

MASTER'S THESIS

Staying Tuned for Censored Information Sources? Delineating Continuities and Changes of Mainland Chinese Students' Information Choices and Media Habits after Migrating to Hong Kong

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Abstract

Set out to understand the continuous use of censored mainland Chinese information sources among mainland Chinese students (MCSs) who have migrated out of the GFW, my thesis provides a systematic overview of both psychological approaches to individuals' media choices and structural analyses of the mainland Chinese information ecology's constraints on people's information practices. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field, I seek to integrate individual agency and structural factors to explain MCSs' media consumption.

Based on the media diaries and interview data from 17 MCSs in Hong Kong, I have first provided a nuanced picture of MCSs' social media and news media habits. Most MCSs are heavily consuming mainland Chinese social media, especially WeChat, while some MCSs, especially those holding liberal political attitudes, engage with Hong Kong local news media as well. Then, I have disentangled the roles played by contextual cues (the algorithm recommendation in particular), social networks, information ecosystems, as well as cultural and political identities in shaping MCSs' media habits.

Based on the above-mentioned literature review and empirical analyses, I have proposed a generalized research program on immigrants' media habits connecting intrapersonal deliberation, micro-level contextual cues, meso-level social networks, and the macro-level information structure and social culture in general. The proposed framework pays attention to both unconscious and conscious behaviors, both subjective motivations and objective opportunity structures, as well as both agency and socio-cultural conditions. Empirically, my observations and analyses have illustrated the difficulties faced by MCSs in designing a media diet that balances the quality and cost of their information consumption.

Keywords: *Habitus; Field; Media habit; Immigration; Censorship; Political communication; Computer-mediated communication; Selective exposure; Cultural identification; China; Hong Kong*