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News Site Commenting Policy and Its Ethical Implications

Abstract: Internet and social media platforms have provided a voice to the readers where they can express their opinions on news articles. However, such freedom to express one's opinion has often lead to uninhibited flow of words that can prove harmful and hurtful to a segment of people, especially when discussions revolve around race, religion, politics, and minorities. News sites have responded differently in dealing with the onslaught of negativity. Some news sites have completely closed the commenting features while a few others have moderated comment sections. Such developments have generated an ethical dilemma in the journalistic realm—trying to balance the need of free expression, and avoidance of harm. Through this study, I synthesized research that deals with commenting in the online context. I found that current policies of news outlets concerning commenting forums have not provided a conducive environment for deliberated discussion. I therefore argue that news sites should open the comment feature along while applying a policy in which commentators' identities are non-anonymous. Furthermore, I suggest the design and implementation of a reputation strategy whereby readers can comment and engage in a dialogue on issues while exercise social rewards and punishment.

Introduction

Words can have a powerful impact. In the online world, words expressed as comments on news articles, videos, photos, and any form on online content can be informational, amusing or even distasteful. Uninhibited behavior online can sometimes result in profanity and hostile communication, also known as flaming (Siegel, et al. 1986) . While some may view such behavior as offensive, others may be more tolerable. Negative words have the power to ruin someone's reputation, can prove hurtful, and even restrict knowledge and science to grow. As one of the most popular and influential journalism products in science, *Popular Science* (*popsci.com*) decided to close their comment feature because of the discourses in that considered bad for science (LaBarre 2013). Other popular news sites such as CNN and NPR have also said goodbye to their comment sections. It is

a perplexing trend since news sites desire user engagement yet are increasingly not allowing such interactions through their comments sections.

For some readers, comments' features in new sites may be insignificant and never read. It probably is regarded as just another website's accessory. But then when the news sites begin to close the comment sections, it no longer seems just another supplemental feature. When closing the comment in 2013, Suzanne LaBarre, the online content director of *Popular Science*, wrote that the comments could shape public opinion in a negative way, and later public policy and research funding for science.

The new sites—*The Verge*, *The Daily Dots*, *BBC*, *Reuters*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *The Week*, *Popular Science*, *Recode*, *Mic*—decided to close their comments' features because they were becoming harder to manage (Bilton 2014) (Ellis 2015). What they mean is that hate speech—shouting, swearing, incivility, racism and sexism—do not contribute to constructive discourses; instead such negative user-generated content ends up silencing the public. News sites that still keep open the comments argue that commenting feature provides the safest place to exchange ideas, especially on sensitive issues, without being recognized. Other news sites, such as Huffington Post, decide to moderate their comments to foster readers' awareness in posting a responsible comment.

It is understandable that media and the journalists are still adapting to the new reality of interactive online news platforms. Such online news sites provide a great deal of power to the consumer of news in shaping public perceptions through their commenting and other engagement behaviors. Through a comprehensive review of literature, this paper discusses new sites' commenting policies and their ethical implications. Through a critical analysis of the current conditions, this study provides insights into what ethical positioning should be taken, as well as recommendations for the media at a practical level.

Previous Research in Commenting Policies

Several studies in this area approach the comments from the audience perspectives (Marchionni 2015), commenting policies and their impact on the discussion (Ksiazek 2015). Research in this area has also delved into news controversy and news sites' comments policies (Santana 2016), anonymity of the readers and its effect on the quality of the discussion (McKenna and Bargh 2000) (Santana 2014), race discourse in online comment forum (Loke 2013), and the importance of moderation on racist discourse (Hughey and Daniels 2013). Most of the studies are related to the strategy, the practice, or its impact on sensitive issues, and lack on the ethical issue of the comment feature.

A look into previous research reveals that there is a gap in analyzing the comments feature from the ethical approach, specifically the implication of comments policies to two principle values: freedom of speech and avoidance of harm. In the initial level of information and communication technology (ICT) adoption, users will presume and treat ICT as the medium to express

their opinion freely. It is mostly considered as a liberated technology. In the context of commenting forums, there is an assumption that it is a new place to have free and open conversation and being heard by others. In the traditional media, a newsroom is usually very selective in publishing comments in readers' sections because they want the comments to serve the function of responsible criticism of news, thereby widening readers' knowledge.

Commenting feature on news sites are usually assumed as the virtue of new media in guaranteeing freedom of speech. Even so, time proves that the comments' features have a potential to bring harm to others, especially to marginalized groups. In Europe, online comments sections have been found to be mostly negative and even aggressive towards the Roma ethnic minority in Romania (Muresan and Salcudean 2017) . Other minorities such as the Muslims have continually been a target of online abuse. An analysis of Twitter data revealed that there is rampant anti-Muslim hate, prejudice, and threats visible online (Awan 2014). In the US context, comments mentioning Latinos were likelier to be negative and stereotypical (Harlow 2015).

Derisive comments can be seen from the perspective of hate speech. A study by Soral, Bilewicz, and Winiewski (2018) through survey and experimental research methods showed that constant exposure to hate speech "leads to desensitization to this form of verbal violence and subsequently to lower evaluations of the victims and greater distancing, thus increasing outgroup prejudice" (1). It can therefore be concluded that the readers' perspectives on this issue is not only influenced by the news, but also by the comments. Hence, this paper discusses the comment feature and its implication to the freedom of speech and avoidance of harm.

Analyzing media policy on the comment feature is important because even though new sites have put a person in charge for managing the comments feature and have a general the policy on it, most of the decision—either to open or close it—is determined per issue. The comments on issues such as religion and race will generally be closed, but there's no particular issue about news that is related to the media owner or political affiliation. The topic is also relevant for media policy in this day because it investigates the dilemma of journalism in the era of the Internet and information overflow.

Research questions

RQ1: Are the commenting forums in the news sites considered the new public sphere?

RQ2: What are the ethical implications of each type of comment policies?

RQ3: Which policy that could give the most benefit for the readers and the discussion?

Method

In analyzing the comment features and their ethical implications, this study uses a critical review method that aims to demonstrate extensively the literature and critically evaluated its quality. Grant & Booth (Grant and Booth

2009) state in the critical review description, a researcher describes, analyses, and synthesizes material from various sources. The end product is identified by a hypothesis or a model that constitutes from various schools of thought, and not an answer. This paper analyzes various concepts that associate with commenting policies and ethical values.

Conceptual Framework

Commenting Forum as the New Public Sphere

The concept of public sphere is mostly associated with Jurgen Habermas' concept in bourgeois coffee shop. The public sphere is described as "the institutional space where political formation takes place, via the unfettered flow of relevant information and ideas. Mediated and face-to-face interaction constitute this space" (Dahlgreen 2001, 33). The Internet, Dahlgren argues, is the new public sphere because it is basically the extension of the mass media and offers one-to-many interactive communication that such enables people to talk in a forum (2001, 46-47). Political discussion on the Internet occurs in three ways: in an individual level, community level, and deliberation (Dahlberg 2001). From the perspective of deliberation, the Internet is considered as the expansion of the public sphere, in which *critical* and *rational* discussions are to be held. Thus, the Internet will be considered as a new public sphere when the discussions in that go beyond the mutual support of virtual communities and involve the type of rational-critical discourse expected by the deliberative model. By this mean, the Internet characteristic that enables people to communicate one-to-many in an interactive way is not sufficient to call it public sphere. The principle of critical and rational discussion must be met to be qualified as the public sphere. This paper analyzes the issue of commenting in three main areas: (1) journalism in the Internet era, (2) commenting policies of news sites, and (3) ethical values from the perspective of freedom of speech and avoidance of harm.

Journalism in the Internet Era

Since the first time the press evolved, the primary function of journalism remains the same: "to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 17). Nevertheless, McChesney (2013, 175) states that the Internet has worsened journalism in a level of "political crisis of existential dimension." That is to say, journalism has failed to serve as the truth seeker and information provider to help people make the best decision of their lives. It is now full of "soft news" and entertainment, contains repeated information and more press releases, and fails to recognize the potential critical issue. The Internet is only making the current condition worse by monetizing all aspects in journalism: from the content to the workers, the readers, and the technology. The Internet which was considered as the "agent of diversity, choice, and competition" has turned out to be the force of monopoly.

In the information era, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), journalism function has promoted to the higher level as the verifier and interpreter of the facts. The new roles require journalism to not only gather the data and information, but also to make sense of them. Besides finding the truth, journalism should also give the citizens the best version of it in order to help them make the best decisions. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) highlight the journalism function in providing a public forum for the citizens to find solutions to their problems.

Related to commenting policies, journalism could utilize the comments feature to serve public for discussion forums and gather information and check the truth of issues they covered. However, it is arguable whether the journalist can use the comments to run their function as a verifier and interpreter of the facts. It is important to understand that not every citizen can distinguish the differences between the news and the comments. Why? Because when the readers open a news site, they assume that information they read are come from the newsroom and is considered as part of the news. Other issue to consider is the technology of the newsgathering and how it can mislead the newsroom. The example of this is the system to count the 'hits' and rank the news, later journalist will use the recommendation from the system to follow up the news and assume that the readers are interest to such information. However, it should be understood that some of news rank systems include the quantity of the comments and if one article gets more comments than the other, the system will rank it in a higher position. If the function of journalism is to verify and interpret facts, and comment feature serve as the reference tools, then it is very likely that journalism may fail to perform its functions.

New Sites' Commenting Policies

An article is not the only information that people receive when they are reading news in news websites. The comments feature also contains a message, and on sensitive issues such as conflict of religions, races, or tribes, the comments have a potent power to provoke the readers. On example is a study by Anderson, Brossard, Scheufele, Xenos, & Ladwig (2014) that found how the online comments on innovation and science, such as nanotechnology, have influenced readers' perceptions in a level that it polarizes the perception about the technology. Santana (2016) collected previous research mentioning the topic on news sites' comments that could heat up the discussion and engender hate. It varies from religion, race, politics, crime, sex, homosexuality, immigration, disasters, taxes, courts, and celebrities. Basically, these topics are categorized as the news values in journalistic terms and it means that almost every article could potentially attract insulting comments.

The news media implement three policies related to their comments (Hughey and Daniels 2013). *First* is to close it or limiting the articles to be

commented. *Second* is to require the users to register and verify their identities before approving them to comment. *Third* is to moderate the comments which contain an offensive discourse, either by the system or human actors from the newsroom or third party. In dealing with the negative and provoke ones, news sites have implemented several strategies such as turning comments off, not archiving comments, and adopting aggressive comment moderation policies.

Other option besides closing the comment is applying some moderation policies. Ksiazek (2015) states that in order to create “a civil discussion” in online comments, there are at least three strategies implemented by the news sites: *registration*, *moderation*, and *reputation*. *Registration* strategy requires the readers to register their identity to the news sites or register through the third party such as using one of their social media accounts. *Moderation* strategy happens before or after the comment is appeared on the news sites. *Reputation* strategy enables the readers to interact by giving each other “award” for useful comments and “punishment” for offensive comments. These comment strategies, either applied solely or combined, according to Ksiazek, could create a more civil discussion rather than a hostile one.

Ethical Values: Freedom of Speech and Avoidance of Harm

Two ethical values that conflict with each other in commenting forums are autonomy and harm. As Plaisance (Plaisance 2013) states, autonomy is the capacity of self-determination, and this means an ability to make a choice. To be able to make a choice, one must have freedom, both freedom from oppression and freedom to maximize our potential, such as education and health access (Trager and Dickerson 1999). Freedom of expression is important to find the truth because truth is tested from many contradictory ideas in which some are true, false, or have a portion of both. The values of freedom of expression are categorized into three: self-fulfillment and self-identity, search for truth, and self-government (Trager and Dickerson 1999, 99). Trager and Dickerson also argue that tolerance and freedom of expression walk together hand in hand because tolerance also promotes the three values.

In further explanation, Plaisance (2013) said that autonomy could also imply “limiting oneself to upholding moral principles and doing the right thing” (150). Autonomy does not mean that one will have an absolute freedom to do whatever he wanted to do, but more to consider his existence as what Kant said is “rational being with moral duties” (cited from Plaisance 2013, 150). Autonomy becomes an ethical issue only if someone has alternative actions to choose. Freedom of expression in the first amendment could be seen as freedom from something that restricted expression and freedom to make use of it. Thus, it will bring not only an opportunity to make a choice, but also a responsibility.

Online communication, according to Gordon (2011), offers more space to freedom of speech and it should not be restricted. People are demanded to be responsible on their speech and expression, thus they first need to be free

before they become responsible. The solution for minimizing harm is not to limit the speech or restrict it, but to allow more speech because it will be less damage in the future than restricting it. More speech is also important for the society to empower themselves and to be self-governing. Besides, the freedom in expressing our speech must not be abused in order to protecting it.

The second value is avoidance of harm, in which according to Plaisance, the definition includes acts that “explicitly set back someone’s interest and human dignity” (Merrill 2011, 125). It is not an absolute principal because sometimes, one will harm other to achieve his goal. In a competition, for instance, the winner will harm the other competitor’s goals by winning, but he’s not necessarily doing “harm”. The challenge for journalism is to make sure that the content which they are distributing will bring minimal harm to people. It is important for journalist to always asses the value of the content and its possible impact.

In discussing harm, one recommendation that always been refers to is Mill’s the canonical formula of the harm. As cited in Turner (2014, 299), the principle is that, “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.” In other words, the only purpose to use power is to prevent harm to others or the community at risk. One could justify his/her action in social interference because it would stop others from a harmful action. The principle is also known as ‘harm to others principle’. Nevertheless, the harm principle put a great responsibility to the person, and he/she does not always realize the harmful effects of the action (Fitzpatrick 2010). Similar with Mill in defining harm, W.D Ross states two main ethical duties of a person: beneficence and non-maleficence (as cited from Ward, 2011). The beneficence is the duty to help other and do goods to them and the non-maleficence is the duty to not do harm to other. Ross argues that people should prioritize the second one and even sometimes to avoid harm requires a restrain to freedom – to act and to publish.

Findings

The first statement to analyze is the claim that comment feature is the new public sphere. According to Ward (2011), online communication establishes “a new and better marketplace ideas of democracy” (89). It allows dissent and alternative ideas beside the main issues that journalism serves to the society. In addition, Loke (2013) states that the comment feature has developed into a place where the “public can participate freely without fear of retribution and the freedom to comment anonymously has revealed the need for honest discourse” (193). Even if some comments do not endorse “sophisticated discourses” (Loke 2013, 194), there is still a reflection of public opinion in it. Thus, closing the comment means that journalism has silenced the public and failed to provide a public forum for discussion.

Analyzing both arguments, this paper reasons that the claim on comment feature as the new public sphere is overrated. *First*, referring to

Almagor (2000, 15-16), there is no such thing as the marketplace of ideas, even on the Internet. It is important to notice and understand that “ideas are not commodities” and thus they cannot be explained by the concept of marketplace. *Second*, the media operation system includes a limitation of access by the limit of ‘space’, limit of duration, the news value criteria, to the interest of media owners. In its relation to democracy, journalism has failed to work by itself because there has been a disappointment regarding its freedom from the media owners and other political pressures (McChesney 2013). *Third*, the works of propagandists in public relations and advertising have decreased the journalists’ abilities to understand and reveal the truth. A comment feature, at first, is seen as a place where a common citizen has the opportunity to express his/her opinion, and later from the discussion, he/she would be able to counter the hegemony and propaganda. Despite exercising their views and knowledge, a common reader will be having enormous information to understand and terminates in doubts or extremism.

Many content providers believe the Internet is a new public sphere where people can share various expressions and opinions. They also believe the Internet will be a new marketplace of ideas that help develop democracy. Nevertheless, the conversation on the Internet sometimes is not contributing to the public discourse and democracy, instead it ends just as one more channel of communication (Ward 2011). It is also possible to question the Internet capacity for creating political discourse when the conversation in full of hate and causes harms. The Boston Globe (Swidey 2010), The Minneapolis Star Tribune (Brauer 2009), The Wisconsin Janesville Gazette (Pioneer Press 2010), Washington Post (Howell 2006), and The Guardian (Mackie 2012) have once closed their commenting feature. The reason is because the conversation is so full of hate, rage, and abusive to the readers. Such conversation, according to the news media, no longer contributes to the political discourse and democracy.

Moreover, Ürper & Çevikel’s research (2016) in Turkey found that soft news—such as sports, home news, and entertainment—are more likely to get more comments from the readers. Politics and economics, which affected people’s lives, comes after the three but only receives less than 20 percent of the comments. As a consequence, the soft news dominated the homepage of the two mainstream online newspapers in Turkey. The finding indicates that readers are more interested in the soft news rather the serious news; and the moderation of the comments are more likely to happen in serious news comments rather than in other categories. They argue that a new public sphere in the online news media is limited by the conversation on such popular issues that is less important to people’s lives. Since online news media count on the popularity of the news, there will be a tendency to only cover the soft news and narrow the information to become lighter and easier to read. The persistent condition is a threat for public discourse and democracy.

The objective of democracy is neither a free press nor the marketplace of ideas. Its main objectives are to create harmony in the society and promote a

free, equal, and respectful participation in social life (Ward 2011). To achieve them, democracy requires participation and public deliberation that is based on facts, a long-term purpose, and consideration on others. Based on the arguments above this paper conclude that *the current condition of comment feature is not sufficient to be called the new public sphere*.

The second statement to analyze is the claims on the freedom of speech and avoidance of harm, and which ethical values will give more advantages to the society. Both Mill and Ross imply that at some point freedom should be limited. The required condition is when the expression will potentially bring harm to others.

Free speech is essential in democracy because it allows a thoughtful political discourse specifically in political issues and policies. But then again free speech does not mean that everything should be said, but everything worth saying should be spoken (Solove 2007). Thus, free speech that relates to soft news, such as entertainment news, sometimes is not really necessary because it potentially can harm someone's reputation. When social networking sites have become one of the important things in people's everyday lives, so does the reputation. Today, keeping an online reputation is as important as offline reputation because reputation is an important part of human dignity, and people keep it with their own lives.

Anonymity has a tendency to make people say harmful things about others and it facilitates lies (Solove 2007). Anonymous postings or comments on the Internet could harm people's reputations and their personal identities. Even if free speech is important for our autonomy and democracy, so it is with reputation and privacy. Waldron (2012) argues that hate speech should not be tolerated because of two reasons: our society is committed to humanity and there are always marginalized groups in a society that need to keep their dignity. Hate speech could damage the public order even though it does not always create clashes. Public order in a society is more than just the absence of fight, but also a peaceful and respectful atmosphere, where people are able to interact positively on a daily basis.

The claim about the harmful effect on anonymous speech is mostly an assumption and not backed up with any research. However, Santana (2014) proves with empirical data that anonymity correlates with incivility dialogue in commenting forums. A controversial issue, for instance about immigration, is more likely to get anonymous comments and arouse "bigoted language, stereotypes, epithets or ethnic slurs and xenophobic or other hateful expressions" (Santana 2014, 28). Diakopoulos and Naaman (2001) research show that users prefer to write comments on controversial issues anonymously; and anonymity has been shown to promote commenting volume as many users reported they would not comment if made to use their real name. All studies confirm that disclosures of readers' identities cause uncivil conversation by expressing anger, hate, and personal attacks.

Hlavach & Freifogel's study (2012) on the ethical implication of the comments feature – by using Society of Professional Journalists' (SPJ) Code of Ethics and American Philosopher Thomas V Morris' ethical framework –

suggests that the comment “has the potential to help ethical news organization to pursue truth, goodness, and unity” (100) and the anonymity policy the news media implemented “does not seem to help it pursue truth, goodness, and unity” (103).

Nevertheless, the comments feature could potentially bring harm and end up in an unproductive conversation. According to Almagor (2000), the right to inviolability of personal honor limits freedom of expression. When considering the harmful effects of free speech, there are four considerations to be applied: the speech content, the manner when it is expressed, the person’s motives and objectives, as well as the situation and condition of the speech (Almagor 2001). Almagor argues that harmful speech, evaluated by the four measurements, should be condensed. In other words, there is a responsibility in our freedom to protect others’ freedoms and make a good use of it. The protection for others and the responsibility to provide a constructive discussion are the reasons why news sites close or limit their comments.

Contrary to the idea of comment feature as a public forum, the decision to close it could protect the readers, news sources, and the journalist from hate and offensive condemnation, as well as protect the forum from harmful and incivility discussion. Based on the arguments above, this paper recommends *the news sites to open the comment feature along with applying a policy in disclosing the commentators’ identities.*

From three moderations strategies—registration, moderation, and reputation—that have been implemented by the news media, this paper will discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of each strategy from the perspective of the two values. The registration strategy will minimize the harm, but it will restrict people to comment. Using one of the social media accounts to register will be more likely to restrict the readers to comments than register by using email account. Using social media account to register will make people easier to identify, especially if the person connects all his online activities to his/her social media. Unfortunately, some of the media have made readers to register using their social media accounts. There seems to be a general trend in encouraging use participation via social media.

Another strategy is to moderate the commenting sections. However, such moderation is more likely to lead a deletion of comments that contain racism; thus, the commenting forum will be seen as a democratic and ideal public sphere. A downside of such a moderation strategy may lead to an absence of any form of discourse on racism on such platforms. Viewed from another angle, it may be argued that uncivil dialogue on racism could actually turn hate to sympathy and tolerance from other readers. Nevertheless, Hughey and Daniels (2013) argue moderation is the best solution for sensitive issue such as racism and news media faces three challenges in implementing the strategy: the moderation costs—time, money, and energy—are high; and the moderated comments will give a wrong sense of racism and not touch the main problem in the society.

Cenite & Zhang (2012) recommend three strategies to be implemented in the online comment section based on the ethical code of Society of

Professional Journalists/SPJ (1996) and ethical discourse developed by Glasser and Ettema (2008). The first recommendation is to set policies on the comments' features, either to allow or to moderate them, and not just take action if the comments have already generated a crisis. Allowing all comments will potentially ruin the media reputation, self-moderation at some point can be effective, specifically if it has a rating system for the members to rate each other, and a highly moderated system is ethically considered the best solution for the forum. Second recommendation is to permit a relevant criticism to be posted. Lastly, the third one is to respond to feedback and build a conversation between the journalists and the readers.

The support of the moderation also comes from Diakopoulos and Naaman (2011) and Diakopoulos (2016). They say that it is also beneficial for the moderators as it gives them a new dimension for identifying potentially interesting comments or threads in online news comments. Identifying the comments or articles could help orient moderators to look at a commentator's behavior or the evolution of discussion on an article more closely. In Diakopoulos' research (2016) on name changes of commentators after being moderated, it shows that the readers are more likely to change their names after that and the behavior relates to section topic and type of article. Diakopoulos and Naaman (2011) research finds behavior changes after the news media change their moderation policies. In their research, after Huffington Post implemented a rule requiring commentators to authenticate their accounts through Facebook, the total number of comments dropped drastically, especially in articles tagged as crime, politics, and world issues. Ruiz, et.al (2011) analyzed audience participation in commenting forum by the diversity of opinions, the quantity of comments, and quantity of the actual dialogue between the participants. In forums where opinions are diverse, readers debate in a mostly respectful discussion; and in the communities where readers express their feeling about events and less argumentative the opinion is more homogeneous. In a more plural society, they recommend a moderation system, which can help shape a public discussion.

The moderation strategy will occur in one of three conditions: first the comments are moderated before they are being posted, second the comments are moderated after being posted, and last is the combination between registration and moderation. The first condition will prevent harm, but at some point, will restrict the freedom of speech. The second condition values the freedom of speech but has a potential of harm because even the comment will be deleted later, there is still a chance that people read and reacted to it. The third condition will minimize harm but restrict readers in expressing their views more than the first condition because they will be identified. It is important to get the point that moderation's costs will be higher than unmoderated accounts, and the third condition will be the most expensive because it needs more people and time to first verify the readers' identities and later to moderate the comments. The third condition is not

likely to be recommended not just because its cost is higher but also has more steps to restrict the speech.

Table 1.
The moderation procedures and their implications

Procedures	Advantages	Disadvantages
Before the comment published	Minimize harm	Restrict readers' expressions
After the comment published	More open to free expression	Has a potential of harm because it is can be read
Mix of registration and moderation	Minimize harm	Restrict readers' expressions Costs will be higher

Table 2.
The Moderation Strategies and their Implications

Strategies	Advantages	Disadvantages
Registration	Minimize harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict people to comments Social media account as registration will even more limited people to comment
Moderation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize harm Moderator will get sense of readers' behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deleting the comment will disappear the real sentiment in society Costly: time, money, and energy
Reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A check and balance system among the readers Minimize harm Exercise readers' responsibility Stimulate readers' critical thinking Engage readers to the conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit readers' expressions

The last policy to discuss is the reputation policy that requires a check and balance system among the readers. In this system, the readers will control each other comments and also build their reputation at the same time. The reputation policy at some point will limit the readers' expression because they cannot only be identified but also can be judged based on their comments. However, this policy could minimize the harm to others and will exercise readers' responsibility. This policy will stimulate readers' critical thinking and engage them to the conversation in the forum. Blom, Carpenter, Bowe, and Lange (2014) identifies two types of users: frequent and infrequent contributors. Frequent contributors seem to treat the online forum as a space for social networking, but their contributions are less informational relatively in comparison to infrequent contributors. In addition, the frequent contributors may discourage participation by those

who are less interested in online community-building aspects of the forum and more interested in discussing issues under examination.

In conclusion, compare to other moderation strategies, the reputation strategy will be beneficial not just for the individual, but also the community and the discourses. Based on the arguments above, this paper recommends *the news sites to apply the reputation strategy.*

Conclusion and Discussion

The new media technology has changed journalism and society in a significant way. Providing information and the best version of truth has become function of journalism for ages and the development of technology has changed it. Along with other user generated contents like blogs and wikis, commenting forum is considered the new public sphere where people can exchange ideas and find solutions for social issues. However, the discussion and the debate in the forums have a potent power to bring to others, not very little benefit for the public discourse. As what his research has showed, Loke (2013) argues that contradicting opinion is still a public opinion. However, a constructive discussion requires a supportive environment, not just criticism and anger. Almagor (2000) states that people now live in an era of political violence and extremism because of the polarization of opinion. Besides, humans have limitation in digesting information and when they are flooded with information, they need more time to think, but then the speed of information will not allow them to do so. Thus, it is important for journalism from the very beginning to set the limit of information by reducing the uncivil discussion.

One consideration from the media practices is when they move the conversation to the social media. At the beginning, it seems like the best solution because people can still discuss the news on the Internet, while doing it in their own media, not in the area of journalism. It seems ideal because journalism itself could distinguish themselves from the audience generated contents platform. Nevertheless, moving the conversation to the social media will be more harmful because of some factors. First is the digital divide because not everyone is literate with social media uses and responses they receive later will be more personal because it will come from the networks of friend. Second the discussion in social media cannot be accessed by journalist and will not give the insight or understand other perspective. Third, the function of journalism in providing public forum of discussion will not be done. Instead it will be replaced by the corporations which own social media networks and later bring another issue on how capitalism controls the information.

Media practices and policies on commenting feature seemed to be decided arbitrarily and often reactionary. Only when a crisis arises or when people are being affected in a negative way, is media willing to evaluate their policies and implement moderation or simply closing of the commenting features on news articles. This paper offers a valuable synthesis of research to illuminate various pathways in dealing with such situations. This study is also beneficial as it can provide a roadmap in assisting better

decision making about the commenting policies while weighing the ethical values that media prefer to apply.

This paper has limitations as it only investigates the issue based on two ethical values: freedom of speech and avoidance of harm. There will be other ethical values and consequences that are not discussed. In entertainment issues, ethical value such as privacy should be considered or when the comment related to marginalized groups, then justice should be considered.

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