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15 and 16

The boon and bane of social media

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Social media is no longer new media. It has been around for a while and the numbers of social media users continues to rise every day. In the Philippines, I was surprised to discover that we are the world's leader in the use of social media. Thinking again I guess it isn't something that should be too surprising. In the Philippines every single person is on social media somehow. Even those who struggle with buying the daily necessities of life somehow have a Facebook profile. It's interesting and a bit disturbing as well.

Like with anything in life, social media is best used in moderation. It has its advantages and its disadvantages. Unfortunately for us, all we seem to be seeing in the recent past are the bad sides of social media. The good gets buried under a pile of fake news, fake friends, and just fake everything.

Social media at its core was created to connect people. I think that more than anything its purpose was to give people ways to find long lost friends

and to keep in touch. In that aspect, it achieved its goal admirably. I know many people, myself included, who have been able to reconnect with former friends via social media outlets.

At the same time, another surprising benefit during the rise of social media was the ability to spread information and stay connected at the speed of light. Whereas before things took a little bit of time, with Facebook and Twitter and even their predecessors Friendster and MySpace, news traveled much faster. It made it easier to share new businesses, milestones, invite people to events, and even keep up with latest trends.

And of course we can't talk about the benefits of social media without touching upon how it has been utilized to help in times of calamity or disaster. Spreading messages through social media has helped raise funds, find lost people, and ask for donations for catastrophes that happened on the other side of the world. It's a powerful

tool to be able to crowd source millions of people at the touch of a button.

I completely understand the importance of social media as a communication tool in the world that we live in. And yet, there is an ugly side to all of it and it just seems to keep growing every day. Social media was originally created to connect people and yet somehow the opposite is happening today.

People who felt alone or depressed get more depressed scrolling through their timelines and seeing how "happy" everyone else is. The comparison of one's life to another's has gotten completely out of control and now people are feeling pressured to "live up" to these carefully curated lives they see online and are devastated if and when they cannot. Not to mention, the likes and shares mentality has made everyone practically a slave to social media numbers. The "worth" of something in people's lives has now become quantifiable by the number of likes and comments it gets when shared. And we've all heard the expression - "if you don't share it on social media, it didn't

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happen."

It's a lot to live up to, especially for children who are already dealing with the delicate process of growing up and gaining confidence. Now, every aspect of their lives is online available to scrutiny and judging and often bullying. Cyber bullying is a real threat to the younger generation, and lets face it the older one as well. Keyboard warriors feel invincible behind their keyboards and can be extremely hurtful with their words.

Plus, social media in the past five years has birthed the "troll community." Granted trolls existed before social media - now they are greater in number and much more emboldened. These often times paid users are utilized by brands to spread information or misinformation. In fact, our government has been under the microscope for using a social media "troll army" these past few years. It's not an unbelievable claim. The current administration places a great deal of importance on social media support.

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And that, of course, includes the proliferation of fake news, which is just everywhere. It's so easy to get drowned out by the number of fake and satirical news sites online. One always has to be on guard when reading news shared on social media sites.

So at the end of the day do the pros of social media outweigh the cons? I suppose that's something we all have to decide for ourselves.

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The paradise we know as Boracay is now in the middle of a

battle between the Duterte administration and their local government over pollution and environmental protection. In this instance, I'm going to have to side with the president's firm stand saying that if they don't fix their sewage and waste problem, he is going to shut the island down. While it sounds harsh, it might be just what the island needs to begin to rehabilitate itself.

We all love Boracay and the beautiful white sandy beaches. But in the past ten years the pollution has gotten out of hand. Too much industrialization in too little time brought in too many people without a proper waste management system in place.

In the last few years we've all seen the island paradise start to lose its luster and hopefully it's not too late to bring back some of its former glory. I think we know that the days of tiki torch lights and uninhabited strips of beach are done, but hopefully we can still help rehabilitate the popular island front.

I believe six months is a good amount of time to give the local government to get their act together and ensure the island's safety. I look forward to seeing Boracay get a much-needed reprieve and hopefully start to look like its old self again.

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