It recently became known that Twitter has been selling information to advertisers about the emojis their customers use. Advertisers use this information to target specific audiences based upon the emotion or likes/dislikes expressed by the emoji. For example, if you use the football emoji, you might see ads related to sporting events or sports equipment. Use the high-heeled shoe emoji and you might expect to see ads for fashion; a pizza emoji could result in everything from food-to-vitamins-to-exercise programs even if you simply chose it on a whim because your stomach was growling. When you tweet an emoji, advertisers buy that information and attempt to categorize your feelings.

Ask students to identify the ads they might see based upon their emoji choices

AHA! Advertisers think they know me because of my emojis!

Grade 7-12

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to get my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?

Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same message differently.
Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are included or omitted?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Materials: smart phone, tablet or computer to check individual twitter accounts. Paper and pencil. WUNC Podcast for reference, “That emoji you just tweeted could determine the next ad you see.” http://www.tinyurl.com/ycwbj7dp

Activity: Have each student look at their individual tweets from the last few days or weeks. If students don’t have Twitter accounts, they can team with a classmate who does, or reference their emoji use for texting on a different platform.

Ask each student to draw and label (to prevent confusion) their 5 most-used emojis. Collect and create one master list for the class. Are there certain emojis being used by large numbers of students? List the 5 most-used emojis on the board. Then as a class guess which advertisers would most likely target this group. Reference the Key Questions and Core Concepts, as well as the money section of the article listed above.

Ask students: Do your emoji choices accurately portray your emotions? Is it okay for Twitter to sell your information? How do you feel about being targeted by advertisers? Does it violate your privacy or is it good business? How will this knowledge change your behavior?

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2018, Center for Media Literacy.