



# TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## FACULTY OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Bachelor of Computer Science (Hons) in Data Science  
Year 3  
RDS G1

### Written Assignment

BACS3033 Social and Professional Issues  
2021/2022 (session 202105)

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Date of Submission : 2021-09-06

## Assignment Final Report Assessment Criteria

The assessment of this final assignment report is based on the following criteria:

### Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Score
<b>Part A</b> <b>Background</b> <b>(4%)</b>	Very clear description about the background of the contemporary topic selected. <b>(4%)</b>	Some part of description about the background of the contemporary topic selected with ambiguity. <b>(3%)</b>	Brief description about the background of the contemporary topic selected, which are not directly related to question. <b>(2%)</b>	Very brief description about the background of the contemporary topic selected, which are not related to question. <b>(0-1%)</b>	
<b>Part B</b> <b>Topic analysis and exploration.</b> <b>(30%)</b>	Able to provide very clear and reasonable assessment & justification with very details explanations on the chosen topic from social, legal, architecture and market perspectives. Able to look for relevant information from many sources within the duration of time given and well utilize it. <b>(24-30%)</b>	Good to provide reasonable assessment & justification on the chosen topic from social, legal, architecture and market perspectives. However, some explanations are not clear. Able to look for relevant information from many sources but some information is not used wisely. <b>(15-23%)</b>	Average to provide reasonable assessment & justification with limited explanation on the chosen topic from social, legal, architecture and market perspectives. Able to look for information from many sources but some of them are irrelevant. <b>(8-14%)</b>	Poor to provide reasonable assessment & justification with very little to no explanation at all on the chosen topic from social, legal, architecture and market perspectives. Able to look for limited information and subject to limited few sources and some information are irrelevant. <b>(1-7%)</b>	
<b>Part C</b> <b>Proposed solution(s) for your chosen topic.</b> <b>(20%)</b>	Able to provide very clear and reasonable evaluation with very detailed explanations on the proposed solution(s) for your chosen topic. Able to apply the new ideas and thoughts in solutions and able to apply it for autonomous learning. <b>(16-20%)</b>	Good to provide reasonable evaluation on the proposed solution(s) for your chosen topic. However, some explanations are not clear. Able to apply new ideas or thoughts in solutions in most situations and able to use them without assistance. <b>(11-15%)</b>	Average to provide reasonable evaluation with limited explanation on the proposed solution(s) for your chosen topic. Able to apply new ideas or thoughts in solutions under certain situations and can only use them with some assistance. <b>(6-10%)</b>	Poor to provide reasonable evaluation with very little to no explanation at all on the proposed solution(s) for your chosen topic. Unable to receive & apply new ideas or thoughts on solution. <b>(1-5%)</b>	

<b>Summary (6%)</b>	Able to provide very clear summary on the topic chosen. <b>(6%)</b>	Good to provide summary on the topic chosen. <b>(4-5%)</b>	Average to provide summary on the topic chosen. <b>(2-3%)</b>	Poor to provide summary on the topic chosen. <b>(1%)</b>	
<b>Sub-Total (60%)</b>					

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Part D Ethical evaluation (40%)</b>	Able to provide very clear and reasonable assessment of ethical issues raised from chosen topic. Excellent justification on such ethical issues with well appropriate selection of the ethics philosophy to support it. Able to give excellent interpretations and consider numerous views from related perspectives based on facts, rules and laws that are relevant to the ethical problem. <b>(31-40%)</b>	Able to provide clear and reasonable assessment of ethical issues raised from chosen topic. Good justification on such ethical issues with well appropriate selection of the ethics philosophy to support it. However, some explanations are not clear. Able to verify whether the facts are relevant or not based on facts, rules and laws relevant to the ethical problem. <b>(21-30%)</b>	Average to provide clear and reasonable assessment of ethical issues raised from chosen topic. Average justification on such ethical issues with limited point to support it. Able to gather facts related to ethics problem but some of it being irrelevant. <b>(11-20%)</b>	Poor to provide clear and reasonable assessment of ethical issues raised from chosen topic. Poor justification on such ethical issues with very limited or no point to support it. <b>(1-10%)</b>	

**TOTAL MARK:        /100**

## **Lecturer/Tutor's Feedbacks/Comments:**

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## Faculty of Computing and Information Technology

### Plagiarism Statement

Read, complete, and sign this statement to be submitted with the written report.

**I confirm that the submitted work are all our own work and are in our own words.**

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**Tutorial Group : GROUP 1**

**Date : 2021-09-06**

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We thank everyone that makes this assignment possible to be finished.

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## Section A: Introduction

Comparitech, a Tech Research company has ranked Malaysia along with other countries in the bottom rank for internet freedom(Malaysiakini, 2020). Ranking has been placed among the worst countries in the world due to the restriction on social media, news reporting, adult contents and torrenting freedom at the scale of 58 out 100, where 0 represents least free and 100 as most free(Freedom House, 2020). Despite the abolishment of the Anti-Fake News Act in 2019 by the reformist coalition of Pakatan Harapan, prosecutions and investigations for postings on social media posts did not stop(Freedom House, 2020). Comparitech's Internet Censorship Research has scored Malaysia with the score of 7 out of 11, where China and North Korea are scored as 11(Bischoff, P, 2021). According to its description, torrents were banned or shutdown, pornography being restricted and banned, political media heavily censored and restricted(Bischoff, 2021). However Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) are not restricted or banned(Bischoff, 2021). Comparisons were made between countries to see which nations impose the harshest internet restrictions.

According to the index compiled by Reports Without Borders (RBF) released on April 17 2021, Malaysia fell 18 spots further to the back to the rank of 119(Murugiah, 2021). It was directly attributed to the formation of a new coalition government in March 2020, where the adoption of 'anti-fake-news' emergency proclamation allows the government to prosecute anyone responsible for any incorrect information(Murugiah, 2021).

Freedom House has rated Malaysia's internet decreased(CSO Platform for Reform, 2020). However during the ruling of Perikatan Nasional government, probes and arrests were made over social media posts, where student group UMANY were investigated under Sedition Act (Palatino, 2021).

On a presentation by Houda Belkassem in Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance (MEAC-SIG) 2015, five main stakeholders of internet governance were identified, namely Governments, Business Sector, Civil Society, Academia and Technical Community (Belkassem, 2015).

On the effects of internet censorship on academia, primary and secondary teachers believed that blocking certain Internet websites will not negatively affect education(Aktay, 2018) . It is also believed that internet censorship is detrimental to academia as academic papers and contents published online were rigorously monitored(Maxwell, 2019).

By observing the majority of the examples, governments censor the internet under the pretext of security, which is in contrast with their actual aim of restricting civil society(Saidi, 2020). In the example of Kashmir and Sudan in 2019, the authority used force to disperse protestors, where internet blackouts were often utilized as a tool to restrict people (NewYorkTimes, 2019).

On Malaysia's Examples

## **Section B: Case Studies and Facts**

### **MCMC Order At Least 11 ISPs To Block Mkini GE14 Sites**

On the polling night of Malaysia's 14th General Election, The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) instructed many internet service providers (ISPs) to block three election result websites (Malaysiakini, 2018). On a copy of a confidential request sighted by Malay Mail, the MCMC requested the site to be blocked immediately due to the nature of the offence that may affect national stability, public order and harmony, and economic stability (Malaymail, 2018). It was mentioned that the three sites had allegedly violated the Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act which defined as "improper use of network facilities or network service". The internet censorship occurred just before official elections results showed that the incumbent government had failed to retain a majority to form government.

The websites were maintained by Malaysiakini, an independent and leading news site in Malaysia that was launched back in 1999 (Malaysiakini, 2021). Launched as a result of frustration by official censorship where media outlets were owned by pro-government interest groups, Malaysiakini has been subjected to several restrictions and suppression since its inception (BBC, 2020). 48 hours after the new Communication and Multimedia Minister took office, a detailed investigation was launched by him (SunDaily, 2018).

From the perspective of law, section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act was often used to prosecute and suppress dissent voices of government. As the interpretation of section 233 covers comprehensive actions, this law was often used to enforce censorship over the internet. Under the operation of law, ISP(s) is needed to comply with any requests from MCMC to block certain websites. As long as the draconic provisions exist in the act, the censorship and suppression will continue.

Due to the prolonged history of suppression of freedom of expression, the social norms have evolved to a stage where everyone is practicing self-censorship. Statements that criticized the government were often being avoided. Anyone who voices opposition and criticisms will face social pressure from people around him/her. People are often told not to voice their opinions publicly if it goes against the government.

From the perspective of markets, the internet censorship on media outlets has made many For-Profit Online Media Organizations consciously avoid dissenting voices. Such conscious action by them is made solely on the basis of protecting the organization's business interests as their publication licenses could be revoked at the discretion of the government. Therefore, business would circumvent any issues that might trigger censorship.

From an architectural perspective, the enforcement system will be developed towards a future where enforcement of censorship will be much more straightforward. MCMC could come up with a new computerized system to enforce censorship efficiently. The architecture of telecommunications systems for ISP(s) could be more restrictive in order to enforce censorship.



## **Sarawak Report**

On 19th July 2015, after receiving many complaints from the public that Sarawak Report was posting unconfirmed information, MCMC has announced that access to the Sarawak Report website has been blocked on the basis that it may undermine the stability of the country(Star, 2015). The Sarawak Report has been operated by Clare Rewcastle-Brown since 2010, it is a Malaysia-focused journalism website that is very critical to the then Malaysian Government(SarawakReport, 2021). Prior to the censorship, Clare has been specifically critical of the Prime Minister Najib Razak's allegation of \$700 million corruption cases that was exposed by the Wall Street Journal(Wall Street Journal, 2015). The publications on the website are deemed offensive and in violation of Section 233 of Communications and Multimedia Act (Global Freedom of Expression, 2015). An arrest warrant against Sarawak Report's chief editor and founder were issued, however unenforceable internationally. Subsequently she was barred from re-entering Malaysia(Malaysiakini, 2015). The censoring actions of blocking the site has attracted combinations from the public as it has violated the government's promise of not to censor the internet(Guardian, 2015). In 2018, The Sarawak Report was unblocked after being shutted off for more than two years(Malaysiakini, 2018).

From the perspective of law, Section 233 of Communications and Multimedia Act which prohibits improper use of network facilities or network services has been once again being utilized against the dissent voice against the government. The censorship of The Sarawak Report has once again been the victim of the oppressive instrument of state.

Through the phenomenon above, it has indirectly reinforced a social norm where criticism and whistle-blowing should be avoided. Any disclosure of corruption will be met with suppression by the government. People of the country will be discouraged to disclose any corruption as that will bring severe repercussions.

From the perspective of markets, the economics of true journalism will be disrupted, which eventually will cause many journalists to not disclose any corrupt practices as they fear repercussions from the government. With the restrictive censorship in place, journalists will drift away from platforming opposing voices as that might cause him/her to lose jobs.

On the other hand, the enforcement agencies may work towards any automation enforcement system that can monitor and regulate online contents. Automated censorship systems could be put in place if certain sensitive keywords are detected, therefore the architecture of the whole industry could develop towards a more restrictive digital ecosystem.

## **Sugarbook in Malaysia**

The Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) mentioned on 14th February 2021 that the government should ban the Sugarbook app to prevent youth from getting involved in immoral activities(StraitsTime, 2021). A check on the app on 15th February has verified that Sugarbook App is no longer accessible as it is understood to violate Section 233 of Multimedia and Communications Act(Star, 2021). The censorship request originated from a marketing post of Sugarbook, which mentioned there has been a 40% surge in sign-ups from

students.(TechnInAsia, 2021) Sugarbook CEO and Founder Darren Chan was charged with Section 505(b) Penal Code with the intention of causing fear or unrest to the public.(Star, 2021) Conservative politicians in predominantly muslim country of Malaysia has been pushing for an official ban on the ground of preventing immoral activities(Vice, 2021).

From the perspective of law, there is no law that prohibits the operation of Sugarbook. Therefore, the CEO was charged as a threat towards public harmony. However, under the operation of law, it is legal, but there are conservatives who think that this is immoral and should be banned. In future, this phenomenon may encourage the lawmakers to draft a law to enhance censorship on “immoral activities”.

On social norms’ perspective, this crackdown on Sugarbook may indirectly reinforce the conservative moral values that are enforced on Malaysians. The modern dating approaches of Sugarbook or Sugar Baby-Sugar Daddy may be seen as immoral and wrongful. People who practice such an approach of dating may face pressure from people around him/her.

Looking at the perspectives of the market, the crackdown on Sugarbook may cause many young women to lose their primary source of income. Dating websites and software developing companies may lose their footing in Malaysia, which will indirectly bring a bad effect on the economy. The presence of multinational dating website companies indirectly contributes to the economy as it employs employees for their operation. The crackdown will make the similar company avoid Malaysia.

In terms of architecture, the software and digital ecosystem of Malaysia may move towards a future where romantic dating applications are monitored and restricted. Due to the sensitive nature of the dating applications, they would be facing censorship and restrictions from the government.

## **Section C: Solutions**

### **Social**

Censorship and content manipulation are being investigated, and public awareness is being raised. Individuals and organizations from civil society should engage in innovative projects that educate the public about government censorship while also investigating and exposing disinformation operations, including their sources and intentions. According to studies and polls, as users become more aware of censorship and disinformation, they are more likely to take actions that promote internet freedom and defend their fellow users.

Increase the level of digital literacy among the general populace. In order to educate netizens on how to recognize disinformation and misinformation on social media, civil society organizations should address subjects such as manipulated content, so-called deep fake videos, questionable wording or phrasing, and insufficient citation. Additionally, internet users should be educated on how to report fake or suspicious content and how to flag this stuff for the attention of their friends and family, according to organizations.

### **Legal**

Refuse to accept unreasonable limits on access to information and freedom of expression, particularly during a public health emergency. Social media and messaging systems should be supported and maintained by governments, and governments should refrain from prohibiting their use. While such services may raise legitimate concerns about society and national security, banning them is an arbitrary and disproportionate response that unnecessarily restricts users' cultural, social, and political expression and expression. To address any legitimate human rights or other risks posed by such services, governments should use standard democratic mechanisms, such as legislation enacted in consultation with civil society experts and affected stakeholders, rather than resorting to national security orders or emergency measures.

Set the tone by being a role model. According to Freedom House research, governments constantly learn from one another, imitating restrictive laws and practices from foreign countries and implementing them in their own countries. This includes regimes that are less free and use the actions of democracies to justify their own restrictive practices, such as China and Russia. Liberal and democratic leaders should demonstrate their commitment to internet freedom principles by supporting domestic legislation that is consistent with international human rights laws and standards, and by abstaining from using language that undermines these standards in their speeches.

### **Architecture**

The third solution will be based on the perspective of the architecture of Malaysia's internet censorship. Investing in an authorized VPN is one of the most cost-effective options. Paid or Premium VPN creates a secure tunnel with limitless Internet access to a VPN service provider over an ISP connection. There are also free VPNs accessible, such as UltraVPN, although free

VPNs often have higher latency and lower bandwidth. Furthermore, rather than blocking all websites deemed detrimental, Malaysia might hire specialists to assess the dependability of websites through study before restricting them, allowing netizens greater access to the Internet.

Aside from utilizing a VPN to circumvent Malaysia's firewall, people can also construct custom applications with the sole goal of circumventing Malaysia's firewall. Of course, this cannot be produced outside of Malaysia and will be difficult to distribute within the country. This action will have to take place within Malaysia in order to be viable. Unlike a VPN, which is more general and a single blocked off country will not really matter to the VPN company as it is only one of its demographic, the creators of a specific program that specializes in breaking the code of bypassing the firewall can focus more on fine-tuning it if it ever gets blocked off by the government.

## **Market**

Ensure fair and transparent content moderation. To accomplish this, private companies should do the following:

- Prioritize users' freedom of expression and access to information, particularly for content that can be classified as journalism, human rights discussion, educational resources, or political, social, cultural, religious, and creative expression.
- Clearly and concretely state what speech is not authorized in their standards and terms of service, what purposes such limits serve, and how the organization evaluates content.
- Ensure that government requests for content removal are in accordance with international human rights norms, and utilize all available avenues to oppose problematic requests.
- Publish extensive transparency reports on content takedowns, both initiated by governments and started by firms themselves.
- Provide an efficient and speedy channel of appeal for users who believe their rights have been unfairly constrained, such as through censorship, banning, label assignment, or post demonetization.

## Section D: Ethical Evaluation

### MCMC Order At Least 11 ISPs To Block Mkini GE14 Sites

Based on the first discussed topic, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has implemented heavy censorship on its internet by instructing at least 11 internet service providers (ISPs) to block Malaysiakini's three election result websites on the polling night of Malaysia's 14th General Election. The reason given is improper use of network facilities or network services that may affect national stability, public order and harmony, and economic stability.

In this case, the rule utilitarianism is used to analyse the scenario as stated above.

Who would benefit?

- Malaysian able to avoid getting in-accurate information from non official website
- Government of Malaysia

Who would be harmed?

- Non-profit Online Media Organisation that speak out dissenting voices.

In general, the action brings more benefits than harm which can conclude that it is ethical.

Besides, the action of the MCMC is **ethical** based on the social contract theory. The MCMC has compiled the law, section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act in order to enforce censorship on Malaysiakini's website.

### Sarawak Report

For the second discussed topic, access to the Sarawak Report website has been censored by the MCMC under Section 211 and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act because it may undermine the stability of the country.

The Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act makes it an offence for any person to use a network facility to knowingly make, create, solicit or initiate a communication which is obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive with the intent to annoy, abuse, harass or threaten another person (Ifex, 2020). From the ethical social contract theory, the action of the MCMC is ethical because the Sarawak Report specifically criticizes the Malaysian Government and violates the law.

Besides, rule utilitarianism is used in order to prove that MCMC is ethical to block the Sarawak Report website.

Who would benefit?

- Malaysian able to avoid getting in-accurate information from non official website
- The government of Malaysia

Who would be harmed?

- Non-profit Online Media Organisation that speak out dissenting voices.

In general, the action brings more benefits than harm which can conclude that MCMC is **ethical**.

### **Sugarbook in Malaysia**

Based on the third discussed topic, Sugarbook apps have been banned by the government under Section 233 of the Multimedia and Communications Act to prevent youth from getting involved in immoral activities. The founder also was charged with the intention of causing fear to the public.

From the cultural relativism perspective, it shows what is 'right' and wrong depending upon a society's actual moral guidelines and it varies from place to place. For example, the Sugarbook is banned in predominantly muslim country of Malaysia only. The action of the government is **ethical** based on this perspective.

Not only that, the ethical theory used to analyse this scenario will be rule utilitarianism again. Who would benefit?

- The government of Malaysia able to prevent immoral activities

Who would be harmed?

- Young women may lose their primary source of income
- Software developer that maintains the dating website.
- Founder of the website

In general, the action caused more harm than benefit which can conclude that government action is **not ethical**.

## Section E: Summary

To conclude, Malaysia was ranked at worst by multiple researches and ranking for internet freedom. Malaysia currently has restrictions on social media, news reporting, adult contents torrenting freedom. Despite the new reformist government coalition taking over the power in 2018, prosecution on internet postings has not stopped. Government in 2021 proclaimed an anti-fake news emergency decree to prosecute anyone who is responsible for incorrect information.

Five stakeholders of internet censorship have been identified, mainly Government, Business Sector, Civil Society, Academia and Technical Community. In the scenario of censorship of internet in Malaysia, we explore on three main issues:

1. MCMC Order At Least 11 ISPs To Block Mkini GE14 Sites
2. Sarawak Report
3. Sugarbook in Malaysia

Similarities such as usage of Section 233 of Multimedia and Communications Act to enforce internet censorship. Internet censorship was imposed on any published materials which disclose the corrupt practices of the government. Dissent voices against the government are also being suppressed using such a law. Other than that, the government tends to utilize current available law to restrict moral activities.

Several policies were suggested through the perspective of social, legal, architecture and market. After ethical evaluation using several ethics principles, it can be concluded that the action of the government restricting internet censorship is ethical as it benefits the government through operation of law. However, in the case of Sugarbook, it is seen as unethical as it imposes restrictions on Sugarbook due to it being “immoral”.

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## Appendix

### Originality Report

9/6/2021

SPI CONTENT FOR OR

#### Originality report

##### COURSE NAME

GOHKIMNEE RDS3S1G1 & RIT3S1G1 202105

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##### REPORT CREATED

Sep 6, 2021

#### Summary

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