

Media literacy in 'Fake News' era

By LORETO ELINON

Being faced with the term 'fake news' is just cringe-worthy. Let's face it. The term is 'oxymoronic' in many levels. How could you even consider 'news' fake when the essence of the word 'news,' to begin with, is to purvey factual information?

Ever since social media took the world by storm and instantly became an essential part of today's lifestyle, the ever-increasing and alarming proliferation of false content online has drawn public attention.

Particularly, what does it connote about Filipino 'netizens'? Many can read but only a few can distinguish fact from fake.

Having spent four years studying mass communication, we were comprehensively taught about media literacy. I realize now that the subject has never been as important as it is today. With social media as a 'big driver,' information is now at the tip of our fingers and it is up to us whether we stop or scroll.

This is when media literacy comes into play. It might just be a phrase fraught with multiple meanings, but it summons one purpose - a new approach that aims for critical understanding against the information warfare.

Gone are the days when truth and lies were the only options. Now, we have truth, lies, and statements that rest between "too subjective to be true" or "too benign to be false." Sounds euphemistic? Well, we have reached the "post-truth" era, and the greatest weapon to fight it is by being media literate.

Amid the backdrop of propaganda and misinformation in the online world, it is high time for every single Filipino citizen or 'netizen' to take a sip of what media literacy is. Purveyors of false information will always be there; living in a democracy makes us easily skewed by misinformation.

In the same way, the algorithms of social media can mean harm to democracy. Everyone can be victims of misleading content peddled by agenda-driven sources. What we can only do is to gain a critical understanding in order to survive the world of fake news.

As media practitioners, encouraging better media literacy among Filipinos should always be one of our primary cores. The media, being one of the powerful tools for information dissemination, should play a vital role in combating impartiality and spreading knowledge on media literacy.

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The academe should also take an active part. As the social media world blazes forward, better media literacy skills, specifically digital literacy, should be mandated in school curricula. It is already past the time to have done this, but it is also never too late.

As for the government, conducting media literacy programs is good, but removing proven purveyors of fake news from government posts will even be better.

We live in a media-driven society. By saying this, we have the responsibility to carefully discern between factual and absurd information. We should not just let society lose its grip on reality. Media literacy should not only be exclusive to media practitioners; every Filipino citizen needs to learn it now more than ever.

Let's make media literacy triumph in a "post-truth" era.