News or Native Advertising

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Abstract

We are living in a world surrounded by media. Companies are constantly thinking of new ways of communicating and engaging with the public. When the reader is overwhelmed by advertisements in media, they are no longer persuasive to audiences who begin to disbelieve and question what the companies want to promote and sell. The technique of native advertising, which "employs a third party" such as media, social media, celebrities, professionals and people of high stature, has become an important tool that contributes positively to the success of a business. Sponsored articles and television shows are produced in the same way that traditional programs are, and they now account for a large portion of the company's budget and bring in huge revenue for media-based organizations. Consumers often find it difficult to identify a paid article because these articles are blended in with the surrounding environment which is so effective that many people are unable to distinguish between sponsored content and news reports. It has a large impact on the thoughts and actions of readers. Therefore, it is important to teach students the differences between native advertising and legitimate news articles. The lesson takes place in four hours, including four parts: What is native advertising; forms of native advertising; native advertising: beneficial or harmful; and identify native advertising. These sections are linked to concepts of news literacy, for example, evaluating sources, verification, independence, accountability and fairness. This lesson plan aims to guide readers and help them recognize subjective and non-independent articles. In order to convey these concepts, a teacher must use relevant and relatable examples within the daily lives of their students. Some of the more common techniques used by teachers are: game play, group work, and discussions or debates. These are applied to focus on student development and sharpening their skills to gain a better understanding of news literacy.
Lesson Plan

Title: NEWS OR NATIVE ADVERTISING

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By: Hoang Xuan Phuong, Ph.d

News Literacy Concept(s):

The purpose of this lesson is to help students spot advertisements that are "blended in" as articles. News Literacy concepts such as SBU’s Information Neighborhoods, Source Verification, Verification, Independence, Accountability will be applied.

Lesson Objective:
This lesson is designed for 4 hours for high school students and university students. This lesson aims to help students to differentiate between mainstream media articles from unfamiliar forms of advertising.

Learning Outcomes

After completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- State the differences between news and native advertising.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the potential influence of advertisers on magazine contents.
- Consider reasons why advertisers would want their messages to seem to be a “natural” part of the media.
**Definition of terms**

**V.I.A.**

For our purposes, we define each of the letters that make up VIA as so:

**Verification**: A process of collecting evidence that establishes or confirms the accuracy or truth of something.

**Independence**: Freedom from the control, influence, or support of interested parties, coupled with a conscious effort to set aside any preexisting beliefs and a system of checks and balances.

**Accountability**: Being responsible or answerable for your work.

**Public Relations**: Public relations may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment (Seitel, Fraser P. 2007)

**Advertising**: Advertising is paid non-personal communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence an audience (Moriarty S, et al 2000)

**Discussion Questions:**

Given a set of two articles, a piece of advertising and sponsored content (see appendix 1), the students will have to answer the following questions: (Teacher writes down the students’ ideas on the board.)

What types of articles are these?
How many advertisements do you think you see every day?
When buying products, do you think you are influenced in any way by advertisements?
In your opinion, what is an advertisement?

After reading a series of sponsored articles, students will have to answer the following questions: How many of you have read articles that are similar to these examples? How many of you think that this is a mainstream article? How many times have you trusted the information in it? Do you want to know the method to distinguish mainstream news from advertisements? The teacher then explains to students that they are going to become "advertising investigators" in the area of mass
media. Over the next 2 days, they will identify the news and distinguish it from native advertising.

**Summary of the lesson / Lesson Outline:**

Surfing your Facebook every day, countless pages will pop up with titles like “recommended for you” or “sponsored”. The print and online newspapers display titles like “self-introduction of firms”, “you need to know”. You are surrounded by articles embedded on pages that look exactly like news articles but turn out to be “native ads”. Many people are exposed to sponsored content without realizing it. It’s sometimes called native advertising or content marketing.

**Session 1: What is native advertising?**

Individual or pair work: Given magazines and daily newspapers, students will be expected to look through the articles and count how many of them are native ads and how many are news reports. In doing this, students have to write down what products are being advertised. Students also need to compare their answers with others. The purpose of this exercise is to assess whether students can recognize native advertising before they are introduced to techniques for spotting sponsored content.

After the activity, the teacher will show a video clip on Overview of Native Advertising by Comedian John Oliver (Oliver, J, 2014) to help students understand native advertising in the international media. (Vietnamese subtitles attached)

After watching the clip, students will demonstrate their comprehension by answering these three questions:

- What advertisements were observed in the screencast?
- What native advertisements were observed in the screencast?
- What did the screencast point out regarding the personal experience of the consumer?

After that, the teacher will introduce students to examples of Vietnamese articles such as “The entrance exam student sharing tips to get high scores” (see appendix 2) which referred to Viet
Hung milk corn as a dominant factor and an article with a lot of valuable information in the column “Health” showing the risks of contagious disease from roadside milk. But at the end of the article, there was information about Viet Hung cornmilk. The question is: will consumers be able to spot the differences between news and advertisement?

**Teacher’s reflection:** Emphasize what is native advertising and how readers or viewers tend to believe in these stories.

What did you notice from these two articles?

These articles are different from most commercials, which are full of images and little words, because they are written in the form of an article, designed to resemble independent news reporting that makes the viewers feel as if they are reading a real article. By doing so, these articles will create a "feeling of trust" for viewers without acknowledging that these are the paid articles by the companies. These articles are called advertorials or in a broader way, are native advertising. It is difficult to distinguish paid articles from news articles because they are almost 100% similar to the other articles on the same page. Many PR professionals find this work appealing to the readers because the average reader cannot recognize that they are reading a sponsored article at least until they read half of it. Readers and viewers tend to believe in these stories. If it appears in Vnexpress, TuoiTre or the 60 Minutes TV program, it must be true, right?

**Session 2: Forms of Native advertising**

Lecturers will list some forms of native advertising in Vietnam with practical examples:
- Every week a story: customers share their experience
- Cooking tips (See appendix 3.1)
- The secret of health care or beauty (See appendix 3.2)
- Tips in the family
- Compare products to highlight trends
- Interview celebrities (See appendix 3.3)
- Use blogger (See appendix 3.4)
Matching Game (group work): Every group has 3 minutes to complete the game. On two-sided large sheets, one side contains examples of journalism and the other includes native advertising, and each group will line up and take turns matching the right article with its genre. After 3 minutes the team with the most correct answers will be the winner.

Examine celebrity endorsements (group discussion). Students look through newspapers and magazines to find articles with celebrities (e.g. sports stars, actors, musicians, or even cartoon characters) endorsing products (See appendix 3.3). Encourage students to think about why a famous person or character would be in these articles. Does the celebrity truly believe in the product? Is he being paid to endorse the product? Ask students to consider whether they would buy something just because someone famous said it was a good thing. Explore options for how the students could make their own assessment of the product.

Teacher’s reflection: Emphasize critical thinking when readers consume an advertisement. When you read the article about secrets for health or beauty such as a young person sharing travel tips, including an indispensable product, you should not trust it immediately. You should check out the information to see if this is really the secret or just a paid advertisement.

Session 3: Native advertising: beneficial or harmful

Discussion: The teacher gives an example of a doctor's advice, which was answered in a newspaper with the reference of a product.

Prevention of injury to the elderly

It is known that the skeletal system of the elderly is often brittle but recover slowly. Please advise how to prevent bone injury for the elderly?

(Tran ThanhBinh - HCMC)

To prevent injuries to the elderly, the most important advise for the elderly is to consider the design of the home. Factors such as low stairs are important because high floors are dangerous. We should make sure there is a toilet nearby in the room and enough light so hazards can be avoided such as slippery floors and faulty equipment, etc...When an older person is injured, it is
advisable to X-ray immediately at the hospital and await diagnosis. Do not take medication or any other treatment without asking a doctor because it may be more harmful. Pay attention when changing positions such as lying, sitting and standing. If the patient is unable to move on their own and has difficulty using the toilet, he or she can use a diaper to facilitate hygiene. Choose a diaper that is breathable and absorbency, such as Caryn adult diapers.

Doctor. Nguyen Xuan Hien

Students will be asked how trustworthy the content of a piece of news is when an advertisement is embedded in it. What does the information look like in standalone news? Is it really accurate? Why? Students use SBU’s Information Neighborhoods (See appendix 4) and the VIA formula for analysis. The teacher will ask students to think about the following questions:

• Who creates this story?
• What is its purpose?
• How is it told?

The teacher concludes that the news is only valuable and only trustworthy when it shows independence and fairness, not when the author is dependent on the financing of outside companies.

Group work: Each group will receive two native advertisements about the real estate market and make a list of pros and cons of native advertising in the articles and discuss: How is native advertising designed to affect our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? Does native advertising manipulate or trick people? Decide whether native advertising is beneficial or harmful.

Teacher’s reflection: Emphasize what is beneficial and harmful about native advertising and the way native advertising influences people.

Because of shared similarities to news reports and editorials, native advertising also conveys useful information to the reader. Of course, when reading an article on a health issue like the one mentioned above, readers learn basic knowledge about medicine provided by a doctor, and read
when reading articles about the real estate market, we also have more information about housing. But these are native advertisements, which are paid by companies to be published with the intention of selling their products and services. However, if the reader does not spot that intention and cannot recognize that it is native advertising, then they believe in the information that they think it is written by a real estate reporter, which can lead to virtual land fever and it can lead investors to make the wrong decisions.

In fact, adults and even children may also be aware of the persuasive intent of advertising because consumers always consider the origin of a message in deciphering it. When the sender is a company that wants to sell a product, consumers will consider this fact while evaluating the content of the message. Consequently, the knowledge of consumers helps them to be more alert before advertising messages. However, when advertising messages are ingeniously integrated into articles and camouflaged as journalism, readers’ defenses will decrease. And when these articles are placed next to or in the newspaper's content page, surrounded by independent articles, the reader's ability to be influenced is very high. Sponsored content is not necessarily bad, but you should know when you are reading native advertising so that you can fully understand its intentions.

**Session 4: Identify Native Advertising**

In this session, watching a video, pair work activities and case studies will be used to deliver the concepts. Students will watch a video on how native advertising is integrated into a website (Hobbs, R 2014) so that it seamlessly mixes advertising content with news (Vietnamese subtitles provided). After this video, we provide learners with a pair work exercise to practice categorizing sponsored content.

**Pair work activity:** Explore your social media and news sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google, Yahoo, TNO, TTO, VnExpress, ngoisao.net, dantri.com, etc., and analyze the native advertising or sponsored content that you find on the pages you view. Describe what it is and explain why you think it was placed there. Follow some links to discover who is creating these items.
After the activity, the lecturer will continue to deliver information about how to identify native advertising by introducing two articles writing about an online social network for entrepreneurs.

Article 1:

After the activity, the lecturer will continue to deliver information about how to identify native advertising by introducing two articles writing about an online social network for entrepreneurs.

Article 2:
What do you think after reading these two articles? Can you identify them as native advertising if it was written as an editorial and mixed in with news articles? And how will you be affected? If you are an entrepreneur, you can immediately create an account on a social network because it is a hot trend. But what social network "I" should join and it was showed clearly in the two articles about Anphabe.com social network. In the end, this native advertising made you think this is journalism and you may have created an account on Aphabe.com without hesitation.

After the activity, the teacher will introduce some of the methods with practical examples for identifying native advertising.

**Form**

- Appearance of some strange words on the corner such as advertising, self-introduction, market and business, sponsored, etc.

- The name of the author is unclear

- Photos: There is a picture illustrating a particular business
Content:

- Language: Journalism usually does not use flattering words and always cites a variety of ideas, information from different companies, and products. It does not just focus on a particular company, product or service, with the goal of praising them.
- Testimonial: Check out whom the article quotes. Sometimes a testimonial is from just one person, especially from a celebrity. The implication is that someone can become as fabulous as the movie star or athlete as long as they buy the product that he/she uses. Sometimes advertisers use “real” people to provide testimonials. Companies are trying to appeal to the “common man” implying that if their products work for someone similar to you then the product also suitable for you.
- Repetition: when you see the name of the product is repeated multiple times in the article. Remember that the product can be a person! Sometimes the repetition is in the form of a picture or even symbols of the product. For example, there might be four pictures of the product in the article.

To demonstrate the theory, the teacher will show students a Vietnamese native advertisement and analyze what makes it sponsored content.

Example: The article about Real Estate

This article was written about the real estate market in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and placed in the real estate column of a reputable online newspaper in Vietnam. At first glance, the article was written as an analysis of the real estate market but if you read carefully you can see along with some general information on infrastructure projects in the future, the writer also indicated that there are investment opportunities at various real estate companies and many names were mentioned. However, as you read through to the end of this article, you will find that the writer is in favor of Nam Long with Mizuki Park. This company was given more attention than other companies and more favorable terms. For example: the product is used to “satisfy the needs of the residents who desire to find a place full of high-class convenience and close to the natural
environment” Or two of Japan's leading real estate firms will continue their partnership with Nam Long to launch Mizuki Park”. You can see the underline here, it means that the name of the company was mentioned several times. These are obvious signs that this is an article written under the pen of an advertiser and not a specialized real estate reporter.

Thị trường bất động sản khu Nam tăng nhiệt

09/06/2017 08:00 GMT+7

Trong khi phân khúc đất nền hạ nhiệt kéo theo sự chung lại của thị trường khu Đông thì khu Nam vẫn đang giữ được tình thần khoản khá ổn định, giao dịch sôi động.

Đặc biệt, các dự án quy mô đầu tư lớn, tiến độ đẩy đủ tại khu Nam được các nhà đầu tư đánh giá rất giàu tiềm năng.
After understanding the signs to recognize native advertising, students will re-do the exercise in session 1 to evaluate the effectiveness.
The Takeaway:

At the end of the lesson, the teacher will remind students of 3 main points:

As a form of paid media where sponsored content blends in and seems like a natural or inherent part of a website, magazine or newspaper, messages can be customized to make the content seem informative and credible. It causes readers to let their guard down when reading the news and to accept as true the claims in these native advertisements.

Despite its success, the danger and the mechanism of native advertising are still being discussed. In the meantime, the best thing you can do is keep your eyes open when using the Internet or consuming any media. Watching for signs that the content you are reading may be sponsored by the advertisers, search for "self-introduce", "featured business", etc. You may be surprised to see them. It may be more difficult for you to take a closer look at different websites to determine whether the articles you are viewing are actually sponsored content.

If you see the same product, service or company appearing on different media at the same time, it is likely that the articles have been paid. Pay attention when you use social media and note that the native advertising may appear anywhere, even in a normal Facebook user.

References/Media Used/Additional Resources:

https://www.minds.com/newsfeed/667829281174331401

http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/693

https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy/advertising
Appendix 1.1. Advertising
Appendix 1.2: Sponsored content
Appendix 2: The article about The best student in entrance exam sharing tips to get high scores

The highlight mentioned to Viet Hung cornmilk company
Appendix 3

Appendix 3.1. Cooking tips

Cooking tips

Trần Phương Linh (TPICMC)
Appendix 3.2. The secret of health care or beauty
Appendix 3.3. Interview celebrities

Nhật ký về tóc

Ngày... tháng... năm...
Hôm nay, mình chụp ảnh cho một tờ tạp chí. Không làm tóc, anh trang điểm chạy mình rằng tự hỗ trợ "cải thiện" để đỡ, đi đầu tóc càng bị sậm sọt. Mình chỉ cười, không nói cho anh ấy biết tóc chăm là một trong những bộ phận trên cơ thể được mình đặc biệt quan tâm. Và việc chọn loại dầu gội và xả phù hợp là yếu tố quyết định cho mái tóc đẹp.

Ngày... tháng... năm...
Cảm nhận nới mới cốt ngôi ngày nghèo hiện tại nên mình thích thú với lòng màu sậm. Mỗi lần đậm màu, mỗi đầu tóc trở thành màu nào cũng thành trang cho cơ. Mình cần chọn dầu mượt bảo đảm rất hợp với mình. Lát nữa ra ngoại về, "Mama" yêu sê bit ngóc cho mà xem!

A, hôm nay mới chén hàng hóc: "Thích mật lạy thả Linh Nga để tóc bồng xoa thoải mái!". Mình cũng thích ngâm mình trong khuê tóc này nhất.

Ngày... tháng... năm...
Hôm nay mình bị đạo vẻ sám samon cơ thể gian ngót trở thành các bộ màu. Sau những chu kỳ dưỡng tóc, mình chu kỳ tự tóc mình và khen nhu thể mình với cơ bắp làm ấy: "Tóc con gái đẹp này<button>menu</button> 100<sup>1</sup> và đẹp rất đẹp". Bờ không nghĩ gì, nhưng ảnh mới không giữ được vải lòng. Mình hiểu bà đang nghĩ gì?


G.L. Ánh: Độc Huy

Bí quyết của Linh Nga

Pantene Hair Fall Control được thiết kế giúp tóc khỏe từ gốc đến ngọn. Trong vòng 14 ngày, liều pha ngày giúp tóc bền khỏe hơn và giảm mốc tóc rụng và gãy giảm hơn 98% so với việc sử dụng dầu gội không có dầu xả. Hãy sử dụng trong bộ dầu gội, dầu xả, kem dưỡng để có hiệu quả tốt nhất.
Appendix 3.4. Use blogger
## Appendix 4

### A Taxonomy of Information Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Journalism</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Propaganda</th>
<th>Raw Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Goal</strong></td>
<td>To Inform</td>
<td>To Amuse or engage people during their leisure time in activities in which they are passive participants.</td>
<td>To Sell goods, services and talent/personalities by increasing their appeal to consumers.</td>
<td>To Build Mass Support for an ideology by censoring its leaders or demonizing its opposition.</td>
<td>To Bypass institutional filters and distribution costs in order to sell, publicize, advocate, entertain, and inform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Verification, independence, accountability.</td>
<td>Story-telling, performance, the visual arts &amp; music.</td>
<td>Paid Advertising &amp; Public Relations activities. Press releases, public statements, staged events, sponsorships, product placement, websites, viral videos, etc.</td>
<td>One-sided accounts or outright lies, relying on emotional manipulation through images, appeals to majority values and fallacious reasoning.</td>
<td>Facebook, YouTube, blogs, Twitter, websites, website comment sites, chain email, text message forwarding, flyers, graffiti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Reporters, Photographers/Videographers, Editors, Producers</td>
<td>Writers, actors, artists, musicians, designers.</td>
<td>Ad agencies, Publicists, Public Relations experts, government spokespersons.</td>
<td>Political operatives and organizations.</td>
<td>Anyone with a web connection, photocopier, or can of paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Empowers citizens by educating them.</td>
<td>Distraction from or changed view of daily life, Reinforcement or critique of social norms.</td>
<td>Increased sales of products and services or higher fees for talent being promoted.</td>
<td>Helps an ideological group seize or maintain power, by influencing public opinion and motivating the public to take action consistent with the ideology.</td>
<td>Outlet for self-expression, entertainment, promotion, advocacy, propaganda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(From the Center for News Literacy, Stony Brook University School of Journalism)
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Hobbs, R (2014), Native Advertising Overview, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c63OixIgDF0, Retrieved from 10th May 2017


Oliver, J (2014), Native Advertising: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwizc, Retrieved from 10th May 2017