



8

FACT SHEET

ARE THEY TRYING TO INFORM YOU OR SELL YOU SOMETHING?

OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRICULUM

DISCIPLINES AND LEVELS CONCERNED

Ethics and Religious Culture (Elementary – Cycle 3)

Think about ethical questions

- Acquire autonomous, critical and creative thinking.

TARGETED DIMENSIONS OF THE DIGITAL COMPETENCY

- Develop and engage information literacy;
- Exploit the potential of digital technology for learning;
- Develop critical thinking regarding digital information;
- Produce content with digital technology;
- Innovate and show creativity with digital technology.

SUGGESTED DIGITAL TOOLS

- Create a video: Clips (iOS), Funimate (Android);
- Analyze a publication: Instagram.

EDUCATIONAL INTENTION OF THE GUIDE

By the end of these activities, the students will be able to recognize two types of non-traditional advertising, concealed in different formats and sometimes hard to identify.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES

- Identify good practices concerning publication of sponsored content;
- Think about and discuss the importance of clearly identifying advertising in media;
- Create a post containing sponsored content while respecting good advertising practices;
- Discuss the students' relationship with sponsored content found everywhere on social media.

BEFORE BEGINNING: QUESTIONNAIRE

- Ask students to identify where they normally see advertising. (Examples to help them think about it: on television, in a banner on a website, just before a YouTube video, at the bottom of the screen when they play a mobile game, on radio, between two songs on Spotify, etc.);
- Ask students if they think that ads are sometimes hidden from them.

HIDDEN ADVERTISING

Traditional advertising is easy to identify. We see it between two segments of a TV show and on YouTube, just before a video that interests us. It often interrupts games we're playing on our phone and can sometimes be found at the bottom of an app screen.

But when we're looking for information or entertainment on social media and Web platforms, we must be twice as careful. It isn't unusual for a favourite YouTuber to advertise a product... without saying this clearly. Sometimes it's even hidden intentionally or presented in a way that makes it pass for information or opinion! The same for fake journalism published solely for the purpose of advertising. They often try to sell us something without our knowledge.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INFORMATION AND ADVERTISING

Information is based on verifiable facts, such as events, observations, dates, eye-witness accounts, etc. Whether it's in the form of a journalistic article or a post on social media, or slipped into a conversation, it's communicated by someone who intends to inform us.

Advertising is a sales strategy, designed so that a company is talked about, sells more goods or services, and makes profits. The intention behind an ad is to sell us something, no matter whether it's published in a newspaper or subtly integrated into an Instagram post.

Information is nuanced while advertising only sheds light on the positive aspect (the selling point) of a product, service or company.

WEB PERSONALITIES AND CELEBRITIES

Influencers are followed by a large number of people on social media. Their tastes and opinions have an impact on their audience, who generally share their values. This is why more and more companies are turning to influencers to talk about them. Web personalities have direct and privileged contact with their subscribers and influence their lifestyle and consumption.

Many influencers earn a living from their posts on social media. They depend on advertising contracts that companies award them.

Because many web users follow them, celebrities often also play this influencer role.

When a Web personality receives a free product or is paid to talk about it, this is advertising. Under Canadian law, it must be disclosed *. But some personalities get around these rules and don't tell us, so we fall into the trap.

* Source: Competition Bureau website

In Canada, the Competition Act governs influencers' practices. The Competition Bureau's website states that influencers must clearly indicate any connection with a company, a product or a service they promote. These connections may be:

- A payment;
- Products or services received free of charge;
- Discounts;
- Free trips or event tickets;
- Personal or family ties.

This indication must be visible, clear and honest, while following these guidelines:

- Identified by obvious hashtags (#ad, #advertisement, #spon, #sponsored, #COMPANY_Partner, #PaidPost)
- Identified in the functions provided for this purpose on social media.

VIDEOS FAR FROM REALITY

Have you ever watched a video in which a child is unboxing new toys? In front of the camera, the child discovers popular new dolls, collector cards, collectible figurines... It's fascinating, even hypnotizing. This type of video is a sensation on YouTube. Millions of people watch them. After viewing one of these videos, it isn't unusual to want to buy everything presented to us!

However, it's important to know that most of the people who create these videos:

- Make a lot of money from YouTube. In some cases, producing these videos is a full-time job;
- Receive free products (like games and gadgets) from companies that want to increase their visibility. In this case, the creators are sometimes obliged to say good things about the product;
- Are often paid to speak about one product in particular. Companies very often pay content creators to speak about them and their products in their videos, blogs or posts. Instead of paying for a TV or radio ad, they go through Web personalities to reach their target audience. Companies continue to operate this way because these creators are very powerful persuaders of their audience and this type of advertising generates a lot of money.

We must therefore remember that their videos don't represent reality and are often hidden ads. Like influencers, YouTubers are supposed to tell their audience when they are advertising.

This phenomenon applies not only to unboxing videos, but to plenty of other Internet content (whether on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram or other outlets). Here are some examples:

- Gaming videos (video games, mobile apps);
- Critiques of games and technological gadgets;
- "Reaction" videos to films, series, games, albums, etc.;
- Tutorials (makeup, do-it-yourself, arts, etc.);
- "Haul" videos showing recent purchases.

Glossary

Content creators may use several other terms to refer to an ad or content for which they were paid or sponsored. Pay close attention to their vocabulary!

- Sponsored content;
- Gift;
- Ambassador;
- Ad;
- Partnership;
- Collaboration;
- Product received;
- Sponsor or sponsored.

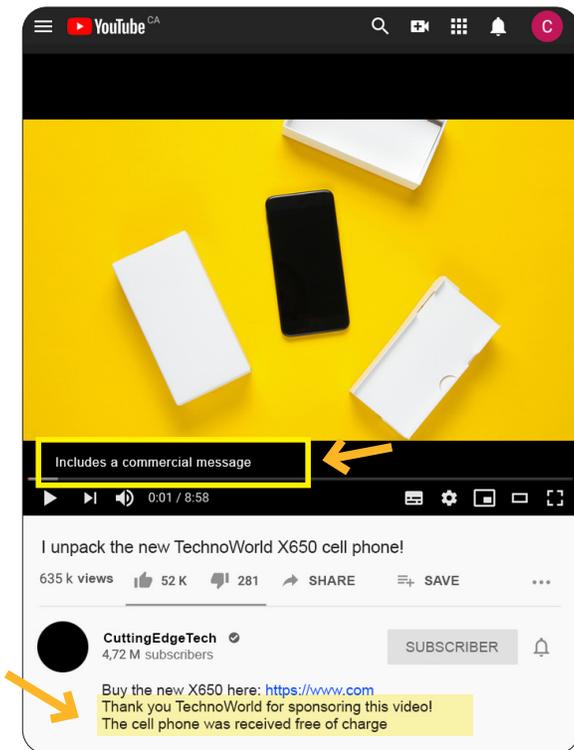
HOW TO IDENTIFY ADVERTISING ON WEB PLATFORMS

Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have functions that allow content creators to clearly identify promotions and ads. They can also be identified in the “Descriptions” section of the posts. Here are some examples:

YouTube

The ad (or sponsored content) is identified by a banner. We can read “Includes a commercial communication” in the bottom left-hand corner of the video.

Often YouTubers will also indicate the nature of their content (free product received, paid promotion, etc.) in the description box below the video. Click on the “Plus” button to access this box.



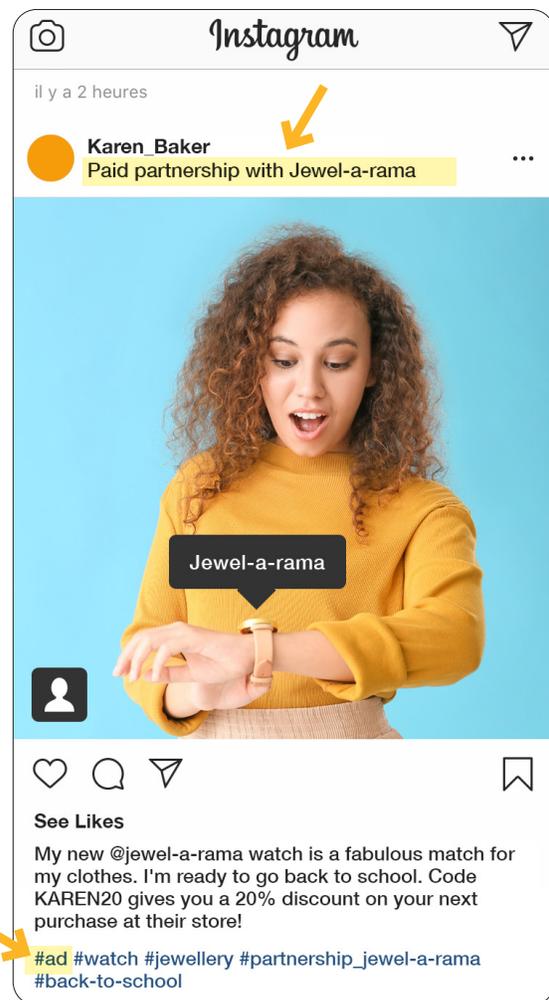
Instagram

On Instagram, the creator indicates if the content is sponsored in a banner above the post. We can read “Paid partnership with [name of company]”.

Often the creator also uses hashtags like #ad, #advertising and #productreceived in the description box.

TikTok

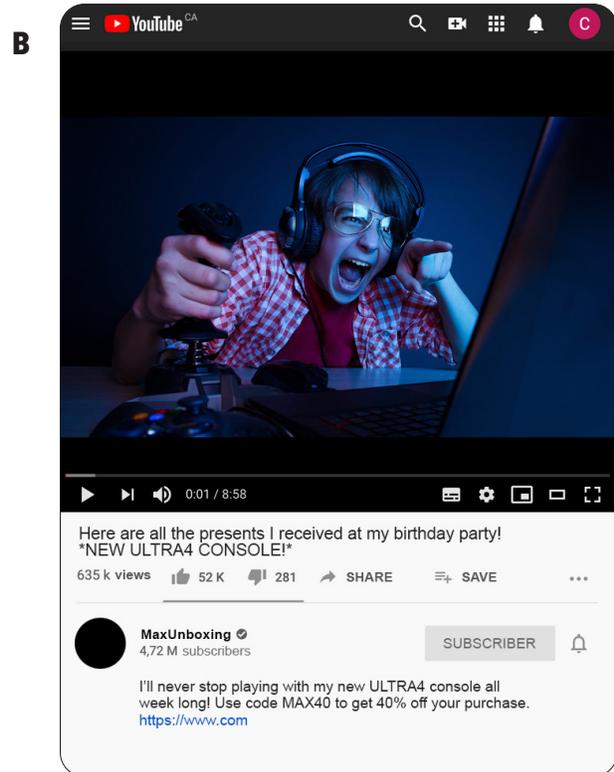
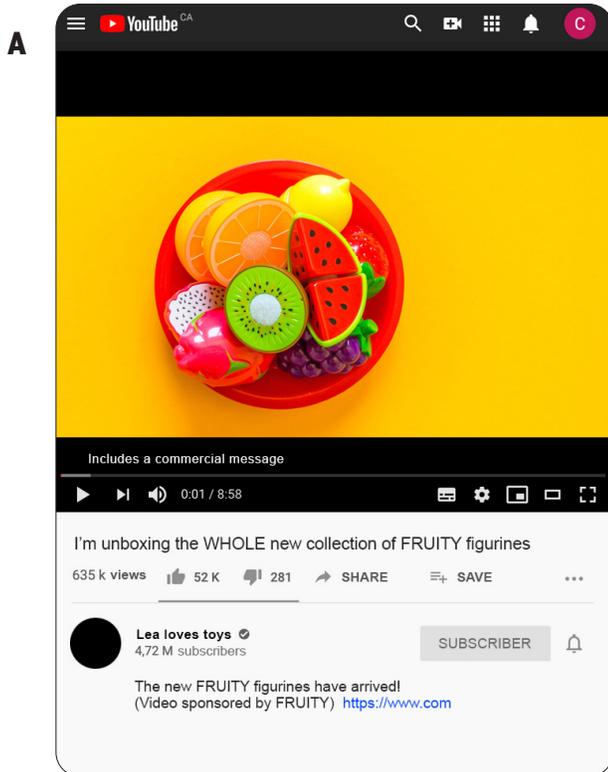
The TikTok app still doesn't have a function to identify sponsored content. However, TikTok creators can use hashtags, as they do with Instagram, to tell their audience they are watching an ad.



EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

These two YouTubers were paid to talk about a company in a video. Which one follows good practices? Explain your choice.



EXERCISE 2

You can find advertising anywhere, but is it easy to identify? The teacher is invited to test students' knowledge by presenting the following examples and asking them if they risk being exposed to advertising.

1. Instagram
 - a) A friend's profile
 - b) Profile of a celebrity/influencer
2. A print newspaper
3. An online information media outlet
4. Facebook
5. YouTube
 - a) The YouTube page of a professional video game player;
 - b) The CBC YouTube page.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 3

Ask students to create their own video or commercial publication and “publish” it according to standard practices.

EXERCISE 4

Ask students if paid posts affect their perception of the creators and the content they like.

Suggestion: Use Instagram, for example, and target the influencers young people like. As a group, analyze the posts that contain sponsored content. Present some examples on the interactive whiteboard (IWB). Get the students to respond on their relationship with the ads. What do they like more or less about this kind of content? Do they consider they can be easily influenced by these posts? What elements in an ad attract their attention more? Do they find there's too much sponsored content on Instagram or any other social media they visit?

ANSWER KEY

1.

The right answer is A. The “Includes a commercial communication banner” quickly tells us what we’re dealing with. In addition, Lea loves toys indicated in the description of her video that she was sponsored by FRUITY.

Video B may mislead viewers because it doesn’t clearly indicate that its author is paid to talk about the new ULTRA4 console. The promotional code “MAX40” isn’t a clear disclosure of the nature of the partnership between MaxUnboxing and ULTRA4.

2.1

- a) Advertising can be found almost anywhere on the app. However, our friend risks not being paid for promoting a product or service.
- b) Influencers often do advertising. However, they must clearly identify this in their posts. We must be vigilant anywhere because the rules aren’t always obeyed.

2.2

In a newspaper, the ads are clearly identified and separated from the articles. However, there may be advertorials (see Fact Sheet #5 for secondary school students – *How to recognize hidden advertising*). Advertorials are also clearly identified.

2.3

Serious online media generally follow the same rules as traditional newspapers. In a newspaper, the ads are clearly identified and separated from the articles. However, there may be advertorials (see Fact Sheet #5 for secondary school students – *How to recognize hidden advertising*). Advertorials are also clearly identified.

2.4

Advertising can be found almost anywhere on the platform. However, our friends risk not being paid for promoting a product or service. Beware of celebrities and influences you “like” on Facebook.

2.5

- a) Advertising can be found almost anywhere on the platform. Each video is preceded by an ad and creators may insert commercial breaks in the middle of their videos. Games are often paid and sponsored by companies to promote their products.
- b) Advertising can be found almost anywhere on the platform. Each video is preceded by an ad.