

# Let's go back to basics in addressing provocative news

**F**ORWARDED messages — messages delivering either true, questionable or fake news — keep us somewhat informed and bewilderingly engaged.

Questionable and fake news albeit entertaining has led to various problems, so much so that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission developed a fact checking site called [Sebenarnya.my](http://Sebenarnya.my).

However, there is a category of news passed through social media that can cause quite a stir among the masses. This type of news cannot be addressed by fact checking websites. As there isn't



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(yet) a term coined for this type of news, let us refer to it as "provocative news".

It is often biasedly reported — touching on sensitive issues such as politics, race and religion. It contains messages that deviates

from cultural norms, elicits negative emotion, and possibly instigates social disharmony and uncertainty. The question of whether the content is true, questionable or fake is of secondary importance when it comes to provocative news, as it is simply problematic.

A recent study conducted by Prof Dr Ezhar Tamam and his team of researchers at Universiti Putra Malaysia found that three in five Malaysians are exposed to provocative news on a frequent basis. It also found that most social media users do not discriminate the source of news that they read.

Making matters even more complicated is the comment section or thread on social media. A biased news post would most likely attract and encourage more people to hop on the negative band wagon.

While solving this issue may seem like an impossible conundrum given the nature of social media, but all is not lost. Part of the solution may lie in digital literacy. Besides having the skill of using technology, digital literacy also encompasses appropriate use of technology.

Addressing provocative news is a human-based issue where principles and values must come into

play. Values taught to us at home and in school such as respect and benevolence should be applied on screen and off screen.

We are living in an era called the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where embracing digital technology is a necessity and not an option. Despite technology dominating a huge chunk of our lives, we must not forget the basics of being responsible individuals and members of society.

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