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Teach consumers to fight fake online ads, says Fomca

PETALING JAYA: Cyberspace is filled with fake advertisements and false information but regulating social networks would be a big challenge, said the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca).

Its secretary-general Datuk Dr Paul Selvaraj (*pic*) said to combat false information, the focus should be on consumer education and media literacy awareness.

"False advertisements and information is a global issue but as far as regulations are concerned, it is a difficult area to tackle.



"These advertisements are dangerous as they are unverified and can be manipulated by anybody for their own benefit.

"What is actually needed is media literacy to teach consumers what is authentic and what is false," he said.

Paul said media literacy should be taught at the school level as children are exposed to the Internet early in life.

"We are not preparing consumers to deal with scams and false advertisements.

"A lot of people rely on social media for information, so it is easy to be exposed to such false information," he noted.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) can handle certain complaints about misleading advertisements, said Paul.

"But it also depends. If the advertisement comes from an organisation, then of course the government can take action against it.

"But if individuals are coming up with these advertisements by using other people's pictures, then that's a bit challenging to handle," he added.

He said consumers who come across online content problems could lodge complaints with MCMC's complaints division by e-mailing secretariat@cmcf.my or calling the hotline at 1800 882 623 / 03-7954 8105 / 03-7958 3690.