# Realisation of online networked publics: A study on genre of Communication, Deliberation and Interactivity.

Ehsan Milani

Bachelor of Engineering, Industrial Engineering
Master of Communication Studies, Media Research
Master of Philosophy, Communication and Journalism

**MACQUARIE**
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

Faculty of Arts
Music, Media, Communication and Cultural Studies

# Table of Contents

# Abstract

The popularity and growth of numerous online platforms which citizens can use to discuss news and current affairs has become a new area for studies on cyber culture and online journalism. In that context, this study makes enquiries into the nature of online publics in news websites and their most popular affiliated social network: Facebook.  The study refers to the question of genre and its possible role in creating spaces of deliberative communication on the Web, as discussed by Ridell (2005), Dufrasne, M., and Patriarche, G. (2011). The presence of deliberative practices is then observed within discussions which emerged in news genre to reflect on Setala's (2014) question on the function and outcome of public deliberation in the cyberspace. The thesis argues that public opinions which emerged from discussions on and about news genres should be considered as legitimate reflections of public opinion and therefore a reasonable source for policymakers and analysts for pilot studies and feedback.  Recognition of publics which are created in forms of public sphericules or mini-publics is important to reinvigorate discussion on the discourse of internet democracy in the context of participatory internet forums. Recognising the contribution of online publics will lead future research to focus on the implications of the outcomes of these publics in different areas of public policy, politics, social sciences research and public relations. This study investigates the relationship between genres of communication and the emergence of deliberative practices and the formulation of public opinion within six international news websites (BBC World News, the *Guardian* Global edition,

the *New York Times* Global edition, CNN international, Al Jazeera English and the *Washington Post*) and their official pages on Facebook.

# Statement of Candidature

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled "Realisation of online networked publics: A study on genre of communication, Deliberation and Interactivity", has not previously been submitted for a degree in whole or in part to any other university or institution.  I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research and in the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used is indicated and acknowledged fully.

Ehsan Milani
(41328833)
June, 2015

# Acknowledgements

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

**Introduction**

The growth of information and communication technologies has significantly enhanced people's access to information. The omnipresence of the Internet and its particular features, such as immediacy and hyper connectivity, have enabled it to provide new platforms for the presentation and dissemination of news. Though it is not yet possible to claim that all news organisations are actively seeking their audience in cyberspace, the vast majority of established media organisations have expanded their presence into this sphere and are actively updating their services to satisfy their users and make sure they are not left behind in the race to capture the potential of new communication technologies for extending their presence in the information age. For instance with growing access to smart phones, the majority of news organisations have started providing mobile news dissemination by creating a different domain and updating their users in real time. As a result, news as an important genre in media content categories is now available from numerous sources with just a touch.

Our world is presented and understood through news (Anderson, 1991). People identify each other and formulate an imaginary picture of their own community other countries based on the news stories they read or the programs they watch. In this context news and the public sphere are connected with each other through multiple spaces for consumption and reproduction of the content. On the other hand, the public sphere presents a unique space for individuals to discuss a range of different topics of their interest with others. These communities were once created in coffeehouses and salons (Habermas, 1989) but the public sphere was later on influenced by corporate powers and the discussion of the politics and public affairs were marginalised.

This thesis looks into possibilities of reinvigorating publics -which were once centred on common stories of national and international importance – but now are centred in new spaces created by the Internet.

The thesis targets discussions on stories which are significant – because discussions in the public sphere were mainly centred on issues affecting everyone - so its focus is on the providers of this kind of content: news websites.

This study aims to identify common spaces where *news dialogue* takes place. The importance of dialogue leads this study to focus on the mechanics of these transactions or the concept of *interactivity*.

In addition, such discussions should be meaningful – because it is preferable to identify a common understanding or a public opinion – after each discussion. The usefulness of this criteria is set by the concept of *deliberation*.

The combination of deliberation within this space and interactivity by the participating users creates a virtual space of every person who has established a connection in regards to the central theme of the discussion. This virtual space is a public.

Hence this thesis imagines a public that has emerged through 1)Deliberation and 2) Interaction by the users in a virtual space.

The requirements of this virtual space is to provide particular functions which allow users / readers to participate and discuss, and approve or reject other users' ideas about the central theme of each discussion. This requirement shapes the first question of this thesis: Is there a common platform across all news websites where this public could emerge? The second and third questions of this thesis are centred in the way news websites present their content in this common platform, and then how these new spaces satisfy common requirements of

deliberation and interaction so that the final public opinion emerging from these interactions can be legitimate and trust-worthy.

**Theoretical Framework**

Different theories inform the discussion of this study. The characteristics of publics is informed by Habermas' concept of Public Sphere (1962) but it also includes relatively new concepts such as the formation of 'publics and counter publics', 'Mini-publics', 'Public Sphericules' , ' ad-hoc publics' and 'networked publics' (Benkler, 2006).

The discussion on deliberation is informed by earlier attempts in defining deliberation. But the key theoretical framework here is drawn from Manosevitch, Manosevitch, Steinfeld & Lev-on (2014) and Zhou, Chan & Peng (2008) in identifying certain criteria for evaluating the deliberative values of comments posted on dicussion pages (These values are discussed in the methodology chapter). The interactive nature of publics has been discussed in regards to different forms of Interactivity and particularly Benkler's (2006) discussion on how Interactivity sythesizes networked publics by network's participatpry behavior. It is important to note that for Habermas public was designed for discussion and debate but for Benkler (ibid) it leads towards political action.

**- Statement of the problem**

The introduction of Web 2.0 in 2004 was followed by a wave of optimism concerning the potential of new information and communication technologies in representing the public sphere. Central to discussions on this potential was the application and use of participatory platforms that were previously either limited

or even inaccessible for majority of users in Web 1.0. The effects of this transformation in the formation of publics at par with the ideal public sphere has been discussed by number of studies (which are discussed in the literature). However amongst the different theories, this thesis examines Dufrasne & Patriarche (2011) and Ridell's (2005) argument on the importance of 'Genre of communication' in evolution of deliberative publics. In particular, studies on the Internet-democracy project were mainly influenced by the technology of the Internet and how this technology can limit Dean (2003) and Fraser (1992), Fraser (2007) or expand the public sphere (Dahlberg, 2001). However as discussed by Dufrasne & Patriarche (2011) and Ridell (2005), with Web 2.0 and the participatory web, participation has changed both in its richness and reach. Participation in web 2.0 is empowered by the application of interactive features. If participation within publics was limited to clear expressions of opinion, with the application of different interactive features (via options to confirm, share and recommend previous opinions within a public) there are new opportunities for members of a public to identify one opinion as their most preferred option. The collective actions of users here– in displaying opinions which have received the maximum number of approvals – highlights a public opinion which has emerged from online publics. It can be argued that interactivity between users (in discussing subjects of interest) has transformed online publics from a domain of playful commentary to a purposeful domain of deliberative action. In this phase, the evolution of public opinion is dependent on the application of interactive features. However, the presence of deliberation in discussions according to Ridell (2005) and Dusfranse & Patriarche (2011) is dependent on the genre of communication. This thesis investigates genre of news and argues that the

emergence of public opinion as a result of deliberative action amongst users is genre-specific and in this context news genre present opportunities for a legitimate public opinion to emerge. It is legitimate because it is a product of deliberative discussions between users. It is therefore important to include mini-publics or networked publics in the evolution of formal decision processes. The impact of online publics would not become operational unless they were registered as formal arenas for debate between citizens. According to Setala (2010, p.15) the impact of mini-publics could be strengthened by the institutionalisation of their use and by developing the ways in which their recommendations are dealt with in representative institutions. In restrospect, the argument of this thesis in recognition of networked publics has clear implications for the increased civil and political participation of ordinary citizens. However, this participation can only become feasible if citizens become aware of the effects of their participation in civil discussions in the internet. Based on this argument, different government institutions can initiate online platforms for discussion and debate on their proposed policies and each corresponding public can represent public opinion on subjects of future legislation. This thesis argues that news genre (particularly current affairs and interntional relations) are a catalyst for deliberative discussions within publics.

The question of genre of communication is important because it presents a different approach to the internet-democracy project which is not techno-determinist in its approach. In this context, this thesis aims to analyse whether News as a genre (defined and limited to stories on current affairs and international relations) could be a catalyst in turning emerging spaces of playful interaction into

deliberative publics. The importance of this transformation sheds light on the legitimacy of the public opinion which is ultimately created within these publics and could assist politicians, policy-makers, social science researchers , etc as an important document.

**Methodology**

The study applies both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative content analysis is applied in identifying and categorising posts into different beats. Simultaneously, qualitative content analysis is used to identify presence of deliberative factors within publics.

Two statistical tests of Pearson's correlation coefficient ® factor and absolute deviation around the mean are applied in this study. Pearson's correlation coefficient ® is calculated to present the relationship between two levels of interactivity within a public. Absolute deviation around the mean is also calculated to detect outliers and avoid the findings presenting a methodological bias towards the sample.

**Outliners of Chapters**

As the main areas of enquiry are on publics, deliberation and interactivity, the literature review is focused on three chapters, each dealing with a distinct topic: 'Public Sphere and Publics, 'Deliberative Practices in Online Journalism' and 'Interactivity'.

In the 'Public Sphere and Publics', I discuss the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, critiques of this concept, the emergence of the cyber public sphere and Michael Warner's concept of 'public'.

In 'Deliberative Practices in Online Journalism', deliberation is discussed as an important element in publics and the differences between online deliberation and face-to-face deliberation are explored. An examination of theories of deliberation is followed by a discussion of the characteristics of deliberation.

In chapter four on 'Interactivity', interactivity as a concept is discussed from different perspectives. The differences between interactivity and interpassivity are explained in detail followed by defining interactivity as an intercreative process. The different types of interactivity and the use of different interactive features in online journals are also covered in this chapter.

In Methodology, different methods and statistical analysis is presented and discussed.

The chapter on 'Analysis' presents a descriptive account of the data and it also presents statistical tests. Its followed by results.

The final chapter is 'The conclusion' and it raises the significance of findings in the context of the existing literature followed by recommendations for future research and limitations of this study.

# Chapter 2

# Publics

**Introduction**

Research on the public sphere has been traditionally associated with studies of public opinion and political participation. In fact, political theorists have conceptualised the public sphere in various ways. Hannah Arendt anchors her notion of the public sphere in a particular understanding of the politics of ancient Greece (Arendt, 1958). For Arendt, the public sphere is a place of freedom and contestation, separate from the demands of work and the necessities of bare existence.  Richard Sennett reads the public sphere in terms of practices of self-presentation and display, because to him the public sphere became a space of abstract freedom (Sennett, 1992). However, the discussion of the public sphere in the media is most often associated with the ideas of Jurgen Habermas (1989 [1962]) in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry in a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Habermas' ideas have been used regularly in the fields of media and democratic discourse theory to articulate relations between state and civil society. For Habermas, the public sphere is a space of open debate standing against the state as a special subset of civil society in which the logic of democratic equivalence is cultivated (Cunningham, 2001.p.132). Habermas identifies and discusses the emergence of the public sphere in English coffee houses , French salons and German *Tischgesellschaftens*. Habermas's observations lead to further elaboration on the principles of a working democratic institution. In this context, the Habermassian concept of the public sphere is inclusive, and that means it identifies parity among all the individuals regardless of their social status. The public sphere functions on communicative rationality, a concept which refers to the emergence of new

areas of culture that are made open to publics by reasoning, critique and rational thinking. The public sphere is then conceptualised as the public use of reason (Dean, 2003). Habermas's conceptualisation has been criticised by researchers like Nancy Fraser (1992) due to its assumption of the inclusivity of all individuals and its assumption of non-existent gender discrimination or racial and age limitations. Despite this, it is still referred to as a prominent theory in political thought and is widely cited by scholars in media studies (Geiger, 2009).

As stated, the concept of public sphere has been discussed by scholars in different fields of social sciences. However over the last ten years there has been a surge in number of scholars focusing on the application and discussion of the public sphere particularly within emerging discourses related to globalisation and the network society (Lunt,P. 2013).  In the same context Lincoln Dahlberg (2013) elaborates on the importance of the public sphere and argues that its influence is not only because of the wide uptake of Habermas' conception in democratic theory, but because it offers a communication-centered understanding of the role that social actors and institutions should take in the democratic processes, providing for both the evaluation and guidance of practice.  Dahlberg's emphasis on the role of social actors and institutions was extensively discussed after the events of Arab Sprint in Tunisia, Egypt and Iran.  For example according to Papacharissi (2013) the discussions on the role mobile communication and social media were either dismissing or downplaying the existence of a causal relationship between social media and political uprising or they argue that the use of social media accelerated the development of social movements (p.145). New

developments in information and communication technologies and the various ways the Internet is today changing our daily media use in accordance with the rise of social media and our notions of political participation, the public sphere has established itself once again – as discussed by Schneider (1997) and Dahlberg (2013), in the expansion of the public sphere by the computer mediated communications – as an arena of research that stands very close to arguments by the advocates of electronic democracy. As Costa (2014) has discussed the Internet and new digital technologies have raised the potential of online, horizontal and deliberative communication.

> *The spaces in which political debate and rational argumentation between equals may take place have diminished, yet new digital technologies have brought up potentialities in the promotion of online, horizontal and deliberative communication.* (Costa, 2014, p.187)

In fact, it can be argued that the idea of the public sphere has been reinvigorated (particularly in the 1990s) because of the emergence of the Internet and new digital communication networks. In this context, Nicholas Garnham has claimed that the public sphere has replaced the concept of hegemony as the central motivating idea in media and cultural studies (Garnham, 1995). In this chapter, I review arguments on the public sphere and the Internet, media segmentation and emerging public sphericules. Discussions will be summed up by reviewing Lincoln Dahlberg's (2001) view on the Internet and the public sphere.

**The Public Sphere**

Habermas defines the public sphere as a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed (Habermas, 1989). The public sphere is inclusive of all citizens and comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Citizens' conversations in the public are not constrained by any limitations imposed by the state (1989, p. 73).

Habermas particularly recognised the impacts of the print industry, exerting a powerful influence on the state's practices and the political life of societies. For Habermas, it was not simply the growth of publishing that created the public sphere—it was the simultaneous dawn of a kind of *consciousness* that the public could be systematically addressed through a pamphlet as if a group of strangers were gathered together in a giant auditorium. Habermas conceived this imaginary "public sphere" as a potential democratic utopia where individuals could discuss issues and deliberate towards achieving a common consent in public (Ganter, 2003). In the same context Benedict Anderson (1991) defined the concept of the 'imagined community' to underline the formation of the modern state. He offered a new way of looking at a nation – as an "imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" and he convincingly illustrates the role of print press and colonial states in "making" nations (Anderson, 1991, 6). However  as discussed by Habermas (1989) in the 19th and 20th century with the growth of the publishing industry and the commercial importance of the print industry, this public sphere arguably transformed into an arena which served the interests of industrial magnates

and the ruling class rather than one which enabled critical rational debate. The decline of the public sphere has been studied from different perspectives that will be addressed later in this chapter. However as highlighted by Dahlberg (2013) the underlying importance of public sphere was the role of media and communication technologies in the democratisation process. Habermas particularly mentioned the role of the printing press in shaping publics, however with the fragmentation of media audiences and consolidation of media ownership it can be argued that the ideal public sphere had to change according to new emerging patterns of media practice as well. The transformation of the public sphere will be discussed in the next section to elaborate on the emergence of new publics.

**Transformation of the Public Sphere**

Habermas observed that social gatherings in common public places created a particular class practising deliberation and reasoning. This public body in its earlier days emerged in public places such as coffeehouses and salons, where actual discussion on topics of general interest used to take place. As described earlier, industrialisation and other agents of transformation, such as the mass media, introduced new platforms for the public to engage in discussions over different issues. These discussions were ultimately expected to result in the formulation of a public opinion. According to Habermas, public opinion refers to the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally – and in periodic elections, formally as well – practise vis-a-vis the ruling structure organised in the form of a state (1989, P.73).

This concept suggests that public opinion is dependent on the practices of a public in questioning and reasoning with regard to political power. Habermas's observations on the evolution of the public sphere points to the early days of bourgeois society, with changes in Europe's political structure in the eighteenth century, particularly after the collapse of feudalism. The new political structure that was created identified the boundaries between state and society, public and private. Based on these boundaries, a new sphere evolved between the state and private life that was identified by Habermas as the public sphere. However, this public sphere was mainly a forum for discussion on politics and literature by the educated property owners of the time and therefore was not inclusive of all civilians. This bourgeois public sphere began to fade, particularly with economic and structural changes that were introduced to the society:

> *The collapse occurs because of the intervention of the state into private affairs and the penetration of society into the state. Since the rise of the public sphere  depended on a clear separation between the private realm and public power (Holub, 1991,p.4).*

In this new phase critical, rational thinking about the public's interests was replaced with discussions related to leisure and entertainment. This stage is often described as a refeudalisation of the public sphere by the mass media, and has been critically analysed by contemporaries of Habermas in the Frankfurt School. They argue that the change is a direct result of the mass-produced, mechanically reproduced culture, manufactured through structural changes in cultural industries (Ubayasiri, 2006). This refeudalisation phase is seen as having enabled corporate and commercial interests to colonise the public sphere.

The main argument of scholars of the Frankfurt School was that the commercialisation of the public sphere in the 20th century – due to the commercialisation of the mass media and popular culture – has refeudalised the public spheres in such a way that questioning the practices of the state had become a marginal affair.

The debate over public sphere after the intrusion of commercial media into every realm of the public and private lives of civilians in society has been described in two different views discussed by Eder (2013) and Schiller (2001).

Eder (2013) identifies three major issues in discussing public sphere in relation to changing patterns of participation and structure of public sphere. First is the theoretical issue of the social and cultural embeddedness of the public sphere (2013,p.27). The key question here is to discuss how public spheres emerge and reproduce themselves in changing social and cultural environments. The issue is that we have to leave the container of European experience – which the idea of public sphere by Habermas was based on-(before the public sphere area)  and consider how public sphere/s can emerge in our own time. For example Elder discusses that exclusions which were practiced in the public sphere and questioned by Nancy Fraser (1997) and others such as class, gender or ethnic differences are no longer applicable in contemporary formations of public sphere. On the other hand, there might be some new complex dimensions shaping the participation patterns of the public. The second issue as discussed by Elder is the blurring line of private and public in our time. As boundaries of public and private become more fluid the empirical eye needs appropriate instruments able to

capture the final outcome. The third issue is both theoretical and methodological and here the key question is to find how arguments run through individuals and groups to finally form a public sphere.

Another key perspective on the idea of public sphere in our time is presented by Schiller (quoted in Cunningham 2001, p.132) who believes that the contemporary western public sphere has been tarnished or even fatally compromised by the encroachment of commercial media and communications. Others, such as Hartley (1999) think that media remains the main source for existing discourse in the public sphere (Hartley, 1999). This media-centric approach, as discussed by Hartley (1999), considers media as a force that envelopes the public sphere:

> *Hence the public sphere can be rethought not as a category binarily contrasted with its implied opposite, the private sphere, but as a 'Russian doll' enclosed within a larger media-sphere, itself enclosed within the semi-sphere. And within 'the' public sphere, there may be equally found, Russian doll style, further counter-cultural, oppositional or minoritarian public spheres (Hartley, 1999, p. 218).*

Hartley's conceptualisation of the term 'public sphere' is quite different to the original explanation by Habermas. Hartley conceives of public sphere as an integrated part of the media sphere, where the media not only creates the public sphere but also controls the flow of discourse. This is a media-centric approach towards the evolution of the public sphere in refeudalised media systems that are in fact different from the Habermasian modernist understanding that considers the public sphere as separate from such mediatisation.

Hartley's media-centric approach to the public sphere is important from the perspective of broadcast media. However, with the rise of

interactivity and the presence of different tools for the audience (to create, share, recommend, email and tweet the content) it can be argued that the flow of discourses is no longer completely controlled by the traditional media. For example, the dissemination of news and reports on the 2008 elections in Iran was mainly done by ordinary citizens through their use of social media (Rahimi, 2011). Along the same lines, other media scholars have proposed different readings of public in discussions of public sphere. For example Sonia Livingstone (2005) defines a public as a group bounded by a shared text. Michel de Certeau (2002) argues that consumption and production of cultural objects are intimately connected and therefore shaping a public. Henry Jenkins (2006) applies these ideas to the creation and dissemination of media. Amongst different ways to conceptualise publics Danah Boyd (2010) presents a  perspective which is inherently different from earlier explanations. Boyd (2010) focuses on formation of publics. According to Boyd publics in a network are different from the other publics in their structure.

Networked technologies reorganize how information flows and how people interact with information and each other. In essence, the architecture of networked publics differentiates them from more traditional notions of publics (Boyd, 2010,p.2)

In fact the networks allow publics to freely disseminate information. Along the same lines, Mizuko Ito (2008) argues that "publics can be reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception" (Ito, 2008, p. 3).

The presentation and discussion of publics in different ways indicates new structures in the design and structure of public sphere. To address these issues raised by Elder (2013) three concepts of public sphericules, networked publics and mini /micro publics will be discussed.

**Publics and Counterpublics**

Michael Warner (2002) introduced and discussed three different concepts associated with the public sphere as a discourse. Warner elucidates the differences between the terms, 'a public', 'the public' and 'public'. According to Warner (2002, p. 49) 'the public' refers to people in general either in a nation or in any other social entity such as humanity. However this assumed unity in 'the public' is more ideological than empirical (Warner, 2002, p.84). 'A public' refers to a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible spaces, those sharing the same experience of being in a crowd for a particular reason and their publicness is a result of the boundaries that have been created by the cause of their unity in that location. Examples include those who attend a presidential campaign or go to theatre to watch a movie (Warner, 2002).

The third concept discussed by Warner is 'public'. According to Warner this kind of public only comes into being with relation to texts and their circulation, for example the 'public' of a news story printed in a newspaper.  Although Warner's definitions of these three terms clearly identify the boundaries and differences in their applications, he explains further that there would be cases in which their application might overlap with each other. For instance, 'a public' is a space of discourse organised by

nothing more than discourse itself and it is auto-telic (ibid) in addition to reflecting a concrete audience. This means that a public exists both in rhetorical terms and in the context of reception (this was also discussed by Sonia Livingstone (2005) who explained public in relation to a text and its audience). Gitlin (1998) asks whether new emerging communities that are shaped on information rather than speech, share the same values as publics. In this line, the rise of social networks and particularly Twitter has been discussed in formation of micro/mini/adhoc publics (Bruns & Burgess, 2011) & Wessendrof (2014).  In particular Bruns & Burgess (2011) argued that Twitter presents a public of its own kind:

> *Twitter, too, is one space for public discussion, one fragment of the public sphere, alongside a range of others; it is neither entirely separate from them (since its constituency of users overlaps with theirs, and communication flows across their borders), nor completely homologous with them (since different sociotechnical affordances enable different forms and themes of communication). (Bruns & Burgess, 2011, p.6)*

Identification of Twitter as a space for public discussion resonates with Bruns' (2008) assertion that publics which have emerged based on discussions centred on a particular issue (issue publics) are subsititutes for the conventional, universal public sphere of the mass media age.

> *What we see emerging ... is not simply a fragmented society composed of isolated individuals, but instead a patchwork of overlapping public spheres centred around specific themes and communities which through their overlap nonetheless form a network of issue publics that is able to act as an effective substitute for the conventional, universal public sphere of the mass media age; the remnants of that mass-mediated public sphere itself, indeed, remain as just one among many other such public spheres, if for the moment continuing to be located in a particularly central position within the overall network.  (Bruns, 2008, p.69).*

Discussion of Bruns' identification of ad hoc publics in Twitter  as substitutes for the universal public sphere created by mass media informs the argument of this thesis as well. Though Bruns doesn't answer the question of what emerges from these ad hoc publics, and although he mainly focuses on deliberative values in the circulation of hashtag commentaries, the central aim here is to show that as a result of the interactive and deliberative actions of the users, and with application of their collective wisdom, a unique public opinion is emerging from these mini-publics and in publics formed for the discussion of news.

**The Characteristics of Publics**

Warner has identified and discussed six different characteristics of publics; (1) A public is self-organised (2) The address of public speech is both personal and impersonal (3) A public is a relation among strangers (4) A public is constituted through mere attention (5) A public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse, and (6) publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation. In order to identify a news forum as a public we need to discuss these characteristics and observe if a news forum, in its entity, can be framed as a public.

A public is self-organised. Warner explains a public as being auto-telic, an entity that exists only in its own discourse.  The discourse here means any form of rational communication intended to establish consensus on an abstract principle or a personal statement of thoughts and feelings. As a social practice, discourse involves symbolic transactions that affect people's shared sense of the world (Hauser, 1999, p.13). This discourse can be audio, video,

texts or basically any form of established signs and signals that are intended to establish communication between participants. Discourse in Warner's discussion of public is textual and reflexive. It is textual and is dependent on its own circulation to formulate a public. This discourse exists by virtue of being addressed. A news forum also exists because of its own content that is primarily text-based and is often projected as comments posted by the participants in a forum. As Warner has explained, "A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself ... it exists by virtue of being addressed*"* (Warner, 2002 p. 50).

This public organises itself independently, free from state institutions or any other form of external affluence. An online news forum provides a unique opportunity for individuals to participate in online deliberations free from external influences. Participants are disembodied and free to leave their comments on news stories that interest them.  Warner explains this public as a combination of infinite publics within the social totality. In fact, a news forum is also a combination of various categories and discussion groups on multiple news stories and topics of general interest, so it can be considered as an entity that consists of multiple or infinite semi-publics that can be identified as public sphericules as well.

According to Warner, this particular feature of inclusivity projects a public as a very modern concept that is different from other terms explaining and classifying collections of individuals as crowds, audiences, people or groups. The difference is that the idea of a public, in this context is primarily text-based and different from the understanding of a public that is associated with the co-presence of individuals. Warner discusses the characteristics of

publics, and he explains who can be considered a member and how membership of publics can be determined. As stated, a public is different from a group, community or people. The difference is not only in that a public is primarily text-based but that participation in a public unlike the other three terms, is not necessarily determined by physical presence. The membership of a public is determined by individuals' participation (which only happens after members' attention is attracted). In news forums we can identify a public when individuals participate in news discussions. Therefore, participation in discussions is central to shaping these publics. This participation itself is dependent on the circulation of discourses among individuals. This means reading a news text itself doesn't form a public. Those who read form an imagined community, however a public is formed only when members participate in either adding to the content or dissemination of the content. However, the prerequisite of this public is having access to forms of interactivity where participation is defined with users having an active role in the dissemination of addressed discourses. This is generally achieved with the application of interactive features where users' participation has a central role in shaping the overall presentation of the original content. According to Guay (1995) the most sophisticated level of interactivity is adaptive, meaning that it allows the users to alter the page (ideally in real time).

In this context, the circulation of discourse only takes place when individuals use these interactive features and for example publish their comments. Therefore, uploading comments in a news forum is in fact circulating a discourse. This discourse should be classified as public discourse as it is formatted and circulated to an existing public. In this context, to

highlight the differences between a social group and a public, Walter Lippman (1927, pp. 54-55) argues that a public is thought to be active, curious and alert. But actual people are only occasionally aroused and fitfully involved.  A news forum is in fact a platform where alert and generally curious individuals discuss different themes as presented in news items.

Warner considers a public to be a relationship among strangers (2002, p.55). As publics are self-organised with their own discourse and are not influenced by external frameworks, it is expected that their address is open and inclusive of all strangers who are participating in its circulation. Warner's discussion highlights that a public unites strangers by participation itself. In other words the only commonality among strangers is their membership that is practised by their contribution to the dissemination of discourse through their online deliberations. A news forum is also a platform for anonymous individuals to interact with each other on news stories of their interest. In fact an online forum is a good example of Warner's conceptualization of this term since it practically unites strangers with their online deliberations. In this context the only way to realise this public is to observe the structure of online deliberations, as that is the primary factor determining a public. The various ways to realise a public have been discussed by Warner and he has mentioned polling as one of the most popular tools that is generally used in market research and social sciences to realise a public, its foundation and interests. According to Warner (2002, p.54), "polling is an apparatus designed to characterize a public as social fact independent of any discursive address or circulation". In this discussion, Warner presents Habermas's understanding of polling that systematically distorts a public and presents

something as public opinion when it is itself derived from a form that lacks

the openness and reflexive framing of a public discourse. Warner considers

opinion polls as mediating in open public discourse to present something as

public opinion while this interference itself distorts the openness of a public.

Polling lacks the reflexive and deliberative nature of a news forum.

> *I would add tat it lacks the embodied creativity and world making of publicness. Publics have to be understood as mediated by cultural forms...publics do not exist apart from the discourse that addresses them (Warner, 2002, p.54).*

Warner's explanation that a public is internal to discourse suggests

that the best possible way to identify the nature of publics and relations

among strangers would have to be a closer analysis of the presentation and

flow of discourses, generated in the forum. For instance if the primary

discourse in the news story is racial discrimination then the public is formed

on reflections on/about the same primary discourse.

The address of public is both personal and impersonal. Once we

identify a public, we need to understand what is being addressed and who is

being addressed. In this phase Warner presents an analysis on the type of

address in a public and furthermore elaborates that this address to strangers

can be personal or impersonal. The address in a news forum can be

impersonal as the news story / earlier comments do not address any of the

readers in person. However once a user identifies herself as a possible

addressee of the discourse then s/he conceives the address as personal and

acts accordingly. The process of identification here is the same as what

Althusser (1972) had described as interpellation. In defining interpellation,

Althusser states that through the act of interpellation individuals are turned

into subjects. Individuals are interpellated when they assume they are the subject of an address. Though this might seem similar to the way speech is addressed in publics, it's important to note that there is a difference between interpellation and addressing individuals in a public. The difference lies in the fact that in interpellation, the addressor knows exactly who is the subject of his communication. However in a forum the identification is solely dependent on the addressee's confirmation. Once the addressee confirms being the subject, the address becomes personal. The fact that address can be both personal and impersonal indicates that a public exists and therefore the address, whether personal or impersonal, becomes a public address.

> *The appeal to strangers in the circulating forms of public address thus helps us to distinguish public discourse from forms that address particular persons in their singularity (Althusser, 1972, p.59).*

Consequently, speech in a public should be conceived as public speech or public address. Warner considers attention as the principal sorting category by which members and non-members are discriminated (p.61) in a public. As discussed earlier, the existence of a public is dependent on members' activities, either notional or compromised. However a minimum uptake is required. As Warner explains publics are more identifiable as virtual entities than voluntary associations and since they are not influenced or supported by any external institutions they may disappear once the attention has expired.

> *Publics, by contrast, lacking any institutional being, commence with themoment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to cease exist when attention is no longer predicated (Warner, p.61).*

In forums, and particularly news forums, we can identify sub-publics or public sphericules emerging on various themes that are being discussed by

individual members. These themes are selected and highlighted by members

and when other members start referring and commenting on the same theme

that has been mentioned in another member's post, a public sphericule

evolves. This process can be conceived of as self-organisation of discourse in

publics.  The evolutions of such spaces have different consequences which

will be discussed in a later chapter in the discussion of online deliberation

and interactivity, however the minimum consequences derived from the

emergence of public sphericules is providing a public space almost on any

discourse that is presented in public. The degree and measure of experience

depends on users' activities in sharing their opinions with others and vice

versa.

A public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of

discourse. Warner identifies a public as a space for ongoing encounters with

discourse (2002, p.62). A public is a platform where discourse is created,

updated and circulated.  Hence he argues that no single text can create a

public,

> *[and nor] can a single voice, a single genre, or even a single medium. All are*
> *insufficient to create the kind of interactivity that we call a public, since a*
> *public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse … only*
> *when a  previously existing discourse can be supposed, and a responding*
> *discourse be postulated, can text address a public (p.62).*

Interaction is then central to the creation of a public.  It's not a single

text but texts reflecting each other and being circulated like a conversation

between individuals. A news forum presents a platform for this interaction

and circulation of news, reflecting everyone's argument and circulating and

updating them continuously. These updates, on arguments posted by

individuals in a forum, introduce a level of temporality to the public discourse. In fact, intervening discourses presented by individuals are part of a cross-citational text allowing the original discourse to move in different directions (Warner, p.66).

- Publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation

The punctual rhythm of circulation is crucial to the sense that ongoing discussion unfolds in a sphere of activity. This punctual rhythm ensures up-to-date circulation of discourses in a public through an inter-textual environment of citation and implication. All publics are inter-textual, even inter-generic (Warner, p.68).

Warner suggests that the Internet and other forms of the new media will change the public sphere by their temporality. However Warner didn't discuss the Internet in detail. He explains further that we cannot be sure when a website updates and how frequently new content becomes available online; most websites are not indexed and are not archived. However, Warner's analysis no longer holds true. Due to the popularity of the Internet as a news source and the growth of communication technologies, temporality is not an issue anymore. Online news journals are updated multiple times in a day since for many digital and mobile subscribers the Internet has become the only source for news. Online forums also present a perfect example of temporality as they are updated continuously and are indexed/ archived. In addition to temporality, hypertextuality as an integrated feature of the web offers circulation and reflexivity to a public.

Warner explains other features of a public such as that it should be open to an indefinite number of strangers as reaching strangers is public discourse's primary orientation (p.76), however although it is open to strangers, it selects its participants based on topical concerns and similar interests.

In this context, it can be argued that although online forums are open to indefinite strangers, as anyone can register, the individual's membership is not restricted by selection. That means that in forums everyone can get access and participate in the circulation of various discourses. This participation is in fact a search for new publics.

> *Public discourse says not only: "let a public exist," but "Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way." It then goes out in search of confirmation that such a public exists, with greater or lesser success. Success being further attempts to cite circulate and realize the world-understanding it articulates (Warner, 2002, p. 82).*

In news forums, other members of the public can realise this search for new publics in the way individuals present their own understanding of primary or secondary events in a news story and then seek confirmation or rejection of their opinions. The success in establishing public discourses in public sphericules, that have evolved in forums on a particular event, depends on confirmation from other members.

In a news forum, members can recommend comments to each other. Each comment is a presentation of a public discourse that seeks approval and confirmation from other members. Members can arrange published comments based on recommendations. Those comments that have received confirmation and been cited by other members systematically represent public sphericules within the same public. The more confirmation a

comment (public discourse) receives the more relevant it becomes in the

creation of a public sphericule. The realisation of this concept, as discussed by

Warner, and emphasised by Greene (2002) requires the readers to put texts,

circulation, and publics together as an interactive unity. Warner explains that

publics can be different from each other in terms of their relationship with

the dominant publics. Some publics identify themselves as oppositional to the

ideologies and practices of the dominant publics and their members mark

themselves off as not being included in dominant publics and share no

common interest with public discourses presented in them. In this sense,

membership is constituted through conflictual relationship to the dominant

publics (Warner, p.85). Fraser (1992) has also discussed alternative publics

that are generally composed of members of subordinate social groups. These

alternative publics evolve when the public arena is completely controlled and

moderated by dominant publics and there is no institutionalised space for

deliberation among members of these subordinated groups. Although Fraser

has discussed these 'subaltern publics' mainly with reference to feminist

activists in the US and Warner has discussed 'counter-publics' with reference

to gay or queers movements, it can be argued that the online deliberation that

takes place in Internet forums and particularly news forums can be

considered as subaltern or counter-public when the topical concerns are

alternative compared to the practices of dominant publics. News forums do

provide a shared virtual space among committed newsreaders in which they

can either launch or participate in a discussion that is primarily dependent on

a cause, which is the news story. However, if the news story is classified as

alternative then emerging publics should be conceived as counter-public

since it is the circulation and reflexivity of discourses that shapes publics. On the other hand, public sphericules that have emerged in a 'public' can turn into subaltern public sphericules if their projected discussions are alternative. In fact online news forums can share some of the characteristics of Warner's counterpublics but the combination of interactive features of these forums and the fluid nature of discussions – that can be shared and cannot be controlled by the media in relation to their circulation would make these publics to stand very closely to the idea of mini/micro publics as well. However as news forums are based in cyber space, it is important to first review some discussions on relationships between the internet and public sphere and then focus further on the characteristics of news forums.

**News Forums and Publics**

The definition of public proposed by Michael Warner (2002) in *Publics and Counterpublics* can help us in framing multiple online communities of information and knowledge as discussed by Gitlin (1998). In this context, it's important to underline that in addressing a news forum, we are focusing on a combination of discourses that comes into being only in circulation with unknown readers.  This is in fact the definition of 'public' (and how it will be applied in this thesis) and how it is differentiated from 'a public' and 'the public'. Henceforth we recognise news forums as 'publics' and not just isolated communities or groups because in addressing a news forum, we are focusing on a context that comes into being only in circulation with unknown readers.

According to Warner (2002), 'public' is primarily an imagined shared space between the audiences of any given text that could be written, audio or

visual. This sharing might be between known or unknown readers but the primary foundation of 'public' lies in the text and its circulation among the readers. Warner's definition of the term public, in relation to text and its circulation, opened a new space in media studies, particularly with reference to audiences. According to Ronald Walter Greene (2002, p. 435) Michael Warner's *Publics and counterpublics* performs a conceptual archaeology of the rules that have formed the idea of a public as an object of study and agent of history (Greene, 2002).

> *The sense that publics are agents of history offers Warner a space to rethink the political importance of publics. (Greene, 2002,p.438)*

In this context, it is important to note that recognition of a news forums and platforms for the discussion of news as publics is fundamentally significant for the legitimacy of the public opinions they express, since their roles either as agents in history or as sections of an imagined community would not be recognised by the institutions which are affected by the emergence of public opinion, unless they are identified as publics. In fact it is the 'public-ness' of this notion that turns it into a new dimension that could be identified with the presentation of discourses that should be taken as public discourses rather than discourses in private spheres of individuals interacting in a virtual platform.


**Public Sphericules**

Gitlin (1998) proposes a new term to analyse the highly debated notion of the public sphere. He elucidates the difference between the past and the present status of mass media in society and argues that if speech was

once a nugget term in the past, when democratic political theory was

discussed in the academia, this has now been replaced with information and

this shift represents a transformation in the media sphere that is

accompanied by a multiplication of the sources of information in an

information age. With the multiplication of the sources of information and

increased audience segmentation and the emergence of parallel subgroups,

he asks whether we can still speak of an ideal public sphere that has become

increasingly complex and poly-ethnic around the world.  He suggests that

with this change, multiple public sphericules evolve that are projections of a

shattered public sphere (Gitlin, 1998, p.173).

> *Does democracy require a public or publics? A public sphere or separate*
> *public sphericules? Does the proliferation of the latter, the comfort in*
> *which they can be in falling, had shattered into a scatter of globules, like*
> *mercury? The diffusion of interactive technology surely enriches the*
> *possibilities for a plurality of publics –  for the development of distinct*
> *groups organized around affinity and interest. What is not clear is that*
> *the proliferation and lubrication of publics contributes to the creation of*
> *ideological differences to establish a common agenda of concern and to*
> *debate rival approaches (Gitlin, 1998, p. 173*).

Cunningham (2001, p. 134) defines public sphericules as social

fragments without critical mass but having the common characteristics of a

public sphere.

> *Public sphericules provide a central site for public communication in*
> *globally dispersed communities. They stage communal difference and*
> *discord productively, and work to articulate insider ethno-specific*
> *identities – which are by definition 'multi-national, even global – to*
> *wider 'host' environments (Cunningham, 2001, p.135).*

Gitlin raises this argument, that what might evolve from this changing

scope of mass media is a network of public sphericules within the public

sphere:

> *The unitary public sphere is weak, riddled with anxiety and self-doubt,*
> *but distinct communities of information and participation are*
> *multiplying, robust and brimming with self-confidence ... the diffusion of*
> *interactive technology surely enriches the possibilities for a plurality of*
> *publics ... what is not clear is that the proliferation and lubrication of*
> *publics  contributes to the creation of a public– an active democratic*
> *encounter of citizens who reach across their social and  ideological*
> *differences to establish a common agenda of concern and to debate rival*
> *approaches (Gitlin,1998, p.170).*

Gitlin has mentioned that the distinct communities of information and

participation are multiplying. Prominent examples of such fast-spreading

communities, with the application of new interactive technologies, are online

news forums.  A news forum provides multiple spaces for readers to

participate in the dissemination and discussion of news stories, providing

new opportunities for further online deliberations. However, according to

Gitlin, the unresolved question is whether such lubrication and proliferation

contributes to form a public (Gitlin, 1998).

The idea of public sphericules or the inclusivity of various publics

either as oppositional or counter publics with a truly post-modern structure

has to be recognised as the most recent development on the original theme

proposed by Habermas. This is a crucial turning point as recent developments

in information and communication technologies are studied and presented by

many researchers, introducing new platforms for the practice of alternative

media that are fundamentally different from mainstream media houses.

Though the identification of public sphericules as discussed by Gitlin (1998)

is significant in understanding the transformation of the public sphere, it should be noted that the structure of a mediascape which is primarily formed by numerous sphericules is problematic particularly from a production perspective where niche audiences are defined and content is tailored to their interest (English, 2013).

> *While online social media often enable the easy development of distinct interest groups it is unclear whether the emergence of a multitude of publics can lead to the creation of a singular public defined by Gitlin (1998).* (English,C. 2013, p.139).

Previously, scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1992) Alexander Kluge (1988) and Lyotard (1944) have also criticised the concept of a universal public sphere. Their main critiques were focused on the exclusion of women and marginalised social groups, on the bracketing of inequalities of status, and on problems in identifying discourses of common concern. However, although the universality of the public sphere was questioned by such scholars, the emancipatory nature of this arena was not dismissed, as it presents a platform where new kinds of publics can grow and help bring about change. For example, Nancy Fraser (1992) recognised the potential of subaltern counter publics and how within oppressed social groups the logic of democratic equivalence is cultivated. For example Fraser's discussion on subaltern counter publics suggests a way that situationally oppressed groups can bring about change within public spheres while still maintaining a collective identity independent (however marginally) from more influential publics.

**The Internet and the Public Sphere**

Discussions on the Internet and public sphere are contentious and require close analysis of human-communication interactions. Jodi Dean has reviewed and discussed this relationship from the early days of discussions on public sphere and has presented significant views over the impact of political communication empowered by networked communication. Dean's argument states that the emergence of the Internet and computer-mediated communication does not necessarily lead to the evolution of an inclusive public. She argues that not only is this use inapplicable, but it is damaging the practices of democracy under conditions of contemporary technoculture (Dean, 2001).

Dean's argument draws on Mark Poster and other cyber-post modernists who claim that this public sphere notion is "outmoded" in relation to online practices. The main argument is that cyberspace presents a hyper-reality in which the rational subject is radically de-centred.

In *Cyber Democracy: Internet and the Public Sphere*, Mark Poster (1995) poses an argument on the Internet and the public sphere that is primarily based on a re-conceptualisation of Habermasian public sphere theory. According to Poster, Habermas conceives of the public sphere as a homogeneous space of embodied subjects in symmetrical relations, pursuing consensus through the critique of arguments and the presentation of validity claims in a process that Habermas identifies it as communicative rationality. Poster argues that this model is systematically denied in the arenas of electronic politics and that we are advised to abandon Habermas's concept of

the public sphere in assessing the internet as a political domain (Poster, 1997).

Poster rejects the application of Habermasian public sphere theory in the analysis of computer-mediated interactions in online forums. According to him the Internet simply doesn't offer an open and inclusive platform. In fact technical limits of the Internet in earlier days of the web prior to diffusion of Web 2.0, made it quite difficult for such considerations. However with advances in communication technologies and growing Internet penetration rates in different parts of the world, the Internet has reached to a new phase that makes it more inclusive and open.

The public sphere and the Internet have been discussed from different perspectives. Jodi Dean's (1998) argument has been influential in shaping discourses. Unlike Poster, Dean's argument on the public sphere and the Internet emphasises ideology critique. Firstly she argues that the characterisation of the Internet as a public sphere is erroneous because the Internet lacks certain qualities of the public sphere and secondly she argues that this is an ideology of publicity in the service of communicative capitalism.

In critiquing the public sphere, Dean (1998, p.98) argues that

*The disorganized sphere designates a plurality of communicatively networked yet diffuse, dispersed autonomous spheres. These spheres form opinions spontaneously. They are effective only indirectly. They generate practical convictions.*

According to her the utopian concept of a unique public sphere is an illusion. Fraser also raises concerns over the public sphere but from a different perspective. Fraser considers Habermas's account of the public sphere to be exclusive on the basis of gender and class. In this context, Fraser

44

(1990) raises questions on inclusivity and asks whether white-American-male-dominated cyberspace could actually represent the physical public sphere. Though this was a valid point in early1990s, with the growth of Internet communication and accessibility to more affordable technologies, the Internet has become more inclusive that it was in the early days of its development. The critique of the Internet and public sphere goes beyond this (façade) and reaches to deeper levels of its functions on mediating communications among individuals. In this context, Dean discusses the issue of inclusivity and argues that even if the Internet becomes fully inclusive of all individuals then the driving force for all discussions and communications on broadband superhighways is nothing but capitalism

> These regulatory interventions are invoked and pursued so as to make the Net safe for commercial exchange, to protect the Intranets of financial markets, establish the trust necessary for consumer confidence in online transactions, and to make appear as a public sphere what is clearly the material basis of the global economy (2003, p.100).

Dean's discussion of the public sphere and the Internet is linked to technoculture as a concept that stands for facilitation of democratic agents in Internet communication networks.

> Technoculture is heralded for the ways it enhances democracy by realizing the conditions for an ideal public. From virtual town halls to the cat and opining of apparently already politicized netizens, computer mediated interaction has been proffered as democracy's salvation (2003, p.101).

Technoculture according to Dean is often heralded as a concept that is linked to notions of democracy and that is conceived to be a solution to the old problem of the lack of daily face-to face-interactions in modern societies with virtual town halls and opinion forums. If expansion and growth of networked communications was once known as an agent in the

45

democratisation of a public, according to Dean (p.102) it has now become a factor to facilitate global capitalism or "communicative capitalism".

Dean's main argument is that the dissemination of information and open networks of discussion and opinion formation, as conditions for the emergence of technoculture in networked societies, are not necessarily functioning to empower the individuals or to work as agents leading to more equitable distributions of wealth. For example, according to Saskia Sassen (1998) the speed and interconnectivity of electronic telecommunications networks produce massive distortions and concentrations of wealth. This goes along with Dean's (2002) argument that that recent excitement regarding the democratic potential of new ICTs fails to recognize the various ways in which the technologies, agents, and practices of digital democracy underwrite the power relations of contemporary capitalism (Longford, 2005).

Dean's critique of the Habermasian public sphere with reference to technoculture questions the possibility of spontaneous opinions and the emergence of spontaneous circuits of communication as in entertainment-driven arenas of technoculture. His argument is based on the assumption that every item that enters the cyber media – and generally the media – has been tested, focus grouped, prodded and shaped to meet the acceptance of a public who are primarily potential consumers with purchasing power (though the emergence of Web 2.0 has clearly changed this pattern). In a way Dean argues that as most of the online content is filtered, channelled and screened beforehand, this procedure is not as independent as an ideal Habermassian public sphere was meant to be.

In regards to Dean's discussion of communications, Judith Perrolle has looked at conversations on bulletin boards and found that the conditions of the ideal speech situation do not apply in the way that has been previously explained by Habermas. She concludes that the conversations are distorted by a level of machine control (Perrolle, 1991). According to Perrolle the basic conditions for speech are configured in the program of virtual reality and remain outside the arena of discussion. That means the norms that govern the discussions are set by a program that is formulated with no reference to the nature and type of discussion that is happening in the forum.

Although Perrolle's argument in analysing the operating programs is valid, her concluding point that rejects the condition of ideal speech has to be analysed again particularly in the context of changing design and architecture of forums and highly interactive domains of social media where, where users discuss news stories, the forum is constantly monitored by the human beings instead of machines. It is monitored by other members or those who are either journalists (in professional news portals), or moderators (in news dissemination portals).

Dean conceives mediation in networked communication, as a tool to facilitate communicative capitalism. Based on this view Dean concludes that the idea of a free public becomes a fantasy of a disconnected life, a life that is liberated from networks of global technoculture (p.104). It is clear that to Dean the emergence of networks is associated on spreading certain values and ideologies. However if we consider these networks just as media for communication then their use and application can be diverse and shaped by individuals.

Dean prefers to associate the concept of the Internet to Levi-Strauss's and later Slovaj Zizek's concept of "Zero Institution" rather than just with a public sphere.  A zero institution is an empty signifier that itself has no determinate meaning but signifies the presence of meaning.  The term was first used by Levi-Strauss to explain how members of a tribe are able to think of themselves as members of the same tribe even when their very representations of what the tribe is are radically antagonistic to one another. According to Dean the Web is a zero institution:

> *It enables myriad conflicting constituencies to understand themselves as part of the same global structure even as they disagree over what the architecture of this structure should entail .... Indeed, the Web is particularly powerful form of zero institution insofar as its basic elements seem a paradoxical combination of singularity and collectivity, collision and convergence (Dean, 2003, p.106).*

As a zero institution, the net is an arena for conflicting arguments. Dean uses the same concept to elaborate on alternative voices in the Web. She argues that the presence of non-mainstream websites and reports of World Trade Organisation (WTO) protests and discourses of this kind, which do not echo the mainstream media, strengthens her stand that the Web is more of a zero institution than a public sphere.

Dean's analysis of the public sphere and the Internet was relevant while the Web was developing in stages that are tagged today as Web 1.0. However the application of various user-friendly platforms for the creation and distribution of user-generated content has significantly blurred the lines between users and producers. The new terminology of 'produsers' is now being used to address the changing landscape of production and participation on the web.  In this context, it is important to review other arguments, those that value online deliberative practices and identify the structural changes

between web 2.0 and web 1.0, particularly the uses and applications that affect users' experiences in the cyber sphere. In the next section a counter argument is discussed with a focus on similarities between ad hoc publics (Bruns & Burgess, 2011) and news forums.

### Public Sphere and participatory spaces

Dean's argument was mainly concerned with the limitations of various discourses in the cyber sphere. She elaborates on these limitations and concludes that screened and channelled content are primary factors in limiting the scope of participation and users' activities on the Web. In the same context, Lincoln Dahlberg (2001) has compared Internet practices, focusing particularly upon publicly oriented online deliberative spaces, with a model of the public sphere developed from Hab ermas's theory of democratic communication. His analysis was based on comparing six different factors that shape the Habermassian public sphere. The six categories are identified as : (1) Autonomy from state and economic power, (2) Thematisation and critique of moral-practical validity claims,  (3) Reflexitivity, (4) Ideal role-taking, (5) Sincerity, and (6) Discursive equality and inclusion. In fact, the first two categories are primary requirements of the Habermassian public sphere and the following four establish the quality of its deliberations.

Dahlberg also acknowledges the threats to online deliberative practices that are posed by corporate colonisation of the online public sphere, state censorship of the internet, online surveillance, the rapid commercialization of cyberspace and the increasing control of internet infrastructure and content by major corporate players (2001, pp.4-5).

However he argues that non-commercial or alternative websites also are taking advantage of cyberspace and are actually facilitating the growth and coordination of a global culture of resistance to the corporate takeover of cyberspace, and of public life in general (p.5). Examples of this rapidly changing cyber culture include the partial shut-down of WTO and International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings, the global protests against the war in Iraq and the popularity of blogging and social networks in many parts of the world. According to Dahlberg although online practices might not be fully autonomous they can still begin to contribute to the development of rational critical discourse and the public sphere at large (p.5).

Dahlberg focuses on the exchange of validity claims in the cyber public sphere and whether the presence of such semi-autonomous spaces actually is leading to establishment of an arena that facilitates deliberation.

Reflexivity probably is one primary factor for which it is difficult to achieve any determination. As reflexivity refers to a process of standing back from, critically reflecting upon, and changing one's position when faced by 'better argument' (p.7) it is more of an internal process and is an indication of changes in people's ideas regarding the subjects of discussions. Discussions on cyberspace are mediated in short sentences and most of the time as Millard (1997, p.159) has discussed are affected by 'chrono-economic stress' (CES). CES refers to time, money and bandwidth limitations of the network and the user. It identifies certain limitations as obstacles to individuals taking on roles in discussions and further elaboration on their arguments.

Role-taking is another factor in fulfilling the requirements of a public sphere that has been discussed by Dahlberg. Role-taking refers to

participants' involvement in the discussions and their positions in

deliberation. Role-taking requires a commitment to listening and

participating in the discussion by users. Through observation of various chat

rooms and use-net news groups, Dahlberg (p.12) concludes that online

interaction is fragmented into groups holding similar values and interests and

that respectful listening is rarely practised - and only to the extent that is

necessary for understanding.

The public sphere requirement of sincerity refers to the extent users

in cyber forums expose their real self either in choosing their nicknames and

email IDs or in writing the introductory sections of their profile pages.

Although research by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) confirms a high level of

voluntary self-disclosure in online interaction, Dahlberg (2001) states that

identity deception is a widespread problem in online interactions. Given that

the presentation of one's identity in cyberspace is a crucial factor in the

structure of online interactions and deliberation, information deception has

become a factor affecting the trustworthiness of discussions in online forums.

In more recent studies Hess (2009) discussed that entertainment based use

of YouTube limits growth of deliberation between users. In another study on

YouTube and Facebook, Halpern & Gibbs (2013) concluded that identifiability

is an important factor in shaping deliberation in online communications.

As discussed by Dahlberg (2004), the inclusion of individuals in

cyberspace is influenced by socio-cultural inequalities.  Here, The most

important factor is access as it is limited and constrained due to poverty and

existing telecommunications infrastructure. Simultaneously, even providing

access to the Internet may not necessarily guarantee the inclusion of users in

cyberspace as participation in discussion forums requires a certain level of cultural capital and community support that may not exist in all conditions. Based on these preconditions, the public and discursive equality is limited to participation from an elite public that has access to the internet and is intellectually capable of participating in online deliberative forums.

According to Dahlberg (2001) this leads to the reconstitution of authoritative power in cyber forums as access and participants potentials to engage in online discussions leads to new social hierarchies and power relations in cyberspace. However the new power relations are solely dependent on the values of the claims posted by the users rather than a reflection of their offline identities. Dahlberg argues that this reconstitution of authoritative power may limit the realisation of the requirement of discursive equality and inclusion. In this context, Halpern and Gibbs (2013) explain that identity plays an important role in shaping online deliberation. Networks that reveal individuals identity show greater deliberation in comparison with those that hide individuals identity. Dahlberg (2001) identifies six different factors that threaten the online public sphere, a review of these points is necessary as some of these factors have become irrelevant, particularly with evolution of Web 2.0 and participatory platforms.

- The commodification of cyberspace that threatens the autonomy of public interaction online. Commodification of cyberspace is an on-going concern for free deliberation. However the changes in the design and architecture of the Internet has introduced new spaces (such as the blogsphere, Twitter feeds and social media) for the evolution of deliberative practices.

- reflexivity that is often a very minimal part of cyber-deliberations. Reflexitivity is still a problem in emerging online discussions as users are not bound to participate.

- lack of respectful online listening in online-fora and minimum commitment to working with difference. Politeness is an important factor in shaping deliberation, It has been found (Halpern &Gibbs, 2013) that networks that reveal an individual's identity can present greater level of civility in discussions among the users.

- difficulty in verifying identity claims. This can be valid even in the context of new platforms for online discussions. There is no guarantee that the individuals behind avatars are necessarily those people that they claim to be.

- exclusion from online fora due to social inequalities. Social inequalities and access to the Internet are still relevant but with growth of Internet penetration rates and relatively cheaper technologies and availability of mobile devices, it can be argued that they are becoming less significant than before.

- discourse being qualitatively and quantitatively dominated by certain individuals and groups. Domination of discourse can become a problem when the fora has a smaller number of participants. With forums open to thousands and millions of subscribers it becomes increasingly difficult for an individual to influence and shape unless there are sound arguments or interesting opinions supported by the members of public.

**Micro Publics / Mini Publics**

The identification of News forums in general as publics is important in

discussing the importance of discourses shared and recommended by users.

However the design and architecture of these publics are inherently different

from earlier discussions on publics. This is particularly important while

considering Elder's (2013) discussion on theoretical and methodological

issues facing the idea of the public sphere emerging from the blurring lines

between public and private spaces. It is clear that 'place' is an important

factor in shaping public sphere, with changes in society there has been a

surge in the number of sites where meaningful encounters take place. These

places may not be as inclusive of all but the regularity of these encounters

leads to a creation of an impact on people's attitudes towards each other or in

their understanding of different subjects (Wessendrof, 2014). Amin (2002,

p.989) calls these places micro-publics.

> *A progressive micro-public can be helped by an agonistic political culture, that*
> *is, a culture of participatory and open-ended engagement...This is a politics of*
> *emergent solutions and directions based on the process itself of democratic*
> *engagement. Open and critical debate, mutual awareness and an altered*
> *subjectivity through engagement are the watchwords of agonistic politics, in*
> *preference to the language of rational deliberation seeking consensus or*
> *compromise. Such engagement may well leave conflicts and disagreements*
> *unresolved, but it will uncover the reasons for resentment and*
> *misunderstanding and the pathos and legitimacy of the aggrieved, so that*
> *future encounters (considered essential in an agonistic public culture) can*
> *build on a better foundation. (Amin, 2002 p.989)*

The idea of micro-publics has been discussed in the context of the

internet and platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) where these

interactions commonly take place. The formation of mini-publics in these

virtual places has been discussed by Boyd (2011) as 'Networked Publics' and

later Bruns & Burgess (2011) have discussed the emergence of 'Ad hoc publics' (which is discussed later in this chapter) particularly with reference to use of Twitter. According to Boyd (2011,p.39),

> *Networked publics serve many of the same functions as other types of publics –*
> *they allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes and they*
> *help people connect with a world beyond their close friends and family. While*
> *networked publics share much in common with other types of publics, the ways*
> *in which technology structures them introduces distinct affordances that shape*
> *how people engage with these environments* (Boyd, 2011,p.39).

It is important to note that Boyd has identified similar functions between network publics and other types of publics. To elaborate on these similarities, the characteristics of publics is discussed in the next section.

**Ad-hoc Publics**

Bruns & Burgess (2011) focused particularly on Twitter and the communities which are gathered around different hash tags. They identify Twitter as another 'Space' or virtual place where a public discussion can take place. In other words they identify Twitter as a mini / micro public.

> *Twitter, too, is one space for public discussion, one fragment of the public*
> *sphere, alongside a range of others; it is neither entirely separate from them*
> *(since its constituency of users overlaps with theirs, and communication flows*
> *across their borders), nor completely homologous with them (since different*
> *sociotechnical affordances enable different forms and themes of*
> *communication) (Bruns,A. & Burgess, J. 2011, p.6).*

The discussion of Twitter as a fragment of public sphere resembles Bruns discussion in identifying evolution of numerous publics.

> *What we see emerging … is not simply a fragmented society composed of*
> *isolated individuals, but instead a patchwork of overlapping public spheres*
> *centred around specific themes and communities which through their overlap*

*nonetheless form a network of issue publics that is able to act as an effective substitute for the conventional, universal public sphere of the mass media age; the remnants of that mass-mediated public sphere itself, indeed, remain as just one among many other such public spheres, if for the moment continuing to be located in a particularly central position within the overall network. (Bruns, A. p. 69)*

The discussion presented by Bruns confirms earlier arguments by Gitlin around the evolution of public sphericules. However if Gitlin raised the question around possibilities that sphericules could substitute a public sphere, Bruns & Burgess argue that the network of publics can act as an 'effective substitute for the conventional , universal public sphere of the mass media age'.

Its important to note that by clearly stating 'mass media age' a clear distinction is made from the European public sphere discussed by Habermas with the printing press. In the same context they add that the difference between hash tag communities (publics) and earlier spaces defined by Warner (2002) is the fact that now with interactive technologies, the public has this ability to respond with great speed to emerging issues and acute events (Bruns, A. & Burgess, J. 2011, p. 7).

*In many other environments – especially those controlled by extensive top-down management structures, issue publics may form only post hoc: some time after the fact. Even online, news stories must be written, edited, and published; commentary pages must be set up; potential participants must be invited to join the group. Twitter's user- generated system of hashtags condenses such processes to an instant, and its issue publics can indeed form virtually ad hoc, the moment they are needed: to include a hashtag in one's tweet is a performative statement: it brings the hashtag into being at the very moment that it is first articulated, and – as the tweet is instantly disseminated to all of the sender's followers – announces its existence. (ibid)*

In the same context it can be argued that news forums which are free from editorial approvals share the same characteristics with ad hoc publics. However questions around the universality of these sphericules or publics

and the fact that they can act effectively as a substitute for a universal public

sphere, it should be noted that the architecture and design of such publics is

highly dependent on 1) Each news website editorial policy in publishing users

comments and 2) Access to these forums. However if the news forum is

virtually transferred to social networks where people can participate and

comment on stories in real time then the argument can be adapted to identify

collection of these sphericules as a universal public sphere. In the same

context its important to acknowledge the importance of developments from

Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 as the real time interaction factor that distinguishes these

publics from communities is primarily a distinct character of participatory

web.


**Public Sphere and Web 2.0**


The introduction of Web 2.0 was followed by a wave of optimism

concerning the potential of new information and communication technologies

in representing the public sphere. Central to discussions on this potential was

the application and use of participatory platforms that were previously either

limited or even inaccessible for majority of users in Web 1.0.  The

transformation of the Web from read only to read / write was accompanied

with a rise in number of Internet users from 350 million 60,985,492 in 2000

to nearly 3 billion (InternetWorldStats, 2014).  Web 2.0 provided a platform

where every member of public could ideally share their voice with others via

existing networks.  In retrospect, in Web 1.0 this connection had to be

established by Webmasters, Web 2.0 allowed each member to independently

act as a Webmaster. According to Benkler this networked public sphere is

inherently more democratic compared to mass mediated public sphere

(Benkler, 2006). The democratic values of networked publics is conceived to

be in its participatory behavior, however it is important to note that

participation by itself does not guarantee the emergence of a public. In fact,

Benkler recognized the importance of other factors and discussed five

different criteria for the efficiency of a networked public: (1) 'Universal

Intake', in that it must be open to everyone.  (2) it must show itself capable of

filtering relevant information that is plausibly within the domain of organised

political action (3) it must have systems for accrediting information sources

(4) it must be capable of synthesising public opinion, bringing together

disparate individual opinions into a coherent public opinion and (5) it must

be independent from government control.

Benkler's definition of a networked public is similar to the definition of

a public discussed by Warner (2005) in 'Publics and Counterpublics' but it is

essentially different from Habermasian public sphere. The difference lies in

Benkler's assumption that this public should lead to political action despite

the fact that for Habermas, the public sphere is a space (mediated or non-

mediated) for debate and discussion.  On the other hand the concept of

participation is not clear. As Terranova (2004) has discussed assuming the

Internet (and here Web 2.0) as a transformative machine to turn every user

becoming a producer is highly arguable.

> *The Internet does not automatically turn every user into an active producer,*
> *and every worker into a creative subject. The process whereby production and*
> *consumption are configured within the category of free labour signals the*

*unfolding of another* logic of value, whose operations need careful analysis
(Terranova, 2004: 75).

Although it seems necessary to define participation, it is also
important to question the techno-determinist approaches towards the
Internet's role in presenting a public sphere. Dean, Dahlberg and Benkler
discuss the role of the Internet as a technology in either limiting or expanding
the public sphere. However as discussed by Ridell (2005) participation has
changed both in its richness and reach. He raises the importance of genre of
communicati on in discussion of participation;

> *The question of genre is pertinent in this connection because it is genres*
> *that offer the cultural interfaces through which the internet, like other*
> *media, is interpreted, made sense of and used. The importance of genre is*
> *highlighted by the development where the online cultural forms that are*
> *evolving will provide ready models for those areas and groups that will*
> *be connected to the net at a later stage.*

Ridell's (2005) discussion on genre of communication presents a new
approach towards the project of Internet-democracy which is not techno-
determinist but focuses on the context of communication rather than the
communication technology. In this context, it can be argued that the Internet
is a platform where sphericules or micro-publics on different communicative
practices emerge but a number of those micro-publics may have the potential
to represent the public sphere and that is depending on their genre of
communication. The question of this thesis is to further elaborate on this
matter and focus on the genre of News and find out whether as a cultural
form, it can provide a model for public participation. The importance of

participation leads this discussion to the next chapters on Deliberation and Interactivity.

**Summary**

Discussion and debate surrounding the relationship between new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and democracy (or the internet-democracy project) is historically framed around the concept of the public sphere. This chapter presented the public sphere as it was originally developed by Habermas (1989). The chapter then discussed the arguments and counter arguments on whether the internet could be considered as a new domain for the functions of the public sphere in a society. It was observed that the discussions on the public sphere and the internet were highly influenced by the design and architecture of the net. Developments in broadband technology, along with the introduction of web 2.0, drastically influenced the discussions and in fact this thesis is developed along with these changes to argue for the legitimacy of publics which are emerging in news forums.

In this context, it was important to establish that these sphericules – made up of user discussions of news stories – shape publics which were later discussed as ad hoc /mini-publics. It was important to discuss the 'publicness' of these sphericules because representing of them as publics adds legitimacy to their corresponding public opinions. The discussion by Bruns & Burgess (2010), (2011) identified Twitter as another 'space' or virtual place where

public discussion can take place. However, the discussion doesn't answer the important question of what the impacts of these publics are (Setala, 2014).

Discussion on the impacts of publics connects this discussion to the deliberative nature of publics, because in the context of publics, outcomes can become legitimate with the presence of two other characteristics: the deliberation and participation of users. To address these values, Chapter Three focuses deliberation and Chapter Four focuses on interactivity (which provides the means of participation for users in online publics).

# Chapter 3

# Deliberation

**Introduction**

Public deliberation is a key area of enquiry in this thesis. In the previous chapter, I discussed the formulation of a public according to Michael Warner's (2002) definitions of publics and counterpublics, particularly with reference to online news forums and discussion boards. For Warner, deliberation is one of the main features of publics - discussions among members within a public can only generate public opinion when it is preceded by reasoning and logic. As deliberation can be defined in different ways, it is important to first discuss those definitions and then focus on deliberations in cyberspace and find any differences between online and face-to-face deliberation to distinguish the essential qualities of deliberative practices and how the Internet might facilitate this process.

To answer this question, this chapter presents an overview on deliberation in historical and political contexts and posits a view on audiences and their behaviours in the pre- and post-Internet eras with reference to online (including social media) and face-to-face deliberation.

**Deliberation**

Deliberation as a traditional form of reasoning has been discussed by various scholars in different contexts. Aristotle in *Rhetoric* defines deliberation as arguing against or for something (Cited in Garver, 1995). Hobbes (De Cive, XIII, 16) also considers deliberation as nothing else but a weighing in scales, the conveniences and inconveniences of the fact we are attempting to establish.

The importance of deliberation as a political process that plays a central role in participatory democracies was discussed in Joseph Bessette's work in 1980. In his paper, 'Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government' Bessette called for participation that goes beyond voting and includes dialogue on controversial issues among citizens. With his work a new direction of scholarship opened, that valued communal life via public communication, protection of public spaces and the identification of a communal ethos (Sandel, 1982).

Lev-On and Manin (2009) define deliberation as a process of considering and weighing the pros and cons of an argument and they suggest that deliberation should be distinguished from other forms of reasoning. Specifically they explain deliberation as a process that uses reason in a distinctive way (p.106). If we only argue for or against a particular cause then we are using reason in a limited way. Proper deliberation only occurs when we are aware that there might be reasons for and against a cause (p.106). Moreover, in the study of political thought and liberal democracy the process of deliberation is generally dependent on the participation of individuals with diverse views. Lev-On and Mannin (2009) explain this further and emphasise that although traditionally opposite and diverse views have been treated identically to each other, their functions are completely different. They emphasise that while diverse opinions may be needed for adequate levels of deliberation, diversity of opinion alone is not sufficient for deliberation to occur (p.106).

To appreciate this point, it is important to note that the presence of diverse views in a conversation may not necessarily guarantee weighing the pros and cons of the proposed argument as at times individuals either may not feel comfortable or may not have enough information or knowledge to present their views in opposition or they may find it difficult to find the relevant information (due to limited resources, etc.) to be used against the main argument. In this regard, a discussion in a deliberative setting may not necessarily be perceived as deliberation, since deliberation requires reasoning for and against one view.

In other words, while diversity can be identified as the primary gate for deliberation, it is only the presence of opposing views that will trigger deliberation as it is conceived of in the deliberative democracy model. The main concern is that diversity may polarise the discussion and practically work as a catalyst for individuals to find like-minded individuals and continue their discussion by creating peer groups and they may tend to forego analysing an argument critically. For example the presentation of individuals' views on an issue such as the legalisation of marijuana may not be deliberative unless and until it focuses on discussing a central argument either pro or against legalisation. General discussion would lead to the presentation of diverse views from different perspectives:

> *The deliberation potential of a given argument or medium should be assessed by looking at the probability that agents will be confronted with opposing views and will give them due consideration (Lev-On & Manin, 2009, p.107).*

The presence of opposite views in a public is the primary requirement of deliberation. It is with exposure to opposite views that individuals may get involved in the process of weighing the pros and cons of an argument. True

deliberation rarely occurs as often in real life exposure to opposite views is largely limited as individuals tend to start discussing issues of concern with like-minded friends and family and so they may end up in their peer group discussing issues with everyone reaffirming each other's opinion. Mutz (2006) discussed these incompabilities and stated:

> *The prospects for truly deliberative encounters maybe improving while the prospects for participation and political activism are declining (Mutz, 2006, p.3)*

However there is a possibility that cyberspace might work as a catalyst for the presentation of opposite views by individuals. If deliberation in physical spaces has become alienated for citizens due to the depoliticisation of public sphere, then the question is whether online deliberation can be considered as the equivalent of deliberative practices in real life.

**Online Deliberation**

Deliberation is a necessary precondition for the legitimacy of democratic political decisions (Bevir, 2006). According to Wright and Street (2007, p.85) its absence is notable in most democratic societies since it is held to be impractical because of the difficulty of holding large-scale political discussions. The Internet was discussed as a new tool to address this problem by providing asynchronous discussion forums or external platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to enhance deliberative practices.  On the other hand,

many argue that online discussion may not necessarily benefit deliberative democracy as it leads to the polarisation or balkanisation of politics (Bellamy & Rab 1999, quoted in Wright & Street, 2007). The balkanisation of politics or polarization of discussions has been discussed as a consequence of individuals' exposure to like-minded people in receiving information or participating in discussions. For instance, Lev-On and Manin (2009, p.111) argue that many individuals join virtual groups for affirmation and most of the news and information uploaded is tailored to their communal interests. On the other hand the process of collaborative filtering influences the flow of ideas. Peers tend to vote for comments that are reaffirming of the group's particular stand on an issue and this affects the exposure to opposing views. Likewise, there is the editorial choice of a website to provide hyperlinks to other related information from various sources. Lev-On and Manin (2009, p.107) argue that the deliberative potential of the Internet relies heavily on the presence of not only diverse but opposing views.

> *Thus in seeking to estimate the deliberative potential of internet communication , we should focus on the probability that users will be exposed to opposing views online and on the probability that such exposure will trigger the distinct deliberative mode of reasoning 'within individuals' (Lev-On & Manin, 2009, p.107).*

Lev-On and Manin (p.110) argue that the structure of online interaction is designed in such a way that it fosters the evolution of homogenous groups. They emphasise that the internet is used primarily to form groups of like-minded individuals, receiving information from like-minded others and creating homogenous hyperlinked spaces (p.110). However they also argue that, although drivers of homogeneity may be prevalent online, the Internet also presents a platform for drivers of

opposition as well. Although they argue that users generally do not actively look for opposing views on the Internet, the structure of online information seeking is designed in such a way that the results of a search for information on the cyberspace may end up in presentation of unintentional opposing views (p.113). In this context it is important to note that the structure of commentaries on a news story shared in external platforms such as Facebook may well fit into the category of a public containing unintentional opposing views as users posting their comments are different from each other and the only commonality between them is the possible subscription to the news website's page in Facebook.  These users are individuals from different backgrounds with different opinions who are participating by sharing their views and discussing issues of their interest with each other.

Sack, Kelly and Dale (2009) empirically analysed the characteristics of discussion threads in Usenet threads to find out if mixed exchanges of opinions could be classified as exchanges of opposing views to confirm deliberation. They concluded that (2009, p.103) if one wants to find a mixed, potentially deliberative exchange in a large set of Usenet news group threads, one needs to look for those threads in which (a) no one person dominates the discussion, (b) everyone participating in the thread has posted at least a couple of messages, and (c) there is at least one message with multiple replies. However while their categorisation maybe valid in observing usenet groups, extending their findings to different external platforms (such as social media) may not be appropriate because the architecture and design of such platforms are essentially different from usenet groups. For example, in evaluating the first category, it can be argued that providing options for users

to like and share a comment will eventually affect the presentation of one dominant view against the others. However the fact that one comment receives plenty of likes and others are  marginalised indicates that some views/ arguments / opinions are not favored by public who have participated in the flow of discussions.

Deliberation, whether face-to-face or online, is ideally expected to have some effects on the act of politics. However in answering the question of whether the Internet could facilitate the emergence of a public as equivalent of public sphere, there are number of conditions that emerge. In a study on deliberation and its influence on political participation, Price and Capella (2002, p.322) analysed sixty different groups who were engaged in series of monthly, real-time electronic discussions about issues facing the country (United States) and the unfolding presidential campaign and concluded that online discussion fostered increased political engagement and general community participation. The findings of Price and Capella confirm findings in earlier studies in the United States in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 2000 by Katz et al. that internet users are more likely than non-users to participate in traditional forms of civic engagement and that 'the internet provided a platform for a significant amount of additional forms of political activity' (2003, p.135). These findings are consistent with range of recent studies on use of Facebook and political engagement by Homero &Zuniga (2012) and use of Twitter motivating individuals to participate in politics by Park (2013). Although findings on the Internet enhancing political participation are consistent, there are contrary arguments by scholars who deny the Internet's influence on civic engagement. Ferber, Franz and Pugliese (2007) assessed

political websites' progress towards the ideals of cyber democracy and the fostering of public deliberation in a period of three years and concluded that little deliberation was found on the legislature sites but they confirmed that opportunities for such deliberative practices were greater on the other types of sites. Earlier studies by Bimber (1998), Davis (1999), McChesney (1999) were also equally disappointed at failing to find any relationship between increased communication and political engagement. The inconsistency in findings may be a result of the changing architecture of participation in the Internet but it is also important to note that Internet use has changed due to changing demographics of social networks. For example there are number of studies researching use of social media and political engagement and they all have argued the existence of positive relationships between individuals use of social media and changing patterns of political inequality in terms of engagement. Apart from studies by Park (2013) on Twitter and Homero &Zuniga (2012), a recent study conducted in USA, Canada and Australia by Xenos, Veromen & Loader (2013) documented a strong, positive relationship between social media use and political engagement among young people across all three countries. They conducted 12 in-person focus groups with students grouped together in four different categories: party political group, issue-based group, identity-based group and social group, and they concluded that the ways in which political information is broadcast, shared and talked about on social media by engaged young people demonstrate the importance of communicative forms of action for the future of political engagement and connective action. It also provided additional insights

regarding the role played by social media use in the processes by which young people become politically engaged.  However in explaining reasons for earlier studies' disappointment with Internet use and political engagement, it can be argued that apart from the changing architecture of the net in the last decade and a greater move towards participatory platforms, it was also probably too early to make a statement about this relationship as discussed by Witschge (2002). It is probably too early to conclude that the Internet is not enhancing and cannot enhance democracy. Another reason for this inconsistency could be the changing nature of Internet use and its application in people's lives. As communication technologies have developed from dial-up to 4G, so the access to Internet has become more mainstream and widespread.

Scholars like Sunstein (2001) and Rice (1993) argue that internet discussion may not necessarily benefit deliberative democracy since it 'enclaves' communication among very like-minded citizens, circulating unfounded and often false information, polarising and intensifying opinions and contributing to widening the gaps between those on opposite sides of public issues.  Kelly, Fisher and Smith (2009) argue that online political discussions may not necessarily become echo chambers of like-minded individuals:

> *The tendency to political homophily clearly exists in blogs and seems to appear as well in more controlled environments featuring gatekeepers of one sort or another, but the kind of open, anarchic discussions found on Usenet have quite the opposite tendency. We have previously found that debate, not agreement or reinforcement, is the dominant activity in political groups (Kelly, Fisher & Smith, 2009, p.84).*

Kelly, Fisher and Smith highlight the fact that the Internet might polarise political discussions but their observation of Usenet news groups confirms that debate is the dominant activity in these spaces. In this context, Wright and Street (2007) argue that strategies towards the Internet, either as strengthening deliberative democracy or denying its ability to have any effects are both techo-determinist approaches. They argue that instead of focusing on technology and the way it may or may not influence political deliberation, the design and structure has to be analysed.

> *We argue that how discussion is organized within the medium of communication helps to determine whether or not the result will be deliberation or cacophony.... The democratic possibilities opened up (or closed off) by websites are not a product of technology as such but of the ways in which it is constructed, by the way it is designed (Wright & Street 2007, p. 850).*

Wright and Street (2007, p. 853) argue that the interface shapes the deliberative practices in an online platform. Based on their observation, it is the design of a Usenet discussion forum that affects discussions and presents civic engagement. Even if it leads towards balkanisation of politics, it is due to categorisation and classification of discussion in different political camps. Wright and Street (2007) refer to discourse structure as the main feature of an online space:

> *The practice of designing networked environments to support conversation, discussion and exchange among people... that is the means to shape the conversation that takes place within a system (Wright & Street, 2007, p.267).*

According to Krejins et al. (2003, p.340) interaction should be intentionally designed. In other words it is the form of technology that affects

interaction and not the fact of it (Wright & Street, p. 854). For example, in the context of news forums, technology could be the application of different interactive tools, their use and presentation format. Cooper (2009, pp.198-99) also identifies rhetoric and structure as key elements shaping political activities on the Internet. According to Cooper (2009) the rhetoric and structure should assure potential members that they will be able to constructively promote their ideas and focus their energy in an organised and reliable environment that shares reputational similarities to the world outside cyberspace. In other words, Cooper is reflecting Fishkin's four characteristics of equality, participation, deliberation and non-tyranny as structural requirements for fulfilling a democracy of civic engagement (Fishkin, 1997, p. 34)

> *Political equality: citizens' preferences count equally in a process that can plausibly be viewed as representative of everyone. Deliberation: a wide range of competing arguments is given careful consideration in small group, face-to-face discussion. Participation: a significant portion of citizenry is engaged in the process. Non-tyranny: the political process avoids, wherever possible, depriving any portion of the citizenry of rights or essential interests (Fishkin, 1997, p.34).*

On design and interface it is important to note that discussion on news can also be structured in different ways. It is the structure of the website and its editorial policies that influence interaction among readers. Whether the readers are allowed to comment on each other's messages, whether they can rate, rank and report comments, whether they can see each other's emails and locations and whether the interface allows them to add each other as friends to follow news stories posted and comments by them. All these features affect the flow of online deliberation.

As discussed by Wight and Street (2007) the structure of discourse in any online interaction depends on the interface. Websites often use different structures to present various interactive features and they are different from each other as their interfaces are designed differently. Gangadharan (2009, p. 329) presents a taxonomy on the levels at which online deliberation occurs. According to him online deliberation takes place in two different contexts: online political discussions and general-purpose discussions. In this context, online political discussion can be in different forms: virtual governmental debate hall, virtual civil society, online news media space and public-private sphere (2009).

- A virtual government debate hall is conceived of as an online space that facilitates a state's consultation of its citizens for political decision-making. It is manifested in the format of official websites that gather information from citizens and provide information to citizens. Different projects of e-governance fall into this category. It is often strengthened by the utilisation of a forum for government–citizen interaction.

- A virtual civil society centralises deliberative activity by creating an online space for discussion, debate learning, and so forth. Non-governmental groups and agents of civil society are active in this space. Examples include online deliberative polling.

- Online news media space, centralises, manages, and stimulates debate on issues of political importance and informs governmental decision-making. Online news media may be unconventional (user-

driven) like Digg or traditional (exercising control over their editorial

process) like BBC Online.

- An online public–private sphere is another form of online political

    deliberation, where expressive individuals generate public opinion.

    Corporate social networking websites and virtual worlds like

    Facebook, 'Secondlife' and 'Youtube' are known examples of this kind.

On the other hand Gangadharan (2009, pp 338-39) classifies general-purpose online deliberation into five different categories: virtual meeting space, collaborative writing tool, argument visualization tool, preference aggregation tool and deliberating autonomous agents. In comparing these classifications to the ways online deliberation occurs in news website or news aggregation websites, it can be argued that users' discussions can be classified as a combination of online political deliberation and general-purpose deliberation. Online political deliberation is realised in online news media spaces either in traditional news websites or news aggregation websites with reference to news stories that are mainly covering political or current affairs stories. On the other hand, deliberation can be classified as general purpose with reference to news stories on any topic other than politics. An example of the mixture of political and general purpose deliberation is presented in Lampe's (2005) study of the characteristics of political conversation in one of the most popular news aggregation websites, Slashdot. Slashdot is generally known as a website for news and information for computer hobbyists and professionals (It was previously known as 'news for nerds'). Slashdot became a deliberative forum before the 2004 US

presidential elections. Lampe in his analysis shows that before the election more and more political stories were posted. In fact the response from the community was interesting as the news stories on the election received significantly more comments than other stories. On analysis of commentaries Lampe observed that comments were more argumentative and contentious. Simultaneously commentators on political stories received more ratings than other stories and there were more arguments and discussions on political news stories compared to news on computers and technology. In fact the analysis showed that although the main readers of Slashdot were not political activists the forum appeared to spark a political / ideological discussion among all the readers who had joined the site for non-ideological purposes. This example clearly explains the mixture of online political deliberation and general-purpose deliberation.

Apart from inconsistencies in finding a linear relationship between online deliberation and political participation, it can be argued that seeking political participation in individuals as a result of online deliberation is not only unacceptable –due to the presence of a number of other variables- but that the field of politics is so diverse that its very difficult to define what is actually aimed to be observed as an indication of political participation. On the other hand, research on this topic often finds that the discussions taking place fail to meet the standards expected of a public sphere, and thus do not embody rational and civil democratic dialogue (Papacharissi 2002; Ruiz et al. 2011; Singer 2009). A healthy, deliberative public sphere is not possible if users are not civil toward one another and online commenting is often the

site of hostile and contentious discussions that are better characterized as vitriolic than argumentative (Ksiazek, Peer & Zivic, 2014).

Boulianne (2009) reviewed 38 studies and concluded that Internet use will not have a substantial impact on engagement but the effects of Internet use on engagement seem to increase non-monolithically across time and the effects are larger when online news is used to measure Internet use, compared to other measures. In another study Lilach (2012) argues about effects of news sharing as an online activity and concludes how this results in closing gaps in political engagement. These findings lead the discussion in this study to focus more on the genre of News and its potential to have an influence on deliberative practices in comments on news stories and other external platforms.

### Online and Face-to-Face Deliberation

The difference between online and face-to-face deliberation has been one of the main areas of scholarly research in internet democracy rhetoric. As discussed earlier, a broad range of democratic theorists recognise deliberation as a central feature of the democratic process, but only a few emphasise that this interaction should only take place among citizens in a face-to-face setting. Online deliberation became the centre of internet-democracy analysis with the development of new communication technologies and their application in the facilitation of discussion and dialogue in cyberspace. While the advantages of face-to-face deliberation have been discussed in the works of Habermas (1991), there has been an element of uncertainty with regard to online deliberation and whether it

should be considered as equivalent of face-to-face deliberation. According to Gastil (2000, p.359) no research has systematically compared face-to-face and computer-mediated political deliberation. Scott (cited in Gastil, 2000, p. 359) reviews five years of research on communication in face-to-face and computer-mediated groups. He concludes that the findings of different studies are not consistent and research has not resolved past criticisms concerning mixed and inconclusive findings. This is probably due to the importance of deliberative settings and speech conditions that are designed differently However Scott summarises his observation and concludes that based on earlier research face-to-face groups tend to be more cohesive and better at handling complex problems that require qualitative judgements. On the other hand, computer-mediated groups often make better quantitative judgements, sometimes reduce the influence of individual participants' social or professional status on the discussion, and usually result in comparable levels of participant satisfaction.

Min (2007) confirms Gastil's observation that there has been little empirical research investigating the effects of online deliberation on public opinion. Min (2007) conducted a study of the differences between the effects of online deliberation and to face-to-face deliberation and concludes that online deliberation can be as effective as face-to-face deliberation for those with access and deliberative abilities. Min argues that online deliberation is not necessarily inferior to face-to-face deliberation. In an observation of college students' responses to face-to-face and computer-mediated settings he suggests that both online and face-to-face deliberation can increase

participants' issue knowledge and willingness to participate in politics (2007, p.12).

According to Min (2007), criticism of online deliberation and whether it should be considered as equivalent to face-to-face deliberation is mainly from social identity / de-individuation (SIDE) theory that considers communication to be most effective when non-verbal cues are present and when communication signals are present within social contexts. On the other hand Min suggests that the importance of deliberation is in rationality rather than the presence of non-verbal cues.

> *Rationality is achieved mostly by linguistic exchanges...there is no reason to believe that online communication conducted through text should be inferior to face-to-face communication in terms of deliberativeness (Min, 2007, p.5).*

Walther (1992) also argues that verbal cues are sufficient for information processing. He asserts that online verbal communication may even be superior to face-to-face communication in terms of rationality, because online deliberation, which is solely dependent on text exchanges, is emotionally more detached and perhaps more cognitively oriented (Walther as cited in Min, 2007, p.5). In other words the advocates of online deliberation argue that the most crucial aspect of dialogue in deliberation is creating the deliberative environment and perfect speech conditions that satisfy assumptions of equality, rationality, reflexivity and civility of communication. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous chapter, one of the main characteristics of publics is access to members and communication among them. If face-to-face deliberation is considered as the only legitimate form of deliberation then the sustainability of different publics would be questioned

when face-to-face interaction is not possible. In this context, online deliberation plays an important role in enabling people to communicate regularly without significant economic or other costs and without being in close proximity, either spatially or temporally (Etzioni & Etzioni, 1999, p. 242).

Etzioni and Etzioni (1999) discuss the differences between online and face-to-face communication and conclude that both face-to-face and computer mediated communication (CMC) can provide access, however online communications seems to be superior in that it can reach more people, even those dispersed over large areas. Off-line communications benefit from the fact that they are built into other physical activities and hence require fewer specific initiatives than online communication.

**Civic Engagement**

Research on the effects of deliberation on political behaviour shows clear links between various forms of political efficacy and political action (Pollock, 1983; Wolfsfeld, 1986 cited in Gastil, 2000, p.359). Proponents of citizen deliberation argue that participation in deliberative forums has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes and behaviours. However in a closer analysis of deliberation and its effects on citizens' political engagement Gastil found that the impact of deliberation depends on the nature of forum participants' experiences. In other words, as discussed earlier, it is influenced by the design and structure of the interface.

Deliberation that occurs in platforms in online journalism enriched with different interactive technologies might influence the ways in which the

political–public sphere is shaped in western societies. Online journalism –

with the application of complex interactive technologies – can present a new

platform for the public to engage in various political discourses and at times

this engagement might shape the virtual public into practising a form of

deliberation that may lead to the formulation of public opinion. Rosenbury

(Cited in Manosevitch & Walker, 2009, p.6) argues that;

> *The combined effects of immediate response, unlimited space, and minimal*
> *censorship, open up an opportunity for citizens to participate in public*
> *deliberation, and a direct link between the paper's voice and citizens' voices,*
> *thereby combining institutional and public voice (Rosenbury, cited in*
> *Manosevitch & Walker, 2009, p.6).*

This public voice discussed by Rosenbury (2005) manifests in

different ways, but mainly it can be summarised as the presentation of

multiple viewpoints and references to personal narratives and experiences.

According to Campbell (2000, p.691), readers' comments and their political

discussions indicate a change in the reception of news from categorising the

audiences as readers to identifying their interactions as a conversation

among experts. Scholars such as Fishkin (1996) and Gastil (2000) have

argued that deliberation can promote an informed citizenry, because it

enables citizens to engage with issues, share information and weigh

alternatives, all of which are necessary to construct an informed public

opinion to influence policy makers. Peter Dahlgren (2005) has also framed

public deliberation as a central issue in the formation of a 'civic culture' that is

primarily focused on citizens and their political participation as social agents.

According to Dahlgren (2005, p. 158) the political discussion is integrated

partly in the creation of a civic culture.

*The framework of civic cultures provides an empirical starting point for analysis. Given that the foundation of civic culture frame is the citizen-agent, this frame is thus interested in the process of becoming – how people develop into citizens, how they come to see themselves as members of and potential participants in social development. Civic culture is an analytic construct that seeks to identify the possibilities of people acting in the role of citizens.*

Whether civic culture is a utopian concept or a reality, it is important to note that this vision has already been discussed in different contexts. According to Pew's (2009) findings on civic engagement and political participation, the Internet is expected to raise political participation due to interactive capabilities that allow certain forms of political activity to be conducted more easily. Simultaneously, the capacity to communicate with a large number of geographically dispersed people at little cost has also helped the individuals as well as the organisations to use the internet not only as a tool to disseminate news and information but to utilise it to communicate with adherents and sympathisers and to recruit them to take political action, either online or offline (Pew, 2004). In the same context Pew (2009) reports on a study on the political participation of American citizens and their use of the Internet:

*In addition to participating directly in civic groups or activities, 49% of Americans have spoken out about an issue that is important to them in the past year by contacting a government agency or official, signing a petition, writing a letter to the editor or calling into a radio or television show.*

A more recent study conducted by Pew (2012) reports on the use of smart phones and civic engagement and shows that in the 2012 US presidential election smart phones were used extensively for either participating in discussions or double checking facts stated in candidates campaigns.

*Smartphone owners are using their mobile devices as a tool for political*

*participation on social networking sites and as a way to fact check campaign statements in real time. Roughly half (48%) of registered voters who own a cell phone say that they have a smartphone, and within this group 45% have used their smartphone to read other people's comments on a social networking site about a candidate or the campaign in general 35% have used their smartphone during this election campaign to look up whether something they just heard about a candidate or the campaign in general was true or not. 18% have used their smartphone to post their own comments on a social networking site about a candidate or the campaign in general Pew, 2012).*

Although the application and use of smartphones might technically be political participation, the same study highlights the fact that the findings are more relevant to political activists than the general public. In other words it can be stated that political participation remains in the circle of political activists rather than spreading to the public. In fact, the findings of Pew, internet research on civic engagement in America does not confirm the evolution of civic culture and civic engagement (only 18 per cent of those having access to smartphones participated in online deliberation), but confirms that democratic debate has helped wired Americans to hear more points of views about key issues than other citizens and that they are not using the internet to screen out ideas with which they disagree (Pew, 2004). Although Pew is not academic source it can be helpful in  providing insights

*Whatever wired Americans' motives for their use of internet for news about politics online resources are on balance as a door-opener to a more informed political discourse (Pew, 2004*).

**Online deliberation: Effects**

Deliberative practices in real life follow a procedure that is summed up either in approval or rejection of the initial argument. Parliaments present the outcomes of their deliberative practices in the form of legislation or various recommendations to the government. Meanwhile its important to

note that a final decision may or may not be taken and deliberative practices

may not necessarily result in a final concluding argument.  However if a final

decision is being made then everyone will become aware of it. However the

outcomes of deliberation in cyberspace, particularly when participants are

unknown and geographically diverse, may not be released in such a fashion

so that every participant is made aware of it. Even if a decision is made, there

is no guarantee that it will be followed or enforced by the same participants.

In fact due to the nature of the Internet and the way publics have emerged (as

discussed in Chapter 2), the effects of online deliberation are delayed and

unclear (due to other intervening variables).  Price (2006) concludes that the

effects of online deliberation can be divided into two categories: (1) impact

on knowledge and opinion and (2) impact on citizen engagement. He

elaborates on the impacts by observing that deliberation does appear to

produce significant gains in argument repertoires, which is the range of

arguments people hold both in support of and against their favoured position

(Price, 2006, p. 15). On the impacts on knowledge and opinion Price

concludes that the impact of deliberation is to move citizens in the direction

of an elite opinion.

The second category of impacts on citizen engagement was concerned

with community engagement, social trust and political participation. In this

category Price concludes:

> *Although the estimated effects on civic engagement are small in size, results*
> *are consistent across a number of different indicators and across both projects.*
> *Online discussion attendees, relative to non-attendees with comparable*
> *propensities to participate, score significantly higher in end-of-project social*
> *trust, community engagement, and political participation. For example,*
> *participants in the Electronic Dialogue discussion reported voting in the 2000*
> *presidential election at significantly higher rates than their counter- parts who*
> *did not attend, even after extensive controls (Price, 2006, p.16).*

In his discussion Price also underlines that online deliberation reinforces social capital and deliberative behavior.

On the other hand online deliberation can be seen as a tool for media practitioners to observe the attitudes and behaviour of their audience. Online deliberation has enabled media professionals to not only track their audiences but also to observe audiences' attitudes and responses with reference to the published content. Although in the pre-Internet era audiences were generally encouraged to contact professional journalists or editors in different ways such as 'letters to the editor', it is important to note that with the application of new technologies, this feature is now used in real time with audiences sending emails, participating in opinion polls, filling in readership surveys or posting their comments on a published news stories online.  In all these procedures, the aim is to achieve a level of deliberation either between professional journalists and their audiences or among the peer group that is responding to a particular story. These changes are mainly presented with application of different interactive features in News websites.

In fact, the operational scope of these changes are often celebrated for their potential to facilitate discussion and dialogue, where comments sections offer the possibility of a virtual public sphere (Papacharissi, 2012). However, Papacharissi's research on this topic finds that in many cases the discussions taking place in forums or commentaries  do not comply with the requirements of deliberative practices.  They are often highly polarized, or users exhibit very hostile attitudes towards each other (Papacharissi 2002;

Ruiz et al. 2011; Singer 2009). According to Ksiazek, Peer & Zivic (2014), a healthy, deliberative public sphere is not possible if users are not civil toward one another and online commenting is often the site of hostile and contentious discussions that are better characterised as vitriolic rather than argumentative. Various scholars have argued that hostility has become so prevalent that users take it for granted in their online interactive experiences (Lee 2005; Moor, Heuvelman, and Verleur 2010; Reader 2012).

To improve the quality of discussions, editors have taken a number of approaches, including asking all participants to register themselves with the publication, or even publishing comments only after initial moderation. Filtering comments and blocking profane and obscene language are also practised by a number of publishers (Gsell 2009; Pe´rez-Pen˜a 2010; Soni 2013). Despite the problems, it is now clear that online deliberation has added new values to journalism. According to Anderson (2011) the profession is becoming more responsive to user behaviour and more open to active audience engagement. Overall, as discussed by Xenos, Vromen & Loader (2013), research on social media use and political engagement has so far produced mixed results.  For example, Zuniga (2014) discussed the relationship between political consumerism and civic engagement, and concluded that political consumerism is more closely related to civic engagement than it is to political participation, and that the use of social media mediates the relationship between general Internet use and political consumerism.

In another study, Bode (2012) investigated the role of social media in the modern political information environment and concluded that social media affects the political behavior of the users.

> *Users of social media are regularly exposed to political information. They may learn from it under appropriate conditions, and the information to which they are exposed tends to be politically heterogeneous. Exposure to such information results in additional information seeking and sharing, as well as some attitudinal change and increases in traditional political behaviors. Implications of these findings are discussed* (Boyd, 2012, p.351).

In another study, Vitak (2010) conducted a survey of undergraduate students in the US  one month before the 2010 election and found a relationship between Facebook use and political participation:

> *Political activity on Facebook (e.g., posting a politically oriented status update, becoming a "fan" of a candidate) is a significant predictor of other forms of political participation (e.g., volunteering for an organizing, signing a paper or online petition), and that a number of factors—including intensity of Facebook use and the political activity users see their friends performing on the site—predict political activity on Facebook (Vitak, 2010, p.1).*

On the other hand, a number of other studies suggest a negative or minimal relationship between the use of social media and the political behaviours of the users. For example Dimitrova (2013) explored the effects of social media on political participation and candidate image evaluations. Dimitrova concluded that social media have no effect on the likelihood of caucus attendance, but did influence perceptions of candidate traits among the sample. In another study Baumgartner (2010) examined the political uses of social networking (SN) websites by young adults in the context of the early

stages of the 2008 presidential primary season, and found no relationship

between social networking and political participation:

> *The study concluded that in spite of the promise social networking sites hold for increasing political interest and participation among a chronically disengaged cohort, users are no more inclined to participate in politics than are users of other media (Baumghartner, 2010, p. 880).*

Studies on the use of social media and political participation are

providing different findings. However, for the discussion of the impact of

social media on political participation, it is important to highlight Setala's

argument that the impact of mini-publics (on social media) could be

strengthened by the institutionalisation of their use, and by developing ways in

which their recommendations are dealt with in representative institutions.

### Facebook and Online Deliberation

The growth of social media (particularly Facebook and Twitter) has

introduced new domains for the public to discuss their stories. Media houses

have also expanded their operation to these new platforms by creating their

own official pages and inviting their readers to follow them in these new

domains. As social media provides the same opportunities for users to leave

their comments and participate in discussions –for example on different

stories published in official pages of each news website- there is this

possibility that users might avoid hostility and engage themselves in

productive and civil discussions.

> *Some sites are even replacing traditional commenting platforms with third-party social media platforms, such as the integration of Facebook or Twitter feeds. Beyond the general engagement benefit, this also has the potential to*

*discourage hostility by holding commenters accountable to their broader social circles. Ksiazek, Peer & Zivic (2014).*

The application of Facebook in the presentation and dissemination of content has developed over the last decade. The uilisation of various user-friendly interfaces provides a number of opportunities for news organisations to follow their readers and find out more about their interest in News. If once social bookmarking sites had editors who were responsible for choosing the type of content and sharing it with their peers, now this is can be performed – though potentially- by all users of a social media like Facebook.

Two-thirds of Internet users use social networking sites (SNSs) – Facebook being the most popular (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010) – and they are increasingly encountering news stories in their online networks. The majority (75%) of online news consumers have content from news websites shared with them through email or SNSs (Purcell et al., 2010), and nearly half of SNS users now receive content from news websites on a daily basis from peo- ple they follow on Facebook (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2012).

Facebook provides a unique space for news readers to share, like, recommend and comment on news stories. Schmitz Weiss and De Macedo Higgins Joyce (2009) suggested that the Internet offers unique opportunities for interactivity because it "allows for a closer relationship with the audience; a shortened social space" between media producer and consumer (p. 593). It can be argued that Facebook changes the dimension of this relationship and

make it to stand as a personal relationship as users' engagement with the
content can be property of the user, the medium or both.

> *Social media sites such as Facebook also enable users to take an active role in*
> *sharing news content with their networks, with potentially positive effects on*
> *their own involvement with the news topics (Greenhow & Reifman, 2009).*

The engagement with content may be in different ways which will be
discussed in next chapter on Interactivity but in regards to deliberation it can
be argued that Facebook presents a unique space because; 1) It is linked to
users public profile and 2) due to its popularity and penetration rate, it
provides easier options for content (such as comments) to be shared amongst
users.

> *About one-third of Internet users have contributed specifically to the creation*
> *or dissemination of news via social media by commenting on a story on a news*
> *website, posting a link to a news story on an SNS, or even creating their own*
> *original news material (Purcell et al., 2010).*

Simultaneously, it can affect the size of publics in terms of number of
participants and also it can be argued that it can improve quality of online
deliberation as it would hold commenters accountable to their broader social
circle (ibid). The accountability in Facebook can be considered as a
foundation in building a constructive arena for online deliberation as SNS
users are more likely to stumble upon current events than to actively seek out
this information (Stelter, 2008), indicating a reliance on opinion leaders in
their networks for information (Sundar, et.al, 2014). Individuals increasingly
prefer socially filtered news, thanks to the powerful influence of peer opinion
that is accessible in SNSs (Emmett, 2008). The key factor is that news is
coming from a trusted personal source: most news links on Facebook (70%)
are from friends and family rather than news organizations that individuals

follow on the site (Mitchell & Rosenstiel, 2012). In the same context when it comes to discussing news on social networks Zuniga (2012) has discussed that the inherent structure of the SNSs facilitates not only the acquisition of information but also the discussion of its importance and relevance with other members of a particular individual's social network, which may increase the elaboration and reflection mechanism for an individual to make sense of what they were informed about. SNS also achieve the high interactivity component that the Internet may provide, which coupled with the simplicity to organize information and relate to similar topics also could enhance the way people get informed. This in turn, could also make possible a smooth mobilization process.

When a News story is posted on Facebook, it attracts users to engage with the content. Obviously there are number of users who abstain from engaging with the content for reasons such as lack of interest, time or etc. But for those who do, this becomes a potential space for deliberation. From all different forms of deliberation the simplest form of deliberation in Facebook is by clicking on 'Like' for every piece of content that is shared in this space. The act of 'Liking' synthesizes a public as collectively it can identify a comment as the most important opinion in a public and likewise collectively can marginalise the irrelevant and obscure comments. The function of 'Liking' –holistically- is deliberative.  In this context it can be argued that a comment that has a maximum number of likes has managed to engage the majority of participants in its own public. According to Oh (2014) the "top" comments may suggest a priority of the ideas promoted in those top comments over

others, thus hindering a full deliberation on topics in the public sphere. So although deliberation may happen in a thread in exchanging ideas it is also important to underline that the most liked comments or top comments display a degree of online deliberation –independently- as well.

The existing literature on online news comments suggests that the idealized dialogue of the public sphere is difficult to attain (due to different issues such as lack of inclusivity of all individuals, hostility towards others and ongoing questions about moderation of comments) Amid such challenges, emerging Web technologies—and interactivity—may have the potential to improve the establishment of functional publics or at least present alternative models of emerging publics in the cyberspace.  In this context, instead of matching ideals of public sphere to new online publics, it's worth thinking whether the Internet can at least provide an extension of imagined public sphere with its own separate values. Henceforth, it is important to argue that new technologies have introduced new ways of dissemination and consumption of content then it would is valid to imagine a new space  - of online public sphericules (Gitlin, 1998) or online mini publics which are becoming increasingly popular- with limited but identical contribution to scrutiny of public policies. With social media providing a new forum for opinion leaders to discuss the news of the day with their broader networks, its reasonable to recognise these new spaces and value their contribution – at least with caution- to the internet's project for democracy. As the introduction of this feature is essentially dependent on application of Web technologies, the next chapter is focused on Interactivity.

**Summary**

The discussion on publics has highlighted the importance of
deliberation and participation in establishing the legitimacy of publics. In fact,
any discussion on the impacts of publics should first be concerned with the
question of legitimacy.  According to Price (2006) the impact of publics can be
categorised into two different levels:  (1) the impact on the knowledge and
opinions of the users and (2) the impact on users' civic engagement. Previous
studies have discussed the impact of publics on the knowledge and opinions
of the users (Boyd 2012;  Vitak 2010) however, the impact on civic
engagement has been unclear because of number of other variables that could
mobilise individuals to participate in civic engagement.  This thesis argues
that the genre of communication plays an important role in the presence of
deliberation in discussions. To explore the importance of the genre of
communication, news genre are framed for analysis and then discussions by
users are analysed to find out whether deliberation shapes the discussion
that takes place within publics. It is also important to note that the
architecture and design of the forums are also important to the legitimacy of
publics. If no public opinion is identified, then publics could not be said to
have made any contribution to their (assumed) corresponding institutions
(Assuming that discussions are on/about institutions such as government
departments, councils, N.G.O's, etc.). The identification of public opinion
within publics is dependent on the use of interactive features by users when
participating in discussions, arguing for and against different opinions and
voting for their favourite opinion. The importance of participation leads to

the discussion of the legitimacy of publics, and consequently their potential to affect their corresponding institutions, (as discussed above). To argue further about this legitimacy, the next chapter is focused on interactivity.

# Chapter Four

# Interactivity

**Introduction**

The idea of having a computer and a broadband Internet connection

for daily use was once difficult to imagine, but now it is the reality for many.

One of the central arguments in the discussion on the Internet and the public

sphere was focused on inequalities in accessing the new information and

communication technologies. In this context, if one is to argue for the

potential of the online publics to represent the public sphere, the first step is

to explore how the development of technology has partially closed the gap

and made participation in online forums a reality for a greater number of

individuals. Although Manuel Castells (2001, p.1) in *Internet Galaxy* begins his

discussion by stating that Internet is the fabric our life, it took nearly two

decades for that realisation. By 2010, the Internet's penetration rate in OECD

(Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries reached

nearly 800 million 797,249,583 users and that covers 65.4 % of the

population in OECD countries (OECD, 2010). On the other hand the ITU's

2010 report on ICT development index (IDI), stated that the digital divide

between the developed and developing world has already decreased.

According to an OECD report, the digital divide refers to the gap between

individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-

economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information

and communication technologies, and their use of the Internet for a wide

variety of activities. The OECD report examines the level of advancement of

information and communication technologies ICTs  in 159 countries

worldwide and compares progress made between 2002 and 2008. It also

measures the global digital divide and examines how it has developed in

recent years. The final remark of the report asserts there has been a significant change in the access to and affordability of ICT services in the developing world. While the IDI values are on average much higher in developed countries than in developing countries, the growth over the past few years has been equally strong and even slightly higher in developing countries. These results illustrate that the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of ICT indicators is relatively small – especially compared to that for other development indicators, such as life expectancy or infant mortality rates (ITU, 2010). Considering growing figures from the developed and developing world with the overall penetration rate of the Internet, it is clear to that access to information and communication are key issues facing most contemporary societies, both developed and developing. In this context, it is important to underline the fact that in examining access to information, there is no intention to discuss or contest an assumption by techno-determinists that is highly dependent on fantasising the role of technology as a magical force that can empower equality and democracy. Rather, the aim is to clearly differentiate between politics and access to information or new technologies.

In recent years the rapid growth and popularity of social interaction over the Internet and the mushrooming of websites with such applications has created a new dimension in Internet use.  This new dimension, which is also known as social media, enabled users to create and share content or participate in social networking. The explosion in social media use can be studied from different perspectives, Sachdev, Nerur and Teng (2010, p. 586) argue that interactivity is an important subject of investigation to shed light

on this explosion in social media use. Nico Carpentier (2011, p. 190) discusses

user generated content as one of the main innovations in contemporary

media worlds and emphasises the importance of adapting this new

participatory phenomenon to the old audience theory by focusing on its

active–passive, participation–interaction, micro–macro, community–society

and meso dimensions. Although interactivity as a 'concept' is not the central

issue in this chapter, a particular view on interaction and interactivity, as

realised in news forums and news aggregation websites, will be discussed.

**Interactivity: Definition**

There are different ways to define interactive and interactivity.

Interactivity has been discussed along with number of other concepts such as

'hybridity' and 'convergence' with an emphasis on their advantages and

implications in different contexts. According to Jensen (1998) the meaning of

interactivity became very unclear and lost in the hype around its application

and use;

> *The concept seems loaded with positive connotations along the lines of
> high tech technological advancement, self determination and even along
> the line of folksy popularization, grassroots democracy, and political
> independence (Jensen, 1998,p.185).*

Rafaeli (1988) presents a different perspective to the term by

discussing how it has been used in different contexts with little effort in

identifying its meaning and application.

> *Interactivity is a widely used term with an intuitive appeal, but it is an under-
> defined concept. As a way of thinking about communication, it has high face
> validity, but only narrowly based explication, little consensus on meaning and
> only recently emerging empirical verification of actual role (Rafaeli, 1988,
> p.110).*

Mark Poster (1995, p.33) states that though interactivity originated primarily in computing and telecommunications, its usage can float and be applied in different contexts having little to do with telecommunications. Based on Poster's observation it can be argued that the definition of interactivity is primarily connected to its application and use in the media. Wilson (2003) defines interactivity from the users' perspective and refers to interactivity with a discourse of active agency in dialogue with technology. Rafaeli (1997) considers interactivity not as a characteristic of the medium but a process-related construct about communication. According to Rafaeli interactivity is a pivotal measure and a determining factor in the social dynamics of group communication. Therefore interactivity should lead to engagement and sociability. The definition of interactivity presented by Rafaeli (2003) considers interactivity as a phenomenon that could be present in face-to-face communication but is not always present. Likewise, he argues that computer-mediated communication may or may not possess this particular characteristic. For him, it is clear that interactivity is a value in communication that might be to some extent connected to engineering of the interface but its presence and impact is measured by the degree of sociability that is the outcome of such interaction.

Considering interactivity as a value that can vary leads to the discussion of different attempts to define interactivity either as prototype, criterion or continuum. This was suggested by Jenkins (1998, p.191) after examining different definitions of interactivity spread throughout media studies and computer science.

*...rather than talking about interactive technologies, we should document the interactions that occur amongst media consumers, between media consumers and media texts, and between media consumers and media producers. (Jenkins, 2003).*

Flew (2005, p.13) identifies interactivity as a central concept for understanding new media and discusses different degrees of interaction and interactivity that may occur in media and points to many aspects of digitised and converged media (which according to Flew is product digitisation and interconnections between ICTs, computer networks and media content) that are not interactive at all. He defines interactive media forms as those that give users a degree of choice in the information system, both in terms of choice of access to information sources and control over the outcomes of using that system and making those choices (Flew, 2005). He discusses two components of interactivity: inter-connectivity and inter-operability. Flew describes inter-connectivity as the ability to access interactions over different networks, those that are universally realised with the application of TCP/IP protocols. On the other hand, inter-operability is the capacity to access interactions over operating systems with different browsers.. Based on Flew's discussion of the two components of interactivity, it can be argued that any online process should be considered interactive, simply because it is compatible with different browsers and operating systems and there is a universal protocol to access world wide web. Kristof and Satran (1995, p.1) also argue that by definition, the things people do on computers have always been interactive. Computers and hardware and software are just tools, and their purpose is to help people interact with words, numbers and pictures.

*With tools for interactivity now available on every desktop, people everywhere are turning documents and presentations into interactive experiences to be*

*viewed on the computer screen. They are discovering that adding interactivity is easy, but making interactivity really work is a whole new process – the process of creating interactivity by design (Kristof & Satran, 1995, p.1).*

Interactivity as continuum is discussed by Newhagen and Rfaeli (1996, p.6). Here interactivity is conceived of as the extent to which communication reflects back on itself and forms a social reality. Based on this definition any form of communication on the Internet (such as chat-rooms, message boards) includes interactivity as a feature. Rafaeli highlights the importance of social reality in this process.

> *Interactivity varies along a continuum; at one end is declarative (one-way) communication (e.g. most radio and television). Reactive (two-way) communication is further down the road. In reactive communication, one side responds to the other side. Fully interactive communication requires that later messages in any sequence take into account not just messages that preceded them, but also the manner in which previous messages were reactive. In this manner interactivity forms a social reality (Rafaeli, 1988, p.7).*

According to Rafaeli, interactivity changes according to the design and engineering of the interface. From this perspective any forms of communication, whether face-to-face or mediated, can be interactive but still different from each other in their levels of interactivity. A form of communication can be either more interactive or less interactive, as interactivity should be defined as a variable and not as a constant feature of the new media.

With the development of media technologies and the introduction of Web 2.0, a new dimension was added to the continnum. Rafaeli and Ariel (2007) suggested a new addition to the continuum be called synthetic communication. Synthetic communication refers to the presence of humans and interaction between them. Avidar (2013) also developed a 'responsive pyramid' to explore interactions between users in the context of web 2.0.

Messages are placed in three categories: non-interactive (a response that doesn't refer to the request or previous messages), reactive (a response refers solely to the request or previous messages) and interactive (a response refers to the request and initiates an additional conversation). In the context of comments posted on news stories, any comment that is irrelevant to the news story can be identified as non-interactive. Comments that refer to the news story without presenting arguments are reactive, and comments which refer to the original story and present arguments or add further information are interactive. The responsiveness pyramid underlines that participation is the primary requirement of interactivity.

### Defining Interactivity as Participation

Lister et al. (2003, p.40) have identified three different phases of interactivity. The first phase refers to discussions by early computer visionaries with a particular view that identified interactivity as the ability to manage large amounts of information by searching and categorising databases. The second phase of interactivity refers to interactivity as consumer choice. That is primarily focused on users making active choices rather than being consumers of the media. The third phase adjusts the idea of interactivity into new realm of authorship. In this perspective interactivity is the realisation of a post-structuralist theory that is focused on the 'death of the author' (Barthes, 1967). In this phase, users navigate through the media text and make their own choices followed by their interpretations of the media text which according to Avidar (2013) can be either reactive or interactive. In fact, this is the same perspective that has been discussed as a structural break between production and reception in media studies (Hartley,

2008). In other words, this view emphasises the idea of interactivity as an act of active participation in the production and reception of mediated messages.

> *New digital media, in their interactive, multimedia forms, are being celebrated for their capacity to generate polysemic meaning which involve the viewer's active participation (Lister, 2003, p.10).*

The first and second phase in defining interactivity are now considered as essential and basic configurations of online interaction between different agents. However the third phase is closer to how we consider interactivity in this study to provide participation within publics. In this context, interactivity is the actual production and distribution of mediated messages that shapes and reflects on communication.

In the same context, Brian Eno explains interactivity as 'unfinished';

> *In a blinding flash of inspiration, the other day I realized that "interactive" anything is the wrong word. Interactive makes you imagine people sitting with their hands on controls, some kind of game-like thing. The right word is "unfinished". Think of cultural products, or art works, or the people who use them even, as being unfinished. permanently unfinished. We come from a cultural heritage that says things have a "nature", and that this nature is fixed and describable. We find more and more that this idea is insupportable – the "nature" of something is not by any means singular, and depends on where and when you find it, and what you want it for. The functional identity of things is a product of our interaction with them. And our own identities are products of our interaction with everything else (Eno interviewed in Wire, 2007)*

There is a clear connection between discussing interactivity as 'the unfinished' and the 'death of authorship'. The 'death of the author' (Barthes, 1967) presents us with a new platform for participation, understanding and reflection on the original text. As this experience varies between individuals and each will follow their own narrative, it presents itself as the unfinished act. In other words, interactivity becomes a new medium to present 'self'. Interactivity as a new venue helps every user to identify and portray their selves. This is the same response that was discussed by Avidar (2013).

Interactivity is a response based on the text which in the context of web 2.0 initiates a dialogue and presents itself in dialogues between users. In this sense, any communication between users about the text that initiates a discussion is interactive. Interactivity liberates the self from the text and develops new ways to create new texts, which mirror the individual's identity and are therefore unique. In the same context, Ariel & Avidar (2015) introduce a perspective on interactivity which is based on users' interactions with the medium.

> *From a perspective of interactivity as a process-related variable, the actual usage of a medium by users and their actual interactions within a medium could exercise different levels of interactivity, both in new and traditional settings (Ariel & Avidar, 2015, p.25).*

In their discussion they refer to the impact of convergence and argue that in exploring the concept of interactivity we should not focus on the characteristics of a medium, because the medium might change and converge. Instead, we should focus on the ways users transfer information in a communication setting:

> *The perception of interactivity as mainly relevant to new media rather than traditional media is no longer accurate. Indeed, communication consumers today are also communication producers (or "prosumers"). These prosumers watch television programs on their smartphones, send text messages to reality shows, read electronic books, and use their tablets to read online papers and write talkbacks. In this communication environment, it is no longer accurate to label a specific medium as interactive and another medium as noninteractive. In other words, when exploring interactivity, we should not focus on the characteristics of a specific medium, because the medium might change and converge. Rather, we should focus on the process of message transition and reciprocity, as well as the ways in which participants transfer information to one another in a communication setting. Thus, we endorse interactivity as a process-related variable rather than a characteristic of the medium (Ariel & Avidar, 2015, p.25).*

The shift from medium to users' actions in transmitting information in a communication setting underlines the previous argument that interactivity

is an unfinished process. It is unfinished because according to Ariel & Avidar (2015) the interaction takes place when users liberate themselves from the text and create their own messages.

In the discussion of publics, interactivity is presented at the process of users discussing the news story and adding their own perspectives or arguing about the text. This is the reason that along with delibration, participation (which is interactivity) is essential in establishing the legitimacy of publics.

**Models of Interactivity**

The interactive nature of the Web implies a potential to support e-democracy. However there are different realizations of the discussed interactive features. To further clarify this concept scholars have discussed different models to analyse interactivity in computer-mediated communications. For example McMillan (2002) suggested a four-part model of interactivity that considers issues such as direction of communication (one-way or two-way communications between sender and receiver), choice and different degrees of control (level of receiver control). In his model interactive communication is divided into four categories: monologue, feedback, mutual discourse and responsive dialogue. McMillan (2002) considers monologue to be primarily concerned with one-way communication where the receiver has very limited control over the direction of communication. Feedback is largely one-way but still with limited participation. Responsive dialogue allows two-way communication but the sender has control over the process. Mutual discourse allows for both parties

to send and receive messages but provides greater control over the process than responsive dialogue. Ferber et al. (2007) modified McMillan's model and discussed a new perspective of three-way communication that covers public communication (or any types of communications when more than two parties are involved). The main advantage of Ferber's discussion on interactive models is the inclusion of a third party that can be involved in the public discourse. As discussed in the previous chapter (on online deliberation) by the engineering of sharing and discussion, websites enable users to negotiate issues including strategic narratives not only with editors but also to address the discourses in the public discussion. McMillan's model according to Faber et al. (2007) considered only two-way communication between the receiver and sender but their modified version of this model proposes a three-way model of communication covering the public discourse as well as controlled response.  In this model (Faber et al., 2007, p.393) interactive communication in the Web is categorised into six different types of feedback: monologue (when the direction of communication is two-way), mutual discourse, responsive dialogue (when the direction of communication is two-way), public discourse and controlled response (when the direction of communication is three-way). In addition to McMillan's model, there are two new categories: controlled response and public discourse. In controlled response, such as polls or bulletin boards, users are allowed to participate but the site retains control over the content. For instance in polls the site has control over the presentation of questions and results. Likewise controlled forums and bulletin boards require authentication of comments and user registration. On the other hand public discourse corresponds with unlimited

and unrestricted opportunities for users to interact either with journalists or other users. Here participation involves a high level of control and intervention of moderators only participate when the site's norms are violated (Feber et al. 2007, p.394).

**Interactivity and Interpassivity**

Advocates of digital democracy celebrate the beginning of a new era in human interaction with mediated text, which has the potential to be more democratic and essentially subjective, by turning them to produsers (Bruns, 2008) who can be independent in their reflections. The fact that technology today is now equipped with a personalisation option that chooses and underlines the important content for future or immediate attention signifies a revolution in our daily interaction with the media. The ability to choose a particular program on TV and record it on a USB stick, or to save an article, digitally published in an online newspaper, is in fact a breakthrough from earlier practices.  The new dimension in users' interactions with the media is significant as it presents an opportunity for users to become gatekeepers of their own media use (Bruns, 2008). With recent transformations in audiences' relationship with texts, we can argue that the period of passive consumption has reached an end as we can choose what we are interested in following and we are no longer passive observers of programs on TV and no longer need to spend hours scanning newspapers to find interesting articles. Whilst many argue this opportunity is a unique practice, revolutionising the media in terms of production and presentation of content, scholars like Pfaller (2003) and Zizek (2002) are quite sceptical on the reach of possible

new interactions. As discussed in the previous section, one of the essential characteristics of interactivity is the ability to choose content. However this ability may also lead the prospective audience to passive consumption of a mediated text. Interpassivity as a notion was initially discussed by Lacan (as cited in Zizek, 2002) and then discussed by Zizek (2002) through the example of chorus in a Greek tragedy. The emotional commentary that should naturally have been produced by the audience was presented by the chorus or according to Lacan, by a surrogate self in the form of a signifier. According to Zizek what was thought to be passive and transparent (the interface) is now understood as mediator, as active, while what was thought to be active, the user, becomes a passive intermediary. Zizek explains this further and refers to the role of media in fulfilling our realisation of engagement with the mediated text. The example he uses to further explain this term is a VCR that records TV programs for future or canned laughter, dubbed in sit-com, laughing for the viewer or reminding the viewers that they can/should laugh. Following Zizek, Andrejevic (2001) also discusses the concept of interpassivity in observing the 'Big Brother' television show. He points to the initial failure of Big Brother in the US and calls it a watershed moment in the passage from interactivity to interpassivity. In the show, the audience was supposed to vote for their favourite character and the one who received the lowest vote was asked to leave. Audiences voted against the most known star in the show. Following this incident, it was decided that voting should be done amongst the participants. For Andrejevic this change in the approach to the audience highlighted the incompatibility of the democratising potential of interactivity and led to interpassivity instead of interactivity. This common

practice is also discussed by Manovich (1996) particularly when the common

understanding of interactivity resembles totalitarian politics more than

democracies; by externalising reflection, contemplation and attempting to

make those more beneficial notions of interaction visible, the appearance of

interactivity becomes more important than its actuality. In this context he

adds, we are "...asked to follow pre-programmed, objectively existing

associations".

Another example of interpassivity discussed by Wilson (2003) is an

avatar. According to Wilson interpassivity can be found in an interpassive

object or entity. She defines this entity as a material object that mediates

between the user and the digital space.  In this context, an avatar stands in

instead of ourselves or it is a visual agent that represents the user. An

interpassive object fills the empty space by the virtue of its presence.

Consequently an interpassive object or entity can be defined as a stimulus or

a hyper reality.  Wilson also stresses the importance of agency in her

discussion and explains interpassivity as a "multifarious condition that

extends our agency" (2003, p.3).

> *The avatar in cyberspace (or computer game persona) -as a virtual-, surrogate self-  can be understood as a 'stand-in' for our real-space selves; a visual agent that represents the user. A feedback loop is created between user and avatar whereby part of one's self is extended or projected on to the screen, enacting a dynamic of agency by proxy. The cyberspace avatar, as the new interpassive object thus functions as a locus for our extended agency; a locus that is multifarious and polymorphous , displaced from the facticity of our real space selves.*

Gij Van Oenen (2006) explains interpassivity in opposition to

interactivity. Interpassive becomes the illusion of interactive.

> *As opposed to interactive arrangements, in which the work of art 'outsources' part of its own realization to the spectator, interpassive arrangements take up a part normally played by the spectator or consumer, namely the enjoyment or*

*'consummation' of the work of art. The spectator or consumer is made redundant; or rather, his or her involvement in the realization of the work has become superfluous (Oenen, 2006, p. 8).*

Oenen's explanation of interpassivity is important as it implies a lack of interest in the aims or goals of audience actions as primarily the defining feature of interpassivity. His explanation of 'lack of interest' was present in Wilson's argument when there were discussions on extended agency, lack of agency or representation of agency (in an avatar). However, in this context the issue of identifying the border between interactivity and interpassivity is not clearly discussed.  For instance, in news websites there are various interactive tools like searching, commenting, rating or sharing a news item. But it is not clear how audience actions in using any of these features could be translated as interpassive or interactive. From the same perspective, how interactive are users in this postmodern condition?

In Oenen's discussion on interpassivity and citizenship, he explains that interpassivity is the loss of the product of politics and can be observed in an obsession (on the part of users) with the process rather than the eventual product. When the outcome of interaction is programmed, predictable and mathematical then there is no venue to engage the individual's self in designing the outcome of this interaction. As discussed earlier, the interactive is 'the unfinished' and should present a platform for self to liberate itself with creativity, to liberate the object (initial text) from the politics that presents it. Henceforth when discussing final product it corresponds with loss of interactivity. In other words, interpassivity is realised when the final product

is presented, regardless of the audiences' degrees of involvement with the mediated text.

**Politics and Interactivity**

Jodie Dean (2005) discusses the importance of politics and argues that participation for the sake of participation creates a fantasy about the process, that should be identified as being interpassive. She describes a situation in which technologically enabled interactivity gratifies popular appetites for judgment and action, without actually satisfying them politically. According to Dean people might think that they are active, maybe even that they are making a difference by clicking or posting their comments or signing different online petitions, but all these acts are politically ambitious at large. She states that:

> *Specific or singular acts of resistance, statements of opinion or instances of transgression are not political in and of themselves; rather, they have to be politicized, that is articulated together with other struggles, resistances and ideals in the course or context of opposition to a shared enemy or opponent (Dean, 2005, p.57*).

For Dean the actual process of politicisation is equivalent to the collective social / political movements, or to being an active catalyst in social reform. This is to argue that the effects and impacts of online collaboration should be realised hand in hand with political change in society. In this context, McChesney's argument against the Internet democracy model seems very pessimistic, as he thinks that the internet, rather than having a competitive bias, may in fact stimulate monopoly and oligopoly (McChesney, 1999, p. 183).

He emphasises that the Internet 'itself' may not be enough to provide

any changes;

> *The key point is simply that those who think the technology can produce a viable democratic Public sphere by itself where policy has failed to do so are deluding themselves (1999, p.183).*

> *The notion that the Internet is a democratic medium – that it will remain or become available to the public on anything close to egalitarian terms – seems dubious at best (McChesney, 1999, p. 184)*

As he argues, expecting cyberspace to act independently and demonstrate all sorts of effective and influential political oppositions may not correspond with the aims and goals of all individuals in cyberspace. However the level of engagement with the mediated text and the way it is changed via users' interactions is itself an achievement that hasn't been practised in the public sphere at this level. For instance, if overall media exposure in the public sphere directs individuals' minds to a particular pseudo event, then breaking this pattern by users' participation in rating news stories of the day and presenting the headlines based on these ratings is an achievement in shaping the news agenda. Although it is important to note that the uses of all different interactive features may not necessarily result in changing the agenda of a news website, there are features that enable users to make such changes. This is particularly important if we consider the popularity and growth in online news sharing via different social media. From a different perspective, although Dean criticises the optimism in the evaluation of the Internet's role in society, either as a democratisation or modernisation catalyst, her argument favours the Internet as an agent of change. Dean's argument in rejecting cyberspace as equivalent of public sphere, clearly points to a different possible design of the web. This highlights a paradox, as by prescribing conditions, it is obvious that once conditions are fulfilled then

the Internet should be considered as the equivalent of the public sphere.

However as discussed above, and particularly in this context, the Internet's

role should be conceived of more as an agent that tends to complement the

public sphere.

On Dean's argument and because of the way the Internet is

changing or complementing politics, it is important to build on Castells'

(2001) emphasis on the vital role of the Internet in our lives. Castells refers to

the various ways the Internet is shaping the political agendas of our time.

Political parties' use of Internet for their election campaigns started as early

as 1997 with Howard Dean blogging his campaign and now it has become a

necessity for all parties or candidates to have a presence in the Internet. In

this context Villalba (2003) found that although parties actively use websites

in their campaigns, communication is mainly one-way and the websites are

just used to present a wide variety of information to individuals. Villalba's

(2003) observation led to the conclusion that true interaction was limited and

most communication was unidirectional. However over the last few years

political campaigns have turned to common interactional spaces for

politicians and individuals. According to Castells (2007, p. 255) this change

was possible with the popularity of websites like Youtube and the use of

social networking platforms for election campaigns. Barack Obama and Mitt

Romney both used social media. Obama was active on several public

platforms of Facebook, Google+, Flickr, YouTube, Interest, Tumblr, Spotify

and Instagram and he had two accounts on Twitter. Romney was active on

seven platforms of Facebook, Google +, YouTube, Tumble, Flickr, Spotify and

Twitter. A study by Pew Research Centre (2012) stated that candidates were using social media but their use was mainly limited to updates on their policies and they hardly re-tweeted or participated in any discussions. Villalba's (2003) argument that communication in 2003 was unidirectional was valid particularly because social media was not as popular today, as politicians use of Twitter in making announcements has become a usual approach. This means that the engagement in political discourse on the web has become easier for the public and politicians and both are actively participating in this process.

### Interactivity and News

Social networking platforms as discussed by Castells, have become popular in different areas such as news sharing and recommendation readings as well. To underline the importance of this trend, it is relevant to discuss CNN's research findings in a study on POWNAR (Power of News and Recommendation). CNN conducted research between June and October 2010 in order to better understand the effects of content sharing and to find out what happens when users tweet, feed, share or move its content around the web. In a very simple methodological structure, all the contents of CNN were tagged with codes for eight weeks and were surveyed after their appearance on the CNN website. The result of their survey suggests:

- almost half of the content is shared by social media and other means (like emails).
- each sharer of content generates approximately five times the number

of new visitors to that content.

- sharing of content happens as much on mobile devices (phones, smartphones, iPads, etc.) as on desktop computers.

- 27% of all sharers' account for 87% of all news stories shared and 43% of news sharing comes from social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc), followed by email (30%), SMS (15%) and IM (12%)

- the average global user shares 13 stories per week and receives 26 stories through shared social media links or emails

- 65% of shared content comprises ongoing stories, 19% comprises breaking news and 16% falls into the "quirky or funny" category

- in terms of themes, news recommendation is driven by content that is visually spectacular, stories about science and technology, human interest stories and money-related stories.

According to the findings of CNN's POWNAR study, on average each news story introduces five new users to that content. Social media is actively involved in the way news is presented and delivered to individuals. CNN's study highlights the importance of new online collaborations, and it is important to note that these opportunities could be further applied in the dissemination of alternative news as well. With the overall reach and growth of social networking and online collaboration tools, it can be argued that either increasing the readership of news stories or exposing alternative media to a new public can be considered as bringing major changes to the media habits of individuals. This raises a relevant discussion in reference to Dean's argument in 'Fantasy of publication' and identifying changes brought

by social media as political, as changes in discourses of political resistance. In fact this change signifies a departure from a broader perspective on the dominance of certain ideologies in daily gatekeeping practices of the media. Herman and Chomsky (2002) have discussed five filters in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political-Economy of Mass Media* which are influential in imposing ideologies on the daily practices of the media houses (These five filters are (1) Ownrership of the medium (2) Medium's funding sources (3) Sourcing (4) Flak (5) fear ideology).

From a different perspective this change presents an important shift in the politics of media hegemony as it directly influences the media habits of users. The presentation of content from different alternative sources and the way it directs traffic to websites is an important change in the media sphere. It is also important to note that socio-political resistance and struggles for a social cause are now expressed in different ways. If in the late 1960s until mid-1970s, and during the counter cultural movements, the political struggle meant following certain political ideologies or for individuals to be physically involved in demonstrations, in 2011 one example of the political act is to participate in the dissemination of alternative news (or even the use of open sources and sharing multiple audio/video files for free). The idea of disseminating uncensored news and information either via social networking websites or the Internet in general was a very powerful tool in shaping demonstrations against authoritarian regimes (for example the use of Twitter amongst the Iranians after the 2009 presidential elections to organise protests against an allegedly rigged election despite heavy censorship and state control over mainstream media) . In most oppressive

regimes where news is highly controlled and censored information acts as a

catalyst in uniting individuals and for the same reason the first step taken by

the governments to control the public sphere was to stop the Internet service

providers and limit mobile communication access. For example, in a study on

regimes' responses to the political use of social media, Howard et. al (2011)

examined governments' accounts of interfering with digital networks and

concluded that:

> *Comparative analysis indicates that both democratic and authoritarian*
> *regimes disable social media networks for citing concerns about national*
> *security, protecting authority figures, and preserving cultural and religious*
> *morals. But, whereas democracies also disable social media with the goal of*
> *protecting children, authoritarian regimes also attempt to eliminate what they*
> *perceive as propaganda on social media (Howard et al. 2011, p.1).*

The importance of political struggle was discussed extensively after

the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. In this context, Zhang and

Johnson et al. have discussed the new format of social resistance in their

article 'Revolution will be networked' and argue that social networking and

interaction on platforms such as Facebook significantly increases civic

participation.

As Oenen argues, interpassivity should be seen as a radical

presentation of interactivity. If participation for the sake of participation

doesn't create any of the outcomes discussed by CNN's POWNAR study, or

affect the way content is generally presented, then it identifies a distinctive

change from the political act as discussed by Dean. Combining the findings of

CNN's study with the role of individual users in the dissemination of content

followed by the use of various interactive features, highlights the importance

of participation, not only in shaping the final product, but also in the ways the

final product is read and distributed.


Following this discussion, we can consider that 'politics' as discussed

by Oenen and Dean is the equivalent of 'change' in the final product.  This

argument can be applied in individuals' uses of different interactive tools.  In

one website choosing by searching for a news story may not necessarily

shape the news agenda but in another website that works on aggregation this

can become a factor in shaping the final product. This leads to a new

discussion of identifying interpassivity as a very relative concept. An

individual's participation in one website might be labeled as interpassive but

in another website could be interactive as it shapes the way news is

presented. Arguably, interpassivity itself is a product that is defined by the

design of the interface and what it controls.  It is the design of the interface

that allows changes to be made, particularly in response to individuals' use of

interactive tools. Design plays an important role in the creation of real

interactive platforms. However, although the engineering of a website is a

necessary factor, it isn't the one and only factor to promote interactions in a

website. Modern digital technologies invite their audience to interact. For

example in videogames, users can actively participate in developing of

different environments but the outcome of their interaction is often pre-

programmed. According to Sarkis:

> No meaningful communication – in the sense of a true exchange of ideas,
> thoughts, ... – can ever emerge from a programmed technology. What we get
> instead is simple alteration, based on the rules set by the programmer. The user

118

*remains a 'user' who will not magically turn into a creator but will continue to resemble a puppet responding to the artists' programmed vision (Sarkis, 1993, p.13).*

Choosing outcomes of pre-programmed alterations is not interactive participation but there should be a distinction between pre-programmed technologies, when interaction stays within the 'process' from participation where interaction itself becomes a 'product'. Interaction in the form of participation in a digital art format where users are asked to act and observe a reaction is a form of interpassivity, as the reaction was pre-programmed. But when interaction in the form of participation is realised by leaving comments on another user's comments or by rating a particular comment and becoming part of a public, it is essentially different. There is nothing programmed in this process, except the publication of the comment or the calculation of ratings, which is very minimal, compared to the participation factor. Everything else in this process is an outcome of 'self' and 'agency' rather than a pre-programmed technology.

Agency in terms of limitless and proactive participation of the self in interactive platforms presents a different understanding of interactivity. The argument presented by Sarkis (1993) was essentially to identify all interactions in 'interactive' platforms as essentially 'interpassive'. Her observation of interactivity in the early 1990s might have been valid for assessing the degrees and levels of interaction between users and machines, but this analysis is now dated and the projection of self in a changing media sphere which is empowered by Web 2.0 and the ongoing flow of user-generated content is a totally different landscape. The aim here is not to

119

identify all types of interactions in open platforms as necessarily interactive but to underline arenas where this interpassivity (according to Sarkis) becomes essentially interactive and a powerful tool for making changes that were difficult to realise in older forms of the public sphere. In fact although there are venues that support Dean's stand on 'fantasy of participation' where interaction stands only as an action without any particular influence over the flow and depth of information, it should be noted that growing networks are turning this 'fantasy' to opportunities to change the world information and communication order. This might seem to be the very beginning of a new stream but remembering that online participatory networks have already passed this be ginning, is essential to imagine the horizon ahead of these changes.

### Interactivity and online journalism

The application of different interactive features has changed the presentation of news over the last two decades. As a consequence, news stories are now delivered in different formats from interactive galleries to audio/video presentations. Online newspapers utilise different interactive features to present effective platforms for participation. Earlier studies on interactivity and news presentation show a very limited use of interactive features in online news websites.

> *Although the production of news has moved gradually and steadily into the online environment, journalism has not witnessed a hearty acceptance of new forms of storytelling (Chung, 2007, p.46).*

One of the first examples was to provide email addresses of either the authors of the stories or a general email address for a particular beat. Chan-Olmsted and Park (2000) examined broadcast TV station sites and found that interactivity and personalisation were not exploited to the fullest potential and were rarely incorporated. Massey and Levy (1999) applied Heeter's six-dimensional model of interactivity in their study of English language online newspapers in Asia. They found the criterion of choice applied but the other five criteria were rarely used. In a content analysis of 100 US newspapers Schultz (1999) found that although 94 per cent of newspapers provide at least one email address to contact the newsroom, 67 per cent of the news stories didn't provide a direct email from the stories to the authors. Only 24 per cent provided online polls and 33 per cent ran discussion forums. Interactivity as a multidimensional construct is divided into three categories: medium, human/medium and human interactivity.

> *Medium interactive features solely rely on the technology to allow users to exert control. These are considered as offering lower levels of interactivity. Those that utilize characteristics of medium interactivity and that allow partial human-to-human communications are considered human/medium interactive and human interactive features are those that facilitate user-to-user mutual communication (Chung, 2008, p.379).*

Amongst the studies conducted in the first decade of new millennium, Chung (2004) found that interpersonal exchange options, and human interactivity features were used least extensively compared to other interactivity features such as audio and video download files, multimedia galleries and search features. Chung conducted research on award-nominated news websites and discussed the progression from medium interactivity through human interactivity that is believed to be exercised through the use

of various complex interactive features. In fact, human interactivity is generally considered as the most complicated type of interactivity that is mainly realised in intercreative platforms where agency is the subject of any interaction.

Deuze (2003) found that mainstream news sites offer mainly navigational interactivity that allows the user to merely navigate a site through buttons or menu bars. (The idea of navigational interactivity is quite close to the discussion of interpassivity by Sarkis (1991)). Deuze (2003) also argued that mainstream media have not only taken their content online but have also transferred their working culture and practices to the online world. However with the increased application of open participatory platforms for amateur journalists to publish their videos and photos of different incidents, his argument needs further analysis. This is particularly important with reference to a growing trend in mainstream commercial networks to depend on amateur journalists for reporting from areas where foreign correspondents either have no access or have been forced to leave. A recent example is the coverage of unrest in Syria in 2011 and Iran in 2008, where foreign reporters were all deported. In this context, the overall importance of citizen participation in news production has enforced the application of certain guidelines for media professionals in assessing the credibility and authenticity of content. For example the BBC has introduced some criteria and a set of rules for any submission by amateur journalists for broadcasting (BBC, 2012).

The general argument that online journalism is still following the same work culture will be tested in the next chapter, particularly with an emphasis

on the role of intercreative features. A review of the existing literature about the use of different interactive and intercreative features suggests that online news sites are not using all available forms of interactive features. It appears that general human–machine interactivity is the most common practised form that is application of personalised search engines and hypertexts.

**Categories of online news websites based on Interactivity**

Deuze (2003) categorised online news websites based on different levels of online publishing, hypertextuality, interactivity and multimediality. He summarised his classification in four categories: mainstream news sites, index and category sites, meta and comment sites, and share and discussion sites.

Mainstream news sites are generally the established news websites, which are an extension of newspapers, news agencies or television networks. According to Deuze (2003, p.209) they generally offer a selection of editorial content and navigational interactivity.

Index and category sites do not offer any original editorial content. They generally present links to other websites like Yahoo or DrudgeReport who depend on aggregating news from other sources, but do actually sometimes write their own editorials to organise and contextualise this content.

Meta and comment sites like Poynter's 'Medianews' or 'Crikey' are a kind of 'journalism on journalism' in which

*Editorial content is often produced by a variety of journalists and basically discusses content found elsewhere on the Internet. They are sometimes intended as media watchdogs like 'Poynter' or 'Crikey' sometimes intended as an extended index and category site like Europemedia (Deuz, 2003, p. 209 ).*

Share and discussion sites generally facilitate platforms for the exchange of ideas, stories and so forth, often centred around a specific theme such as worldwide anti-globalisation activism (the aforementioned independent media centres, generally known as Indymedia) or computer news (Slashdot, featuring a tagline reading: 'News for Nerds, Stuff that Matters'(Deuze 2003, p.210).

Observing these categories and combining them with interactive models which were originally discussed by McMillan (2002) and later on modified by Ferber et al. (2007) points to the application of different directions of communication and to users' control over the process of communication. For example mainstream news sites and index and category sites present one-way communication with low levels of receiver control. Meta and comments sites and share and discussion sites both refer to two-way communication with relatively higher levels of receiver control over the communication.

In this context, if we consider interactivity as a concept with two different functions of being interpassive and intercreative then it can be argued that whenever communication is one way and users have minimal control over the presentation of the final product then the interaction becomes interpassive. On the other hand, when communication is practised in two ways and users receive the ability to control and shape the final product, the interaction becomes closer to being intercreative.

**Interactive features in online news websites**

Interactivity is the application and use of interactive features. There
are different ways to engage in interaction and they correspond with levels of
engagement and complexity of participation. Chung and Yoo (2008, p.385)
have listed different interactive features in their study of online newspapers.
Their categories are based on levels of interactivity that range from medium
to human interactivity.

Features of medium interactivity include the presence of audio/video
files, update tickers, log-in functions, search functions, customised weather
information, customised topics of news, email updates, personalised
headlines, 'send articles to friends' buttons, advertisements and photo
galleries. It is clear that this 2008 list needs to be updated with other features:
recommendation buttons, sharing buttons, RSS feeds and more which will be
discussed in next chapter (Analysis). They also include features such as polls,
submit news stories, blogs, submit news tips in features of human/medium
interactivity. The last category of human interactivity is listed as chat
functions, message boards, Q&A (Live chat features), emails to
reporters/editors and letters to the editor buttons. As stated Chung and Yoo's
observation is limited because of the changes in news presentation since
2008. It is also important to note that the availability of these features does
not necessarily make an online news website highly interactive or
interpassive. There are other important factors such as one's capabilities in
executing online activities. This applies particularly where interaction is

defined in terms corresponding with intercreativity or on the other hand the general knowledge of not only navigation but the application and manipulation of available features. Other factors like engineering of the interface and the presentation of these features are also important in determining ease of usage for users.

Users' interactions with the media may lead to the creation of content that is now classified as UGC (user generated content). For this study, comments that are posted by users are considered as a form of UGC. However UGC can appear in different ways according to levels of interaction, the design of the interface and ease in using technical applications.

## Different types of User-Generated-Content (UGC) in online news websites

There are different types of audience material and it is necessary to identify each of these different types separately. There are different views on the typology of audiences contributions to online website, for example Peter Rippon ,the editor of Radio 4 in the UK, discusses three different types of user generated content:

> *There are essentially three types of user generated content: there is the user generated content that allows users to express their own opinion and ventilate debate. There's the user-generated content that is very much about delivering and supporting the journalism that we do. So, eye-witness reports, 'I've got the story, are you interested?' and then there's the kind of public insight journalism that they are doing in America (Rippon, cited in Wardle & Williams, 2008, p.10).*

In another discussion Richard Sambrook (Head BBC Global News) discusses four types of of user-generated content:

126

*I have four different categories: one is eyewitness material which maybe stills or video, which is the showing of an experience. And there's the kind of opinion, which we have done for decades such as radio phone-ins. We have always used material from the public or given a platform for opinions by the public, but we are getting a far greater quantity of it than ever before because of the technology. The third category is about discovery: people break news and on the net, and bloggers uncover stories which journalists haven't. The final category is what is known generally these days as networked journalism where you use the expertise and use it to inform our journalism, it will be better as a result (Sambrook, cited in Wardle & Williams, 2008,p.10).*

Wardle and Williams discussed a different model for categorising audience material. They divided audience collaboration into five different categories: 1) audience content that covers the three criteria of audience footage, audience experience and audience stories 2) audience comments which are opinions shared by phone-in interviews 3) collaborative content that refers to material which is produced by the audience 4) networked journalism that refers to collaboration between professional and amateur journalists working together to get the real story linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives and 5) non-news content that refers to photographs of wildlife, scenic weather or community events. All five categories are explained in detail in a report from the Arts, Humanities Research Council to the BBC (Wardle & Williams, 2008). The classification is important as it shows the complex nature of the participation that can be realised in different forms.

**Online Participation: Reasons behind**

Amongst the different types of audience material the most popular form of participation is commentary. Wardle and Williams (2008,p.20) analysed the BBC's 'Have Your Say' and discussed the values of user-generated content in this program. This is an important enquiry as it fits the framing of cyber publics in this thesis. According to the BBC's facts and figures 'Have Your Say' receives a minimum of 10,000 comments per day from people in different parts of the world and on one occasion they received 12000 photos in one day. The highest participation rate (by 2008) was on Shilpa Shetty in Big Brother with 30,000 comments. In their study they observed that audience commentary was the most popular format of participation with 52 per cent of their respondents highlighting it as the main reason for contacting the BBC. Forty-two per cent of the respondents who commented on a news story explained that the main reason for their contribution was that they had seen or heard something about that particular news story (Wardle & Williams, 2008, p. 20). Only 21 per cent mentioned that they contributed because they thought they had something interesting to say. On motivations behind leaving a comment, another important aspect was observed and that was the individual's liking the sound of his or her own voice. It is also important to note that since 2008 the media ecology has been graced with many more social networking sites. This affects the power structure that was presented in 'Have Your Say' in which a news story was picked by journalists and then the audience was asked to leave their opinion behind. Now with endless possibilities of sharing news in different social

networking websites, every individual can run a 'have your say' amongst a circle of friends. However the participation of peers in a discussion will turn a public (such as the one for 'Have Your Say') to a community of like-minded individuals. The study conducted by CNN on the power of news and recommendations stated that each news story shared brings five times more new visitors to the original story. Knowing that the sharing of news happens amongst the like-minded friends, this feature underlines the polarisation of content and opinions in small online communities. However one method for escaping this polarisation is to encourage the news organisations to actively support and update their pages in social networking websites. The wide range of audiences receiving stories on their page will ultimately shape an online public on the external platform (for example in a social networking website) which would have the potential to present a sphere for the users to negotiate and challenge strategic discourses in the news and shape the final outcome of their deliberation.

### Commentaries and interactivity

Wardle and Williams (2008) in their discussion of different audience material highlighted posting comments as the most popular type of online participation. In another study by Paulussen et al. (2007), a survey of 58 Spanish media journals, it was found that only a third (22) explored some sort of audience participation. Most of the options framed the audience as respondents to journalistic content. Comments on news and on journalists' blogs were the prevalent developments. Compared to other styles in audience

material, it seems that relative ease in participation – compared to reporting a news story or making and editing a video – is a determining factor in making comment boxes appear as a favourite form of participation in the user-generated content category.  Studies on comments posted online in news websites  are very limited and their scopes of analysis are widely different from each other. Thurman (2008) focused on the importance of comments to media institutions and found that the major concern of editors was to control the comments before publishing them to avoid duplication of ideas and to make the discussion free from grammatical and spelling mistakes. On the other hand legal liabilities and costs were also discussed as reasons for the slow uptake of user-generated content in some news websites. Nafria (2007) also raises cost as an important factor and discusses the Elpais.com (the web edition of the *El Pais* daily in Spain) example in having 12 editors to filter users' contributions in order to get rid of offensive submissions.  An important function of comments posted by the readers was also to increase circulation as comments can be used to modify the source and content of future programs. In another study on comments posted in Digg, Khabiri et al.(2009) identified that the Digg community usually favours short, simple and readable comments. The study was mainly focused on presenting a model to predict the community's preferences in the rating of unseen comments. Although the findings might represent a particular attitude of the community they may not respond to the more qualitative analysis of Digg. For instance the content analysis of comments was limited to counting the number of nouns and verbs in a comment and to highlighting the importance of discourses that were presented. A measure of entropy was introduced that

was calculated based on the number of different words that were used in a text. Although in quantitative analysis this measure of entropy might be indicative of certain values, it may not hold true in a qualitative analysis framework. In another study on the possible effects of comments on perceptions of political news, Yu (2009) found that online comments may not have a significant influence on people's perceptions, but they allow people to engage and to disseminate their opinions. In another study about readers' comments on opinion / editorial pages Walker and Manosevitch (2009) argue that integrating readers' comments within the context of opinion journalism may help enhance deliberative democracy. They observed that some readers who posted their comments on the editorial piece posted additional comments in the same thread. This was an indication that participants stay involved in the discussion and the interaction is not only limited to the content of editorials but includes commenters commenting on each others' notes.

> *We argue this is a potential opportunity to connect professional journalists with readers, thereby offering a unique context of public deliberation that differs from community discussion boards or blogs. Our study demonstrates that opinion writers may serve as instigators of constructive public deliberation. Writers of comments had seized the opportunity to deliberate with fellow citizens on issues of the day, and lurkers most likely benefited from a greater scope of voices and information. Such reader comments can serve both the democratic mission and the economic interests of contemporary news organizations. Providing a platform for public deliberation may also help draw in readers to journalism content (Walker & Manosevitch, 2009, p.23).*

Regarding the possible impacts of comments on actual journalism practised within the media institutions Walker and Manosevitch (2009) argue that readers' comments are adopted by editors with some degree of caution and fear.

> *Editors feel that this is a trend they cannot resist, and at the same time they fear that broad inclusion of user generated content will damage the quality of newspaper and its role in journalism (Herminda & Thurman, 2007). While some newspapers are resisting the inclusion of user-generated content, others are seeking ways to moderate the content. But moderation is both challenging and resource-intensive. Offering design features that promote deliberative content may help (Walker & Manosevitch, 2009, p.2).*

In another study on users' comments on political discussions on Facebook, Shah (2011) found that unlike discussions on sports and entertainment, political discussions on pages from established institutions like the immigration department of the United States generate comments that are to the point and for the most part very relevant and close to the page topic. Commercial pages on Facebook generate less meaningful communication and a majority of comments were either about expressing an individual's interest or dislike of the brand or the products. This finding corresponds with Walker and Manosevitch's (2009) discussion on meaningful communication in editorials. However neither of these studies considered the importance of most voted comments in their analysis.

### Interactivity and Journalism

Journalists and media scholars explain journalism in different ways. Differences in defining this concept and ultimately the discussion of various perceptions and expectations existed right from early days of this profession. Schudson (1998, p.134) has discussed different models of journalism and identified three models: trustee, market and advocacy. In the trustee model journalists are seen as professionals who decide what citizens should know to act as informed participants in democracy. In the market model journalists aim to please audiences or at least those audiences that advertisers find attractive. The advocacy model, which is considered to be extinct in the US

and Europe due to the historical processes of the secularisation and depoliticisation of the public sphere, envisages a noble role for journalists to act free from market and politics. This was a model that was practised mainly in alternative and community-based newspapers (Schudson, 1998, p.135).

The application of different interactive and intercreative features has changed the old classic concept of public, trustee or market journalism. Joyce Nip (2006) discussed four new models that have emerged from adaptation of new technologies to journalism. The four categories are public journalism, interactive journalism, participatory journalism and citizen journalism. The main differences between these models are to do with the degree of power assigned to professional journalists and the audience.

Public journalism in cyberspace is journalism for and by the public. Haas (2004) considers weblogs as examples of public journalism and Deuze (2001) discusses open source journalism as an advanced model of public journalism where control over the different stages of news production is shared amongst the users.

Interactive journalism refers to practices in online journalism that use the Web as a platform for interactivity and discussion. Nip (2006, p.217) notes that "the involvement of the news users takes place after the news is published, the professional journalists are responsible for producing the news content for publication."

Participatory journalism represents a different mode of participation as Nip (2006) explains: "User contribution is solicited within a frame

designed by the professionals". Citizens are invited, in other words, to contribute actively in the processes of newsgathering, selection, publication, commentary and public discussion, and all this is accomplished in collaboration with and in interaction with professional journalists. Closely related variants of this model of participatory journalism are thought of in terms such as "open-source journalism" (Deuze, 2001).

Citizen journalism as explained by Paulussen et al. (2007) refers to a particular practice of journalism in which the news-making process is completely taken out of the hands of journalists and left to the people, who have become both producers and users of the news.

Based on these definitions, it is very difficult to categorise news websites, as they might offer opportunities for participatory journalism practices in some areas but present a model on interactive journalism in other sections. A mainstream online news website is a combination of these practices, however on the other hand aggregation and dissemination websites are closer to participatory and citizen journalism.

**Summary**

This chapter presented a discussion on the concept of interactivity and interpassivity, with a particular emphasis on exploring differences in explanations of this term. On the concept of interpassivity, Dean argues that activity on the net, frantic contributing and content circulation, may well

involve a profound passivity, one that is interconnected, linked, but passive nonetheless (Dean, 2005). According to Dean, the Internet is a 'zero institution' as it presents an illusion of unity with an imagined totality. In this context, this thesis argues that the recognition of publics on the internet (and assurance that users' participation will affect policies and legislation on the condition of deliberative values practised within publics) will transform the internet into a powerful domain for actual socio-political change.

Regarding the concept of interactivity, it was observed that developments in media technologies have also changed perceptions of interactivity. If interactivity was once a characteristic of a medium, with the growth of converged media, this has transformed into users' actions in transmitting messages in a communication setting (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). Interactivity in this thesis is an important factor in

identifying the legitimacy of publics, as without interactivity (which is participation) a public would be missing its requiements for deliberation. In this study, interactivity is defined as an important as 'unfinished project' which is dependent on users' (prosumers') actions in creating and sharing their own messages based on a content that has become available in different media. In the context of levels of interactivity (McMilan, 2002) this refers to the third aspect of human-human, or synethetic (Rafaeli 2007) interaction. Therefore, the analysis of interactivity within news websites will focus on occurences of synthetic/ human-human /Interactive interactions.

# Chapter 5

# Methodology

**Introduction**

The application of relevant research methods and an appropriate research design is crucial to ensuring the validity and value of a research project.  After in-depth analysis of the relevant literature in previous chapters, this chapter outlines in detail the methods I have chosen to undertake this study. This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the research design applied in answering the research questions of this thesis which focus on 1) framing the interactive presence of online journals in an external platform and 2) exploring deliberation as a value in most liked/rated comments on news stories.

The primary research method employed in this thesis is content analysis. Content analysis is used to examine how external platforms are utilised by news journals to enhance human-human interactivity. Discourse analysis is then applied to identify the deliberative nature of  the most liked / recommended comments of users. It is important to mention that the first research question is primarily methodological as it ultimately presents a common platforms in all news websites of this study for further analysis in other research questions.

Each of these methods probes a different dimension of the enquiry into the object of study, particularly the interactive features and the analysis of users' comments and their references to strategic narratives in news stories. Together, they provide a wide range of information for understanding and analysing the phenomena investigated.  As Punch (2005) suggests,

integrating quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis ensures the development and investigation of research questions in an evolutionary manner, and increases the understanding of research results. Hansen (2009) also suggests that good research should aim for a combination of methods, which can 'light up the most angles and dimensions of what are invariably multidimensional and complex processes and phenomena' (pp.1–2).

The central argument of this thesis is focused on assessing the legitimacy of online publics. The literature review highlighted the importance of deliberation and participation in establishing this legitimacy. The literature review also showed that the genre of the communication plays an important role in shaping the values of discussions within a public. In this context the research questions address the interactive (participatory) and deliberative nature of online publics which are based on the discussion of news.

**Research Questions**

**Research Question 1**

The popularity and penetration of social networking, has encouraged major news sites to expand their operations to this new domain. As interactivity shapes the working structure of major social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (for example in establishing communities of users who participate in sharing, recommending, following or liking different forms of content and also participating in the production and dissemination of content) all journals have presented identical applications for their readers to connect and subscribe to their content in this new fashion. In this phase of

this study, this study aims to identify spaces where publics can emerge. As discussed in the literature, online publics are virtual spaces where users can start a discussion on a subject which interests them. Therefore, the first research question is designed to find out a common domain in news websites where users can share their views with others. Clearly, this is an interactive space and therefore the first question is to identify an interactive space used by all news websites. This space is a virtual arena for synthetic / human-human interactivity.

**Research Question 2**:

Findings in research question one identified Facebook as a platform used by all news websites examined in this study for users' participation and the website's dissemination of its own content. It is clear that the online publics can emerge in this domain but these publics are dependent on the kind of content shared by news websites. In this context research question two presents an analysis on news websites' use of Facebook in regard to:

1) Dissemination of content;

- How many stories are shared by each news website in one month?

- What kind of content is being shared on Facebook (news, any other content such as editorials, etc.)?

- Are there any differences between the presentation of news in Facebook and the original version published in the online journal?


2) Deliberation on content:

- Is deliberation a significant factor in identification of top comments on news stories disseminated by each journal on Facebook?

As discussed in the previous chapter on deliberation, the public-ness of communities of readers organised around a common text is dependent on the presence of deliberation in their comments on the original content (in this case, a news story). It is important to recognise these collections of readers as 'mini-publics' (Goodin, 2008) or 'public sphericules'(Gitlin, 1998) . To that end, Research Question 2 asks whether top comments on selection of news stories from each journal reflect the values of deliberative practices as discussed by Manosevitch, Steinfeld and Lev-on (2014). To explain this question further, it's important to understand that Manosevitch, Steinfelf and Lev-on (2014) presented a set of measures to capture key aspects of a deliberative process. These aspects are (ibid, p. 1186-7): (1) Comment relevance: A comment is coded as relevant when it addresses either the structuring topic defined as 'the topic established prior to or outside of the immediate environment' or an interactional topic, which includes any subject related to the structuring topic that arises as the discussion unfolds (Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 6) (2) Comment length: the number of words in the message, including the comment title when provided. (3) Opinion expression which is defined as an expression of the participant's belief about how the world is or ought to be with regard to the discussion topic (Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 10). (4) Reason, which is an explicit statement about a reason in favor of or against an opinion of relevance to the discussion topic. (5) Acknowledging other comments: Acknowledging ideas expressed in other comments manifests the idea that participants are adhering to the 'obligation to consider' criterion of the social process of deliberation (Gastil, 2008, p. 9). A comment is coded as an acknowledgement when it includes an explicit

reference to the prior comment by quoting previous text, repeating or rephrasing ideas expressed in another comment, addressing the previous subject by their user name, or using second person language (Manosevitch & Walker, 2009). (6) Agreement with prior comment was coded as a signal of support with an opinion expressed by a prior participant (Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 10). (7) Disagreement with a prior comment was coded as a statement that signals opposition with an opinion stated by a prior participant (Stromer-Galley, 2007, p.10). (8) Elaboration on prior comment: an elaboration of a thought expressed in a prior comment manifests the essence of the idea of deliberation as creating public knowledge. When deliberators explicitly expand on prior content and raise additional dimensions related to it, they are seizing the potential of group discussion to broaden public understanding of the issue. Comments were coded as elaboration when they offered additional dimensions relevant to prior comments or offered an explication of prior ideas.

These eight indicators discussed by Manosevitch, Steinfeld and Lev-on (2014) can be used to identify the deliberative nature of publics. However, the deliberative nature of comments may differ from what has been discussed above. In particular, comments may not necessarily have all these values. For example a comment may only display acknowledgement or approval without providing a reason or the expression of an opinion. A real example of interactivity in social networks could be discussed here as sharing some values of deliberation as mentioned earlier. For example, when a user joins others or independently likes a post in the official page of a news site, he/she is either acknowledging the points mentioned in that post or is

141

approving the content presented on that page. If, for the purposes of this study 'liking' a post is considered as a deliberative factor then it is important to ask whether there is a relationship between the number of likes a post has received and possible occurrences of the number of deliberative practices relating to any of the other seven values. In other words, if liking content is considered to be a simple, primary act of deliberation (According to Manosevitch, Steinfeld and Lev-on (2014) acknowledging is a form of deliberation),.then is there a chance of expecting other deliberative factors to be present in the same thread? To understand whether there is a relationship between these variables, a statistical test is undertaken to present the relationship between liking a news story and deliberative practices (in any form other than just acknowledging) in that thread.

### Research Question Three

The third research question builds on findings From Research Question Two and tests proposition that news discourse is the underlying factor in turning communities of individuals into public sphericules. This is to complement earlier discussion by Ridell (2005) on the importance of the genre of communication in the internet-democracy project. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2 , Ridell's discussion on the genre of communication presents a new approach towards the project of Internet-democracy which is not techno-determinist but focuses on the context of communication rather than the communication technology. In this context, this research question

aims to focus on the genre of news to discover whether, as a cultural form, it can provide a model for the emergence of publics in the Internet. In other words, the third research question aims to identify the presence of deliberative practices in most-liked comments (i.e. comments which have the largest number of 'like' responses) shared by the users. To answer this question we refer to and analyse the findings of the product momentum test. If the relationship shows that there exists a positive link between likability of a post and emerging discussions in the comments section, then it can be asked whether these discussions have emerged in response to news stories or tips on traveling or opinion and editorial pieces. It would be important to find out what percentage of these posts belong to which genres of news to further discuss the importance of genre and particularly present news as an important pillar in the emergence of public sphericules (Gitlin, 1998) or mini-publics (Goodwin, 2008).

**Research Methods**

This section presents a brief introduction to the research methods used in this thesis – that is, content analysis and discourse analysis. Each of these methods contains distinctive methodological characteristics and functions for answering the multidimensional issues of presentation and the application of interactive features in the online news website examined this study. The discussion also identifies the strengths and limitations of these methods. The calculation of Pearson correlation coefficients is important for assessing the significance of each public. If we consider a public to be a

143

networking space between users, where every user connects to the others by processing information and transforming it in a communication setting, then this network and its nodes will have a level of significance which depends on the level of users' activity in processing information (Castells,2004). Pearson's correlation coefficient identifies the relationship between the number of times a story is shared by users and the number of times a story has received a comment. Pearson's value identifies the strength of the connection in user-to-user communication. Therefore, it gives an indication of the significance of a public. Pearson's value is calculated between +1 and -1. The closer the value is to +1, the more significant is its corresponding public. This is important because public opinion of publics should only matter if the network presents a high level of participation and deliberation (Sharing and Commenting). Every post in Facebook can invite the users to like, share or comment on it. A public is created for all users who participate in this space by liking, sharing or commenting on a single post. Liking, sharing and commenting are different features of participation and deliberation. Liking a story is a form of participation because the act of liking a post becomes visible in the network. Sharing is also a form of participation but it is directed towards known recipients, and commenting in a post is feedback that can also contribute towards deliberation. Each news website makes a number of posts every week. However, the publics created for all these posts are not equal with each other. Some publics are more significant because they have more people liking, sharing or commenting on them. To understand the importance of publics, a statistical test was undertaken to assist this study with identification of genre of news (as defined earlier) as a catalyst for the

144

evolution of deliberative publics. In this context this study reviews the value of Pearson's R in: 1) all posts published in the official pages of news websites in Facebook 2) those posts that can be grouped together under the news (as defined). The difference between these two values would suggest if there is a difference between these publics. This difference (if proven) would assist this study to argue that publics created on News posts (as defined) are more significant than other publics because the relationship between two values of commenting and sharing is closer to +1 ( $-1<R<+1$). In other words, publics that present a higher value of R display greater activity between the nodes (users). According to Castells this means nodes process more information and this adds to the value of this public (network) in the context of all publics (networks) created in Facebook for all posts. If the value of R for networks of News (as defined) is significantly different from the value of R for other networks, then it means the genre of News is a catalyst for the vibrant and active nature of these publics.

### Content Analysis

This study uses quantitative comparative content analysis to identify the interactive features of news website.. Krippendorf (1980) defines content analysis as 'a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding' (p. 21). It allows inferences to be made, which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection. A similar explanation in recent decades can be

found in Neuendrof (2002), who defines content analysis as 'the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics' (p. 1).

Content analysis is a widely used research method in communication studies and particularly in news analysis. One of the advantages of content analysis is that it can be used to analyse large bodies of textual information (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 100), which consequently allows the analysis of media trends over an extended period. This project uses content analysis to analyse interactive features in selected online news website. The online news websites considered for analysis in this project were the six most popular news websites that have been identified and selected by combining ranking lists provided by a number of ranking websites. Primarily, content analysis was applied in scanning for the presence of all interactive features in publications of a single news story from each website. As the news story and nature of the event covered does not matter news stories were randomly selected from each website and the presence of different interactive features are examined.

As described earlier, content analysis is used to study a broad range of texts, from transcripts of interviews and discussions in clinical and social research to films, TV programs and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines. Media content analysis was introduced as a systematic method to study mass media by Harold Lasswell in 1927 (cited in Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998) initially to study propaganda. It became increasingly popular as a research methodology during the 1920s and 1930s for investigating the rapidly expanding communication content of movies.

With the arrival of television in the 1950s, media content analysis proliferated as a research methodology in mass communication studies and social sciences. Media content analysis has been a primary research method for studying portrayals of violence, racism and women in television programming as well as in films. Content analysis is also useful for examining trends and patterns in documents. For example, content analysis can be used to observe the news coverage patterns of a particular country in media.

Because it can be used to examine any piece of writing or recorded communication, content analysis is used in a large number of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, and other fields of inquiry.

In this study the application of content analysis is limited to identifying the presentation of those interactive features – in the presentation of a news story – that enable their readers to connect to each other.  In cyber news website. Hence, the unit of analysis in this phase of the study was the entire page containing the news story. Each sample was coded for the presence or absence of these features that tap into the technology of interactivity. In brief this study looks into the presence of any interactive feature that could be useful in addressing the functions shown below.

| U2U (User-to-user) Interactivity | Interpersonal communication | 1. Chat room function<br>2. Function for creating online community<br><br>3. Ability to Email, comment, share, recommend, like the |
|---|---|---|

147

| | | content |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

### Discourse Analysis

Analysing the relationship between language and political action is the main objective of discourse analysis. It is a method that has been used in different areas of the social sciences but still there is no mainstream definition. According to Pedersen (2009);

> *There is no mainstream definition of discourse within the social sciences. Neither is there any generally accepted understanding of what discourse analysis is, or which methods(s) its practitioners should use. Consequently, it is difficult to give a precise description of what characterizes discourse analysis (2009, p.1).*

The application of discourse analysis in mass communication research is relatively new; therefore, a brief introduction is necessary to discuss the background and developments of this new approach. At the same time this historical sketch may show the multidisciplinary roots as well as the theoretical and methodological diversity of the field of discourse analysis.

For the purposes of this thesis, discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language at a given time and place is used to describe an act as realised at that time and place. Hence discourse analysis focuses on the thread of language and the related semiotic system used in a comment. Any piece of language, oral or written, is composed of a set of grammatical cues or clues that help listeners and readers to interpret the meaning of the language. The application of discourse analysis in this study is limited to examining the discourse structure of the most recommended commentaries in selected news websites.

The approach to media discourse analysis applied in this study was developed by Manosevitch, Steinfeld and Lev-on (2014) and the presence of different deliberative values is examined in most-liked comments posted by the users. The overall analysis emphasises finding elements reflecting: relevance, opinion expression, reason, acknowledging other comments (agreement, disagreement or further elaboration on previous comments). To address the presence of these values, a set of questions prepared by Zhou, Chan & Peng (2008) were developed as below. To find out if these questions could be applied in the analysis of users' comments an explanation is given after each question.

1) Did a given participant pose any argument(s) to support his/her viewpoints?

This is clearly an important question as it looks for arguments.

2) Did a given participant mention or propose any different or opposite idea(s) in one single post? Presentation of opposite views adds to the credibility of a public so this factor is relevant as well. However the presentation of opposing ideas by the participant indicates a lower level of deliberation.

3) Did a given post include any opinion(s) unfavourable to government policies or any criticism of the events or officials cited in the original news story? This factor can be further explained with posts raising a disagreement with some events in the content (So it is not limited to government policies).

4) Did a given participant use any "hot button" words in the posts? This is a negative factor as civility is important in addressing individuals' opinions.

5) Did he /she explain his/her viewpoints with different expressions? Explaining one's opinion is important in deliberative discussions.

These questions will be addressed in reference to those comments that are selected for analysis in news discussion.

**Research Design**

The research outline for the content analysis and discourse structure analysis employed in this thesis is the focus in this section. This outline covers the methodological aspects of the research design, including the strategies for sampling and the analytical tools used for the analysis. Each of these methods follows a distinctive protocol and uses specific operational definitions based on their methodological nature and functions. Thus, the research outlines for each method are presented in subsections.

**Content Analysis**

The design of the content analysis process is often very taxing. It includes the construction of a coding scheme with a detailed operational definition for each of the variables to be coded. The following sections describe the content analysis design and provide an explanation of the implemented process.

**Sampling**

**Source Sampling**

The website listed in this project were selected from most popular online news website rated by ranking websites such as "Alexa"," Rank"," Quantcast" and "Compete". While listing and merging the findings about the rankings, a stratified sampling method was applied to include only the websites with an international / world news page. Online website selected for this study are listed below.

1- Al-Jazeera English (http://Aljazeera.com)

2- BBC (http://bbc.co.uk/news)

3- CNN (http://cnn.com)

4- The Guardian (http://guardian.co.uk)

5- New York Times (http://nytimes.com)

6- Washington Post (http://washingtonpost.com)

To answer Research Question One of this study the news item on international news page of each news website as selected for observation on available interactive features that allow user-to-user interaction. For research question two of this study, the official page of each journal website on Facebook is framed for analysis on 1) dissemination 2)

deliberation on the content. A time sampling method is applied to develop a sample for each website.

### Time Sampling

The dissemination of content looks into the extent that each website has expanded its operations to a new domain (that is, Facebook). Henceforth, a survey of content shared on Facebook by the website administrators was undertaken to find out how many stories are shared by each website in an average calendar month. For this purpose a 30-day period is framed to observe: 1) Number of times each website updates its Facebook page 2) What kind of content is being shared in Facebook. The reason for selecting 30 days is discussed by Lynch & Peer (2002) in their published guideline 'Analysing Newspaper Content' at the Readership Institute at NorthWestern University. Their recommendation is as below:

*We recommend studying a week's worth of newspapers, looking at a proportion of stories, overall structure, listings and content promotion. This allows a very thorough look at a newspaper in the most efficient way. Although tempting, studying a month of newspapers isn't significantly more reliable than a week's worth of papers.*

Though their recommendation is for newspapers, it can be argued that the same rule can apply in analysing newspapers' official pages in Facebook. However to increase the scope of this study and to present a detailed observation it was decided to cover one month's publication of each news website in their corresponding Facebook account.

Each website presents its content under its own taxonomy and website are different from each other in allocating their content into

different categories. For the purpose of this study content is first classified according to categories chosen in each news websites. However in analysis the content is classified as News, Editorials / Opinion pages or Other News. The reason for this categorisation is the promise of the third research question of this thesis which is to identify whether the genre of communication could be considered as an important factor in emerging publics / mini-publics or ad hoc publics. In this context 'News' is defined as any story that is on current affairs and international relations. Editorials and Opinion pieces are articles that are published in each website . They can be either analytical or descriptive. The third category of Other News covers all stories on any beat but national current affairs and international relations. Stories on sport, entertainment, and photo galleries, are classified under this group.

The answers to both questions in regards to dissemination of content will highlight the editorial directions of each website . To answer the third question, the dissemination of content is focused on language. Ten updates of each website were considered for analysis of their use of language in shared content. Findings in this phase highlight if websites follow different policies from their original publication in targeting their audience on Facebook (or if they share the same headlines and leads in referring to news stories). In this phase, a total of 60 news stories were analysed to observe their use of language on Facebook. To answer research question 3 of this study, the same ten news stories from each website were taken and the most-liked comments on each story were

framed to identify presence of deliberative values (exposing comments to values in five questions discussed earlier) in them. A total of 60 comments are analysed in this phase. The ten most liked posts are selected from each website within a periods of 30 days from 25 November 2014 to 25 December 2014. It is important to note that an analysis of all the comments published on each news story may not have been helpful to the aim of this study, as the emphasis is ultimately on finding whether the genre of News (current affairs and international relations) could be considered as a catalyst for an emergence of deliberative publics. This means for each story the top comments which have received most number of likes will be framed for analysis. This analysis is limited to top /most liked comments because these comments have already been selected by the majority of users participating in the discussion thread. Top comments are significant because when compared to two other available actions performed by the users – Liking and Sharing, they present a degree of interactivity which goes beyond participation and sharing the content. Commenting on a story can potentially add deliberation to publics created for each post. The sample size is not necessarily an important factor for analysis as the primary focus of the study is on the structure, style and deliberativeness of most-liked comments shared by the readers. As Bell and Garret (1991, p. 20) suggest, data collection depends on the purpose of analysis. As discussed earlier, research question one helps us to understand whether news websites accelerate the emergence of publics. Research question two is based on the previous question that finds all websites are using third platforms like Facebook for

publication of their content and also they invite their readers to experience user-to-user interaction in these platforms. Research question three focuses on the qualities of these interactions and aims to understand whether these interactions are deliberative and whether the genre of content (News as defined earlier) could be a catalyst in the emergence of deliberative mini- / ad hoc publics in these conditions. The findings are significant in identifying publics that should be considered important in regards to the formation of public opinion on different events.  To further elaborate on the purpose of this study it is important to note that different kinds of content (either shared on Facebook or in the original news website) create their own kinds of publics. However, only publics that display deliberation should be considered effective and influential. Identifying these publics an d genres of communication would assist policymakers, government officials and researchers in public discourse in response to civil society.

### Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis for this study vary according to the research question. For research question one the unit of analysis is a page that delivers a news story from the international news beat of each website . For the second research question of this study the unit of analysis is an official update (shared by administrators of each website , signing in with the registered username of each website ) posted on the

Facebook page of each journal. For research question three of this study, the unit of analysis is the most liked comment shared on a news story.

Hansen et al.'s (1998) explanation of sampling relevant content for content analysis justifies the exclusion of specific sections:

> *For studies which are principally interested in the operation of news values and factors governing the production of news such exclusions are reasonable on the grounds that these types of coverage are generally less directly driven by the news values and journalistic practices which apply in the main news section of newspapers (p.105).*

The definition of 'international news' in this study is adopted from the UNESCO's 'foreign images ' study (Srebenny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). International news is defined as: 'Events or situations outside the home country, or events in the home country in which foreign nationals take part or which are presented as having substantive relevance to foreign situations' (p.14). This definition has been adopted for the investigation of international news sampled for this study.

**Analytical Categories**

**- Research Question 1:**

One of the most important procedures involved in content analysis is the operationalisation or development of measures for the coding of data. The dimensions or variables to be measured had to be constructed in a way that reflected the social context of the data in order to achieve the research objectives and address the research questions in this thesis. For research question one, categories of analysis were based on a particular form of interactivity that enhances human-human connectivity. As the aim of this thesis is based on an analysis of ad hoc/mini-publics to underline the importance of genre in the advancement of deliberative practices, it is imperative to first identify a common platform where the majority of users interact with each other.

To identify common platforms for analysis, research question 1 is primarily a methodological question. It was designed mainly to justify presence of a common platform for further analysis. This platform can be internal discussion forums in each news website or another platform like Facebook. This research question aims to identify how each news website promotes user-to-user interactivity (because user-to-user interactivity is an essential factor in enabling individuals to deliberate in a public). Interactivity, for this dimension, could be thought of as synchronous or real time conversation (Massey, 2000). This dimension allows the newspaper and audience to interact. Email addresses, online forums, live

chats, comments and feedback are the specific options of this dimension that are investigated in this study

**Analytical Categories for Research Question 2:**

Analytical categories for the first part of research question 2 which focuses on dissemination of content are divided into three parts:

1) Numerical values indicating the number of shared entries in the Facebook page of each website .

2) Identifying the shared content as News, Editorials / Opinion articles, Other than News shared stories. As the social media (and here Facebook) is providing a new domain for each website, this study aims to find out whether this new platform is being used for dissemination of News or any other type of content. This is important because in research question three, ultimately the aim is to discuss whether genre of the content – and here News – is the means for enabling online deliberation to flourish. To answer this question it is important to define News. News is any shared post on Facebook by the official news website's account that 1) has a dateline and 2) presents an immediate event on socio-political affairs (current affairs) or international relations between countries. Editorial / opinion articles are those posts that are analytical / descriptive of an event / issue and do not have a dateline. 3) Other than news posts are those shared stories which are on beats other than current affairs / international affairs. They can be stories on sport,

entertainment or photo galleries and documentary videos. News websites use different beats to categorise their content. For example entertainment, show business and culture were three different terms to classify posts which were on/about 'culture'. Based on this variance in terminology, it is useful to combine identical beats in the manner described below:

1) Beats of art, culture, entertainment are grouped together as culture

2) Beats including sole presentation of photos and videos are grouped together as 'Photos Videos').

3) Beats on dining, travel and life style are grouped together as 'Lifestyle'

4) Posts on satellite signals for the reception of programs and posts that are exclusive to Facebook and do not reflect pages from the original source were grouped together as 'No Beat'.

5) Posts on 'Opinion', 'Editorials' and articles in the Magazine of The New York Times are grouped together as 'Opinion'.

6) Posts on Business and Economics are grouped together as 'Business'.

      3) In answering research question three, the aim is to compare the language between the status of each shared story with the original one published in the news websites. As this based on comparison no particular analytical category can be defined.

      Analytical categories for the second part of research question 2 – which is focused on identifying deliberation in the most liked comments of each news story – are qualitative in nature as the aim is to identify

deliberation in comments by analysing for the presence of deliberative

indicators (as discussed earlier in research question 2).

**Analytical Categories for Research Question 3:**

No analytical categories are discussed in answering research

question 3 because the subject of enquiry for this question is the genre of

communication. It is directly related to findings from research question 2

on presenting the final argument of this study on genre of news and

possibilities that communication on this genre stay to be closer to

deliberative communication and therefore argue that transforming

communities of online readers into mini-publics (public sphericules). To

answer this question the top comments posted on 'News' (as defined

earlier) in each website will be analysed.

**Micro language analysis**

Once the comments to be used for further analysis are

identified (those which are most recommended by other users), the next

stage is to perform a micro analysis on selected texts in order to highlight the

various ways deliberativeness in online discussions is practised by the

commentators. In critical textual analysis, the aim is to make a close analysis

of the lexical style, the tropes, rhetoric and other expressive properties of the

language used in any given text. These features are instrumental in

persuasion, argumentation and the conveying of meaning, and therefore in

the reproduction of ideologies (Fowler, 1991).

Lexical style refers to choices and variations of words (Van Dijk, 1991, p.209) and that is the basic resource from which choices of words are made from the range available (Fowler, 1991, p.54). Given that each commentator's lexicon is limited, it is important to understand the choices they make in order to understand the meanings of texts. The style of a text gives hints as to the type of the audience addressed, the speaker's social role and status, and the function of the text (van Dijk, 1984, p.133).

Micro language analysis is used in answering research question 2 of this study and will later be referred to in discussions on research question 3. It is also important to mention that the analysis in this phase is focused on most liked comments because these comments are significant due to the number of approvals they have received and if they represent deliberation in their text, then this can be used to argue that a majority of users have voted on deliberation rather any other type of commenting such as playful conversations (aimless casual interactions between users).

### Statistical Tests

#### 1. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. It is referred to as Pearson's correlation or simply as the correlation coefficient. If the relationship between the variables is not linear, then the correlation coefficient does not adequately represent the strength of the relationship between the variables. The symbol for Pearson's correlation is "$\rho$" when it is measured in the population and "r" when it is measured in a sample. Because

we will be dealing almost exclusively with samples, we will use "r" to represent Pearson's correlation unless otherwise noted.

Pearson's r can range from -1 to 1. An r of -1 indicates a perfect negative linear relationship between variables, an r of 0 indicates no linear relationship between variables, and an r of 1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship between variables. Figure 1 shows a scatter plot for which r = 1. The formula for calculating r is:

$$r = \frac{\sum XY - \dfrac{\sum X \sum Y}{N}}{\sqrt{\left(\sum X^2 - \dfrac{(\sum X)^2}{N}\right)\left(\sum Y^2 - \dfrac{(\sum Y)^2}{N}\right)}}$$

where x and y are two variables and X and Y are deviation scores which are calculated by extracting each value from the mean. For the purposes of this study x is the number of likes a post has received on the Facebook page of a news site and y is the number of threads that each individual comment has created. This thread is created by individuals replying to a comment posted by previous users, for example see the pictures below.

A post has received 1010 likes, so x is 1010 and it has created a number of threads in the comments section (note that here we are not referring to the number of individual comments, but threads made of comments). Threads are in the comments section but they sit in response to one particular comment so it (the threat as a sub-section) presents a

conversation, a space for dialogue between the original commenter and the others). The picture below shows one example of these threads.
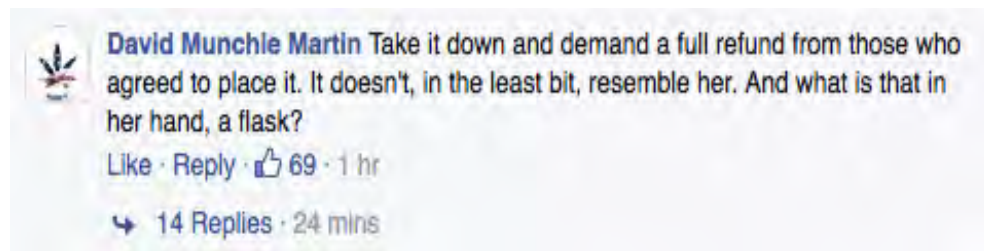


This is one example of a thread because it has created 14 replies. The value of 'y' is the number of these threads in the comments section of a post. Understanding this relationship helps us to focus on the third question of this study: whether there is a relationship between the genre of communication and emergence of mini-publics?

### 2. Calculating Absolute Deviation Around the Mean

During the analysis of data, it was found that one of the news websites had presented significant coverage of a certain beat. Inclusion of outliers from that news website would have affected the findings of this study, and so it was decided to calculate deviation around the mean.

Outliers can drastically change the findings of a study. It is important to identify outliers and make special arrangements to ensure that extreme number of occurances in less frequency do not change the results of a study. To avoid a study being biased by the presence of outliers scholars have often calculated means and standard deviations. However, as discussed by Leys et al. (2013) the earlier methods are problematic because mean and standard deviation are both affected by outliers. So instead of calculating the mean and

standard deviation, Leys et al. provide an alternative method for calculating

the acceptable range of frequency within a sample. This is done with the

calculation of the media absolute deviation (MAD). In this approach the

acceptable range is calculated as below:

$$M - 3\,^*MAD < x_i < M + 3\,^*MAD$$
$$\text{or}$$
$$\frac{x_i - M}{MAD} > |{\pm}3|$$

(where Xi : The acceptable range, M is the Median, and MAD is the

Median absolute deviation)

and Mean Standard Deviation is calculated as:

$$MAD = b\ M_i\left(\left|x_i - M_j\left(x_j\right)\right|\right)$$

where x(j) is the n original observations and M(i) is the median of the

series and b is a constant number of 1.4826.

**Online News Websites**

In this section I provide a brief introduction to the six cyber

websites that are the focus of this study.

**Al-Jazeera English (AJE):** Al-Jazeera which in English means

'The Island' was founded in 1996 using a US$150 million-dollar donation of

the Emir of Qatar to create an independent and objective pan-Arabic news

channel. Since its creation Al-Jazeera's coverage from the Middle East has

reached more than 50 million households in the region. Al-Jazeera expanded its operations over the years and its most important addition was to launch a 24-hour English news channel on 15 November 2006. Al-Jazeera English (AJE) is now reaching audiences in 140 countries and it targets 270 million households. According to its own website its policy has been always about 'giving voice to the voiceless' (Aljazeera, 2014). The channel operates from its four broadcasting centres in Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington D.C. and receives reports from more than 70 bureaus in the world. AJE is the first editorially independent 24 hour English-language news channel headquartered in the Middle East.

Al-Jazeera's success in the region was discussed by Geara & Staugaard (2009) and they identified several factors including:

1) The channel's policy in dealing with taboos in Middle Eastern countries, covering subjects such as homosexuality, women's hijab and also for the very first time in the Middle East, inviting Israeli officials to participate in its programs

2) Al-Jazeera's exclusive coverage of neglected areas in the Middle East and Africa with local reporters has provided a fresh take on presenting evidence from the ground. Al-Jazeera allows natives to present their own stories.

3) Al-Jazeera presents a different perspective on the coverage of war at Iraq and Afghanistan. It was the first news network that aired Osama Bin Laden's tapes following the events of September 11, 2001.

Unlike Al-Jazeera, AJE's mission is to present a coverage to a wide range of international viewers. In the beginning Al-Jazeera faced a lack of interest in the US distributor's market as the channel was often accused of giving voice to terrorist groups. However Al-Jazeera started a campaign on 'IwantAlJazeera' with using You Tube, Facebook and dedicated websites and blogs and finally succeeded in entering in the US market (Zayani, 2005). However the channel softened its English edition to become a global media player. Al-Jazeera English invited a range of international journalists including David Frost and Riz Khan (former CNN news anchorwoman) to join its channel. On the other hand the use of certain words was changed. For example, instead of announcing individuals' deaths during the war and calling them 'martyrs', in the English edition the announcement only stated that individuals were 'killed' (Geara & Staugaard, 2009).

Al-Jazeera English is also considered to be one of the early adopters of new media in its channel. AJE expanded its presence with podcasts, YouTube channel videos, Facebook and Twitter posts and an interactive map with citizen-journalists uploading their stories from conflict zones.

Al-Jazeera English today is facing competition from other emerging networks in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. However due to its policy in airing limited advertising and favouring content over revenue, and its different style of covering international events (by giving voice to the

voiceless and reporting from the field with local people) it remains an important and influential news channel.

     **BBC**:   The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the largest broadcasting corporation in the world (BBC, 2014). It is a public service broadcaster, established by a royal charter and funded by the licence fee that is paid by UK households.  The BBC World Service broadcasts to the world on radio, on TV and online, providing news and information in 32 languages. It is funded by a government grant, not from licence fees. The BBC is governed by the BBC Trust, which represents the interests of licence fee payers and sets the overall strategy (BBC, 2009). The BBC News website is part of BBC online and according to Alexa's traffic ranking system, in February 2009 BBC Online was the 43rd-most popular website in the world and the first news website to be ranked in the traffic ranking list (Alexa, 2009). The BBC news website is the Internet arm of the biggest broadcasting news gatherer in the world. It was launched in November 1997 and has since published nearly one-and-a-half million full multi-media news pages in which each page is published by teams of online journalists based in the main newsroom in the BBC TV Centre. The BBC News website presents links to four different social bookmarking websites (Facebook, Digg, Stumble Upon and Delicious). Users can link news stories of interest to these feeds or alternatively they can participate in the BBC News discussion forum that is presented on the front page as an independent section of "Have Your Say".  BBC has two types of moderation policies with reference to discussions and debates. Threads are either fully moderated or reactively moderated. Full moderation is also known as pre-

moderation, in which every submitted comment is checked by a BBC

moderator before it is published on the site. However the BBC doesn't

guarantee to publish all the comments due to the volume of comments they

received every day. Reactive moderation means that all the comments

submitted by registered users will appear on the website and BBC

moderators will monitor the threads after submission. However, if an

interested reader is not a registered user his comments have to be checked

before they are published on the website. The BBC will monitor the content of

reactively moderated threads and remove comments that break the explained

house rules. On the other hand users can always complain about the

published comments by using the "complain about this comment" button that

appears next to each published comment. Registered users can also

recommend a particular comment by using the recommendation button that

appears next to each published comment and they can sort all the published

comments either by recommendation or by date. The BBC asks all users to

follow certain guidelines described as house rules to ensure publication of

comments. Those house rules cover 19 different issues that are fully

explained and they have to be signed by all the users before completion of

their registration.  The BBC also asks all its users to be aware of copyright

laws and the requirement that their comments should not infringe any laws

and must be their original work (BBC, 2009).

In BBC News, most of the news stories are written by BBC News

journalists and the rest come from writers in the BBC's specialist units,

covering everything from business and social affairs to foreign news. Many of

the BBC's correspondents operating worldwide also contribute as well as those at BBC Monitoring. To promote participation, non-BBC journalists are frequently commissioned to contribute. A wide variety of sources is used in the preparation of material – including BBC News, BBC World Service and a large number of internationally recognised news agencies. They include the Press Association, Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France-Presse (BBC, 2009). As per new policies the readers of BBC online news can now customise their BBC homepages and set their own criteria to follow news stories of their interest. BBC Online also offers various radio and television programs streaming live from the website or readers can download certain programs in line with creative license agreements.

In November 2003, Tessa Jowell, minister at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), appointed Philip Graf, a former newspaper executive with the Trinity-Mirror group, to head up an independent review of the BBC's online operations (DCMS, 2003). The need for a review was highlighted by other online companies and politicians who complained that the BBC website received too much funding from the television license, meaning that other websites were unable to compete with the vast amount of advertising-free online content available on the BBC. They said that the BBC makes the development of private online businesses impossible (Hanluain, 2004).  Some proposed that the amount of license fee money spent on bbc.co.uk should be reduced – and should be replaced with funding from advertisements or subscriptions, or there should be a reduction in the amount of content available on the site (BIPA, 2005). In response to this the BBC carried out an investigation, and has now set in motion a plan to change

169

the way it provides its online services. In future bbc.co.uk will attempt to fill gaps in the market, and will guide users to other websites for currently existing market provision. For example, instead of providing local events information and timetables, users will be guided to outside websites already providing that information. Part of this plan includes the BBC closing some of its websites, and redirecting money to redeveloping other parts. In fact the BBC closed down five websites: the what's on events listings site; Fantasy Football; the games portal; the surfing portal and the Pure Soap site (Azeez, 2004).

**CNN**:  Cable News Network, CNN, was launched by Ted Turner on 1 June 1980. It was the first television station to broadcast 24 hours of news coverage and is owned by parent company Time Warner and the Turner Broadcasting System. CNN gained recognition for its news coverage of the first gulf war in 1991. According to Nielsen cume ratings, CNN is rated as the first and most popular news network in the United States (Pew, 2014). The Alexa traffic ranking system has listed CNN's news website as the world's 51st-most popular website, and the second-most popular news website after the BBC.  CNN online has an international edition that caters to viewers in different parts of the world, though CNN US was originally aimed at audiences in North America (Canada and the United States).  As of June 2008, CNN was available in over 93 million US households, broadcasting to over 890,000 hotel rooms and its programs are broadcast in 212 countries and territories. CNN has expanded its reach to a number of cable and satellite television networks, several websites, specialised closed-circuit networks (such as CNN

Airport Network), and two radio networks. The network has 36 bureaus (10 domestic, 26 international), more than 900 affiliated local stations, and several regional and foreign-language networks around the world (CNN, 2014).

CNN launched its news website on 30 August 1995 followed by CNN pipeline. The widespread growth of blogs, social media and user-generated content have influenced the site, and blogs in particular have focused CNN's previously scattershot online offerings, most noticeably in the development and launch of CNN Pipeline in late 2005. CNN Pipeline was the name of a paid subscription service, its corresponding website, and a content delivery client that provided streams of live video from up to four sources (or "pipes"), on-demand access to CNN stories and reports, and optional pop-up "news alerts" to computer users. The installable client was available to users of PCs running Microsoft Windows. There was also a browser-based "web client" that did not require installation. The service was discontinued in July 2007 and replaced with a very similar but free web-based live video service.

In 2004 the now-defunct topical news program, Judy Woodruff's Inside Politics, was the first CNN program to feature a round-up of blogs. Blog coverage was expanded when Inside Politics was folded into the The Situation Room. In 2006, CNN launched CNN Exchange and CNN iReport, initiatives designed to further introduce and centralise the impact of everything from blogging to citizen journalism within the CNN brand. CNN iReport which features user-submitted photos and videos, has achieved

considerable traction, with increasingly professional-looking reports filed by amateur journalists, many still in high school or college. The iReport gained more prominence when witnesses of the Virginia Tech shootings sent in first-hand photos of what was going on during the shootings (CNN, 2014). In addition to iReport, CNN offers social bookmarking features to its users and they can link to news stories of their interest on different websites (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, etc.)

**The New York Times:**  The New York Times was founded on September 18, 1851 by journalist and politician Henry Jarvis Raymond and is now the largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States (New York Times, 2009).  The newspaper is owned by The New York Times Company and the paper reported a circulation of more than one million readers on weekends. The New York Times launched its news website in 1995 and is reported to have reached an online universe of over 143 million readers on the web (New York Times, 2009). The New York Times website is ranked as the 101st-most popular website in the world by Alexa . According to Compete, a traffic ranking website, the nyt.com domain attracted 146 million unique visitors annually by March 2008 (Compete, 2008). The New York Times allows its readers to post comments on news stories but the feature is only available on selected news articles. In order to post comments The New York Times readers must create a free account and accept all terms of use. By doing so they agree to seven different policies that are set for the submission of any user generated content material. Submitted content should comply with certain guidelines as it shouldn't contain any form of obscenity,

vulgarity, profanity, commercial promotion, impersonation or personal attack
(New York Times, 2009). Comments are monitored and they are only
published once they have been screened by the editors.  Readers can sort
comments based on five different criteria that include the earliest, latest,
reader's recommendation, editors' selection and replies. The New York Times
is linked to seven different social bookmarking / networking websites:
Facebook, YahooBuzz, Digg, Myspace, Linkedin, Mixx and Permalink.

**The Guardian:** The Guardian is a British newspaper founded in 1821
and owned by the Guardian Media Group.  The Guardian website was
launched in January 1999 and it reaches 25 million people, with 10 million
readers in the UK, establishing itself as the most popular news website in the
country (Guardian, 2009). Guardian is ranked as the world's 315th -most
popular website according to Alexa traffic solutions (Alexa, 2009). The
Guardian was voted as world best designed newspaper in 2006 after a panel
of five judges compared 344 newspapers from 44 different countries
(Guardian, 2006). Guardian online (http://www.guardian.co.uk) is the UK's
most popular newspaper site and has regularly been voted the world's best
newspaper site at the Webby Awards. The Guardian has long been regarded
as the innovator among the UK's newspaper websites. The site features a
number of high quality successful blogs, including "Comment is Free", the
UK's leading comment blog (GMG, 2009).  Readers can't comment on news
stories directly but they can comment on articles that have been published on
the 'Comment is Free' section of the website that includes editorial and
opinion pages. The Guardian is linked to ten different social

bookmarking/networking websites: Digg, Reddit, Yahoo My Web, Google Bookmarks, Delicious, StumbleUpon, Live journal, Newsvine, Facebook and Blinklist.

**Washington Post**

The Washington Post is a daily newspaper in Washington DC, USA Founded in 1877 by Stilson Hutchins. The Washington Post is the largest newspaper in Washington, D.C. and one of the leading daily newspapers in the United States, along with USA Today, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. Unlike the Times and the Journal, the Washington Post does not print a national edition, aside from the "National Weekly Edition

The Post was established in 1877 as a four-page organ of the Democratic Party. For more than half a century it faced economic problems, caused partly by the competition that it faced. The paper was sold in 1889, resulting in the abandonment of its Democratic Party allegiance. It grew in size and reputation and came to be known as an extremely conservative publication. The Washington Post is mainly remembered for the coverage of Watergate scandal which led to resignation of Richard Nixon.

In the early 21st century, because of increasing financial difficulties in a struggling newspaper industry, the Post underwent a period of major restructuring, including the appointment of Donald's niece Katharine Weymouth as publisher (2008), employee buyouts and layoffs, and the

closure of its domestic branches (2009). In 2013 founder of Amazon.com Jeff Bezos bought the newspaper and affiliated publications for $250 million. The paper has won numerous awards for its content, including more than 60 Pulitzer Prizes (Britannica, 2014).

**Ownership and Circulation:**

The ownership and circulation of the three newspapers in this study are shown below:

| New York Times (Online) | The New York Times company | 57 million unique visitors each month (NY Times, Media Kit, 2014) |
|---|---|---|
| The Guardian (Online) | Guardian Media Group | 19,272,000 unique visitors monthly (The Guardian, 2014) |
| Washington Post (Online) | Washington Post Company. | 18 million unique visitors per month (Theoped project, 2014) |

Ownership and viewership of 24-hour news networks of this study are as below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Al Jazeera English (Online) | Al Jazeera Media Network, which is partly funded by the House of **Thani** | 20 Million unique visitors per month (Al Jazeera English, 2014) |
| BBC News (Online) | Guardian Media Group | 64 million unique visitors per month (BBC Media Centre, 2014) |
| CNN International (Online) | Washington Post Company. | 62 million unique visitors per month (CNN Press room, 2014) |

**Summary**

The integration of research methods and careful selection of various analytical tools that are emphasised in the introductory section of this chapter are crucial for the acquisition of important and relevant information for academic research. In this chapter I have detailed the specific methods I use in collecting the relevant information and I have explained the various ways I analyse my data. This chapter also explicates the relevance of content analysis and micro language analysis in analysing the interactive features of news websites and provides an insight into various fields of adaptive interactivity and their applications and uses by readers.

The two research methods, content analysis and discourse analysis each possess their own distinctive strengths and limitations. Content analysis allows the analysis of large amounts of information from the cyber news websites (of this study), focusing on the presentation of interactive features and their complexity with reference to different levels of interactivity. However the discourse analysis method is more focused on the micro-language analysis of comments that are published and ranked according to the recommendations of other readers in each online news website. Discourse analysis will be used only when a comment refers to particular section of a news story. In this regard, the application of discourse structure provides another point of view on the original news story with reference to the readers' commentaries.

The basic approach of this thesis – in identifying online publics as legitimate domains for users to discuss subjects of their interest – has informed the development of the research questions. Research question one aims to identify a common platform for all news websites for the evolution of online publics. Research question two is focused on news websites' use of Facebook. The most-liked stories are identified as significant domains for users' actions in creating their own text (referring to the idea of interactivity) and their corresponding publics are framed for analysis of deliberative practices in discussions. Research question three is focused on the relationship between genre of communication (News) and deliberative values in publics.  Identification of the effects of the genre of communication on the

evolution of deliberative and participatory publics helps this study to argue

that there are spaces which should be recognised by politicians and

policymakers and that this recognition, together with an assurance that they

have an impact, should be shared within publics to ensure maximum

participation is achieved from users.

# Chapterp 6

# Results

**Methodological Enquiry, Research Question 1:**

As the central argument of this thesis is on the legitimacy of online publics, it is important to first identify a common platform for their evolution as networked/ad hoc publics. It is also important to mention that this question is primarily a methodological enquiry that justifies further analysis on a common platform. To identify a common platform enabling users to participate in relation to the text (where 'text' means any article published in a news website) a comparative study was conducted to identify whether news websites allow their readers to experience interpersonal communication (Synthetic dimension of interactivity) in their own domain. The Washington Post, Al Jazeera and The Guardian allow their users to leave their comments on their articles but the response rate from users is relatively low and this was not observed as a common practice across all news websites. Instead, it was found that the only external platform shared by all news websites of this study was Facebook. This was mainly influenced by BBC News niche selection of social networking and social bookmarking sites. BBC News presented only Facebook and Twitter and this decision was explained in their 'Sharing Policy' document that stated that this decision is made according to popularity and usage amongst their readers.  This finding made it clear that any attempt to identify publics has to be undertaken in each news website's official Facebook page. In simple words, research question 1 justifies why this study is focused on the Facebook use of the six news websites of this study when addressing the other three central questions of this thesis.

**Research Question 2:**

**Frequency of posts and corresponding beats**

There are 1446 posts in this study from six official pages of different media houses. The highest frequency of posts is from Al Jazeera English (1091 posts) and lowest frequency is from BBC News (41). The chart below displays the frequency of posts in the Facebook pages of news sites.



| Al Jazeera English | New York Times | Washington Post | CNN International | The Guardian | BBC News |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1092 | 87 | 86 | 79 | 61 | 41 |

*6.36: News websites posts in Facebook*

Al Jazeera English is the newest news organisation amongst the six media houses in this study. In addition to high frequency of posts in Facebook, it has also enabled live streaming of its content in its Facebook page. On the other hand if Al Jazeera English is excluded, it was clear that all

other news sites presented frequencies of between 40 and 80 for the one-month sample of this study.

To identify what kind of content is mainly posted in Facebook, it was important to take a closer look at the classification of beats in each news website. It was found that different websites use different terms to classify their stories. For example Entertainment, Show Business and Culture were three different terms used to classify posts which were on/about 'culture' . Based on this variation in terminology, it was useful to combine some beats as shown below.

7) The beats of Art, Culture, Entertainment are grouped together as 'Culture'

8) Beats including sole presentation of photos and videos are grouped together as 'Photos Videos').

9) Beats on dining, travel and lifestyle are grouped together as 'Life Style'

10) Posts on satellite signals for the reception of programs and posts that were exclusive to Facebook and do not reflect pages from the original source were grouped together as 'No Beat'.

11) Posts on 'opinion', 'editorials' and articles in the magazine of The New York Times are grouped together as 'Opinion'.

12) Posts on business and economics are grouped together as 'Business'.

The distribution of beats in this population are presented in the chart below.
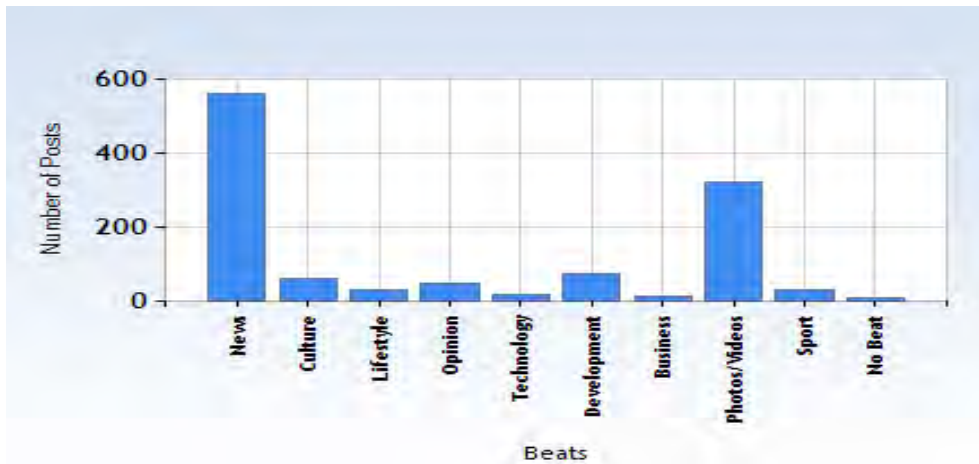
Table below displays distribution of beats across the population of this study.

| News | Culture | Life Style | Opinion | Technology | Development | Business | Photos / Videos | Sport | N.A |
|------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-------------|----------|------------------|-------|-----|
| 559 | 60 | 31 | 45 | 16 | 75 | 11 | 319 | 22 | 6 |

*Table 6.37: Beats of shared stories in Facebook*

*(N.A is indication for no beat and is referring to stories like satellite reception of the programs, changing frequencies, etc).*

The most popular kind of content is 1) 'News' followed by 'Photos / Videos' and 'development'. However a closer investigation indicates that the inclusion of 'Development' as a top beat for shared posts is mainly due to Al Jazeera's exclusive coverage of 'Development' news. It is also apparent that Al Jazeera's coverage of 'News', 'Photos / Videos (Television Teasers)', 'Opinion' and 'Development' is clearly influencing the distribution pattern of beats across all six news websites. To find out what thresholds should be considered for the average frequencies of each beat, and to avoid the findings being biased by the results for Al Jazeera English, a statistical test is needed to identify whether outliers could be meaningful in finding results, or whether

183

they should be omitted. To calculate the range of acceptable frequencies, a method is proposed by Leys et al. (2013) which is based on calculating the absolute deviation around the median. The acceptable range of frequencies is calculated with this formula:

$$M - 3 * MAD < x_i < M + 3 * MAD$$
$$\text{or}$$
$$\frac{x_i - M}{MAD} > |\pm 3|$$

(Xi is the acceptable range, M is median and MAD is Median Absolute Deviation.

Median Absolute Deviation is calculated as:

$$MAD = b \; M_i \left( \left| x_i - M_j \left( x_j \right) \right| \right)$$

where the Xj is the n original observations and Mi is the median of the series. b is the constant number of 1.4826.

So here, a calculation of the acceptable frequencies for different beats of 'News', 'Opinion', 'Development' and ' Photos / Videos' is presented to avoid the findings being biased by Al Jazeera's outliners.

1) Acceptable frequency for 'News'

Frequencies: 18, 21, 25, 32, 33, 452

Median : 28.5

MAD: 6

Frequency : 28.5 – (3 * 6 ) < X < 28.5 + (3 * 6)

$10 < X < 37$   This means the acceptable range for news is between 10 and 37.

2) Acceptable frequency for 'Opinion'

Frequencies: 0, 1, 8, 12, 24, 271

Median: 10

MAD: 9.5

Frequency: $10 - (3*9.5) < X < 10 + (3*9.5)$

$$0 < X < 38.5$$

3) Acceptable frequency for Photos / Videos

Frequencies: 5,6,8,9,10,290

Median: 10

MAD: 2

Frequency: $10 - (3*2) < X < 10 + (3*2)$

$$4 < X < 16$$

4) Acceptable frequency for Development

Frequencies: 0,0,0,0,2,73

Median: 0

MAD : 0

$X = 0$  The frequency is insignificant.

According to above calculations it is clear that to make a meaningful observation of frequencies across different beats, we cannot include frequencies which are higher or lower than X (as calculated). This means including frequencies of selected beats of Al Jazeera English will strongly affect the findings of this study.

Table below displays frequencies of different beats across websites excluding Al Jazeera's coverage in the beats of 'News', 'Opinion', 'Development' and 'Photos / Videos'.

| News | Art & Culture | Opinion | Photos and Videos | Life Style | Sport | Science and Technology | Business | No Beat | Development | Health |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 129 | 60 | 45 | 38 | 31 | 22 | 16 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 1 |

*Table 6.38: Frequency of beats*
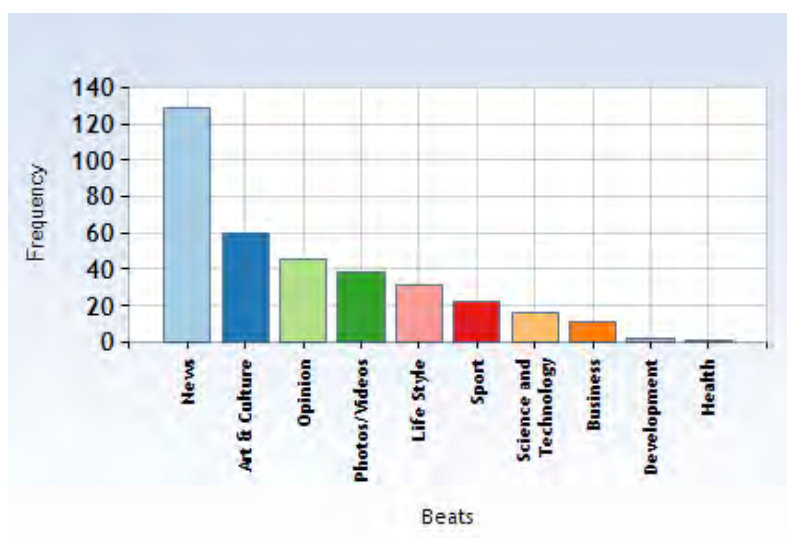


This chart displays an unbiased presentation of beats across news websites of this study.

Three news websites of this study are online editions of 24 hour television news channels and the remaining three are online editions of newspapers. The differences between their primary media houses have affected the types of articles that they shared on Facebook. For example it was significant to note that there are fewer news stories being shared by newspapers and most of their feeds were from different beats such as opinion pieces or photo/video galleries.

| Provider | BBC NEWS | Al Jazeera English | CNN International | The Guardian | New York Times | Washington Post |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| News posts | 18 | 452 | 33 | 21 | 32 | 25 |
| Total number | 41 | 1091 | 79 | 61 | 87 | 86 |

186

| of posts | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage | 43.90 | 41.42 | 41.77 | 34.42 | 36.78 | 29.06 |

*6.39: Number of News posts and total number of posts*

The average mean of news posts from those editions of television networks is 42.06 while the average mean of news posts from newspapers is 33.60. The difference in coverage of news events reflects the impact of changes in journalism today. The nature of 24-hour television news networks and continuous updates in announcing news multiple times a day requires coverage of different events to update news every hour. However, online news websites (which are an extension of newspapers) do not face this pressure to update their news because they follow different temporalities in terms of circulation and dissemination of their content.

**Presentation and the language of posts**

News websites follow different policies in publishing their stories in Facebook. Therefore it is important to observe the presentation and use of language for each news website separately.

- **CNN**

The appendix 7 lists the top ten most liked news stories in CNN's official Facebook page. The first column on the left presents the lead to the post as shown in the Facebook page. The middle column presents the title of the story in the original online version. The third column presents observations.

Observing 10 posts in Facebook indicates that: (1) Breaking News items are presented with no changes in their titles (2) Non-Breaking News items are presented with minimal changes. The presentations are variations of the headlines in the original versions. For example the title of one news article was: 'Malala, Satyarthi, accept Nobel Peace Prize, press children's rights fight' and this was changed to 'Nobel Peace prize Laureates Malala and Satyarthi continue striving for children's rights'. The lead on the post in Facebook presents the same event as stated in the headline but it starts by stating the name of the prize and then mentions the names of the recipients. It aims to attract the attention of users by stating the prize and encouraging them to read further by reading it in the news website. (3) for Non-News items like items on Travel, Opinion and Culture, there is a common pattern of presenting a more descriptive account of the event and omitting one of the key details and raising the curiosity of the readers to encourage them to follow the original story.

- **Al Jazeera English**

The appendix 8 lists the top ten most liked news stories in Al Jazeera English's official Facebook page. The first column on the left presents the lead to the post as it is on their Facebook page. The middle column presents the title of the story in the original online version. The third column presents observations.

Stories on 'Development' are presented in Facebook with the original title. However, the leads of news stories are different from the headline. For

example, in two accounts they were more descriptive than the headline and presented a quote from the original news story (These are news stories on international relations). A news story on an orangutan and one on the verdict of an Argentinian court are presented with small changes to the original title. Likewise, the news story on a black teenager killed by the police is presented with just the addition of information about the location of the incident. In other articles the post on Facebook presents more information and adds further descriptions to the original title.

- **The Guardian**

The appendix 9 lists the top ten most liked news stories in The Guardian's official Facebook page. The first column on the left presents the lead to the post on the Facebook page. The middle column presents the title of the story in the original online version. The third column presents observations.

Stories on 'Travel Photographer of the year' and 'Best children's books' are presented with the same title. However the rest of the posts have changed with the addition of more information to the corresponding title. This has mainly been followed by including a quote from the story in the lead on Facebook.

- **The New York Times**

The appendix 10 lists the top ten most liked news stories in The New York Times' official Facebook page. The first column on the left presents the

lead to the post on the Facebook page. The middle column presents the title of the story in the original online version. The third column presents observations. In all these stories the lead has added more information to the original title. Posts on 'Culture' and 'Opinion' display very minimal changes but news stories (though updated) add further information as the story develops.

### - The Washington Post

The appendix 11 lists the top ten most liked news stories in  the Washington Post's official Facebook page. The first column on the left presents the lead to the post on the Facebook page. The middle column presents the title of the story in the original online version. The third column presents observations

News stories on national and international affairs have changed in their presentation in Facebook. This change is apparent here with the title being a quote from the original story by one of main lead actors in the event. On one occasion the lead of a story on North Korea's Internet presents a very subjective understanding of the story but subjectivity like this is not a common practice. Other posts on different beats are presented with more detailed, descriptive information on the main event in the original article.

### -   BBC NEWS

The appendix 12 lists the top ten most liked news stories in  the Washington Post's official Facebook page.

With the exception of one item, the lead in all these posts adds more information to the title. The only exception is the story on Sony Corporation and the release of 'Interview' (the movie). BBC NEWS adds more information to the events in the original title but doesn't follow the same strategy of other networks in replacing the title with a quote. The emphasis here is on the event itself and it tries to make the story even more interesting so that readers will follow it up. For example in no.1 story adds the name of a product (iPhone) which is familiar to many of the readers and then adds the conditions under which these phones are made as it is in the video documentary. In another example, in stories 2, 4, 7, 8, and 10, the lead adds information to justify the significance of the event. In story no.2 this is done by adding that the selection is made by judges and then asks the readers for their opinions. In story no.4 it adds a quote to a series of photos of the royal family and the quote adds another discourse to this post and that's the issue of the Paparazzi. In the no.7 story the lead summarises the event in two parts by using 'but' as a connector, raising the reader's curiosity about why the victim was killed. In story no. 9 the lead adds more information on the number of people killed in the massacre to add significance to the original story. In story no.10 the lead presents the title but then presents an argument which summarise every reader's opinion about the gadget.

In conclusion, it is clear that news websites follow different strategies in posting leads in their Facebook pages to accompany the original stories. However, despite these differences some common practices are: 1) items that

191

are not about current affairs like photo galleries, TV teasers, and videos are often presented with the same title or the lead presents a variation of the original title. 2) breaking news stories are presented with the same title 3) news on current affairs are mainly edited with a quote that further explains the news value 4) the news value of on non-current affairs articles (for example: Orangutan and Argentinian court or Birth of endangered species are presented with minimal change or the lead is a variation of the title 5) In all cases where an edit was undertaken the lead adds more information and becomes more descriptive than the title. The changes in the language of presentation is important in the context of emerging publics, because these publics in the Facebook pages of news websites are based on news stories that are shared in this domain and every story is initially visible with its lead. Changing the lead of a story directly affects the public because it creates the first impression of the content that is shared.

# Chapter Seven

## Analysis and Discussion

**Introduction**

Online news websites present their stories in different formats. Apart from content, multimedia tools and different interactive and intercreative tools create significant differences in their approaches to content and their audiences. To identify and discuss the differences in their methods of journalism practice, particularly with regard to the evolution of new publics, the analysis in this chapter is focused on content, interactivity and deliberation as below:

1- The identification of a common platform in each of the six news websites in this study where readers could experience user-user interactivity (which is required for the evolution of publics.) This is mainly a methodological analysis.

2- A focus on content to find out: 1) What type of content was shared in a period of 30 days by the online news sites in Facebook 2) How many stories were shared by the online news sites in Facebook and 3) Whether the language of presentation was the same on Facebook and the original site or had changed. To elaborate on each question a content analysis of the news sites' official pages on Facebook was undertaken to find out how each news outlet is using this new domain. This question is important because of the popularity and penetration rate of social media and particularly the use of social media to enhance human-human interactivity which might promise the evolution of certain publics in the context of news discussions.

3- In the context of most liked / most shared news stories, the study looks further to test whether a relationship could be established between the number of shares and likes, and the actual deliberation of comments by the users.

4- To sum up and discuss whether the presentation of news in social networks (where human-human interactivity shapes the architecture and design of the network) could enhance deliberative practices. This question is raised to further investigate the importance of the question of genre of news in the evolution of publics.

**A methodological Enquiry, Research Question One:**

As the main area of this thesis is focused on the formation of publics/mini-publics / ad hoc publics, it is imperative to find out where these publics can be found. Since these publics evolve as a result of interactions between users, the news websites of this study are compared with each other in the interactive features that promote this kind of interaction between users.

**CNN**
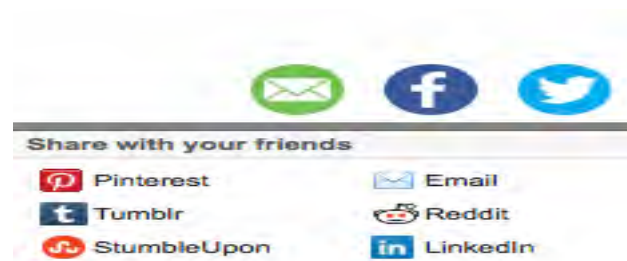


CNN's presentation of a news story is accompanied by the ability to email, Tweet and share on Facebook. In addition to these features, users can also share the story through social bookmarking sites such as Pinterest, Tumblr, StumbleUpon, Reddit and Linkedin. There are no links to chat rooms or possibilities for users to interact with others and share their opinions on the news stories on CNN's official page.

**Al Jazeera English**

Al Jazeera English allows its users to share its content with 54 different social networking and social bookmarking websites. The news website also allows its users to leave a comment on news stories published in its website. However, the number of participants in discussions is much less than the number of people participating in discussions of the same news

story on Al Jazeera's official Facebook page. For example, a story with 11

comments in Al Jazeera's website had received 156 comments on Facebook.
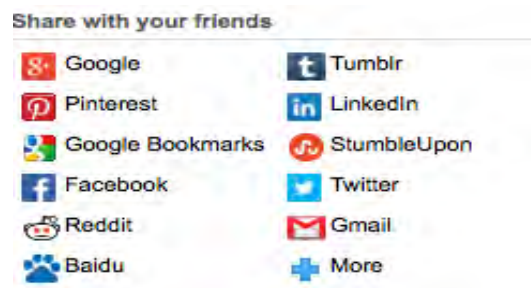


### The Guardian

The Guardian allows its content to be shared with via Facebook,

Twitter, Google+, Instagram and email. The Guardian allows its users to

participate in discussions on its own website on a selective basis. Some news

stories are presented with embedded comment boxes but the rest do not

display this feature.



### The New York Times

The New York Times allows its users to share its content through

seven different social networking and social bookmarking websites. It doesn't

provide any features for users to connect with each other on its own website.
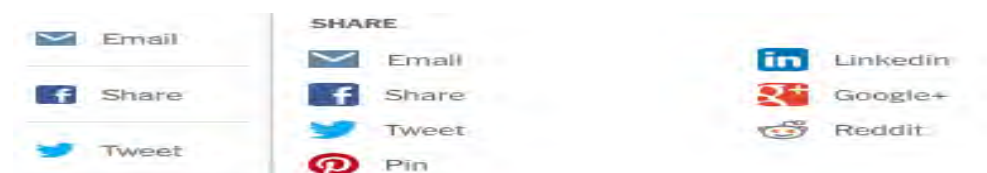


### Washington Post

The Washington Post presents links to six different social

bookmarking and social networking websites. Users can also email the

content to each other. The Washington Post allows its users to leave comments on its stories in its own website. However, it doesn't reveal how many times each story has been shared. There is also a huge difference between the number of users leaving their comments on the Post's own website and those participating in discussions on Facebook. The difference has been observed with six comments on the Post's own webpage to 357 comments on the same story in Facebook.



**BBC NEWS**

BBC News allows its users to share its content only via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Users are not allowed to leave their opinions on news stories on the BBC News online page. However the BBC has a special announcement about sharing and it states:

> We have chosen the most relevant social sites for our users by assessing the volume of referrals from those sites to the BBC website, their technical compatibility, and the number of users they have overall. All of the services chosen are currently free at the point of access for users. We monitor the range of social sites on the internet and regularly review our choice.

BBC NEWS also explains why Facebook and Twitter are the only social networking sites chosen for sharing its content. It states that this decision was made by reflecting on users' choices in the UK. Facebook is the largest social networking website and Twitter, despite having a smaller number of subscribers, it is the fastest growing network.

A closer look at the news websites in this study in their use of social networking and social bookmarking sites indicates that publics are to be found in external platforms. The only common network between these news websites that allows users to interact by commenting, sharing and leaving feedback on each other's posts is Facebook. Therefore question two and question three of this study analyse the dissemination and deliberation practices on the official Facebook pages of each news website.

**Research Question Two**

In this section each news website is framed and analysed with reference to the various ways they disseminate their content on Facebook.

1. **CNN**



CNN has two main pages on Facebook: CNN and CNN International. However there are number of other pages relating to individual programs on CNN, for example CNN Fit Nation or CNN Heroes. CNN focuses mainly on

news and reports from the US, however CNN International presents a broader perspective on news and reports from around the world. CNN International, with 8,372,956 subscribers, is framed for this study.

In the one-month sample for this phase (from 25 November 2014 to 25 December 2014) a total of 79 posts were published on CNN International's official Facebook page.

The ten most liked stories published in this period are shown below:

1. The original story is posted in the 'Travel' section of CNN International.



(http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/24/travel/dubai-disabled-skydiver/index.html) and its headline is: 'Can't slow me down': Paralyzed U.S. skydiver conquers Dubai's skies'

However, the lead to this story on Facebook is taken from story highlights as below:

2.The original story is posted in the 'Travel' section of CNN
International.



(http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/09/travel/singapores-jewel-
changi/index.html?hpt=hp_c2)

and its headline is; "Coming Soon: Singapore's jewel Changi, The
world's most awesome airport". The presentation of this story on Facebook is
different and it aims to make the reader ant to find out more about it.

3.Here the post is a link to a video on CNN International under the
Showbiz section.

(http://edition.cnn.com/videos/showbiz/2014/12/05/curry-hobbit-elves-news-question.cnn)

The original title for this video is 'Difficult Question for Elves…'. The post on Facebook has a different lead to the video and invites users to discover 'what has happened' to the presence of 'Elves' on the program.

4. Here is an introduction to a video which was scheduled for broadcasting on the CNN program 'On China'.



The video is available on Facebook but it is not available on CNN International's website. The Facebook post also doesn't provide any hyperlinks to this video on CNN's website.

5. The original story is posted under the 'Travel' section of CNN Internatioal.

([http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/23/travel/worlds-best-metro-stations/?hpt=travel_hp_blogroll](http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/23/travel/worlds-best-metro-stations/?hpt=travel_hp_blogroll))

The original headline for this story is; 'World's most impressive metro stations'. The lead in the Facebook post is more descriptive and explains the impressive nature of these stations.

6. This is the first hard news ('hard news' generally refers to up-to-the-minute news and events that are reported immediately, while soft news is background information or human-interest stories) that has received a record number of likes in this section.



The original story is published in CNN International under the category of World News. The headline of the story is exactly the same as the intro to this post on Facebook.

([http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/04/world/asia/philippines-super-typhoon-hagupit/index.html?hpt=hp_c1](http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/04/world/asia/philippines-super-typhoon-hagupit/index.html?hpt=hp_c1)).

7. This post refers to a breaking story which was published on the homepage of CNN International.

The story was covered for three days and consequently the coverage was updated. The original story was updated at a later stage and was titled 'Protests erupt in wake of chokehold death decision'.

(http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/04/justice/new-york-grand-jury-chokehold/index.html?sr=fb120414chokeholdprotestsdiein925pVODtopVideo)

8. The story is published in the CNN International's world news section.



The headline in the website is, 'Malala, Satyarthi accepts Nobel Peace Prize, press children's rights fight'.

(http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/10/world/asia/nobel-peace-prize-awarded/index.html)

The lead on the post in Facebook was not changed in terms of information and explanation. This is the second most liked hard news story posted on Facebook.

9.The post on Facebook has a link to a video on events after the death of an unarmed black teenager at Ferguson.



It is a live blog updating the way the original story unfolds. There is no news story on CNN International with this headline; this is due to the fact that the story was updated in real time.

10. The story on CNN International was published in the World News section (Politics) and was later updated with President Obama's Speech on Cuba and US relations.

(http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/17/politics/cuba-alan-gross-deal/index.html)

**- Analysis**

In top 10 most liked posts on CNN, fie stories are news events and the rest are from different beats of Travel, Entertainment and one trailer for a special report on the CNN Television channel. The table 6.1 summarises the information on the top ten most liked news stories on CNN.

| News | Travel | Entertainment | TV Teaser |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------|
| 5    | 3      | 1             | 1         |

*Table 6.1: Top ten most liked news stories on CNN according to their beats*

Appendix 1 presents detailed information about top most liked stories on CNN Internatioal's official Facebook page

In the same period, the top ten most shared news stories on CNN International are:

| o. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Breaking news | News | 7 | 1087 |
| | Breaking News | News | 9 | 679 |
| | A year after Haiyan's devastation, new super typhoon threatens Philippines | News | 6 | 569 |
| | Jarret Martin is paralysed from chest down: Here is what happened when he jumped off a cliff in Norway | Travel | 1 | 516 |
| | Daughter if you love her, marry her | TV Teaser (Special Report) | 4 | 495 |
| | This country may soon have the world's most awesome airport | Travel | 2 | 489 |
| | This is what happened when three elves appeared on CNN | Entertainment | 3 | 361 |
| | These beautiful metro stations make commuters crush worth it | Travel | 5 | 269 |
| | Pope Francis congratulates governments of U.S and Cuba for historic decision to establish diplomatic relations | News | 10 | 193 |
| 0 | Nobel Peace prize Laureates Malala and Satyarthi continue striving for children's rights child | News | 8 | 144 |

*Table 6.3: Ten most shared stories on CNN's Facebook page*

Table 6.4 summarises the beat of shared stories:

| News | Travel | Entertainment | TV Teaser | Technology |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

*Table 6.4: Beat of most shared News on CNN's official page in Facebook*

It is important to note that of the five most shared news stories, three are breaking news. Breaking news stories were also the most liked news stories posted on CNN. It is important to highlight use of social media (here Facebook) in dissemination of breaking news. Social media is used as an effective tool to spread news stories as it is shared between the users and their network of friends. In fact, it is the interactive features of social media working as a key factor in evolution of immediate publics. This application corresponds with Ariel and Avidar's (2015) discussion on interactivity. They discussed interactivity not as a feature of the platform but users' actions in transmitting messages in a communication . In other

words, it provides a more effective way of distributing important news as it dissemination of content here is done by the users instead of the news website.

In a period of one month a total of 79 posts were uploaded on CNN's official Facebook page. The table below displays the categories of these posts.

| News | Travel | Sport | Business | Videos/Photos | Technology | Entertainment |
|------|--------|-------|----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| 33 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 3 |

Table 6.5: Categories of posts on CNN's official Facebook page

It is clear that the majority of posts are news stories and Facebook is used to disseminate content from all different beats including teasers for TV programs and even live blogs. In the context of news stories posted on Facebook, all three breaking news stories were highly liked and shared by the users and the rest of the content (shared or liked) was from other beats. The popularity of breaking news in the most shared /liked posts indicates that social networks can immediately create publics for the dissemination of breaking stories, something which can't be achieved with TV, radio and the press. The presence of social networks and easy access to messenger apps play key roles in the evolution these publics. However it is important to examine the deliberative nature of these publics as well and this directs this section to the question of deliberation.

**BBC Comments**

To find out if deliberation is an important factor in the most liked comments posted on the top 10 most liked posts, the most liked comments on each news story are framed for further analysis. The analysis here follows recommendations by Zhou, Chan & Peng (2008) as discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis. In summary we are looking to find out if (1) a given

participant presents any argument(s) to support his/her viewpoints (2) a given
participant mentions or proposes any different or opposite idea(s) in one single
post (3) a given post includes any opinion(s) unfavourable to government policies
or any criticism of the events or officials cited in the original news story (4) a
given participant uses any "hot button" words in the posts (5) he /she explains
his/her viewpoints with different expressions.

1. The post here is from the beat of 'Travel' in CNN International.
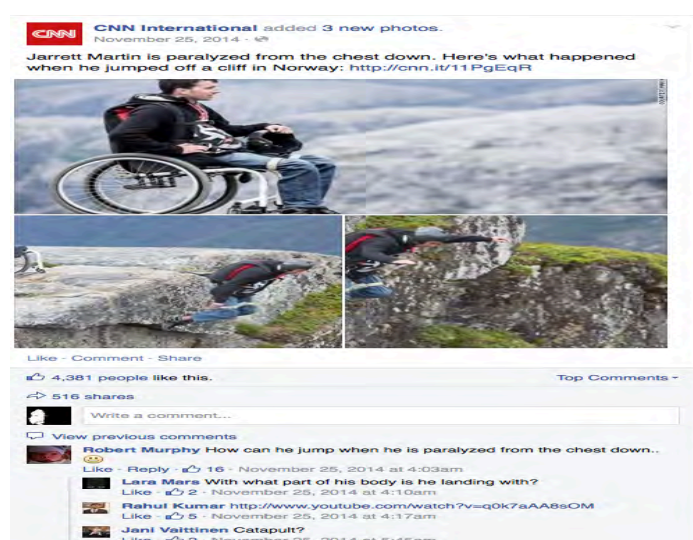


The most liked comment on this story raises a question about the jump
itself. The user is presenting an argument to support his view point (Factor 1). This
is followed with three comments on the jump itself. The first comment presents a
different question about the main event of this story. Second comment presents a
link to the video in which Jarrett is actually doing the jump from the same cliff as
in the picture (responding to previous comments by showing the actual jump as
captured in the video, Factor 5). The last comment also presents a viewpoint by
suggesting a method 'catapult' in the action covered in the story.  The most liked
comment under this post presents deliberative practices with factors 1 and 5.

2. The post here is from the beat of 'Travel' on CNN International.

The most liked comment on this country is name of a country and it is directly connected to the introduction to this post as it doesn't reveal the name of the specific country and leaves it to the readers to click on the post and discover it for themselves.

The first most liked comment received 41 replies from other users explaining their viewpoint about the Philippines, the airport in the Philippines and recommending the first commenter to read the story (Factor 5). There is hardly any deliberation in the comments shared under this post. The comments are not relevant to the original story.

3. The post is from 'Showbiz' or entertainment beat on CNN International.

The third most liked story here has received a comment on the technical problems in the interview itself. It is obvious that the commenter has tried to watch the video and has had difficulties in hearing questions from the interviewer. The comment has received one reply raising a question about whether the interview was needed or not (probably assuming that the people being interviewed are already known). Both comments refer to the original content. In terms of deliberative practices the first comment is relevant but it doesn't relate to the actual content of the post. No deliberation can be observed under this post.

4. The fourth most liked post here is a video teaser of a report for the 'On China' program on CNN Cable Television.



The video is almost one minute long and it is about gays and lesbians in China. Though the video is only a teaser, it has received 2,757 likes from

users. The top comment here has received 29 comments. As the original comment is ironic, the comments posted are targeting the irony presented in this comment. The comment lacks the requirement of comment length and relevance to the original story in terms of presenting an argument and supporting it. There is no act of deliberation here.

5. The fifth most liked news story is from the beat of 'Travel' and it has received 2350 likes.



The most liked comment presents users' opinions about identifying one of the cover photos. The comment has been liked by 14 other users. There are no comments posted under the original comment. The original comment is relevant because it addresses one of the pictures in the story but there is no other deliberative factor present in this comment.

6. This is the most liked post from the beat of News in this selection. The post has received 2229 likes.



The most liked comment on this story has received 57 likes and four responses. The most liked comment is targeted at other comments from users who were discussing the role of local government in the Philippines in helping people in affected areas. The comment is about the typhoon indirectly. It is presenting opposing views to previous comments and presents an opinion at the end (Factor 2). This comment has been contested by two others and supported by another two. The thread presents deliberation as it shows 1) arguments to support opinions (comment made by Meriel). 2) the presence of different ideas (comment posted by Den). 3) explanation of viewpoints (comment made by Amierose). 4) critique of the event (this refers to critique of other commenters' viewpoint as in the first comment). The post is from the beat of News and has created a deliberative space between the users.

7. This is the second most liked story from the News beat.



The original comment has been liked by 265 users and has received 11 replies. The original comment is relevant to the original post as it presents users' overall understandings of the event (Factor 5). The first comment presents the user's opinion about how this event will unfold (Factor 1). The second comment – though offensive in its use of the word 'bozzo' – shows the users agreeing with the main comment (Factor 4). The third commenter presents 'facts' and 'figures' to argue her position on the main story (Factor 2). Of the other eight comments posted, four respond to previous comments in this thread.
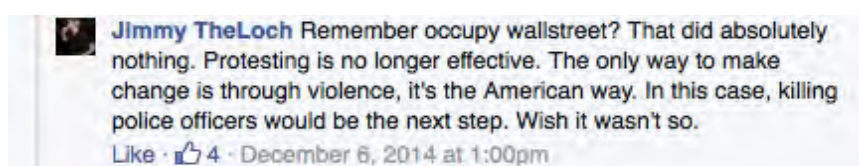


Comment responds to the first comment in praising non-violent protests. Discusses own point of view with examples (Acknowledgement and presentation of ideas, Factor 5)

Karen Graffen dear god afican americans have every right as any other race in the us. They chose crime and cry racism when something happens. How about not fighting with police officers. stop playing the victim. The world is sick of it there are people in the world that need true help.
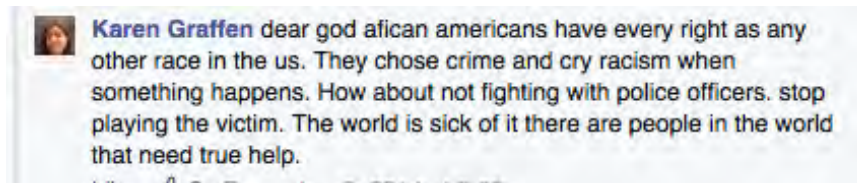
Comment presents 'relevance' as a factor in deliberative practices (Factor 1).



Timothy Smith I agree with you Joy and Renaissance...this was a peacefull protest and yet some people don't have the common decency to respect peace. They prefer to justify their hate would these shamefull comments. Let's not forget about those teenagers who go to schools and theaters and mass murder everyone. I don't recall any of them being Black!
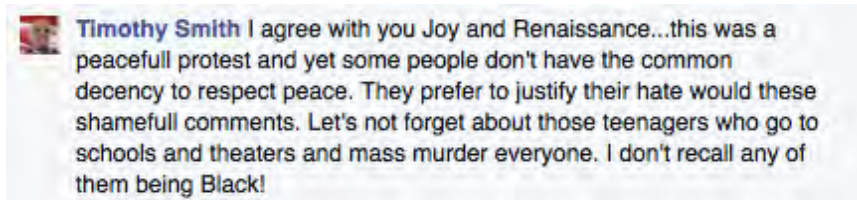
Comment addresses other previous users and provides its own examples to justify a stand on this event (Value of acknowledgement and presentation of different ideas, Factor 1)



Ashley Priel Karen Graffen.......THANK YOU, it's the truth!!! 🙂
Like · December 7, 2014 at 1:09am
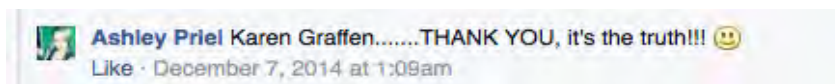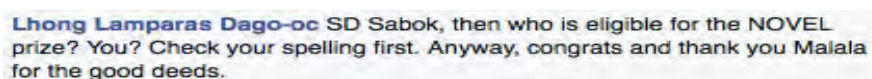
Comment here addresses a previous comment and agrees with previous points (Value of acknowledgement & approval, Factor 1). Presence of these factors indicate the presence of deliberative practices in the commentary of this news post.

8. The post here is from News beat of CNN.



CNN International
December 11, 2014 · 🌐

Nobel Peace Prize laureates Malala and Satyarthi continue striving for children's rights: http://cnn.it/1qwgS1D

Like · Comment · Share

👍 2,148 people like this.                                    Most Relevant ▾

↪ 144 shares
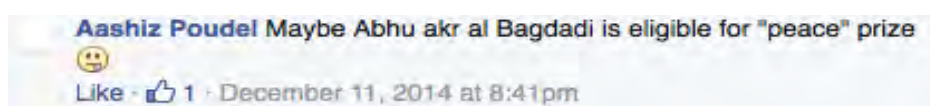
The post has attracted 2146 likes and the most liked comment on this post

has received 28 likes and 5 replies from other users. The main comment here

is a critique of another users' opinions on the decision to offer the Nobel

Peace Prize to Malala (Factor 2).



> **Lhong Lamparas Dago-oc** SD Sabok, then who is eligible for the NOVEL
> prize? You? Check your spelling first. Anyway, congrats and thank you Malala
> for the good deeds.

From the five comments posted under this comment, three refer to other

personalities whom users believe would have been better choices for the

Nobel Peace Prize, including an ironical comment suggesting the nomination

of Al-Bagdadi (Leader of ISIL).



> **Aashiz Poudel** Maybe Abhu akr al Bagdadi is eligible for "peace" prize
> 😖
> Like · 👍 1 · December 11, 2014 at 8:41pm

However a lengthy comment is made which addresses one of the

previous users. The comment has used logic and argues about why Malala

deserves this prize. The comment was later on acknowledged by a previous

user. This shows that the comment was read by the user as he/she has

responded by acknowledging points made in the previous comment (Factor

2).

**Hilary Ali** Nawabzada. Women are entitled to their rights, especially when it comes to them having an education. I note that . not by what you have said, but, what underpins your denial of Malala. You are enraged that a female challenged the Taliban and, despite the horrific injuries inflicted on her by those barbarians, she continues to fight on for education for girls across the world. The time will come when patriarchal societies ***,[. which, 90% of the time oppresses women because medieval mentality is still the norm and, it has no place in the modern world. Women no longer wish to be solely tied to domesticity and being baby machines,They need to be empowered in order to take control of their own lives, instead of being controlled by male domination ]*** will become more egalitarian and women can have a voice. The person you nominated ,i see, is male, well accept that this wonderful and courageous girl, Malala, is arole model for all girls to follow. She deserves this award and i'm sure she will go on to gain more. --AASHIZ POUDEL-----How can you compare a courageous humanitarian to a medieval Fanatic Abu Bakr Bagdahdi whose ideology to create a caliphate is both evil,***[ beheading/ crucifying,those that won't convert to Islam, and beheading aid workersetc;] and unrealistic. Malala is some one we can respect because she is such a wonderful and dedicated young girl who is a crusader for all women, God bless her.

D SABOK-------When did you become judge and jury for Malala Yusefsai? Of course she deserves the award, and more. You will have to accept that more and more women want to stand up and be counted, not dominated by chauvinists living in patriarchal societies. You could have been honest and said women don't deserve the award, and not use Malala as a scapegoat .Malala has earned respect and admiration on the world stage and, for a youn g girl of 17, who is mature beyond her years, she will go on to do greater things. Can you say what you have done for society? You, unlike Malala , deserve no accolades or respect, so, please[no offence intended] please, think before you speak.
Like · 👍 1 · December 12, 2014 at 1:16pm

**Lhong Lamparas Dago-oc** thank you Hilary Ali for being with me. Woman empowerment must be given a priority on this modern world.
Like · 👍 1 · December 12, 2014 at 1:21pm

9. The fourth most liked post here is from the News beat of CNN.



**CNN International**
November 25, 2014 · 🌐

DECISION DAY: Tensions are high as Ferguson waits to see if police officer Darren Wilson be indicted for the shooting death of unarmed, black teen Michael Brown.

Follow our live blog here: http://cnn.it/FergusonLive

229,844 Views
Like · Comment · Share

👍 2,132 people like this.                                    Top Comments ▾

↪ 679 shares

The top comment here is liked by 105 users and has received nine comments from other users. The original comment presents the user's opinion by referring to what he/she considers to be the common law (Factor 5).



**Lily Rose** Regardless of race, a criminal who attacks a police officer can and should be stopped by whatever means necessary, including shooting. Rioting in the streets is never going to change that.
Like · Reply · 👍 105 · November 25, 2014 at 12:40pm

Other users have responded to this comment by addressing the user (Factor 2).



The user questions the logic used in the previous comment and presents his own opinion. In response to this comment, the first commenter has responded (which shows a clear dialogue taking place, Factor 2).
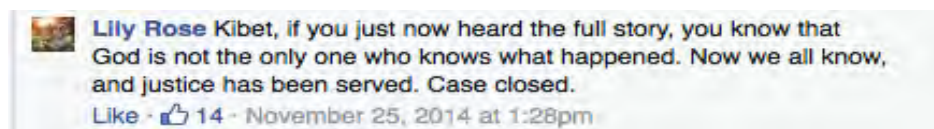


The other three comments on this post also present arguments and logic in discussing viewpoints (Factor1, Factor 5)

10. The post here is from News beat of CNN.



The top comment here has received 21 likes and 2 replies from others. The original comment targets the politics in the US and presents a different viewpoint from another political perspective (Factor 1). The comment is

relevant as it addresses the core event in the news story. The first comment rejects the political significance of the other perspective and the second comment is irrelevant to the event narrated in the news. The original comment and other users' comments include a degree of deliberation in their acknowledgement of other comments and present a different viewpoint.

Analysis

It is important to highlight how strategic narratives of original stories are being discussed by the users. In here a closer look at comments posted on breaking news clearly identified presence of same narratives. This indicates presence of a communication model where users read the original story, identify it's narratives and respond to it. In addition it provides unique avenues for other users to analyse and challenge other user's perceptions of the news story and its narratives. The analysis here confirms earlier findings by Shah (2011) on the importance of the theme of communication for evolution of meaningful discussions between users. Likewise, Manosevitch and Walker (2009) have also stressed on the importance of theme for emergence of meaningful discussions.

**Deliberation on CNN**

A post on Facebook connects to users in different ways

1) Those who read the post but do not like / share or comment on it

2) Those who read the post and like it

3) Those who read the post and share it

4) Those who read the post and comment on it

5) Those who follow numbers 1, 2 and 3 in combination to each other.

Combining these different options (excluding number 1), they comprise a population that has engaged with the content of the post. A review of all 79 posts on CNN's official page in Facebook reveals that all posts with the highest number of shares are amongst the most liked posts and all those with the highest number of comments are also from those posts which have already been liked by the majority of users who are participating in this public (obviously there are users who may just read and avoid liking, sharing or commenting but here the emphasis is on those users who are shaping a public by their acts in liking, sharind or commenting on a story). The users who share a story will not always comment on it, and those who comment will not always share. However, the number of 'shares' and 'comments' is much smaller than the number of 'likes'. This raises the question: Whether there is a relationship between the three forms of interaction for each post. In this context, when comparing liking, sharing and commenting on a post, questions arise as to whether: (1) there is a relationship between liking a post and the number of comments it has received or (2) there is a relationship between liking a post and the number of shares it has received and (3) there is a relationship between sharing a post and the number of comments it has received. These are important questions because if a relationship could be established between sharing and commenting, then knowing that those with the highest shares and highest comments are posts presenting news stories, then it can be argued that the genre of News is closely associated with deliberation because all the stories that have received

the highest number of comments and shares, are posts directly linked to the genre of News.

   To answer the above three questions a statistical test is applied to underline whether a relationship between these factors can be established. For this purpose, the calculation of the Pearson's correlation coefficient (R) used to test these relationships.

**Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:**

The value of R relating to question 1 and question 2 did not present any indication of possible relationships between them. However, in response to question 3 a strong relationship has been found which will be tested for other news websites as well.

**Details and Calculations**

| X | 01 | 81 | 4 | 83 | 8 | 21 | 48 | 24 | 35 | 2 |
|---|----|----|---|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|
| Y | 16 | 89 | 61 | 95 | 69 | 69 | 087 | 44 | 79 | 93 |

*Table 6.6: Variables*

X: Number of comments of a post in Facebook
Y: Number of shares of a post in Facebook

Result Details & Calculation

X Values
$\sum$ = 1507
Mean = 150.7
$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 46376.1$

Y Values
$\sum$ = 4802
Mean = 480.2
$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 671519.6$

X and Y Combined
N = 10
$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 139356.6$

R Calculation
$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$

$r = 139356.6 / \sqrt{((46376.1)(671519.6))} = 0.7897$

Meta Numerics (cross-check)
r = 0.7897
<u>Key</u>

X: X Values
Y: Y Values
$M_x$: Mean of X Values
$M_y$: Mean of Y Values
$X - M_x$ & $Y - M_y$: Deviation scores
$(X - M_x)^2$ & $(Y - M_y)^2$: Deviation Squared
$(X - M_x)(Y - M_y)$: Product of Deviation Scores

The value of R is 0.7897
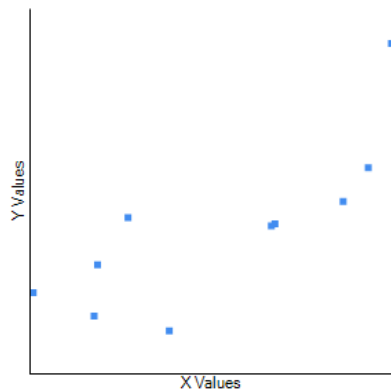


This is a strong positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores are connected with high Y variable scores (and vice versa). As discussed in the methodology chapter, the value of Pearson's correlation coefficient indicates the activity level and the significance of the network. The relationship between sharing and commenting refers to users (nodes) in a network and their processing and transmission of information. This also refers to the concept of interactivity by Ariel & Avidar (2015).

## 2. Al Jazeera



Al Jazeera has several different pages on Facebook but for this study Al Jazeera English is framed for analysis with 5,203,240 subscribers. Al Jazeera English on Facebook has a new feature enabling users to watch its programs live. This means Facebook is not only used to disseminate the original content but in addition is acting as a secondary platform to present the content in real time.

In a one-month sample for this phase (from 25 November 2014 to 25 December 2014) a total of 1092 posts were published on Al Jazeera English's official Facebook page.

| News | Opinion/Articles | TV Teasers | Photos | Development | Technical Information on Satellite reception | Entertainment |
|------|------------------|------------|--------|-------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 452  | 271              | 227        | 63     | 73          | 4                                            | 2             |

*Table 6.7: Number of posts on Al Jazeera's official page in Facebook*

The ten most liked stories published in this period were:

1. The most liked post on Al Jazeera English was published in the News beat and has received 7161 likes. The lead in this post is different from the

story on Al Jazeera. This might be due to the fact that the post is an update on a developing story.



(http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/11/riots-ferguson-after-no-indictment-ruling-20141125456576161.html)

2. The second most liked story on Al Jazeera is a teaser for a television program on development in South Asia.



(http://www.aljazeera.com/pressoffice/2014/11/hear-human-story-20141135433755976.html)

The lead to this post on Facebook is exactly the same as the title for the video. It has received 6979 likes.

3. The third most liked story is on development and is a link to a television program on humanity. It has received 4751 likes.

The lead of this post is the same as the post on Al Jazeera's website.

4. The fourth most liked post is a video from the News beat of Al Jazeera.



It has received 2947 likes and the lead of the post is different from the title of this story on Al Jazeera. The original title of the video is: 'US condemned after CIA torture revelations'.

5.The fifth most liked story is a photo gallery on the history of Intifada.

The lead of this post is different from the original story. The original title for this post is: 'Stories from the Intifada'.



([http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2014/12/stories-from-intifada-2014129113635479595.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2014/12/stories-from-intifada-2014129113635479595.html)).

6. The sixth most liked post on Al Jazeera is a TV teaser for a political interview.



This post has received 2854 likes and the lead of the post and the original title of the interview are the same.

([http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/headtohead/2014/11/time-boycott-israel-20141116114716395219.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/headtohead/2014/11/time-boycott-israel-20141116114716395219.html))

7. The seventh most liked post is a teaser for a political documentary on the history of the intifada. The post has received 2619 likes.

The lead of this post is almost identical to the original title. The lead of this story on Facebook is different from the original title. The lead raises the question of how Intifada became a form of Palestinian resistance, and it includes a quote from one of the interviews in the video. However the original title is more descriptive and states that the video is 'a look at the Palestinian uprising'.

The original title: 'Stories From the Intifada. A look at the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising, or First Intifada, through the eyes of those who lived through it'.

Lead on Facebook: '"It was forbidden to have anything Palestinian"
How did the Intifada become a form of Palestinian resistance?
The story of The First Intifada through the eyes of political figures & ordinary people who lived it'

(http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2014/12/stories-from-intifada-201412911363547 9595.html)

8. The eighth most liked story is from News beat of Al Jazeera and has received 2511 likes.
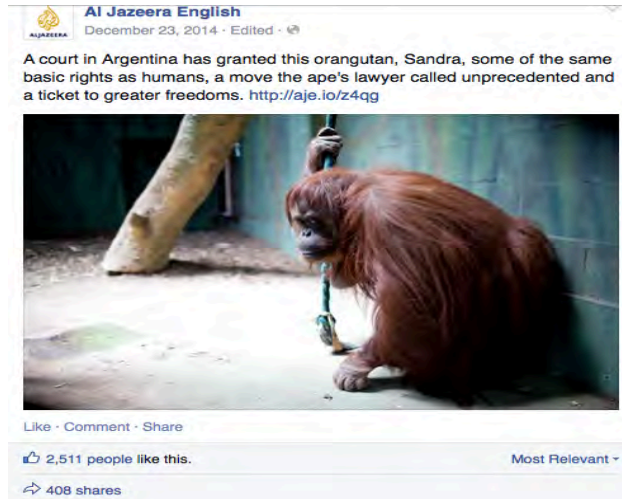


The original story is titled, 'Argentina court grants orangutan basic rights- Ape's lawyer says ruling that animal entitled to some rights enjoyed by humans could pave the way for greater freedom'. The lead on Facebook adds the name of the animal to the title.

(http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/12/argentina-court-grants-orangutan-basic-rights-20141222224116508511.html).

9. The ninth most liked post on Facebook is a news story with 2408 likes.

The title of the original story in Al Jazeera is: '"Smuggled" child meets father in Israeli jail'. The title refers to a story of how the child in the picture was born when his father was in jail in Israel. However the lead of this story on Facebook doesn't refer to this specific case and presents factual information on the number of children born through 'sperm smuggling'.

(http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/child-meets-father-israeli-jail-201412712250546184.html)

10. The tenth most liked post on Facebook is from news beat of Al Jazeera.
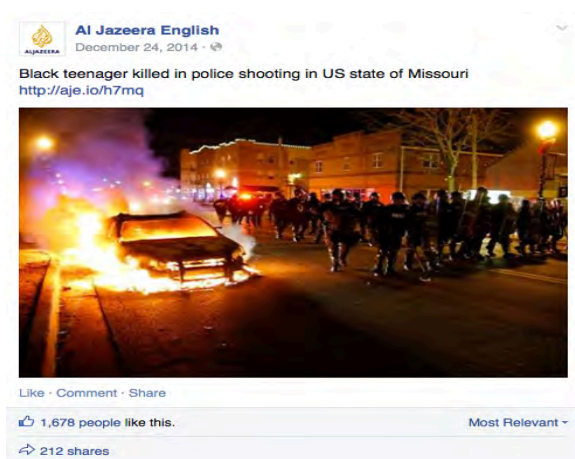


The post has received 1678 likes and its lead is almost identical to the original title. It only adds the name of US state where the incident happened.

(http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/12/black-teenager-killed-police-missouri-201412241086430417.html).

In the top 10 most liked posts in Al Jazeera , five posts are News events, four posts are teasers for television programs and one post is on a photo gallery.

| News | Photo Gallery | TV Teaser |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |

| 5 | 1 | 4 |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |

*Table 6.8: Categories of most liked News on Al Jazeera's official page in Facebook*

Appendix 2 summarises the information on the top ten most liked news stories on Al Jazeera's Facebook page.

The most shared posts on Al Jazeera's official page in Facebook are presented in table 6.10.

| No. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | We are profoundly disappointed… | News | 1 | 1629 |
| 2 | Time to Boycott Israel? | TV Teaser (Political Interview) | 6 | 686 |
| 3 | U.S hypocrisy China Says… | News | 4 | 638 |
| 4 | More than two dozen Palestinian children have been born to a prisoner family through sperm smuggling | News | 9 | 440 |
| 5 | A court in Argentina has granted this orangutan, Sandra, some of the same basic rights as humans… | News | 8 | 408 |
| 6 | Illac Diaz's project has spread Globally… | TV Teaser (Human Story) | 3 | 361 |
| 7 | The story of The First Intifada through the eyes of political figures & ordinary people who lived it | TV Teaser (Political Documentary) | 6 | 260 |
| 8 | Black teenager killed in police shooting in US state of Missouri | News | 10 | 212 |
| 9 | Photographs of the first Palestinian Intifada and the personal stories behind these images | Photo Gallery | 5 | 208 |
| 10 | Every time he installs a bottle people faces light up | TV Teaser(Human Story) | 2 | 193 |

*6.10 Top ten most shared stories on Al Jazeera's official page in Facebook*

Table 6.11 displays the beat of most shared stories:

| News | Television program Teasers | Photo Gallery |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | 4 | 1 |

*Table 6.11: Beat of most shared stories*

Here again five of the most liked and most shared stories are from the News beat of Al Jazeera.

**Comments**

1. The first comment posted on this news post has received 147 likes and 25 responses



The first comment is clearly linked to the news story and presents the user's reaction to and evaluation of the incident (by stating that he is sorry for what has happened and finally links it to the way the justice system has been manipulated in the US). In response to this comment another user presents his appreciation of what has been discussed and presents his agreement in different words. The third comment presents a disagreement (opposing view), rejecting what has been said with examples and use of logic.

2. The second most liked story is a link to a television program on human development in south Asia.

The three top comments on the post do not present major deliberation as there are no arguments or opposing views in them.

3. The third most liked story here is on development in South Asia.



The first most liked comment here is addressed to another user and it explains the ethics of participation in online discussions. The deliberation between the two users here is not on the original post. The second and third comments both present a different idea or add information to the original story. There are no arguments.

4. The fourth most liked story is from the news beat of Al Jazeera.
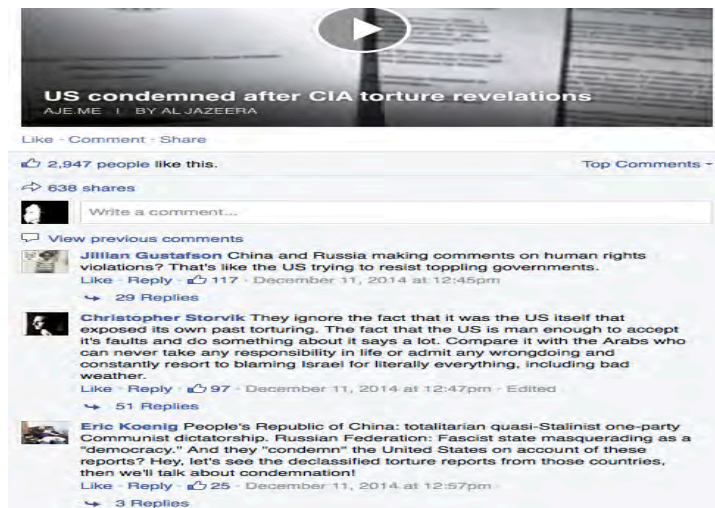
All three comments here present their opinions on the news story with their own arguments and examples (Factor 1 , Factor 2 and Factor 5).

5. The fifth most liked story is a link to a photo series on Intifada and people of Palestine.



The three comments on this post reflect the users' overall understandings and their positions in this conflict. The second comment presents an argument (Factor 1)

6. The fifth most liked post is a television teaser on Palestinian and Israeli conflict.

The first comment presents a set of questions, without argument, about the legitimacy of the story on boycotting Israel. Comments are targeting strategic narratives in the original news story. The second and third comments are not related to the content, and don't pose any arguments.

7. The seventh most liked story is about a documentary on Intifada.



The first and second comments are statements without any arguments or reference to the original story. The third comment on this post presents an argument and a personal perspective on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Factor 1).

8. The eighth most liked post is from the News beat of Al Jazeera.

The first commenter makes a statement about Israel. The second

commenter confirms what has been reported and presents an example from

his own experiences (Factor 5). The third comment presents an argument in

regards to what was reported in the news story (Factor 1)

9. The ninth post is from the News beat of Al Jazeera.



The first comment presents the user's viewpoint and presents an

argument to support it (Factor 1). The second comment raises a question

about women's rights and the third comment presents an ironic comment

(with examples) on the procedure that was presented in the story (Factor 5).

10. The tenth most liked post is from the News beat of Al Jazeera.
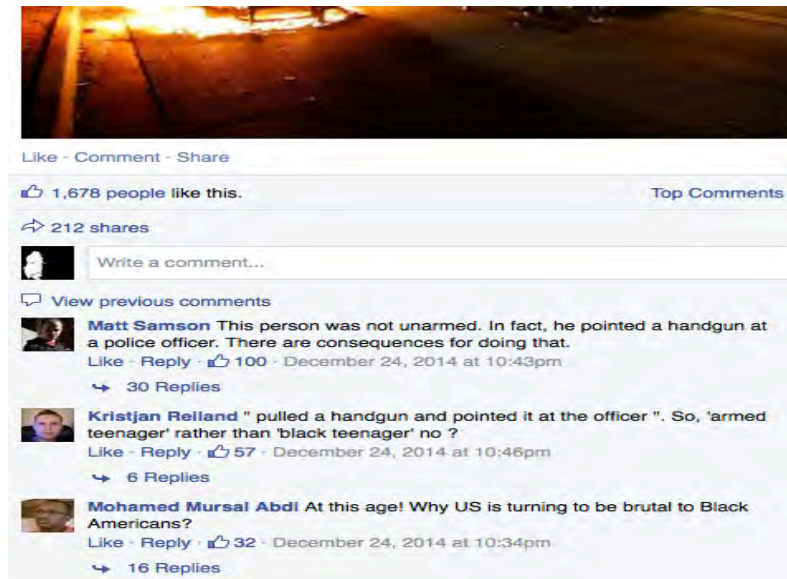
The first comment responds to what was reported in the story and presents an argument (Factor 1). The second comment again refers to the news text and present quotes to raise a question about racial discrimination in the language of the report (Factor 5). The third comment is a question that refers to historical treatments of African Americans in the US.

**Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:**

The value of R relating to question 1 and question 2 did not indicate any possible relationships between them. Following the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient for users interaction, this relationships between X as the number of comments and Y as the number shares are tested again.

**Details and Calculation**

| X | 48 | 68 | 41 | 48 | 13 | 7 | 98 | 4 | 2 | 28 |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|
| Y | 12 | 40 | 08 | 60 | 86 | 08 | 38 | 61 | 93 | 629 |

*Table 6.12: Variables*

*X Values*
$\sum$ = 2587
Mean = 258.7

$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 493622.1$

*Y Values*
$\sum = 5035$
Mean = 503.5
$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 1679600.5$

*X and Y Combined*
$N = 10$
$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 778319.5$

*R Calculation*
$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$

$r = 778319.5 / \sqrt{((493622.1)(1679600.5))} = 0.8548$

*Meta Numerics (cross-check)*
$r = 0.8548$
Key      *X*: X Values
*Y*: Y Values
$M_x$: Mean of X Values
$M_y$: Mean of Y Values
$X - M_x$ & $Y - M_y$: Deviation scores
$(X - M_x)^2$ & $(Y - M_y)^2$: Deviation Squared
$(X - M_x)(Y - M_y)$: Product of Deviation Scores

The value of R is 0.8548. This is a strong positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores (and vice versa). Value of R indicates a relationship between size of a public and communications within it's network.
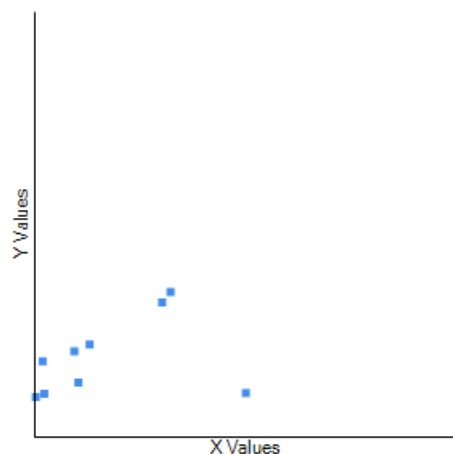


The strong relationship between X and Y confirms previous testing on CNN. However, this test needs to done for all other websites of this study.

### 3. The Guardian



The Guardian has a number of editions such as Guardian Australia and Guardian US. However for this study Guardian's official media/news publishing is framed for analysis. The Guardian has 4,398,343 subscribers and during this period 61 posts were published on its official page.

| News | Travel | Sport | Development | Videos/Photos | Technology | Opinion | culture |
|------|--------|-------|-------------|---------------|------------|---------|---------|
| 21 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 16 |

*Table 6.13: Beats of posts on Guardian's official page in Facebook*

The top 10 most liked posts are shown below.

1. The first most liked story is from the News beat of the Guardian with 6364 likes.

The Guardian presents the original title of the story in its post.
However it adds an additional lead to the story. Here the additional lead is a
quote by President Obama.

2. The second most liked story on The Guardian is a post on the
winners of the Travel Photographer of the Year award from the Travel beat of
the Guardian.



The lead of the story and original headline are exactly the same.

(http://www.theguardian.com/travel/gallery/2014/dec/12/travel-
photographer-of-the-year-2014-winners-in-pictures?CMP=fb_gu)

3. The third most liked story is from Life Style beat of The Guardian.

The lead to this post is different from the headline. It adds more information about the café in the story.

4. The fourth most liked story is on a series of photos about wildlife from the beat of environment in The Guardian.



The post has received 3199 likes and the lead of the post is the same as the title in the Guardian.

5. The fifth most liked post is a video from the opinion beat of the Guardian.



It has received 3053 likes and the lead of this post is a quote from Zizek on the topic of his speech.

6. The sixth most liked post is from the beat of culture.



The post has received 2649 likes and the lead of the post is entirely

different from the title of this story in the Guardian.

7. The seventh most liked post is from the beat of Culture.



The lead of this post is different from the original title. It adds more

information about the article with highlighting the main argument.

8. The eight most liked post is from the beat of culture.

It has received 2106 likes and its original title is the same as the lead on

Facebook.

9. The ninth most liked story is from the beat of culture.



**The Guardian**
November 30, 2014 ·

"What the celebrities who appear on BBC Strictly Come Dancing are doing is taking part in the ongoing cultural war on critical thinking. Just as in as in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four where "War is Peace", "Freedom is Slavery" and "Ignorance is Strength" so in Strictly ugliness is beauty, prancing is dancing and Judy Murray is Ginger Rogers."

**Alexei Sayle's Marxist demolition of Strictly Come Dancing**
The TV show has taken a great popular art form and turned it into a travesty – which is why you will never see the comedian on Strictly
THEGUARDIAN.COM  |  BY ALEXEI SAYLE

Like · Comment · Share
👍 1,817 people like this.        Recent Activity
↪ 891 shares

It has received 1817 likes and the lead of the post is a quote from the

article.

10. The tenth most liked article is from the beat of culture.



**The Guardian**
December 19, 2014 ·

A new superhero has arisen in India in the wake of the brutal gang rape on a Delhi bus two years ago: Priya, a mortal woman who is raped herself, but who fights back against sexual violence with the help of the goddess Parvati - and a tiger.

**Indian comic creates female superhero to tackle rape**
Priya's Shakti will tell story of 'a new hero for modern India' who fights with goddess Parvati's help for education and respect for women, reports Alison Flood
THEGUARDIAN.COM  |  BY ALISON FLOOD

Like · Comment · Share
👍 1,690 people like this.        Recent Activity
↪ 507 shares

It has received 1690 likes and the lead of the post is different from the title.

It adds more information about the post.

The Ten most liked stories on Guardian are from different beats as in table below:

| News | Travel | Culture | Life Style | Editorials/Opinions | Environment |
|------|--------|---------|------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

*Table 6.14: Beats of most liked stories on The Guardian's official page in Facebook*

Fifty per cent of most liked stories on Guardian are from the beat of Culture. This is a significant difference from CNN and Al Jazeera. It is possible that with the immediacy of 24 hour television news programs even the approach of the users to news websites such as the Guardian has changed. It is also important to mention relatively high coverage of cultural stories in The Guardian's facebook page. With emergence of news websites , the cyber editions of newspapers such as The Guardian seem to focus more on soft news rather covering breaking news stories. There is no breaking news in The Guardian's page on Facebook but 50 percent of stories are on culture and entertainment.

Appendix 3 summarises the essential information on top ten news posted in the Guardian's official Facebook page.

In the same period top ten most shared news stories on the Guardian are:

| o. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Can the cereal killer café, which sells cereal really make a killing | Life Style | 3 | 1520 |
| | Photography is art and always will be | Culture | 7 | 1347 |
| | Travel Photographer of the year | Travel | 2 | 1256 |
| | A black man in a tuxedo? Must be a waiter, Obamas recall everyday racism they faced | News | 1 | 1144 |
| | Slavoj Zizek: What is Freedom today? – Video | Opinion | 5 | 1094 |
| | The week in wildlife – in pictures | Environment | 4 | 979 |
| | *Sydney Siege: Reports of hostage situation inside café live | News | - | 948 |
| | Alexei Sayle's Marxist demolition of strictly come dancing | Culture | 9 | 897 |
| | The best children book of 2014 | Culture | 8 | 757 |
| 0 | Skyfall's follow up  christened and cast revealed | Culture | 6 | 725 |

*Table 6.16:Most shared stories on The Guardian's official page in Facebook*

243

*Top shared stories are all from the most liked stories however the seventh most shared story was not amongst the most liked stories. Details of this post are shown below:

| o. | News lead on Facebook | Original story | Beat of the story | Number of 'Likes' | Number of Comments | Number of shares |
|----|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 0 | Live: Hostages have been forced to hold up a black flag... | Sydney Siege: Reports of hostage situation inside café live | News | 865 | 365 | 948 |

*Table 6.17: Seventh most shared story on The Guardian's official page in Facebook*

**Comments**

1. Top comments on this post from the life style beat of the Guardian are as below:



In the first comment the user presents his viewpoint with different expressions (Factor 5). The second comment in full is shown below:
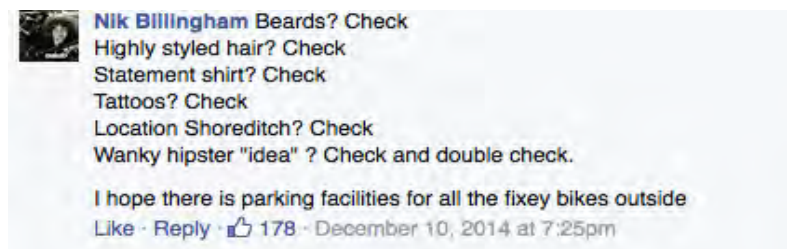
The comment presents the user's overall understanding of the event presented in this post. The user explains his viewpoints about the event with different expressions (Factor 5)

The third comment presents the user's viewpoint again but all three comments lack arguments and justifications related to the post.

2. The comments on this post – from the beat of culture in the Guardian – are shown below



Photography is art and always will be
Do Jane Bown, William Eggleston and Diane Arbus not sing on a gallery wall? Photography critic Sean O'Hagan hits back at Jonathan Jones's damning claim that photographs cannot be considered fine art
THEGUARDIAN.COM | BY SEAN O'HAGAN

Like · Comment · Share

2,459 people like this.                                    Top Comments ▾

1,347 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Amy Walker. This debate was had 40 years ago.
Like · Reply · 75 · December 12, 2014 at 5:04am
    8 Replies

Jack Marshall If photography isn't fine art than how come my camera-phone has a 'fine art' filter?
Like · Reply · 63 · December 12, 2014 at 5:18am
    7 Replies

Terralynn Szup People who think photography isn't art are the same people who thought impressionism wasn't art 150 years ago.
Like · Reply · 32 · December 12, 2014 at 6:03am

The first comment rejects the significance of the discussion and states that it is old but it doesn't give any reasons. The second comment poses a question and asks a question (Irony). The third comment presents user opinion in the form of an argument but it doesn't present any reasons to support it. There are no arguments in the top comments.

3. The comments on this post – from the beat of Travel – are shown

below:



The first and second comments are statements about one of the photos.

The third comment presents the user's disapproval with the aesthetic values in

one of the photos. The user presents his opinion and a comparison with external

practices in photography but this is done without presenting any arguments

(Factor 5).

4. The three comments posted on this news story display different

levels of deliberation.



The first comment approves what was reported in the story and

presents the user's own experience to back it up (Factor No.5). The second

comment presents an opposite idea and the user presents reason and logic

for disagreement with the argument in the post (Factor 3). The third

comment presents a definition of racism and argues that incidents as

reported in this story are acts of racism (Factor 1) . The third comment in full

is displayed as below:



5. The comments on this post from the opinion pages of The Guardian are

shown below:
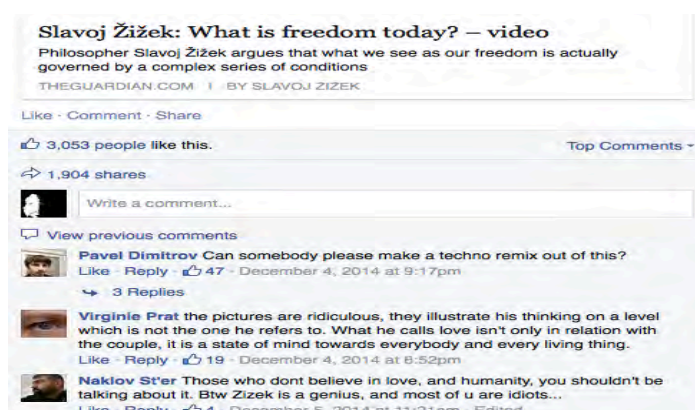


The first comment doesn't give any reason or logic indicating whether

the user is approving or disapproving the content of the video the post refers to.

The second comment criticises the video for its graphics and presents the user's

opinion about the meaning of this video (Factor 2). The third comment presents

the user's opinion about the central theme of this video (Factor 5).

6. Comments on this post from the beat of environment are as below:
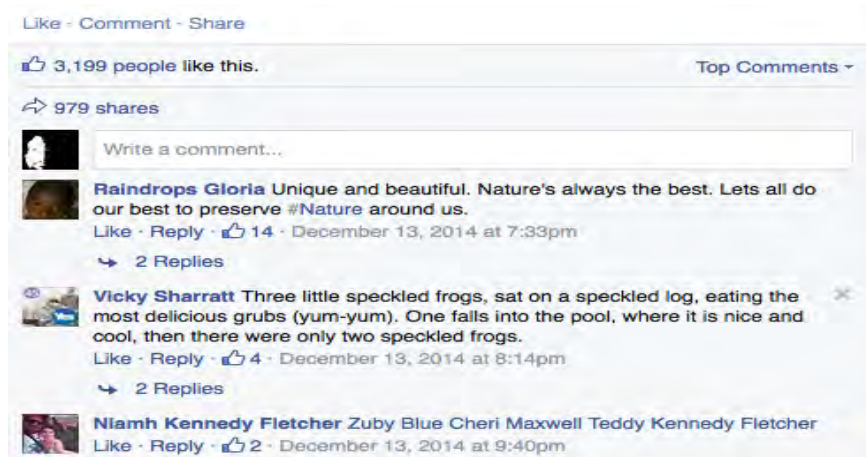


The first comment presents the user's viewpoint with different

expressions (Factor 5). The second comment narrates a story about the main

photo in this gallery.  No arguments occur in this thread.


7. Top comments on this post from the News beat of The Guardian and

shown below:



The first comment here presents the user's evaluation of what has been

discussed by others in this thread. The user discusses (with irony) the reasons

why he is satisfied with his experience in reading comments on this story (Factor

1). The second comment presents the user's viewpoints with different expressions and an argument (Factor 5).

8.  The top comments on this post from the beat of Culture are as below:



The two comments present a different idea with their own reasons (Factor 2).

9. The top comments on this post from the beat of culture are shown below:



The three top comments on this post do not present any relevant argument.

10.  The top comments on this post from the beat of culture are as below:
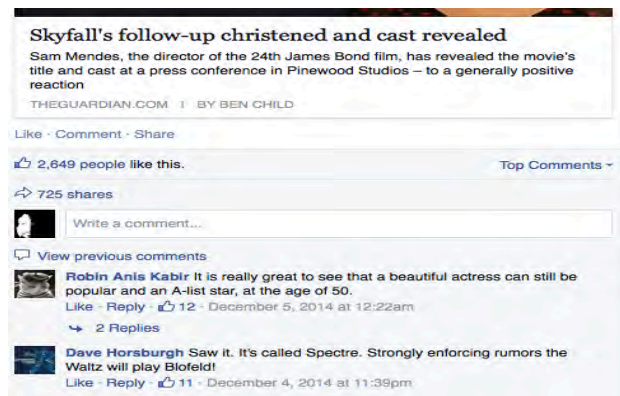
The two top comments on this post do not present any arguments on this story.

**Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:**

Following the outcome of the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient from CNN and Al Jazeera, the relationship between X as the number of comments and Y as the number shares is tested again.

**Result Details & Calculation**

| X | 1101 | 202 | 159 | 479 | 115 | 121 | 365 | 204 | 121 | 124 |
|---|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

| Y | 1520 | 1347 | 1256 | 1144 | 1094 | 979 | 948 | 897 | 757 | 725 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

*Table 6.18: Variables*

*X Values*
$\sum$ = 2991
Mean = 299.1
$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 845842.9$

*Y Values*
$\sum$ = 10667
Mean = 1066.7
$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 589856.1$

*X and Y Combined*
N = 10
$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 457568.3$

*R Calculation*

250

$$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$$

$$r = 457568.3 / \sqrt{((845842.9)(589856.1))} = 0.6478$$

*Meta Numerics (cross-check)*
r = 0.6478
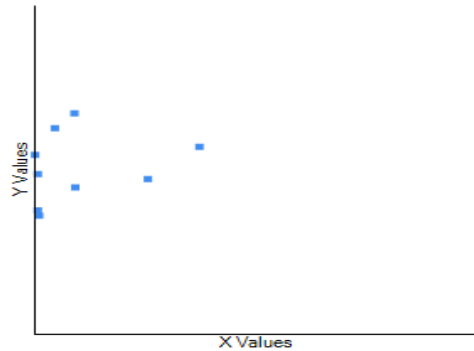


The value of R is 0.6478. This is a moderate positive correlation, which means there is a tendency for high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores (and vice versa).

The value of R shows a moderate positive relationship between number of comments and number of shares. It is important to note that the composition of top shared stories on the Guardian site were very different to those on the CNN and Al Jazeera sites. The difference lies mainly in the smaller number of News stories in the top shared posts. The main stories shared on The Guardian had less news values compared to Al –Jazeera and CNN. Although this test is applied for the remaining news sites of this study, but it is imperative to calculate the R factor only for those stories which fall under the News beat of each news website. As news sites use different beats to categorise their content, a unification of themes (referring to beats of posts) is required which will be done once the analysis of each website is completed.

**4. The New York Times**



The New York Times has a number of different pages in Facebook. However for this study the official page of The New York Times newspaper with 9,313,366 subscribers is framed for analysis. In a one-month sample for this study (from 25th November 2014- 25th December 2014) a total number of 87 posts were published on the Facebook page of The New York Times. Table below displays the beat categories of these posts.

| News | Culture | Exclusive post on Facebook | NY Times Magazine | Opinion | Business | Videos/Photos | Sport | Dining |
|------|---------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------|----------|---------------|-------|--------|
| 32 | 24 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 3 |

*Table 6.19: Beat categories of posts on NYT's official page in Facebook*

The ten most liked stories published in this period are as below:

1. The most liked story is a historical photo from the news beat of The New York Times.

The New York Times
December 18, 2014

Fidel Castro confers with Che Guevara in Cuba, in this original 1959 print from The New York Times archives.

Like · Comment · Share

Liz Heron and 10,492 others like this.          Top Comments ▾

2,315 shares

This photo is shared as an update to a previous news story on US–Cuba relations. It has received 10,492 likes.

2. The second most liked post is a video from The New York Times Magazine (Which is not accessible anymore).

3. The third most liked post is from the news beat of The New York Times.



The New York Times
December 18, 2014

Updated: The U.S. will open talks with Cuba aimed at restoring full diplomatic relations and opening an embassy in Havana for the first time in more than a half century.

U.S. and Cuba, in Breakthough, Resume Diplomatic Relations
The U.S. will open an embassy in Havana for the first time in more than a half century after the release of an American contractor held in prison for five years,...
NYTI.MS  |  BY PETER BAKER

Like · Comment · Share

7,926 people like this.          Most Relevant ▾

3,128 shares

This post has received 7926 likes.  The lead of this post is different from the headline of the news story. The lead is updated and is adding more information on the U.S and Cuba's relations.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/world/americas/us-cuba-relations.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&bicmp=AD&bicmlukp=WT.mc_id&bicmst=1409232722000&bicmet=1419773522000&_r=0)

4.The fourth most liked post is from the news beat of The New York Times.

This post has received 7089 likes. The lead of the post is different from the original title. The original title in The New York Times is: 'For Australia's Muslims, Relief Is Shadowed by Fear'.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/world/asia/sydney-siege-muslims.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&bicmp=AD&bicmlukp=WT.mc_id&bicmst=1409232722000&bicmet=1419773522000&_r=0)

5. The fifth most liked story is from the opinion pages of The New York Times.

It has received 6065 likes and the lead of the post and the original title of this story are the same (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/25/opinion/patrick-chappatte-on-ferguson.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&bicmp=AD&bicmlukp=WT.mc_id&bicmst=1409232722000&bicmet=1419773522000)

6. The sixth most liked post is from the opinion pages of The New York Times.



This post has received 5336 likes and the lead of this post is the same as the title in the original article. The lead has omitted 'Obama unbound' and instead presents the second title of the original post which is more descriptive.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/20/opinion/obama-unbound.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&bicmp=AD&bicmlukp=WT.mc_id&bicmst=1409232722000&bicmet=1419773522000&_r=0)

7. The seventh most liked post is from The New York Times magazine.

The post has received 4271 likes and the original title is: '9 kisses

8. The eighth most liked post is a post on the Tumblr page of The New York Times: The lively morgue.



The post has received 3699 likes and the lead of the post and the caption of the photo in The New York Times Tumblr page are the same (http://livelymorgue.tumblr.com/post/19678992707/nov-26-1970-some-things-never-change-the).

9. The ninth most liked photo is from the news beat of The New York Times.

The post has received 2987 likes and the lead of the post is different from the original title. The original title in The New York Times is: '2 N.Y.P.D. Officers Killed in Brooklyn Ambush; Suspect Commits Suicide'. The lead is the title of a photo in the coverage of this incident.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/two-police-officers-shot-in-their-patrol-car-in-brooklyn.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&bicmp=AD&bicmlukp=WT.mc_id&bicmst=1409232722 000&bicmet=1419773522000&_r=0)

10.The tenth most liked post is a photo with no links from the New York Times newspaper. It is exclusively published on The New York Times official Facebook page.



This post has received 2637 likes.

In top 10 most liked posts in The New York Times official Facebook page, five stories are on News events but they are not hard news. They are on / about news stories that have already been reported. The rest are from different beats of opinion, The New York Time Magazine and photos (exclusive posts on Facebook).

| News | Opinion | NY Times Magazine | Photos (Exclusive for Facebook) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

*Table 6.20: Beat categories of most liked stories on NYT's official page in Facebook*

Appendix 4 summarises the information on the top ten most liked news stories in The New York Times.

In the same period the top ten most shared news stories in the New York Times Facebook page are as below:

| No. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Strandbeests arrive at Art Base | Culture | 2 | 3742 |
| 2 | The U.S. will open talks with Cuba aimed at restoring full diplomatic relations and opening an embassy in Havana for the first time in more than a half century. | News | 3 | 3128 |
| 3 | Fidel Castro confers with Che Guevara in Cuba, in this original 1959 print from The New York Times archived | News | 1 | 2315 |
| 4 | On Ferguson, from the opinion section of The New York Times | News | 5 | 1395 |
| 5 | 18 of the year's best actors pucker up for the magazine's Great Performers issue. Watch them all here | Culture | 7 | 1087 |
| 6* | BPA in cans and plastic bottles links to quick rise in blood pressure | Health | - | 1051 |
| 7 | The president is acting like  a man who… | Opinion | 6 | 1014 |
| 8* | Even among Harvard graduates, Women fall short of their work expectations (1005) | Opinion | - | 794 |
| 9* | How your city influences your spending | Business | - | 662 |
| 10* | Our Cats, Ourselves | Opinion | - | 516 |

*Table 6.22: Most shared stories on NYT's official page in Facebook*

6*  The sixth most shared story is from the beat of Health in The New York Times.



This story has received 793 likes, 1051 shared and 39 comments.

8* This post is from the beat of opinion in The New York Times.



It has received 2307 likes, 1005 shares and 130 comments.

9* This post is from the beat of business in New York Time.

It has received 1194 likes, 794 shares and 88 comments.

10* This post is from the beat of 'Opinion' in The New York Times.



It has received 975 likes, 662 shares and 174 comments.

Table 6.23 summarises the beat of shared stories:

| News | Opinion | Culture | Health | Business |
|------|---------|---------|--------|----------|
| 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

*Table 6.23: Beat categories of most shared stories on NYT's official page in Facebook*

**Comments**

1. Top comments on this post are about the artwork and there is no record of deliberation on this post.

2. Top comments on this news story are as below:



The first comment hails president Obama as the greatest president of all time. However this opinion is not supported by any arguments (Factor 5).

3. The third story here is an exclusive photo for Facebook on US–Cuba relations.

The top comment here presents the user's perception of the personalities depicted in the photo. There are no arguments.

4.The fourth post is from the news beat of The New York Times.



The first top comment here explains the user's viewpoint on the incident and argues that the incident should be further analysed for more insights (Factor 1). The second top comment presents the user's overall evaluation of the event in the news story.

5.The fifth post is from the beat of culture.

The user expresses dissatisfaction with the content without stating the reasons.

6.The sixth post is from the beat of news.



Both comments present arguments which question the findings and methodology of the research reported in this news story (Factors 1, 2 & 5)

7. The seventh post is from the opinion pages of The New York Times.

Jacqui Ottomeyer Kaplan I'm thinking maybe the commentators didn't get this cartoon. It's powerful. It shows how far we think we've come (elected a Black president), yet how we have not in any way solved our problems in terms of race, class, or privilege. Get it together people. It's not a dis on Obama for "not doing anything."
Like · Reply · 👍 1,101 · November 26, 2014 at 12:17am
↳ 29 Replies

Gemma Potts It is not a racist rendering. It is a political cartoon. It is meant to say, in my humble opinion, that we have come so far in some ways as to have elected an African American into the highest office in the land. But there is also a pointed statement here that all he can do is watch on tv as the riots occur, and the town burns. As much as he would like to change the situation, the people doing the rioting are out of control and hurting their own cause. Martin Luther King, Jr and Ghandi and Nelson Mandela did more to advance social change and uphold the rights of the people they represented than anyone who attempted the same through violent means. Education and dialogue is the only way to achieve lasting social change. If laws need to be changed, then put well spoken, educated people who are effective communicators in charge of organizing the community to vote in the laws necessary. That is how a civilized society works. Anarchy only breeds hatred and solves nothing. SO all he can do is sit in the oval office and feel helpless and frustrated that his own people do not get that we, the most powerful nation in the world, have that power because of the ability to vote. Yet so few choose to exercise that power. Time to organize. Time to work to enact change in a positive, well thought out, meaningful way, and not by throwing tantrums in the street. What got him into the whitehouse was that African Americans went out to vote. Kind of reminds me of the Pixar movie about the grasshoppers trying to keep the ants believing that they were in charge, when in reality, the ants outnumbered them. It was not until the ants figured out they did have power did their lives change. The vote is your power. If you want a say badly enough, organize your people, elect your officials, and make changes in laws. Mandela, MLK and Ghandi saw this as the true lasting power. But it takes more work.
Like · Reply · 👍 359 · November 26, 2014 at 12:43am · Edited

Both comments put forward reasons in arguing over what the cartoon is about and they also respond to ongoing discussion of the article in the commentaries (Factor 1 & 5).

8. The eighth post is from the opinion pages of The New York Times magazine.

Andrew Sz Maybe expectations are too high for both men and women? I read that salaried working hours are up to 50 per week (meaning that a significant % work more) on average and that the average American gets two weeks of vacation but only takes half that amount due to pressure not to do so.

In other developed countries, this would lead to street rioting. Literally.

Companies should re-evaluate their more ridiculous expectations from employees. If expectations were more reasonable, maybe couples wouldn't need to prioritize careers as much.
Like · Reply · 👍 258 · December 1, 2014 at 9:56am · Edited
↳ 25 Replies

Amy Barragree I hate to say it, but even as a staunch feminist, I have a very hard time feeling any empathy here. I was pushing a stroller around the Harvard Business School campus while my husband attended, and you could smell the contempt wafting off of the female students. I'm much more concerned about low-income moms who don't have the opportunities and choices that these women have available.
Like · Reply · 👍 106 · December 1, 2014 at 9:28am

Both comments here are deliberative as they present arguments for their discussions and they refer to other examples to highlight the significance of their viewpoints (Factors 1, 5).

9.The ninth post is from the beat of business.



There are no arguments in the top comments here.

10.The tenth post is from the opinion pages of The New York Times.



The first comment here presents the user's opinion about the theme of this article. The user is expressing his opinion with different examples (Factor 5). The second comment has an argument but it is not supported with reasoning.

**Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:**

Following the outcome of the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficients from CNN, Al Jazeera and The Guardian, the relationship between X as the number of comments and Y as the number shares is tested again.

**Result Details & Calculation**

| X | 3742 | 3128 | 2315 | 1395 | 1087 | 1051 | 1014 | 1005 | 794 | 662 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|

| Y | 252 | 331 | 533 | 501 | 248 | 39 | 479 | 130 | 88 | 174 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

*Table 6.24: Variables*

Result Details and Calculation

X Values
$\sum$ = 16193
Mean = 1619.3
$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x$ = 10263944.1

Y Values
$\sum$ = 2775
Mean = 277.5
$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y$ = 285478.5

X and Y Combined
N = 10
$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y)$ = 529565.5

R Calculation
$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$

$r = 529565.5 / \sqrt{((10263944.1)(285478.5))} = 0.3094$

Meta Numerics (cross-check)
r = 0.3094
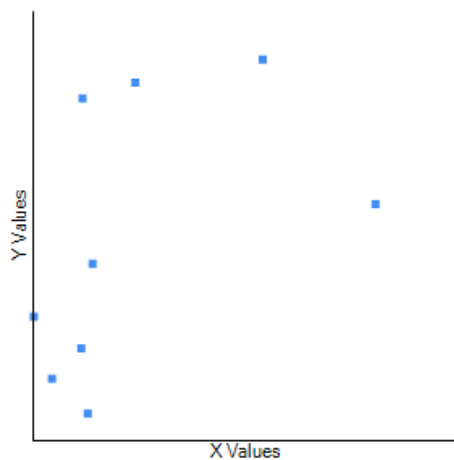


The value of R is 0.3094. Although technically a positive correlation,

the relationship between variables is weak.

It is important to note that for the two newspapers in this study the value of Pearson's R is not significant. However a strong relationship was observed earlier for the 24 hour news networks. To examine whether discussion and sharing, as two signs of participation and deliberation, are genre-specific, it is once again important to calculate this value according to genre of each post across all six news sites. This will be done later in this chapter.

### 5. Washington Post



The Washington Post has two official pages on Facebook. The first is Washington Post Local which is primarily focused on Washington state district. The main page of The Washington Post on Facebook has 3,251,355 subscribers. For this study the main page of The Washington Post is framed for analysis and during the sampling period of this study a total of 86 posts were uploaded on this page. Table below displays the beat categories of these posts.

| News | Opinion | Special Coverage Thanksgiving | Science &Technology | Photo galleries | Life Style | Economics | Entertainment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | 24 | 4 | 10 | 5 | 11 | 1 | 6 |

*Table 6.25: Beat categories of posts on Washington Posts official page in Facebook*

The top ten most liked posts are as below:

1. The first most liked story is from the news beat of The Washington Post.



This post has received 16,531 likes and it's linked to live updates of the events in Ferguson. The title of the original post is: 'Live updates: Nation reacts, Ferguson erupts '. (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/liveblog-live/liveblog/live-updates-ferguson-grand-jury-decision/?tid=sm_fb)

2. The second most liked story is from the beat of Culture and Entertainment.

This post has received 6721 likes and the original title for this story

is: 'James Bond finally falls for a woman his own age'. The lead of

this post in Facebook is about the same issue as the original title but it

doesn't reveal further information about the 'Bond Girl'.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/12/07/ja

mes-bond-finally-falls-for-a-woman-his-own-age/

3. The third most liked story is a video from the News section.



The post has received 6123 likes. The original title for this post is:

'Video: Frantic 'hero' monkey rescues another monkey from death in Indian

railway station'. (http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-

mix/wp/2014/12/23/video-frantic-hero-monkey-rescues-another-monkey-

from-death-in-indian-railway-station/?tid=sm_fb).

4. The fourth most liked story is from the beat of News.



This post has received 5,028 likes and the original title is: 'North Korea's Internet is going suspiciously haywire'. The lead of this story presents speculation about an attack. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2014/12/22/north-koreas-internet-is-going-suspiciously-haywire/?tid=sm_fb](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2014/12/22/north-koreas-internet-is-going-suspiciously-haywire/?tid=sm_fb))

5. The fifth most liked story is a video from the News beat of The Washington Post.

This post has received 4744 likes and the original title is: 'Watch this Michigan cop hand out presents instead of tickets'. The lead of this post adds more information about the incident. (http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2014/12/10/watch-this-michigan-cop-hand-out-presents-instead-of-tickets/?tid=sm_fb).

6. The sixth most liked post is from the beat of Culture and Entertainment.



This post has received 4158 likes and the original title is: 'Chris Rock is right: White Americans are a lot less racist than they used to be'. The lead to this post on Facebook adds the name to the quote which is visible underneath in the attached content.

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/12/01/chris-rock-is-right-white-americans-are-a-lot-less-racist-than-they-used-to-be/?tid=sm_fb)

7. The seventh most liked story is a video from The Washington Post section on Thanksgiving.

Washington Post
November 27, 2014 · 🌐

Be sure to deep fry safely this Thanksgiving. http://wapo.st/1pojSwA

742,086 Views
Like · Comment · Share

👍 3,856 people like this.                    Top Comments ▾

➡ 8,381 shares

This post has received 3856 likes. The original title is: 'Putting fire safety on Thanksgiving menus'. The lead to this post is different. It addresses those celebrating Thanksgiving and compared to the original post, it is more personal.

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/posttv/national/putting-fire-safety-on-thanksgiving-menus/2014/11/26/723438d8-7597-11e4-8893-97bf0c02cc5f_video.html?tid=sm_fb)

8. The eighth most liked post is from the opinion section of The Washington Post.



Washington Post
December 8, 2014 · 🌐

"More and more, I felt like I couldn't do the work I set out to do." via PostEverything

"Being a cop showed me just how racist and violent the police are."
We don't need more training, bad cops need to be punished.
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

Like · Comment · Share

👍 Robert Scoble and 2,466 others like this.         Top Comments ▾

➡ 1,106 shares
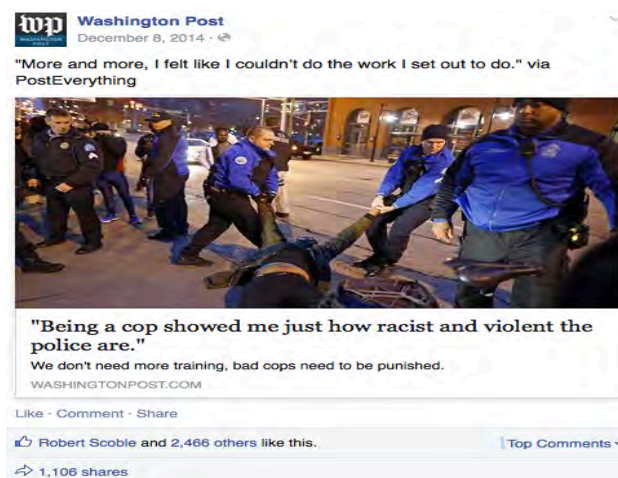
This post has received 2466 likes. The original title is: 'Being a cop showed me just how racist and violent the police are. There's only one fix'.

The lead to this post is a quote from the article.

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/06/i-was-a-st-louis-cop-my-peers-were-racist-and-violent-and-theres-only-one-fix/)

9. The ninth post is from the News beat of The Washington Post.



The news post has received 2035 likes and the original title is the same as the lead for this post in Facebook. (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2014/12/19/obama-sony-pictures-made-a-mistake-in-canceling-the-interview/?tid=sm_fb).

10. The tenth most liked story is a link to the photo gallery section in The Washington Post.



The post has received 1894 likes. The title of this photo gallery is: 'The royal family: William, Catherine and George'.  The lead of this post is about

one of the photos in this gallery.

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/william-kate-and-george/2013/08/05/f051ac82-fdf2-11e2-9711-3708310f6f4d_gallery.html?tid=sm_fb).

The ten most liked stories in The Washington Post's Facebook page are from different beats as in table below:

| News | Culture &Entertainment | Special Coverage (Thanksgiving)* | Photos/ Videos | Editorials/Opinions |
|------|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

*Table 6.26: Beat categories of most liked stories on Washington Posts official page in Facebook*

* The special coverage on Thanksgiving cannot be classified as a particular beat so it was decided to present it as it was categorised in The Washington Post.

Appendix 5 summarises the essential information on top ten posts in The Washington Post's official Facebook page.

In the same period the top ten most shared news stories in The Washington Post's Facebook page are as below:

| No. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|-----|----------------|------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Be sure to deep fry safely this Thanksgiving | Special Coverage of Thanksgiving | 7 | 8381 |
| 2 | Electrocuted monkey saved by monkey friend on India rail tracks | Video (News) | 3 | 3429 |
| 3 | Obama: This is not just an issue for Ferguson, This is an issue for America | News | 1 | 3008 |
| 4 | Is this an attack? The chances aren't zero | News | 4 | 2785 |
| 5 | A Michigan cop pulled people over for traffic stops. Instead of tickets they got Christmas presents | Video (News) | 5 | 2292 |
| 6* | All five remaining are in captivity | Science | - | 1909 |
| 7* | Vodka is a classic choice | Science | - | 1369 |
| 8* | Food Hacks: How to carve a perfect Thanksgiving Turkey | Special coverage of Thanksgiving | - | 1311 |
| 9* | Michael Brown's mother as the news came in last night | Video (News) | - | 1262 |
| 10 | Skyfall's follow up christened and | Opinion | 8 | 1106 |

| | cast revealed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

*Table 6.28: Top most shared stories on Washington Posts official page in Facebook*

6* This post is published in the News beat of The Washington Post.



It has received 1432 likes, 1909 shares and 267 comments.

7* This post is published in Science section of Washington Post.



It has received 1670 likes, 1369 shares and 77 comments.

8*. This post is published in the special coverage of Thanksgiving in

Washington Post.



It has received 1293 likes, 1311 shares and 97 comments.

9* This post is a video from the News beat of The Washington Post.

It has received 885 likes, 1262 shares and 348 comments.

Table 6.29 displays the beat of most shared stories:

| News | Special Coverage Thanksgiving | Opinion | Science |
|------|------|------|------|
| 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 |

*Table 6.29: Beat categories of most shared stories on Washigton Posts official page in Facebook*

**Comments**

1.  Top comments on this post refer to the video but there are no
    arguments. However both users express their opinions about the theme
    of this post (Factor 5) referring strategic narrative of the original news
    story.



2. The first comment presents an ironical argument and discusses an

alternative ending to this incident (Factor 2). The second comment presents

the user's opinion about this incident (Factor 5).

276

3. The first comment raises a question about one of the characters in 'The Interview' but the context of this question is not clear. The second comment hails President Obama as the best president ever, without any further discussions.



4. The first and second comments here are statements about the incident without reasons or any arguments. There are no explanations for these statements.

**Washington Post**
December 23, 2014 · 

Is this an attack? The chances aren't zero.

**North Korea's Internet is going suspiciously haywire**
Could this be the "proportional response" Obama promised after the Sony hacking?
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

Like · Comment · Share

5,028 people like this.                    Top Comments ▼

2,785 shares

Write a comment...

**Dan Furmaga** Maybe they should try turning it on and off....
Like · Reply · 504 · December 23, 2014 at 6:17am
↳ 19 Replies

**Laura Radcliff** I hope it is being flooded with streaming video of the interview release
Like · Reply · 294 · December 23, 2014 at 6:16am

5. The first comment refers to the incident and argues about the public's judgement of the police force. The second comment presents the user's opinion that this post is a public relations message.



**Washington Post**
December 11, 2014 · 

A Michigan cop pulled people over for traffic stops. Instead of tickets, they got Christmas presents. http://wapo.st/1whYhG7

256,450 Views
Like · Comment · Share

4,747 people like this.                    Top Comments ▼

2,292 shares

Write a comment...

**Betty Raper Olson** What a wonderful thing for this guy to do!!! There are a lot of good police in this country. Don't judge all by a bad few!!!!
Like · Reply · 163 · December 11, 2014 at 11:41am
↳ 12 Replies

**Brooks Fortune** PR game strong
Like · Reply · 107 · December 11, 2014 at 11:36am

6. The first comment presents the user's reaction to others who have found this article to be funny. There are no reasons given for this statement. The second comment raises a question in the context of the incident in the news story (Factor 2).

Washington Post
December 16, 2014 · ⚑
All five remaining are in captivity.

A northern white rhino has died. There are now five left in the entire world.
Angalifu was 44 when he died of old age on Sunday at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

Like · Comment · Share

👍 1,432 people like this.                                      Top Comments ▾
➪ 1,909 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Jose Rosa If you think this is funny, you suck.
Like · Reply · 👍 65 · December 16, 2014 at 8:40am
↳ 1 Reply

Lewis Drash I wonder if there are planets out there somewhere in the universe that have white rhinos on them now living free in the wilderness??
Like · Reply · 👍 31 · December 16, 2014 at 8:32am

7. The first comment proposes a different idea in the context of the original story (Factor 2). The second comment presents no discussion or arguments for the user's opinion.



Washington Post
December 25, 2014 · Edited · ⚑
Vodka is a classic choice.

The scientific reason you should put booze into your pies
Some of the molecular secrets of the perfect pie.
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

Like · Comment · Share

👍 Amanda Zamora and 1,670 others like this.              Top Comments ▾
➪ 1,369 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Ann Blazejewski I hate to be an English snob, but the alcohol will complement the pie rather than compliment it. I expect better English skills from the main newspaper of the nation's capital.
Like · Reply · 👍 26 · December 25, 2014 at 9:51am
↳ 4 Replies

Mike Lipsius Don't argue with science.
Like · Reply · 👍 13 · December 25, 2014 at 8:09am

8. The first comment refers to the video but the comment is not directly related to the central theme of this video (Thanksgiving). The second comment presents a different view without any reasons or arguments.



Washington Post
November 26, 2014 · ⚑
Food hacks: How to carve a perfect Thanksgiving turkey.

How to carve a turkey ▶

171,853 Views
Like · Comment · Share

👍 1,293 people like this.                                      Top Comments ▾
➪ 1,311 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Mary Close Those knife skills are atrocious... she's going to slice her thumb one of these days (also, who wears jewelry when they are preparing food? Unsanitary...)
Like · Reply · 👍 30 · November 26, 2014 at 10:07am
↳ 2 Replies

Hemant Mainali Billions of turkey killed for thanks giving. Can't you just say thanks & eat carrot.
Like · Reply · 👍 24 · November 26, 2014 at 10:19am

9. The first comment presents the user's dissenting ideas with an argument to justify them (Factor 1, 2). The second comment adds further information to the video and invites people to watch the whole video before making up their minds.



10. The first comment present the user's opinion about the police force and in the context of this story suggests a solution.  In the second comment the user presents his viewpoint after mentioning a personal experience as an example (Factor 5).
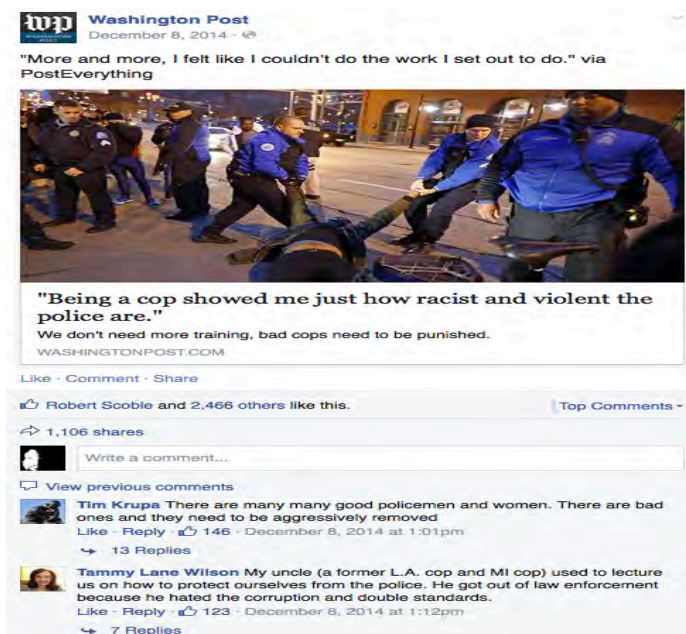
Washington Post's coverage of news was different compared to the other news websites of this study.  The difference was mainly due to the fact that Washington Post is only published in it's U.S edition while CNN, The Guardian, Al-Jazeera and other news websites of this study all have international / global editions. This factor affected composition of stories published in its Facebook page. It is clear that majority of stories are U.S centered or they are mainly targeting the audience living in the United States. However despite this difference ten most discussed stories present non-news coverage of stories on 'Recipes for Thanksgiving' or stories on weather in parts of the U.S.  The three stories on U.S  current affairs are followed by most liked comments which were focused on strategic narrative of the original news story.

### Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:

Following the outcomes of the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient from CNN and Al Jazeera and The Guardian, here the relationship between X as the number of comments and Y as the number shares is tested again.

### Result Details and Calculation

| X | 8381 | 3429 | 3008 | 2785 | 2292 | 1909 | 1369 | 1311 | 1261 | 1106 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

| Y | 693 | 380 | 2031 | 589 | 410 | 267 | 77 | 113 | 364 | 414 |
|---|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|

*6.30: Variables*

Key

X: X Values
Y: Y Values
$M_x$: Mean of X Values
$M_y$: Mean of Y Values

X - M$_x$ & Y - M$_y$: Deviation scores
(X - M$_x$)$^2$ & (Y - M$_y$)$^2$: Deviation Squared
(X - M$_x$)(Y - M$_y$): Product of Deviation Scores

X Values
$\sum$ = 26852
Mean = 2685.2
$\sum$(X - M$_x$)$^2$ = SS$_x$ = 42006807.6

Y Values
$\sum$ = 5306
Mean = 530.6
$\sum$(Y - M$_y$)$^2$ = SS$_y$ = 2828394.4

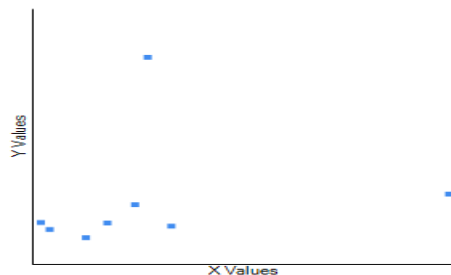X and Y Combined
N = 10
$\sum$(X - M$_x$)(Y - M$_y$) = 3192057.8

R Calculation
r = $\sum$((X - M$_y$)(Y - M$_x$)) / $\sqrt{}$((SS$_x$)(SS$_y$))

r = 3192057.8 / $\sqrt{}$((42006807.6)(2828394.4)) = 0.2928

Meta Numerics (cross-check)
r = 0.2928



The value of R is 0.2928. Although technically a positive correlation,

the relationship between variables is weak.  For three newspapers in this

study the value of R is significantly lower than the value of R for the other two

24 hour television news networks. Further tests with the next news website

should identify if this difference could be a meaningful gap. Once again, a

combination of posts from different beats might have affected number of

comments, so once again it is important to undertake this test using a new

definition of News beat (so far the classification of posts into news and other beats has been based on the categories in the original source).

## 6. BBC World News



BBC News has 15,528,188 subscribers on Facebook. During this period a total of 41 stories were published in the Facebook edition of BBC World's television network. Table below displays the beat categories of these posts.

| News | Art & Culture | Videos | Photos | Health | Q&A | Sport |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 18 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 |

*Table 6.31: Beat categories of posts on BBC World News official page in Facebook*

The top ten most liked stories published in the official Facebook page of BBC World are as below.

1. The most liked story is a video from the business beat of BBC News. It has received 44,515 likes. The original title for this post is: 'Apple "failing to protect Chinese factory workers".' The lead to this post adds further information about the condition of workers and also names iPhones as being made in these conditions. (http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30532463).
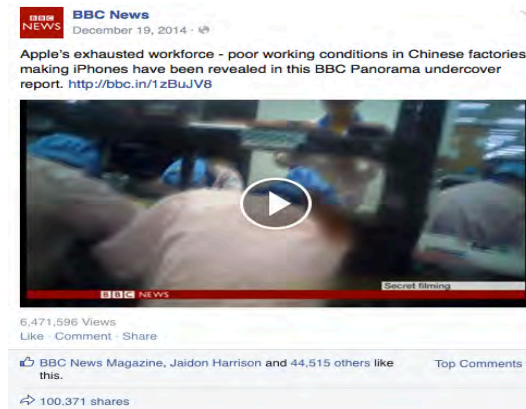
2. The second most liked story is a photo gallery from the beat of technology in the BBC.
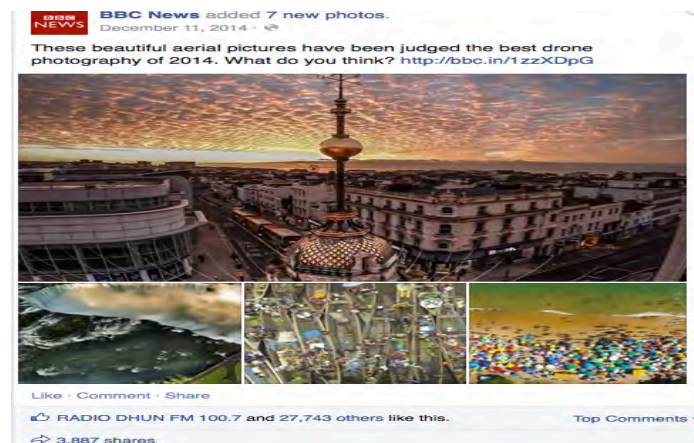


This post has received 27,743 likes and the original title for this post is: 'The most stunning drone pictures of 2014'. The lead to this post adds further information by stating that these photos are 'judged' to be the most beautiful photos of their kind. It also directly addresses the readers by asking their opinions about the drone pictures.

(http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30415475)

3. The third most liked photo is from the beat of News in BBC.
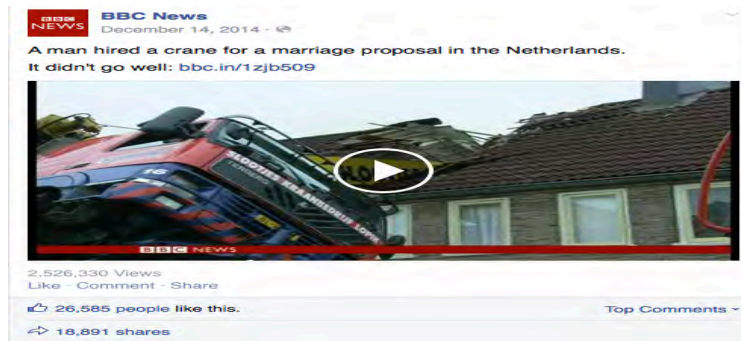
It has received 26,585 likes and the original title for this post is: 'Dutch marriage proposal sees crane smash IJsselstein house'. The lead of this story presents the same act of 'marriage proposal' with a crane but it doesn't reveal anything about the fact that it smashed the house. (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30462825?ocid=socialflow_twitter)

4.The fourth most liked post is from the beat of News.

This post has received 26,445 likes. The original title is: 'Prince George Christmas pictures released'. The lead of this post in Facebook adds more information including an indirect quote by parents William and Kate. (http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30464090).

5. The fifth most liked post is from the news beat of the BBC.



It has received 18,061 likes. The lead of this post adds more information to the title in original story. However both lead and title highlight the same act. The title for this story is: 'Hope for endangered Malayan tapir as one born in Kent zoo'.

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/30189458/hope-for-endangered-malayan-tapir-as-one-born-in-kent-zoo).

6.The sixth most liked post is a video from the News beat of the BBC.

It has received 16,172 likes. There are no links to the original story in the BBC.

7. The seventh most liked post is from the News beat of the BBC.



This post has received 15,583 likes. The original title of this story is: 'Germans honour "role model" student'. The lead of this post on Facebook adds more information (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30268653)

8. The eighth most liked post is from the beat of News on the BBC.

This post has received 15,261 likes. The title of the original story is:

'Pakistan mourns after Taliban Peshawar school massacre'. The lead of this post

adds more information and states the number of casualties.

(http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-

30507836?OCID=twitterasia)

9. The ninth most liked post is form the beat of News on the BBC.



This post has received 15,156 likes. The original title for this story is:

'North Korea calls for joint inquiry over Sony Pictures film'. The lead on this

post is completely different and it includes a quote by President Obama.

(http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30559136)

10. The tenth most liked story is a video from BBC Magazine.

This post has received 10,842 likes. The original title for this post is:

'The rise of selfie sticks'. The lead on this post adds a question to this title.

(http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30455720).


Appendix 6 summarises most liked stories on BBC World's official

page in Facebook.



The ten most liked stories on BBC's Facebook page are from different beats as

shown in the table 6.33:

| News | Business | Technology | Photos/ Videos |
|------|----------|------------|----------------|
| 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

*Table 6.33: Beat categories of most liked on BBC World News official page in Facebook*

In the same period the top ten most shared news stories in BBC's

Facebook page are as below:

| No. | Highest Shared | Beat | Previous rank in liking order | Number of Shares |
|-----|---------------|------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Apple's exhausted workforce - poor working conditions in Chinese factories making iPhones have been revealed in this BBC Panorama undercover report | Business | 1 | 100,399 |
| 2 | A man hired a crane for a marriage proposal in the Netherlands. It didn't go well, | Video (News) | 3 | 18889 |
| 3 | The rise of the "selfie stick" - a handy tool? Or a narcissistic menace to our streets? | News | 8 | 3859 |
| 4 | Funerals begin in the Pakistani city of Peshawar after the country's deadliest Taliban attack leaves 132 children and nine staff dead at a school | News | 3 | 2604 |
| 5 | French fries and mayonnaise are used in an attack by activists on Belgium's PM Charles Michel | Video (News) | 6 | 2045 |
| 6 | Obama: Sony "made a mistake" in | News | 9 | 1345 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | canceling 'The Interview' | | | |
| 7 | Here's Prince George - as seen in new Christmas photos issued by parents William and Kate. They're a "thank you" to the media for not using paparazzi images of the 16-month-old. | Photos | 4 | 1346 |
| 8 | She tried to help two girls who were being harassed - but paid with her life | News | 7 | 760 |
| 9 | These beautiful aerial pictures have been judged the best drone photography of 2014. What do you think? | Technology (photo) | 2 | 546 |
| 10 | The birth of this extremely rare Malayan tapir has provided some hope for the endangered species. Little chap Nias was born at Port Lympne Reserve near Hythe in Kent | News | 5 | 430 |

*Table 6.34: Most shared stories on BBC World News official page in Facebook*

Comparing BBC to other news websites of this study, it is clear that BBC is covering more hard news and this can be explained with 1) it's global edition and 2) being an extension of a 2 hour television news broadcasting organisation.

**Comments**

1.



The first comment presents the user's opinion about the report. The second comment is addressed to all people who have left a comment under this post asking them, despite this report, how many are using Apple products. Both comments present the user's opinion about the incident but there are no arguments (Factor 5).

2.



Both comments are statements about the incident and there are no signs of further explanations or arguments.

3.



The first comment here is a general statement about the world. The second comment refers to one of the main actors in the news story (the Taliban) and presents the user's opinion about them after reading about this incident. The second comment presents the user's opinion with further explanation (Factor 5).

4.



The first comment presents the user's opinion about the gadget in the post. The second post presents an argument for why the gadget should be celebrated and raises questions about why other commentators are against it (Factor 1).

5.
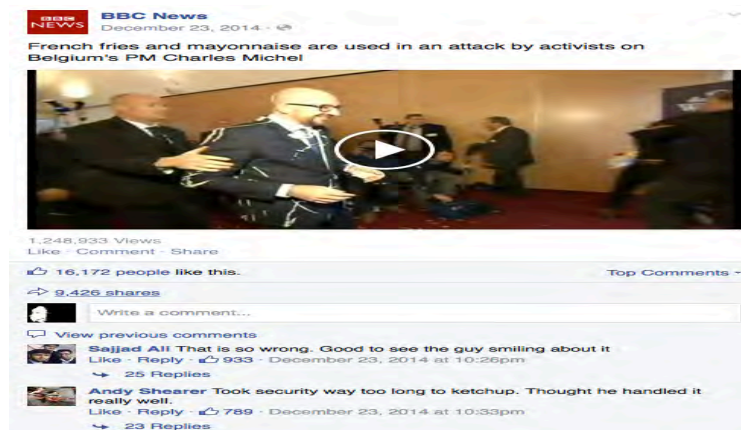


The first comment presents the user's evaluation of the incident. The second comment criticises the security arrangements and refers to the whole incident and how it was handled (Factor 3).
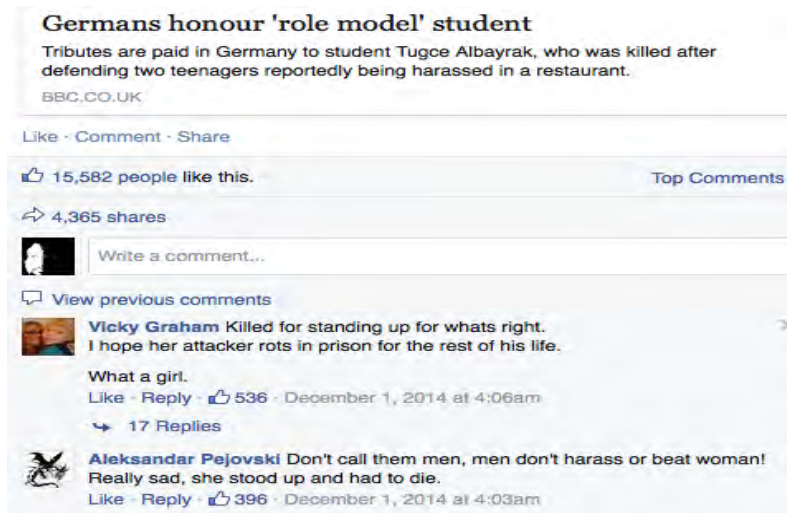
6.

The first comment here presents the user's opinion in response to threats from North Korean hackers (Factor 2). The second comment is a statement without further explanation or argument.
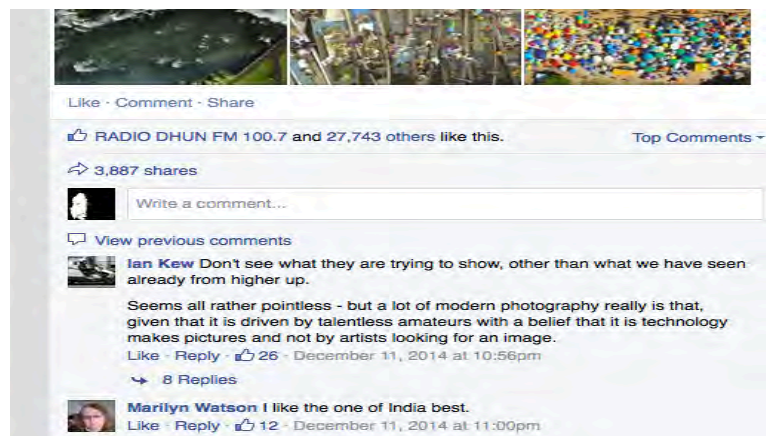
7.



Both comments here are addressing previous negative comments on this photo. They both present reasoning and logic about why the user considers earlier comments to be unacceptable (Factor 5).

8.

Germans honour 'role model' student

Tributes are paid in Germany to student Tugce Albayrak, who was killed after defending two teenagers reportedly being harassed in a restaurant.

BBC.CO.UK

Like · Comment · Share

👍 15,582 people like this.                                      Top Comments ▾

↪ 4,365 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Vicky Graham Killed for standing up for whats right.
I hope her attacker rots in prison for the rest of his life.

What a girl.
Like · Reply · 👍 536 · December 1, 2014 at 4:06am

↳ 17 Replies

Aleksandar Pejovski Don't call them men, men don't harass or beat woman!
Really sad, she stood up and had to die.
Like · Reply · 👍 396 · December 1, 2014 at 4:03am

Both comments here refer to the incident in the news story followed by their opinion on this event. The first comment starts with a statement on the action of the girl who was murdered and then the user connects this to what should happen to the people who murdered the girl in the photo. The second comment also refers to the people who committed the murder and then praises the actions of the girl (Factor 5).

9.



Like · Comment · Share

👍 RADIO DHUN FM 100.7 and 27,743 others like this.          Top Comments ▾

↪ 3,887 shares

Write a comment...

View previous comments

Ian Kew Don't see what they are trying to show, other than what we have seen already from higher up.

Seems all rather pointless - but a lot of modern photography really is that, given that it is driven by talentless amateurs with a belief that it is technology makes pictures and not by artists looking for an image.
Like · Reply · 👍 26 · December 11, 2014 at 10:56pm

↳ 8 Replies

Marilyn Watson I like the one of India best.
Like · Reply · 👍 12 · December 11, 2014 at 11:00pm

The first comment here refers to the overall experience of watching the drone photos. Theuser argues that modern photography is pointless and continues discussing it (Factor 2). The second comment presents the user's pick from the collection of photos.

294

10.
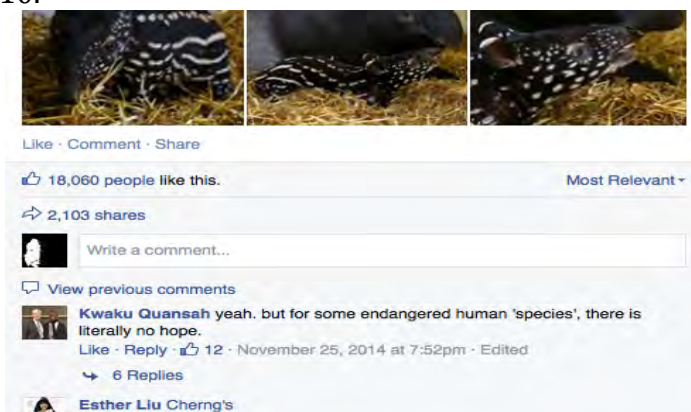


The first comment agrees with the news report and then the user states that for some other 'human species' there is no hope. User is comparing the story to human beings dying for various reasons and according to him there is 'literally no hope' of finding a solution. The second comment shares this story with another page titled 'Cherng'.

**Calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient:**

The value of Pearson's R factor between the two variables of X as the number of comments and Y as the number shares is tested again.

**Result Details and Calculation**

| X | 5879 | 1298 | 2606 | 2919 | 2045 | 1345 | 1246 | 760 | 511 | 457 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Y | 100366 | 3859 | 5975 | 18889 | 9426 | 3118 | 1348 | 4365 | 3887 | 2103 |

*Table 6.35: Variables*

X Values
$\sum$ = 152336
Mean = 15233.6
$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 8292350200.4$

Y Values
$\sum$ = 19066

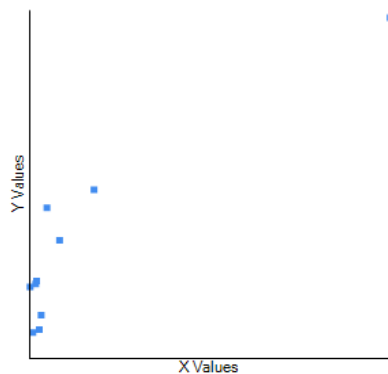Mean = 1906.6
$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 23799142.4$

X and Y Combined
N = 10
$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 405440935.4$

R Calculation
$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$

$r = 405440935.4 / \sqrt{((8292350200.4)(23799142.4))} = 0.9127$



The value of R is 0.9127. This is a strong positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores (and vice versa). This indicates a positive and strong relationship between dissemination and commenting on stories within this public and can be linked to presentation of hard news in ther coverage of BBC on Facebook.

**Research Question three, Deliberation in Publics:**

Every post published in Facebook creates an immediate public for itself. This public includes 1) readers who just read the story or the title but do not use any of the interactive features 2) those who read and 'Like' the post 3) Those read and 'Share' the post on their own page, or a friend's page or send it as a message to a number of selected individuals 4) those who leave

a comment and 5) those who do a combination of any1,2,3,4 and 5. Although the imaginary public includes all these categories of users, the public that is the subject of this study is dependent on interactivity. In other words, this public comprises users connecting themselves to the text or to other users / users' comments and this connection is made visible and documented. This public can exist through application of different interactive features.

Liking, sharing and commenting on a post display different levels of interaction with the content. Liking requires the least effort a reader might exert to be included in this public, while sharing displays an interaction with an identified individual or a group of recipients. Commenting displays another level of interaction that involves reading and generating a statement on the content and sharing it with the rest of the public. The three levels of interaction are important in assisting us to imagine a public of this kind. 2nd and third level of interactivity are exmaples of a communication model where users read the original message, think about embedded narratives and either forward it to other people in their own network or present their own understanding of it. It is also clear that interactivity as discussed by Ariel and Avidar (2015) defines the public-ness of this virtual community. However the two acts of sharing and commenting are more significant because they involve the greater effort a user must exert to interact within the public (i.e. greater effort in terms of identifying the recipients of a message and also generating an opinion about the text).

If we consider a public as a network of nodes, where each node represents a user who has liked / shared / commented on a story then it can be argued that some nodes process more information than others and

become more important to the network. Users who share and /or comment on a story process more information and become vital in the life cycle of the network. These nodes operate within the same network and it can be argued that some of them participate in deliberative practices (by leaving a comment that displays deliberative values, as discussed in the methodology, or by commenting on comments with reason). Therefore, it is important to find out whether there is a relationship between nodes sharing and nodes commenting on posts. Since the activity of a network is dependent on the activity of nodes then the more active the nodes, the more significant is the network. This means that the publics with higher value of R (Pearson's correlation coefficient which shows the relationship between sharing and commenting) display greater significance compared to other publics and their outcomes (where an outcome is the formation of an opinion according to the application of civic wisdom in identifying a comment as the most liked comment).

Deliberation in publics has been discussed in detail, and factors contributing to deliberation were highlighted and tested for the top comments of each post across six news websites. It was found that not necessarily all publics present deliberative factors, because as discussed by Manosevitch and Lev-on (2011) their theme for discussion doesn't ignite a deliberative conversation.. For example, in the six news websites of this study the value of R varied between 0.29 and 0.91 ( -1<R<+1). Value of R reflects the relationship between the number of shares and the number of comments. It was found that the higher the number of shares, the higher the number of

comments. Lower values of R signify lower importance of the publics and therefore lower credibility of the outcome of the public (public opinion).

**Deliberation and Genre**

Deliberation was not a common practice in all publics across this study but there were times when all deliberative factors were present within a public. To discuss this and find out whether News could be a catalyst in evolution of deliberative publics, this section analyses the R factor (significance of a public) exclusively for posts which were on current affairs and international relations. The reasons for discussing the R factor for stories on these themes is explained in the discussion about calculating Pearson's R for the Genre of News.

**Pearson's R for the Genre of News**

Across all six news websites the relationship between Y (Sharing or dissemination) and X (Commenting or deliberation) was positive but the degree of this relationship was different in different cases. For example, CNN, Al Jazeera English and BBC News displayed a strong relationship between the two variables but in the news websites the relationship was weak though still positive. To determine whether the genre of communication can contribute to the dissemination of, and deliberation on, content (two important characteristics of a public) it is important to narrow the sample and calculate the value of Pearson's R exclusively for posts which can be grouped together as News. As discussed earlier in the methodology, with a review of 60 posts in this study it would be possible to separate stories which are on current

affairs / national and international relations from the rest of posts on a wide range of topics. Table below summarises the posts for calculation of the value of R.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Protesters stage a die-in in New York | 1087 | 248 |
| Decision day: Tensions are high in Ferguson | 679 | 235 |
| A year after Haiyan's devastation, new super typhoon threatens Philippines | 569 | 221 |
| Nobel Peace prize Laureates Malala and Satyarthi continue striving for children's rights child | 144 | 124 |
| Pope Francis congratulates governments of U.S and Cuba for historic decision to establish diplomatic relations | 193 | 82 |
| Aljazeera English | | |
| Update: 'We are profoundly disappointed | 1629 | 828 |
| U.S Hypocrisy China Says… | 638 | 298 |
| More than two dozen Palestinian children have been born to a prisoner family through sperm smuggling | 440 | 168 |
| Black teenager killed in police shooting in US state of Missouri | 448 | 212 |
| Guardian | | |
| Sydney Siege: Reports of hostage situation inside café live | 948 | 365 |
| A black man in a tuxedo? Must be a waiter, Obamas recall everyday racism they faced | 1144 | 479 |
| The New York Times | | |
| U.S. and Cuba, in breakthrough, Resume diplomatic Relations | 3128 | 331 |
| Washington Post | | |
| Obama: This is not just an issue for Ferguson, This is an issue for America | 3007 | 1302 |
| Is this an attack? The chances aren't zero | 2785 | 545 |
| Michael Brown's mother as the news came in last night | 1262 | 346 |
| BBC News | | |
| ' Pakistan mourns after Taliban Peshawar school massacre' | 5975 | 2604 |
| French fries and mayonnaise are used in an attack by activists on Belgium's PM Charles Michel | 9426 | 2045 |
| Obama: Sony made a mistake in canceling 'The Interview' | 3118 | 1345 |
| She tried to help two girls who were being harassed - but paid with her life | 4365 | 760 |

*Table 6.45: Number of shares and comments on News stories about current affairs and international relations.*
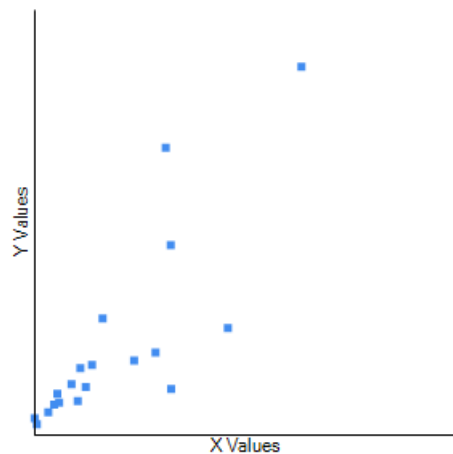
### Result Details and Calculation

X Values
∑ = 44248

Mean = 2212.4

$\sum(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 98403622.8$

:

Y Values

$\sum = 14133$

Mean = 706.65

$\sum(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 9951578.55$

X and Y Combined

N = 20

$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 25328177.8$

R Calculation

$r = \sum((X - M_y)(Y - M_x)) / \sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}$

$r = 25328177.8 / \sqrt{((98403622.8)(9951578.55))} = 0.8094$

Meta Numerics (cross-check)

r = 0.8094



The value of R is 0.8094. This is a strong positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores.

The R factor here indicates a strong relationship between dissemination of content and commenting on content. The value of R represents the nature of a public in terms of the amount of information processed and passed on by nodes. Furthermore, the value of R also indicates the significance of a public.  The number of participants within a public does

not by itself indicate the importance of the public but in combination with the number of participants and their actions in processing information in a communication setting, it determines their importance. As discussed by Castells, the relative importance of a node does not stem from its specific features but from its ability to contribute to the network's goals (Castells, 2005, p.3). In this context, sharing or commenting on a story are ways of processing information and contributing to the network while the goal of the public –as a network – is to present a public opinion. Amongst different publics that emerge on news stories, only publics with a significant value of Pearson's R should be considered important as their corresponding nodes (users) have added to the importance of the network (public). This is an important finding of this study which is justified with use of statistical tests (value of R) and quality of comments posted on news stories. If networked publics are recognised by policymakers and politicians, then their public opinion should only be considered influential in final decision-making processes if their corresponding value of R is close to +1 ( $-1 < R < +1$).

The next step here is to analyse the top comments on the news stories that were included in this test and find out whether they represent deliberative values. Table below lists news stories from each news website during this period.

| | CNN | Shares | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Protesters stage a die-in in New York | 1087 | 248 |
| 2 | Decision day: Tensions are high in Ferguson | 678 | 280 |
| 3 | A year after Haiyan's devastation, new super typhoon threatens Philippines | 569 | 240 |
| 4 | Nobel Peace prize Laureates Malala and Satyarthi continue striving for children's rights child | 145 | 143 |
| 5 | Pope Francis congratulates governments of U.S and Cuba for historic decision to establish diplomatic relations | 193 | 95 |

*Table 6.46: CNN's most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

## Aljazeera English

| 6 | Update: 'We are profoundly disappointed | 1629 | 828 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | U.S Hypocrisy China Says… | 638 | 298 |
| 8 | More than two dozen Palestinian children have been born to a prisoner family through sperm smuggling/ | 440 | 168 |
| 9 | Black teenager killed in police shooting in US state of Missouri | 448 | 212 |

*Table 6.47: Al Jazeera's most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

## Guardian

| 10 | Sydney Siege: Reports of hostage situation inside café live | 948 | 365 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | A black man in a tuxedo? Must be a waiter, Obamas recall everyday racism they faced | 1144 | 479 |

*Table 6.48: The Guardian's most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

## The New York Times

| 2 | U.S. and Cuba, in breakthrough, Resume diplomatic Relations | 3128 | 331 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Fidel Castro confers with Che Guevara in Cuba, in this original 1959 print from The New York Times archived | 2315 | 533 |
| 4 | On Ferguson, from the opinion section of The New York Times | 1395 | 501 |

*Table 6.49: New York Times most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

## Washington Post

| 15 | Obama: This is not just an issue for Ferguson, This is an issue for America | 3008 | 2031 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | Is this an attack? The chances aren't zero | 2785 | 589 |
| 17 | Michael Brown's mother as the news came in last night | 1262 | 346 |

*Table 6.50: Washington Posts most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

## BBC News

| 18 | ' Pakistan mourns after Taliban Peshawar school massacre' | 5975 | 2604 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | French fries and mayonnaise are used in an attack by activists on Belgium's PM Charles Michel | 9426 | 2045 |
| 20 | Obama: Sony made a mistake in canceling 'The Interview' | 3118 | 1345 |
| 21 | She tried to help two girls who were being harassed - but paid with her life | 4365 | 760 |

*Table 6.51: most shared News stories on current affairs and international relations.*

Most liked comments on News stories will be discussed here. To identify key aspects of a deliberative process, Manosevitch and Lev-on (2014) have discussed a set of measures that will be applied to each most liked comment. As discussed in the methodology chapter these measures are : 1) Relevance: A comment is relevant when it addresses either the structuring topic defined as the topic established prior to or outside of the immediate environment ; or an interactional topic, which includes any subject related to the structuring topic that arises as the discussion unfolds 2) Opinion Expression: defined as an expression of the participant's belief about how the world is or ought to be with regard to the discussion topic 3) Reason: an explicit statement about a reason in favor of or against an opinion of relevance to the discussion topic 4) Acknowledging other comments in forms of (a) Agreement (b) Disagreement (c) Elaboration on previous comments.
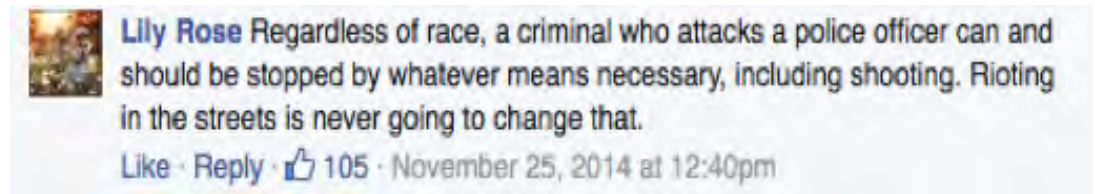
**CNN**
1.
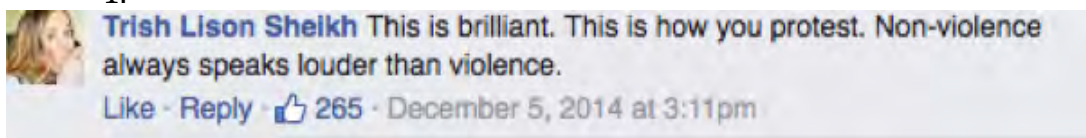


The above comment presents an agreement in defense of non-violent protest as elaborated in the news story. 'This is brilliant' (Opinion Expression). 'This is how you protest' (Relevance). 'Non-Violence always speaks louder than violence' (Reason). This comment has been liked by 265 users and has received 10 replies from other users (Acknowledgement).

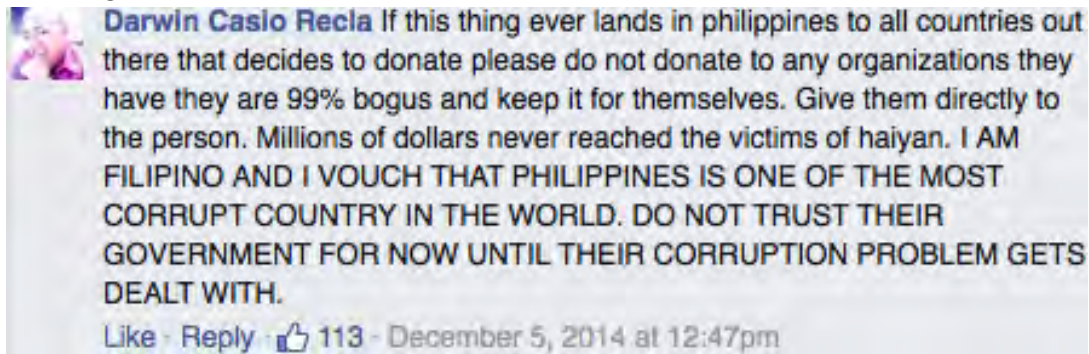This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

2.



Lily Rose Regardless of race, a criminal who attacks a police officer can and should be stopped by whatever means necessary, including shooting. Rioting in the streets is never going to change that.

Like · Reply · 👍 105 · November 25, 2014 at 12:40pm

The comment addresses the structural topic of the event (Relevance and opinion expression). 'Rioting in Streets in never going to change that' (Reason). The comment has received 105 likes and received 10 replies from other users (Acknowledgement).

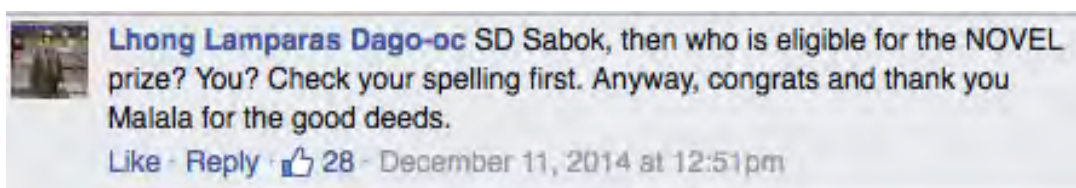This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

3.



Darwin Casio Recla If this thing ever lands in philippines to all countries out there that decides to donate please do not donate to any organizations they have they are 99% bogus and keep it for themselves. Give them directly to the person. Millions of dollars never reached the victims of haiyan. I AM FILIPINO AND I VOUCH THAT PHILIPPINES IS ONE OF THE MOST CORRUPT COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. DO NOT TRUST THEIR GOVERNMENT FOR NOW UNTIL THEIR CORRUPTION PROBLEM GETS DEALT WITH.

Like · Reply · 👍 113 · December 5, 2014 at 12:47pm

The comment presents 'relevance' as it talks about the incident and international community in providing assistance to victims of this incident. It presents 'opinion expression' by stating that 'Philippines is one of the most corrupt country'. It also presents 'Reason' in stating that 'Millions of dollars never reached the victims'. The comment has received 113 likes and 33 replies (Acknowledgement).

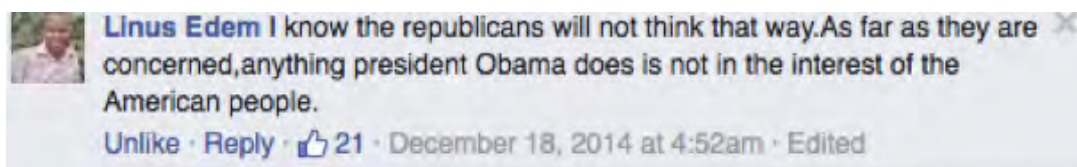This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

4.

> **Lhong Lamparas Dago-oc** SD Sabok, then who is eligible for the NOVEL prize? You? Check your spelling first. Anyway, congrats and thank you Malala for the good deeds.
> Like · Reply · 👍 28 · December 11, 2014 at 12:51pm

The comment presents 'relevance' as it talks about the central structural topic of this news story. It acknowledges other comments by openly addressing 'SD Sabok' about the incorrect spelling of Nobel as 'Novel'. It presents reason, by referring to 'Good deeds' performed by Malala. It also presents 'Opinion expression' as it rejects previous comments in stating that Malala doesn't deserve this prize. This comment has received the most likes in this thread (28) and has received fie replies from other users.

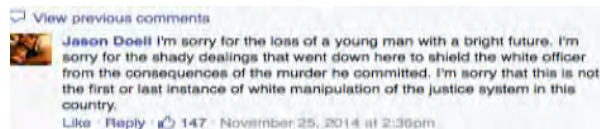This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

5.

> **Linus Edem** I know the republicans will not think that way. As far as they are concerned, anything president Obama does is not in the interest of the American people.
> Unlike · Reply · 👍 21 · December 18, 2014 at 4:52am · Edited

The comment presents relevance as it targets the central act in this story and the user says that it in his opinion (expression of opinion) it won't be approved by the Republicans, because (reason) they consider everything President Obama does to be against the interests of the American people. This comment has received 21 likes and has received three replies (Acknowledgement).

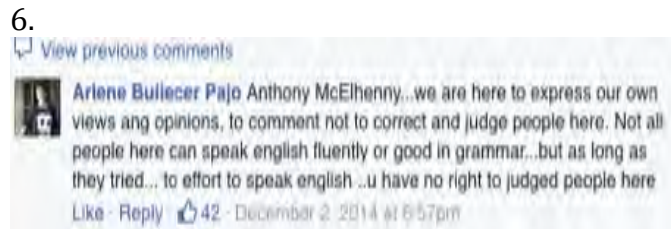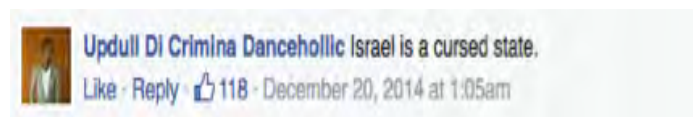This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

**Al Jazeera English**
5.
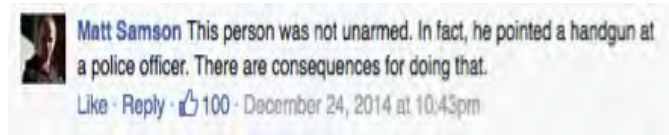
> **Jason Doell** I'm sorry for the loss of a young man with a bright future. I'm sorry for the shady dealings that went down here to shield the white officer from the consequences of the murder he committed. I'm sorry that this is not the first or last instance of white manipulation of the justice system in this country.
> Like · Reply · 👍 147 · November 25, 2014 at 2:36pm

The comment here presents an opinion (Opinion expression) based on the fact that the user is expressing how sorry he feels based on the events that he quotes from the news story (Relevance) and he adds 'the white manipulation of the justice system' as the reason (reason). The comment has received 25 replies (Acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

6.



> **Arlene Bullecer Pajo** Anthony McElhenny...we are here to express our own views ang opinions, to comment not to correct and judge people here. Not all people here can speak english fluently or good in grammar...but as long as they tried... to effort to speak english ..u have no right to judged people here
> Like · Reply · 👍 42 · December 2, 2014 at 6:57pm

The comment here presents acknowledgement of a previous comment (acknowledgement 1) and then presents the reason (reason) why he disagrees with what has been discussed earlier. The comment lacks relevance as it doesn't address the original content. The comment has received 42 likes and 3 replies (acknowledgement 2).

7.



> **Updull Di Crimina Dancehollic** Israel is a cursed state.
> Like · Reply · 👍 118 · December 20, 2014 at 1:05am

The comment here is an expression of opinion but it lacks reason. It is relevant as it is about the news story. It has been liked by 118 people and has received 22 replies (Acknowledgement)

8.

Matt Samson This person was not unarmed. In fact, he pointed a handgun at a police officer. There are consequences for doing that.
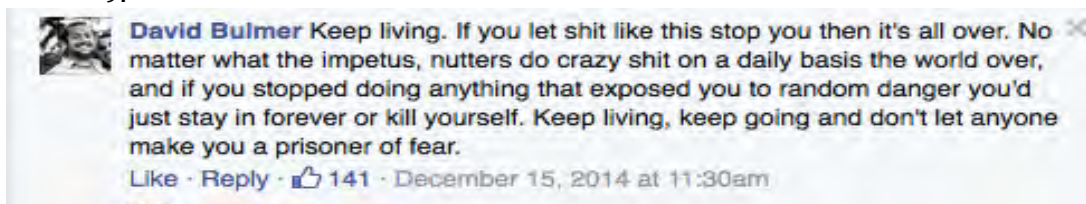Like · Reply · 👍 100 · December 24, 2014 at 10:43pm

The comment is relevant because it adds to what has been narrated in the news story. It presents reason by stating that the action would have its consequences. The comment presents expression of opinion by stating that 'in fact … he pointed a gun at a police officer'. It has received 100 likes and 30 replies from other users (acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

**The Guardian**
9.



David Bulmer Keep living. If you let shit like this stop you then it's all over. No matter what the impetus, nutters do crazy shit on a daily basis the world over, and if you stopped doing anything that exposed you to random danger you'd just stay in forever or kill yourself. Keep living, keep going and don't let anyone make you a prisoner of fear.
Like · Reply · 👍 141 · December 15, 2014 at 11:30am

The comment presents relevance as it refers to the incident and concludes with the user's personal view (expression of opinion) that people should not let incidents of this kind affect their lives. There is an argument (Reason) in the comment and it states that if people stop doing something that exposes them to danger then one may remain in that danger. The comment has 141 likes and has received 4 replies (Acknowledgement).
This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

10.



Tracy Hager The Guardian wouldn't just make this up. I grew up in the states and saw things like this happen, to minorities, women... it happens here too.
Like · Reply · 👍 204 · December 18, 2014 at 8:40am

The user agrees with what has been reported in this story (Expression

of opinion) by stating that 'The Guardian wouldn't just make it up'. It presents

reason by referring to an example from personal experiences living in the U.S

(Reason). The comment is relevant because it addresses the central act in this

308

story. The comment has 204 likes and it has received 44 replies

(Acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.
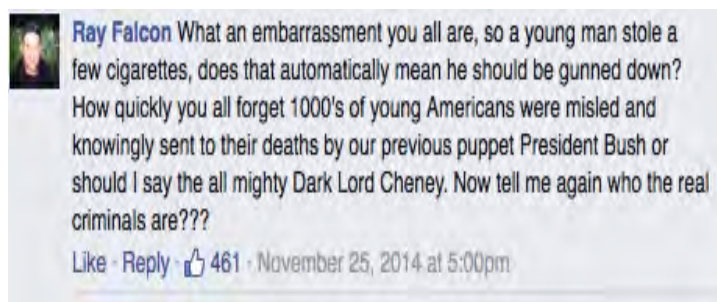
**The New York Times**

11.
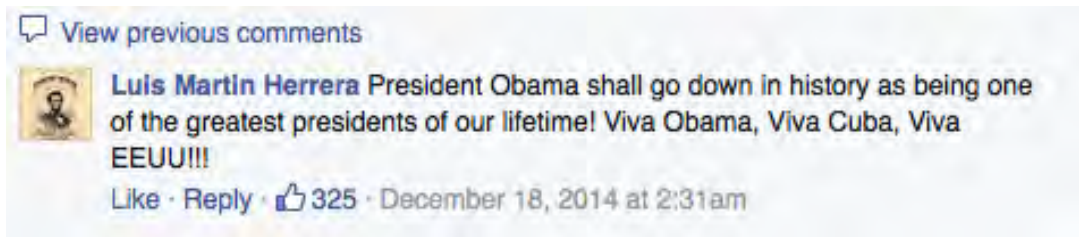


The user praises President Obama (Expression of opinion). The

comment lacks 'Reason' as a factor however it stays relevant by referring to

the two countries in the story. The post has received 325 likes and 21 replies

(Acknowledgement)

Washington Post

12.



The comment starts with addressing previous comments

(Acknowledgement 1). It presents relevance as it refers to the events in the

news story (Relevance).  It also presents reason by referring to young

Americans being killed during war (Reason). The commenter presents his

personal opinion (Expression of opinion) as he argues that the boy in the

news story should not have been 'gunned down'. The comment has received

461 likes and 57 replies (acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

13.

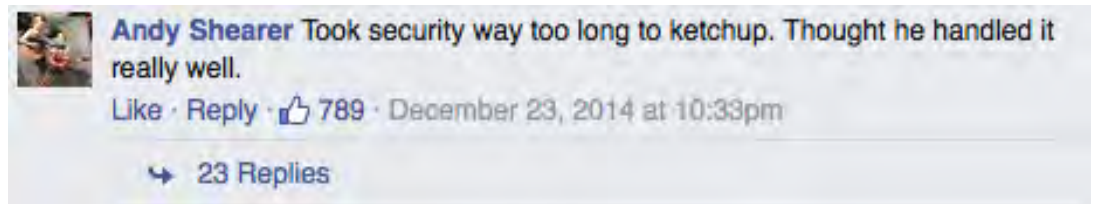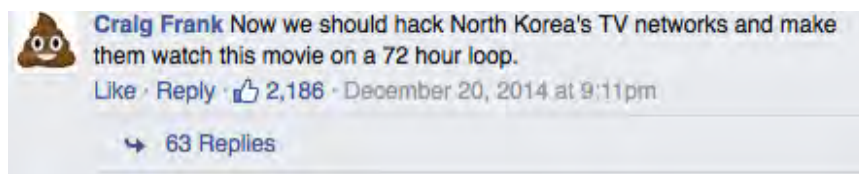Laura Radcliff I hope it is being flooded with streaming video of the interview release
Like · Reply · 👍 294 · December 23, 2014 at 6:16am

The comment presents relevance as it refers to the event in the news

story and presents the user's personal opinion on what should be streaming

in the Internet of the North Korean government. The comment lacks reason. It

has received 8 replies.

14.

Shasta Westaby They didn't show all of what she said... she was instigating the folks in the crowd to riot. look for the whole video before you feel sorry for the mom.
Like · Reply · 👍 91 · November 26, 2014 at 2:13am
↳ 15 Replies
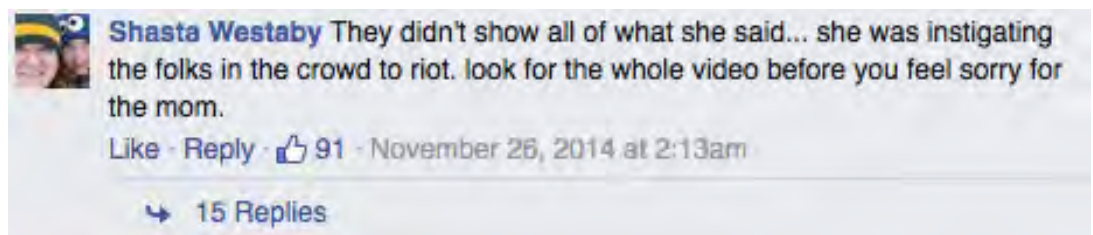
The comment is clearly referring to the new video (Relevance). It also

presents a reason for why people should not feel sorry for the mom (Reason

& Expression of opinion). It has received 91 likes and 15 replies

(acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

**BBC News**

15.

John Tampi What a cruel world we lived in
Like · Reply · 👍 455 · December 17, 2014 at 3:02pm
↳ 166 Replies
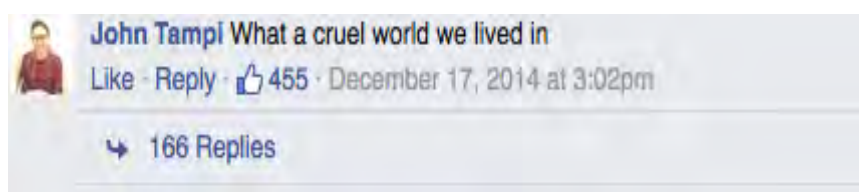
The comment presents the user's overall understanding of the incident

(expression of opinion). It lacks reason and relevance. It has received 455
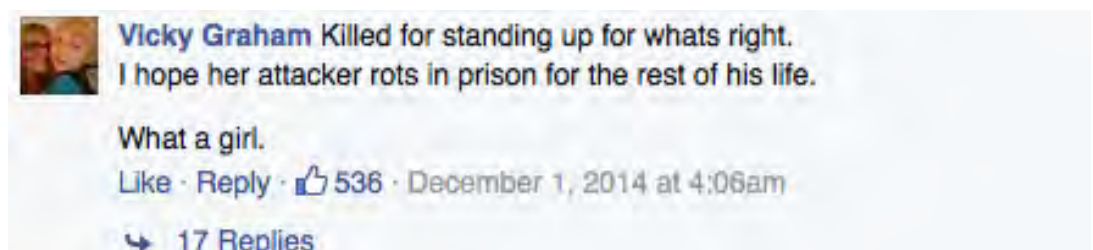
likes and 166 replies (acknowledgement).

16.



Andy Shearer Took security way too long to ketchup. Thought he handled it really well.
Like · Reply · 789 · December 23, 2014 at 10:33pm
↳ 23 Replies

The comment presents relevance and expression of opinion (security

too long to ketchup) and also expression of opinion by stating that 'he

handled it very well'. It has received 789 likes and 23 replies

(Acknowledgement).

17.



Craig Frank Now we should hack North Korea's TV networks and make them watch this movie on a 72 hour loop.
Like · Reply · 2,186 · December 20, 2014 at 9:11pm
↳ 63 Replies

The comment presents expression of opinion (now we should hack …)

and relevance (reference to the movie). It lacks reason. It has received 2186

likes and 63 replies (Acknowledgement).

18.



Vicky Graham Killed for standing up for whats right. I hope her attacker rots in prison for the rest of his life.
What a girl.
Like · Reply · 536 · December 1, 2014 at 4:06am
↳ 17 Replies

The comment presents relevance by referring to the story. It presents

expression of opinion by stating 'What a girl' and ' I hope her attacker'. It also

presents reason by stating that for this incident the attacker should be in prison. The comment has received 536 likes and 17 replies (acknowledgement).

This top comment satisfies all requirements of a deliberative process.

Eleven news stories out of 18 total display the presence of all factors shaping deliberative processes. The remaining seven stories do present different elements of deliberative processes but they miss at least one factor. In other words 11 news stories present 10 per cent deliberation in their publics and the other seven stories present 75 percent deliberation in their publics. In overall it is clear that the publics in the majority of these posts are 100 per cent deliberative with the remaining showing a high tendency towards deliberation in their publics. In addition, it is important to note that the deliberative nature of publics indicate presence of a public opinion. However , though historically locating this public opinion has been a major subject for contentious discussions, this thesis has argued that use of interactive features are helpful in highlighting a public opinion that is expected to emerge from publics.

312

# Chapter Eight


# Conclusion

## Introduction

This study set out to assess the significance of public opinion created as a result of collective wisdom in highly interactive domains of the official pages of news websites in Facebook . The study also described news websites' approaches to sharing content and it also assessed the contribution of the genre of news in the proliferation of users' deliberative practices in these interactive publics. To examine the legitimacy of publics, questions were raised about the deliberative and interactive features of these publics. Interactivity was defined according to the actions of the users in transmitting and processing information, so there was a structural shift from evaluating interactivity based on the medium to evaluating it based on the users' actions in transmitting and processing information in a communication setting. In the context of deliberation, news stories and their corresponding discussions were framed for analysis. The first focus was on dissemination of content for participation, and it was found that the inclusion of leads in the presentation of news stories in Facebook (as a common platform which enhances human interaction with news websites) adds a new dimension to the way publics are formed.  Changing headlines in the presentation of each news story affected the circulation of content as it created the first impression on the users. In the context of circulation of text for the emergence of publics, this study sought to answer three questions:

1. (a) How many stories are shared by each website in one month,

What kind of content is being shared and (b) are there any differences in the presentation of news in Facebook and the original version published in the online website?

2. Is deliberation a significant factor in the identification of 'most liked' comments on news stories disseminated by each website on Facebook?

3- Can 'news' be considered as a genre of communication contributing to the evolution of deliberative publics?

**Publics**

The discussion on publics emerging in cyberspace was reviewed in the literature chapter of this thesis. It was clear that with changes in the architecture of the net (as discussed in Chapter 2) the function of publics would change as well. The findings here underline the significance of these publics which are primarily a product of highly interactive features of external platforms such as Facebook. The significance of these publics can be further evaluated in view of news sites' deliberate inclusion and exclusion of comments sections for some stories. In discussions of publics in cyberspace, a key question was asked by Setälä (2014); What is the outcome of public deliberation?

In response to this question, this study explored the significance of public opinion created in news discussion threads by focusing on the deliberative nature of publics which are based on the dissemination and discussion of news stories by the users. In particular, this study found that the public opinions which emerged from the collective actions of users – in publics established on news sites – are legitimate (Provided that they are significant by referring to Pearson's coefficient

factor) and could be considered as a document for policy makers, politicians, journalists, public policy analysts and researchers in different fields of social science.

**Deliberation**

Textual analysis was applied to highlight publics that were established by either voting or commenting on individuals' comments on a story. The significance of comments in relation to deliberative factors (as discussed in the literature) were examined and it was found that posts from different beats display different degrees of deliberation but with exception of a few posts, the rest were missing these factors. The study referred to the question of genre and its possible role in creating spaces of communication around the Web as discussed by Ridell (2005), and Dufrasne and Patriarche. (2011). The genre of News was defined separately and another textual analysis was applied and it showed that the majority of most liked comments display the full criteria of satisfying the deliberative factors of a public. It was also found that the relationship between sharing (dissemination) and commenting is significant particularly in the context of the two variables in the News. In the context of civility in discussions, previous study by Ksiazek, Peer and Zivic (2014) summed up earlier literature and mentioned that the discussions taking place in comments on News fail to meet the standards expected of a public sphere, and a healthy deliberative public sphere is not possible if users are not civil toward each other. However, in discussion threads of 60 different posts in this study, it was found that the collective wisdom of the members of

the public will lead the discussion to take place in an environment that is more argumentative than vitriolic. This can be discussed in regards to the function of the external platform (in this case, Facebook) in connecting individuals to range of different applications, the visibility of users' actions within his/her own network. Visibility affects users and encourages them to collectively present a healthy space for public discussion.

### Interactivity

Interactive features connecting users to users and users to content are the foundation of emerging publics. Users practice different levels of interactivity by sharing, liking and commenting on a post. Interactivity regulates the public as users can deliberately vote /like for their preferred comment and this ultimately marginalises obscure and irrelevant discussion. As publics are emerging within social networks, it can be argued that each public is in fact a networked public (Benkler 2006). Benkler (2006) defines a networked public (as discussed in the literature review) as having five characteristics: 1) 'universal intake' (Benkler, 2006) in that it must be open to everyone.  (2) it must show itself capable of filtering relevant information that is plausibly within the domain of organised political action (3) it must have systems for accrediting information sources (4) it must be capable of synthesising public opinion, bringing together disparate individual opinions into a coherent public opinion and (5) it must be independent from government control. It is important to note that with exception of the fifth factor the networked public is completely dependent on the functions of different interactive tools. Universality is the presence of interactive tools

which enable all participants to share , disseminate and comment on a post. Filtering plausible content is performed with interactive functions in liking and sharing one particular comment and disregarding the others. Accrediting information sources is itself an interaction between the user and the news website in the external platform, and synthesising public opinion refers to users' collective action in liking a comment and presenting it as the most liked / top comment of the thread. Therefore, it can be argued that the interactive functions in liking and sharing a comment  work to satisfy the filtering value of a networked public. However, this networked public is essentially different from the Habermasian public sphere. The difference lies in Benkler's assumption that this public should lead to political action despite the fact that for Habermas, the public sphere is a space (mediated or non-mediated) for debate and discussion.

### Political Action

As the networked publics are framed on news stories corresponding to fields of current affairs and international relations, it would be logical to think about their consequences in the political lives of the individuals. This has been stressed by Arapakis et.al.  (2013, p.1): "A common challenge is to identify which aspects of online interaction influence user engagement the most".

This thesis argued that the public opinion created in threads of networked publics is legitimate and should be considered as an important document to assist politicians, social science researchers public policy

318

developers and others. However, if a precise political action is expected to evolve from networked publics then it is important to note that the public sphere functions differently in the cyberspace and thus its parameters and outcomes need to be rethought.  It is also important to mention that in this discussion one subject is about legitimacy of publics and the other is on the implications and effects of publics. Because, ideally the communicative interaction of the public should create an impact in the public sphere in terms of developing policies and assisting politicians and lawmakers in proposing or updating legislation. A key argument against the potential of these publics is discussed by Dean (2005). She refers to protests of 400,000 people in London ,Biggest protest in the world history according to Times publication, 2013, followed by 250,000 people in Washington against the war in Iraq and concludes that although the message was sent, it was not effective as ultimately the White House just acknowledged the presence of different opinions about initiating a war against Iraq. She discusses two different concepts of (1) the fantasy of abundance and (2) the fantasy of participation.

According to Dean (2005) the fantasy of abundance is about communication, not reaching an understanding. Messages are created and circulated over and over without being understood and having an effect:

> *The message is simply part of a circulating data stream. Its particular content is irrelevant. Who sent it is irrelevant. Who receives it is irrelevant. That it need be responded to is irrelevant. The only thing that is relevant is circulation, the addition to the pool. Any particular contribution remains secondary to the fact of circulation. The value of any particular contribution is likewise inversely proportionate to the openness, inclusivity or extent of a circulating data stream – the more opinions or comments that are out there, the less of an impact any one given one might make (and the more shock, spectacle or newness is necessary for a contribution to register or have an impact). In sum,*

*communication functions symptomatically to produce its own negation (Dean, 2005, p.58)*

In addressing the subject of 'the fantasy of abundance', this thesis argued that communication within those networked publics which are found to be significant, leads to the evolution of a public opinion. Though the effects of this public opinion might vary based on sensitivity of the subject matter (for example on issues such as national security, politicians may be reluctant to refer to these public opinions because the kind of information which is available to them to make appropriate decisions is not available to the public and hence public opinion may not be considered to affect final decisions). However, in the context of governance there are issues that are of public interest and an informed decision can be made by the public after reviews of plans and recommendations. This thesis argues that networked publics can become effective tools in developing new policies and updating previous legislation in this arena. For example, issues facing the residents of a suburb can be presented in a domain with assurances given to the public that their contributions will affect the formulation of policies. A combination of participation and deliberation within these publics can become very effective in closing the gap between politics and the public.

On the 'fantasy of participation', Dean refers to the registration factor that results in people thinking their contribution means something and is effective.

*They believe that they are active, maybe even that they are making a difference simply by clicking on a button, adding their name to a petition or commenting on a blog (Dean, 2005,p.80).*

Dean's argument coincides with Zizek's concept of the 'Internet as zero institution' (As discussed in Chapter Four). She refers to Zizek (1997) to explain this further;

> *Zizek describes this kind of false activity with the term "interpassivity." When we are interpassive, something else, a fetish object, is active in our stead. Zizek explains, "you think you are active, while your true position, as embodied in the fetish, is passive . . ." (1997: 21). The frantic activity of the fetish works to prevent actual action, to prevent something from really happening. This suggests to me the way activity on the Net, frantic contributing and content circulation, may well involve a profound passivity, one that is interconnected, linked, but passive nonetheless (ibid).*

To address the concept of interpassivity or fantasy of participation, this thesis argued that networked publics present domains for participation and they are legitimate due to the participatory and deliberative nature of their discussions. However the concept of legitimacy is different from making a difference. For example the protests against the war in Iraq did not led to changes in Bush's administration but it created its own impact in the long run. For example according to Heaney and Rojas (2007);

> *The antiwar movement did have important political effects in the United States.  By 2006, the movement had weakened public support for the war, the Bush Administration, and the Republican Party, which was likely a contributing factor to the Democratic Party's takeover of the US House and Senate in that year.*

And also according to Heaney (2012):

> *The antiwar movement helped Barack Obama to establish credibility as a genuine antiwar candidate in 2008 by creating the space for him to speak at a 2002 antiwar rally in Chicago when he was an Illinois state senator.  As a result, the antiwar movement contributed to US Senator Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 Democratic primary contest against Hillary Clinton, which paved the way to his election to the presidency.*

And according to Jimmenez (2007);

> *…A well-organized antiwar movement in Spain contributed to the Socialist Party's success in the 2004 parliamentary elections, which ultimately led to Spain's withdrawal from the "Coalition of the Willing."*

This thesis is not about the politics of the Iraq war, but it is important to note that if anti-war movements did not create major changes immediately, they definitely introduced changes in the following years. Here the reference to the war in Iraq is just an example because Dean referred to this movement and then argued against the effects of publics.

In the context of effective participation, it is argued that participation by itself does not guarantee the impacts, and nor it does create any obligation for the policy makers and politicians to adjust their policies and legislation. But deliberation along with participation would result in valid expectations on the part of the public to witness changes or modifications in regards to their public opinion and concerned individual or institution in civic society. To achieve this this assurance must be provided to users that their contribution will be effective and will be considered. This can be inferred from the assertion in this thesis that the genre of communication (news or current affairs) is an important factor in the introduction of deliberation as a value in publics. Therefore, in the context of local politics (even within councils) introducing domains for participation and discussion of local policies can become an example of the effective use of internet in not only presenting legitimate publics with clear presentations of their corresponding public opinions, but also an example of how networked publics can ultimately affect politics (even in scales such as suburban councils).

**Recommendation for Future Research**

The role of social media in providing external spaces for discussion and debate was discussed in relation to six news websites on Facebook. There is a need for more case studies on the appropriation of external platforms for the dissemination and deliberation of news by the users. It is also recommended that future research focus on official government pages in Facebook and explore the implications of online discussions – within these publics – on policies set by the same organisation or by government institutions.

**Limitations of Study**

The study was mainly focused on publics that have emerged in the external platforms such as Facebook. However as discussed in the methodology some news websites offer human-human interactivity in a selection of their published content online. It could have been beneficial to compare two parallel publics coverage of the same story (for example one in Facebook and the other in the original news website) to find out how the architecture and mechanics of the two public differ.

# References

**References List**

Abel, F., Henze N., et al. 2009, Semantic enhancement of social tagging

systems. In Devedzic V.and Gasevic. D. Web 2.0 & semantic web. *Annals*

*of Information Systems* Web 2.0 & Semantic Web, volume 6, 2009 [25]

Springer 6.

Alexa 2012 Retrieved 2 February 2013 www.alexa.com

Al Jazeera English (2014) Media Kit (Accessed at

http://www.aljazeera.com/mritems/Documents/2012/4/23/20124231150

58508734MediaBrochure_2012_007.pdf)

Allen Bell, P. G. 1998. Approaches to media discourse, Wiley-Blackwell.

Althusser, Louis. 1972. "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses" in *Lenin*

*and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press.

Amin, A., & Thrift, N. 2002. Cities: reimagining the urban. Polity Press.

Anderson, B. 1991. Imagined Communities, revised edition. London.

Anderson, C. W. 2011. Deliberative, agonistic, and algorithmic audiences:

Journalism's vision of its public in an age of audience

transparency.International Journal of Communication, 5, 19.

Andrejevic, M. 2001. The pacification of interactivity. M/C (25 October 2001).

Retrieved 4 march 2010 from http://reviews.media-

culture.org.au/features/interactive/mandrejevic-c.htm

Arapakis, I., Lalmas, M., Cambazoglu, B. B., Marcos, M. C., & Jose, J. M. (2014). User engagement in online News: Under the scope of sentiment, interest, affect, and gaze. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, *65*(10), 1988-2005.

Arendt, H. 1958, *The human condition*, University of Chicago Press.

Ariel, Y., & Avidar, R. (2015). Information, Interactivity, and Social Media. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, *23*(1), 19-30

Arrington, M. 2006. "Breaking news: Conde Nast / Wired acquires Reddit." Retrieved 16/03/2009, 2009 from [http://www.techcrunch.com/2006/10/31/breaking-news-conde-nastwired-acquires-reddit/](http://www.techcrunch.com/2006/10/31/breaking-news-conde-nastwired-acquires-reddit/).

Arrington, M. 2007. "Stealthy start up mixx launches into private beta." Retrieved 17/03/2009, 2009, from http://www.techcrunch.com/2007/09/20/stealthy-startup-mixx-launches-into-private-beta/.

Azeez, W. 2004 "Make news web priority." Retrieved 10 February 2009 from http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/node/26260

Barthes, R. (1977). The death of the author.

Baumgartner, J. C., & Morris, J. S. (2009). MyFaceTube politics: Social networking web sites and political engagement of young adults. Social Science Computer Review.

BBC. 2009. "Have Your Say moderation explained."   Retrieved 4 march 2009 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/4180404.stm.

BBC. 2009. "The Have Your Say rules."   Retrieved  16 May 2009 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/4176520.stm.

BBC 2012 BBC WorldNews Retrieved 2 February 2012 bbc.co.uk/worldnews

Bell, A & Garrett, P. 1998 Approaches to Media Discourse, Wiley.

Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press

Berners-Lee, T. 1999. *Weaving the web: The original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor.* San Francisco, Harper.

Berners-Lee, T. 1999. Realising the full potential of the web. *Journal of the Society for Technical Communication*, 46(1), 79-82.

Berners-Lee, T. 1999. "The future of the Web" Retrieved from http://www.w3.org/1999/04/13-tbl.html.

Bessette, J. 1980. Deliberative Democracy: The majority principle in republican government. How democratic is the constitution, *Political Sociology,* 102, 109-11.

Bimber, B. 1998. the internet and political mobilization research note on the 1996 election season. *Social Science Computer Review*, 16(4), 391-401.

Bimber, B. 1998. The Internet and Political Mobilization Research Note on the

    1996 Election Season. Social Science Computer Review, 16(4), 391-
    401.

Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. 2001. The new media and our political

    communication discontents: Democratizing cyberspace. *Information,*

    *Communication & Society*, 4(1), 1-13.


Bode, L. (2012). *Political information 2.0: A study in political learning via social
media* (Doctoral dissertation, THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON).

Boulianne, S. (2009). Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of

    research. political communication, 26(2), 193-211.

Boyd, D., Golder, S., & Lotan, G. (2010, January). Tweet, tweet, retweet:

    Conversational aspects of retweeting on twitter. In System Sciences
    (HICSS), 2010 43rd Hawaii International Conference on (pp. 1-10).
    IEEE.


Bode, L. 2012. Facebooking it to the polls: a study in online social networking

    and political behavior. Journal of Information Technology & Politics,

    9(4), 352-369.


Bravo, R. B. 2012 Internet Politics Policy:"Big Data, Big Challenges?" Oxford

    Internet Institute Conference.


Brtitannica (2014). Washington Post, American Newspaper. Britannica, Inc.


Burgess, J. 2006. "Hearing ordinary voices: Cultural studies, vernacular

    creativity and digital storytelling." *Continuum: Journal of Media &*

    *Cultural Studies* 20(2).

Burgess, J., Foth, M. et al. 2006. Everyday creativity as civic engagement:  a

    cultural citizenship view of new media. Communications Policy &

    Research Forum. i. f. C. I. a. Innovation. Sydney, Queensland University

    of Technology.

Bruns, Axel. (2008) "Life beyond the Public Sphere: Towards a Networked

    Model for Political Deliberation." Information Polity 13(1-2): 65-79


Bruns, A., & Burgess, J. E. 2011. New methodologies for researching news

    discussion on Twitter.

Bruns, M. 2008. Remembering public service broadcasting liberty and

    security in early ABC online interactive sites. *Television & New Media*,

    9(5), 392-406.


Campbell, C. 2000. Citizens matter: and that is why public journalism matters.

    *Journalism Studies*, 1 (4), 689-694.

Carpentier, N. 2011. New configurations of the audience? The challenges of

    user-generated content for audience theory and media participation.

    *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, 190-212.

Carpentier, N. 2011. New Configuration of the Audience? In  Nightingale, V.

    (ed) *The Handbook of Media Audiences.*, Wiley-Blackwell: 560.

Castells, M. 2001. *The internet galaxy: reflections on the Internet, business, and society*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Castells, M.(2004). *Informationalism, Networks, and the Network Society: a Theoretical Blueprinting, The network society: a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Castells, M. 2007. Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International journal of communication* 1(1): 238-266.

Chadwick, A. (2008). Web 2.0: New challenges for the study of e-democracy in an era of informational exuberance. *ISJLP*, *5*, 9.

Chambers, S. 2003. Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual review of political science*, 6(1), 307-326.

Chan-Olmsted, S. and Park J. 2000. "From on air to online world: Examining the central and structures of broadcast TV stations websites." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 77(2): 321-339.

Chung, D. S. 2007. "Profits and perils: Online news producers perceptions of interactivity ad uses of interactive features." *The internaional journal of research into new media technologies* 13(1): 43-61.

Chung, D. S. and Yoo C. Y. 2008. "Audience motivation for using interactive features: distinguishing use of different types of interactivity on an online newspaper." *Mass communication and society* 11(1): 375-397.

CNN. 2007. "CNN Privacy Statement."  Retrieved 14/03/2009, from
http://edition.cnn.com/privacy.html.

CNN,  2012 Retrieved 2 February 2012 www.cnn.com

Compete. 2008. "Snapshot of New York Times." Retrieved 10 Nov 2008
10http://siteanalytics.compete.com/nytimes.com/?metric=uv.

Cooper, M. 2009. Political action and organization building: an internet-based
engagement model.

Cooper, E. 2010. Beyond dualism: public opinion on the legal recognition of
same-sex couples in Washington State. In Western Political Science
Association 2010 Annual Meeting Paper.

Costa, E. (2014). The (non) regulation of the blogosphere: the ethics of online
debate. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, *25*, 252.

Cunningham, S. 2001. "Popular media as public 'sphericules' for diasporic
communities " *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4(2): 131-147.

Dahlberg, L. 2001. "Computer-mediated communication and the public
sphere: A critical analysis." *Journal of computer mediated
communication* 7(1).

Dahlberg, L. 2005. The Habermasian public sphere: Taking difference
seriously? *Theory and Society*, 34(2), 111-136.

Dahlberg, L. 2005. The corporate colonization of online attention and the marginalization of critical communication? *Journal of Communication Inquiry,* 29(2), 160-180.

Dahlberg, L. 2013. Exclusions of the Public Sphere Conception: Examining Deliberative and Discourse Theory Accounts. Javnost-The Public, 20(1), 21-38.

Dahlberg, L. 2007. The Internet, deliberative democracy, and power: Radicalizing the public sphere. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 3(1), 47-64.

Dahlgren, P. 2003. Reconfiguring civic culture in the new media milieu. *Media and the restyling of politics,* 151-170.

Dahlgren, P. (2005). The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation. Political communication, 22(2), 147-162.

Devedžic, V., & Gaševic, D. (eds.). 2009. *Web 2.0 & semantic web* (Vol. 6). Springer.

Dahlgren, P. 2005. The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation. *Political Communicat*ion, 22(2), 147-162.

Davis, D. 1999. *Democracy and deliberation*. Juta and Company Ltd.

Davies, T., & Gangadharan, S. P. 2009. *Online deliberation: Design, research, and practice*. Center for the Study of Language and Information/SRI

Dean, J. (2002). *Publicity's secret: How technoculture capitalizes on democracy*. Cornell University Press.

Dean, J. 2003. "Why the Net is not a public sphere." *Constellations* 10(1): 95-112.

Dean, J. 2005. Communicative capitalism: circulation and the foreclosure of politics. *Cultural Politics*, 1(1), 51-74.

Dean, J. 2006. *Zizek's politics*. New York, Routledge.

De Certeau, M. (2002). A escrita da história. Forense Universitária.

Deuze, M. 2001. Online journalism: modelling the first generation of news media on the World Wide Web. *First Monday*. 6.

Deuze, M. 2003. "The web and its journalism: considering the consequences of different types of news media online." *New Media and Society* 5(2): 203-230.

Dewey, J. 2012. *Public and its problems: an essay in political inquiry*. Penn State University Press.

de Zúñiga, Homero Gil, Lauren Copeland, and Bruce Bimber. "Political consumerism: Civic engagement and the social media connection." *New Media & Society* (2013): 1461444813487960.

Dijk, V. 1991. *Racism and the press*, Routledge.

Dimitrova, D. V., & Bystrom, D. (2013). The effects of social media on political participation and candidate image evaluations in the 2012 Iowa caucuses.American Behavioral Scientist, 0002764213489011.

Donath, J. S. 1999. Compelling study of identity deception in the virtual community In Kollock, M. (ed) *Communities in cyberspace*. London, Routledge: 29-54.

Downes, E. J., & McMillan, S. J. 2000. Defining interactivity a qualitative identification of key dimensions. *New Media & Society*, 2(2), 157-179.

Dufrasne, M., & Patriarche, G. (2011). Applying genre theory to citizen participation in public policy making: Theoretical perspectives on participatory genres. CM-časopis za upravljanje komuniciranjem, 6(21), 61-86.

Etzioni, A., & Etzioni, O. 1999. Face-to-face and computer-mediated

communities, a comparative analysis. *The Information Society*, 15(4),

241-248.

Eder, K. 2013. Struggling with the concept of a public sphere. Rethinking the

Public Sphere Through Transnationalising Processes, edited by

Armando Salvatore, Oliver Schmidtke and Hans Joerg Trenz.

Basingstoke: Palgrave, 27-55.

Elder, A. 2013. Between Two Worlds: Identity and Community in Oaxaca.PSU

McNair Scholars Online Journal, 6(1), 8.

Elstub, S., & Mclaverty, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Deliberative democracy:*

*issues and cases*. Oxford University Press.

Emmett, A. 2008. Networking news. American Journalism Review,

30(6), 40-43.

Ferber, P., F. Foltz, et al. 2007. "Cyberdemocracy and online politics: A new

model of interactivity." *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 27(1): 391-

400.

Fishkin, J. S. (1996). The televised deliberative poll: An experiment in

democracy. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and

Social Science, 132-140.

Fishkin, J. S. 1997. *The voice of the people: Public opinion and democracy.* Yale

University Press.

Flew, T. 2005. From e-government to online deliberative democracy. Eprints.

Fowler, R. 1991. *Language in the news: discourse and ideology in the British press*, Routledge.

Fraser, N. 1990. "Rethinking the public sphere:A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy." *Social Text* 25/26: 56-80.

Fraser, N., & Bartky, S. L. (Eds.). (1992). Revaluing French feminism: critical essays on difference, agency, and culture (No. 682). Indiana University Press.

Fraser, N. (1997). Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the" Postsocialist condition" (p. 69). New York: Routledge.

Gangadharan, S. P. (2009). Understanding diversity in the field of online deliberation. Online deliberation: Design, research, and practice. Stanford, Calif.: Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, 329-347.

Ganter, G. 2003. "Review on publics and counterpublics." *Humanities Review* 1.

Garver, E. 1995. *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An art of character*. University of Chicago Press.

Gastil, J. (2000). Is face-to-face citizen deliberation a luxury or a necessity?.Political Communication, 17(4), 357-361.

Geiger, R. S. (2009). Does Habermas understand the Internet? The algorithmic  construction of the blogo/public sphere. Gnovis: A Journal of Communication,  Culture, and Technology, 1, 1-29.

Gastil, J. 2000. Is face-to-face citizen deliberation a luxury or a necessity? *Political Communication*, 17(4), 357-361.

Geara, G. & Staugaard, J. (2010) 'Al Jazeera: A Middle Eastern Enfant Terrible Goes Global' , INSEAD Research.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17(3), 319-336.

Gitlin, T. 1998. Public sphere or public sphericules?. In Liebes T & J. Curran (eds), *Media, Ritual, Identity* (pp.168-175). London: Routledge.

Garnham, N. 1995. "The media and narratives of the intellectual." *Media, Culture and Society* 17(3): 359-384.

Greene, R. W. 2002. Rhetorical pedagogy as a postal system: circulating subjects through Michael Warner's "Publics and Counter-Publics". *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88(4), 434-443.

Greenhow, C., & Reifman, J. (2009). Engaging youth in social media: Is Facebook the new media frontier?. Nieman Reports, 63(3), 53.

Group, G. M. 2009. "Guardian news & media."  Retrieved 11/03/2009, 2009,

from:http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/Ourbusinesses/GuardianNewsMedia/

Guardiancouk/tabid/138/Default.aspx.

Group, W. D. I. 2009. "Terms of Use."  Retrieved 21/04/2009, 2009, from

http://disney.go.com/corporate/legal/terms.html.

 Guardian (The),  Retrieved 2 February 2014 www.guardian.co.uk

Guardian (The), Retrieved 12 December 2014

http://www.theguardian.com/select/facts-figures

Guay, T. 1995. Interactive paradigm.

http://www.smcc.qld.edu.au/infotech/Paradigm/Interact.htm

(accessed December 1, 2004).

Guardian. 2006. "Guardian wins design award."  Retrieved 11/03/2009, from

http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/feb/21/theguardian.pressa

ndpublishing.

Guardian. 2008. "History of the Guardian."  Retrieved 08/03/2009, from

http://www.guardian.co.uk/gnm-archive/2002/jun/06/1.

Guardiuan. 2005. "Reddit.com."  Retrieved 16/03/2009 from

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/dec/08/innovations.gu

ardianweeklytechnologysection1.

Haas and Tanni. 2005. "From public journalism to the public's journalism? Rethoric and reality in the discourse on weblogs." *Journalism Studies* 6(3): 387-396.

Habermas, J. 1974. The public sphere: an encyclopedia article. *New German Critique*, 3:49-55.

Habermas, J. 1989. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into bourgeois society.* (T. Burger & F. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. (1991). The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society. MIT press.

Habermas, J. 1992. Further reflections on the public sphere. In C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. (421-461). Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

Hartley, J. 1999. *Use of television*. London, Routledge.

Hartley, J. 2008. Journalism as a human right: the cultural approach to journalism. *Global journalism research: Theories, methods, findings, future*, 39-51.

Hauser, G. A. 1999. *Vernacular voices: the rhetoric of publics and public spheres*. Univ of South Carolina Press.

Heaney, M. & Rojas, F. 2007. Partisans, Nonpartisans, and the Antiwar

Movement in the United States," American Politics Research, Vol. 35,

No. 4 (July 2007): 431-464. Available at:
http://www-   personal.umich.edu/~mheaney/AntiwarMovement.pdf

Heeter, C. 1989. Implication of new interactive technologies for

conceptualizing communication. J. L. In Salvaggio, JB and Salvaggion JL

(eds) *Media use in information age.*, Hills dale: 217-235.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. 2002. *Manufacturing consent: The political*

*economy of the mass media.* Pantheon.

Hermida, A., Fletcher, F., Korell, D., & Logan, D. (2012). Share, like,

recommend: Decoding the social media news consumer. Journalism

Studies,13(5-6), 815-824.

Heywood,A. 2007. Politics, Palgrave foundations, 3rd ed., Basingstoke:

Palgrave Macmillan.

Hobbes, T. 1949. *De cive: or, The citizen*. Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Holub, R. 0.(1991) Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere.

Howard, P. N., Agarwal, S. D., & Hussain, M. M. (2011). When do states

disconnect their digital networks? Regime responses to the political

uses of social media. *The Communication Review*, *14*(3), 216-232.

Ito, M., Horst, H., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Herr-Stephenson, B., Lange, P. G. &

Robinson, L. (2008). Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of

Findings from the Digital Youth Project. John D. and Catherine T.

MacArthur Foundation.


Jenkins, Henry, 'Interactive Audiences? The 'collective intelligence'

of media fans', 2003 [WWW document] URL:

http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/collective%20intelligence.html

Jenkins, H. (2006). Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide.

NYU Press.


Jensen, J. 1999. Interactivity- tracking a new concept in media and

communication studies. In Mayer, P (ed) *Computer media and*

*communication.* , Oxford: 160-187

Jimmenez, M. 2007. "Mobilizations against the Iraq War in Spain:

Background, Participants and Electoral Implications," South

European Society and Politics, Vol. 12, No 3 (September 2007):

399-420

Kaarle, A. S.-M. w., Nordenstreng , et al. 1985. *Foreign news in the media:*

*International reporting in 29 countries,* United Nations Educational

Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Katz, E. 1992. The end of journalism? Notes on watching the war. *Journal of*

*Communication*, 42(3), 5-13.

Kelly, K. 2005. We are the Web. *Wired magazine*, 13(08).

Kelly, J., D. Fisher, and M. Smith. "Friends, foes, and fringe: Norms and

structure in political discussion networks. Online deliberation: Design,

research, and practice." (2009): 83-93.

Kevin, G. B. 2006. "After Modernism." American media in the XX century"

Retrieved 09/03/2009, 2009, from

http://formofnews.pbwiki.com/Chapter%201%20(part%205).


Khabiri, E., C.-F. Hsu, et al. 2009. "Analyzing and Predicting Community

Preference of Socially Generated Metadata: A Case Study on Comments

in the Digg Community ".

Kinder, D. R. 2002. Pale democracy: Opinion and action in post-war America.

The evolution of political knowledge: Theory and inquiry in American

politics.

Koivunen, M.-R. 2001. "Semantic Web kickoff in Finland." *Computer and Information Science* 29(1): 27-41.

Koivunen, M. R., & Miller, E. 2001 W3c semantic web activity. In *the proceedings of the Semantic Web Kick/off Seminar,* Finland.

*Society*. 5 (1). pp 8-22.

Krejins, K., Kirschner, P.A. & Jochems, W. 2002. The sociability of computer-supported collaborative learning environments*. Educational Technology &*

Krippendorff, K. (1980). Content analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology. Beverly Hills: Sage

Ksiazek, T. B., Peer, L., & Zivic, A. (2014). Discussing the News: Civility and hostility in user comments. Digital Journalism, (ahead-of-print), 1-21.

Lacan, J. 1959-1969. *The seminar of Jacques Lacan book vii: The ethics of psychoanalysis*. London, Routledge.

Lamb, B. 2004. "Wide open spaces: Wikis, ready or not." *Educase Review* 39(5): 36-48.

Lampe, C. 2005. Talking politics on the side: Political conversation on Slashdot. Paper presented at the second conference on online deliberation.

Lee, H. (2005). Implosion, virtuality, and interaction in an internet discussion

344

group. Information, Communication & Society, 8(1), 47-63.

Lev-On, A. & Manin, B. 2006. Happy accidents: deliberation and on-line exposure to opposing views.

Lev-On, A., & Manin, B. (2009). Happy accidents: Deliberation and on-line exposure to opposing views. Online deliberation: Design, research and  practice, 105-122.

Leys, C., et al. (2013) Detecting outliers: Do not use standard deviation around the mean, use absolute deviation around the median,  Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.

Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I., & Kelly, K. (2009). *New media: A critical introduction*  (2nd ed.). Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK and New York: Routledge.

Lippmann, W 1927. *The phantom public*. Macmillan, New York, NY

Livingstone, S. (2005). On the relation between audiences and publics (No. 2, pp. 17-41). Intellect Books.

Lule, Jack. "CNN at 25." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22.4 (2005): 339-339.

Lunt, P., & Livingstone, S. (2013). Media studies' fascination with the concept of the public sphere: Critical reflections and emerging debates. Media, Culture & Society, 35(1), 87-96.

Lynch, S. & Peer, L. (2002). Analysing Newspaper Content. A How-To Guide. Readership Institute, Media Management Centre at North Western University.

Lyotard, J. F. 1994. The postmodern condition in Lyotard, J. *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, 27. Cambridge University Press.

Manosevitch, E., & Walker, D. 2009. Reader comments to online opinion journalism: a space of public deliberation. In *International Symposium on Online Journalism* (April, 17-18, 2009).

Manovich, L. 2002. *The language of new media*. MIT Press.

Manosevitch, E. and D. Walker 2009. Readers' comments to online opinion journalism: a space of public deliberation. *10th International Symposium on Online Journalism*. Austin, Tecas, University of Texas.

Massey, B. L. a. M. R. L. 1998. "Interactive online journalism at English-language Web Newspapers in Asia: A dependency theory analysis." *Gazzette* 61(6).

McChesney, R. W. 1999. *Rich media, poor democracy: communication policies in dubious times* Urbana, University of Illinois press.

McMillan, S. J. 2002. "A four-part model of cyber-interactivity." *New Media and Society* 4(2): 271-291.

Mill, J. S. 1859. "Essay on liberty". In *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*,1994.

Millard, W. B. 1997. I flamed Freud: A case study in teletextual incendiarism. *Internet culture.* London, Routledge: 145-159.

Min, S. J. 2007. Online vs. face-to-face deliberation: effects on civic engagement. *Journal of Computer –Mediated Communication,* 12(4), 1369-1387.

Miragliotta, N., & Errington, W. 2012. The rise and fall and rise again of public broadcasting? The case of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 71(1), 55-64.

Mitchell, A., Rosenstiel, T., & Christian, L. (2012). The state of the news media 2012. An annual report on American Journalism.

Moor, P. J., Heuvelman, A., & Verleur, R. (2010). Flaming on youtube.Computers in Human Behavior, 26(6), 1536-1546.

Murray Wooda, J. D., Millera,J and Ropera, M. 1999. "Multi-method research: An empirical investigation of object-oriented technology " *Journal of System and Software* 48(1): 13-26

Nafria, I. 2007. Presentation at the 8th International Symposium on Online Journalism. 8th International Symposium on Online Journalism. Austin, Texas, University of Texas.

Negt, O., Kluge, A., & Hansen, M. 1993. *Public sphere and experience: toward an analysis of the bourgeois and proletarian public sphere.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Negt, O., Kluge, A., & Labanyi, P. (1988). " The Public Sphere and Experience": Selections. October, 60-82.

Newhagen, J. E., & Rafaeli, S. 1996. Why communication researchers should study the Internet: A dialogue. *Journal of Computer –Mediated Communication*, 1(4), 0-0.

New York Times 2012 Retreived 2 February from  nytimes.com

New York Times Media kit 2014 Retreived 18 Decembe from  nytimes.com http://nytmediakit.com/online.

Newman, J. 2003. "The myth of the ergodic videogame; some thoughts on player-character relationships in videogames." *Game Studies*. 2.1 (2002): 1-17.

Nielsen, A. 2007. "Online audience profile."   Retrieved 08/03/2009 from http://www.nytimes.whsites.net/mediakit/online/audience/audience _profile.php.

Nip, J. M. 2006. "Exploring the second phase of public journalism." *Journalism Studies* 7(2): 212-236.

Oenen, G. V. 2006. A machine that would go of itself: interpassivity and its impact on political life. *Theory & Event*, 9(2).

Oh, S. K. (2014). What's in A "Like"? Influence of News Audience Engagement on the Deliberation of Public Opinion in the Digital Public Sphere.

Op ED Project (2014). Submission Information.  Retrieved 13 January 2015 http://www.theopedproject.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content &view=article&id=47:submission-information&Itemid=65

O'Reilly, T. 2005. Web 2.0: compact definition. Message posted to http://radar. oreilly. com/archives/2005/10/web_20_compact_definition. html.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere The internet as a public sphere.New media & society, 4(1), 9-27.

Papacharissi, Z., & de Fatima Oliveira, M. (2012). Affective news and networked publics: The rhythms of news storytelling on# Egypt. Journal of Communication, 62(2), 266-282.

Papacharissi, Z., & Easton, E. (2013). In the Habitus of the New. A Companion to New Media Dynamics, 167-184.

Park, C. S. (2013). Does Twitter motivate involvement in politics? Tweeting, opinion leadership, and political engagement. Computers in Human Behavior,29(4), 1641-1648.

Paulussen, s., A. Heinonen, et al. 2007. "Doing it together: Citizen participation in the professional news making process." *Observation* 3(1): 131-154.

Perrolle, Judith A. 1991. "Conversations and trust in computer interfaces," in Dunlop, C and Kling, R (eds.) *Computerization and Controversy.* New York: Academic Press. 350-363

Pew Research Center for People & the Press. 2009. The internet and civic engagement. Retrieved 9 December 2011 from

http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2009/The%2 0Internet%20and%20Civic%20Engagement.pdf%27%27%29

Pew Research Center for People & the Press. 2004. The internet and campaign. Retrieved 9 December 2011 from

http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2005/The-Internet-and-Campaign-2004.aspx

Pew Research Center for People & the Press. 2012. The state of the 2012 election mobile politics. Retrieved 9 December 2011 from http://pewinternet.org/~/media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP_State_of_t he_2012_race_mobile.pdf

Pfaller, R. 2003. Little gestures of disappearance: Interpassivity and the theory of ritual. *Journal of European Psychoanalysis,* 16.

Pollock III, P. H. 1983. The participatory consequences of internal and external political efficacy: A research note. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 400-409.

Poster, M. 1995. *The second media age* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Poster, M. 1997. Cyberdemocracy: Internet and the public sphere. *Internet culture*, 201-18.

Poster, M. 2001. Cyber Democracy: Internet and the public sphere. In Trend, D (ed) *Reading digital culture.*, Wiley-Blackwell: 259-27

Price, V., Capella, J. N., & Nir, L. Analyzing political conversation. *Blogging, Citizenship, and the Future of Media*, 9(1), 80.

Price, V., & Cappella, J. N. (2002). Online deliberation and its influence: The electronic dialogue project in campaign 2000. IT & Society, 1(1), 303-329.

Price, V. 2006. Citizens deliberating online: Theory and some evidence. Online Deliberation: Design, Research and Practice. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, http://www. hks. harvard. edu/netgov/files/talks/docs/11_13_06_seminar_Price_citizens-delib _online. pdf.

Purcell, K., Rainie, L., Mitchell, A., Rosenstiel, T., & Olmstead, K. (2010). Understanding the participatory news consumer. Pew Internet and American Life Project, 1, 19-21.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Quancast 2012 Retrieved 2 February 2012 www.quantcast.com

Rafaeli, S. 1988. Interactivity: From new media to communication. Advancing communication science: Merging mass and interpersonal processes, 16, 110-134.

Rafaeli, S., & Sudweeks, F. 1997. Networked interactivity. *Journal of Computer –Mediated Communication,* 2(4), 0-0.

Rahimi, B. "The agonistic social media: cyberspace in the formation of dissent and consolidation of state power in postelection Iran." *The Communication Review* 14.3 (2011): 158-178.

Rahman, M. 2008. "Interactive options in online newspapers of Bangladesh." *Paksitan Journal of Social Sciences* 5(6): 620-624.

Reddit. 2008. "Reddit goes open source." Reddit blog  Retrieved 16/03/2009 from http://blog.reddit.com/2008/06/reddit-goes-open-source.html.

Rice, R. E., Sheperd, A., Dutton, W. H., & Katz, J. E. 2007. Social interaction and the Internet: A comparative analysis of surveys in the US and Britain. *Oxford handbook of Internet psychology,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 7-30.

Rice, R. E. 1993. Media appropriateness. *Human communication research*, 19(4), 451-484.

Ridell, Seija. "Mediating the Web as a Public Space." Nordicom Review 26.1 (2005): 31-48.

Riley, D. 2008. "Netscape Digg clone is kaput." Retrieved 18/03/2009 from http://www.techcrunch.com/2007/09/06/netscape-digg-clone-is-kaput/.

Rosenberry, J. 2005. Few papers use online techniques to improve public communication. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 26(4), 61.

Ruiz, C., Domingo, D., Micó, J. L., Díaz-Noci, J., Masip, P., & Meso, K. (2011). Public sphere 2.0? The democratic qualities of citizen debates in online newspapers. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 1940161211415849.

Sachdev, V., Nerur, S., & Teng, J. T. 2010. Interactivity redefined for the social web. In Dumova, T. & Fiordo R. (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Social Interaction Technologies and Collaboration Software: Concepts and Trends* (pp. 586-600). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Sack, Warren, John Kelly, and Michael Dale. "Searching the Net for Differences of Opinion." *International Affairs* 1100 (2005): 3355.

Sack, W., Kelly, J., & Dale, M. (2005). Searching the Net for differences of opinion. International Affairs, 1100, 3355.

Sandel, M. J. (1982). 1998. Liberalism and the limits of justice.

Sandel, Michael J. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge University
Press, 1998.

Sarkis, M. 1993. "Interactivity means interpassivity." *Media Information
Australia* 69: 13-14.

Sassen, S. 1998. *Globalization and its discontents.* New York, The New Press.

Schudson, M. 1998. The public journalism movement and its problems. In
Graber, D. McQuail, D and Norris, P .(eds) *The Politics of News. The
News of Politics*. Washington, CQ Press: 132-149.

Schultz, T. 1999. Interactive options in online journalism: A content analysis
of 100 US newspapers. *Journal of Computer –Mediated Communication*,
5(1), 0-0.

Schlesinger, P. 1987. *Putting" reality" together: BBC news*. London: Methuen.

Schneider, S. M. (1997). Expanding the Public Sphere through Computer-
Mediated Communication: Political Discussion about Abortion in
(Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

Schutze, P. (Interviewer) & Eno B. (Interviewee). 2007. Wire [Interview
transcript]. Retrieved 6 August 2012 from
http://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/interviews/p=10151

Sennett, R. 1992. *The fall of public man*. New York. Norton.

Setälä, M. (2014). *Deliberative mini-publics: involving citizens in the democratic process*. ECPR Press.

Shah, C. 2011. Politics 2.0 with Facebook–Collecting and Analyzing Public Comments on Facebook for Studying Political Discourses.

Singer, J. B. (2009). Separate Spaces Discourse About the 2007 Scottish Elections on a National Newspaper Web Site. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 14(4), 477-496.

Stelter, B. (2008). Finding political news online, the young pass it on. New York Times, 27, 2008.

Steibel, F., & Estevez, E. (2015). Designing Web 2.0 tools for online public consultation. In *Impact of Information Society Research in the Global South* (pp. 243-263). Springer Singapore

Sundar, S. S., Bellur, S., Oh, J., Jia, H., & Kim, H. S. (2014). Theoretical Importance of Contingency in Human-Computer Interaction Effects of Message Interactivity on User Engagement. *Communication Research*, 0093650214534962.

Sunstein, C. R. 2001. *Designing democracy: what constitutions do*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Thurman, N. 2008. "Forums for citizen journalists? Adoption of user-generated content initiatives by online news media " *New Media and Society* 10(a): 139-157.

Tubearoo. 2009. "Investor relations- Overview."   Retrieved 23/03/2009 from http://www.tubearoo.com/Investors.

Ubayasiri, K. 2006 "Internet and the Public Sphere Retrieved 6 March 2011 from http://www.ejournalist.com.au.

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation1. Journal of Computer‐Mediated Communication, 14(4), 875-901.

Villalba, B. 2003. French political parties and the new ICTs. In Gibson R., Nixon P. and Ward, S. Political parties and the Internet: Net gain? Routledge: 120-138

Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's complicated: Facebook users' political participation in the 2008 election.CyberPsychology, behavior, and social networking, 14(3), 107-114.

Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction a relational perspective. Communication research, 19(1), 52-90.

Wardle, Claire, and Andrew Williams. "Beyond user-generated content a

production study examining the ways in which UGC is used at the BBC." *Media, Culture & Society* 32.5 (2010): 781-799.

Wardle, C., & Williams, A. 2008. UGC@ the BBC: Understanding its impact upon contributors, noncontributors and BBC news. Report to the BBC, Retrieved 5 May 2009 from http://www. bbc. co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange

Warner, M. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14(1): 49-90.

Warner, R. 2010. "Shared Content Matters x5 Times More: The (Brilliant) CNN Pownar Study." Retrieved 18 July 2011 from http://www.contentandmotion.co.uk/social-media-pr-blog/shared-content-matters-x5-times-more-the-brilliant-cnn-pownar-study/.

Weiss, A. S., & Joyce, V. D. M. H. (2009). Compressed dimensions in digital media occupations Journalists in transformation. Journalism, 10(5), 587-603.

Wilson, L. 2003. Interactivity or interpassivity: A question of agency in digital play. *Fineart Forum* (Vol. 17, No. 8).

.Witschge, T. 2002. Online deliberation: Possibilities of the Internet for deliberation. In *Prospects for Electronic Democracy Conference*, Carnegie Mellon . University, September (pp. 22-22).

Wolfsfeld, G. 1986. Political action repertoires the role of efficacy. *Comparative Political Studies,* 19(1), 104-129.

Wright, S., & Street, J. 2007. Democracy, deliberation and design: the case of
online discussion forums. *New Media & Society*, 9(5), 849-869.

Xenos, M., Vromen, A., & Loader, B. D. (2014). The great equalizer? Patterns of
social media use and youth political engagement in three advanced
democracies. Information, Communication & Society, 17(2): 151-167.

Young, S. and Collins S. 2010. "A view from the trenches of Music 2.0."
*Popular music and society* 33(3): 339-355.

Yu, H. T. 2009. The influence of online comments on the perception of
political news . Master of Arts thesis, University of Sheffield.

Zayani, M. 2005  The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives On New
Arab Media. Pluto Press. London, U.K.

Zhang, W., Seltzer, T., & Bichard, S. L. (2013). Two sides of the coin assessing
the influence of social network site use during the 2012 US
presidential campaign. Social Science Computer Review, 31(5), 542-
551.

Zizek, S. 1999. "The matrix, or the two sides of perversion."   Retrieved
23/05/2009, from http://www.lacan.com/zizek-matrix.htm

Zizek, S. 2002. The interpassive subject. *The Symptom*, 3.