AN INVESTIGATION INTO WEATHER A RELATIVELY OPEN INTERNET ENVIRONMENT COULD INFLUENCE INFORMATION BEHAVIOURS OF CHINESE OVERSEAS STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background. With the rising of the internet, this new channel for retrieval information becomes more and more common and popular in information-seeking behaviours. Compared with the UK, the information resources and channel in China are relatively special because of the internet censorship regimes which are widely applied in many fields. From the perspective of those Chinese overseas students, their web-based information searching experiences cover both two different internet conditions, which enable the possibilities for information behaviours changing for Chinese overseas students in hypothetically.

Aims. This research have three aims, which are to gain insight into information searching behaviour by Chinese overseas students when they face internet censorship in China and the UK, to elicit views from participants on their behaviour changes when searching for the same subject or events in China and the UK, and to propose a model of information behaviour changes for Chinese overseas students through comparative analysis and evaluation

Methods. As a small-scale project, 10 participants have engaged in this research by adopting snowball sampling method. The semi-structure interviews have been conducted to gather the experiences from interviewees, which are based on the qualitative approach.

Results. Qualitative results first confirm the otherness for internet environment in China and Britain. Then the potential connection between internet censorship and people’s information behaviours have been raised based on interview data. Based on the otherness of awareness and understanding of the situation, multiple behaviour patterns for information gathering model have been generalized. The perspective of participants for this situation also have been summarized in this study.

Conclusions. This research has clearly demonstrated that the internet censorship as an external condition could influence the information behaviours of Chinese overseas students. Meanwhile, an information behaviour model of participants has been generalized to confirm this changing in patterns. Further quantitative investigations should be undertaken in a larger group of population to test the empirical information behaviour model which be concluded in this study.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The World Wide Web is playing a significant role in the daily life of Chinese people. According to official number, 38.3% of Chinese people are internet user by the end of 2011 and 26.6% of Chinese people surf the internet by their mobile phone. In another word, China has the largest internet user group in the world (Reporters without Borders [RSF], 2012). With the strong internet growth in China, Chinese government also started to implement an Internet censorship policy to regulate Internet information in China since 1995 (Tsui, 2003). The internet censorship, taken the world over, many country exist internet surveillance. However, the most sophisticated system for surveillance and censorship might be working in China (People's Republic of China) (RSF, 2012). A large number of investigations and researches have focused on the online environment of China for internet censorship by different organization and researchers (French, 2006; Gross, 2010; House, 2011; O’Rourke, Harris & Ogilvy, 2007; RSF, 2012; Tsui, 2003).

With a faster development of the internet, this new channel for retrieval information becomes more and more common and popular in information-seeking behaviours. Mansourian and Ford (2007) pointed out that the information users always expect to access the information in a fast and convenient way for whatever reason when they search online. By the large use of information and internet, the web-based information searching is becoming a routine for most of the people for their daily life. Therefore, Choo, Detlor and Turnbull (1999) claimed that based on the new patterns for data searching and collecting in web based circumstances, a set of new models and theories could be generalized by either integrated with previous information-seeking behaviour theories or entirely fresh theories through new studies for information-seeking behaviour.

Compared with the UK, the information resources and channel in China are relatively special because of the internet censorship regimes which are widely applied in many fields. In another aspect, more than 284 thousand of Chinese students went abroad to study in 2010 (Chen, 2011). The Higher Education Statistics Agency calculates the number of Chinese overseas student which currently study in the UK has reach to 67 thousand (Coughlan, 2012). From the perspective of those
Chinese overseas students, their online information searching experiences cover both two different internet conditions which by the effect of internet censorship. Hence, the changes of internet circumstance enable the possibilities for information behaviours changing for Chinese overseas students in hypothetically.

1.2 Knowledge Gaps

Although, there are plenty researches working on the mechanism of the internet censorship, and many studies focus on the information behaviours theories. However, limited studies combine them together and intend to provide an interpretation for the changing pattern of information behaviour by the influence of internet censorship. Hafiz (2010) has studied the impact of Internet Censorship on the information behaviour of students from Iran, China and Saudi Arabia, which has concluded that Chinese interviewees thought their Internet using behaviours were slightly change or unchanging in the UK. However, it focuses on the self-awareness of the interviewees rather than in-depth analysis of the relationship between Internet Censorship and people’s Internet searching behaviours.

Hence, the gaps, which exist in this field, make this research become more significant for provide a new perspective of information searching behaviour of information user under the internet censorship. By relating and study the current situations of Chinese overseas student with their information-seeking behaviour, that could provide a new perspective on information-seeking behaviour by contrast their information-seeking behaviour under different internet environment between China and the UK.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This project will focus on the investigation for the possible changes in human information behaviours through the investigation for the changing pattern of information searching behaviour of Chinese overseas student based on the change of internet environment and aim to provide a new perspective for information searching behaviour of Chinese overseas students based on the previous models and theories on the field of information behaviour from earlier researchers.
As a qualitative research, this project has engaged the semi-structured interviews for getting the personal experiences of participants about their online searching behaviours to achieve three main aims of this study. The first aim is to gain insight into information searching behaviour by Chinese overseas students when they face internet censorship in China and the UK. Secondly, by the leading of a series of interview questions, the views have been elicited from participants on their behaviour changes when searching for the same subject or events in China and the UK. The last one is to propose a model of information behaviour changes for Chinese overseas students through comparative analysis and evaluation of the interview data.

To achieve the aim of this study, three objectives have been presented as follows. The first objective aims to investigate the information-seeking experience in Chinese Internet environment, especially under the condition of internet censorship, which focuses on the previous information-seeking behaviour of the Chinese overseas students. The second objective intends to investigate the information-seeking experience in UK Internet environment from the same group. The last objective, which attempt to set a comparative analysis and evaluate the information-seeking behaviour of Chinese overseas students both in Chinese Internet environment and UK Internet environment. The applying of these three objectives is surrounding the research aim and intends to present a clear structure for comparing the possible changing of information-seeking behaviour of the target participants.

1.4 Outline of Structure

This dissertation first reviewed the previous researches and theories which relate to this study. Several Information behaviour model have been mentioned for the ground theories for this research. The concept and general situation of Internet Censorship in both internet environment in China and the UK also have been illustrated in the literature review section.

Then, the research design and methodology section introduced the character of sample, interview method and data analyse method of this study. This small-scale project has been designed to use snowball sampling method to select participants from the Chinese overseas student population in Sheffield which is attending a
Higher Education institution. The interview has been divided into three parts to gain information from respondents by different intention.

Furthermore, by adopting the coding method, the data of interview have been analyzed and organized as findings. In the result section, the data have been presented by relevant and logical way which base on the interview structure.

The last part of the dissertation concentrates on discussing the findings of this research, which corresponds to the research aim. By applying the rational explanation about the results, an information behaviour model about the Chinese overseas students, and a diagram of web-based information searching patterns have been claimed to reflect the information behaviour of Chinese overseas students when they suffered the internet censorship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

With the development of the World Wide Web, the online information searching is playing a significant role for the approaches of information acquisition for the public. When people enjoy the convenience, which be brought by internet searching, of information online, while the internet censorship still have the possibility to affect the online searching result. For building a theoretical framework for the relationships between the information behaviour theories and existing internet censorship, four themes of literature have been reviewed in the following sections which are Information behaviour theories, Internet censorship, Internet censorship in China, and Internet censorship in the United Kingdom.

2.2 Information Behaviour Theories

Information behaviour has been studied for a long time and a large volume of published research describes the role of it in information science. It is already over 60 years since the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference had been held in 1948 (Vickery, 1998). Many papers on the field of information behaviour which were closely related to science and technologists were presented during the
conference. Wilson (1999) labelled that event as the origins for the term of information behaviour. However, the shortage the still exists in the results of this conference. The latter commentators pointed out that there is no body of theory or empirical findings has been established in such a way by conventioneers to promote the further research as a starting point. From the early 1970s in the UK, this situation has been changed by the investigation in the wider scope (Wilson, 1994). Since then, the investigators adopt the qualitative methods in general to conduct research into human behaviour and attempt to find models and theories in from the dimension of social sciences. As a result, models and theories have been demonstrated by some investigators and those result also been adopted by other researchers to conduct further study (Wilson, 1999).

In 1981, Wilson presented a model of information behaviour (Figure 1), which attempts to outline the inter-relationships among the different concepts and objectives which are included in the study field of information behaviour, instead of drawing an internal information-seeking behaviour model. In this theory, the information-seeking behaviour has been regarded as the consequence of the need. The information users have recognition of their information need. By conducting certain information activities, the individual of information user could have different information behaviour pattern to succeed or fail in meeting their need. After the successful information have been used in practice, the feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction could affect their need for decide to conduct the further information searching circle. Other people also are involved in this model to show the relationship between individuals through information exchange and information transfer (Wilson, 1981).

The limitation for this model is obvious. No in-depth relations between factors have been provided. For example, there do not have a clue on the generation of personal attitude from information use and the effecting pattern to information need from those feelings. The whole model is to provide a map for the gaps which from different research in this area.
Ellis (1984) presented a series of empirically based theories to modelling information-seeking behaviour. The significance of his works was that the development of information retrieval systems could be informed by those academic social scientists based investigations (Ellis, 1987, 1990). In 2004, Foster established the nonlinear model (Figure 2) which is different from the previous models of information behaviour (Foster, 2004). This theoretical model provides a fundamentally different perspective of information-seeking behaviour from interdisciplinary information seeker and it intend to interpret the relationship among

Figure 1. Wilson’s information behaviour model (1981).
the external context, internal context, core processes, cognitive approach and behaviours. As shown in Figure 2, Opening, Orientation and Consolidation have been represented as the three core categories and processes for continually develop the information need, definitions, functions and context during information searching. Meanwhile, the whole information behaviour grounded on three contextual stages which are Cognitive Approach, Internal Context and External Context. Mansourian and Ford (2007) describe the External Context as “out of the people`s control” and the Internal Context as “related to the person`s ability” to classify the different factors (p. 662). Table 1 lists the Contextual interaction of the nonlinear model (Foster, 2004).

![Figure 2. Nonlinear model of information-seeking behaviour (Foster, 2004).](image)
Table 1

*Contextual interaction of the nonlinear model (Foster, 2004).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive approach</th>
<th>Internal context</th>
<th>External context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible and adaptable</td>
<td>Feelings and thoughts</td>
<td>Social and organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomadic thought</td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>The project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Navigation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, this nonlinear model which has no fixed start and finish point, and flexible processes provides a dynamic, holistic and nonlinear viewpoint for information seeking behaviour. That also illustrate that every single process are repeatable and leading for any other. For the significance, this model provides the naturalistic inquiry to expand the perception of the complicated circumstance. In practically, it has a positive contribution on training program for information literacy and library by borrowing this nonlinear information seeking model.

Wilson (1999) considered that it is a close relationship between the behaviour of information-seeking and information retrieval. He believed that the IR systems play a significant role on information collection (information retrieval) and information-seeking process.

From the cognitive perspective, Ingwersen (1996) developed the cognitive theory of interactive information retrieval. From the view of the holistic information-seeking behaviour which incorporate with internal context and external context circumstance, the Ingwersen`s cognitive IR model is compatible with Foster`s nonlinear model. Furthermore, an integrative framework for information seeking and information retrieval interaction are being extensive researched. Vakkari (2003) stressed that the intentionality could be treated as the rationale of information seeking and information retrieval interests which on non-job related and perceived information require tasks. Under this framework, the information seeking and information
retrieval could be seen as a process of cognition. Meanwhile the process will be engaged with the information seeking actor or term in certain context.

Focusing on the information needs and searching behaviour of users, a great quantity of research had been conducted by researchers in specific dimensions (Belkin, Oddy & Brooks, 1982; Kuhlthau, 1991). With the rise of World Wide Web browsing and searching behaviour, the studies which are concerned with new patterns of data collection also increased. Nevertheless, some researchers believe it is possible to conduct an information seeking study by adjusting the previous models and theories with the new information searching technology and channel (Choo, Detlor & Turnbull, 1998). Hence, the new hybrid information-seeking pattern which based on Ellis` (1989) model has been provided to measure information behaviour (Choo et al., 1998). Some of models intend to discover the differences of information-searching behaviours between the beginner and expert, but the result could not fully satisfy the objectives, because it is very difficult to define and distinguish them. As a consequence, some research assumed that the expert information search strategies could be substituted by experience (Cothey, 2002; Khan & Locatis, 1998).

From the perceptions of information searcher, Mansourian and Ford (2007) conducted an empirical study to explore the relationship between the online information searchers` attribution and the search result. In this project, 82.4% cases showed the clear attributions on internal and external factors reflecting on their searching result. The findings for this study provide a theoretical framework to demonstrate the connection between the information searching and people`s understanding of online searching.

2.3 Internet Censorship

With the development of the technology, the internet becomes more accessible for the large number of web user which from all over the world. Under this situation, many countries take that as a major social issue (Bidgoli, 2004). Essentially, internet censorship is similar to the censorship on traditional media. But the internet censorship is conducted in a much broader and complex network environment, and adopts unique technology for World Wide Web like content filtering and site blocking (Dutton, Dopotka, Hills, Law & Nash, 2010).
Straubhaar, LaRose and Davenport (2010) defined the concept “censorship” as “the prohibition of certain media contents by government, religious, or other societal authorities” (P86). Furthermore, for the purpose of censorship, Müller (2004) highlighted the connection between censorship and political authorities and explained the reason as the government authority protects itself from undermine by restricting the public voice. On a practical level, the behaviour of blocking and filtering can be operated statically or dynamically. The static mode is based on relatively blacklists and the dynamic one based on the real-time examining on information (Chadwick & Howard, 2008). Centralized national level, decentralized sub-national level and institutional level are three hierarchical structures which the blocking and filtering could base on (Chadwick & Howard, 2008). In 2012, the Reporters without Borders provided a report which list 26 countries that have filtering behaviour on internet and named the report as “Internet Enemy Report” (p. 1). China has been classified in this group.

2.4 Internet Censorship in China

The internet of China used to have a relatively opened circumstance during the time period from 1987 to 1996 (Tsui, 2003). However, the control actions for internet have been processed more and more during the following years. By the large growth number of the internet user and the commercialisation of Chinese internet in 1995, the government published the first regulation to control the internet and continually updated it in the next few years (Tsui, 2003).

“China may have the world’s most sophisticated online censorship and surveillance system.” (RSF, 2012, p. 18). Numbers of researches confirmed that the internet censorship in China is engaged by the government of China under a series of laws and regulations (Human Right Watch [HRW], 2006; O’Rourke et al., 2007; RSF, 2012). In China, State-owner Internet Service Provider, business companies, and organizations take the responsibility to implement censorship and surveillance (HRW, 2006).

There are several censoring methods engaged by Chinese government based on the internet using view. The first and also the most direct method which controls all
internet connections between Chinese Internet user and foreign website that hosted outside of China is IP blocking (Thompson, 2006).

There are two major blocking methods which have been adopted by Chinese authorities. The Web Server IP Address and the Domain Name Server (DNS) IP Address are the objectives for those two methods to filter. In the study which conducted by Zittrain and Edelman (2003), they described and explain the two method in details. According to the interpretation of them, the filtering operates for Web Server IP Address basically is to set a block on a given physical server for web sites. But for the DNS IP Address, the method will block the user’s computer to reach the web server through stop the domain name for conversion into a numeric IP in border routers.

The second one is content filtering which mostly engaged with information retrieval (IR) system. These processes require the providers of IR system follow the instruction of government by using official blacklists to filter information (also called keyword filtering). Examples of this situation will be like Yahoo, Baidu and Google (O’Rourke et al., 2007).

By the research by Zittrain and Edelman (2003), the keyword filtering also includes several types which include URL (Universal Resource Locator) Keyword Filtering and HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) Response Based Keyword Filtering. URL keyword filtering aims to block the display of the results, in order to achieve the goals of filtering. When you use Chinese ISP to retrieve the governed words or phrases, the filtering would happen, especially in the searching engines. HTML Response Based Keyword Filtering is one of the methods in connection with the web page data. It implies that some sensitive data would be filtered when the data are transmitted to the terminal devices for Chinese internet users. Sometimes, although some data which came from a server have passed the URL filtering, they still could be censored by the HTML way by particular controversial terms. Thus, those censored pages would be clipped or disappearing from the screens of Chinese web users.

Except the technique approaches to censor the internet which like above, for keeping an eye on the users and the information flow, the government also recruits about
fifty-thousand in 2006 (French, 2006).

Another artificial method for internet censorship called self-censorship. That requires the internet content providers examining the information which they contain autonomously. It also was seem as an obligation of those companies or organizations for their business (House, 2011). Under the order from the Chinese government, those international network companies such as Yahoo, MSN, Cisco Systems and Google engaged in censoring in China in a certain level (O’Rourke et al., 2007). However, Google quitted censoring searching in China in 2010 and moved the searching business to Hong Kong (Gross, 2010).

2.5 Internet Censorship in the United Kingdom

The existence of censorship in the UK has been through in a long history. As a new carrier which different with the traditional medium for content, the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were first be pressured to ban 132 newsgroups in 1996, many of which were pointed out for contain pornographic information (Rowbotham & Stevenson, 2003). In the same year, the European Commission has extensively categorized and identified those content-related problems, which are the illegal and harmful material on the internet (Akdeniz, 2001). In 2011, the UK High Court ruled that the ISPs in the UK must block a series of websites which involve illegal file-sharing to protect the copyright (Sweney, 2011). In the UK, the Internet censorship includes three main types of the contents, which are the restricted websites, illegal publications, and some particular information. The particular information implies the materials with the details of the child pornography, copyright, libel, and incitement of terrorism (OpenNet Initiative [ONI], 2010).

The majority of educational institutions in the UK adopted internet filtering method to block certain websites which contain Pornographic, Gambling and violence. However, the students always can find technique method to overpass those internet barriers (Mackenzie, 2009). As the 80% of ISPs in British market, BT Group
engaged a filtering technology which called Cleanfeed to block access a list of websites which be provided by Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) through check the URLs requests for websites on banned list, and return an “URLs not found” error page to the information requester (BBC, 2006). So, the Cleanfeed always be known as a silent content filtering system.

It has been illustrated in the research of Koumartzis (2008), more than ninety percent of the participants, who use UK Internet, did not have the consciousness for the presence of the Cleanfeed software. It is interesting to find out that almost two-thirds of the participants have doubted about the responsibility of IWF for the censorship system in the UK. According to the recording of the report by ONI in 2010, there is no evidence to show that the information which related with political, social, security, internet tools and conflict have been censored in the United Kingdom (ONI, 2010).

To sum up, after the presenting and discussing of the literature, a framework of the relationship between the information behaviour theories and the online censorship has been emerged for the researcher to conduct the further investigation on this phenomenon. The design of the further research steps has based on the information behaviour models which be presented in this section to elicit views from participants on their behaviour changes pattern by the influence of internet censorship.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Overview

This research has been designed as a small-scale project, for answering the research question about the relationship between the internet censorship and people`s information behaviour, an inductive approach has been adopted to “drawing generalizable inferences out of observations” (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 14). Since the process of this research it built on the experiences of participants, it fits the definition of qualitative research by Gubrium and Holstein (1997); enabling the researcher to understand the social reality and gain access to experience. As a result, a semi-structured interview is an appropriate choice to conduct the project in order to obtain deeper perception by explored research questions depending on the flow of
the conversation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Due to the research aim, it intends to investigate whether the changing of Internet environment could influence the information searching behaviour of Chinese overseas students. As a result, 10 participants have been engaged during this project from the target group. The sample is a cohort drawn from the Chinese overseas student population in Sheffield which is attending a Higher Education institution. Meanwhile, anonymous recoding for interviews has been applied during the project to avoid personal biases and protect privacy. For the nature of qualitative research, it could be claimed that participants’ personal interpretations could be more helpful for data analysis of research, which is related to the benefit of the interview method. An alternative approach would be an observational study of information seeking in China and the UK, but this is not feasible for practical reason.

3.2 The Samples

The target population is selected from the general groups of student which is attending the Higher Education institution in the Sheffield. Those participants must come from China and proceeding their Higher Education in the UK as an overseas students to fit the research aim of this project. Because of the theme of this research, it is to identify the possible change of information behaviour for Chinese overseas students by living in different internet environment. Hence, the interviewee needs to have certain experience on information searching through internet over their living period in Mainland China.

In this project, the internet environment of China and the UK are two research backgrounds. One core effect factor for the circumstance is internet censorship which is also the primary condition in this project. Not every Chinese student has experience on internet censorship, so the individual cases are difficult to identify. Hence, a snowball sampling method has been engaged in helping to get more participants who are applicable and interested in this project (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

As one type of non-probability sampling, there are no random techniques for getting sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Based on the subjective judgement of the researcher, the snowball sampling need the researcher makes initial contact with a limited number of people which fit the research topic and then use their
recommendation to establish contacts with other potential actors (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Lee (1993) points out that the respondents like to identify the further potential involver with the similar issues in a high possibility by using snowball sampling. Hence, the usage of snowball has benefited the researcher to recruit more suitable participants in this small-scale investigation with sensitive topics.

A friend of the researcher has been invited as a qualified participator to join this project as the first place. After interview, the subsequent respondents are recommended by this involver for researcher to contact with. In order to avoid the research get into a dead end by rejections from all potential participants, more than one name has been recorded as the alternative candidate from each former actor. By using email, telephone, social network site and Chinese network community, the researcher has get in touch with those potential participants, required permissions and made appointments with them.

The status of the interviewees has been restricted to adult Chinese overseas students, over 18 years old. The project was design to interview up to 15 participants during the whole project. In practice, 13 potential participants responded the contact from the researcher and 10 of them has been invited to involve in this project eventually. In order to control the effect of possible variables, the gender of the participants has been controlled by design, which implies the male and female interviewees need to be recruited by the same number. At last, there are 5 males and 5 female participants get involved in this project which from universities and colleges of Sheffield.

3.3 Interview Design

After require the agreement from the participants, the date and site of interviews has been arranged with them. Every participant took one interview during the research. Before each meeting, the actor has chance to preview and know the project by reading participant information sheet (see Appendixes 1). After sign the consent form (see Appendixes 2), the interviewee still has choice to withdraw in any time, if they feel unsatisfied during the process of the research. Under the official approve from the participator, the interview will begin and be recorded. The interview has adopted a semi-structured format that include some limited set questions and a few new questions which be brought up during the interview as a result of what the
interviewee says. For the participant, the open answer was expected as much as possible. For a better understanding, the discussion during the interview was hoped to performance in-depth.

The researcher first prepared 17 questions as the first version of question list for interview (see Appendixes 3). According to the suggestion from the supervisor, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to test the whole procedure and identify shortcomings of the questions. One potential involver is invited to join this test and the pilot interview strictly followed the rules and structure for this project. Two main problems have been showed from the result. The first one is the presentation of questions. Some questions did not leading the participant’s speech into a appropriately way in which to cover the research aims. These questions take ambiguous meaning or wrong direction. So the answer of them cannot fit what exactly the research’s need. The second problem is that the interview does not proceed as expectation. The previous plan is to spend about 30 minutes for one interview. The pilot interview takes much longer time than expectation and do not have a clear structure. Some questions are proven unnecessarily. It took times, but provided less relevant information for this project.

With the help of the supervisor, enabled the researcher to modify the interview question list into different level and improve the researcher’s interview skills. According to the suggestions from supervisor, the whole interview is divided into three sections (see Appendixes 4).

As the first section, the “General Questions” has been designed to gather the general information from actors. The results of this part could help researcher to get better understanding of the participant through knowing their background knowledge around the research topic. Thus, the interviewer could ask further questions for each actor to get more relevant information, which is based on the awareness of participant’s situation. Another purpose for this part is to make the interviewee feel comfortable and free for join this interview. It also provides a better atmosphere for them in which to get more information about their experience.

The “Experience Questions” part is designed for guide the participants to talk their personal experience about information searching on internet. To manage the
conversion into a clear structure, this part of interview has been leaded by using a list of sub-questions (see Appendixes 4) to guarantee the participants provide accurate information of their information behaviour when they face the internet censorship in China or the UK. Some emotion details also have been expected to gain from the dialogue, in order to help the researcher to interpret the data in a different aspect.

“Further Questions” has been presented as the last section in the interview. The contents of the questions, which are in this part, are based on the details of previous section to seek in-depth perceptions. The question number 6 and 8 are useful to know which subjects simply were not searched for, so they can be distinguished from the subject where people searched and did not have a problem. It helped the researcher to summarize the censored subjects into different class for each internet censorship system. The question number 7, 8 and 9 intent to lead the participants contrast their experience in China and the UK when they conduct internet searching in same or different subject. The participants have chance to present their opinion on internet censorship and talk their personal feel on the influence on information searching behaviours by internet censorship in the last question.

For the nature of the semi-structured interview, there is no strict order or question list need to be performance during the whole interview. The pre-existing question list only provides the basic process to follow. Hence, more questions have been present during the interview and based on the answer from participants to approach the core problem.

3.4 Data Analysing Method

In this project, the data analysing process has been built on “Grounded theory” which be used for analysing qualitative data in a wide range by far (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 14). The whole analysing section could be seen as a grouping or categorisation process by meanings. As the most central processes and tool in grounded theory, coding has been selected to gave labels and note every component part in order to help researcher identify the important concept of data (Prasad, 1993). From the data to the theory, three steps have been adopted by this research. The first step is using open coding method to label data as an indicator of concepts in order to broken the scripted interviews into blocks by codes. The next step is constant comparison by
using axial coding method, analysing the relationship between the data and intending to bring a group of concepts together into categories. The last step is to establish relationships between categories and bring the hypothetical idea to develop the framework or theory around this topic of this research.

3.5 Ethics

There are four domain ethical issues in this research. First, the permissions of participants should be achieved before conducting the survey. In the permission, the rights of the participants will be highlighted.

Moreover, the basic information about this dissertation will be presented, including the rationales of the research and the objectives. These types of background information could benefit participants to understand this research deeply, and decrease the anxiety of participants. As mentioned, after reading the information sheet, consent form will be informed to clarify that the participants understand all the background information and their rights.

Additionally, anonymity will exist in the whole study, which has two advantages. One hand, anonymity could avoid the personal biases in the data evaluation, on the other hand, it could avoid the personal information of participants to be uncovered.

The security of the data will be guaranteed to the participants. Regarding to the security of the data, the original data will be stored in a confidential file with password protected. Both the researcher and supervisor could read them. After this research, the data will be destroyed appropriately, in order to avoid revealing. It has to be clarified that all the data will not used in any other researches, which aims to protect the participants as well.

Finally, the interview process will be recorded, which will acquire the permission of the participants. This method aims to help the data analysis process, which will be confidentiality as other data.

Before attending in the project, information sheet (see Appendixes 1), including background information about this research, will be provided to the potential
participants. Moreover, consent forms (see Appendixes 2) will be informed by the participants, when they decide to engage in this research.

3.6 Limitation in Methodology

Three limitations have been noticed in methodology section. First of all, as the small-scale research project under a qualitative background, the method in this project could not be generally used. The second one is that the bias becomes common by using snowball sampling. Because the participants are most likely to recommend other potential involvers which have similar perspective with themselves, that could lead a homogeneous results (Lee, 1993). The last limitation is that according to individual differentiation, the semi-structured interview could cause more specific information from every participant, which is difficult to achieve a general conclusion. This limitation could influence the accuracy of the research findings directly.

4. Results

4.1 Overview

Because this is a small-scale project, the number of interviewee has been controlled in a small group. Ten Chinese overseas students have involved in this project at last. As a result, all content of the dialogues which between the researcher and those ten respondents was recorded as the data to analyse. This research has been designed as a semi-structured interview to collect data from participants based on their experience. The loose structured interviews provide the opportunity of unexpected information for interviewer by present non-planed questions based on actual situation. In order to acquire the deeper relationship between the data, the coding method has been adopted to label and note the data into components. Through the comparison of those components by using axial coding method, this section of report have presented the data which be grouped by different themes.

4.2 Characteristics of the Sample

During this project, 13 potential participants responded the contact from the researcher. After the communicating with them about informing the research content,
10 respondents accepted and engaged to this project eventually. All participants are Chinese overseas students and proceeding for their Higher Education in Sheffield.

Figure 3 shows the composition of the participants by their current education level and the years which they have lived in the UK. The interviewees are all over 18 years old as the adult and they all have the experience on information searching on internet during the time when they living in China and the UK.

Six respondents were doing their Master degree. Four of them have been studying in the UK for two years and two of them only came here just one year. Three participants were doing their Bachelor degree during this research and two of them have lived in Britain over three years. Only one student was studying in Sheffield International College (SIC) for one year and was getting involved in this project. Except the college respondent, all participants come from The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. The gender ratio in this project is 1:1.

![Bar chart showing the constitution of participants by education level and living years in the UK.]

*Figure 3. The constitution of participants which grouped by education level and living years in the UK*
4.3 Data Analysis

In this section, the contents, which grounded from all ten participants, have been analysis by using coding method that built on Grounded theory for analysis of qualitative data. As a grouping or categorisation process by meanings, every component part has been given labels and notes by coding. According to the aim of this research and the design of the interview questions, the contents have been generalized into four parts which are Overall perspective of participants, searching experience, techniques to solve censorship problem and personal attitude. This enabled the researcher to organise the interview transcripts into structured and logical categories.

4.3.1 Overall Perspective of Participants

This part of information leads by the personal impression from respondents to built the general image for two different internet environments. Some perceived opinions for the online circumstance of China and the UK were expressed.

The first question intends to acquire the general feeling from participants to compare and contrast the two different internet environments. There is a pervasive compliment on internet service and network security:

The Internet environment is good, I suppose. Compare with China, the speed is much quicker and the internet trades are more safety, especially the security of online payment system. I usually leave my bank information to my landlord or for registering some website. I am not worry about my bank information would be stolen or online defraud in UK most of the time (Interviewee Number 7).

However, mentioned the internet environment in China, except the speed and security issues, some complains have been brought about the insufficient and difficultly for information gathering:

Sometimes it very hard to find what I expected information or resources on internet. In China, when I looking for something on internet, it is hard to find or getting through the results by using internet searching engine. For example, some words and phrases cannot be resulted well on searching engine. It is hard to find different versions of these subjects. Most of the time, I cannot access into some
websites such as New York Time, BBC English and YouTube (Interviewee Number 1).

Hence, the concept of internet censorship has been brought to show respondents’ awareness about the reason for their information searching problems. In practice, all Chinese overseas students which involved in this project know more or less about this phrase to varying degree. Some of them have in-depth understanding about that:

Of course I know this issue (Internet Censorship). I am living in China (Laugh). We have the most complicated censorship system on internet. We have the Great Firewall of China. We have Keyword Filtering. We have Self-censorship. When I was in China, I fought with it almost every day to get information from internet (Interviewee Number 6).

However, some of students do not have such perception like above, they just heard from others about this concept. They do not pay much attention about this issue and are careless about it:

I knew it, but I did not know the (information censorship) system clearly. I do not know how it works. Until I got into university, I heard a few words about this thing. Some of my friends talked about this, mostly the boys. I do not know why they so interested about the computer games or internet things (Interviewee Number 4).

In some cases, the respondents have already got the awareness to link the insufficient and difficultly for online information searching with the internet censorship system:

I am not quite clear about the internet censorship in China. During a long time, I did not even know about it. At the first time, I just thought that there is something wrong with my network connection when I met some difficulties to get what I want on internet and I did not know what is going on with it. It is not a long time, science I got awareness about the concept of internet censorship and that may cause the problems (Interviewee Number 5).

Someone provided a strong confirm this relationship by their experience, they know what was happen and why it happened:
It happened a lot of times. The problem is you cannot find or very hard to find what you want on internet. For instance, I cannot access into some site. Some words and phrases cannot be resulted by internet searching engine. I know what I was looking for. When this happened, most of the time it was because of the subject of my searching. Those relevant information and website has been censored and blocked (Interviewee Number 6).

For the same problem, rare participant have the similar issue during their living period in Britain, compare with their experience in China. Only one interviewee mentioned a situation which is like the internet censorship problem for information searching when he was studying in Loughborough as a high school student:

When I studied in high school here (Loughborough), I had experience for using internet through school`s network. It has been controlled and censored as long as you connect to the internet by the network service from school. There always a page for noting you that there are certain information will be blocked which include pornographic, violence and Fraud information (Interviewee Number 9).

However, except that experience, this interviewee hardly recall any other similar issue after he graduated from high school and attending the Higher Education institution in the UK.

### 4.3.2 Searching Experience

In this part, most of the data was gathered from the second and third part of interview questions. The experience data was leading by certain logical order as the interview question part two (see appendix 4), and structured as the general process of an internet searching behaviour. An in-depth investigation about the action and selection of participants had been insisted during this part of evaluation.

Based on the respondents’ experience of meeting the internet censorship, normally, their online information searching behaviour started with the desire for further information of news or events:

I have a recent experience might answer your question. It was a few months ago, there were a series of political events and change in China, which had powerful influence in Chinese society and government, even for the world. Many people
focused on those events. So I wanted to search some relevant information, such as background, the inside story, the process of the event etc (Interviewee Number 3).

Some interviewees have continued concern on their interested topic to motivate the information searching behaviour of them. The World Wide Web provides a new channel for them to get information:

Historical study is a hobby of me for a long time. I like to read and do some research about it during my leisure time. I used to study in library, but I prefer to find and read historical resources online from a couple of years ago. It is very convenient and flexible. However, sometime I might meet the internet censorship in a certain degree (Interviewee Number 6).

In some cases, the insufficient and difficulty which caused by internet censorship on their information searching experience was an inevitable event:

Well, when I was at university, my dissertation topic needs some sensitive information, which I could never get in China. Many resources had been filtrated and censored. So in order to complete my research, I had to spend more time on information searching and think different solution (Interviewee Number 10).

People usually conduct the online information searching by using internet searching engine. In China, the censorship is ubiquitous fact. With the efficient and powerful internet censorship system, the network information was controlled strictly:

I think the measure of information censorship system in China is strict and wide. And I feel it becomes more and more strict. For example, the contents in Weibo (a Chinese website like “Twitter”) have been censored and deleted without reasons. It is ridiculous. Almost all of the Chinese websites are censored even a lot of foreign websites have been controlled as well. Those foreign websites could not be accessed, which cause more difficult to acquire information for me (Interviewee Number 3).

If you using some Chinese internet searching engine like Baidu, it is pretty easy to estimate the situation for censorship. There always has a notice sentence to point out your searching results have been censored:
When you using Baidu to searching information, if your keyword is sensitive, the result will be censored and with a notice sentence shows on the top of result page. The word is “According to some relevant law, part of the results could not be shown”. That is the sign for censorship (Interviewee Number 7).

Normally, beside the Chinese local searching engine, other internet searching engines like Google and Bing do not have this notice. But if you visit them from China, you still get censored in result. Because the address which is filtrated by Chinese online censorship system has been blocked:

Google never have the same notice like Baidu has. But it is not mean that Google do not suffer the internet censorship. If you use it in China, you still got censored frequently. A lot of result cannot be accessed. Sometimes you will lost the connection with Google when you searching for some sensitive information (Interviewee Number 7).

Another censorship happened in the address bar of the web browser. When you input the web address on it, the censorship system will function and your target address will be censored. Many foreign website and service have been blocked in China:

Like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and so on, many foreign websites used to be visited in China. But they have been banned step by step in recent years. When you type their web address on browser, normally, you just got a blank page with words “Not found” (Interviewee Number 1).

When they face the problem, the people’s reaction is various. For the users who know the search has been censored, some of them choose to give up directly and some of them choose to proceed the further searching. In addition, after a few failure of further trying, some of them also might give up searching or get what they want:

I do not like failure, especially during the online information searching. It supposes to save my time for fulfil my needs. So I do not want to spend too much time. When I met this situation (Internet Censorship), sometimes I just give it up. I did not usually try this repeatedly to find a batter result in most of the time (Interviewee Number 2).
In the Figure 4, the diagram shows the different numbers of participant who take reaction of different action patterns when they realize their information searching results have been censored. Four of ten interviewees have once dropped their searching right away when the censorship happened. Six of them have had the aspiration to conduct the further searching actions.

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4.* The different numbers of participant who take reaction of different action patterns when they realize their information searching results have been censored.

Although in some occasion, the user face the internet censorship when they conduct the online information searching. But they did not realize that they have been censored on that time. They treat those online researches as the normal one. Maybe they got something they need. But, they willing to do some further online information searching, until get frustrated or satisfied:

During a long time, in China, when I met some insufficient and difficulties to get what I want on internet, I feel very perplexed about that. I did not know what is going on with it. At the first time, I thought it might be the problem of my internet connection. Sometimes, I blame that for my limited information searching skills. I will choose to give up (Interviewee Number 8).
The Figure 5 shows the different numbers of participant who take reaction of different action patterns, when they face the censorship and did not have the awareness of it. When this situation happened, only one of ten interviewees prefers to give up their searching immediately. Besides that, other nine participants indicated that they would do some further searching for finding more information until they want to stop.

![Figure 5](image)

*Figure 5.* The different numbers of participant who take reaction of different action patterns, when they face the censorship and did not have the awareness of it.

### 4.3.3 Techniques to Solve Censorship Problem

For those interviewees who have the will and the approach to solve their information searching problem which caused by online censorship, they usually prefer to solve this situation by certain patterns. Whether depends on the help from others or by themselves.

The Figure 6 shows the number of interviewees who are willing to fix the searching problem when they are facing the internet censorship and the diagram also shows the number of them who take a practical action for doing that in their experience. Eight of ten interviewees have this wish to get the better results by certain ways. But only half of them have taken the real actions for solve this problem. The data show there
is a gap between the people’s will and their practical action for solving the problems which caused by internet censorship.

![Figure 6. The gap between the will of interviewees and their practical action for solving the problems which caused by internet censorship.](image)

In some case, the participants have techniques and skills, even by the helping from other people. Four patterns have been showed in the content of the interview.

The first method is to modify the key word. Sometimes they use the different word as a metaphor for the original one:

The Chinese web users are very smart, you know. When they find some words or phrases are really sensitive and have been censored, they usually invent a new word or use other common phrases for it to avoid the system. So they can talk and exchange information successfully online. If you know this trick, you can search those metaphor words for your real intention. Of course, you have to filtrate a large quantity of unrelated information first (Interviewee Number 6).

Someone choose to use different language to proceed their searching to get more information. Based on the background of the respondents in this study, English is their first choice for doing that:
Using foreign language to do the online searching is viable way I think. Sometime you will be surprised by the results. But it is not work effectively every time. The internet censorship system still can block the foreign website and set filtering keyword for foreign language when you in China. Furthermore it is really depend on your language skills and ability (Interviewee Number 2).

For somebody who have connection with somebody which located in another internet circumstance. They could get help from them:

When I was in college, my graduate dissertation needs me to do some research on a series of sensitive events. But the most of relevant resources have been censored by then in China. So I ask help from a friend who study in Australia by then to download some academic paper and copy some webpage which I can never get through in China (Interviewee Number 10).

New technique and skill become much more popular to against the internet censorship system:

In recent years, there is a technique which called “cross wall” has been widely adopted to cross the internet restrict in China. By using some software and technique, you can have the same internet environment like the UK or America. Such as using proxy servers to change the IP (Internet Protocol) address. Frankly, those techniques or software are forbidden by authority. But many people trend to use it to get more information (Interviewee Number 6).

4.3.4 Personal Attitude

The last part of data analysis is intended to investigate the personal attitude from participants for internet censorship. They also had the chance to present their feeling and opinions for internet censorship whatever they succeeded or failed on the result of information searching under the influence by internet censorship, and if or not the censorship on internet could make influence on information searching behaviours.

For the influence on online searching result by the affection of internet censorship, all participants presented the similar opinions. They confirmed that there must be certain causal relationship between searching results and censorship:
The result is clear, isn`t it? It definitely influences my information searching results in a large extent, which are far away from my expectation. I believe the internet censorship should take the responsibility for information deficiency (Interviewee Number 3).

However, for the respondents those who have the capability to solve these kind of problems, the online censorship might not take a strong impact on the results of their searching. Nonetheless, they also show some anxious about the results:

The censorship things are not acting as problems for me. I can fix that all the time. I do not worry about there are not enough results for my study. Quite the opposite, the information excess could be the biggest problem for me sometimes (Laugh). But it could be a barrier in some occasion. Sometime it takes me too much time to solve this problem. The time and efficiency issue always take impact on my searching (Interviewee Number 6).

From the perspective of the influence to their lives through the information searching, the participants presented different opinions for intent censorship. Those viewpoints could be generalized into three groups.

The first group of standpoints take positive opinions on internet censorship:

I think the Internet censorship is necessary. It is an effective way to protect people from bad information, especially for the underage young. Another point is that, the censorship system could protect the information which is confidential for public (Interviewee Number 4).

The disadvantage factors also have been presented and take a serious position for the opinions:

I think there are some problems about the current censored system. The scope of the censorship is too wide. It is inconvenient for my daily using. For example, some commonly used words have been deleted, because it is a part of a sensitive phrase. Sometimes, it makes me very frustrated (Interviewee Number 1).

The last type of opinions plays an indifferent status:
I do not believe that (internet censorship) is a tough issue which need to be settled urgently. I am ok with that and feel that it is not a big deal in my life (Interviewee Number 8).

Consider for the influences to the information searching behaviours of participants by internet censorship, different opinions have been raised. Almost in every case, the positive perspectives for the changes have been presented by the project actor science they came to the UK. Most of them believe they had a better experience:

It is a huge change for my information behaviour. The information and resource which result from internet are much richer than what I can get in China. So, I do not need to spend more time and try to get help from others to identify the result. The opened information environment make thing much easier than before. When I did an information searching here (The UK), the quantity of the results could never be the problem anymore. For instead, I have been more concentrated on the quality of the information (Interviewee Number 10).

Rare participant do not feel the changes of their information searching behaviours by their living experiences in those two countries. Maybe something has changed or maybe not. Perhaps, they just do not have the awareness:

Whatever how bad the result was, you can always find some useful resources. I just use the internet as a tool for my information need. If it does not go well, I will pick another one. I am not really care the process. Usually, just search and find and will not put a lot of time on it (Interviewee Number 9).

This research also counted the possible subjects which could be censored in Chinese internet environment. The Figure 7 shows the times which be mentioned by interviewees for each subject. The politic and pornographic have been noticed by every participant. The violent information also takes the important place for the range of internet censorship.
5. Discussion

5.1 Overview

This study set out with the aim of gaining insight into information searching behaviour by Chinese overseas students when they face internet censorship in China and the UK. The diversity has been showed from the results of the interviews for students` different information behaviour pattern and their attitude for internet censorship. In this section, the findings have been discussed and organized by certain logical framework which based on the structure of the results in last section.

5.2 Overall Perspective for Internet Environment

During the first part of the interviews, the participants have been asked some questions about the general feeling and perspectives for the internet circumstance of China and the UK. The responses of this part of questions show that there are some external factors which influenced their internet using behaviours and brought the insufficient and difficulty for their information gathering behaviours. According to the descriptions from interviewees, two major issues have been presented for the
internet using problems when they conduct the information searching. The first issue is the accessibility for some websites:

(In China) I cannot access into some websites such as New York Time, BBC English and YouTube (Interviewee Number 1).

The second problem has been showed on the results of online information searching when they using the internet searching engine:

Sometimes when I want to search some contents, I think my key words were correct and relevant, but I could not find relevant results or even results. Sometimes, although I could get some relevant links, but I still could not enter into its website. It is very limited to achieve useful information (Interview Number 3).

In this study, all Chinese overseas students have this kind of experience. The interesting fact is that they all have this kind of experience under the internet environment of China. Only one respondent also has the similar experience in his living period at Britain, when he was a high school student (Interviewee Number 9).

This finding corroborates the previous researches of Thompson (2006), Zittrain & Edelman (2003), O’Rourke et al., (2007) and RSF (2012), who demonstrated the Internet Censorship in China has been widely adopted and make the pervasive influence for the information searching results. These results clearly prove that these two major phenomena as the consequences which caused by internet censorship in China.

The only one case which happened in the UK also support the report of Mackenzie (2009) which introduce the internet filtering method has been adopted by the educational institutions in the UK to block certain websites which contain Pornographic, Gambling and violence. According the report of ONI in 2010, the information which related with political, social, security, internet tools and conflict have not been censored in the United Kingdom, by investigating the UK’s internet environment. That would be a good explanation for fact that, all the respondents did not face what they faced in China when they using internet in the UK for information searching.
For the concept of internet censorship, the different levels of understanding have been reflected from the content of interview of the Chinese overseas students. Without any exception, every participant in this project knows this phrase more or less. The possible explanation is that the internet control in China started from 1996 (Tsui, 2003). That means the internet censorship has been existed over 16 years in China until now. The participants who involved in this project were growing up along with the development of internet censorship in China. In this long period of time, those Chinese overseas students could be affected by the internet control in a high possibility through internet using when they living in China.

Based on the interview result, three levels of perception have been generalized to represent different group of students who have similar thought about the concept of internet censorship. The Figure 8 shows the different number of participant which have different understanding level for this phrase.

Figure 8. Different number of participant which have different understanding level for the concept of internet censorship.

The first group of student only know a little about this concept. Someone just heard this phrase from other people (e.g. Interviewee Number 4 and 8). Someone got the idea of this concept through information encounter (e.g. Interviewee Number 3).
The second group of thought take the majority number of interviewees. Half of participants know something about internet censorship (e.g. Interviewee Number 1, 2, 5, 7 and 9). They can tell part of features of this concept and they know the purpose of it.

The last kind of understanding involves two interviewees (e.g. Interviewee Number 6 and 10) in this study (i.e. Know a lot). Both of them understand this phrase very well. They can tell most of the detail of this concept, and they have in-depth understanding about how exactly it works on internet:

Of course I know this issue (Internet Censorship). I am living in China (Laugh). We have the most complicated censorship system on internet. We have the Great Firewall of China. We have Keyword Filtering. We have Self-censorship. When I was in China, I fought whit it almost every day to get information from internet (Interviewee Number 6).

5.3 The Information Behaviours Model of Participants

In this part, the information behaviours of interviewees have been generalized from the interview result by using coding method. The interview section clearly reviewed the online information searching experiences of those Chinese overseas students. Their information behaviours processes have been obviously reflected from their specific description which leaded by a series of questions of interview. Hence, it is possible to build an information behaviour model for Chinese overseas students in this particular circumstance through building relationship between the different behaviour patterns and actors.

Based on Wilson`s model of information behaviour in 1981 (Figure 1), and Forster` Nonlinear model of information-seeking behaviour (Figure 2), the researcher join those two models into a primary combination to provide a holistic framework for this study (Figure 9). Meanwhile, some modification have been made for this model to match the new situation which in this project.
In this model, like the Wilson one (1981), the Information Users, which are Chinese overseas students in this research, launched the Information Need from their daily
life. That can be showed from the contents of the online searching experiences of participants. They were all searching for realistic information to cover their need. After that, their information needs have been passed into the Information seeking processes through the internet by different online searching pattern to find the available results. Moreover, the Core Processes for information seeking processes in this model has been changed into Information seeking Behaviours which demand on online Information System. The another part which is “Demands on other information sources” from the original Wilson’s model (Figure 1) has been removed from this diagram. In consideration of the research area of this project, it is unnecessary to involve other information sources into this model.

Apparently, the concepts of “Success” and “Failure” could be used to define the searching consequence for every searching course. Everyone has to take that as the end for a single searching behaviour. However, in the research which be engaged by Mansourian and Ford (2007), they reported another consequence for online information searching. According to this previous investigation, a number of participants could not confirm their particular search were successful or not. But in this project, this situation has not been reflected from the responds of those Chinese interviewees. Hence, that condition has not been added in this model of this study.

In Wilson’s model (1981), if the information user successfully find the relevant information by using online information searching system, the information will be used for their information need. Both dissatisfaction and satisfaction could be brought up by the effect of the searching result fit or not for their information need. The dissatisfaction could lead the reiterating for the searching process. This process also been proved from this research. The participants frequently evaluate their searching result with their information need (e.g. Interviewee Number 3, 9 and10).

It is usually happened (Dissatisfaction). Sometime you got a lot of result after the research. But after you look through all of them, none of them is useful. So I have to search for it again. But if I get noting in so many stages then I think I will lose my patience for further moving (Interviewee Number 9).

However, another relationship has been added to this model. Large percentage of participants which engaged in this project has reported their experiences for helping
the researcher to build this connection from the Failure to dissatisfaction and finally influence the information searching process. The continual failures (especially caused by internet censorship) bring the dissatisfaction feeling for the participants. Sometime the information seekers choose to give up the further searching by the effect from the disappointing of the situation:

Sometime, it is really hard to find some useful information, because you are keeping fail from the research. Certainly I do not like that happen, but I cannot fix that. That makes me feel so bad and I give it up (Interviewee Number 1).

Furthermore, this model get rid of the connections, which the Wilson`s model (1981) have, with the other people through information transfer and information exchange (Figure 1). It not meant that there are no linking between the main body of this model and the other people. However, to investigating the online information searching behaviours of individual are the main purpose for this project. The area of information exchange and information transfer has not been covered in this study.

5.4 The Different Patterns for Information Seeking Process

In this part, the researcher further developed the information seeking processes in to different situations by observation for the reaction pattern for Chinese overseas students under the internet censorship. To clearly show the changing on information searching behaviours which caused by internet censorship, the Figure 10 has been presented.

By the definition for “External attributions” by Mansourian and Ford (2007), outside people’s control is the character for an external context. The internet censorship system has this attribution to be an external context. It cannot be affected by other attributions but government. Hence, except the searching processes have been censored and caused insufficient and difficultly for information gathering, other searching processes all could be seen as the Common Searching Processes.

Because the information seeking processes which demand on online Information system has built on Foster’s (2004) Nonlinear model of information seeking behaviour, the contextual interaction still affect the searching results on this dimension. As a result, the common searching processes could link to a successful or
a failing result. However, when the searching processes were suffering the internet censorship and caused insufficient and difficulty for information collection, the insufficient information source and disappeared information channel have already announced the failure for the information searching.

According to the interview, the participants` reactions for the problem which caused by internet censorship could be generalized into different awareness patterns. When they were facing the online censorship problem, three different awareness patterns have been addressed in this study. As the interview results, some people did not know that their searching results have been censored when they were facing this problem. So they think and treat that as a normal one. The second group of reaction is that they know the censorship has happened because they got the notice from certain online information searching engines. The third group of participant also know the internet censorship was the reason for causing the insufficient and difficulty for online searching results because they got self-awareness about this situation.

Once the participants those who realized that the internet censorship has influenced their information gathering, from the interview content, two consequences have been clarified from the investigation. One consequence is that the actors giving up their researching right away or after a few unsuccessful further stages, which leads the failure for their information searching pattern. Another surprising pattern is that those information users could choose to solve these problems in four different ways. According to the result for interview, four main methods were adopted by them for getting more information. But they still could get failure for no more useful information retrieved by using those methods.
According to their online information searching experiences in different internet conditions, all of the interviewees have faced the internet censorship in China and only one participant mentioned a similar issue in the UK when he was a high school students. That means that all cases, which faced the internet censorship problems,
have happened in Chinese internet environment. So, those especial reaction patterns of Chinese overseas students could be seen as the unique features for their information behaviours in Chinese internet environment. It could be said that, the internet censorship have influences to the information behaviours and created more information searching patterns of Chinese overseas students.

5.5 Decision Making

Through contrast the Figure 4 and 5, an obvious change could be discovered as showed in Figure 11.

![Graph](image)

*Figure 11. The variation tendency for interviewees’ behaviours through contrast their reaction for different circumstance.*

As be displayed in this figure, when the interviewees realize that their information searching has been censored, four of them will choose to terminate this searching action. But in another situation which the interviewees did not have awareness about the online censorship, only one participant choose to give up this searching immediately. At the same time, the number of interviewees who would like to try more searching when they face the insufficient and difficultly for information gathering also changed. Six of respondents who have the awareness of censorship
choose to do the further search for the better searching result. For unknown situation for interviewees, up to eight one would do more searching.

The possible interpretation is that, when the information user did not realize their unsuccessful searching results were caused by the internet censorship, they treat this search as an ordinary one. So they could believe that the condition was caused by other internal or external factors. However, if they know the real situation which is the internet censorship blocked the searching results, they might think that is too hard to get the better result. Consequently, the online searching behaviours have been terminated. The changing of the number of people, who wish to conduct the further search, could also reflect this perception. Based on the interview data, it is not hard to tell the online censorship system hurt the enthusiasm for those Chinese students on information gathering. The interview material also proved this explanation (e.g. interviewee number 5).

5.6 Other Interesting Finding

During this project, the researcher also discovers some interesting phenomena from the interview data. Nevertheless, those finding are not directly relevant to the research topic for this project. But a number of further studies could explore those interesting connections into a new area.

In this study, the information users, which have ability to adopt certain technical methods to against the internet censorship, are male. Some female participant just heard about this way to across the online censorship in China.

Eight of ten participants showed their wishes for getting the better information searching results under the online censorship by conduct certain methods. But only half of them have taken the real actions for solve this problem.

All of the respondents which involved in this project admit the internet censorship brings inconvenience for their information need. But, for the attitude of the internet censorship, people have different feelings and opinions.
6. Conclusion

6.1 Summarise the Research

This dissertation has investigated the information behaviours of the Chinese overseas students in both Chinese internet environment and British internet environment through a qualitative research method. By using the snowball sampling and semi-structured interview method, ten qualified participant have conducted the interview with the researcher to present their experience about online information searching behaviours. As an important investigation objective, the influences which caused by internet censorship for information behaviours also have been reported to establish the theoretical frameworks of participants` information behaviour patterns and generalize an empirical information behaviour model for Chinese overseas students.

This project was undertaken to gain insight into information searching behaviour by Chinese overseas students when they face internet censorship in China and the UK. To achieve that goal, this research has been designed to elicit views from participants on their behaviour changes when searching for the same subject or events in China and the UK to confirm this variance for the two different internet environments. The final objective is to propose a model of information behaviour changes for Chinese overseas students through comparative analysis and evaluation for the interview data to prove the hypothesis which is the theoretical connection between the internet censorship and the information behaviours.

This study has shown that the internet environment could as a important factor to affect people`s information behaviour patterns in certain extent. Based on the comparison for information searching experiences of Chinese overseas students, many evidences could be shown that the UK`s internet circumstance is more opener than the internet circumstance in China. The Internet Censorship play a significant part to narrow the information user`s choices on their searching results. Account for much of the data, the relationship between the internet censorship and people`s information behaviours has been build and enable the further research to generalise a theoretical frameworks of their behaviour patterns. As the most important finding, the information behaviour patterns, which under the internet censorship, of Chinese overseas students have been presented to distinguish their information behaviour
which in common situation. At last, a unique information behaviour model has been reported to achieve the research aims for those participants. Furthermore, some interesting find also be listed in this report for arguable discussions in further research.

The result of this study indicate that the internet censorship play the important part for affecting people’s information behaviours. Evidences which from the interview data demonstrate the negative influence could be brought by the online censorship for Chinese overseas students. When they get awareness of that situation, they could lose their patience and enthusiasm on information searching more than the common searching conditions. The online censorship also could separate the information users away from the outstanding information results and make them into circulatory information searching failures.

These finding enhance our understanding of interaction model of online censorship system with people’s information behaviours. By using qualitative method, this research reappeared the situation when those Chinese information user under the censorship on web-based information seeking processes. It helps people to make introspection with their own information searching behaviours and helps them for the batter online information seeking experience in the future. This present study also filled the gap of personal perspectives towards the intent censorship from the point of view of the Chinese overseas student.

6.2. Limitations

There are a number of limitations need to be considered for this project. First, the sample was not nationally representative of all Chinese internet users but partly covered the Chinese overseas students which attending the Higher Education institution in the Sheffield. So the results of this study could not be generalized into a broader population of Chinese. Second, the current study was not specifically designed to evaluate all the factors which could affect the online information searching results from both internal and external context. Many factors could affect the searching results. At the last, the snowball sampling method could engage certain bias for people’s perspectives. The research finding could involve certain deflection.
6.3 Recommendation

Further quantitative investigations should be undertaken in a larger group of population in China to test the empirical information behaviour model which be concluded in this study. More broadly, research is also needed to be determined in different and various restricted condition to find the possible relationship or remove unreasonable factors for testing or deeper researching. For those un-expectable findings in this research, some future study could be engaged to extend those findings in different areas. New theories or model could be generalized by those further investigations. For the recommendations for practice and policy, this research suggest the government consider the negative impacts which bring by the online censorship to the people’s web-based information searching behaviours. New policies and technologies for internet censorship should be adopted by authorities to guarantee the quality and efficiency of online information searching for public, meanwhile, using more user-friendly management theory to protect the information user instead of forbid them.

(Word Count: 13144)
References


APPENDIX 1

Participant Information Sheet

An Investigation into whether a Relatively Open Internet Environment Could Influence Information Behaviours of Chinese Overseas Students

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what is will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the project?

Compared with UK internet environment, the information resources and channel in China would be different because of the internet censorship regimes applied. In this project, the researcher willing to investigate the realistic change of human information behaviours. Investigate the changing pattern of information searching behaviour of Chinese overseas student base on the change of internet environment. Try to provide a new perspective by using the previous model from the theories of information behaviour. This research will start at May 2012 and finish at September 2012.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this project because you are the Chinese overseas students, whose age over 18 years. The condition of you meets the requirements of this research. Your participation would benefit and contribute to this project.

Do I have to take part?

This research is voluntary. It means that it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to involve in, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

This project will start at May 2012 and finish at September 2012. Depend on the practical situation of the research every participant may be take only one interview during the research. Approximately, each interview would take around 30 minutes to proceed. Every participator would not involve in this project over 2 weeks.
Before each meeting, the participator will be able to preview the questions and topics of the interview. The interviewee still has choice to withdraw if they feel unsatisfied of the content. After an official approve by the participator, the interview will begin and be recorded. The interview would adopt a semi-structured format that include some limited set questions and a few new questions which be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. For the participant, the open answer would be expected as much as possible. For a better understanding, the discussion during the interview would be hoped to performance in-depth.

What do I have to do?

There is no lifestyle restriction for being a participant in this project. Only a few of questions about your information searching experience need to be responded.

What are the possible disadvantages and risk of taking part?

There are no obvious disadvantages and risks of taking part in this research. No privacy issue would be mentioned during the project. The questions only relate to your life experience which based on your information searching behaviours.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will meet its objective which could provide a new perspective by using the previous model from the theories of information behaviour to identify the changing of Chinese overseas student’s information searching pattern changing.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to raise any complaints for any reason, please feel free to contact the supervisor of this project (Project Supervisor: Ms. Sheila A Webber, Email: s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk  Tel: 0114 222 2641). If you feel your complaint has not been handled well and you feel unsatisfied, you can contact the University’s “Registrar and Secretary”.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Please also notice that, after the research been accomplished, all the gathered data from participant will be destroyed.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project’s objectives?

The information, which would be questioned from you, mostly relates to your experience on information searching behaviour during the time you spent in China and UK. By contrast with the different information searching behaviour in different internet environment, the researcher wants to explore certain pattern for those changes by using the previous model from the theories of information behaviour.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?
The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

If the results of this project have been desired by participants, the summary for the final results will be sent to them after this dissertation has been submitted on September, 2012. The final documents would also been stored in the system of the University of Sheffield and it is usually easy to access by the help of university stuff or student.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The University of Sheffield is the organiser of this research.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via Information School ethics review procedure (every academic department either administers the University’s Ethics Review Procedure itself, internally within the department, or accesses the University’s Ethics Review Procedure via a cognate, partner department). The University’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

**Contact for further information**

To get further information for this project, please feel free to contact:

Project Performer
Bo Dang
Email: bdang1@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel: 07435 779 298

Project Supervisor
Ms. Sheila A Webber
Email: s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk

At the end, allow me to thank you for your reading and to appreciate your participation.
APPENDIX 2

Participant Consent Form

**Title of Research Project:** An investigation into whether a Relatively Open Internet Environment Could Influence Information Behaviours of Chinese Overseas Students.

**Name of Researcher:** Bo Dang

**Participant Identification Number for this project:** Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet [05/2012] explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS OF THE RESEARCHER: ICAI1@SHEFFIELD.AC.UK)

3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential (only if true). I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

________________________  __________________  __________________
Name of Participant       Date                  Signature
(or legal representative)

________________________  __________________  __________________
Name of Participant       Date                  Signature
(or legal representative)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person taking consent</th>
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<td><em>(if different from lead researcher)</em></td>
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*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

________________________________________  __________________  __________________

Lead Researcher                  Date                  Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

Copies:

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*
APPENDIX 3

The First Version of Interview Questions

1. Do you know the Internet censorship in China?

2. Have you meet difficult position in information searching when you in China, because of internet censorship?
   If so, how often do you meet this situation in China?

3. When you meet this situation, what subject of information are you looking for usually?

4. When you meet this situation, what type of resources are you looking for usually?

5. Does this situation make you feel disturbing or confusing?

6. How did you fix your information searching plan when you meet this situation?
   If so, how does it affect?

7. Does this situation effect your information searching result?
   If so, how does it affect?

8. What is your search preference when you in China? (For example: specific searching engine, website, database, journal links, libraries, other)

9. According to your experience, which words or phrases have been censored in China usually?

10. Have you meet difficult position in information searching when you in the UK, because of internet censorship?
    If so, how often do you meet this situation in the UK?

11. Does this situation effect your information searching result?
    If so, how does it affect?

12. What type of resources are you looking for usually in the UK?

13. What is your search preference when you in the UK? (For example: specific searching engine, website, database, and journal links, libraries, other)

14. Compare and contrast the time spending in information searching in China and the UK, how long it will take in average?

15. Compare and contrast the result in information searching in China and the UK, what is the same and different in quality, format and quantity?

16. What is your personal attitude for Chinese internet environment and for British internet environment?

17. According to your experience, which words or phrases have been censored in the UK usually?
APPENDIX 4
The Final Version of Interview Questions

Section 1: General Questions
1. How long have you been in UK?
2. How do you feel the internet environment in the UK? (Contrast with China)
3. Do you know the Internet Censorship in China or in the UK? (If yes, how do you know and when do you know?)
4. Have you ever meet some problems when you doing internet searching in China?

Section 2: Experience Questions
With your experience, Could you remember a particular event when you face the censorship for information by using internet? (Think a subject when you doing your information searching such as politics or pornographic)

--When was that happened?
--Why did you need this information?
--What resource were you looking for?
--Have you got the awareness for internet censorship on that time?
--If yes. How you know you have been censored?
--What did you actually do about that?
--Did it affect the searching result?
--Does the searching results arrive your information need?

Section 3: Further Questions
1. Thanks for telling me about that in detail. How often do you meet this situation in China or in the UK? Can you think of any other types of subject or occasion when this has happened?
2. Thinking back to the detailed example you gave me - Have you done this type of search in the UK? If YES did you encounter the same problem? If YES can you say something about what happened? If No, what are you actually do for searching information on internet? How about the other subjects you just mentioned?

[It will be a good idea to go through them all and ask the interviewee - did they search for it or not, and did they have a problem. It will be useful to know which subjects simply were not searched for, so they can be distinguished from the subjects where people searched and did not have a problem]
3. Consider the situation you have met, if you got the opposite awareness (know or not know), what would you do for that?
4. Do you have any favourite technique for avoiding the problem? Tell me about it.
5. What do you think about the Internet Censorship? (Do you think the censorship on internet could make influence on information searching behaviours?)
APPENDIX 5
Parts of Interview Record

E: Interviewee   R: researcher

Interviewee No.3   Female

Section 1: General Questions

R: How long have you been in UK?

E: 2 years

R: How do you feel the internet environment in the UK? (Contrast with China)

E: The Internet environment is good. Compare with China, the speed is quicker and more safety, especially the security of online payment system. I am not worry about my bank information would be stolen or online defraud in UK most of the time.

R: Do you know the Internet Censorship in China or in the UK? (If yes, how do you know and when do you know?)

E: Does UK have Internet censorship? I am not sure. But I knew it in China, but I did not know the (information censorship) system clearly. I think the measure of information censorship system in China is strict and wide. And I feel it becomes more and more strict. For example, the contents in Weibo (a Chinese website like ‘Twitter’) have been censored and deleted without reasons. It is ridiculous. Almost all of the Chinese websites are censored even a lot of foreign websites have been controlled as well. Those foreign websites could not be accessed, which cause more difficult to acquire information for me.

R: How do you know that and when do you know that?

E: I heard those things just from my friend for the first time when I was in the college. But you can always encounter this type of information occasionally in China.

R: Have you ever meet some problem when you doing internet searching in China?
E: If this question means the aspect of the accuracy of the information retrieval results, I think there are some problems, and every search engine would have some similar problems to some extent.

R: Sorry, please consider it in some specific aspect, not in general aspect.

E: OK, sometimes I could not find out relevant results. (In China) It means that sometimes when I want to search some contents, I think my key words were correct and relevant, but I could not find relevant results or even results. Sometimes, although I could get some relevant links, but I still could not access those website. It is very limited to achieve useful information.

Section 2: Experience Questions

R: With your experience, Could you remember a particular event when you face the censorship for information by using internet? (Think a subject when you doing your information searching such as politics or pornographic.)

R: When was that happened? Why did you need this information?

E: To be honest, I could not remember too many details about the experience in the past, but I have a recent experience might answer your question. It was a few months ago, there were a series of political events and change in China, which had powerful influence in Chinese society and government, even for the world. Many people focused on those events. So I wanted to search some relevant information, such as background, the inside story, the process of the event etc

R: What resource were you looking for?

E: I hoped that I could get some news reports or comments about those events, especially some analysis in different angels, which could help me to understand more.

R: Have you got the awareness for internet censorship on that time?

E: Yes, I am. Quite sure.

R: How do you know that you have been censored?

At the time, I was in the UK, I used a Chinese search engine called ‘Baidu’, which I used in China regularly. After searching, the results were limited, and a sentence,
which was according to some relevant law, part of the results could not be shown, was shown. It could be found that some results were censored. Moreover, some results were repeated and the types of information were similar as well. The reports from foreign media were rarely found, except Chinese media.

After that, I used Google to search the same key word, more relevant results had been achieved, which were diverse from different media and organizations.

R: How you feel about that?

E: If I had not used Google (in UK), maybe I would not feel too much unsatisfied, and because I might think it could be understandable to some extent. But, when I used different searching engines, the diversity of result made me feel that it choud not be fulfill by using Baidu for my information need. And there was too much drawback of the previous system. I believe that without the experiences in these two different Internet environments, I would not find those disadvantages of censored system.

R: What did you do about that? Did you conduct any further investigation?

E: With respect to my information searching behavior, in order to get more useful information, I will spend some time to search, and sometimes I definitely would spend a lot of time. According to my habit, I would check the first five pages of the searching results. If I could not to achieve relevant information in those pages, I would search again by using different key words or phrases. There is another situation as well. Sometimes if I spend a lot time on searching without relevant results, I would give up angrily.

I heard of the crossing the wall, but I did not know how to do that and the safety issue, which are the reasons I do not use this method. Actually, I do not familiar with some search engines except ‘Baidu’. Maybe it is a habit. But the methods of changing different key words and phrases are usually used both in China and UK. Although the search habit is similar to some extent, I would like to say that the searching aims are different in China and UK. I mean that in China, changing key words or phrases aims to find out more relevant results. However, it is very different in UK, because the diversity and number of the results are not the problems. In UK, I
think I prefer to analysis different opinions in the process of changing key words and phrases in order to form personal opinion, which is totally different aim.

R: Did it affect the searching result? Did you arrive you need?

E: The result is clear, isn’t it? It definitely influences my information searching results in a large extent, which are far away from my expectation. I believe the internet censorship should take the responsibility for information deficiency.

**Section 3: Further Questions**

R: Thanks for telling me about that in detail. How often do you meet this situation in China? Can you think of any other types of subject or occasion when this has happened?

E: Well, generally, I think, I have rarely experience on this situation, because I rarely search some sensitive topics, such as policy except I have strong desires. I spent more time on searching the information about everyday life, such as films, shopping etc. Maybe these types of information are censored rarely, which cause fewer problems for me. Moreover, I think political content is easier to censor. The names of the national leaders and historical events might be strict, I think. Well, I think I could not control this problem, if you intent to avoid it, the only way are not to search it.

R: Thinking back to the detailed example you gave me - Have you done this type of search in the UK? If YES did you encounter the same problem? If YES can you say something about what happened? If No, what are you actually do for searching information on internet?

E: As mentioned before, I used Google and BaiDu in UK, but the results are different in large extent. I think this difference could be caused by Internet censorship.

R: Which language are you chosen in the searching?

E: Chinese, Google accepts Chinese searching.

R: Did you use English as search language?

E: In China, I rarely used English, but in UK, English is the majority Language, especially in searching academic resources.
R: How about the censored contents? Did you use English? Why?

E: Yes, I tried in English, when I wanted to know some opinions from foreign media.

R: Consider the situation you have met, if you got the opposite awareness (know or not know), what would you do for that?

E: You mean I did not know I have been censored, right? If so, I think I would drop the searching after a few trying. If the results do not get better, I will drop it.

R: Do you have any favourite technique for avoiding the problem? Tell me about it.

E: No. But I heard of the crossing the wall, but I did not know how to do that and the safety issue, which are the reasons I do not use such methods.

R: What do you think about the Internet Censorship? (Do you think the censorship on internet could make influence on information searching behaviours?)

E: I think the Internet censorship is necessary, but I think there are some problems about the current censored system. The scope of the censorship is too wide. For example, some commonly used words have been deleted, because it is a part of a sensitive phrase. It is inconvenient for my searching. Apparently, it wastes more time of mine and even provides me irrelevant information to me.

R: OK, I have done my questions. Thank you again for join my research. Do you have any questions?

E: Thanks. I am ok with that.

R: Great.
Participant No.5  Male

Section 1: General Questions

R: How long have you been in UK?

E: About 2 years

R: How do you feel the internet environment in the UK? (Contrast with China)

E: In my opinion, the UK has a better internet speed than China and customers can get higher quality of internet service from local internet service provider. The information and resource which from internet are much richer than people can get in the Chinese internet environment.

R: Do you know the Internet Censorship in China or in the UK? (If yes, how do you know and when do you know?)

E: I am not quite clear about the internet censorship in China. During a long time, I did not even know about it. At the first time, I just thought that there is something wrong with my network connection when I met some difficulties to get what I want on internet and I did not know what is going on with it. It is not a long time, science I got awareness about the concept of internet censorship and that may cause the problems.

R: Have you ever meet some problems when you doing internet searching in China?

E: Yes, sometimes. The problem is you cannot find or very hard to find what you want on internet. For instance, I cannot access into some site. Some words and phrases cannot be resulted by internet searching engine.

Section 2: Experience Questions

R: With your experience, Could you remember a particular event when you face the censorship for information by using internet?

R: When was that happened? Why did you need this information?

E: I remember one case when I was in high school. On that time, there is a rumour about a prisoner which be locked in the prison which nearby my hometown. They
said that prisoner was a officer which in a high place and had great power. But somehow, he got arrest suddenly. I was very curious about this rumour and want to know the whole story about that. However, I cannot find any useful information from other people or paper media. I tried on internet, but get nothing either. It confused me in a long time. I finally knew it is internet censorship after I go to my college. These are very limited information about those mysterious politicians on internet. Most resources had been banned.

R: What resource were you looking for?

E: There was no particular form for my desired information. I just wanted to know dipper about this guy and the story about his fall.

R: Have you got the awareness for internet censorship on that time?

E: No I am not. Not on that time.

R: How you feel about that?

E: Confused I felt at first and a little bit disappointed by then. But I understand the whole thing eventually after I realized it is the internet censorship caused difficulties on my information collecting. I think the purpose for that is to protect the privacy about that guy. So it is understandable.

R: What did you do about that? Did you conduct any further investigation?

E: I gave up for what I was looking for, because I think that it could hardly get better result by further searching moves. I tried on some different internet searching engine, still the same situation.

R: Did it affect the searching result? Did you arrive you need?

E: Of course not, I did not find anything related, some chaining cannot access into. My curiosities did not be satisfied, and I drop it.

Section 3: Further Questions

R: Thanks for telling me about that in detail. How often do you meet this situation in China or in the UK?
E: It depends. When I was in college, I meet this situation a lot. But not that much, recently.

R: Why?

E: Maybe the reason is that I am very curious for some sensitive information on that time. But in recent years, I am not like that anymore and the time for searching that information is become less and less.

R: Can you think of any other types of subject or occasion when this has happened?

E: With my experience, a lot of words and phrases about some religion conflict would be censored. Besides that, the pornographic information which is illegal in China also is banned.

R: Thinking back to the detailed example you gave me - Have you done this type of search in the UK? If YES did you encounter the same problem? If YES can you say something about what happened? If No, what are you actually do for searching information on internet?

E: Yes, I have. (In the UK) There is nothing wrong with it. Everything looked common and nature. The only thing I need to do is to analysis the results. I never felt that the information had been censored in any degree. Everything looks fine. I did not feel censorship. Some conservative Chinese people could be surprised by the fact that it is very easy to get pornographic information on internet. You know, in China, it is very hard to find some.

R: Consider the situation you have met, if you got the opposite awareness (know or not know), what would you do for that?

E: If I know exactly what were happened, I think I will give up the research right away. But I wish I can search more for better results.

R: Do you have any favourite technique for avoiding the problem? Tell me about it.

E: In recent years, there is a technique which called “cross wall” has been adopted to cross the internet restrict in China. Frankly, those techniques or software are forbidden by authority. But many people trend to using it to get various information.
R: What do you think about the Internet Censorship? (Do you think the censorship on internet could make influence on information searching behaviours?)

E: I think we should consider this in different aspect. I think the positive significance of internet censorship is to protect people from bad information, especially for the underage young. I agree that the internet censorship could make influence on information searching behaviours. But I cannot tell how and why. I just feel the internet censorship waste us a lot of time to looking for some information which you have no awareness that it had been censored. Think about you spend a lot of time to look for some information which cannot be reached. Sometimes, it is very frustrated. So you do not want to touch any of them. I think in some point, it has a bad influence on the thirst for knowledge.

R: Thanks for join me today. Any question for me?

E: No.

R: Perfect.