

# Mackenzie Volk

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## EDUCATION

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Ph.D.	<i>Marketing</i>	May 2026 ( <i>Expected</i> )
	Darla Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina	
	Dissertation: Effects of Pet Identities in the Marketplace	
	Essay 1: <i>How Pet Identity Salience Influences Conspicuous Consumption</i>	
	Essay 2: <i>Exposure to Cat People Increases Support for DEI Initiatives</i>	
B.B.A.	<i>Marketing</i>	May 2017
B.S.B.E	<i>Economics</i>	
	University of Kentucky	

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Social identity, pets, and marketplace inclusion

## HONORS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

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Doctoral Fellows Award Recipient, University of South Carolina - \$7,000	2025
Nominated Doctoral Fellow (Presenter), Haring Symposium, Indiana University	2025
Darla Moore School of Business Research Grant (with Xiaojing Yang) - \$5,000	2025
Graduate School Travel Grant, University of South Carolina	2024
Darla Moore School of Business Research Grant (with Xiaojing Yang) - \$3,000	2024
First Scholars, First Generation Scholarship, University of Kentucky	2012 - 2017

## MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW OR IN PREPARATION

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Rebecca Rabino, Elise Chandon Ince, **Mackenzie Volk**, and Debora V. Thompson, “Accent-Driven Curiosity: Ambiguous Accents Pique Consumer Curiosity,” submitted to the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

Lei Jia, Xiaojing Yang, and **Mackenzie Volk**, “Being True to Oneself: Gender Nonconformity Signals Men’s Creative Potential,” in final preparation for submission to the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

**Mackenzie Volk**, Lei Jia, and Xiaojing Yang, “How Pet Identity Salience Influences Conspicuous Consumption,” in preparation for submission to the *Journal of Marketing*.  
*Dissertation Essay 1*

**Mackenzie Volk**, Lei Jia, and Xiaojing Yang, “Exposure to Cat People Increases Support for DEI Initiatives,” manuscript targeting the *Journal of Marketing Research* in progress.  
*Dissertation Essay 2*

Yanfen (Cindy) You, Xiaojing Yang, Xiaoyan Deng, and **Mackenzie Volk**, “‘I Will Remember You’ or ‘Don’t You (Forget About Me)’?: How Linguistic Differences in Reminder Messages Affect Consumer Compliance,” in preparation for submission to the *Journal of Marketing*.

## SELECT WORKS IN PROGRESS

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**Mackenzie Volk** and Linyun W. Yang, “Unraveling the Dynamics of the ‘Women-Owned’ Label.”

**Mackenzie Volk**, Xiaojing Yang, and Yanfen (Cindy) You, “Green vs. the Machine: How Service Robots Impact Sustainable Behavior.”

## DISSERTATION

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*Dissertation Proposal Defended June 2025*

*Dissertation Committee:* Xiaojing Yang (Advisor), Elise Chandon Ince, Linyun W. Yang, Debora V. Thompson

### **Essay 1: “How Pet Identity Salience Influences Conspicuous Consumption”**

Consumers frequently identify as either dog people or cat people—an identity endorsed by as much as 85% of consumers, including non-pet owners. Yet, despite its ubiquity, existing research demonstrates very little about how this identity shapes consumer behavior. This is an important distinction to consider because dog and cat identities reflect fundamentally different traits: dog people are more socially oriented and attuned to hierarchy, while cat people value independence and autonomy. In my dissertation, I find that when a dog-person identity is salient, consumers are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption to enhance social status. In contrast, when a cat-person identity is salient, consumers are less likely to view social visibility as a status symbol and show weaker preferences for conspicuous goods. These identity-based differences in status signaling result in varied downstream outcomes, including choice, purchase likelihood, and brand evaluations. Importantly, these effects are unique to pet identity and do not occur in response to other identity cues or personality traits. This research reveals a source of variation in identity-driven consumption that marketers can leverage in targeting and positioning strategies.

### **Essay 2: “Exposure to Cat People Increases Support for DEI Initiatives”**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives have been a hot topic in the media and the marketplace. While political identity has been shown to predict support for DEI, existing research has not explored whether seemingly unrelated identities—like pet identity—can influence these attitudes. Given that pet identities are widely held, with up to 85% of consumers identifying as either dog or cat people, understanding whether exposure to these identities influences preferences poses an interesting question. In the second essay of my dissertation, I find that exposure to cat (vs. dog) people increases consumer support for DEI policies. This occurs because cat identities—mirroring the solitary and independent nature of cats—enhance sensitivity to minority group needs, while dog identities—reflecting sociability and group orientation—focus more on majority group norms. These identity-based effects lead to meaningful differences in DEI support, above and beyond preference explained by political orientation. This research reveals a novel pathway through which non-political identities shape attitudes toward social policy, offering actionable insights for marketers and policymakers seeking to foster inclusive consumer engagement.

## CONFERENCE AND INVITED PRESENTATIONS (\*Presenter)

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**Mackenzie Volk**, Lei Jia, and Xiaojing Yang\*, (2025), “A Means for Social Connection: How Pet-Based Identity Influences Conspicuous Consumption Tendencies,” Competitive Paper, *Summer AMA*, August 22-24.

**Mackenzie Volk\***, Xiaojing Yang, and Yanfen (Cindy) You, (2024), “Green vs. the Machine: How Service Robots Impact Sustainable Behavior,” Competitive Paper, *Frontiers in Service Conference*, June 26-28.

**Mackenzie Volk\***, Xiaojing Yang, and Yanfen (Cindy) You, (2024), “Green vs. the Machine: How Service Robots Impact Sustainable Behavior,” Competitive Paper, *T.R.A.P. Lab Unconference*, June 8-9.

**Mackenzie Volk\***, and Linyun W. Yang (2023), “Zero-Sum Thinking Impedes Women’s Support for Women-Owned Businesses,” Competitive Paper, *Society for Consumer Psychology (SCP) Annual Conference*, March 2-4.

**Mackenzie Volk\***, and Linyun W. Yang (2023), “Zero-Sum Thinking Impedes Women’s Support for Women-Owned Businesses,” Competitive Paper, *Clemson Research Symposium*, February 17.

**Mackenzie Volk\***, and Linyun W. Yang (2022), “Zero-Sum Thinking Impedes Women’s Support for Women-Owned Businesses,” Poster Session, *Association for Consumer Research (ACR) Annual Conference*, October 20-22.

## TEACHING

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University of South Carolina, Instructor

- Consumer Behavior (MKTG 351; undergraduate)

Spring, 2024 – (in-person)

Instructor Evaluations Score: 4.7/5

Fall, 2025 – (in-person), two sections

University of South Carolina, Teaching Assistant

- Consumer Behavior (MKTG 351; undergraduate; Dr. Linyun W. Yang)  
In person (Fall 2022, 2024)
- Consumer Behavior (MKTG 704; MBA/PMBA; Dr. Linyun W. Yang)  
In person (Fall 2022, 2023, 2024)

## SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

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JCR, *Trainee Reviewer*

2024 – Present

American Marketing Association First Generation Scholars, *Mentor*

2023 – Present

University of South Carolina First Generation Student Org., *Member*

2023 – Present

American Marketing Association DocSIG, *Vice Chair of Member Engagement*

2024 – 2025

Darla Moore School of Business Doctoral Student Organization, *Chair*

2021-2024

DOCTORAL COURSEWORK

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<i>Marketing</i>	Current Topics in Consumer Research	Abhijit Guha
	Concepts and Theories in Consumer Research	Elise Chandon Ince
	Research Methods and Philosophies in Marketing	Satish Jayachandran
	Marketing Strategy	Satish Jayachandran
	Empirical Causal Models	Ramkumar Janakiraman
	Empirical Causal Analysis for Marketing	Manpreet Gill
	Strategy Research	
	Independent Study	Linyun W. Yang
	Independent Study	Abhijit Guha
<i>Statistics</i>	Advanced Statistics for Business I	Paul Bliese
	Advanced Statistics for Business II	Paul Bliese
	Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data I	Svetlana Shinkareva
	Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data II	Alberto Maydeu-Olivares
	Theories of Psychological Measurement	Alberto Maydeu-Olivares
<i>Other</i>	Design and Analysis of Educational Surveys	Xumei Fan
	Research Approaches to Human Behavior	Elizabeth Will

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

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Statistics: SAS, R, SPSS, Mplus, Basic Python

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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American Marketing Association  
 Association for Consumer Research  
 Society for Consumer Psychology  
 Society for Judgement and Decision-Making

PROFESSIONAL INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

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Process Manager, *P.L. Marketing*, The Kroger Company - Cosmetics Planograms, (2019 - 2021), Cincinnati, OH

Space Planning Analyst, *P.L. Marketing*, The Kroger Company - Health and Beauty Planogram Team, (2018 - 2019), Cincinnati, OH

Area Manager, *Amazon.com*, Reverse Logistics - Kindle and Large Sort, *Hebron*, KY (2016 - 2018)

Production Planning Co-Op, *Toyota*, Engine Allocation Team, *Erlanger*, KY (2015 - 2016)

## REFERENCES

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**Xiaojing Yang (Advisor)**

*Professor of Marketing and Moore  
Research Fellow*

Darla Moore School of Business  
University of South Carolina  
[xiaojing.yang@moore.sc.edu](mailto:xiaojing.yang@moore.sc.edu)  
803-777-2124

**Linyun W. Yang**

*Assistant Professor of Marketing*  
Darla Moore School of Business  
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**Elise Chandon Ince**

*Associate Professor of Marketing and  
Pearce Faculty Fellow*

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