Book Review

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# Introduction

 When one talks about the online commenting that is being carried out on most on the internet these days, it can take many shape and form. It might be informative for the person or it might be creating some sort of an entertainment. At the same time, with the plethora of haters emerging using the internet and the trolling culture that has developed off late, there is all the likelihood that the hate mongering might be going on in the online comments. In this book, the author talks about how the bottom half of the internet, which is the online commenting at times gives us insight about how the human psychology and nature is supposed to work. During the course of his book, author has visited some of the communities where people have commented online such as Amazon reviewers and the reviews that are witnessed on fan faction as well as the other backgrounds. He provides an insight how this commenting system is supposed to work, what sort of insight might the person would be gaining out of it and how it helps one to understand the mindset of the people at the broader level. Joseph M. Reagle Jr. obviously put quite a bit of time into amassing a deceptively slim but massive text on the bizarre, funny, and disturbing ways our increased access to all manner of technological opinionation has enhanced our cultural reflection, refining it in both innovative and cartoonish ways.

# How the Website Commenting System Works

 One of the key things that is being argued during the course of this book is that how the system of likes, comments and ratings is supposed to work. The idea that is being propagated by the author is that how the majority of the internet commenting fabric is supposed to work. It goes way beyond the background chatter among which the person is involved these days. One of the key things that can be seen when one talks about how this comment system works is that there are many websites and spaces that are dedicated to this commenting system. One of the insights that is provided here is that how this commenting system goes a long way towards providing the variability culture that one gets to see these days. Author comments that how the culture of misogyny and bullying has developed these days and the way manipulation is being done on these forums. The book provides insight about how these manipulators are supposed to work and how the web sociology is supposed to work out. Now, when one is discussing such a topic, at times it becomes quite difficult to digest due to the fact that there is not much context behind it, but the author has done a good effort riding the book with the context and how the overall behaviour of the people is supposed to work when one talks about any online community. This is one of the prime reasons that it comes across as an interesting read rather than just merely providing an insight about how the system is supposed to work.

# Understanding the Sub Culture on the Internet

 One of the things that is needed to be kept in mind when any sort of analysis is carried out is to make sure that the lowest common denominator has to be looked at. What it means is that there has to be an effort to make sure that all the corresponding stakeholders should be in the position to understand that the majority of the people who are commenting on the internet are the prospective users or the buyers themselves. They are the primary audience of any message and reading their comments goes a long way towards making sure that how their thought process is supposed to work. Now, with the extensive usage of the internet, it has become a sub culture and the way this culture works is that it is quite wide ranging in terms of the way it works. For instance, the way rating system works on any platform. Most of the times, people are waiting for the rating system when they are going to be buying any book or going to watch any movie. Despite the fact that it is something that is quite subjective in nature, but the rating system provides a good insight that how the product is going to turn out towards the end what are some of the basic components of the product at the particular point of time. Other major factor with regards to this commenting and rating system is that at times, there are floods of the user who are going to be rating something just out of the fanfare, and due to that, it is quite difficult to interpret how the wider thinking pattern of the audience is supposed to work at the particular point of time. In a way, it gives insight about the mass rating and the commenting system where people tend to rate things out of the sheer impulsiveness and at times these ratings and commenting are not lacking enough merit but shows enough insight about how things are supposed to work at the particular point of time.

# Tendency of the People to Judge

 It has to be argued that one of the basic human tendencies that the people have developed is that they tend to judge other people, and when they are doing that, there is all the likelihood that the artistical merit, or the sheer merit of the product, but there are some other factors at work as well that are contributing behind the comments that are made by the people and their tendency to judge the work of the other people. The book talks about the fact that how much people tend to judge others and what internet has done is that it has provided them with a platform where they can go out and easily criticise and ridiculed others without much of an accountability. They have an idea that no matter how much they spew hate, and no unfiltered their comments are going to be, unlike the real life, there are not going to be any consequences that are going to be faced by them at the particular point of time. It is one of the prime reasons that people are not commenting there with much thought process and articulation, and they are commenting how they please. Now even though it provides a good insight about how they are thinking at a particular point of time, the downside of relying on the internet and commenting for the understanding and information development is such that there is not going to be much valuable insight here due to the fact that there are hate filled rants and not much meaning behind the comments. Reagle covers all these topics and more in his book, "Reading the Comments." There's probably no topic more timely, more universal, or more controversial going forward than how do we create the society we want when it comes to social media? Adding to his own interesting conclusions is the work of numerous scholars in the field (that readers can locate via footnotes). One only wishes he had also included a bibliography of these, instead of having to hunt for other fascinating work among his footnotes. The overview of the various commenting platforms on the internet provided in Reading the Comments is an interesting refresher course on the human condition as it relates to communication skills when people are shielded by screens.

# Impact of the Social Media on the Commenting Space

 Whenever someone is trying to contribute to a thread, there is often this tendency that they are going to be defending their position regardless of the fact that what shape the argument has taken at that point of time. It is one of the prime reasons that there are many instances when book does tend to make sense in the specific form. What the commenting space has done is that it has made sure that the different impulses that the people have around when they have the same opportunity to express themselves is needed to be kept in mind. This is one of the major premises of how the online commenting spaces are supposed to work as well as the way participation in such a threat is supposed to mean at the first place. Regale justifies his project thus: “There is a lot of dreck down there, but in sifting through the comments, we can learn much about ourselves and the ways that other people seek to exploit the value of our social selves.” I assumed this sentence would simply unpack itself, as the book went along: what would we learn about ourselves? What does the “value of our social self” mean, exactly? Are other people exploiting my value, or their own?

# Assessment of the Behaviour from the Online Comments

 It has to be kept in mind whenever any sort of commenting is being done at the online space, even though it is supposed to be defined and described, it cannot be interrogated beyond the basic level at the particular point of time. For instance, there are many gadgets and the technologies through which people are able to comment these days and due to that it has become too much easier for the people to comment about things that they actually care about at the given point of time. Now, at times, there is lot of harmless commenting and trolling going on as well and due to that, it is quite hard to make sure that what sort of context or meaning can be attached to these comments. The other thing should be kept in mind that how these commenting systems is supposed to work and how it is in contrast to the way things are supposed to work in real life. In real life, when someone is commenting about things, if they are wrong, there is a likelihood that they would have a hard time defending themselves, there is going to be accountability for what they have said and there is all the likelihood that there are going to be consequences if they have said unwarranted things the other person without much proof. On the other hand, when someone is commenting on these online spaces, they can create an account with great ease, there is not going to be any traces, they can stay behind the screen and thus the lack of accountability regarding what they have said and how wrong they are being about certain things would not count to anything. So, there is a need to realize that at times, the way online commenting system works, it has to be taken with a pinch of salt as things might lose meaning and context when they are worked out in an appropriate moment at the particular point of time. This is one of the things that is missed out in the book but other than that, there is some valuable insight about how online commenting might be great help when looking at the behaviour pattern of the people.

# Conclusion

 In the hindsight, it can be said that the key aspect of any online system is that a space is being provided to them where people can actually go and comment about things at a particular point of time. The book talks about what sort of insight people are able to gain when they watch closely there is a pattern prevailing to the online commenting system. There is some valuable insight about, and one might understand certain things about the consumer behaviour when they look closely at this book but at times, it is important to be clear that the validity of the online commenting system is up to the debate. And one cannot really rely on these comments to form an opinion about certain thing. In this book, Joseph Reagle urges us to read the reviews about product and services and readers’ comments below it. This tells us much about communication in the digital age, the social behavior and human vulnerabilities. The comments on reviews inform and improve things; it can also alienate, manipulate and shape things.

**References**

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