



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

Studies on comments on news websites

Several researchers have examined how commenters and news organizations address behavior on news websites and public forums.

Reader, B. (2012). *Free press vs. free speech? The rhetoric of "civility" in regard to anonymous online comments.* Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 89(3), 495-513.

What is civility and can it be found in anonymous comments posted to news media websites? Reader conducted a textual analysis of journalistic essays about the issue and more than 900 audience-member responses to those essays. He found that professional journalists and most online forum participants have different interpretations of what is civil and the role of anonymity.

Boczkowski, P. J., and Mitchelstein, E. (2012). *How Users Take Advantage of Different Forms of Interactivity on Online News Sites: Clicking, E-Mailing, and Commenting.* Human Communication Research, 38, 1-22.

This study looked at the most clicked on, e-mailed and commented-on stories during periods of heightened and routine political activity. Stories with the most comments were more likely to be focused on political, economic and international topics than the most clicked and most e-mailed articles.

Rosenberry, J. (2010). *Virtual Community Support for Offline Communities through Online Newspaper Message Forums.* Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 87, 154-169.

In a survey of participants on online message forums for U.S. newspapers, those who post on the forums had a greater understanding of their communities than those who do not but do not necessarily take part in real-world community activities.

Student assignment: If you were editing a digital news outlet, given the research above, what would you do differently? What other research would you need? Can you find it online?

