

## Team 1

1. **Provenance** (Qiang Ma) The news website is named by Ars Technica in San Francisco. It is a commercial website publishing news related to technology, science, and society. This group report news mostly is based on the facts, so their news usually is objective and scientific. They also have their own reporters or columnists. The article of Yelp case was written by Cyrus Farivar, a Senior Tech Policy Reporter at Ars Technica. His contact information is left below the article. Thus, the contents are reliable.
2. **Unknown terms** (Hon Lam Chung) **Judge Marsha Berzon**: United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. **Yelp Terms of Service that Botto Bistro violated**: Under Restriction, part A, first line - Violate our Content Guidelines, for example, by writing a fake or defamatory review, trading reviews with other businesses, or *compensating someone or being compensated to write or remove a review*. **Yelp content guideline that Botto Bistro violated**: Don't ask for reviews and don't offer to pay for them either: Please don't ask your customers to review your business on Yelp. Over time, solicited reviews create bias on your business page — a bias that savvy consumers can smell from a mile away. Learn why you shouldn't ask for reviews. *You should also never offer compensation (discounts and freebies count too) in exchange for reviews*. **Yelp Consumer Alert**: A notification from Yelp that informs users that the shop or business he/she is looking up has been caught to pay for reviews. **Vince Sollitto**: Yelp Spokesman.
3. **Vagueness/Ambiguity** (Enrique Cardenas) One way the article is vague is in the following sentence "There are also accusations of abruptly vanishing positive reviews and suddenly appearing negative reviews" it is vague because we do not know how many accusations there are. Given that there are hundreds of companies listed on yelp, a more precise number or estimate of accusations would make the sentence less vague and also less dramatic. Aside from this, there isn't many other vague or ambiguous terms as the article is comprised of mostly quotes from people.
4. **Speculation** (Alexander Abusaidi) Within the article there is some speculation over what could happen if Yelp decided to take the restaurant to court. Apparently, since offering incentives to patrons in exchange for reviews is against Yelp's terms of service, they would have the option to remove their business from their listings. Of course, Yelp declined to comment on what actions they would proceed with to save face. There had been previous court cases that involved an employer posting fake reviews that he denied. There

was also some speculation that Yelp had been harassing the bistro. This was clarified in an email that they had called over the phone once a week for a few months until he chose to buy their service.

5. **Background History** (Marissa Lopez) **2009**: David Cerretini and Michael Massimo open Botto Bistro, an Italian restaurant, in Richmond California.
  1. **October 5, 2011**: Harvard Business conducted a study on Yelp reviews:
    - One star reviews boost independent restaurant revenues 5-9 percent.
    - **June 2012**: Botto Bistro begins to receive numerous phone calls several times a day from Yelp telemarketers. The owners feel forced into purchasing advertising through Yelp, to stop the harassment, however the phone calls continued during their 6-month advertising agreement.
    - **June 2013**: A Yelp spokesperson claimed that they only contacted the restaurant once within two and a half years. Their records show that they only contacted them once a week when they purchased advertising in June 2012.
    - Yelp believes that the business is using a smart strategy to boost their revenues using the Harvard Business research as their evidence to support this claim.
    - The owners of Botto Bistro started a “Hate us on Yelp” campaign that rewarded their customers for posting a negative review of their restaurant on Yelp, as a way to undermine Yelp’s aggressive bargaining tactics. They began giving discounts to customers who brought in screenshots of their negative Yelp reviews.
    - **Early September 2014**: Yelp was accused of extorting businesses to filter out negative reviews in exchange for paid ad space. The Court of Appeals ruled that Yelp has the right to sell advertising space and adjust rating as they see fit.
    - **September 15, 2014**: Yelp User Support Team contacted Botto Bistro with regards to the restaurant violating their Terms of Service by offering incentives for reviews. The company was unsure as to why anyone would purposely ask for negative reviews.
    - **September 16, 2014**: Cerretini sarcastically responds to Yelp’s message by stating that they have violated Botto Bistro’s Terms of Service.
    - **September 21, 2014**: The controversy between Botto Bistro and Yelp gains notoriety among media outlets including the writer of this article, Ars Technica.

- The owners of Botto Bistro feel that while some business want to have the reviews, many small and independent businesses do not want this advertising space or want to read these reviews.
- **Today (September 23, 2018):** The Botto Bistro website offers a 50% off a pizza for a one star yelp review. Currently they have 2,993 one star reviews posted on Yelp.
- **Tone** (Joshua Liang) The tone of the article was mostly cool and objective. The author stuck to facts and I didn't see any additional, unnecessary words that showed any subjectivity. The author mentioned recent accusations that were made towards yelp. He described them and said that they were dismissed. Whenever he describes the restaurant owners' actions, he always quotes them instead of paraphrasing. This way, the reader only senses the frustration and sarcasm of the restaurant owners. The only time the author uses his own words is when he is describing the menu of the restaurant and how it operates with no table service.
- **Modality** (Jasper Matthew Dum Dumaya) The terms of modality of Cyrus Farivar's article on the case are mostly assertions of fact. Statements and claims are backed up by records and documents such as past emails and logs. However, there is one statement that suggests a term of possibility. Farivar states that there have been "accusations of abruptly vanishing positive reviews and suddenly appearing negative reviews" to support the claim that Yelp has participated in extortion. Accusations are not entirely assertions of facts and unless proven, accusations cannot fully support the claim. Be that as it may, there is a basis to these accusations, so there is always "possibility" to consider when analyzing this support.