

BEYOND POLITICAL DIFFERENCES: THE INFLUENCE OF EXPOSURE TO
DISAGREEMENTS AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL RESPONSES ON
SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

Mi Rosie Jahng

Dr. Esther Thorson, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

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 examined the role of online discussion boards on selective exposure to political news. Also, the emotional responses toward discussions were suggested as a mediator between the influence of exposure to disagreements on opinion-challenging news use.

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 interesting. Also, discussion participation was found to moderate the effect of the exposure to position-divergent online discussion boards on the utility of opinion-challenging news use. Mediation analyses suggested that positive emotional responses and negative emotional responses were significant mediators for opinion-challenging news choices in discussion participation conditions. Theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.