

Name _____ Navigating The World Of Online (Mis)Information

Lesson 4: Tactics That Make Information Feel True

Digital Advertising: Techniques and Case Studies Activity

Key vocabulary

User: A person who uses a product, technology, or service.	Ad (Advertisement): A message or content promoting a product or service.	Marketing: The action or business of promoting and selling products or services.
Engagement: How users interact with online content – for example, by clicking, liking, commenting, or sharing.	Visibility: In digital advertising, visibility refers to how often and prominently an ad is displayed.	Platform: An online service or application where users can create and share content, such as a social media site.
Demographics: Statistical data about a population or individual, such as age, gender, or income, often used in advertising to target specific groups.	Target: The intended audience or consumer for a product, service, or ad campaign.	Brand Association: The feelings, emotions, and images that are associated with a particular brand in the minds of consumers.
Web cookies: Small pieces of data that websites store on your device. They're used to keep you logged in and track your online activity.	Banner ads: An ad on a website that is often at the top (banner) or on the side (sidebar).	Content: Material that the primary reason people visit a website or use an app. This includes articles, videos, photos, games, podcasts, graphics, social media posts.

Is My Cell Phone Listening to Me?

You might have experienced this: you're talking about a product or a place with a friend, and then you start seeing ads for it on your phone. It can feel like your phone is listening to your conversations. But is it really?

While it can seem like your phone is eavesdropping, it's actually the result of the sophisticated techniques that companies use. These techniques rely on data from your online activity - like what you search for, what websites you visit, what products you look at, and even what posts you like on social media.

Advertising has been around for centuries, but the rise of the digital age has dramatically changed how and where ads reach us. In the past, ads were a one-size-fits-all deal. Advertisers would put an ad in a newspaper, on a billboard, or during a TV show and hope that the right people saw it. But today, advertising has become far more personalized and **targeted**. With techniques like **web cookies**,



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advertisers can now send different ads to different people based on their age, location, interests, and online behaviour.

Apps can ask for permission to access your phone's microphone, but they generally use it for functions within the app, like voice commands or audio recording. Reputable apps from established companies are not allowed to record your conversations for advertising purposes. Doing so would be a violation of privacy laws and policies. So, while it might feel like your phone is listening in on your conversations, it's actually the result of **targeted advertising** techniques that use your online activity to tailor the ads you see.

In the digital age, it's more important than ever to be media literate. Understanding how advertising works can help you navigate the online world with a critical eye and make informed decisions about the **content** you interact with.

Let's take a look at some of these targeted advertising strategies that companies use:

1: Targeted Advertising: Advertisers use this technique to reach specific audiences who are likely to be interested in their products or services. It involves using information such as consumers' demographics, interests, and online behaviour to tailor ads specifically to them. It's beneficial for advertisers because it increases the chances of the ad being relevant and enticing to the viewer, thus increasing the likelihood of engagement. <i>Example: You frequently search for skateboarding videos and follow skateboarding brands on social media. Suddenly, you begin to see ads for new skateboards and skateboarding gear on your social media feeds and in banner ads on websites you visit. This is targeted advertising in action.</i>	I've seen an ad like this before: Yes Maybe No Describe the ad you saw:
2: Retargeting/Remarketing: This strategy is used to re-engage individuals who have already shown an interest in a product or service. For example, if a customer views a product on a website but does not buy it, that product can later be advertised to them on different platforms. It's like a reminder nudging them to complete the purchase. <i>Example: You visited an online clothing store and looked at a pair of sneakers but didn't buy them. Over the next few days, you start to see ads</i>	I've seen an ad like this before: Yes Maybe No Describe the ad you saw:

for those same sneakers on different websites and social media platforms. That's retargeting - the store is reminding you about the sneakers you were interested in.

3: Native Advertising: These are ads designed to match the look and feel of the **content** they're displayed with. They're typically less intrusive than traditional ads and can, in some cases, provide valuable content to the viewer. They're effective because they blend in with the content, increasing the likelihood that the viewer will engage with them.

Example: You're reading an article on a news website about healthy eating. In the middle of the article, you see another story about the benefits of organic fruits and vegetables. This story, however, is actually an ad from an organic food company. It looks like the other articles on the site, but it's designed to promote a product.

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

Describe the ad you saw:

4: Influencer Marketing: Brands use influencers (people with large online followings) to promote their products or services because these influencers have established trust and rapport with their followers. Their endorsements can therefore have a significant impact, leading to increased brand awareness and sales.

Example: You follow a popular fitness trainer on Instagram. One day, they post about a new brand of protein powder they've been using and loving. They've tagged the brand in their post and included a discount code for their followers.

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

Describe the ad you saw:

5: Product Placement: This strategy involves subtly incorporating products into movies, TV shows, or even video games. The intention is to increase brand **visibility** and **association** with certain contexts or characters without explicitly advertising it. The viewer may develop a positive attitude towards the brand without even realizing it.

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

Describe the ad you saw:

Example: You're watching a new movie on Netflix. In one scene, the main character is drinking a Pepsi. The logo is clear and visible, but no one says anything about Pepsi in the movie.

6: Search Engine Marketing (SEM): SEM is a form of online **marketing** that involves promoting websites by increasing their **visibility** in search engine results pages (SERPs) through paid advertising. The goal is to appear among the top results when **users** search for specific keywords related to the product or service, thus attracting high-quality traffic to the website.

Example: You type "best running shoes" into Google. At the top of the search results, you see a few listings marked as "Ad." These are companies that have paid to be at the top of the search results for the keyword "running shoes."

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

Describe the ad you saw:

7: Email Marketing: This form of direct **marketing** uses email to promote products or services. It can be used to build loyalty, trust, or brand awareness. The benefit of email marketing is that it's **targeted** (the recipient has often already shown interest in the brand by signing up for the newsletter) and measurable (open rates, click rates, conversion rates).

Example: You signed up for a newsletter from your favourite bookstore. Now, you receive regular emails from them promoting new books, upcoming events, and sales.

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

Describe the ad you saw:

8: Branded Content: This form of advertising blurs the lines between entertainment and promotion. The aim is to create **content** that doesn't feel like an **advertisement** but still conveys the brand's message or values. The content should be engaging, useful, or entertaining so that consumers choose to interact with it.

I've seen an ad like this before:

Yes
Maybe
No

<i>Example: On YouTube, you find a mini-documentary about hiking the Inca Trail. The documentary is actually created by an outdoor gear company and features their products, but the focus is on the hikers' journey, not the products.</i>	Describe the ad you saw:
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9: Gamification of Ads: Ads are made into games or quizzes to increase engagement and memorability. They're often fun and interactive, which makes the viewer more likely to spend time with the ad and remember the brand. They can also incentivize interaction with rewards, discounts, or prizes. <i>Example: You see an ad for a language learning app. The ad invites you to play a short game where you match words in a foreign language with their translations. At the end of the game, you're offered a free trial of the app.</i>	I've seen an ad like this before: Yes Maybe No
	Describe the ad you saw:

10: Proximity Targeting: This is a technique that uses your location to send you relevant ads, also known as geo-targeting or location-based marketing. By using GPS technology, businesses can send relevant ads to mobile devices in specific geographic areas. <i>Example: When you're near a coffee shop, you see an ad or receive a notification on your phone for a special deal at that shop. This is often used in mobile advertising and can be very effective because it reaches people who are already close to the business.</i>	I've seen an ad like this before: Yes Maybe No
	Describe the ad you saw:

Activity 1: Digital Advertising Case Studies

Every day, we encounter hundreds, if not thousands, of advertisements online. They pop up on our social media feeds, appear in our search results, show up in our emails, and more. While we might be aware of some of these advertisements, others are so subtly woven into our online experience that we may not even recognize them as ads.

These advertising techniques are carefully crafted to capture our attention and influence our behaviour, often without us realizing it. By learning about these techniques and how they're used, we can become more informed consumers and more discerning users of the internet.

Today, you'll be given different case studies, each presenting a scenario that includes one or more advertising techniques. Your task is to identify the advertising techniques used in each case study and evaluate their effectiveness. You can refer back to the "Is My Cell Phone Listening to Me?: Digital Advertising 101" handout to help you.

Case Study 1

Ana loves online shopping and subscribes to numerous newsletters from various online retailers. One morning, she opens her email to find a message from one of her favourite clothing brands. The subject line reads, "Exclusive offer just for you, Ana! 20% off on your next purchase this week!" Ana opens the email and finds a personalized message with a coupon code. She's tempted to use the discount, even though she doesn't currently need anything new.

What type of digital advertising strategy is used here?	
Why do you think Ana feels enticed to shop even when she doesn't need anything?	
What role does personalization play in this strategy?	

Case Study 2

Josh loves to play online games. Recently, while on his favorite gaming site, he noticed a new pop-up ad appearing repeatedly. The ad promotes a new gaming console, displaying its high-tech features, exciting new games, and limited-time discount. The ad even includes a short video showcasing the console's advanced graphics. Josh already has a console, but this ad has sparked his interest in the new one.

What type of digital advertising strategy is used here?	
How does the ad appeal to Josh?	

What ethical considerations come into play with this type of advertising?	
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Case Study 3

Olivia enjoys cooking healthy meals and often searches for new recipes online. Recently, she was looking for vegan dessert recipes on Google. Among the top results, she noticed a link to an article titled "Top 10 Delicious Vegan Desserts" on a well-known food blog. However, it was labelled as "Sponsored." She clicked it and found an article featuring recipes but all using a particular brand of vegan chocolate.

What type of digital advertising strategy is Olivia experiencing?	
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How might search engines benefit from this kind of advertising?	
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What are the potential advantages and disadvantages for consumers?	
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Case Study 4

Elise recently celebrated her 16th birthday. In preparation for the party, she spent hours online researching decorations, outfits, and cake designs. A week after her birthday, she noticed that the ads on her social media accounts and other websites she visited started to change. She kept seeing ads for dresses, sweet 16 decorations, and party-planning services. Even more strangely, many of these ads were for the same websites she visited while planning her party.

What type of digital advertising strategy is Elise experiencing?	
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How did the advertisers know to show her these specific ads?	
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How might Elise feel about these ads?	
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What ethical considerations might come into play in this type of advertising?

Case Study 5

Sam follows his favourite musician, Mia, on Instagram. Mia often posts about her life, concerts, and the music she's working on. Recently, Mia has been posting pictures of herself wearing headphones from a particular brand, casually mentioning how much she loves the sound quality. There's no explicit "#ad" or "#sponsored" tag in her posts.

What type of digital advertising strategy is Sam experiencing?

Why might this technique be effective?

What ethical considerations might come into play in this type of advertising?

Case Study 6

Ben regularly reads articles on a popular environmental news website. One day, he reads an interesting article about sustainable living practices. The article mentions a particular brand of eco-friendly products several times, linking to their website. The article blends in with the rest and doesn't look like an ad.

What type of digital advertising strategy is Ben experiencing?

Why might Ben not immediately recognize this as advertising?

What ethical considerations might come into play in this type of advertising?

Case Study 7

Sophie has been binge-watching a new sitcom on a popular streaming service. She notices that the characters often drink from cups with a very noticeable logo of a well-known coffee brand. The brand isn't discussed in the show, but the logo is clearly visible in many scenes.

What type of digital advertising strategy is Sophie experiencing?

Why might Sophie find it hard to identify this as a form of advertising?

What ethical considerations come into play?