

Zidong Zhao

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Brooklyn, NY

EXPERIENCE

Instagram, Reels Relevance

New York, NY

Senior Quantitative UX Researcher

August 2025 – September 2026

- **Improved Instagram Reels' complex recommendation systems through user research on integrity and personalization.** Served as the primary quantitative researcher on a 3-person UXR team embedded across 10+ data scientists and ~100 engineers
- **Prototyped an LLM-based classification system to identify offensive content** in an international market with ~50% of all Reels impressions. Partnered across research, data science, and product to quantify projected cost and impact. Secured VP-level legal and policy approval, ~\$2M in funding, and 4-5 engineers for feature development and testing
- **Drove sentiment measurement strategy for Reels ranking and recommendation.** Analyzed how survey metrics from the brand level down to the content level connect to recommendation system levers, guiding the strategic shift to a new sentiment north star and aligning team goals across a family of metrics
- **Designed a net-new session-level tracking survey to fill a critical measurement gap,** partnering with engineering to scope complex in-app delivery and aligning across a family of products to ensure measurement consistency
- **Accelerated end-to-end research by introducing AI-native workflows** across 8 concurrent projects, building automation pipelines that reduced repetitive analysis and reporting from hours to minutes and onboarding teammates to scale adoption across a team of 12
- **Expanded into mixed-methods research,** contributing to qualitative work spanning international fieldwork, diary studies, and interviews to develop a foundational framework for how Reels add long-term user value beyond immediate entertainment

The Science of Well-Being, Yale University

New Haven, CT

Research Scientist

August 2021 – August 2025

- **Informed the design of two new well-being online courses by evaluating product efficacy** for 1.5M+ users using advanced statistical modeling and ML across survey, app usage, and behavioral data streams
- **Scaled quantitative research adoption and data-driven decision making beyond the research team** by building pipelines and tools that enabled partnership, curriculum, and marketing teams to independently run analyses and act on data
- **Managed and mentored 3 junior researchers** through end-to-end research life cycles, including study design, data collection, statistical analysis, and results shareout

EDUCATION

Princeton University

Princeton, NJ

Ph.D., Psychology

May 2021

- Dissertation – Dyadic Emotion Prediction: Knowledge Structure, Accuracy, and Implications
- Centennial Fellowship

Vanderbilt University

Nashville, TN

B.A., Psychology (Honors), summa cum laude

May 2016

- Minors in Quantitative Methods and Philosophy

SKILLS

Research & Analytics: User and Product Research (Interviewing, Usability Testing, Survey Research), Machine Learning (Regression, Classification, Clustering, Neural Networks), Statistical Analysis (Generalized Linear Models, Multilevel Models, Latent Variable Models), Experimentation (Experimental Design, A/B Testing, Causal Inference), Data Visualization, Data Modeling

Programming & Tools: Python, R, SQL, Bash, JavaScript, AI-native tooling (Claude Code, Cursor)

Languages: Mandarin Chinese (Native), Cantonese (Full professional), Spanish (Intermediate)