

# PROPAGANDA

MEDIA LAB  
by  
MEDIA LITERACY INSTITUTE

### Media

A circular node containing the word 'Media' and several small icons representing different media types: a newspaper, a television set, a radio, a computer monitor, a smartphone, a tablet, and various social media icons.

### MEDIA CHALLENGES

A circular node with the text 'MEDIA CHALLENGES' and several small icons representing digital media and communication challenges.

### Media functions

A circular node with the text 'Media functions' and several small icons representing different media types and their functions.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA

A circular node with the text 'CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA' and several small icons representing propaganda techniques and media.

### What is PROPAGANDA

Propaganda: Persuasive Techniques used to influence public opinion.

Propaganda: Messages to create, maintain or change attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors in order to gain political or social objectives.

A circular node containing the text 'What is PROPAGANDA' and a definition of propaganda. It also includes several small icons representing propaganda techniques and media.

### WHO USES PROPAGANDA?

- Advertisers
- Politicians
- Industry
- Public Relations (PR)
- Education
- Environmental Groups
- Advocacy Groups
- Everyone!

A circular node with the text 'WHO USES PROPAGANDA?' and a list of entities that use propaganda. It also includes several small icons representing propaganda techniques and media.

### TYPES OF PROPAGANDA

A circular node with the text 'TYPES OF PROPAGANDA' and several small icons representing different types of propaganda.

### AUTHORS

This module has been developed by the Media Lab for Bridging Gaps, Media Literacy Institute. It is a part of the Media Literacy Institute's Media Literacy Program.

A circular node with the text 'AUTHORS' and a short paragraph about the module's development. It also includes several small icons representing propaganda techniques and media.



### REFERENCES

A circular node with the text 'REFERENCES' and a list of sources used in the module.

### TASK/REFLECTION

A circular node with the text 'TASK/REFLECTION' and a list of activities and reflection questions.

### BE CRITICAL OF PROPAGANDA

Think of the context.

**YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE TO PROPAGANDA**

A circular node with the text 'BE CRITICAL OF PROPAGANDA' and a call to action to think of the context. It also includes the text 'YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE TO PROPAGANDA' and several small icons representing propaganda techniques and media.

A row of small circular icons representing various social media platforms and digital communication tools.

# PROPAGANDA

MEDIA LAB  
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### Media



### MEDIA CHALLENGES

### Media functions

### CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA

### What is PROPAGANDA

Persuasive Techniques  
and how to identify them

**Propaganda**  
- Messages to change beliefs and attitudes  
- Intentionally spread by media or individuals  
- Intended to persuade, inform and influence

### WHO USES PROPAGANDA?

- Advertisers
- Politicians
- Industry
- Public Relations & PR Agencies
- Academics
- Environmental Activists
- Advocacy Groups

Everyone!

### TYPES OF PROPAGANDA

### AUTHORS

This module has been developed by the Media Lab for Bridging Gaps, a project of the Media Literacy Institute. It is a part of the Media Literacy Institute's mission to provide high-quality, evidence-based, and accessible media literacy education to all.

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### REFERENCES

### FAQ/REFLECTION

### BE CRITICAL OF PROPAGANDA

Think of the context.

**YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE TO PROPAGANDA**



# Media



# *Media functions*

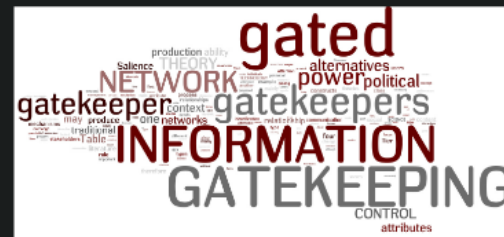
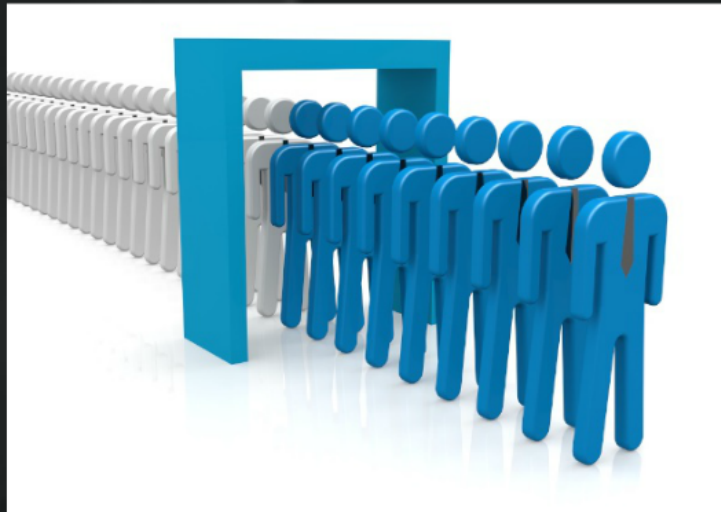


Transmitting political information  
from political actors to the public.



# Gate-keeping:

Making decisions about what is news,  
and for how long?



# Watchdog:

Informally checking on the political system  
(by allowing the public to monitor behavior of  
elected officials).



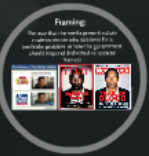
## Setting the scope of public debate:

More media attention leads to higher levels of public knowledge about issue; this leads to more pressure on politicians.



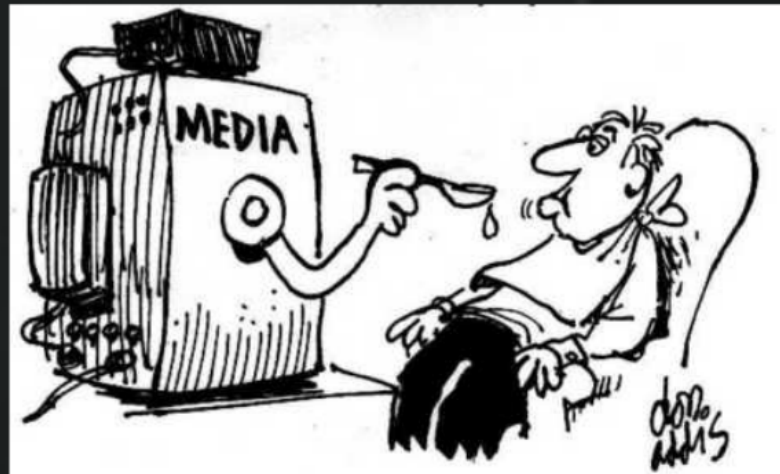


# ***MEDIA CHALLENGES***



# Agenda setting –

The media influence the public by covering some issues, and ignoring others.



# Bias

Ideological bias



Corporate bias





# Priming:

Prominence of stories in the media can affect the standards by which we judge political leaders.



# Framing:

The way that the media present a story make us decide who to blame for a particular problem, or how the government should respond (Individual vs. societal frames).



# Appearance:

Especially on mobile devices, a start-up press room looks similar to established mainstream media.



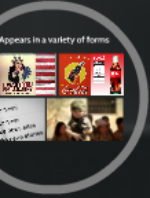
# *What is* **PROPAGANDA**

**Persuasive Techniques**  
used to influence opinions, emotions,  
attitudes or behavior.

## **Propaganda:**

- Attempts to change or lead one's opinion
- Generally appeal to emotion, not intellect
- Attempt to guide people's choices and decisions





# ***CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA***



# Appears in a variety of forms



# Is strategic and intentional



**Aims to influence attitudes,  
opinions and behaviors**



Can be beneficial or harmful

**DON'T BELIEVE**  
HARMFUL PROPAGANDA

**VAPING IS A  
GATEWAY TO SMOKING**  
**FALSE**

Don't Be A SHEEP!  
LEARN MORE AT  
[KySmokeFree.com](http://KySmokeFree.com)



**KSFA**  
KENTUCKY SMOKE-FREE ASSOCIATION



# May use truth, half-truths or lies

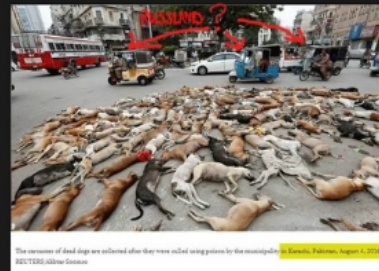
**FAKE**

Angeblich: In Russland  
getötete Streuner  
zur WM 2018



**REAL**

Tatsächlich: In Pakistan  
getötete Streuner  
2016



involves deception or  
twisting the truth

small element of  
truth may be  
included to make  
argument more  
persuasive


example: blame the  
enemy for war;  
portray our country  
as the victim of  
aggression

Tool: Half-Truths or Lies

**SOMEONE**



**TALKED!**



*To be successful, propaganda taps  
into our deepest values, fears,  
hopes and dreams*

Uses any means  
to accomplish its goal



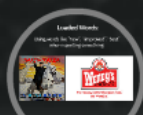


# ***WHO USES PROPAGANDA?***

- Advertisers
- Politicians
- Military
- Media, Journalism & Public Relations
- Advertising
- Education
- Entertainment content
- Advocacy bodies

***Everyone!***

# ***TYPES OF PROPAGANDA***



# General types of propaganda

- Ad hominem
- Ad nauseam
- Appeal to authority
- Appeal to fear
- Appeal to prejudice
- Bandwagon
- Inevitable victory
- Join the crowd
- ...and Beautiful people



# Bandwagon Technique: Everyone is doing it! You should too!!!



**AUSTRALIA, YOU'VE  
MADE THE SWITCH.**

OVER A MILLION AUSTRALIANS  
HAVE ALREADY TRIED ORAL-B TOOTHPASTES\*



**GO PRO, MAKE THE SWITCH TODAY**

\*Research includes 123 Compacts/ProHealth. Based on Nielsen Homescan Penetration data from 12/11 to 12/12 & the average household size of only persons over 12. Always read the label. Use only as directed. If symptoms persist, see your health care professional.

ASMI 22726-0913

## Testimonials:

Testimonials are quotations or endorsements which connect a famous or respectable person with a product or item.



## Loaded Words:

Using words like "new", "improved", "best" when reporting something.



*It's waaaay better than fast food.  
It's Wendy's.*

## Misuse of statistics:

When the statistics are based on a falsehood.



## Name calling or stereotyping:

Discourse that smears or damages opponent, frequently used by politicians.





## Plain Folks:

Discourse or methods to make the leaders look like plain folks (like parents, regular working persons).



## Snob Appeal:

Discourse that aims to flatter and implies that a certain product is better than others.



## Transfer of feelings (good or bad) to something else:

This transfer tries to make people view something in the same way as something else which has certain characteristics.





***TECHNIQUES OF  
PROPAGANDA***

# ***TECHNIQUES OF PROPAGANDA***

- Activates strong emotions
- Responds to audience needs
- Oversimplifies information
- Promotes ideological interpretations in order to guide beliefs
- Attacks opponents, directly or indirectly



# ***BE CRITICAL OF PROPAGANDA***

*Think of the context:*

**YOU ARE NOT  
IMMUNE TO  
PROPAGANDA**

# Message:

What is the nature of the information  
and ideas being expressed?



CONTEXT  
MATTERS







# Means of Communication & Format:

How did the message reach people  
and what form does it take?

The image shows a mobile application interface divided into two main sections. The top section is a news feed from BBC News. The main article is titled "Suspended Tory may go 'within days'" and features a video player with a man in a suit. To the right, there is a "Watch/Listen" section with several video thumbnails. Below the main article, there are smaller news items with images and titles, such as "Singapore mourns founding father" and "Ashya King 'free of brain cancer'". The bottom section is an "Inbox" with a red header. It contains two notifications: one from Tumblr with the text "Update on Russian-linked activity on..." and a timestamp of 4:23 PM, and one from Nintendo with the text "Detective Pikachu is on the case - av..." and a timestamp of 4:08 PM. Both notifications include a star icon for marking as important.

# ***Environment:***

Where, when and how may people have encountered the message?



## ***Audience Receptivity:***

How may people think and feel about the message and how free they are to accept or reject it?



**ACCEPT**



**REJECT**

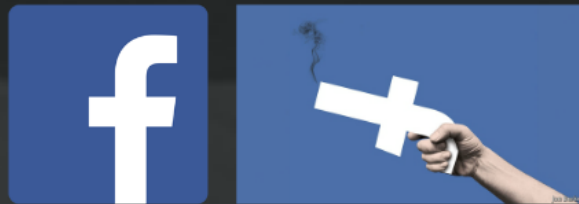
## ***ASK THE MEDIA LITERACY BASIC QUESTIONS***

- Who created this message? ...
- Which techniques are used to attract my attention? ...
  - How might different people interpret this message? ...
- Which lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented - or missing?



## ***HOW TO SPOT FACEBOOK PROPAGANDA***

- Watch for posts that evoke a strong emotional response, especially if the content is inflammatory, controversial or divisive.
- Pay attention to the story the post is conveying, both visually and textually. Question whom the narrative serves and whether there might be a hidden agenda.
  - Watch for absolutist language and messages like “everything you think you know is actually wrong”.
  - Be aware of cultural fears and stereotypes that the post might imply.
- When in doubt: **pause!** Take a breath. Ask yourself why you’re having that reaction. It is very probable that the specific statement has been designed on purpose to invoke such reactions.





***STAY CLEAR OF  
PROPAGANDA***

## ***Be a skeptic.***

Have a vigilant mindset and know that what you're reading *could* be propaganda; this is a good start to being critical.





## *Use your search engine.*

If you find a news story that seems hard to believe, look for other sources. If you can't find them, the story may be fake. All facts in any story should be confirmed by two different reliable sources. But today on the digital media even real news stories are multiplied by various outlets, so actually you may need more sources than the “traditional” two.

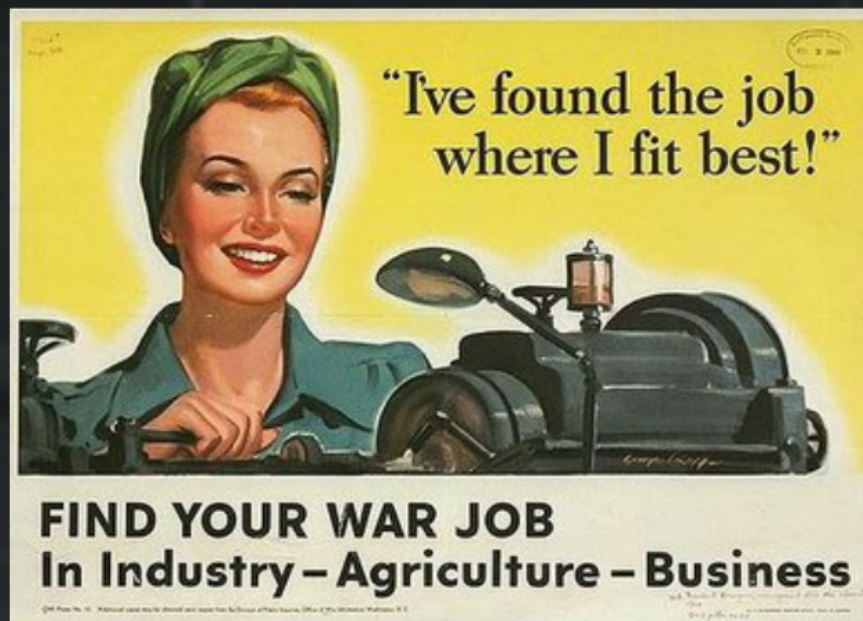






# *Don't fall for every user review you read.*

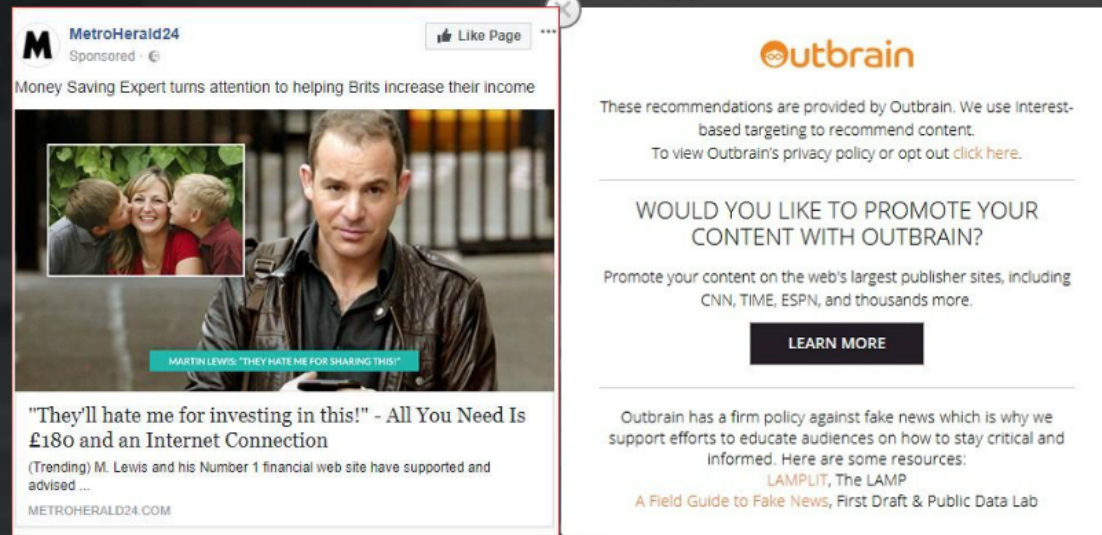
Online reviews are sometimes fake, advertisements, or just opinions of someone you do not know.





# Beware of fake ads or sponsored content.

Learn how you can identify paid content. On social networks or search engines they are labeled as “sponsored.” On Instagram specifically, sponsored posts must carry the hashtag #ad.



The image shows two side-by-side screenshots. The left screenshot is a social media post from MetroHerald24, marked as 'Sponsored'. It features a video thumbnail of Martin Lewis with a caption: "They'll hate me for investing in this!" - All You Need Is £180 and an Internet Connection. The right screenshot is an Outbrain advertisement with the text: "These recommendations are provided by Outbrain. We use interest-based targeting to recommend content. To view Outbrain's privacy policy or opt out click here." Below this is a section titled "WOULD YOU LIKE TO PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT WITH OUTBRAIN?" with a "LEARN MORE" button. At the bottom, it states: "Outbrain has a firm policy against fake news which is why we support efforts to educate audiences on how to stay critical and informed. Here are some resources: LAMPLIT, The LAMP A Field Guide to Fake News, First Draft & Public Data Lab".

**MetroHerald24**  
Sponsored

Money Saving Expert turns attention to helping Brits increase their income

MARTIN LEWIS: "THEY HATE ME FOR SHARING THIS!"

"They'll hate me for investing in this!" - All You Need Is £180 and an Internet Connection  
(Trending) M. Lewis and his Number 1 financial web site have supported and advised ...  
METROHERALD24.COM

**Outbrain**

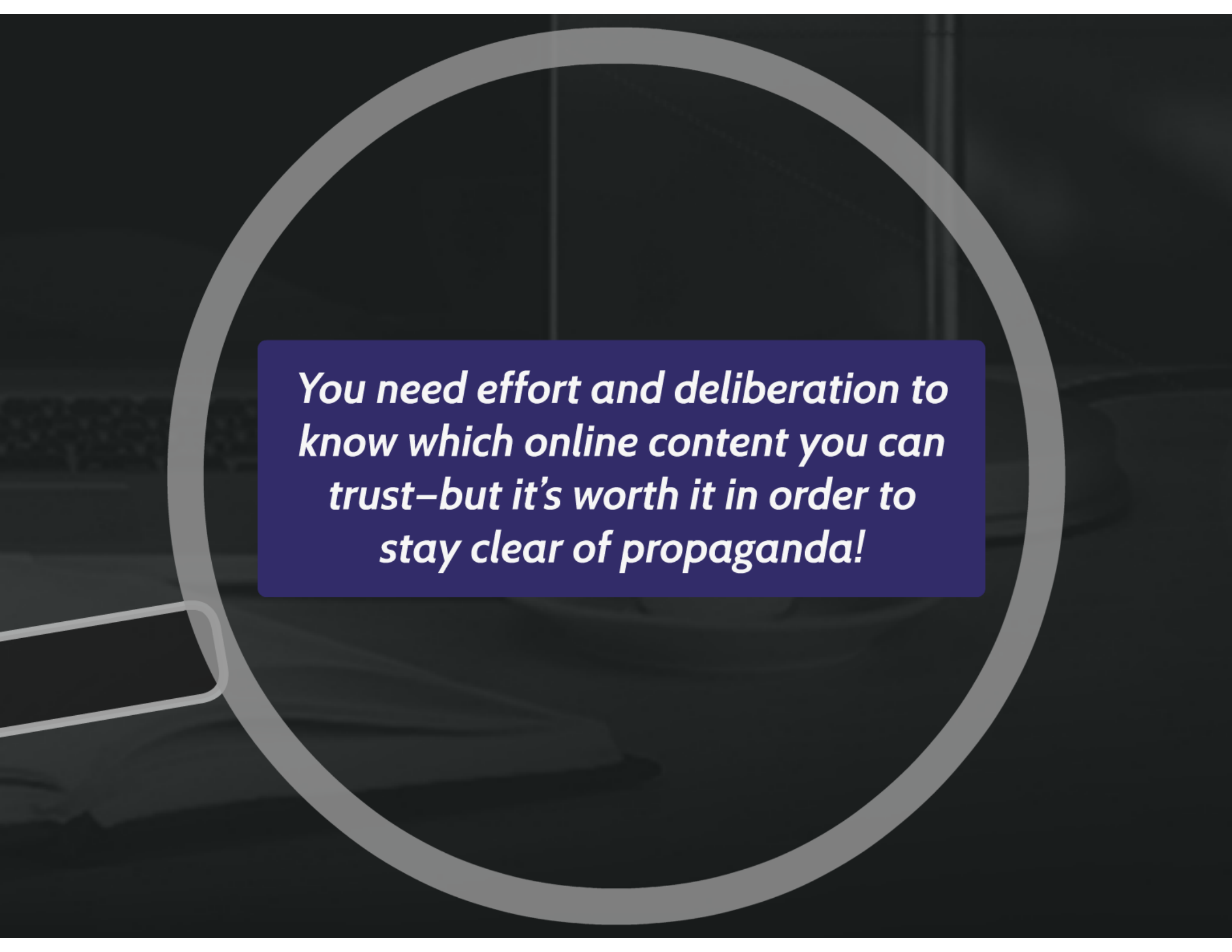
These recommendations are provided by Outbrain. We use interest-based targeting to recommend content.  
To view Outbrain's privacy policy or opt out [click here](#).

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT WITH OUTBRAIN?

Promote your content on the web's largest publisher sites, including CNN, TIME, ESPN, and thousands more.

**LEARN MORE**

Outbrain has a firm policy against fake news which is why we support efforts to educate audiences on how to stay critical and informed. Here are some resources:  
LAMPLIT, The LAMP  
A Field Guide to Fake News, First Draft & Public Data Lab



*You need effort and deliberation to know which online content you can trust—but it's worth it in order to stay clear of propaganda!*

## ***TASK/REFLECTION***

- Try to find some newspaper articles that seem to you to be overstatements or propaganda and do the following exercises:
- Be a skeptic: check who, when and why – can you document reliability of source?
- Use your search engine: can you find more publications from different sources on the same topic? Do they converge? If not, why?
- Check your sources: whenever someone shares a news article with you, check the initial sources and do the reliability test.
- Try multiple media: can you find this publication on a paper medium? Can you find forums or discussions on that topic?
- Beware of sponsored content: can you understand what the motives of the author of the publication are? Is it really news or is it promotion of commercial interests?
- Think about three example of good and bad propaganda; can you document the different uses?
- Whenever you are in doubt, press the PAUSE button! Think before you believe!

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# MEDIA LAB FOR BRIDGING CROSS BORDER GAPS



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