Media and information literacy

A practical guidebook for trainers

DW Akademie

Made for minds.

Imprint

FSC
www.fsc.org
RECYCLED
Paper made from
recycled material
FSC® C108626

1. Media and information literacy

Understanding media

Open questions can be helpful to understanding media. For example: What is typical for the medium? What type of medium is it? Who creates the content? Who finances the medium? How does the medium ensure its own income? How much time is needed to create a message in the medium? Who is the target audience? What options do media makers have for sending their messages? What are typical messages? How can messages be manipulated by the media maker?

Newspapers and magazines

Traditionally, newspapers and magazines were printed media, but nowadays many are also published electronically on the internet. Funding for newspapers and magazines often comes from companies, interest groups or private individuals, and sometimes from the state. Media makers include print and photojournalists, editors, editors-in-chief, typesetters, designers, printers and (online) programmers. They use headlines, written text, different font sizes and colors, drawings, caricatures, and photographs to express their messages. Most print media are published regularly and frequently: daily, weekly, or monthly. Their frequent publishing schedules allow them to report on current stories and events and provide background information. Newspapers and magazines generate income through subscriptions, direct sales, and advertisements. Newspaper and magazine owners, who spend money to finance the medium, often want to influence the selection of topics and steer the direction of editorial viewpoints.

Books

Traditionally, books are a printed medium, but nowadays some are also published as e-books, which can be read on a tablet, computer, or e-book reader. Funding for books often comes from publishers and companies. Media makers include authors, editors, typesetters, publishers, and printers or programmers (for e-books). They express their messages through the contents of the book, which can consist of text and illustrations, but also through the book's title and cover, its composition and design, illustrations, and information about the book and author. Books can be categorized according to their content, e.g. fiction, non-fiction, guidebooks, or textbooks. The time needed to create a book ranges from a few months to many years. Income is generated through the book's sales. To increase sales, many publishers spend a lot of money on advertising in newspapers, radio, television, on posters, and on the web.

Radio

Radio is a non-printed, electronic medium. Nowadays, many radio stations also broadcast via the internet. Funding for most radio stations comes from companies or private individuals. Sometimes the state also owns radio stations, and in rare cases, even local communities do. Media makers include radio journalists, producers, on-air hosts or moderators, editors-in-chief, news editors, and musicians. A radio station can go on air with just a few people involved, sometimes as few as a moderator, technician, and a news editor. Many radio programs are pre-produced before broadcast and moderators often receive introductory texts from journalists to read before their news stories or features are played. Media messages are expressed by the selection of program content, voices, spoken language, music, and sounds and contain (current) information and entertainment. The time needed to create a radio broadcast ranges from minutes to weeks or even longer, depending on the radio show and the particular topic. The station's income comes mainly from advertising slots it sells. Some radio stations receive funding from their owners or through listener fees; community radio stations often rely on donations.

Movies

A movie is a non-printed, electronic medium generally first shown in public movie theaters or distributed through video streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, or Disney+. Later, they are often released on DVD or Blu-ray disc, or shared through the internet (often illegally). Funding for movies is complex. Before a movie is made, the author and the director look for someone to finance it. The amount of money needed to make a movie varies, but it is often a very expensive undertaking. Funding can come from private individuals (a producer or producers) or large production companies. Often movies are co-financed by television stations or big companies in return for product placements in the movie (e.g. the hero might drive a Mercedes, BMW, or another specific car brand). Hundreds or even thousands of people are involved in the production of a movie. They include directors and co-directors, authors, actors, camera operators, sound designers, costume makers, location scouts, stuntmen, and special effect editors, to name just a few. In movies, the media messages are expressed via the genre, story, dramatization, setting, characters, acting, costumes, visual feel (brightness or darkness, colors), sound elements (voices, music, sound effects) as well as the editing. The time needed to create a movie ranges from around half a year to several years. Movies generate revenue through tickets sales, DVD or Blu-ray disc sales, merchandising, and fees paid by TV channels for broadcasting rights or by viewers for digital streaming rights. To increase ticket sales, movie makers usually spend a lot of money on advertising (cinema

trailers, posters, television or online advertisements) to attract the widest possible audience.

Television

Television is an electronic medium. Many television shows are also put online and can be viewed on the internet. Funding for television channels comes from the government, from viewer fees, or from companies or individuals. In some countries, citizens donate money to fund television broadcasters. Media makers include program directors, on-air hosts or presenters, television journalists, editors-in-chief, news editors, camera operators, sound engineers, video editors, actors, celebrities, politicians and musicians, to name just a few. Media messages are expressed by the selection of program content, the program content itself, the selection of hosts or moderators, written and spoken texts, visuals, and sound effects. The time necessary to create a television program varies from a few hours to a month or more. Most income comes from the sale of advertising slots. In some countries, tax money is used to support television channels that are owned by the government. If a company or private individual spends money to fund a television channel, they often want to influence the channel's selection of topics and steer its editorial viewpoints.

Video games

Video games are an electronic medium. They can be played on game consoles, computers, and smartphones. Depending on a game's complexity and scope, the funding for video games comes from the game industry and sometimes from private programmers or start-ups. Media makers include authors, art directors, game designers, programmers, composers, and sound designers, to name just a few. Media messages are expressed by the genre, setting, story, interactive options, the game's objective, and the language used, as well as the audio and visual design of the game. The time needed to create a video game depends on its complexity and the platform it is created for, and ranges from one day to a few years. Most income comes from selling the game to target audiences, advertisements before or during the game, merchandising, and the sale of in-game features.

Internet (computer/smartphone)

The internet is an electronic medium. It can be accessed using special hardware like computers, smartphones, tablet computers, game consoles and e-book readers. The fact that there is no specific funding for the internet sets it apart from other media.

Companies, governments, and private individuals own special websites, blogs, and internet platforms that many people use, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Google. It is hotly debated whether sites like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are media or just platforms that supply a service for content creators. If they are considered media in their own right, they share the editorial responsibility for the content and comments posted by users. This would increase their responsibility for monitoring discussions and deleting offensive posts, hate speech, disinformation, or fake profiles. Media makers on the internet include average people who provide content, programmers, web designers, and IT specialists, as well as authors, journalists and media makers from traditional media outlets, whose content is reposted on the internet. The interconnection of all media content that can be found on the internet is referred to as media convergence. Media messages are expressed through images, videos, audio, text, and through their design, style, and interactive options, to name just a few. The time necessary to create internet content depends on the content itself and can range from just seconds to months. Most income is generated by on-screen advertisements, and through selling user data. Internet content itself is usually not posted to generate income, but to provide information and spread ideas, as well as for self-expression and socializing with others.
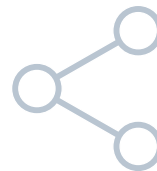
Social media (computer/smartphone)

Social media are platforms on the internet, thus an electronic medium. Social media can be used on computers, tablet computers, and smartphones. Funding for social media comes from companies, individuals, or start-ups. The world's biggest social media platform, Facebook was developed in 2004 by then 20-year-old Mark Zuckerberg and others. It is now operated by Facebook, Inc. Media makers include programmers, web designers, and IT specialists who provide the platform, as well as billions of network users — generally individuals, companies or groups of people — who produce and share content. Media messages are mostly expressed by text and images, as well as shared links, videos and audio. The time it takes to create content for social media is usually short, often ranging from a few seconds to a few hours. Income for programming and managing social media platforms is generated by selling on-screen advertising, and selling user data to companies, institutions or governments willing to pay for the data. Most users do not earn money with their content. Famous bloggers, video bloggers, YouTube stars, and influencers can make money through advertising or when companies pay for product placement. The more followers these individuals have, the more money they can make.
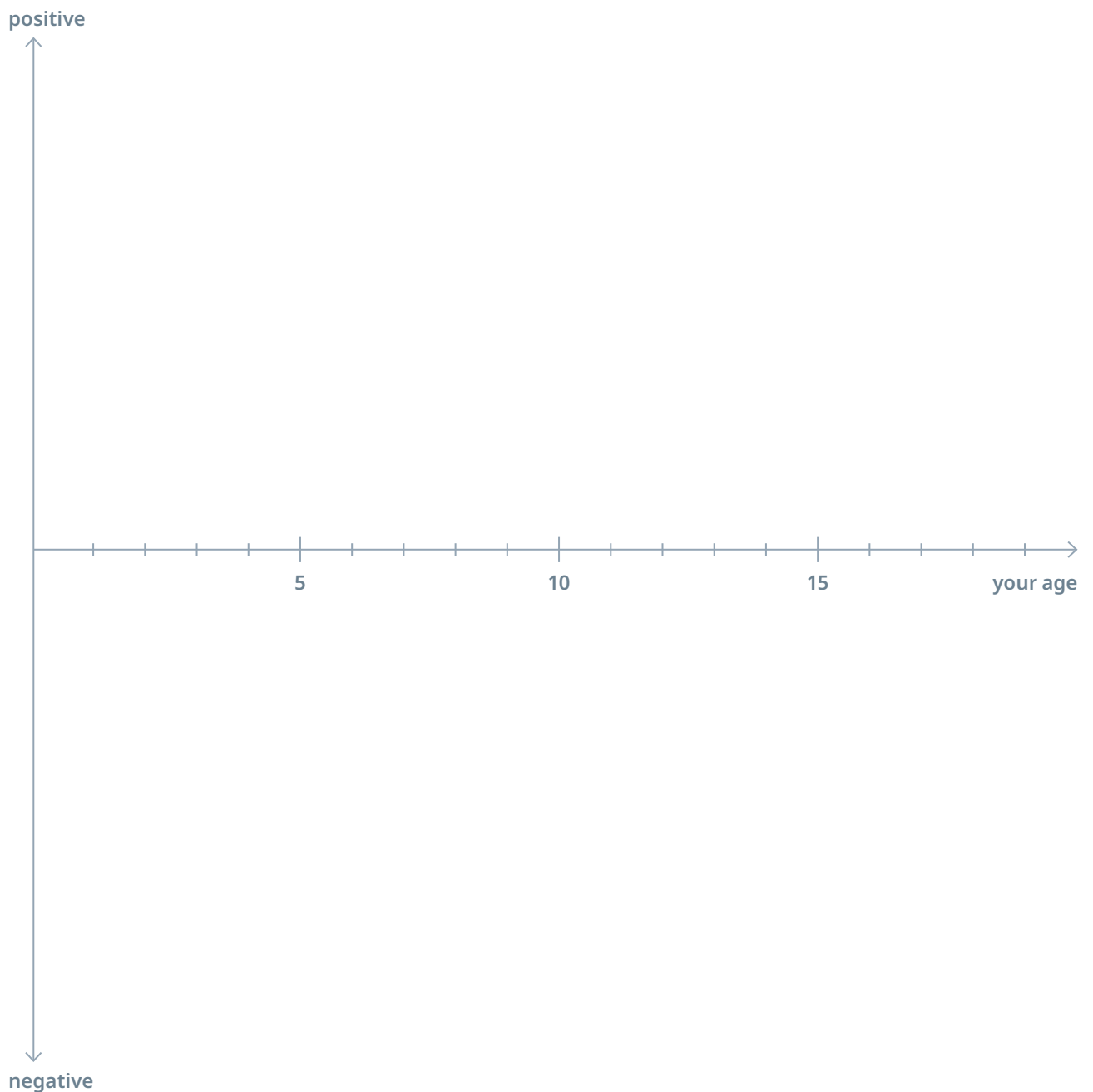
WORKSHEET

My media biography

People around the globe grow up with media. At different ages, we use different kinds of media: books, magazines, comics, music, radio, television, the internet, social media and computer games.

Look back at your childhood: What media and what specific media content were important to you when you were a child? What left a lasting impression? Try to remember both positive and negative media experiences you had and how old you were at the time.

positive

5   10   15   your age

negative

WORSHEET

Online research: Media

Type of medium reviewed: _____

What tools and specific characteristics does this type of medium employ (text, image, sound, interaction…)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who are the target groups of this type of medium and what functions does it have in society?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who produces this type of medium? Who controls the content? How is it financed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Find a specific example for this medium in your national media market and try to answer the following questions.

Selected example: _____

Who owns this medium? _____

Who makes the media messages? _____

What is the target group? _____

How many people use it? _____

When was it launched? _____

How is it financed? _____

What are typical media messages? _____

Do you like it or not and why? _____

WORKSHEET

Analyze! Five key questions to ask

Title of media piece: _____

Source of media piece: _____

> What is the media message?

Discuss the questions regarding your selected media piece. Note down key words of your discussions.
Visualize the most important results on a flip chart. Decide who will present which question.

1. Authorship
Who created this message? How do we know? What choices were made that could have been made differently?

2. Format
What attracts our attention? What creative techniques were used to attract our attention?

3. Audience
Who is the target audience? How might different people understand the message differently?

4. Content
What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in the message? What are omitted? What is the overall worldview?

5. Purpose
Why is this message being sent? Who benefits from it? Who pays for it?

If you have time, discuss within your group why it is important to ask questions about (1) authorship, (2) format, (3) audience, (4) content, and (5) purpose whenever you read, listen to, watch, or share a media piece.

WORKSHEET

One event — different stories

Event reviewed: _____

Medium		
Date		
Content		
Language		
Pictures		
Sound		
Our emotional reaction to it		
Do we believe it?		
The media maker wants us to believe that …		
What information is missing?		

WORKSHEET

Media and me and you

All kinds of media influence people and society, at times in an obvious way, at other times more subtly. People are sometimes aware they are being influenced, and sometimes they are not. In today's world, it is important to know about media, to develop an attitude regarding media that prioritizes informed choices and responsible communication, and to have some essential skills for engaging with media. This knowledge, this attitude and these skills are called media and information literacy (MIL). Just as literacy is the ability to read and write, MIL refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media and media messages of all kinds. But do people reflect on media, media's impact, and why MIL is important?

TASK

Pretend you are a journalist who wants to conduct an interview on MIL for a radio station or a YouTube channel. Prepare four to five questions for your interview with another trainee.

Decide whether you want to record an audio or video interview. Practice your interview with your interview partner and then record it on your smartphone.

Optional:
Interview people at home: your family, friends, schoolmates, and neighbors

My questions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in approximately 50 developing countries and emerging economies.

DW Akademie

Made for minds.