

Written Representation 127

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Keynotes

Points to ponder:

- Severity of falsehood? Was it twisted for political gain or subversive in nature.
- Commercial hype Vs Spiteful misinformation.
- Innocent people being motivated unwittingly to share falsehood.
- Committing a crime out of ignorance, if this is enacted.
- Distinguishing between fair comment and defamation.
- Will this widen the digital divide for the seniors?
- Recommended solutions.



This is the guy who added his infected blood to Cadbury products. For the next few weeks do not eat any products from Cadbury, as a worker from the company has added his blood contaminated with HIV (AIDS). It was shown yesterday on BBC News. Please forward this message to people who you care.



Extract from WhatsApp

This was being shared on social media and WhatsApp in February 2018. If the person who shared this had done his or her due diligence they would have found that this was a hoax. As the same picture was used in a similar hoax about Pepsi product in 2017.

With today's digital technology it is so easy to create fake story and spread it like wild fire on social media. In fact it can be easily done on any mobile devices by using mobile applications available in application stores.

On many occasions when I saw fake information like this being shared online. I made it a point to tell the person sharing it that this is not true and we should stop doing it. Many of them replied with an apology as they were just innocent victims. However, there were a number of people who thought otherwise. They felt that they were doing something for humanity; they were being good citizens telling people to avoid certain problems, without thinking of the damage they can cause to the business owner. This lack of critical thinking may land many vulnerable seniors in trouble in future once there is a law to prevent the spreading of fake news.



Extract from Facebook

When I take a look at what Opposition leader post on Facebook, my thoughts went deeper, especially for those who commented.

Did they ever give a thought of what they were doing? Were their statements a fair comment or defamation?

There are many seniors who are tempted to give remarks without thinking of the consequences and trouble that they can land in. Or worst, some may even think that this is a private chat and nobody is going to be aware of what they have said.

In the past people used to be wary of making comments, today people are trigger happy on their keyboards!

Seniors' Digital Dilemma

In the course of my teaching encounter with seniors, I found that many gave up easily when they faced with complexity. Most of them rely too much on others to help them. They do not endeavour to attempt it on their own for fear that they may hit the wrong button and do not know what to do next. Some find it hard to remember the numerous steps needed to achieve a certain result.

Sending out a message at the push of a button is too big a risk for many seniors. Once posted it is visible to everybody and damage done. Even in private chat they are not spared, as their message can be shared on social media by their friends and they become the source of the problem.

The push for the enactment of the law against Fake News may force many seniors to give up going online totally. On the other hand the authority is pushing to close the digital divide with Skills Future credit and many other schemes. "Ignorance is no excuse" is the biggest concern once the ACT on Fake News takes effect. Elderly with low media literacy will be a social issue.

Proposed Solutions

- 1) Ample time should be given for the less educated seniors to learn how to distinguish between the real and the fake.
- 2) More publicity by IMDA on case studies of Fake News or Fake Information.
- 3) An advisory body established to support public queries and help to substantiate between the fake and the real information.
- 4) Being an App Developer I would propose to build an App to help people to verify online whether the piece of information is real or a hoax.
- 5) Professionals should conduct their due diligence before disseminating their articles or information.
- 6) More courses to educate seniors to have a better understanding of the definition of Fake News.
- 7) Some form of 3rd party insurance to protect vulnerable seniors with low media literacy.