Public Abstract

First Name: Ho-Jin
Last Name: Yoon
Degree: Master
Department: Journalism
Adviser's First Name: Wayne
Adviser's Last Name: Wanta
Co-Adviser's First Name:
Co-Adviser's Last Name:
Graduation Term: Winter
Graduation Year: 2006
Title: A Study of Individual Internet Dependency as an Extension of Social Support

International students tend to use the Internet a lot more in the United States than in their original society. According to Ball-Rokeach's individual media dependency theory, individuals develop a dependency on a certain medium when a situation is uncertain or ambiguous to them. Therefore, using the dependency theory as a theoretical framework, this study aims to show international students' Internet dependency in a relation to their fragmented information environment.

To measure individuals' interpersonal networks and information resources, this study adopted a sociological concept, social support. Internet dependency was assessed by "how helpful they perceive the Internet is for three different purposes." Finally, it was hypothesized that individuals with less social support would be more likely to depend on the Internet. This study also considered that immigrants' acculturation attitude may increase or decrease their social support, which, in turn, affects their dependency on the Internet.

A sample of 158 American and 160 East-Asian college students completed a survey measuring (a) Internet dependency, (b) social support, and (c) acculturation attitude (only for the East-Asians).

The results indicate that the East-Asians students receive less social support and show stronger dependency on the Internet. But no correlation was found between social support and Internet dependency across the samples. The East-Asians use the Internet more intensively than the Americans for understanding the current events or news and for spending time relieving solitude. The East-Asians' acculturation attitude did not affect their social support and Internet dependency; however, those who have stronger acculturation attitude are more likely to depend on the Internet. The findings do not strengthen media dependency theory, but provide constructive discussion on the theory itself and its possible measurement problems.