PhD Program between Freie Universität Berlin (FUB) and the China Scholarship Council (CSC)

Open PhD Position at Freie Universität Berlin, offered only to Chinese CSC scholarship candidates 2027

Department/Institute: Department of Political and Social Sciences, Institute for Media and Communication Studies

Subject area: Health Communication

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marko Bachl

Number of open PhD positions: 1

Type of the PhD Study: Full-time

Project title: Health-related information seeking with search engines and AI chatbots

PhD Project description:

The project aims to extend our ongoing work (e.g., https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2024.2309810; https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2026.2670540) on exploring how individuals use digital tools (traditionally, search engines; more recently, AI chatbots and related services) to search for health-related information. Specifically, the candidate's PhD project would involve working with existing data on health-related Internet use and collecting new data on AI chatbot use in quantitative and/or qualitative settings. The data should inform a larger process theory of health-related information seeking that is not bound to a specific technology.

Language requirements:

IELTS: 6,5 oder TOEFL: 95 ibt

Academic requirements:

Master Degree in Communication Science or a related social science. Experience with qualitative or quantitative social science research methods is a must, experience with computational social science methods is a plus. Prior experience with health communication research is a plus.

Information of the professor or research group leader (website, awards etc.):

Marko Bachl is an assistant professor at the Institute for Communication and Media Studies at FU Berlin. The members of his Digital Research Methods group develop, evaluate, and teach innovative digital and computational research methods. We use these methods to analyze public communication, primarily in the fields of political communication and health communication. He is also a co-leader of DiMES, the Digital Methods and Empirical Social Science Center at the Department of Political and Social Sciences.

Website: https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/kommwiss/arbeitsstellen/digitale-methoden/Team/mbachl/index.html
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.de/citations?user=PHnRmJoAAAAJ&hl=en
DiMES: https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/empirische-methoden/DiMES/index.html

Please note:
In a first step, the complete application should be uploaded to the online portal (https://fuberlin.moveon4.de/form/60acfece5d328710e40bdbd5/eng) for evaluation by January 15th, 2027.