

Introduction "provide internet accessing services" in the year



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Introduction

Internet has been one of the global most popular sources of information. Its extensiveness in terms of geographical coverage has, for instance, been facilitated by its cheaper cost and developments in technologies. In china an estimate of three hundred and seventy million people are believed to be using the internet. There has however been a lot of limitation in accessing internet information in the country because the government has moved in to regulate internet usage through censorship. This paper seeks to discuss the censorship issue in China and how it affects creativity of the Chinese people. The paper will look into the history of internet usage in the country, the censorship, effects of the censorship on people's creativity and the war against government censorship of internet usage in china.

History of internet in china

The first application of the internet which was realized through sending an email occurred in China in the year 1987.

A series of developments then followed with initiatives from private institutions and government agencies to venture more into the internet technology. By the following year, Tsinghua University is reported to have started offering email services. With the development of the country's first browser in the year 1994 and subsequent move by the government to "provide internet accessing services" in the year 1996, the use of the technology began to develop in the country (Enhai 6). The number of internet users then started increasing in the country from less than a million in the year 1997 to reach almost seventy million in middle of 2003. The

increasing trend has since continued and is almost reaching four hundred million by now (Enhai 16). The history of regulation of the internet usage in the country is reported to have been simultaneously developed with the establishment and development of internet in the country.

The government has since the introduction of the technology in the country moved to regulate the way in which its citizens use the internet. The move is applied by denying citizens access to some websites and restricting access to others. This move has been facilitated by the country's legislations that have left internet companies with little options in the country. Calls have however been made to the companies to unite and fight the government's censorship move (James 1).

Internet censorship in China

The move by the government to regulate the internet has been identified as a step to protect itself from fears.

Some of these fears are related to the government's past actions while others are with respect to the forces that citizens can exert against the government. It is with respect to these reasons that the Chinese government moves to restrict any form of information that is believed to have the capacity to facilitating these threats. Websites or even mail transactions that are suspected to carry such information are therefore either blocked or restricted. Specifications have been made to past actions by the government and information that relates to " Dalai Lama, the 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen square protestors, Falun Gong, the banned spiritual movement and other internet sites" (New York Times 1) as elements that receives

censorship. Such stiff regulations that are also dependent on global temperatures that are believed to have the capacity to influence the Chinese people still do exist. One of the most recent heightened censorship was realized in the first quarter of the year 2011 at the wake of revolutionary protests that was felt in the Arab world (New York Times para.

2). Following these occurrences, the government of China increased its surveillance over communications by the Chinese people. Communications through emails and even access to the internet was greatly monitored to avert any fear of anti government protests in the country (New York Times para. 2). The government has been achieving its censorship move through interception of information that is not trusted, according to the government's standards.

The interception is then followed by blocking the information or the site if the government's fears are significantly triggered. It is, for example, noted that Gmail services were disrupted by the Chinese government following anti government protests that were realized in Africa and the Middle East in the year 2011 (New York Times para. 4).

Actions such as blocking sites that contained the word " freedom" were also realized in the country in the year 2010 and 2011 (New York Times para. 4).

The censorship move was stepped up in around the year 2008 with ensuring that each internet provider company employ a team whose work is to ensure that information with particular content are not posted on their web pages.

This was then followed by a move to ban social internet sites such as Facebook and Twiter.

Another move that started as a regulatory measure over websites that published considerably immoral content such as pornography was later modified to include regulations on information with political contents. In this move, “ online discussion forums, instant message groups, and even cell phone text messages in which political and other sensitive issues were discussed received a level of censorship by the government” (New York Times para. 7).

Chinese legislations over censorship

The censorship of communication system in China has been developed on two bases.

One of the bases is a set of legislations that have been approved to govern the country's communication systems while the other basis is being fueled by government forces with the aim of protecting their interest in power. As a result, government forces and influence has used means some of which are not constitutional to ensure that the media is properly contained to guarantee the security of those that are in power. Most of the government censorship measures that are not backed by the country's constitution are normally done in secret and covered or if exposed to the public, are manipulated and backed by the country's legal systems. Some of the major legislations that allows for the censorship of the internet and other media in the country are the “ measures on the administration of internet information services and the provisions on the administration of internet news and information services” (Feng 1). The two regulations were enacted in the year 2000 and 2005 respectively.

The measure on administration act, for example, provides that the state reserves the authority to grant permission to any internet provider company in the country. Once allowed to operate in the country, the companies are subject to “ prior review and approval and specialized review and approval of the information that they provide to internet users” (Feng 1). Under these provisions, the government reserves authority which it can use to intimidate the internet companies as they seek permission to venture into the country’s market. Subsequent provision of the act that gives the government, through its agencies, powers to censor any internet information that is deemed to be “ harmful” also renders unchecked powers to the government over its regulation of internet companies.

With no clear definition of what constitutes harmful information or the extent to which a piece of information should be considered harmful, the government is at liberty to pronounce an article to be harmful especially if it reveals information that is not favorable to the government. This act therefore gives the Chinese government powers to infringe on the rights of both citizens and the internet companies over expression and information (Feng 1). The regulations on administration act also have a lot of impacts on the internet services. The necessity of operational permits to internet companies has also played a role in giving the government powers to control the companies. This is due to the intimidating aspects of possible cancellation of permits in case of failure by a company to comply with the demands of the government over the regulation of the internet.

The definition of information about the government which includes political news and information of economic content among other category of
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information classifies almost all aspects of news into government regulation. Diversification of the act over the definition of "harmful information" also restricts the internet companies over the nature of information that they are free to publish without facing censorship from the government. Internet companies are also subjected to evaluation by government agencies that allows for their continuous operations. Failure by a company to abide by the needs of the government as pertains to the restrictions thus risks a company's deregistration on the basis of disqualifications over evaluations. Owing to these regulations, the internet companies are forced to resort to self censorship and even yield to cases of government's censorship in order to be allowed to operate in the country (Feng 1).

Response of the Chinese people to the censorship

The Chinese people have registered mixed reactions over the government's moves that have over time censored the internet.

When Google Company was on the verge of pulling out of the Chinese internet market, it had a supportive base from individuals and parties that felt that the government's move to restrict internet was uncalled for. This was reflected in the level of disappointment that this group felt when Google gave in to work under the government's censorship program. It is reported that censorship of the Chinese based Google was for example realized during one of the anniversaries of "the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen square massacre" leading to a public outcry (MacKinnon 63). It was actually argued that the blockage of the internet service provider was due to the complaint that was widely raised by people. According to MacKinnon Rebecca, "people responded with anger, directed primarily to whoever was creating the <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-provide-internet-accessing-services-in-the-year/>

blockage" (MacKinnon 63) and many people and even groups were reported to have made public attacks to the party that was responsible for such actions (MacKinnon 63). Animated internet postings that were labeled " the person who makes it impossible to access Google" (MacKinnon 63) were also common responses at the time. The people at the same time blamed Google for not being strong enough to oppose the government regulatory measures that they considered to be unfair. It can therefore be perceived that there are a number of Chinese people who are not happy with such censorship.

Individuals such as Xiaobo Liu have occasionally come out to openly criticize the government censorship and internet companies that have cooperated with the government in its internet regulation. A good example was his verbal attack on Yahoo following its " political cooperation with the Chinese police" (MacKinnon 41). Though there have been forces in the country striving to make success in opposing the government's role in censoring internet access in the country, a majority of the population, especially the younger generation, are reported to not be concerned with the governments move to censor the internet.

This is specifically because this population does not feel the difference between a censored and a free internet due to the lost history of the country which has been partially achieved by the government's move to regulate information that is passed to the public. The government has used its powers to only allow for access to history that is favorable to it thus creating a positive influence. A majority of the Chinese have therefore come to believe that their government has every good reason to censor the internet. This

may have been facilitated by the government propaganda over the internet (Zhang and Zheng 11).

The cost of Chinese internet censorship

With the development of internet technology, educational and general learning set ups were facilitated and developed to give wider opportunities for explorations into topics of interest.

It is also through such explorations that individuals and group can develop creativity. The move to censor internet which has been identified to be the cheapest and most readily available source of information, which include intellectual information, can therefore be seen to hinder developments and innovation through disempowering people. An unrestricted internet system for example has tools that can allow for online learning, research experimentations and innovations.

The move by the government to limit access to these facilities therefore restricts innovative creativity among Chinese citizens (Internet 1). A move to censor the internet has limitations to the benefits that can be achieved from such elements as globalization and advanced technology. These restrictions therefore limit exposure of the Chinese people to the developments that are undertaken outside the country.

Information on political, economical and even social developments in other parts of the world is therefore either not available to the Chinese people or is only availed in limited extents. This is because of one of the governments intentions of shielding the Chinese people from external influences that can negatively affect their opinion over their government. Creativity in the <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-provide-internet-accessing-services-in-the-year/>

country will with this respect be restricted to their environment that has over time been explored before. As a result, there will be fewer chances of creativity into new developments that can be realized outside the country's cultural and environmental factors. Limiting people's exposure to technological developments is also a factor to limiting creativity in a society. With censorship to sources of information over technologies, a person can, for example, not adequately know how to use that technology in order to generate another technology or even to use the technology to create a new product in the market. Ciecko argued that a high level of censorship is restrictive to "information flow, creativity and experimentation" (Ciecko 80).

The extreme cases of censorships that have been extended to control the content that academic institutions can publish have also been a step that limits research and creativity in these institutions. This can also be extended to cover other research bodies in the country. Due to the censorship, individuals are restricted from conducting a research and creative exercise in their field of interest thus rendering them redundant and discouraged. This can also discourage other people to loose interest in innovative fields. The censorship has therefore made it unsafe and unfavorable to retrieve or share information (Amnesty 1).

Conclusion

The government of China has since the establishment of internet facilities in the country moved to control the use of the services by its citizens. Such regulations were later supported by enactment of regulations in the years 2000 and 2005 that gave the government authority to directly control the services offered by internet companies.

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Such regulations have drawn mixed reactions with a number of people and organization protesting against the censorship. A majority of the people have however been influenced by the government to either support the censorship or remain indifferent over it. This level of censorship has been identified to have negative impacts on creativity in the country. Though the censorship might have succeeded in preserving the interest of the government, it is characterized by disadvantages that have economical and technological impacts and can, in the long run, lead to a revolution for liberalization. There is a need for the government of China to lessen the restrictive measures it has on the internet industry as it in many ways limits creativity of the people of China.

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