

**Quiet Reliance and Social Stigma: Response to Generative AI Tools among Males aged
18-25**

Raymond Puentes

Department of Communication, Architecture + the Arts

PUR 6956: Professional Project

Prof. Aileen Izquierdo

March 31, 2026

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	3
Literature Review	5
Generative AI and Productivity Tools	5
Social Media Advertising on Instagram and TikTok	8
Stigma in Technology Use	9
Stigma Management Strategies	11
Research Gap and Conceptual Framework	13
Methodology	16
Hypotheses	16
Research Design	17
Procedure	18
Participants	19
Results	20
Sample Characteristics	20
RQ1	20
RQ2	24
RQ3	26
Usage Patterns and Attitudes	29
Discussion	32
Limitations	36
Recommendations	37
Conclusion	38
References	40

Abstract

This study examines how young adult males aged 18 to 25 perceive and manage stigma surrounding generative AI productivity tools, such as Gemini and Grammarly, after exposure to social media advertisements on Instagram and TikTok. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey of 51 participants, the research assessed exposure to AI ads, emotional reactions to embedded advertisements for Gemini and Grammarly, perceived stigma, stigma management strategies, and willingness to publicly acknowledge AI use. Findings show that respondents reported moderate exposure to AI productivity ads but generally muted emotional responses, with limited feelings of guilt, anxiety, or pressure. Participants were more likely to endorse normalization and defense of AI use than avoidance or concealment, suggesting that stigma management in this group tends to center on justification rather than secrecy. Although many respondents expressed concern that AI use could be perceived as lazy, dishonest, or damaging to reputation, they were relatively reluctant to engage with or share AI-related ads on social media. Overall, the study suggests that young adult males navigate generative AI through a pattern of quiet reliance. They recognize stigma, use the tools for productivity, but remain selective about public disclosure. These findings offer implications for strategic communication and advertising, indicating that brands should emphasize transparency, authenticity, and ethical use rather than pressure-based messaging.

Introduction

In recent years, generative artificial intelligence (AI) has experienced rapid growth, gaining prevalence through different mediums of AI-generated content and social media ads for productivity and learning tools. This is especially seen among young adult males (aged 18 to 25),

who are avid users of platforms like Instagram and TikTok in particular (O'Connell & Daruwala, 2025). These social media platforms have a demonstrable impact on the mental well-being of their users, the choices they make in the real world, and how they choose to engage with these platforms. Thus, it is only natural that the usage of generative AI has grown among young adults over time, with social media ads for these tools playing a major role.

Chen et al. (2023) found that generative AI tools have found a wide variety of practical applications in the daily lives of young adults, including work productivity, healthcare, customer service, and academics. Many young adults use these tools to aid in studying, learning new content, and streamlining tasks that would otherwise take them longer to complete. This has broad implications in both academic and professional settings. There is also a marked distinction in usage of generative AI by gender. In particular, males are more likely to adopt generative AI tools in their daily lives than their female counterparts (Renz et al., 2024). This is reflected in previous trends with new technologies, with the difference stemming from a greater desire to use these tools for self-improvement and other practical applications among males.

Existing literature has also explored the negative psychological impacts of digital technology use among young adults in particular, citing a correlation between greater use and adverse mental health (Thomée et al., 2012). This phenomenon has grown more apparent with the rise of generative AI tools, as their usage is often labeled as lazy and inauthentic (Bae et al., 2024). This, combined with the rise of social media ads pertaining to generative AI, has resulted in a phenomenon where these tools have become stigmatized despite their extensive usage. While prior literature has explored negative stigmatization and adverse psychological effects of digital technologies, it has yet to examine how these effects might correlate with social media

advertisements for generative AI productivity tools, such as Gemini and Grammarly, that are commonly used by young adults (Douglas et al., 2024).

This study will examine how young adult males perceive and manage stigma when encountering Instagram and TikTok ads for generative AI productivity tools, such as Gemini and Grammarly. It will also explore what stigma management strategies these males employ when discussing or publicizing their usage of AI productivity tools. In addition, this research will examine how perceived stigma influences how these males engage with advertisements for these tools, and whether they openly acknowledge their use of said tools. Further research on the stigma management strategies employed by this demographic in relation to AI usage, as well as their perceptions of the matter, will provide actionable insights for communications professionals and advertisers who wish to market these productivity tools to young adult male audiences.

Literature Review

Generative AI and Productivity Tools

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is a type of artificial intelligence that creates new forms of media, which could include code, video, music, text, and images, by being trained to recognize patterns within massive datasets taken from a variety of sources. Generative AI has found wide applications in many areas, with a notable example being AI-powered productivity tools, which can act as an aid in several tasks, or complete said tasks for the user altogether (De Smet et al., 2024). While many individuals think of generative AI in terms of its applications in technical fields, it has found much wider use. Teachers, healthcare workers, students, and managers at various companies and institutions have found means of implementing AI into their

day-to-day lives. It has taken root as a means of facilitating productivity for many adults of working age.

This study will focus on two generative AI tools, known as Gemini and Grammarly, that have become popular among young adults. These have found wide use among students and young professionals, making them especially relevant to the connection between generative AI, social media advertisements, and stigma (Smet et al., 2024). Gemini was first built by Google as a rudimentary chatbot tool, that was later rebranded and expanded to include multiple types of media (images, video, text, etc.), eventually integrating generative AI across most of Google's platforms (Imran & Almusharraf, 2024). Grammarly was first built as an online grammar and spell checking tool, but was later expanded to include a desktop writing assistant and other AI-powered capabilities, including rewriting, tone adjustment, and suggestions for new ideas (Fitria, 2021). Over time, both tools have evolved from having simple capabilities, to constituting AI-powered systems that can produce and revise content on their own, standing at the forefront of the generative AI industry. As a result, they have begun to blur the line between the assistive and substitutive uses of AI in productivity and learning. This shift, when coupled with the promotion of generative AI in digital spaces and its adoption in academic and professional contexts, helps explain why the use of Gemini and Grammarly has seen a surge among young adults. These tools and their public perception serve as excellent examples of how the adoption of AI tools by young adults has occurred, and what types of stigma it has inspired.

Within the past couple of years, generative AI has grown in popularity across many professions. De Smet et al. (2024) found that nontechnical employees who use generative AI significantly outnumber technical employees within those same companies. This is most often done in the form of common productivity tools, such as Gemini and Grammarly, which run on

generative AI models trained on extensive databases of information, making them more effective tools to aid in a wide variety of tasks. Heavy users of generative AI have admitted to using the technology to complete most of their professional tasks, ranging from matters as simple as writing an e-mail to generating 3D models and code for large-scale projects (De Smet et al., 2024). In comparison, light or moderate users of generative AI will most often use it to prepare lesson plans for students, notes for important meetings, or to prepare bulleted lists of information that aid in the creation of written materials. This demonstrates the diversity of the extent of AI usage in professional settings, as well as its wide applications within several industries. For most, generative AI functions as a tool that makes day-to-day work easier to complete, or a tool that can simply do work for them.

Generative AI productivity tools have also seen greater usage within educational settings, by both teachers and students. Many educators use these tools to draft lesson plans, prepare lecture notes, and come up with classroom activities to keep students engaged (De Smet et al., 2024). For students at the collegiate level, this serves as an introduction to the wide applications of generative AI, which can both facilitate productivity and assume its core functions. Chen et al. (2023) found that many undergraduate students find these tools useful in understanding basic concepts, finding educational resources, and aiding with assignments. These are all core functions that apply to any field of study or professional discipline. Thus, it becomes clear that generative AI has cemented itself as a useful tool for most young adults. This growth is certainly facilitated by social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, that often feature posts promoting generative AI tools (O'Connell & Daruwala, 2025). Gendered differences in willingness to adopt AI tools makes it clear that males, in particular, are a demographic that continues to be extensively impacted by developments in generative AI (Renz et al., 2024). This

presents many implications that will likely manifest as the technology develops further and finds more varied usage.

Social Media Advertising on Instagram and TikTok

In an era where most young adults are avid users of social media platforms, the strategies utilized to market on these platforms have become crucial for companies to consider, especially when they want to promote emergent technologies, such as generative AI tools, that are growing popular among younger audiences. O’Connell and Daruwala (2025) discovered that visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which both feature short-form video content, exhibited a positive correlation with upward comparison and social pressure. Study participants also revealed that usage of these platforms had both positive and negative impacts on their mental states, even when not using said platforms. These are both ideals that intersect neatly with typical marketing strategies. In the context of advertisements, feelings of pressure and comparison could spur young adults who view Instagram or TikTok ads to buy in to whatever product is being marketed to them visually. Furthermore, the sentiments felt when initially viewing these ads could continue to linger, which might inspire further investment in a product.

There are also stark differences in how men and women respond to visual content on social media. O’Connell and Daruwala (2025) found that while female participants demonstrated a greater awareness of the negative effects of social media exposure than their male counterparts, they were more susceptible to these effects. When considered with the male inclination towards adopting digital technologies, this could signify that young adult men might be more easily swayed by social media advertisements for these tools than women (Renz et al., 2024). Thus, there is an extant demographic of young adult men who have an inclination towards adopting new technologies, and are also receptive to visual content on social media. This could push them

to be more sympathetic to generative AI tools, especially those that are commonly used, like Gemini and Grammarly.

Prior literature has shown that increased usage of digital technologies can lead to an adverse impact on mental health, particularly in the context of social media addiction (O'Connell & Daruwala, 2025). In the current era, this could be spurred on by social media ads that market products to specific demographics, such as young adult men, that might not be as self-aware as other groups. It is also possible that these ads, or the products within them, might inspire adverse feelings within young adult men. They could grapple with the previously mentioned feelings of social pressure and comparison, which might arise if usage of generative AI tools inspire negative emotional effects similar to those that stem from the extended social media usage that has been examined in prior literature. These are important variables that companies must consider when marketing generative AI tools towards young adult males.

Stigma in Technology Use

The introduction of new technologies has always been met with some form of stigma, especially in the current digital age. The latest example of this is generative AI, which meets mixed reception by the general population. Specifically, there is a broad perception that using generative AI tools for productivity has its own disadvantages (Bae et al., 2024). College students who utilize generative AI have demonstrated concerns about the risk of inaccuracy or bias in its responses. Many have also expressed guilt over using AI tools, feeling that doing so could be perceived as lazy, make their work inauthentic, or perhaps give them an unfair advantage over peers who might not be using generative AI. Thus, young adults are met with an emergent technology that, in their eyes, has visible flaws and raises profound moral questions concerning productivity and work output. Nguyen et al. (2024) expand on this, stating that many

college students are concerned about the honesty of work that was produced with the help of generative AI, and are also worried about how this could impact the development of cognitive and problem-solving skills for future cohorts of students. These factors could contribute to stigma concerning the emergent technology, and motivate a greater negative perception of the tools associated with it among many young adults.

There is a longstanding precedent of stigmatization and general negative perception of new technologies. Shensa et al. (2021) found that usage of social media platforms had a positive correlation with adverse mental health effects, caused in part by an increased exposure to negativity and the use of social media as an unhealthy distraction from day-to-day life. These effects have certainly contributed to prevailing stigmas concerning social media, and certain sentiments could be replicated with generative AI and other technologies in the future. This is a phenomenon that has existed for several years, as seen in prior literature that has examined the link between negative mental health and social media usage, finding a positive correlation between both concepts (Thomée et al., 2012).

The same stigmas exhibited with social media due to the associated adverse mental health impacts could carry over to AI as well, should similar trends continue. Many young adults have already expressed their concerns with the educational and professional applications of generative AI productivity tools, citing academic integrity, ethical implications, guilt over work authenticity, and right to privacy as issues that must be addressed as these tools continue to be implemented (Bae et al., 2024). Given the mixed reactions to these topics from companies with generative AI tools, it is only natural that some forms of stigma might arise in relation to these tools. Finer details pertaining to the impersonal tone of some generative AI responses and misinformation via hallucinations add to this general hesitance. Among those who readily accept the help of

generative AI, this could inspire feelings of shame or regret over their reliance on these tools. Some might think it best to conceal or lie about how often they use AI tools for productivity, but these are matters that have yet to be explored extensively in the prior literature. Nevertheless, a clear precedent has been established for the possibility of stigma concerning the usage of generative AI, particularly among young adults. Gendered differences in AI usage could also push men to experience these effects to a greater extent than women, as they have demonstrated a greater willingness to accept generative AI than their female counterparts (Renz et al., 2024).

Stigma Management Strategies

Stigma is a common sentiment that many individuals have experienced, often intertwined with social issues and the emergence of new phenomena that might be met with mixed reception among a given group. Many individuals manage and cope with social stigma by implementing various stigma management strategies, which are tools used to either mitigate the negative feelings inspired by stigma, or learn to live with them. Smith and Bishop (2019) found that avoidance and denial strategies were common means of managing stigma among wide demographics. Avoidance strategies are strategies that accept public stigma, but avoid situations that would apply that stigma to the self. Typically, an individual who practices avoidance strategies will avoid encounters that would reveal their connection to the stigmatized concept, regardless of whether or not they continue to indulge in that stigma privately. In the case of generative AI productivity tools, this would entail an individual who constantly relies on these tools, but does not disclose their usage publicly to avoid being stigmatized. Denial strategies establish a different approach, often spurring the individual to reject the public stigma and deny its applications to the self via counterarguments (Smith & Bishop, 2019). This would be more applicable to discussions of the ethical and moral qualms surrounding generative AI productivity

tools, which have already begun to feed into stigma surrounding its use (Bae et al., 2024). An individual who uses AI tools for productivity and implements denial strategies would likely challenge the prevailing ethical and moral stigma concerning said tools, and present counterarguments justifying their continued usage for productivity. Within this realm of stigma management, education via counterevidence and confrontation are key components of denial strategies, as they constitute a direct refutation of the stigma itself.

In the context of social media advertisements for AI productivity tools, this could inspire a differentiation in how stigma management and response to said ads both intersect. O'Connell and Daruwala (2025) found that there is a correlation between increased social media usage and the concepts of upward comparison and social pressure. Thus, it is possible that social media ads for AI productivity tools could conflict with commonly held stigma concerning the usage of said tools. While these ads could still convince individuals to adopt AI tools for productivity purposes, they might still feel uneasy due to related stigma. This could push them to implement different stigma management strategies, causing them to either limit how many people they share these ads with, or to become more defensive of their tool usage after seeing these ads.

While stigma management strategies might help individuals cope with their reliance on generative AI for productivity, it could also push them towards situations in which their use of AI is actively challenged and shamed by others who might have different views on the subject. Thus, stigma management strategies could have a mixed impact in this regard, being more helpful to some individuals, and detrimental to others, depending on the exact situation and type of strategy used. O'Connell and Daruwala (2025) found that Instagram and TikTok were both popular social media platforms whose short-form visual content could have considerable influence over the young adults who use said platforms. Thus, one could postulate that the ads

made available on these platforms, especially when concerned with generative AI, could exert a similar influence on their respective user bases. It is clear that stigma management strategies and social media ads for AI tools have the opportunity for a strong intersection, leveraging a considerable impact on the young adult male consumers who view them. Each individual who sees the ads might cope with prevailing stigma concerning AI in different ways, implementing strategies such as denial or avoidance to determine which response works best for them.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Previous research has explored the broad perception and impact of AI productivity tools, the impact of social media advertising on Instagram and TikTok, the stigma of technology use, and the stigma management strategies typically used in response to the prior concepts. Some of this literature has also highlighted gendered differences, demonstrating that men tend to be less self-aware of the impact that digital technology has on them, thus making them more susceptible to its effects (Renz et al., 2024). However, there is a significant research gap at the intersection between male-specific stigma management, AI productivity tools, and social media ads. The closure of this gap through new research would contribute significantly to the current understanding of what AI productivity tools are, how they impact young adult males (aged 18 to 25), and how this impact is driven through social media ads.

In recent years, literature has covered the general prevalence of ads for generative AI tools, but has not fully examined the responses to said ads on specific social media platforms by males (Williamson & Koch, 2024). This is significant in understanding the relationship between stigma management and generative AI tools, as many young adults are first introduced to these tools through social media posts that either advertise them or use them directly to create generative AI content. Given that social media has a demonstrable impact on young adults,

further research into social media ads on generative AI tools would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how these ads impact the stigma management strategies of the males who use these tools for productivity and learning. Furthermore, there is no extant literature that specifically examines the impact of short-form social media content on the stigma surrounding generative AI productivity tools such as Gemini and Grammarly, which are both commonly used by young adults (Douglas et al., 2024). If social media is extensively used among young adults, it is reasonable to postulate that it plays a role in the public perception of generative AI among this demographic, while also influencing how they might process stigma around generative AI.

Existing research concerning stigma addresses the impact of generative AI within education, citing common guilt among students who rely on productivity tools, but does not explore what these feelings might look like in the context of social media or specifically among young adult male users (Bae et al., 2024). There is a research gap concerning how stigma management strategies, such as avoidance or denial, might be applied by young adults in relation to social media ads for generative AI tools as well as their own private use of said tools. This also leads into another research gap that ties into gender. Despite prior studies demonstrating that males and females show different responses to generative AI, there is no literature that specifically takes a male focus, with most current studies either being more general or female-oriented (Renz et al., 2024). Given that males are a more affected demographic in this sense, it would also be wise to examine how their interactions might differ across commonly used social platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which see frequent exposure among males.

The prior literature also presents key methodological gaps, as most prior research on the impact of generative AI has been of a broader nature, with no studies presenting a targeted analysis (via a Likert scale or other quantitative measures) of the relation between stigma among

young adult males and exposure to social media ads differentiated by platform. This makes it difficult for communicators to devise actionable insights that would better target the current stigma that has arisen concerning the usage and advertisement of generative AI productivity tools among these males. Renz et al. (2024) found that females are less likely than males to use generative AI for self-improvement and productivity. When considered with other key factors, it becomes clear that the extant research gap between male-specific stigma management, AI productivity tools, and social media ads must be further explored, with sufficient differentiation being made between specific social media platforms (Instagram and TikTok) and commonly used AI tools, to better understand how young adult males (aged 18 to 25) are affected.

Methodology

Hypotheses

This study will examine the following research questions, as they pertain to the intersection between perceived stigma, exposure to social media ads for generative AI tools, and stigma management strategies.

- RQ1 - How do young adult males perceive and manage stigma when encountering Instagram and TikTok advertisements for generative AI productivity tools?
- RQ2 - What specific stigma management strategies do individuals employ when talking about or sharing their own use of these AI tools after seeing related social media ads?
- RQ3 - How does perceived stigma influence whether adult males openly acknowledge their use of AI productivity tools and how they choose to engage with related ads on Instagram and TikTok?

These research questions lead to the following hypotheses:

- H1 - Young adult males (aged 18 to 25) who report higher perceived social stigma around using generative AI productivity tools will report stronger negative emotions when viewing Instagram and TikTok advertisements for these tools.
- H2 - Higher perceived stigma concerning AI tools will be positively associated with the use of stigma management strategies when discussing their own use after seeing related ads.
- H3 - Higher perceived stigma will be negatively associated with willingness to openly acknowledge the use of generative AI productivity tools and intentions to engage with Instagram and TikTok ads for said tools.

Research Design

This study will implement a quantitative, cross-sectional survey that will be administered via Qualtrics. The design is non-experimental, but will include two embedded advertisements from Instagram and TikTok that promote AI productivity tools, with randomization of ad order to reduce sequence effects. The primary aim of this design will be to describe the relationships between perceived stigma, exposure to social media ads for generative AI tools, and stigma management strategies.

The data in this study will be collected online via a Qualtrics-based survey, with a defined window of 2 to 3 weeks being granted to allow for the collection of sufficient data. Data measured by quantitative scales will serve as the basis of this survey, with all attitudinal and stigma-related measures using 5-point Likert-type scales (1-5) to assess the feelings of participants and ensure consistent measurement. The survey will begin with initial sections that screen for participants that meet eligibility requirements (age, gender identification as male, consent acknowledgement) and demographic sections (education status, employment status, ethnicity). The following sections will cover social media and AI tool use, exposure to AI advertisements, perceived stigma of AI use, the assessment of different stigma management strategies in relation to AI, public disclosure of AI use, and general attitudes and trust concerning AI.

The section on social media and AI tool use will assess the frequency of Instagram and TikTok use, preference of social media platform, the frequency of use of AI tools, and preference of AI tools. Questions involving frequency will be measured using ordered response categories (e.g. from “never” to “very often”), and others that assess preference will be multiple-choice questions allowing for one answer. The next section will be dedicated to exposure to AI

advertisements, with preliminary questions assessing how participants perceive ads for AI tools, the frequency of their exposure to these ads, and what feelings said ads inspire. This will be followed by a section in which participants are exposed to two ads for the generative AI productivity tools Gemini and Grammarly, that fit the typical criteria for short-form video advertisements on Instagram and TikTok. The order of said ads will be randomized for survey participants to control for sequence bias. After viewing each ad, participants will answer items about their emotional reactions, their perceptions of the ad and associated AI tools, and their intentions to interact with the ad or associated tools, all measured on 5-point Likert-type scales.

The perceived stigma of AI usage will be the focus of the following section, and will contain a series of attitudinal statements that focus on personal sentiments concerning the stigma of AI usage. Participants will then be tasked with ranking each statement on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 to 5, and will assess whether they agree or disagree with each statement. This will be followed with a section on stigma management strategies, with attitudinal statements of a similar nature that will assess what strategies different participants implement, if any at all. The last two parts before the final section will be structured similarly, with a focus on public disclosure of AI usage, as well as general attitudes and trust towards AI respectively. The ending section will include a basic debrief statement and contact information. As mentioned before, the various subject areas will be measured with a mixture of Likert-type scales to assess participant feelings and multiple choice questions for categorical information (e.g. questions about preference of social media platform and AI productivity tools).

Procedure

This survey will be shared via links in social media posts and e-mails that direct participants to the Qualtrics survey. Thus, all participation will be voluntary, and participants will

receive an explanation of how their anonymity will be ensured, then having the opportunity to give their consent before proceeding to the different sections. The sample will consist of young adult men, aged 18 to 25, who have access to social media and e-mail, and are users of social media. After clicking the survey link, participants will view a preliminary section that screens for eligibility requirements and demographics. Those who agree to continue will complete said screening items, and then proceed with the rest of the survey. This will include questions on social media and AI use, ad exposure and ad-specific questions, perceived stigma, stigma management strategies, public disclosure items, general attitudes toward AI, and a final debrief statement.

Participants

This study included 51 participants who met key demographic criteria. A target sample of this size is appropriate for a cross-sectional survey of this scale, and is feasible within the outlined time and recruitment constraints. All participants were required to identify as male, be between the ages of 18 and 25, and be users of Instagram and TikTok. They were recruited through social media posts and e-mails sharing the aforementioned survey. While basic demographic details were collected, the participants remained anonymous. There was no collection of names or direct identifiers within the survey itself, which ensured the full anonymity of participants.

Results

Sample Characteristics

A total of 51 completed responses met the inclusion criteria for analysis, as they all finished the survey, gave explicit consent to participate, and fulfilled the previously outlined demographic and behavioral criteria. Most respondents reported using social media very often (46%) or often (33%), confirming that the sample reflects frequent users of Instagram and TikTok. Key demographic data was also collected, including educational status, employment status, and ethnicity. A majority of the study participants identified as Hispanic/Latino (65%), whereas 15% identified as White, 10% identified as Black or African American, 4% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2% identified as Asian, and 4% identified as Other or gave no response. The majority of participants were also college students, including undergraduate (36%) and graduate students (30%). Around 32% of participants reported that they were not currently students, and the remaining 2% declined to disclose their education status. This sample also included individuals who were employed full-time (36%) and part-time (34%), as well as those who are currently unemployed (26%). The remaining 4% of participants declined to disclose their employment status. All 51 participants in this survey were males aged 18 to 25 years old.

RQ1

This study initially posited that young adult males (aged 18 to 25) who report higher perceived social stigma around using generative AI productivity tools would report stronger negative emotions when viewing Instagram and TikTok advertisements for these tools, seeking

to answer how young adult males perceive and manage stigma when encountering digital advertisements for these tools.

Table 1. Exposure to AI productivity ads

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you see ads for AI productivity tools on Instagram?	23%	35%	21%	15%	6%
How often do you see ads for AI productivity tools on TikTok?	41%	29%	17%	8%	4%

Table 2. Salience of AI productivity ads

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
These ads for AI tools stand out to me when I scroll through my feed.	31%	21%	27%	19%	4%
I usually notice when an ad is promoting an AI productivity or learning tool.	17%	21%	27%	27%	8%
I feel like AI productivity tool ads are becoming more common on the platforms I use.	54%	23%	10%	10%	2%

Overall, respondents reported moderate exposure to AI productivity ads, with roughly one fifth to one quarter seeing them sometimes or often on both Instagram and TikTok, but a notable plurality reported never seeing such ads on TikTok specifically. Perceptions of salience were mixed, with around 35% of participants agreeing that they usually notice when an ad is promoting an AI tool, but a smaller fraction stating that those ads stand out to them. Furthermore, a majority of survey participants disagreed that AI tool ads are becoming more common, suggesting that respondents do not uniformly perceive an increase in AI-related advertising.

Emotional responses to two advertisements for generative AI tools were also recorded. These included an Instagram ad for Grammarly, and a TikTok ad for Gemini. The emotional responses for both embedded ads were generally muted, with most respondents selecting neutral or disagreeing options across various attitudinal items, which sought to measure sentiments of guilt, anxiety, and interest.

Table 3. Emotional reactions to Instagram ad

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This ad makes me feel interested in the AI tool being promoted.	28%	21%	15%	28%	9%
This ad makes me feel guilty about how much (or how little) I currently use AI tools.	46%	22%	22%	9%	2%
This ad makes me feel anxious about my own performance in school or work.	47%	26%	19%	6%	2%
This ad makes me feel proud or confident about the idea of using AI tools.	38%	13%	23%	21%	4%
When I watch this ad, I feel like other people my age are already using AI tools.	6%	6%	19%	38%	30%
This ad makes it seem like I might fall behind if I don't use AI tools.	26%	11%	15%	38%	11%
This ad presents the AI tool in an honest and authentic way.	13%	15%	26%	36%	11%
This ad makes using AI tools feel like taking a shortcut instead of doing the work myself.	21%	11%	19%	28%	21%

Table 4. Emotional reactions to TikTok ad

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This ad makes me feel interested in the AI tool being promoted.	47%	11%	17%	23%	2%
This ad makes me feel guilty about how much (or how little) I currently use AI tools.	51%	21%	21%	4%	2%
This ad makes me feel anxious about my own performance in school or work.	68%	15%	6%	9%	2%
This ad makes me feel proud or confident about the idea of using AI tools.	49%	9%	23%	11%	9%
When I watch this ad, I feel like other people my age are already using AI tools.	13%	2%	26%	36%	23%
This ad makes it seem like I might fall behind if I don't use AI tools.	47%	15%	11%	21%	6%
This ad presents the AI tool in an honest and authentic way.	26%	19%	28%	21%	6%
This ad makes using AI tools feel like taking a shortcut instead of doing the work myself.	21%	15%	19%	32%	13%

Only about one quarter of respondents agreed that the ads made them feel interested in the promoted AI tools, while a clear majority disagreed that the ads elicited guilt, anxiety, or pride. This indicates that overtly stigmatizing or pressure-inducing emotions were not commonly reported in response to these ads. Normative comparison items also showed limited social pressure among young adult males. For instance, nearly four fifths of respondents disagreed that the Instagram ad made it seem like they might fall behind if they did not use AI tools, and

similarly large shares rejected the idea that the ads portrayed AI as a necessary shortcut in the completion of their goals or tasks.

RQ2

This study initially posited that higher perceived stigma concerning AI tools would be positively associated with the use of stigma management strategies when discussing their own use after seeing related ads, seeking to identify what specific stigma management strategies individuals employ when talking about or sharing their own use of these tools after seeing related social media ads.

Table 5. Avoidance and concealment of AI tool use

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I avoid talking about how often I use AI tools.	23%	23%	13%	26%	15%
I avoid situations where people might find out I use AI tools.	30%	19%	23%	13%	15%
When I talk about AI tools, I make it sound like I use them less than I actually do.	21%	32%	17%	17%	13%
I downplay how much I rely on AI tools when I explain how I completed a task.	21%	23%	21%	26%	9%
I have hidden my use of AI tools from someone because I was worried about how they would react.	30%	15%	26%	23%	6%

Roughly two thirds to three quarters of respondents disagreed that they routinely hide or minimize their AI tool use, while only about one in ten to one in eight endorsed these avoidance

or concealment strategies. These patterns suggest that, for most participants, active concealment is not a dominant stigma management strategy, although a small but consistent minority report avoiding disclosure or downplaying their reliance on AI tools in interpersonal contexts.

Table 6. Normalization and defense of AI tool use

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I tell people that using AI tools is no different from using spellcheck or Google.	43%	17%	19%	19%	2%
If someone criticizes AI users, I defend using AI tools as reasonable and normal.	43%	11%	26%	15%	6%
When people question the ethics of AI tools, I argue that using them is acceptable.	38%	11%	30%	15%	6%

Relative to the attitudinal items assessing avoidance, these responses show a more even distribution, with roughly one quarter to one third of participants agreeing that they actively frame AI use as normal or ethically acceptable. Taken together, the data indicate that when participants do engage in stigma management, they are more likely to adopt normalizing and defensive reframing strategies than to rely on systematic concealment or avoidance.

RQ3

This study initially posited that higher perceived stigma will be negatively associated with willingness to openly acknowledge the use of generative AI productivity tools and intentions to engage with Instagram and TikTok ads for said tools, seeking to identify how perceived stigma influences whether adult males openly acknowledge their use of these tools, and how they choose to engage with related social media ads.

Table 7. Perceived stigma beliefs about AI tool use

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
People my age think relying on AI tools for school or work is lazy.	11%	26%	15%	30%	17%
If others knew how much I use AI tools, they would think less of my work.	28%	13%	20%	24%	15%
Using AI tools for assignments feels like cheating, even if it is technically allowed.	7%	20%	15%	33%	26%
I worry that using AI tools makes my work seem less authentic.	9%	9%	11%	39%	33%
Professors, teachers, or supervisors would judge me negatively if they knew how much I use AI tools.	13%	17%	24%	24%	22%
People I know look down on others who rely heavily on AI tools for productivity.	2%	13%	22%	33%	30%
I am concerned that using AI tools could hurt my academic or professional reputation.	7%	22%	20%	15%	37%

Across all stigma belief items, opinions on whether AI is perceived as lazy, cheating, or reputation-ruining were largely mixed. While around 40-60% of participants agreed that AI usage is associated with these sentiments in interpersonal contexts, a substantial minority did not agree that these perceptions were commonplace. These descriptive patterns suggest that, while perceived external stigma towards AI productivity tools is not universal, it is prominent enough to affect a plurality of young adult men within this sample, with the aforementioned men expressing concern about how their AI use might be interpreted by others.

Table 8. Comfort with disclosure and future openness about AI use

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel comfortable telling my close friends that I use AI tools.	6%	11%	23%	30%	30%
I feel comfortable telling classmates, coworkers, teachers, or supervisors that I use AI tools.	15%	23%	26%	28%	9%
In the future, I plan to be open about my use of AI tools.	9%	15%	40%	26%	11%
I would be willing to post on social media about using AI tools for school, work, or personal projects.	60%	6%	17%	9%	9%

Respondents were more generally comfortable disclosing AI use to close friends than to institutional figures such as teachers and supervisors. This indicates a gradient of disclosure that aligns with perceived relational risk. These attitudinal questions also revealed an interesting contrast. While over one third of participants agreed that they plan to be open about their AI use in the future, nearly three quarters demonstrated hesitance or were outright unwilling to post about their usage of AI tools on social media. This indicates that their preferred openness

concerning tool usage is selective, with a marked aversion toward posting about it online for a wider audience to see.

Table 9. Behavioral intentions toward AI ads

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
If I saw this ad while using Instagram, I would be likely to like or comment on it.	57%	15%	23%	4%	0%
If I saw this ad while using Instagram, I would be likely to share or send it to someone I know.	62%	13%	21%	4%	0%
If I saw this ad while using Instagram, I would be likely to click or tap to learn more or sign up.	53%	11%	21%	6%	9%
After seeing this ad, I would consider trying or increasing my use of AI productivity tools. (Instagram)	34%	17%	19%	26%	4%
If I saw this ad while using TikTok, I would be likely to like or comment on it.	74%	9%	11%	4%	2%
If I saw this ad while using TikTok, I would be likely to share or send it to someone I know.	70%	9%	15%	6%	0%
If I saw this ad while using TikTok, I would be likely to click or tap to learn more or sign up.	72%	7%	9%	9%	4%
After seeing this ad, I would consider trying or increasing my use of AI productivity tools. (TikTok)	45%	23%	17%	11%	4%

Across both platforms, large majorities disagreed that they would like, share, or click on the advertisements shown to them, and fewer than 15% agreed that they were likely to engage with or share AI productivity ads in general. Taken together with the mixed feelings on perceived stigma documented above, these findings suggest that limited ad engagement is not fully driven by fear of social judgment. Rather, skepticism towards the aforementioned ads and ambivalence about the promoted tools contributes to the aversion toward engagement with these ads.

Usage Patterns and Attitudes

This study also included various questions on social media and generative AI tools, with the intent of assessing usage patterns and general attitudes among the chosen sample. These questions provided further contextual information on respondents' broader social media habits, AI tool use patterns, and general attitudes and trust.

Table 10. Usage patterns of social media and AI tools

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you use social media?	2%	2%	16%	33%	47%
On average, how often do you use Instagram in a typical week?	11%	4%	11%	17%	57%
On average, how often do you use TikTok in a typical week?	45%	4%	4%	6%	40%
How often do you use generative AI tools for school or university work?	26%	11%	36%	15%	13%
How often do you use generative AI tools for work or professional tasks?	30%	26%	19%	15%	11%
How often do you use generative AI tools for personal projects or	32%	28%	17%	9%	15%

self-improvement?					
--------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Similar items also assessed preference of social media platform and the importance of AI tools in the daily lives of participants. It was found that 50% of participants chose Instagram as their preferred platform, whereas only 21% preferred TikTok, and 19% made frequent use of both platforms. This indicates that Instagram is the dominant platform among this sample, and could explain the decreased interest in engaging with the embedded TikTok advertisement, as opposed to its counterpart on Instagram.

Despite relatively high social media engagement, engagement with AI tools was more mixed. AI productivity tools were used only occasionally for school, work, or personal projects by most respondents, and roughly one third reported that such tools were not important in their day-to-day lives. However, nearly half of study participants reported that AI productivity tools held some importance in their day-to-day lives.

Table 11. General attitudes towards AI tools and ads

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Overall, I believe AI tools are beneficial for people my age.	26%	11%	21%	30%	13%
AI tools help me be more productive in school, work, or personal projects.	15%	6%	15%	43%	21%
I worry that AI tools will have negative long-term effects on learning or skills.	0%	0%	15%	38%	47%
I am concerned about the ethical or moral issues related to using AI tools.	2%	6%	21%	23%	47%
I generally trust advertisements I	59%	19%	13%	15%	0%

see on Instagram and TikTok.					
I am skeptical of the claims made in social media ads for AI productivity tools.	4%	11%	17%	32%	36%
I believe companies are transparent about what AI tools can and cannot do.	51%	17%	17%	11%	4%

A majority of respondents agreed that AI tools are beneficial and help them to be more productive, even as sizable minorities expressed concern about long-term effects on learning and ethical or moral issues related to AI. Trust in social media advertising was generally low, with nearly half of respondents disagreeing that they trust ads on Instagram and TikTok. A similar share believed that companies are not transparent about what AI tools can and cannot do, which aligns with the low engagement intentions observed in the ad-specific items.

Discussion

This study evaluated the correlation between social media advertisements for generative AI tools (Gemini and Grammarly) and social stigma among young adult men aged 18 to 25. In assessing these concepts, this study hoped to determine whether social stigma levied a negative impact on the emotional responses to AI ads and tool usage, while also assessing what stigma management strategies (if any) were used in relation to said AI tools.

The first hypothesis posted that there would be a positive correlation between perceived social stigma concerning AI tools and stronger negative emotions when viewing social media ads for these tools. Study participants reported moderate exposure to AI productivity ads on a typical basis, with a mixed but overall muted emotional response. Feelings of guilt or anxiety were not common in response to these advertisements, nor were any sentiments of said ads becoming more and more common. Thus, while stigma concerning the use of generative AI is still extant among this demographic, it does not exist in correlation with feelings of guilt or anxiety toward social media ads for AI tools. This contradicts prior literature, which previously demonstrated the negative psychological impact of exposure to social media (Thomée et al., 2012). This could imply that study participants separate general stigma towards AI from their emotional reactions to ads for AI tools, or that the ads for said tools might be perceived as mundane and ineffective rather than emotionally impactful. For the most part, participants also rejected the idea that tools for AI ads made them as if adopting said tools were necessary to avoid falling behind their peers, which further speaks to the overall ineffectiveness of these ads among the young adult men who were surveyed.

A positive association between higher perceived stigma concerning AI tools and the implementation of stigma management strategies in discussions of AI usage was also expected

among the study participants. Survey items assessed the strategies of avoidance, concealment, defense, and normalization, hoping to determine which (if any) found more frequent usage. Endorsements of these strategies were generally mixed or lower than expected, but still present among a significant number of study participants. The results showed a low endorsement of attempts to hide or minimize AI usage, with only a small minority reporting avoidance of these discussions. However, strategies of normalization or defense of AI usage had a greater relative endorsement, with a significant fraction of participants framing their use of AI as normal or ethically acceptable. Thus, the second hypothesis of this study was partially supported, with certain stigma strategies seeing greater implementation than others. Social stigma concerning the use of generative AI tools is a real phenomenon, but is more likely to be addressed with strategies of normalization and defense, rather than avoidance. Smith and Bishop (2019) found that avoidance was a common strategy to deal with social stigma, but this finding is not applicable to general social stigma concerning generative AI usage. This could be due to gendered differences, with men being more inclined to take on a defensive strategy rather than concealment. It is also important to consider that nearly half of study participants disagreed with the presence of internal stigma, which could also decrease the incentive for concealment strategies.

The final hypothesis of this study posited that higher perceived stigma would be negatively associated with open acknowledgement of the use of generative AI tools and engagement with the ads for said tools. It was found that many participants agreed with sentiments that using AI is lazy, cheating, or a risk to one's reputation in academic or professional contexts, but these feelings were not universal. Participants tended to be more comfortable disclosing the usage of AI to friends than teachers or coworkers. This is consistent

with previous findings on social stigma, which have determined that support from friends can be key in reducing stigma (Cengiz & Tanik, 2020). This could potentially motivate young men to share their usage of AI tools with friends sooner than other individuals, as they will naturally gravitate towards the cohorts that will cast lesser judgment on the subject, or none at all.

Surprisingly, study participants also demonstrated low intentions to engage with Instagram and TikTok ads for generative AI tools, with most being disinterested in sharing these ads or discussing them with their peers. This shows that while AI usage might be growing in frequency among this cohort of young men, it is not correlated with a willingness to engage with or share relevant advertisements. While perceived stigma might have an impact on public acknowledgement of AI use as originally hypothesized, it is not correlated with engagement with ads for AI tools, as said engagement was universally low among the study participants.

The results of this study are best understood when integrated into a profile of quiet reliance among young adult men. AI tools are seen as beneficial and productivity-enhancing among a significant portion of those who were surveyed, but this does nothing to dissuade concerns about authenticity, ethics, and reputation. This is somewhat consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated a gendered difference in the adoption of new technologies, with men exhibiting a greater willingness than their female counterparts (Renz et al., 2024). Although AI tools have been used for school and work by many young people, those who use it are still reluctant to promote that usage publicly or share related advertisements on social media. This leads to a social context in which many young people likely exhibit a quiet reliance on AI tools, integrating them into their lives and defending their actions, but demonstrating a reluctance to advertise their usage of these tools publicly. Prior literature has demonstrated the existence of negative emotions concerning the usage of AI tools to aid in academic or professional tasks (Bae

et al., 2024). While the study data demonstrated that the young men who were surveyed had concerns about authenticity and the impact of generative AI on future learning, this did not necessarily translate to strong negative reactions towards ads, or the outright rejection of AI tools. Rather, young men were more open to defending their usage of these tools, and were simply neutral or disinterested towards what ads had to say. The exclusively male sample of this study also complicates previous assumptions that social media exposure and social pressure are positively correlated (O'Connell & Daruwala, 2025). Here, high usage and willingness to adopt AI tools coexists with skepticism toward ads, selective engagement, and a clear lack of social pressure.

These findings bring several key implications for brands that wish to promote AI productivity tools to a young adult male audience. Given that many young men demonstrated concerns about authenticity and ethics, it would be wise for companies to implement messaging that addresses these concerns in a way that will put male consumers at ease (Bae et al., 2024). At the same time, it would also be wise to avoid explicit pressure tactics that frame AI tools as a necessary feature to adopt for those who do not want to be left behind. Study participants demonstrated an overwhelming rejection of these principles, which means that they are likely ineffective among this demographic. Rather, messaging should be centered on transparent explanations of what AI tools are capable of, how they can be used for skill-building rather than for taking shortcuts, and how ethical concerns are being met by the brands which are promoting these tools. Advertisers should also address the quiet reliance framework that was exhibited in this study by encouraging honest dialogues about the usage of generative AI and general transparency. This could aid in destigmatizing the usage of generative AI overall, and result in a context in which young adult men feel comfortable openly discussing their usage of these tools

and their feelings on the subject. Taking these steps will make generative AI tools more palatable to young adult men, and perhaps incentivize the increased adoption of said tools.

Limitations

One of the greatest limitations in this study was the time constraint, which only allowed for the collection of a smaller sample size ($n = 51$) and convenience-based recruitment via social media and e-mail. This could potentially limit the generalizability of these results beyond young adult males with similar characteristics to the sample that was surveyed. This also resulted in a demographic skew, with the majority of the sampled men being of Hispanic or Latino origin. When taken into consideration with the fact that a majority of the men surveyed were current college students, it becomes clear that these factors might have shaped the exhibited attitudes towards social media and AI in ways that might differ among other regional cohorts and populations. This study was also limited by the cross-sectional, self-report survey design, as this made it more difficult to infer causality and screen for bias in participant responses. Questions concerning stigma management and AI use might have been met with biased responses due to social desirability bias or the previously mentioned stigmatization of AI use. The effectiveness of the study design was also constrained by the sample advertisements included, which only focused on two generative AI tools (Gemini and Grammarly). While these tools were selected due to their popularity among young adults today, they might not highlight the full breadth of generative AI platforms or advertising styles for these tools. This study was largely limited by a smaller sample size and certain facets of the survey design, due to this research being conducted within a small, defined time constraint. This resulted in a smaller sample size that was skewed in favor of Hispanic or Latino men and current college students, and a survey design that lacked a

means of screening for the potential bias that these demographic factors could affect on participant responses, in addition to other variables.

Recommendations

A larger sample with greater diversity across regions and institutions would be beneficial to determine whether the previously defined framework of quiet reliance is still applicable to other young adult men outside of this group. This would minimize the impact of demographic bias on study results, and allow for a greater understanding of the relationship between social stigma, generative AI tools, and emotional responses to social media ads for AI tools. Another recommendation would be the implementation of a mixed-methods design that combines survey research with in-depth interviews or focus groups, to capture the full breadth of stigma management in relation to the usage of AI tools, examining how this phenomenon might manifest in both real-world and online spaces.

Another recommendation would be to oversee comparative studies across genders or different age groups, to better understand what male-specific responses to the perceived stigma of AI look like in relation to their counterparts of different gender identities or ages. This would allow researchers to more accurately distinguish between which responses are universal across populations, and which are largely exclusive to young adult men. In the context of assessing reactions to advertisements for AI tools, it would also be wise to implement longitudinal or experimental studies that assess consumer sentiment towards different types of AI ads over time, testing for causal effects on stigma, emotions, and engagement more effectively.

Future research should also examine a broader variety of generative AI platforms and advertisement formats, including longer-form content or other types of media, to assess whether they provoke different emotional reactions or stigma management strategies among study

participants. This could allow for differentiation based on AI tools that are used for different purposes, as well as ads that come from a greater variety of social media platforms, instead of just Instagram and TikTok. This would be key in understanding whether the usage of stigma management strategies and the perception of overall stigma are influenced by the ways in which generative AI is being used, and for what purpose.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how young adult males navigate the tension between recognizing perceived stigma concerning generative AI usage, and quietly relying on AI tools for productivity and learning, which are increasingly promoted on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The findings of this study complicate simplified narratives of wholehearted adoption or outright rejection of these tools among young adult males, who have demonstrated selective openness toward these tools. At the same time, these findings challenge prior literature on stigma management strategies, as these study participants demonstrated a preference for normalization and defense of AI usage over avoidance of discussion (Smith & Bishop, 2019). This was also met with general apathy and disinterest towards generative AI ads, which implies that they are ineffective among the chosen sample.

This leaves significant implications for strategic communication concerning brands that advertise generative AI tools. Many young adult men demonstrated concerns about authenticity, honest, and ethics in relation to the usage of AI, fearing that doing so could be seen as lazy or a form of cheating. Thus, campaigns that address this stigma transparently and respect the ambivalence of male audiences towards the adoption of AI in relation to their peers may be more effective than campaigns that ignore these concerns. Companies that wish to see the continued success of generative AI among young adult male audiences must promote a message of

transparency and authenticity, demonstrating to consumers that generative AI can be used without being dishonest or violating ethical concerns. As generative AI becomes further embedded in both academic and professional settings, the patterns identified here can strengthen our understanding of how stigma and the adoption of AI tools affects young men in a rapidly shifting technological environment.

References

- Bae, M., Wang, J. (Violet), Xue, H. (Sophie), Chong, S. M., Kwon, O., & Ki, C. W. (Chloe). (2024). Does ChatGPT help or hinder education? Exploring its benefits, challenges, student guilt, and the need for educator training. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2024.2430585>
- Cengiz, G. F., & Tanık, N., (2020). Who is more important in stigmatization, family or friends?. *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 104, 106880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yebeh.2019.106880>
- Chen, Y., Jensen, S., Albert, L. J., Gupta, S., & Lee, T. (2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) Student Assistants in the Classroom: Designing Chatbots to Support Student Success. *Information Systems Frontiers* 25, 161-182. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-022-10291-4>
- De Smet, A., Durth, S., Hancock, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Reich, A. (2024). The human side of generative AI: Creating a path to productivity. McKinsey & Company.
<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-human-side-of-generative-ai-creating-a-path-to-productivity>
- Douglas, P., Stella, W., & Didi, E. F. (2024). Influence of artificial intelligence (AI) tools on students' learning outcome in adult education postgraduate programme in Rivers State University. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Learning*, 3(4), 132-141.
<https://rajournals.org/index.php/ijarl/article/view/345>.
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). Grammarly as AI-powered English writing assistant: Students' alternative for writing English. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 5(1), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.31002/metathesis.v5i1.3519>
- Imran, M., & Almusharraf, N. (2024). Google Gemini as a next generation AI educational tool: a review of emerging educational technology. *Smart Learning Environments*, 11(1), 22.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-024-00310-z>.
- Nguyen, A., Kremantzis, M., Essien, A., Petrounias, I., & Hosseini, S. (2024). Enhancing student engagement through artificial intelligence (AI): Understanding the basics, opportunities, and challenges. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(6), 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.53761/caraaq92>

- O'Connell, R., & Daruwala, N. A. (2025). Milestones and mindsets: how social media shapes young adults' expectations and emotional well-being. *Journal of Social Media Research*, 2(5), 400-415. <https://doi.org/10.29329/jsomer.56>
- Renz, S., Kalimeris, J., Hofreiter, S., & Spörrle, M. (2024). Me, myself and AI: How gender, personality and emotions determine willingness to use Strong AI for self-improvement. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 209, 123760. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123760>
- Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Hoffman, B. L., Escobar-Viera, C. G., Melcher, E. M., Primack, B. A., Myers, S. P., & Burke, J. G. (2021). Positive and negative social media experiences among young adults with and without depressive symptoms. *Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science*, 6(2), 378-387. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-020-00175-2>
- Smith, R. A., & Bishop, R. E. (2019). Insights into stigma management communication theory: Considering stigmatization as interpersonal influence. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 47(5), 571-590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2019.1675894>
- Thomée, S., Härenstam, A., & Hagberg, M. (2012). Computer use and stress, sleep disturbances, and symptoms of depression among young adults—a prospective cohort study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 12(1), 176. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244x-12-176>
- Williamson, D. A., & Koch, J. (2024). *The AI Ad Gap: Why Young Consumers Aren't Yet Buying Into Gen AI Ads*. IAB. <https://www.iab.com/insights/why-young-consumers-avoid-gen-ai-ads/>