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LIES, LIES, AND MORE LIES OR THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Social networking media is constantly a subject of debate, there are those who are strong advocates as well as those who are strong dissenters. Irrespective of our personal views, the Internet is increasingly becoming an intrinsic part of our lives. This brings with it the fact that the use of social networking media, such as Facebook, Twitter, BlackBerry messaging (BBM) and other forms of instant messaging platforms are also part of our lives.

As with most Internet applications, the most successful applications are those based on the simplest of principles. In the case of social networking media this is the very basic nature of people wishing to talk, to exchange ideas and to share thoughts; In essence to reach out to those who are willing to listen.

The combination of these applications and the capabilities of smartphones (mobile, handheld mini computers that include basic or advanced telephony and messaging features) has allowed social networking media to be available 24/7 anywhere in the world. These applications are characterised by their ability to instantaneously broadcast messages to an interested community and then for these messages to be re-broadcast in an infinite number of times to each member of that community's other communities of friends and associates and group members. This cascade effect means that a single message posted can soon be seen by millions of people around the world. In addition to simple text, social networking media is capable of supporting images or links to images and video clips.

The SafeSurf Bahrain team wants to ensure that users of social networking media are conscious of not just the positive benefits of being able to keep in-touch, but also the simple facts that not everything you read online is true. Unlike reputable journalism that attempts to verify its content prior to broadcasting or publication, this is not necessarily the case when individuals broadcast messages. Likewise, reputable journalism operates under a code of ethics that protects

the reader or viewer from images of an extreme nature including images of extreme violence or pornography.

It has been brought to SafeSurf Bahrain's attention that video clips taken on mobile phones during the last couple of months of extreme violence and even murder have been broadcast using social networking media. These video clips have been viewed by minors. As users of the Internet and social networking media, we have a duty to protect the young and the innocent.

The SafeSurf Bahrain initiative has been established to help make sure that everyone in Bahrain is able to enjoy the resources available over the Internet and help users better understand how to use these resources responsibly. As such, to prevent the irresponsible broadcast of messages that distort, corrupt, or fabricate the truth and potentially endanger the safety and security of others, we all have a duty to make sure that what we say is factually correct. Furthermore, when sending links to images or video content we need to think about who could potentially be viewing this content and whether or not it is appropriate or necessary.

Think twice before posting, forwarding, or reTweeting messages. Are they mere propaganda or could they be libellous?

Think Twice before posting, forwarding or reTweeting images. Are they appropriate in their content? Are they likely to cause offense? Could they cause harm?

Update on "Little Gossip"

In the January edition of the SafeSurf Bahrain Newsletter we talked about cyber bullying and Social Media. At that moment in time the issue surrounded a website called Little Gossip. This website encouraged predominantly school children to spread gossip and rumours about fellow students. The work that TRA did in partnership with international organisations resulted in that website being shut down.