How to Analyze a Document: Webpage Advertisement

**Document Description**

This is a modified webpage advertising bioplastic bottles for sale from the company NatureWorks, LLC. The students should understand that NatureWorks, LLC has an active interest in selling the bottles, and the information on this page supports that observation. In this case they compare greenhouse gases and energy consumption to traditional plastics and they include information that is not relevant to the case study, but might make consumers ‘feel good’ about choosing those products.

**Background Information**

This is a webpage advertisement for our DBCS about using bioplastic polylactic acid milk bottles versus traditional polyethylene ones. To help combat environmental problems caused by petroleum based plastics scientists created bioplastics from plant matter that helps to reduce their carbon footprint. These materials may have other drawbacks which consumers need to be aware of. The students should have background knowledge of the carbon cycle and that humans impact the environment (carbon footprint).

**Recognize Bias in Documents**

An advertisement often contains bias to try to persuade the consumer to buy their product. The company’s name gives the consumer a bias towards using environmentally friendly products. Using the name Ima Flower as the interviewer could also create a bias towards being environmentally friendly.

**Determine Reliability, Credibility, and Limitations of a Document**

In an advertisement the company wants to sell their product. The consumer needs to determine if an advertisement has the quality of being accepted as true or honest (reliable and credible) in order to make an informed buying decision. This document provides a source for the consumer to reference, however it is important to think about the limited credibility of the source.

**Ask Questions as a Result of Having Limited Information**

This document provides statistics on their product in relation to the amount of greenhouse gases produced and the use of renewable energy. This type of information should encourage consumers to ask questions to clarify this information. Questions such as, ‘Is this information reliable/accurate?’, ‘What implications does this information have for our DBCS?’, ‘Where can we go to find out more information on this subject?’.  

**Determine the Relevance of Information Presented**

This document contains some irrelevant information in the form of ‘eco-friendly benefits’. Information such as this is used to help sell a consumer on their product, by adding on additional benefits. In the context of our DBCS, this information is not relevant to the decision that needs to be made.

**RESOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**
We thank the National Science Foundation and Iowa State University’s Center for Biorenewable Chemicals for funding this work (EPSCoR; NSF award ESP - 1101284, CBiRC; NSF award ECC - 0813570). We would also like to thank Eric Hall, for his invaluable teaching, the lecturers who shared their knowledge with us (Dr. Peter Keeling, Dr. Raj Raman, Bernardo DeCampo, Dr. Sriram Sundararajan), the businesses that provided the opportunities for tours of their facilities (Lincoln Way Energy, Renewable Energy Group (REG)), the staff of the Biocentury Research Farm, the staff of CBiRC (Adah Leshem, Stacy Rentfro, Diana Loutsch), and anyone else that helped make this learning experience so valuable.