

Censorship in China

Part 1 – Background and Research

I. Introduction

- A. Topic – Explore terms, reasons, consequences, procedures, etc. of censorship in China

II. Company Policies – explanation of company censorship policies

- A. Google

- 1. Abide by the laws of the local government
 - 2. Notify users that their search results are being censored

- B. Yahoo

- 1. Abide by the laws of the local government

- C. Microsoft

- 1. Abide by the laws of the local government
 - 2. Remove material only after the government explicitly asks for a page to be taken down
 - 3. Notify the individual whose page is being taken down that the government requested the removal of his/her page
 - 4. Allow viewers from other countries to be able to access the page

III. Code as Regulation

- A. How difficult was it to censor material prior to advent of computers?

- B. How difficult is it to use code to censor materials?

- C. How does China attempt to use code to censor information?

- 1. Have bloggers register blog with the government so they can be easily identified (and jailed) if need be
 - 2. Block certain words from being used in blogs or as search terms
 - 3. Remove search results that depict the Chinese government in a poor light
 - 4. Use spy software to monitor internet usage

IV. Circumventing the “Great Firewall of China”

- A. What kinds of workarounds are currently available?

- 1. Use Podcasts as means of getting message out
 - 2. Anonymizer – company releases software that helps internet users to maintain their anonymity and thus avoid the government’s censorship attempts

- B. How well do these workarounds work?

- C. Should people be given free access to knowledge about these workarounds?

V. Censorship in History

- A. How have countries attempted to censor materials in the past?

- B. How successful were these attempts?

- C. How are other countries attempting to censor materials now?

- 1. Germany – censorship of the internet through code (censor information pertaining to Nazis)

VI. Ethical Aspects

- A. Is it ethical for companies to bar citizens from obtaining information?
- B. Do companies have an obligation to the people *not* to censor the materials they have access to?
- C. Do companies have a monetary obligation to themselves to expand into the Chinese market regardless of human rights issues?

VII. Conclusion

- A. Is it worthwhile for companies to censor materials?
- B. Should companies censor materials?
- C. How can citizens circumvent these government regulations?

Part 2 – Experiment

- I. Abstract – Summary of findings of the experiment portion, which tests and quantifies matching search terms of google.com and google.cn.
- II. Description of Methodology
 - A. Terms
 1. The second part of this paper will consist of the description and results of an experiment designed to test and quantify the strength of Google censorship in China. This will be done by testing what urls are returned by feeding the same terms into the “censored” google.cn search engine and the “uncensored” google.com search engine. The terms used will be from a list of terms on Wikipedia, some of which have been blocked on the native Chinese search engine Baido and some possibly contentious terms that have not.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_words_blocked_by_search_engines_in_Mainland_China).
 2. There will be twenty “blocked” terms from the Wikipedia, as well as twelve “non-blocked” terms from the tested list, which assumedly have potential to be contentious. There will also be a control group of 20 terms, which include the names of various world cities. Thus, there will be a 52 total terms parsed, 32 of which will be experimental and 20 control.
 3. Of the experimental terms, in addition to the blocked and non-blocked categories, there will also be three further subdivisions. General concepts, events/causes of subversion, and dissident groups, which can also be further analyzed to see if one group is censored than the other (although the sample size is small).
 4. Of the control group, 10 terms will consist of “neutral” West European non-capital cities (to prevent any unintentional references to governments). The other 10 will consist of cities in both China and the US, in order to mitigate against potential local search results. These can also be subdivided and analyzed separately.
 - B. Searching
 1. Each term, in either the blocked or the non-blocked group, will be inserted into the Google search engine. The source code from the first three pages of each will be saved to text files, representing the top thirty urls returned. Each term will have six files, 3 per engine, .com or .cn, and 1 for every ten results for the .com or .cn search engine.
 2. The terms will be accessed in at most the course of a few minutes time differential.
 3. All the terms will be searched using Chinese characters, or as close as they can be ascertained through Google and Google-translation software. This is because the Chinese government will presumably be more concerned with limiting its citizen’s access to the internet in its own native language.

4. The experimental/general concepts category will have the characters for China or Chinese placed in front of the concept, in order to more fully capture a censorship that has no incentive to limit the term “massacre” if the Boston massacre is what comes up.

C. Parsing / Processing

1. A java program will then parse these source text files in order to grab the ten urls from each file. Each of these terms will be found by searching for the unique html “tag” that only precedes them.
2. Sponsored websites will be avoided. Sponsored websites for each specific term could vary, impairing analysis. In addition, sponsored links sometimes continually change when refreshed.
3. The program will then store the urls for each term into a master output file. Alike urls will be determined and output for each term, with their differentials between their position in the .com and .cn engines alongside.
4. Values such as the mean differential, mean absolute value differential, and median differential will also be put into the master output file.

- III. Results – Will be analyzed upon availability, with graphs comparing each category and subcategory. The values may have to be manually transferred to Excel in order to accomplish this task.
- IV. Conclusion – Discussion of the results of the experiment, in addition to areas upon which it may be improved.

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