

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Disappointment as an effect of curiosity and political apathy: modernation of self-efficacy and mediation of media selection

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**Disappointment as an Effect of Curiosity and Political Apathy:**

**Moderation of Self-efficacy and Mediation of Media Selection**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Philosophy**

**Principal Supervisor: Prof. GUO Zhongshi**

**Hong Kong Baptist University**

**June 2015**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of MPhil at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: June 2015

## ABSTRACT

The study adopts Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory as the framework to test antecedents and consequences in using *fanqiang* (bypassing Internet censorship) as an alternative medium along with accessible Internet, TV, newspaper and radio as mainstream media in a Chinese context. By online between-group experimentation ( $N = 132$  in the experimental group,  $N = 127$  in the control group), the study shows that curiosity about forbidden political content and political apathy predict *fanqiang* and most accessible media use tendencies. Moderation effects exist between curiosity and self-efficacy in predicting *fanqiang* tendencies. Disappointment as an emotional effect is directly related to curiosity and political apathy, where the mediation effects of media use tendencies are not salient. Explicit Internet censorship increases curiosity about forbidden political content and decreases the dimension of lack of interest in political apathy. However, it does not change accessible media use tendencies and disappointment levels. Still, participants show fewer of *fanqiang* tendencies than with accessible media, except radio. The results highlight the cognitive roots of motivations and emotional constructs as a part of gratification in U&G research, that self-efficacy as a necessary requirement for curiosity to drive media use, and that information attributes can change motivations. We urge future scholars to build broader explications of political apathy when applied to different societies, to try diverse methods like experimentation in U&G research, and to adopt a sociopsychological approach when studying the influences and effectiveness of Internet censorship.

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