

Public Abstract

First Name:Mi

Middle Name:Rosie

Last Name:Jahng

Adviser's First Name:Esther

Adviser's Last Name:Thorson

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:Beyond political differences: The influence of exposure to disagreements and the mediating role of emotional responses on selective exposure.

This study examined the influence of exposure to online discussion boards and discussion participation in the online discussion boards on opinion-challenging news use. Based on cognitive dissonance theory and media choice model, a 2 (exposure to disagreement: position-convergent discussion vs. position-divergent discussion) X 2 (discussion participation: participation vs. non-participation) mixed factorial design experiment was conducted. In addition, the emotional responses toward discussions were suggested as a mediator between the influence of exposure to disagreements on opinion-challenging news use. MANCOVA results showed that when participants were exposed to position-divergent online discussion boards, they perceived the opinion-challenging news articles to be more useful, and showed higher interest to read the opinion-challenging news articles. Also, discussion participation was found to moderate the effect of the exposure to position-divergent online discussion boards on perceived utility of opinion-challenging news use. Finally, mediation analyses showed that positive emotional responses and negative emotional responses were significant mediators between exposure to disagreements and opinion-challenging news choices in discussion participation conditions. The theoretical applications of this study are discussed.