



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 6 to 9

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Online Marketing to Kids: Strategies and Techniques



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

This lesson introduces students to the online marketing techniques that are used to target children on the Internet. It begins with a guided discussion about the similarities and differences between traditional marketing methods and online advertising and why the Internet is such a desirable medium for advertisers to reach young people. Student activities include the creation of a commercial website for kids that incorporates common marketing strategies; and an analysis of case studies about online marketing to young people.

Learning Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- an awareness of the format and structure of online advertisements
- an awareness of the differences between television advertising and Internet marketing
- an understanding of their own reactions, as consumers, to these ads

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the student handouts:

- *Kids for Sale: Television versus the Internet*
- *Advertising Strategies*
- *Online Marketing Strategies*
- *Top 10 Most Popular Kids' Apps and Websites*
- *Making a Kids' Website*

If students are completing the final task on paper, have on hand art supplies such as bulletin boards, scissors, magazines, paint, glue sticks and magic markers. If they are using online tools, arrange for internet access.



Prepare to distribute the case studies: *Pat's Story: Making Friends with Wallaby*, *Shruti's Story: Under the Influence* and *Jessica's Story: Co-Co's Choco World* to give to students. For yourself, download the analyses of these case studies *Between the Lines: Analyzing Pat's Online Experience*, *Between the Lines: Analyzing Shruti's Online Experience* and *Between the Lines: Analyzing Jessica's Online Experience*.

Procedure

Advertising Strategies

Begin by asking your students to share product jingles, slogans or ad campaigns they remember. Ask them:

- What are the sources of these ads? (ie, magazines, television, radio)
- Which, if any, of these advertisements do they think they will remember years from now? (Teachers might like to share some jingles or ads from their childhoods, as examples of how ads can be ingrained into our consciousness.)
- What elements make these ads so powerful?

Distribute and discuss the student handout *Marketing to Teens: Advertising Strategies*. Discuss these traditional marketing methods and encourage students to think of examples. Other advertising strategies such as the use of prizes, contests and give-aways might also be discussed.

All of us have experienced advertising -- on television, in films, on billboards, on the radio and in magazines. But in the past few years, a whole new medium has emerged that is unlike any other in its ability to target and engage consumers.

Distribute and discuss the student handout *Kids for Sale: Television versus the Internet*. Ask students:

- Have they noticed any of the differences that have just been discussed?
- What kinds of advertisements have they noticed online? (Ask them to record these points for later reference.)
 - Do they sometimes see references to products online that they either don't think or aren't sure are advertisements (references in posts, photos or videos by friends or celebrities, for instance)?
- Discuss the concept of "flow-state," that mental state we enter when we become totally absorbed in an activity such as surfing online or playing a video game. Researchers have found that when we enter this state of mind, we become extremely receptive to the messages and images that we encounter.
 - What advantages does this phenomenon offer marketers? (ie., they can sell us their products without our being aware that we are being sold to.)
 - What challenges does this flow state pose to marketers? (ie., they have to create ads that capitalize on, but don't interrupt, the user's flow-state.)

Next, distribute and discuss the *Online Marketing Strategies* handout. Ask students if any of them have encountered these strategies online. How does online marketing utilize and enhance the traditional marketing strategies that you discussed previously?



Marketing Analysis

- Let students choose one of the case studies *Pat's Story: Making Friends with Wallaby*, *Shruti's Story: Under the Influence* or *Jessica's Story: Co-Co's Choco World*.
- Students are to read their chosen case study and write a two-page analysis of the marketing methods used to appeal to a particular target market, in these cases: boys ages 11 to 15 and children ages 5 to 9. In their analysis, students should also note any issues that emerge from these case studies.
- Once student analyses have been submitted, review *Between the Lines: Analyzing Pat's Online Experience*, *Between the Lines: Analyzing Shruti's Online Experience* and *Between the Lines: Analyzing Jessica's Online Experience*.

Sample Kids' Site

- Divide the class into groups and distribute the assignment sheet *Making a Kids' Website*.
- Each group assumes the role of a company that wants to build a commercial website for children.
- Using the online advertising methods they have studied, students will create a mock-up of a web page with "kid appeal" for their company or product.
- Depending on the time and technology available, you may either have them create a paper version of the website or make their website online. This can be done by cutting-and-pasting printed text and graphics onto poster paper or done entirely by hand, at your discretion.
- If your students already have Google accounts, the easiest option will Google Sites (<https://sites.google.com/new>). You can get an overview of how it works here: <https://support.google.com/sites/answer/6372878?hl=en>

If your students do not have Google accounts, you may create an account specifically for this project and have students create different pages using that account. If you choose this option students will be able to access each others' pages, so make sure they know to only access their own.

If you would prefer not to use Google Sites, you can explore the following free website creation tools:

<https://snappages.com/>

<https://www.sitey.com/>

<https://www.weebly.com/ca>

<https://www.wix.com/>

You may also want to read the MediaSmarts article *Fair Dealing for Media Education* (<https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/media-issues/intellectual-property/fair-dealing-media-education>) to help give your students guidance on using other images legally and ethically.

- This assignment includes production of a mock web page and a written "Site Plan" outlining:
 - the target audience of the site
 - the advertising methods selected to appeal to the target audience
 - why these particular methods have been selected
- Each group will present its "site" to the class, and submit its site and "Site Plan" to the teacher.



Extension Activity

If you are delivering this lesson for younger students, you may consider supplementing this lesson with the TVOntario Original Series *Wacky Media Songs*. These short videos explore a variety of digital media literacy topics, including advertising and marketing. Here are a few suggested videos and discussion topics:

[Create the Hype!](#) There's a whole marketing machine behind movies and they start to create the hype way before the movie even opens by selling us hoodies, toys, t-shirts and more! Guess what? We help create that hype when we wear or use their merchandise!

Before the video, ask: Do you have any clothes or toys that were made to promote a movie, a TV show or a video game? Have you first ever heard about a game, movie or show that way?

After the video, ask: Why do you think marketers use things like toys and clothes to build hype for games, movies or TV shows? How do you feel about giving them free advertising by wearing those clothes? (It's okay if they do! Kids love media and sometimes like being "brand ambassadors." But they should understand that's what they're doing.)

[Words That Sell!](#) Risk-free! Virtually unbreakable! Once-in-a-lifetime! Marketers use words to sell us products and sometimes those words don't even mean anything, but they can still have the power to persuade us!

Before the video, ask: Do you think ads have to tell the truth about what they're selling? How might they say something misleading without actually lying?

After the video, ask: Can you think of any other examples of "weasel words" that make something sound good without actually saying something? Why could an ad say a product is "the best" but not say it's "better" than another product? (A lot of products are basically the same. So any of them could say they're the "best" but none of them can say they're "better" than any other.)

[Just Another Influencer](#) Ava sings a duet with Vava, her favorite influencer! An influencer can feel like a friend, but we should always keep in mind that they're not necessarily authorities and it's okay to question what they say.

Before the video, ask: Do you or your friends follow any influencers online? (Make sure to include streamers and YouTubers.)

After the video, ask: What are some things that make us feel like influencers are our friends? How does that make us want to buy things they talk about?

What are some differences between influencers and real friends?

[They Really Like Us!](#) Marketers like kids because we spend lots of money buying their stuff. Ava sings about some of the tricks marketers use to target kids.

Before the video, ask: Why do you think marketers aim their ads at kids? What makes kids such a valuable audience?

After the video, ask: What are some of the ways that marketers target kids? (Cute characters, video games that feature their brand, putting products at kids' eye-level.)

Why do they sometimes show you ads for things you won't be ready to buy for a long time, like cars? (So that you'll have good feelings about the brand by the time you're old enough to buy it.)



Kids for Sale: Television versus the Internet

As traditional forms of advertising, such as TV commercials, are becoming less effective, marketers are pressed to find even more innovative and aggressive ways to cut through the “ad clutter” or “ad fatigue” of modern life. As well, the popularity of streaming services such as Netflix or Disney Plus means that today’s kids see an average of four hundred fewer hours of TV ads compared to watching commercial TV – making advertisers all the more determined to reach them in other ways.

The internet is an especially desirable medium for marketers who want to target children. This is because:

- It’s part of youth culture. This generation of young people is growing up with the internet as a daily and routine part of their lives.
- Parents generally do not understand the extent to which kids are being marketed to online.
- Kids are often online alone, without parental supervision.
- Sophisticated technologies make it easy to collect information from young people for marketing research and to target individual children with personalized advertising.
- Even though advertising to children is monitored through the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards and the Competition Act, it is still allowed (except in Quebec).
- By creating engaging, interactive environments based on products and brand names, companies can easily build brand loyalties from an early age.
- “Flow” is the mental state we enter when we become totally absorbed in an activity such as surfing online or playing a video game. Researchers have found that when we enter this state of mind, we become extremely receptive to the messages and images that we encounter.

Ads on social media usually resemble TV or print ads or involve influencers. This may be changing, though, as newer platforms like TikTok are introducing ad formats that look more like unpaid posts. Spark Ads, a “format that allows advertisers to use organic user posts as part of their ad campaigns on the app,” is designed to take advantage of the way that products suddenly explode in popularity on TikTok. While those bursts of popularity usually happen without the help of advertising, this new format blurs the distinction between ads and posts, making it even harder for the platforms’ users to know when they’re being advertised to.



Advertising Strategies

Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a lifestyle, or an image, rather than the product. Here are some tricks of the trade.

Best is better - Advertisers don't like to say that one product is "better" than another, because that's something that can be measured and might be false advertising. But most of the products in a category are basically the same, so it's actually safer to say that a product is "the best"!

Endorsement - your favourites sports star, celebrity or influencer telling you that their product is the best! Kids listen, not realizing that the star is being paid to promote the product.

Bandwagon - join the crowd! Don't be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren't you?

Health Halo - using things like brown paper packaging, images of fruit, added vitamins, or words like "natural" to make something seem healthful when it isn't. Some ads or packaging may point out what a product *doesn't* have to make it seem healthy, like saying potato chips are "sugar free." Some brands are built entirely around giving a health halo to junk food, such as Peatos (Cheetos made from peas) that are overall no more healthful than their corner-store equivalents

Repetition - advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear its name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same commercial will be repeated over and over again.

Tell a story - if advertisers don't have anything good to say about their product, they can tell a story that shows it instead. For example, an ad could show how a product would be useful in a particular situation without saying anything outright about its quality.

Weasel Words - advertisers can't just lie, but they can use words to mislead you:

- words like "improved," "premium" and "natural" sound good but don't actually mean anything.
- words like "crunchy" or "juicy" make a product sound good but can't be proven or disproven (how do you measure crunchiness?)
- saying that a product "fights" something only means that it affects it in some way.
- some ads will also use weasel phrases as well. A sugary cereal can be "part of a balanced breakfast" (if you have it with milk, fruit, and peanut butter bread) while a gum could stop bad breath for "up to" six hours (or possibly a lot less).

Emotional appeals - a lot of ads don't tell you anything about the product, but try to make you feel a certain way about it.

- Colour: Bright, vivid colours can make a product seem more memorable and exciting, while brown or other dull colours can make it seem healthful or environmentally friendly.
- Feel-good ads: Make you feel good, or feel good about yourself. An ad for a restaurant might show a family or friends all having fun together, or an ad for dog food might show a dog running happily to greet its owner.
- Humour: Making an ad that's funny is a way to make it memorable, to have it go viral, and to make us connect the brand or product with good feelings.
- Music: Whether it's a pop song that makes us think a product is cool, a jingle that we can't get out of our heads, or sappy strings that make us cry, music has a powerful emotional effect on us. It works even when we know it's happening!

Online Marketing Strategies

Online advertisers use many methods to try and get kids to buy their products. Often, they blend advertising with activities and games on the Internet so that kids don't even recognize that they're being sold to. Next time you're on a commercial kids' site, game or app, see if you can spot any of these techniques.

Bells and whistles: Bold graphics and animation; interactive games; contests; and branded merchandise, such as promotional screen savers, games, and ring tones to send to friends.

Brand characters: The promotion of brand characters, animated spokescharacters or animals is an effective marketing tool that helps build strong brand awareness and attachment to a product.

Click-to-buy: Making it possible to buy something without ever leaving the app. Combined with how social networks show you targeted ads and posts based on the data they've collected about you, they're able to guide your whole shopping experience, from finding a product for the first time to buying it.

Collecting personal information: Through social networks, quizzes and surveys, companies gather and use personal information to create individualized messages, develop site content, and deliver targeted advertising. When you log in to a site using your social network profile, all of the personal information you've provided to the social network – and the personal information of your friends whom you're connected to on the social network – is available to the site. This information is sometimes sold to third parties.

Cross-marketing: Companies team up to create huge merchandising bonanzas.

Friend spam: Getting access to your contact list or social network account and then sending marketing messages to your friends.

Hidden costs: Hiding costs like shipping and handling until the very last moment.

Loyalty programs: Kids' apps and websites keep careful track of when you use them and when you leave. (Some even use track where you go online when you leave.) If you haven't visited in a while, they'll offer a reward to bring you back.

Premium content: A lot of sites manipulate kids into giving up personal information by making them enter surveys or contests to be able to access some of the games and other activities. Other sites start out free but make you pay real money for premium content.

Selling cool: Hip language, humour and goodies such as downloadable audio clips, profiles of young celebrities, and hyped-up information about company-sponsored music and sports events.

Sponsored posts: An endorsement from an influencer feels like a friend talking to you. Sponsored posts look just the same as influencers' other posts except for a small disclosure text like "#ad."

Viral campaigns and "friendvertising": The Internet makes it easy to pass things on to friends. Most social networks are set up to encourage users to share content with things like Share buttons and hashtags.



Top 10 Most Popular Kids' Apps and Websites

According to MediaSmarts' 2022 study *Young Canadians in a Wireless World*, here are the top 10 apps and websites among Canadian students in grades 7-11:

1. YouTube
2. TikTok
3. Instagram
4. Facebook
5. Snapchat
6. Twitter
7. Google
8. Roblox
9. Netflix
10. Discord



Pat's Story: Making Friends With Wallaby

Pat, a 13 year old, is in his room when he sees that his 15-year-old cousin Charlie has shared a link to a video, with the heading “Everybody vote for my Where’s My Wallaby video!” Pat follows the link and finds a video Charlie has posted in which he skateboards through an obstacle course to get to a bottle of Wallaby beer. In the comments under the video, Charles has posted “Check out my entry in the Where’s My Wallaby video contest and vote for me at www.wheresmywallaby.ca #wheresmywallaby”. Pat follows the link to the contest site and sees hundreds of videos that people have made to enter the contest. The prize is an all-expense-paid trip to the X Games. According to the site rules you have to be legal drinking age to enter the contest, but the site seems to include any video that is posted with the hashtag #wheresmywallaby, and some of the videos have gotten hundreds of votes and thousands of views. Just entering the contest lets you download a ringtone of the man shouting “Where’s My Wallaby?” from the TV commercial.

Pat spends a while watching the videos, which are mostly full of skate tricks, then clicks on the button to vote for Charlie’s video. The contest site then asks Pat to sign in with his Instagram account. (Though he doesn’t know it, the contest site checks the age listed on his Facebook account to make sure he’s of legal drinking age: because he lied about his age to sign up for Instagram when he was 12, it thinks he’s old enough and lets him go on.) After he’s voted for Charlie’s video he’s invited to Like the Wallaby Beer page: when he does, it shows him all of his friends that ‘Like’ it too – it seems a lot of them do! – and suggests that he share the link to Charlie’s video with them and suggest that they vote for it.

Pretty soon ads for Wallaby beer start appearing in his Instagram feed, along with links sponsored by Wallaby beer to articles about skateboarding and other extreme sports, as well as things like “Where’s My Wallaby?” games and quizzes. He also starts getting ads for other kinds of beer, too, though he never did before. Pat doesn’t really care, though. He’s too busy thinking about the skate tricks that he’s going to do in *his* Where’s My Wallaby video...

Now, let’s take a closer look at the marketing strategies targeted at kids like Pat.



Between the Lines: Analyzing Pat’s Online Experience

Pat's online experience is not unusual.

The Internet provides teens with easy access to adult material. Sometimes kids access it from teen environments containing adult-oriented links and activities; in other instances, adult-oriented sites actively target teens and send them on to blatantly adult, pornographic sites. As we saw from Pat's experience, techniques for blocking access to underage users are easy to bypass – sometimes even without meaning to!

Marketers create pages and profiles on sites such as Instagram and TikTok for their brands, mascots and ad campaigns. These let marketers connect with consumers and form personal relationships with brands. Alcohol companies have taken advantage of this, creating profiles for brands such as Captain Morgan and creating “apps” that let Facebook users interact with their products. Getting kids to ‘Like’ alcohol brands can also make them think that more of their friends drink than really do – which can make them more likely to start drinking.

As well, when users Like a corporate page, or add an adverggame to their profile, they allow those companies complete access to their personal information. In MediaSmarts’ 2022 *Young Canadians in a Wireless World* survey, although a majority of students (79%) say they had been taught about how companies collect and use their personal information, 46 percent agree with the statement “Companies are not interested in what I say and do online.”



When viral videos are forwarded to friends through email or cell phones they can end up being viewed millions of times. Marketers, hoping to cash in on the viral phenomenon, are increasingly using them to reach youth. The focus of most video ads is humour and entertainment, and the branding is often subtle.

Young people are not only avid viewers of online videos, they’re also creators – so marketers encourage them to use their talents to make videos about their favourite brands. This not only gives corporations free promotion, but also produces a new generation of “brand advocates.” For example, the “Doritos Crash the Super Bowl Contest” invited consumers to create their own commercial for Doritos tortilla chips. More than six thousand video ads were submitted, with the winning commercial receiving more than two million views.



The *Where’s My Wallaby* online ad campaign incorporates a number of online marketing strategies designed to appeal to young people. They include:

- **Selling cool:** hip language, humour and goodies such as downloadable audio clips, profiles of young celebrities, and hyped-up information about company-sponsored music and sports events.
- **"Bells and whistles":** bold graphics and animation; interactive games; contests; and branded merchandise, such as promotional screen savers, games, and ring tones to send to friends.

- **Collection of personal information:** Through social networks, quizzes and surveys, companies gather and use personal information to create individualized messages, develop site content, and deliver targeted advertising. When you log in to a site using your social network profile, all of the personal information you've provided to the social network – and the personal information of your friends whom you're connected to on the social network – is available to the site. This information is sometimes sold to third parties.
- **Viral campaigns and “friendvertising”:** The Internet makes it easy to pass things on to friends. Most social networks are set up to encourage users to share content. Hashtags like #wheresmywallaby make it easy for viral campaigns to spread across social networks as well.



Jessica's Story: Co-Co's Choco World

Eight-year-old Jessica is eating her breakfast when she notices that her box of Co-Co's Choco Crunch has a code on the back that will let her download the Choco World app. She asks her mother if she can use the code to download the app to her mom's tablet.

Mom, who considers herself a savvy surfer, checks out the site's privacy policy before letting Jessica continue:



Choco World follows the FTC guidelines for compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Rule. Verifiable parental permission is required prior to the collection of any personal information. Amalgamated Foods, Inc. collects personal information on a voluntary basis only.

Personal information posted to the Choco World site becomes our property. It is used for internal purposes only, such as marketing and research, and will not be sold to third parties. Choco World offers an "opt-out" feature that allows you to remove your and/or your kids' email address from our files at any time.

Choco World also uses "cookie" technology to obtain non-personal information. This technology helps us track visitors to our site in aggregate form. We do not use this technology to extract specific information on an individual or to contact you, and we do not generally sell this information to third parties. Cookies allow us to update and improve the site for our visitors.

Satisfied, she completes the parental permission form and then leaves Jessica to it.

Jessica is mesmerized by the virtual playground filled with stars from the Co-Co's Choco Crunch commercials. They invite her to colour pictures, play games, make her own comics with the characters, and tour their "Choco World" to visit the people and shops.

Jessica uses the comic maker on the app to make a comic about Choco Crunch. When she's done the app asks her if she wants to share it with her friends by giving their email address. Jessica's mom has told her not to share anyone's email address, so she decides not to.

Then she tries the Cereal Mixer game. It's a fun and colourful game where she gets to pick different kinds of cereals and mix them with ice cream and other delicious things to make recipes she can share with her friends by email.

When she's finished she tries to play the Mr. Monkey's Cereal Surprise game, a tie-in with the new Mr. Monkey movie, but the app tells her she needs more Choco Points. The only way she can get Choco Points are by sharing things she's made (like her comic and her Cereal Mixer recipe) with friends or by filling out surveys. She decides to fill out a survey and answers questions like her name, her age, her email address and her favourite foods and TV shows. Now she has enough Choco Points to play the Mr. Monkey game. When she's done, she's really excited to see the new movie.

Jessica visits Choco World a lot for the next week or so and then loses interest. A few weeks after the last time she uses the app, she gets an email from Choco World: they're giving her fifty "Welcome back" Choco Points because they used her survey to help pick the new Choco Crunch flavour, Mint Choco Crunch, and they've just rolled out a new game – "Escape from Choco Mansion." She decides to check out what's new at Choco World and also to ask her mom to get the new cereal flavour the next time she goes shopping.

Now, let's take a closer look at the marketing strategies targeted at kids like Jessica.



Between the Lines: Analyzing Jessica's Online Experience

The online environment Jessica visits is fairly typical of the virtual playgrounds – both apps and websites – designed for kids. The following are common online strategies used on sites for young children:

- **Cross-marketing:** Companies team up to create huge merchandising bonanzas. In this case, we saw an entertainment company (Mr. Monkey) and a breakfast cereal (Co-Co's Choco Match) join forces.
- **Bells and whistles:** Site designers attract kids with bold graphics and animation; interactive games; contests; and branded merchandise, such as online movie and comics makers, promotional screen savers, tee-shirts, and email postcards. Jessica encountered many of these marketing strategies.
- **Brand characters:** The promotion of brand characters, animated spokescharacters or animals is an effective marketing tool that helps build strong brand awareness and attachment to a product. Remember, Jessica recognized the characters on the Co-Co's Choco Crunch website from TV.
- **Premium content:** A lot of sites manipulate kids into giving up personal information by making them enter surveys or contests to be able to access some of the games and other activities. Other sites start out free but make you pay real money for premium content.
- **Loyalty programs:** Kids' apps and websites keep careful track of when you use them and when you leave. (Some even use track where you go online when you leave.) If you haven't visited in a while, they'll offer a reward to bring you back.

Jessica's mother did the right thing to read the privacy statement beforehand. But let's take another look at some key points in this statement:

We adhere to the FTC guidelines for compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Rule.

Read: According to this legislation, websites must disclose their information gathering practices from children under the age of 13. But this legislation doesn't regulate marketing practices, so we can market our products to your child as aggressively as we wish.

Personal information posted to the Choco World site becomes our property. It is used for internal purposes only, such as *marketing and research and will not be sold to third parties.*

Read: It's our property and we'll use this information to sell Choco World products. Don't be surprised if your child receives promotional email from us.

Choco World offers an "opt-out" feature that allows you to remove your and/or your kids' email address from our files at any time.

Read: It's up to you to withdraw your child's name from the Choco World mailing list.

Choco World also uses "cookie" technology to obtain non-personal information. This technology helps us track visitors to our site and analyze it in aggregate form ... 'Cookies' allow us to update and improve our site for our visitors.

Read: Thank you for visiting our site and providing us with information we obtained from a file on your hard drive -- specifically the places on our site you visited and how long you stayed. This information enables us to target our market much more effectively.

In the end, Jessica is one of hundreds of children to receive an email message promoting Co-Co Crunch's new flavour and their exciting new game.



Shruti's Story: Under the Influence

Thirteen-year-old Shruti loves riding her bike around the city. She often posts pictures of her bike and places she goes on Instagram, and sometimes does research online to find new bike trails and places to go. After a while she notices that she's seeing a lot of ads for bikes and biking gear, as well as things that she's not interested in at all like GoPro cameras and energy drinks.

Shruti starts thinking about using her birthday money to get a new bike. She looks for bike reviews and finds that most of the people who talk about bikes online are mostly interested in mountain biking, not riding on city bike trails. Then she finds Ella Pyncheon on Instagram. Ella only has a few thousand followers, but she feels like Shruti's soul mate. She's passionate about city biking and posts reviews of bike trails, bike gear and bicycles. Shruti reads through all the reviews and finds the one that looks the best: the Amigo. It's Ella's favourite and it looks perfect to Shruti too. Not only that, but tapping the review video takes her right to a page where she can buy the kind of Amigo bike that Ella likes best. It's just the right price, too!

Shruti tells her mother that she's decided what she wants to buy with her birthday money. Her mother puts in her credit card information but when they get to the last screen, it turns out the price didn't include taxes or shipping and handling. The final price is a LOT more, but Shruti's mother doesn't want to disappoint her so she agrees to pay for that part. When they've paid, Shruti gets invited to post about the new bike to her Instagram page with the #bikeamigo hashtag. She does and she gets lots of likes from her friends. Even more exciting, Ella likes her post!

Over the next few weeks Shruti sees a lot of ads for Amigo bikes—even the exact same one she got. Don't they know she just bought one? Then Shruti's new bike comes. At first she's excited to ride it, but after she's taken it out a few times it doesn't seem to her like it's anything special. She tries to remember what it was that Ella liked so much about it, so she goes through her old posts. She notices that a couple of months ago hashtags like #ad, #sponsored and #sp started appearing on posts about the Amigo. Shruti hadn't even noticed that Ella had switched from reviewing bikes to advertising them! It never even occurred to her that someone with just a few thousand followers might be a paid influencer. Now she wonders if she can trust any of Ella's reviews. Even if she wasn't getting paid, would she say anything that might keep bike makers from wanting to get her to advertise for them?

Now, let's take a closer look at the marketing strategies targeted at kids like Shruti.



Between the Lines: Analyzing Shruti's Online Experience

Shruti's experience is pretty common. An endorsement from an influencer feels like a recommendation from a friend. Kids can interact directly with influencers, liking and replying to their posts and sometimes even getting a reply from them. And unlike TV commercials, sponsored posts look just the same as influencers' other posts except for a small disclosure text like "#ad." Kids like learning about products from influencers, too: half of social media users would rather find out about a product from an influencer than from the brand, and one third have learned about a brand from seeing an influencer's post—like Shruti found out about Amigo bikes.

Ella's ads include a number of online marketing strategies designed to appeal to young people and get them to spend more money:

- **Click-to-buy:** More and more, social networks are making it possible to buy what you see advertised – or what influencers are promoting – without ever leaving the app. Combined with social networks' ability to show you targeted ads and posts based on the data they've collected about you, they're able to guide your whole shopping experience, from finding a product for the first time to buying it.
- **Collection of personal information:** Shruti started seeing ads for bikes because she had been searching for information about bike paths. That might even be why Ella came up in her feed! Advertisers also target you *after* you've bought something expensive, like a car or a bike. That's because in most provinces they have to give you a "cooling off period" where you can change your mind after buying something online. Seeing the ads helps reassure you that you made the right choice.
- **Friend spam:** Getting access to your contact list or social network account and then sending marketing messages to your friends.
- **Hidden costs:** Hiding costs like shipping and handling until the very last moment.
- **Sponsored posts:** An endorsement from an influencer feels like a recommendation from a friend. And unlike TV commercials, sponsored posts look just the same as influencers' other posts except for a small disclosure text like "#ad." While advertisers often pay influencers to promote their products, another method is to send free samples to influencers, hoping they will spread the word to their followers.
- **Viral campaigns and "friendvertising":** The Internet makes it easy to pass things on to friends. Most social networks are set up to encourage users to share content. Hashtags like #bikeamigo make it easy for viral campaigns to spread across social networks as well.

Shruti didn't think that Ella could be an influencer because she only had a few thousand celebrities. But more and more advertisers prefer "micro-influencers" and even "nano-influencers" like Ella. Because they seem more trustworthy and relatable, an endorsement from them can be twice as effective as one from a celebrity. She also didn't notice that Ella had switched from doing reviews to sponsored posts. While influencers have to say if they've been paid or given free stuff, they don't have to say anything if they're endorsing something because they *hope* to make a deal with a brand.

You should always assume that any endorsement is an ad unless you have good reason to think it's an impartial review. Visit [Consumer Reports](#) and other members of [International Consumer Research and Testing](#) to find unbiased reviews. If something isn't reviewed there, see if you can find reviews in a few different places.

Making A Kids' Website

For this assignment you will be creating a website. The purpose of this website is to promote a brand or product to young kids.

Plan and be ready to explain:

- the target audience of the site
- the advertising methods selected to appeal to the target audience
- why these particular methods have been selected

Think about these best principles of web design:

Clarity. It should not take users more than five seconds to figure out what the site is about.

Navigation: Users can move within a page (either by scrolling or with anchor text links to different parts of the page) and between pages.

Consistency. Choose a single colour scheme for the site. Make sure the colour, the images and the font (what the text looks like) match the subject.

"If you're a dentist, your visitors expect your web site to look like it belongs to a dentist — not to someone who is going to the opera." – Vincent Flanders, *Web Pages That Suck*

Simplicity. Even if your site has a lot of content, don't give it to your users all at once.

- Think about ways to let them explore it at their pace.
- Don't give users too many choices all at once. Too many choices feels confusing.
- Use lots of white space to keep them from feeling overwhelmed.
- Use colour when it has meaning but don't use it if it isn't meaningful.

Assessment Task: Mock Website

	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Use	<p>experience texts from a variety of genres and cultural traditions; discuss likes and dislikes for a variety of texts</p> <p>identify habits and behaviours (e.g. excessive screen time or video game usage, smoking) that can be detrimental to health and explain how people can be encouraged to adopt healthier alternatives</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
Understand	<p>identify language and visual images that create mood and evoke emotion in a variety of oral, print and other media texts and the rights he/she has as a creator</p> <p>identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience</p> <p>identify whose point of view is presented or reflected in a media text, citing supporting evidence from the text and suggest how the text might change if a different point of view were used</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
Engage	<p>identify an appropriate form to suit the specific purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create and explain why it is an appropriate choice</p> <p>identify conventions and techniques appropriate to the form chosen for a media text they plan to create and explain how they will use the conventions and techniques to help communicate their message</p> <p>produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>

