

I do not grant permission to publish this submission. It is not a traditional research paper and will not yet have value to students on the listed websites. It is a practical solution to a real-world problem and is a product I hope to market to a media outlet one day.

# Get Lit...erate

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

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II

## Table of Contents:

Situation Analysis .....	3
SWOT.....	7
Research.....	9
Target Audience.....	13
Objectives and Messaging.....	16
Strategy.....	18
Tactics.....	19
Timeline.....	23
Budget.....	24
Evaluation.....	26
Appendices.....	27
References.....	50

## Situation Analysis

Media Literacy is a term that was officially coined in December 1992 at the Aspen Institute's Wye Woods campus for the National Leadership Conference. It was defined as "the ability of a citizen to access, analyze and produce information for specific outcomes." (Aufderheide, 1993) It has been known by other names such as news literacy or even digital literacy. Even though this idea was first coined in the 90's, disparities in media consumption, analysis, and comprehension have dated back to the origins of storytelling. This long history has exemplified the complex relationship between the news provider and consumer as policymakers and powerful figures often dictated what "news" is. With each innovation, consumers gained access to sources of information and used their education to challenge and help society progress. The Gutenberg Press, for example, enabled knowledge to be dispersed more democratically and allowed for the growth of ideas, but it also led to the discussion of "truth" or at this time the Scientific Revolution. However, each era was not without conflict over sources of information or news. Yellow journalism was notorious for its scandalously false information. Today we have fake news. The medium may have changed, but the problems still exist. Learning how to access, analyze and produce information should be of paramount importance, especially with with the current growth of technology users and the rapid pace of information dissemination.

**Publics:** A media/news literacy education campaign can affect a wide range of publics.

- **Customers** include news consumers. This is generally everyone, but this campaign will specifically target Generation Y and Z millennials
- **Producers** include reporters, journalists, policy-makers or anyone who has control over news and information disseminated. This also can include social media users who share information and actively discuss news stories
- **Enablers** are those who advocate or have more influence over news than others. These are the public opinion leaders and social media influencers and can range from highly-respected figures such as Pope Francis to debatable moguls like Kim Kardashian. This public also includes watch-dog organizations like the Society of Professional Journalism or the Public Relations Society of America. Enablers can be donors, investors or stakeholders such as the government. Politicians through political action committees can influence news organizations' coverage, whether it be directly or indirectly. Neither is ethical, but it happens today as observed in partisan news coverage. This campaign should be used to bring awareness to this issue and information discrepancies.

- **Opponents** are many of the publics mentioned previously and are the main limiters of this campaign. This is because this campaign will promote the fact that there is a problem with the news system we currently have. Consumers may be opposed because this campaign challenges them to think beyond their comfort zone. Producers will be opposed because this decries their industry. Enablers will definitely be opposed if this halts their political or fiscal ambitions. There isn't current competition for a campaign of this nature. If there were other resources, they would only act as a supplement in this case.

## **Public's Perception**

As mentioned previously, there have always been conflicts between news consumer and producer. It is simply emphasized more today because it is more visible via social media. Using secondary research during Honors Thesis I, it has been concluded that the fourth estate is under scrutiny and perceived as less "trustworthy". The 2016 presidential election exemplified the different considerations of the two-way communication relationship between consumer and producer.

Even though the majority of the population distrusts news media, there is a lack of action occurring to resolve this. This is because it challenges societal norms. News consumers with the innovation of technology value efficiency and ease of access, even if that means sacrificing accuracy.

Producers understand this and compete to produce the most timely sources of information, even if this sacrifices integrity. If news organizations promote media literacy education, they admit that there is a flaw and look more “untrustworthy”.

It may appear to be a stalemate, but consumers are more accepting of media literacy education because it directly benefits them.

### **Problem Statement**

Society has compromised the quality of news and information for the sake of quantity and efficiency.

### **Campaign Benefit Statement**

This social media campaign will help news consumers and producers develop media literacy skills, which will ultimately create a well-informed and more integrity driven society.

# SWOT ANALYSIS: Media Literacy Social Media Campaign

## Strengths

- Ability to reach and resonate with mass audience
- Promotes low-effort learning in relatable context
- Satisfies human's innate need for personal development
- Benefits society as a whole with low cost/effort

## Weaknesses

- Limited, updated research on media literacy education statistics
- Lack of current media literacy education programs to collaborate with
- Requires frequent upkeep of new messaging and tactics

## Opportunities

- Fills technology gap in media literacy education programs
- Acts as an influencer or "first of its kind" as a social media campaign
- Possibility of gaining high media traction and publicity, which can encourage more funding and research into media literacy

## Threats

- Every public can technically act as an opponent
- Lack of funding and resources can deter development
- Political and fiscal greed can influence the success of this campaign

**Problem Goal Statement:**

The goal statement for this campaign will attempt to solve a societal problem and is therefore according to Ronald D. Smith's, Strategic Planning for Public Relations: a task-management, problem goal. (2013)

**"Develop a social media campaign to engage and impact public consumption and production of information for societal progression."**



## Research Methodology

The research conducted for this campaign was completed over two semesters. The first semester used primary research to establish partisanship in broadcast news. Although this research was not applicable to social media, it led to me to explore the problems and research specific to this campaign. See *Appendix A*.

The research from last semester and the feedback I received while presenting at the 2017 Spring Undergraduate Research Colloquium was used to further explore the relationship hypothesized between consumer and producer. The whole process indirectly inspired conclusions that highlighted the necessity for this campaign:

- Media outlets are responsible for not only the information they disseminate but how they disseminate the information. Consumers are responsible for choosing which mediums to consume news on and which outlets to follow. These roles are challenged today with the rise of social media. Freedom of expression is an American right, but to what extent does opinion overrule fact? Social media has enabled an unprecedented level of expression. These platforms are hubs for ideas and networking, but when it comes to news dissemination society ends up with a quantity over quality situation. As Gen-X and Gen-Z millennials use these platforms to cultivate social norms and policies, it has become apparent that watch-dog organizations or enablers such as SPJ or Twitter become advocates for media literacy education.

- Last spring, I identified that language choice is a key tool of persuasion and can ultimately impact how a statement is perceived. LIWC 2015 effectively analyzes and identifies emotion in word choice. Its evaluation process is consistent with human identification and allows users to identify words by emotion objectively for research. “For example, positive emotion words (e.g., love, nice, sweet) are used in writing about a positive event, and more negative emotion words (e.g., hurt, ugly, nasty) are used in writing about a negative event (Kahn, Tobin, Massey, & Anderson, 2007).” (Tobin, 2007)
- It quantifies the number of words representing these emotional categories and allows the user to statistically represent differences. When comparing news broadcasts from known news stations: CNN, FOX, MSNBC, it was found that there is a statistical difference in how news is presented. Fox News had a higher percentage of negative words used in their transcripts. CNN had a higher percentage of positive words in their transcript. MSNBC was in the middle of both categories. The fact that there is a statistical difference emphasizes that there is a problem with how information is relayed.

	<b>Positive Emotion</b>	<b>Negative Emotion</b>
<b>Fox News</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>2.46</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>1.23</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>1.56</b>

- I began focusing on broadcast media last semester, but there is a bigger picture to focus on. All media outlets are guilty in some way for relaying inaccuracies or biases. For example, last spring I also noted that tone and voice inflection of news anchors change the context of information, but there are common examples that people encounter everyday. Consumers see out-of-context photos with print journalism, unvalidated claims on social media, biased radio talk show hosts etc.

Even though I previously studied broadcast media, I was inspired to look at social media and at a different target audience. My thought behind last semester was to impact the population with the largest voting turnout or those who consume broadcast media the most. (The Babyboomers) But I realized that it is more important to focus on those most vulnerable to media and news biases.

They are most vulnerable and have more significance because they now constitute the largest voting eligibility and have surpassed the Baby Boomers. (Geiger, 2017) Although they fell short in the 2016 election and did not have the turnout, they still increased their turnout overall and will only continue to do so. (Brownstein, 2017) So even if millennials continued to have lower interest, they could still have more influence and a higher turnout in the future because of the sheer mass of their electorate alone. Millennials only matched the eligibility of Baby Boomers in 2016. (Fry, 2016)

This demographic is also more vulnerable because there are fewer resources on news literacy education targeted for them. Many resources direct education at youth younger than age 12 or for traditional media formats.

And this generation gets their news from social media, which is why the medium of my thesis has changed gears. (American Press Institute, 2015)

- Finally, media outlets are not very active in trying to promote media or news literacy to millennials on social media. This is understandable from the producer's standpoint because it denounces the entire industry even though it is safeguarded by ethics policies upholding "truth above all".

With distrust in the media at more than two-thirds of the population (Gallup, 2016), it should be no longer optional to disregard a call to action. In this instance, it would be ethical to admit there are problems with the new-age digital journalism and fix them. In organizations like the Society of Professional Journalism, Public Relations Society of America and Radio Television Digital News Association aim to provide accurate information as service to the public or the greater good.

Media outlets are focusing on more short-term benefits than long-term. Watch-dog organizations and media companies can help reduce these occurrences by advocating media/news literacy programs internally and externally to prospective journalists/employees and daily news consumers through an engaging social media campaign.

- Additional research over the second semester focuses on secondary "desk" research with critical recommendations for primary "investigatory" research. This included analyzing various sources such as trade articles, survey research and published research on the topic. A social media audit and environmental scanning were also necessary to complete messaging and tactics. Future primary research that could and needs to be done will include updating what "millennials" value in news sources to reflect future messaging.

## Target Audiences

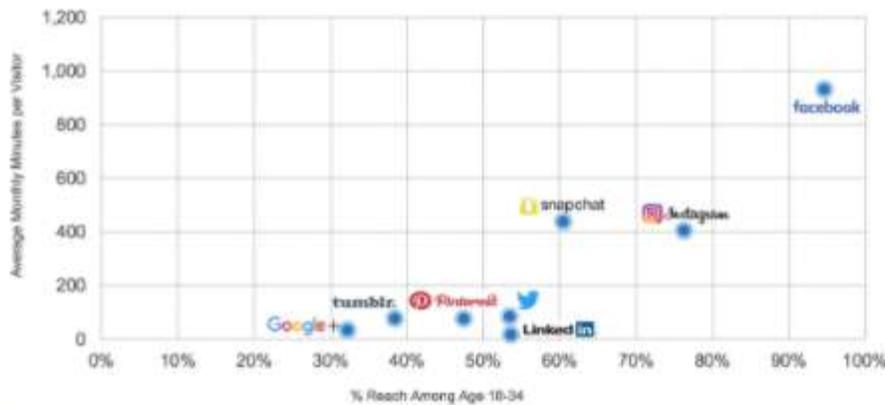
The two publics to be analyzed as audiences will be news **consumers** and **producers**. The primary target audience will be millennial consumers and producers will be the secondary audience. This broken down further is as Generation Z millennials (ages 12-19) and Generation Y (ages 20-31) in the U.S. These generations again will constitute the largest electorate for the next voting cycle, so it is crucial that they have or develop news literacy skills.

Generation Z grew up with technological innovations and social media. This demographic typically has shorter attention spans, has higher expectations, is civic-minded. These characteristics suggest that it is the best target audience to benefit from a media/ news literacy social media campaign. Generation Y are very technological adept, have stronger work ethics and are more balanced, which can conclude that this demographic might already have more critical thinking skills. (2017, Beall) *Appendix B* displays a self-created infographic summarizing the news values of these target audiences collected from the comScore 2017 U.S. Cross Platform Future in Focus survey and the American Press Institute review of “The Media Project Insight”.

Based off of the comScore 2017 U.S. Cross Platform Future in Focus survey, this campaign will develop tactics specifically for Snapchat because is one of the top three social media networks with the highest engagement per visitor, as well as, the youngest skewing network. This means it will engage my target audience, Gen-Z millennials, most effectively.

## Millennials use several social networks regularly, with Facebook commanding the lead in both audience size and engagement

Age 18-34 Digital Audience Penetration vs. Engagement of Leading Social Networks  
Source: comScore Media Matrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Dec 2016



INSIGHT

After Facebook, Snapchat has the highest engagement per visitor among Millennials, just slightly ahead of Instagram – which is 2<sup>nd</sup> in terms of penetration. Millennials overall have a more diverse diet of social media platforms they engage with on a regular basis.

COMSCORE

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## While Facebook's users mirror the internet as a whole, Snapchat, Instagram and Tumblr have a younger audience profile

Age Demographic Composition % of Major Social Networks  
Source: comScore Media Matrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Age 18+, Dec 2016



INSIGHT

Snapchat is the youngest skewing social network with more than half of its users between the ages of 18-34. It's demographic composition is now much more diverse in age than a year ago, as adoption among the 35+ population has improved.

COMSCORE

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Current resources for news literacy also do not use Snapchat as a tool or vehicle for education. The News Literacy Project and National Media Literacy Association use other channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

Furthermore, this campaign will segment Gen-Z millennials by sex. Messaging and will be general and apply to a mass audience, but the campaign will aim to reach females through action strategies.

It is significant to reach females because they are the majority demographic on the social network and with social media generally. Snapchat has not released recent gender demographics, but according to the Wall Street Journal, 70 percent of users were female in 2013. Harvard University conducted a follow-up survey in 2015, corroborated that women use Snapchat more than men do. (Newberry, 2016)

If this campaign were to be broken down further, it could also be argued that the campaign's messaging and tactics will target those without a college degree. A college education offers exposure to new ideas, diverse messaging and critical conversations. These benefits help individuals develop critical thinking skills, which are crucial for media literacy. According to the 2016 U.S. Census Bureau, this is more than 60 percent of the population who may not have had this opportunity to develop as such. Gen-Z millennials fall into this demographic because most have not pursued postsecondary education yet.

## Objectives

- #1: To have an effect on the awareness of media literacy on Generation Z millennials in the United States to increase their understanding of the social impact that compromising the quality of news for quantity and efficiency can have.
- #2: To have an effect on the acceptance of media literacy as a social issue, specifically to maximize interest in further education programs.
- #3: To have an effect on the action of consuming and producing quality news and information, specifically to demand change from higher-level producers and enablers.

## Key Messaging

To raise awareness, increase acceptance and ignite action, this campaign must use language that appeals to the target audience. This is crucial because the current resources for media literacy education are not. The appeals that messaging will rely on include humor and virtues such as justice, improvement, social acceptance, esteem and boldness. (Smith, 2013)

These messages will encourage unity behind a societal problem in an engaging way. Additional messages will highlight empowerment and will directly appeal to female, Gen-Z users. Empowerment is crucial for this segmented audience because it also supplements another societal issue that the mass audience already identifies with.

### **Get Lit...erate!**

- Humor appeal-play on words with popular tagline
- Bold virtue appeal-not a traditional education message

### **It's simple, think SMART!**

**(Search for the author, Mind the motive, Apprehend the message, Remember who paid, Think about what's missing.)**

- Virtue appeal to improvement, self-esteem
- Humor appeal- This message is actually an acronym for a tactic

### **Red or blue, make sure the facts are true.**

- Virtue appeal to justice, improvement and social acceptance
- This message is crucial because this issue is widespread, even across polarizing political parties. It shows unity and not isolationism.

### **Additional Messaging:**

- I want the whole story.
- I choose what I read.
- I'd rather be a knowitall, than know nothing at all.

### **Branding Messages**

This campaign will make use of the color the purple. This is because it blends red and blue, opposing political parties' colors, into one. This shows unity behind a single cause because members of both parties have experienced issues such as fake news as a result of poor media literacy training.

Purple also symbolizes ambition, pride, and creativity. This is the core of the campaign's mission.

**Strategy:** This campaign will utilize proactive, action strategies.

- **Action: Organizational Performance**

Current resources such as the National Association for Media Literacy Education need to adapt through social media. This organization is one of the few that actually have social media accounts, but that doesn't mean that they use them effectively. This social campaign will show the benefits of a sharp product and help encourage resources to update with the times.

- **Action: Audience Engagement**

By using relevant messaging and tactics, this campaign will have salience with its audience. It will highlight the importance of communication and reception, which many resources like the National Association for Media Literacy Education do not recognize. This campaign identifies those most susceptible to the benefits or risks of media education programs. Most other resources target stakeholders or influencers only such as parents or educators.

- **Action: Alliances and Partnership**

Through partnerships with social media influencers and publishers on Snapchat, this campaign will use alliances as a supplement to reach its target audiences with higher engagements.

This will also help alleviate financial stress of using the high-yielding medium, Snapchat. Organizations such as The News Literacy Project do receive large donations and monetary gifts and might be able to afford to do a stand-alone campaign. Other organizations such as the National Associate for Media Literacy Education will not be able to afford Snapchat and will have to partner with a publisher channel. Cosmopolitan and BuzzFeed both have ties to other media literacy resources and will be optimal to work with. (See [thenewsliteracyproject.org](http://thenewsliteracyproject.org)) BuzzFeed has already covered much on this topic and would be the best candidate. (Buzzfeed News, 2017)

## Tactics

Organizational Media tactics are the most effective for a campaign of this nature because of its massive, information seeking audience. Female Gen-Z millennials not only use Snapchat to connect with friends, but also to connect with the world. Snapchat's Discover channels are the newest ways to get news that is quick and entertaining. It is best to use organizational media tactics because it is easier to control messaging and strategies, which is needed for mass audiences who are seeking information. It helps to avoid confusion or any mishap that could occur. It is also necessary to do organizational media tactics because they have more successful rates of achieving acceptance and action objectives, which this campaign requires. Finally, Snapchat is expensive. Organizational media tactics are more efficient at reaching targeted audiences because of the controlled strategies.

Social media is the specific organizational tactic this campaign. Snapchat is the main social network as explained previously for its reach and engagement with this campaign's target audience. There are specific tactics or opportunities to engage within this tool. These will constitute a social media campaign and be arranged by objective.

The content can be redirected for other social media platforms in the future.

**Objective 1: To have an effect on the awareness of media literacy on Generation Z millennials in the United States to increase their understanding of the social impact that compromising the quality of news for quantity and efficiency can have**

Tactic #1: Develop social awareness posters/ads about media literacy and Media Literacy Week 2018. This tactic will use engaging content to satisfy all objectives. See *Appendix C*.

Tactic #2: Create a Snapchat Lens/Filter for Media Literacy Week 2018. This filter will feature a trendy pair of glasses, makeup accent, and the message "I'm Lit...erate" The makeup accent can be added blush, face smoother, or lip color that is trendy at time. This tactic will help increase visibility of the campaign in a fun and unique way with the target audience. It satisfies the first objective to have an effect on the awareness of media literacy. See *Appendix D*.

Tactic #3: Highlight the significance of media literacy by showing the evolution of fake news. This can either be an historical account going back to the Sumerians or it can be of modern scandals. Modern fake news will probably be more relevant, but this depends on the publisher that works with the campaign. For example, Cosmopolitan might want to cover the modern gossip evolution and BuzzFeed would want to cover the history of fake news. Either way, this tactic also satisfies the first objective by bringing awareness to the issue. Ideally this can be presented as a listicle or slideshow on a publisher's channel. See *Appendix E*.

**Objective 2: To have an effect on the acceptance of media literacy as a social issue, specifically to maximize interest in further education programs.**

Tactic #4: Implement "Who Said It" game. This quiz will be modeled after similar games on Cosmopolitan and BuzzFeed. A headline will be presented and then four answer choices will be present. The next slide will show the answer. After showing at least five headlines. A slide will reveal the point of the game and hopefully show players that there is more than meets the eye with news today. It will be the perfect opportunity to start highlighting the message to think SMART. The game will hopefully shock people and help them accept that media literacy is a social issue. See *Appendix F*.

Tactic #5: Launch "How Lit Are You?" quiz. This is another quiz that will be modeled after quizzes done on Cosmo, BuzzFeed and other channels like Refinery 29. It will ask a series of questions and then at the end ask if the user answered mostly A's, B's or C's. This scale will tell users if they are literate or if they should improve their skills. This will also act as an eye-opener and get people to accept that this is a solution that society can work together to easily solve. See *Appendix G*.

**Objective 3: To have an effect on the action of consuming and producing quality news and information, specifically to demand change from higher-level producers and enablers.**

Tactic #5 may also be considered effective for this objective because it refers them to educational resources to effect change.

Tactic #6: Promote tips for action through videos. There are multiple videos that can be made to supplement this objective. One is relaying the SMART acronym and providing easy tips on how to be media literate. See *Appendix H*. Another idea is using a social media influencer who is an ally of the cause to talk about what media literacy means to them or how it can benefit society. This will impact people to change their behavior and enact change.

## Timeline

January-March 2018: Pitch campaign to NAMLE or The News Literacy Project. Confirm.

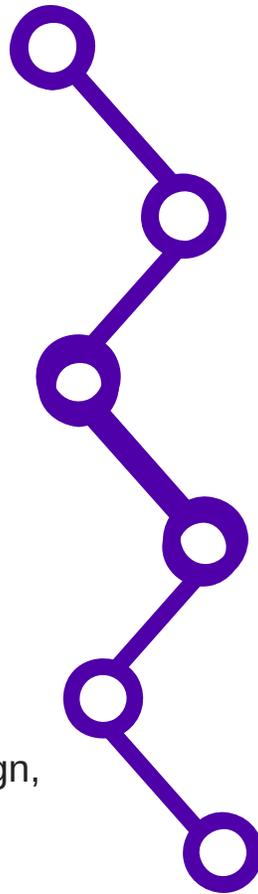
July-September 2018: Continue to pitch to publishers and confirm. Once confirmed, develop official graphic elements and finalize with Snapchat. Promote Media Literacy Week on personal channels.

November 5-9, 2018  
Monitor social media campaign, while promoting on personal accounts.

April-June 2018: Finalize campaign. Begin designing graphic elements and videos. Solidify and pitch to Snapchat publishers.

October 2018: Promote more frequently and do final checks with social tactics. Make sure graphics and videos are approved without any flaws.

December 2018: Evaluate analytics and conclude campaign. Create critical recommendations based on results.



## Budget

<b><u>Budget By Tactic</u></b>	<b><u>Materials</u></b>	<b><u>Labor</u></b>	<b><u>Snapchat</u></b>
#1-Digital posters	Software: 0-\$300 Canva, Adobe Suite	Graphic Designer: 0-\$120 an hour	Distribution/Ad Cost: \$50,000 a day (decreasing)
#2 -National Geofilter Lense	NA	NA	Sponsorships start at \$450,000 a day
#3- Listicle/slideshow on evolution of fake news	Possibly graphic design software: 0-\$300	Possible Writer's Pay \$8.10 per hour (Pitch)	Distribution \$50,000+ for ONE day
#4 "Who Said It?" Quiz	Software: 0-\$300 Canva, Adobe Suite	Graphic Designer: 0-\$120 an hour	Distribution \$50,000+ for ONE day
#5 "How Lit are you?" Quiz	Software: 0-\$300 Canva, Adobe Suite	Graphic Designer: 0-\$120 an hour	Distribution \$50,000+ for ONE day
#6 Promotional Video (Think SMART)	Software: 0-\$300 Canva, Adobe Suite	Graphic Designer/ Videographer: 0-\$200 an hour	Distribution \$50,000+ for ONE day

This budget is a worst-case scenario budget. Ideally, this campaign would be pitched to a non-profit organization such as the National Association for Media Literacy Education or The News Literacy Project. As a 501(c)(3), these organizations could easily find avenues for free or majorly discounted services for all tactics above.

As mentioned in the strategy, there are two ways this campaign to go. It would be ideal for this campaign to be stand-alone, but the Snapchat costs are daunting. The News Literacy Project would have a higher chance of pulling off this campaign without a partner.

Organizations like the National Association for Media Literacy Education will need to partner with a publisher channel to be able to execute this campaign at its current cost.

There were objections to this because it was hypothesized that media outlets will not want to partner or help host this campaign because they are advertising and sponsored based. Although this is true, some organizations have direct ties with The News Literacy Project as current sponsors and donors. Therefore these publishers would not want to look impractical to their stakeholders.

Also, a campaign like this is great for documenting corporate social responsibility and giving back to society. If media outlets do not want to support this because of financial reasons, it just corroborates the fact that the system is flawed and corrupt, which will cause this campaign's target audience to demand more change. This fact can be publicly voiced to denounce the system. It could even be a question in "How Lit are you?". (Which outlet currently believe in ethical news dissemination? Or which outlets supported this campaign?)

Either way this campaign could work and outweighs the anticipated objections.

## Evaluation

Evaluation will take place in December 2018. (Or as soon as analytics are available from Snapchat.) Snapchat is unfortunately not as measurable as other social networks, but by using tools like Narativ, Snaplytics, Delmondo, we can track: unique views, completion rates, screenshots, fall-off rates, time-of-day activity, and on-demand Geofilter metrics. These are currently the top six analytics that matter for evaluating Snapchat. (Russell, 2017)

Following this, the non-profit can sit down and evaluate with the Snapchat partner/sponsor to discuss the qualitative results of the campaign. This will hopefully lead to future developments, which will still count as a success because the industry itself is raising awareness, increasing acceptance and igniting action for media literacy education.

### Critical Recommendations:

I would suggest doing more research on Gen-Z and news consumption. For example, researching if there are any correlations between social media consumption and voting turn out. More research on millennial's values will be insightful for future campaigns or initiatives. I would also definitely move forward with transferring the campaign to other social media platforms to see how they fare.

Another project unrelated to millennials to research would be the advertising based system of media outlets. Are there any alternatives to this system? This would be the next step once we break free of biased reporting and inaccuracies.

# ***Appendices***

## Appendix A

### **Prospectus Research The Fourth Estate: Facts of the Matter Introduction**

The 2016 Presidential Election will be studied for a long time. Society witnessed how media can influence public perception. Many people believe that media adversely affected the election, resulting in Donald Trump's unpredicted win. Discontent with the media has come about from the sheer amount of news outlets available, as well as, political polarization found in much of the media (Soergel, 2016). Researching what effects the media has on the public can help us begin to comprehend and even improve how to convey accurate information.

"Now, only about a third of the U.S. has any trust in the Fourth Estate, a stunning development for an institution designed to inform the public" (Gallup, 2016). The Fourth Estate is a synonym for "the press" or media. The Fourth Estate acts as a check for government institutions. Without an independent press, a true democracy could not survive because citizens could not make informed decisions in the absence of factual reporting. "Agenda setting" or "framing", will occur, which is when these government institutions or outside parties influence the salience of news within media. Agenda setting and framing will distort facts in favor of promoting a personal truth. This does not offer news consumers the fair opportunity to make informed decisions.

While the freedom of the press offers a platform for free speech and opinion sharing, it is important to distinguish the line between truth and fact. In a digital society, we are exposed to more sources of information. This can make it hard for consumers to analyze news accurately. Social media offers a solution to this by compressing news offered via print and broadcast. This raises awareness on social issues as a whole. However, the quality of awareness is adversely affected when personal truths become fact. When a society becomes accustomed to opinion-based information, it lowers the standards for the stringent reporting of the past.

This notion is a part of the controversial debate of what news actually is. The Columbia Journalism Review accurately summarized this generational difference:

**The old guard argued that they were driven by the quest for truth, and by their sense of what citizens need to know to be informed participants in democracy. Reporting was all about locking down the facts and presenting them to readers, who would know best how to take advantage of the light we shined. Digital journalists countered that their way was more honest and democratic—and quicker. If that meant presenting stories before they'd been thoroughly vetted, that was okay, because the internet would correct itself. Truth would emerge through open trial and error. (Fisher, 2016)**

This poses the question of whether it is the role of the news outlet to portray facts or its own truth, or if it is the responsibility of the news consumer to discern the difference for themselves.

Although we are progressing into a digital age, the quantity may not be as beneficial as quality in terms of information dissemination. The “quicker” or authentic way of sharing news conflicts with the very code to which journalism adheres. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics maintains that journalists should “seek truth and report it”. This means reporting accurately, fairly and thoroughly. The Public Relations Society of America’s Code of Ethics has provisions for practitioners to contribute to the “free flow of information” and “disclosure of information” to promote transparent communication of facts. The Radio Television Digital News Association holds “truth above all.” In fact, it is stated that “The facts should get in the way of a good story. Journalism requires more than merely reporting remarks, claims or comments. Journalism verifies, provides relevant context, tells the rest of the story and acknowledges the absence of important additional information”.

Each code of ethics in the mass communications industry has a provision that promotes facts over opinion. If we continue to approach the news with this new outlook of quick and raw information, we lose our integrity as the Fourth Estate. Lack of trust in journalism became evident in society’s discontent for the media because of its involvement in the 2016 presidential election, This proves that ethics still matter to the public and should matter to all gatekeepers of information.

On the other hand, it is crucial that news consumers actively seek information for themselves. Individuals limit their capabilities of making the most informed and accurate opinions and decisions by relying on sources that engage in partisan-aligned values.

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory explores how individuals are as responsible for their behaviors their environments are. In terms of self-regulation, Bandura found that there is a trend in discrepancy reduction, which means that people are more likely to change their perceptions to reflect an adopted standard. This is why individuals build relationships with those who share similar values or why individuals choose information sources that align with personal beliefs. Individuals must push themselves out the comfort zone and seek non-partisan (or at least more objective) sources of information. By engaging in "discrepancy production," individuals motivate themselves to adopt new ideas or form new opinions and ultimately learn (Bandura, 2001).

My thesis will analyze both sides of the relationship between outlet and consumer. It will explore specifically how news outlets convey information and its effects on the information perceived. My thesis will also attempt to seek out new methods of improving consumer awareness of these effects through testing the two different conventions of journalism mentioned previously. By proving that traditional journalistic practices are more beneficial to society, I will help create a more informed public and aim to rebuild public trust in the Fourth Estate

## Literature Review

Marshall McLuhan was a technological determinist that stated, "The medium is the message." What McLuhan meant was that the message of communication, information, relied on the medium of dissemination used. He predicted that as technology progressed, our culture would regress. McLuhan hinted that mass communicators must look at the medium to parse meaning from a message. This proves why it is crucial to analyze the source of news and linguistic style within a message. (McLuhan)

My thesis analyzes the medium of broadcast television because it is still the leading source of news consumption in the United States. Social media is a hot topic in communication research trends because it is a new topic that keeps expanding. Although social media is trending, a 2016 Pew Research Center study still found that 57 percent of US adults consume news via Television. Social media and online resources follow this with 38 percent. Television is also the best source to analyze because of the decline in print media outlets and the rapid growth of social media news outlets. Now a premise must be established stating that news is in fact reported differently. By proving that news is reported differently, whether it be by framing or other means, we can infer that certain network viewers are at a disadvantage when receiving information. It is subjective to say that certain news stations are biased. Therefore we must statistically represent this premise to develop my thesis.

These subjective leanings can still be used to help determine which networks to analyze and also what to predict. (Engel, 2014) The “Big Three” networks are Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. (Schneider, 2016) Fox News and CNN are selected not only because of high viewership but also because they explicitly represent polarized parties more than the other. MSNBC is rather neutral in ideological scope and has accrued a large viewership, which will provide a control to compare to. (Engel, 2016)

Visual communication could provide an opportunity to establish this premise. Compressed and competing information accompanies the rise of the digital age. Information is now being compressed to the point in which an emoticon can represent an entire sentence. This is a trending topic in the mass communication world, especially when it comes to design and universal symbols. (Adami, 2016) The use of specific visual concepts and symbols could make it easy to deduce the differences in how television represents information because of the variety of meanings and contexts. Applying universal symbols would be subjective and much harder to quantify. We all possess our own personal definitions of what symbols and visual icons mean to us, i.e. our own personal symbols. This would therefore not be measurable nor applicable to larger society and would thus not satisfy the needs of my research.

Language choice, however, serves as a more applicable link between information consumption and perception. Language can be translated to fit the needs of different cultures if needed. The words and their connotations in news broadcasts are paramount because they can guide the thoughts and opinions of viewers.

Previous research has made it important to acknowledge that tone and inflection of the speaker's voice in broadcast journalism. Tone can influence perception of information and distort the quality of factual information. (Laplante, 2003) This is why I chose to solely analyze linguistic choices.

The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count 2015 is a successful software in identifying linguistic patterns. For example, it has been used in past research to reflect differences in gender through writing. (Lin, 2016) It has also been used to analyze honesty and deception of prison inmates. (Tobin, 2007) It offers more than 80 categories to analyze linguistic patterns through.

LIWC 2015 effectively analyzes and identifies emotion in word choice. Its evaluation process is consistent with human identification and allows users to identify words by emotion objectively for research. "For example, positive emotion words (e.g., love, nice, sweet) are used in writing about a positive event, and more negative emotion words (e.g., hurt, ugly, nasty) are used in writing about a negative event (Kahn, Tobin, Massey, & Anderson, 2007)." (Tobin, 2007) It quantifies the number of words representing these emotional categories and allows the user to statistically represent differences for my own research.

I would ultimately like to complete another brief literature review on the second part of my research. This could explore tone and voice inflection as I plan on completing a listening component to my study. This could also explore the generational difference of new reporting by discussing current conventions within a focus group of diverse generations.

## **Abstract**

The Fourth Estate, news media, has emerged as a source of discontent for Americans. This has specifically come to light through the 2016 US presidential election. In 1976, 72 percent of Americans trusted the media, yet now less than a third of Americans feel that they have a “great deal” or “fair amount” of trust in mass media (Gallup, 2016). I hypothesize that the concepts of truth and fact may differ in terms of mass media outlets and their publics because of the language used. The research conducted will analyze the degree to which broadcast news outlets portray this consensus and whether there is an ensuing “selective” viewership from Americans. Television programming of three major news networks was linguistically analyzed through software, from March 18-20, for “emotional” word choice. This study, over time, should find that there is a perceivable difference in how news is reported to viewers through language choice either as positive or negative. This conclusion will be further explored to explain the relationship between consumers and outlets, with hopes to answer whether it is the responsibility of the fourth estate to present truth or fact, or if it is the role of the reader to not engage in selective viewership based on partisan values. These distinctions will help society consume news responsibly and be more accurately informed or educated on societal issues, as well as, help the “the press” regain trust.

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## Appendix B

# MILLENNIAL NEWS VALUES

What do millennials look for in news sources?

According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials (18-35) make up 79.8 million of the population and are the largest living generation.

Only a third of all Americans trust news outlets today.

With Millennials serving as the largest population, it's crucial to look at their values with news sources.

## SOCIAL MEDIA STATS



Facebook has the highest engagement per visitor.



Snapchat is the leading social network for Gen-Z millennials, but has seen the greatest amount of age diversity in usage.



Instagram is the second high engagement per visitor and the leading social network for Gen-Y millennials.



# 85

PERCENT

of adults say accuracy is the primary reason they trust a news source.

# 76

PERCENT

of adults say having the latest details make a media outlet trustworthy.

# 72

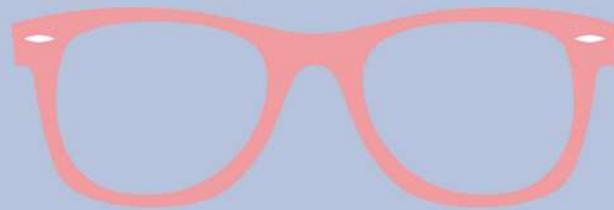
PERCENT

of adults value simple and concise reporting to trust a news source.

## Appendix C



## Appendix C



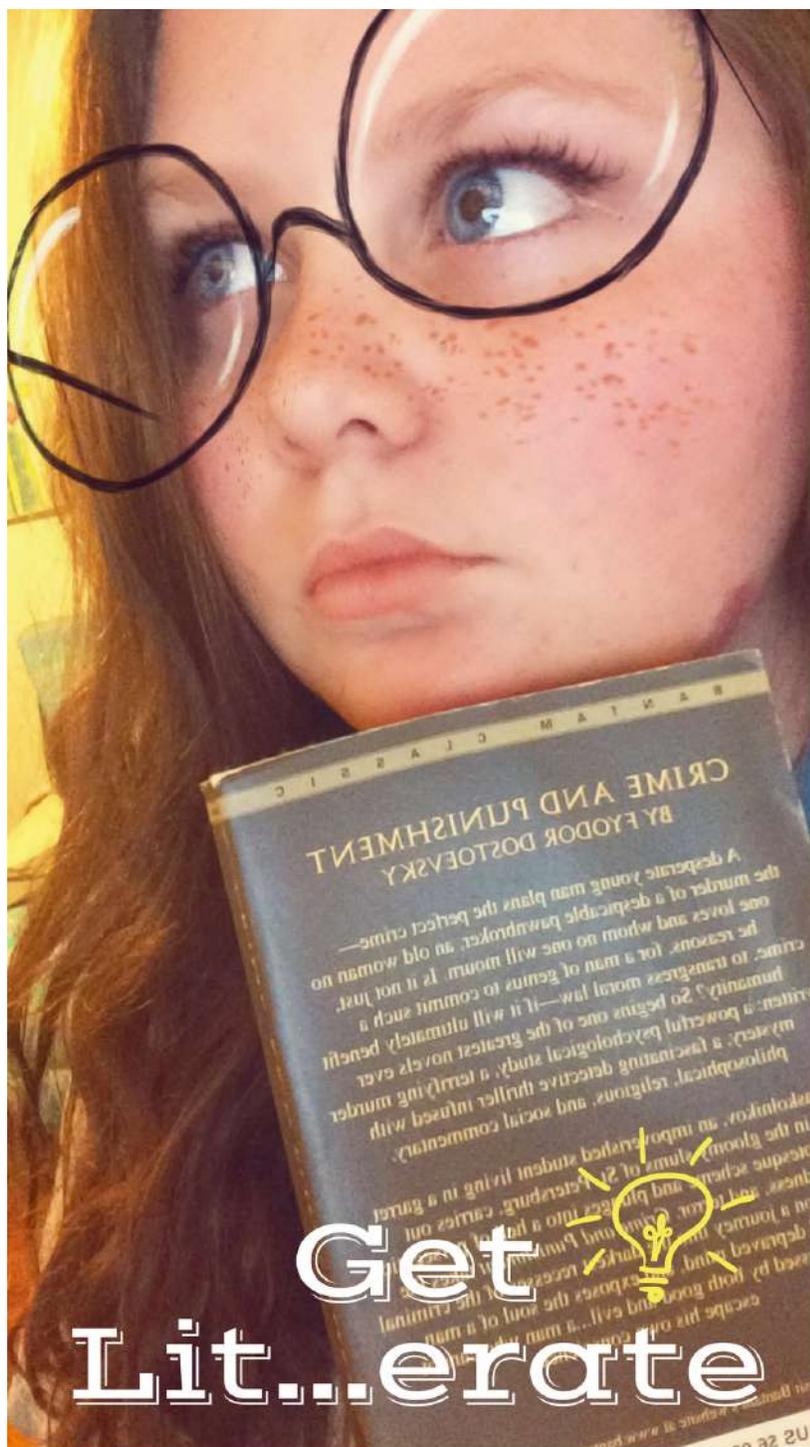
I make know-it-all  
look good.

#GETLITERATE

## Appendix C



## Appendix D



## Appendix D



## Appendix E

**BuzzFeed**

[News](#)

[Videos](#)

[Quizzes](#)

[Tasty](#)

[More](#) ▾

Search

# 11 Bizarre Places In The US That You Need To Know About

The strangest places are always the most memorable.

Posted on May 2, 2017, at 5:48 p.m.



T-Mobile

Brand Publisher

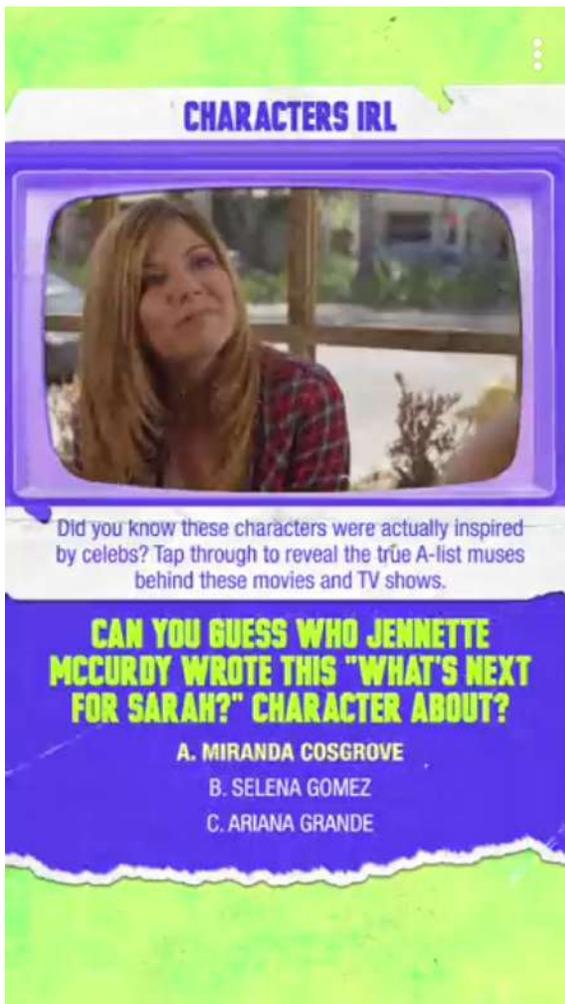


## 1. The Cushing Brain Collection — Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut



Sample styled post

## Appendix F



Sample layout

## Appendix F

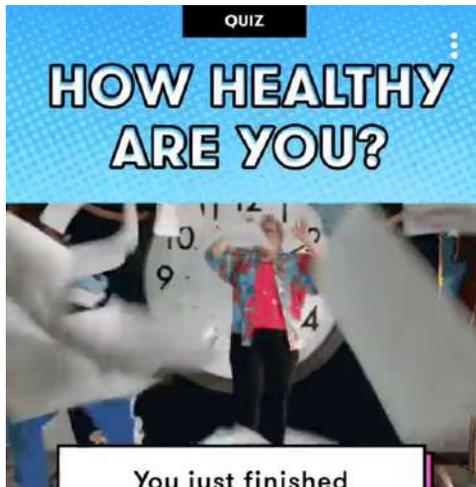
### Sample Headlines

Links for matching headlines game:

- Trump's Position on DACA is as 'clear as mud'-Fox
  - <http://video.foxnews.com/v/5576229316001/?#sp=show-clips>
- DACA Deal: Trump & Dems differ over potential border wall funds- MSNBC
  - <http://www.msnbc.com/brian-williams/watch/daca-deal-trump-dems-differ-over-potential-border-wall-funds-1046288451577>
- Disbelief, outrage and shrugs: How Trump's bipartisan immigration dinner shuffled the swamp
  - <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/14/politics/daca-congress-gop/index.html>
- Trump gets a first-hand look at the damage from Irma- Fox
  - <http://video.foxnews.com/v/5576532767001/?#sp=show-clips>
- Trump Dismisses Climate Change Question by Contradicting Himself on Hurricanes- CNN
  - <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/14/politics/trump-climate-change-hurricanes/index.html>
- Deadly earthquake shakes Mexico City, collapses buildings -MSNBC
  - <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc-news/watch/mexico-7-1-quake-absolutely-horrific-images-1050111043879>
- Buildings toppled in Mexico City amid widespread damage that knocked out power for millions -CNN
  - <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/19/americas/mexico-earthquake/index.html>
- Rescue efforts under way after powerful earthquake kills more than 100 -Fox
  - <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/09/19/7-1-magnitude-earthquake-shakes-mexico-city.html>
- UN speech: Trump says 'Rocket Man' Kim Jong Un on 'suicide mission,' in broadside at 'rogue regimes'-Fox
  - <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/09/19/un-speech-trump-says-rocket-man-kim-jong-un-on-suicide-mission-in-broadside-at-rogue-regimes.html>
- Trump to UN: 'Rocket Man is on a suicide mission'-CNN
  - <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/18/politics/donald-trump-un-speech-iran-north-korea/index.html>
- Trump threatens to 'destroy' North Korea and 'Rocket Man' -MSNBC
  - <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/trump-denounces-north-korea-in-united-nations-speech-1049804867728>

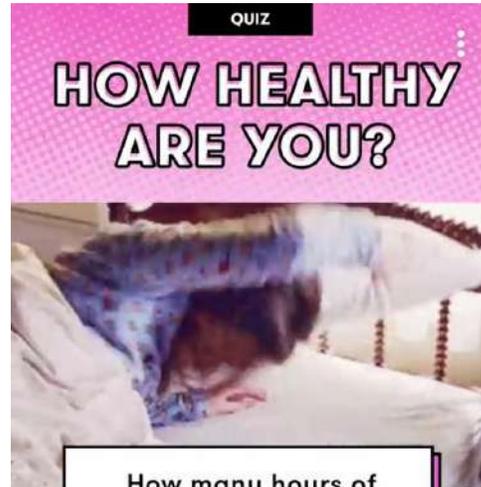
## Appendix G

### Sample Layout



You just finished a brutal week of tests. To reward yourself you:

- A. Relax with a bubble bath and call it an early night.
- B. Stay up and watch the last part of that movie.
- C. Party! All. Night. Long.

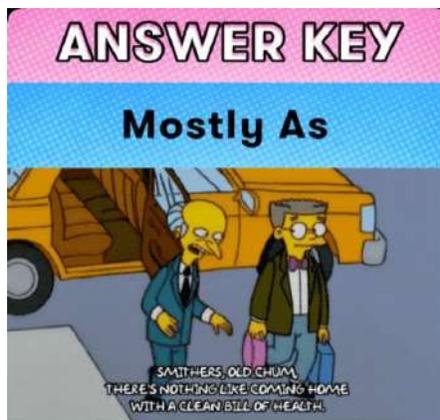


How many hours of sleep a night do you get on average?

- A. 8-9 hours
- B. 6-8 hours
- C. Less than 6 hours

Keep tapping to finish the quiz Keep tapping to finish the

Keep tapping to finish the quiz Keep tapping to finish the



Fox via Giphy

You take great care with your hygiene, diet, and sleep. With all the hustle and bustle of life, that's definitely no easy feat. Keep doing what you're doing; your mind and body thank you. Don't forget to take some exercise breaks in between studying and Netflix. It can be easy to slip out of healthy habits, especially when school work starts

## Appendix G

### Sample Questions

- How do you consume news?
- How often do you consume news on these outlets per week?
- Why do consume news this way?
- Which news station identifies most with Republican values?
- Which news station identifies most with Liberal values?
- Which news station have the most neutral values?

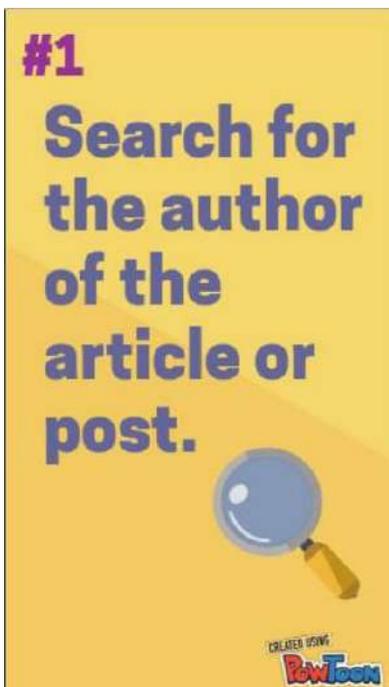
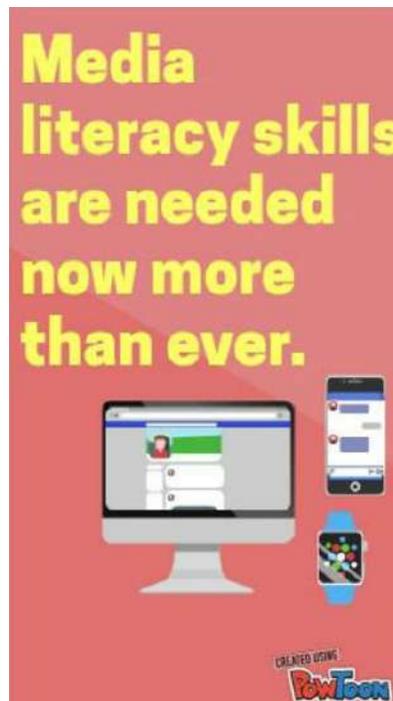
### Likert Questions

It is important for me to consume news.  
It is important for me to be media literate.  
Language is an important factor in how news is told.  
Fake news is real.  
Fake news is the responsibility of the media to discern.  
It is my responsibility to decide what is fake news.  
News stations are politically aligned.  
News stations should be politically aligned.



## Appendix H

View video live: <https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/bBA7hNS80xW/media-literacy/>



## Appendix H

View video live: <https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/bBA7hNS80xW/media-literacy/>

**Think about why the information is posted in the first place.**

CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

**#3**  
**Apprehend the message.**

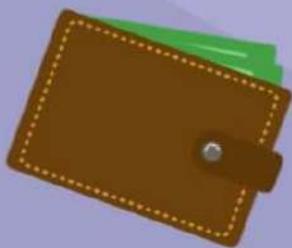


CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

**Look at word choice and style to understand how the message got your attention.**

CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

**#4**  
**Remember who paid.**



CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

**Think about who sponsored the post, article, or information. They could be more involved than you realize.**

CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

**#5**  
**Think about what's missing.**



CREATED USING  
**PowToon**

## Appendix H

View video live: <https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/bBA7hNS80xW/media-literacy/>

**Think about  
who is being  
represented  
and who is not.  
Is there a side  
missing?**

CREATED USING  
**POWTOON**

**It's simple,  
think SMART!**

Seek the author

Mind the motive

Apprehend the message

Remember who paid

Think about what's missing



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