

## **S.U.R.E. Campaign: Promoting Information Literacy Awareness to Singaporeans**

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### **Abstract:**

*In 2013, National Library Singapore undertook a nation-wide marketing campaign to promote information literacy awareness to Singaporeans. As the term “information literacy” was difficult for the man-on-the-street to grasp, the campaign was branded as S.U.R.E., which stands for Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate. This campaign covered numerous aspects, such as the provision of accessible IL resources; promotion on both traditional and social media channels as well as engagement and outreach efforts to students and teachers.*

**Keywords:** information literacy, marketing campaign, social media, Internet, engagement.

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## IMPORTANCE OF INFO LITERACY SKILLS IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE

We are now living in a highly digital age. In 2013 alone, the Internet was used by more than 2.7 billion people, or about 39% of the world's population<sup>1</sup>. Professor Ang Peh Hwa, Director of the Singapore Internet Research Centre at Nanyang Technological University, opined that people have changed their lives around the technology, including the way we work, learn, create and even laugh –“lol”. This proliferation of Internet has resulted in an exponential increase in the quantity and complexity of information available. Beyond print, information now presents itself through multiple media formats and various channels, including unfiltered ones such as individuals' blogs and social media outlets. The mastery of information literacy (IL) skills hence becomes extremely critical to the current generation of information users, as IL capacity affects users' lifelong competency to reason, to think critically, and to take in varied information from numerous sources to synthesize it for their own needs. In short, IL skills are no longer a “good-to-have” but a “must-have” skill in order to maneuver efficiently in today's digital age.

Although Singapore is a highly wired and connected nation<sup>2</sup>, information literacy levels among Singaporeans may not necessarily be high. For example, there are reports of increasing number of Singaporeans falling prey to online scams<sup>3</sup>. When faced with an onslaught of information, there is also a tendency for people to cope with the information overload by satisficing<sup>4</sup>, i.e. choosing an alternative that is just good enough to achieve the goal (search for, found something good enough and stop search) instead of maximising the search. Many times, such satisficing coping mechanisms are cognitive shortcuts and may not be the most info-literate strategy available. In addition, an independent research study undertaken by the National Library Board of Singapore in 2013 showed that 91% of library patrons surveyed tend to turn to online sites and social media platforms as the most used channels of information for leisure<sup>5</sup>, an aspect which would be taken into consideration for the marketing campaign described below.

Against this backdrop, the National Library Board (NLB), which oversees the operation of the National Library and its 24 branches of public libraries, launched a nation-wide campaign in 2013 to promote information literacy awareness to all Singaporeans. Beyond understanding IL as a mere academic concept, the National Library Singapore hopes

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<sup>1</sup> Sim, Melissa. (2014, March 9). 25 years on, many cannot live without the Internet. *The Straits Times*, p34

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, 84% of Singapore's households have internet access and 60% of households have two or more computers according to Infocomm usage statistics in Singapore, provided by Infocomm Authority of Singapore, last accessed on June 11, 2014 : <http://www.ida.gov.sg/Infocomm-Landscape/Facts-and-Figures/Infocomm-Usage-Households-and-Individuals>. The 2012 Norton Survey reported that Singaporeans spend an average of 66 hours online per week (more than half of their waking hours) via Symantec press release, last accessed on June 11, 2014: [http://www.symantec.com/en/sg/about/news/release/article.jsp?prid=20120411\\_01](http://www.symantec.com/en/sg/about/news/release/article.jsp?prid=20120411_01)

<sup>3</sup> Unknown (2013, September 7). Rise in online shopping scams. Today. Last accessed on July 9, 2014 <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/rise-online-shopping-scams>

<sup>4</sup> Agosto, Denis. E (2002) Bounded rationality and satisficing in young people's Web-based decision making. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Volume 53, Issue 1, pages 16–27, 2002. Last accessed on July 9, 2014 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/asi.10024/abstract;jsessionid=8534EB78C1838528FFD8EACA77BBEC91.f04t03?deniedAccessCustomisedMessage=&userIsAuthenticated=false>

<sup>5</sup> Antzworkz Consultants 2014, *NLB S.U.R.E. Year 1 Post-Campaign Review*, confidential paper presented to the National Library Board (NLB) on 9 Apr 2014, Singapore.

that this campaign brings across the message that information literacy skills are important and relevant to each and every Singaporean, especially in their daily lives.

## S.U.R.E – INFORMATION LITERACY MADE SIMPLER

As Information Literacy is an important 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill, it was decided at the outset that this campaign would be marketed to all Singaporeans, including those who do not visit libraries. The necessary first step to promoting information literacy at a national level is to explain the term “information literacy” to the masses in a manner that is understandable by most.

American Library Association (ALA) defines an information literate person as one who “recognizes *when* information is needed and be able to have the ability to *locate, evaluate, and use effectively* the needed information. The information literate individuals are those who have *learned how to learn*”<sup>6</sup>. Understandably, the term “information literacy” may appear too complicated a concept for the average man-on-the-street to grasp. As such, the National Library of Singapore branded this campaign as S.U.R.E. - which stands for **S**ource, **U**nderstand, **R**esearch, and **E**valuate (see Figure 1). By simplifying IL into its building blocks, the intention is to make IL easy to understand for the average Singaporean and thereafter, to encourage them to adopt these 4 easy steps when they handle information:

- check whether the information **source** is reliable
- **understand** the context of the information
- **research** into other sources to verify the accuracy of information (cross-check)
- **evaluate** the best way to use the information

With the help of a creative agency, the National Library Singapore chose a cloud as a logo for this campaign (See Figure 2). This logo symbolizes the ability to see through the information clutter. The image of a cloud is a friendly visual stand-in for information haze, while the acronym S.U.R.E. in the middle of the cloud represents ‘cutting-through’ the information overload. The colour blue is chosen to represent clarity, while the clean, round typeface selection complements the cloud design. Each letter to the acronym is explained around the cloud.

## CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

As this is the first time the National Library of Singapore is promoting IL to the general public, the campaign focuses mainly on generating awareness on IL to our target audiences, who range from youths (Secondary 1 onwards – 13 year olds) to working adults (age 20s-50s). The campaign hopes to achieve 5 million interactions by financial year 2016. These can be both *online* interactions (such as number of resource downloads from S.U.R.E website and number of likes and shares on S.U.R.E social media sites), as well as *offline/real-life* interactions that include the number of participants trained and number of S.U.R.E activities completed by students.

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<sup>6</sup> American Library Association. (1989). *ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report*. Chicago: American Library Association. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm#ldef> (Accessed 7 July, 2011)

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

### *(1) Accessible IL Resources via S.U.R.E Portal*

The campaign kicked off with a media launch on 23 October 2013, with the announcement that the National Library is launching a S.U.R.E Campaign to promote awareness of information literacy. Media and members of the public were introduced to the [S.U.R.E portal](http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/) – a new website<sup>7</sup> with a wide range of free resources on information literacy. As it is time-consuming and costly to develop a website for this purpose, the team opted for an inexpensive blogsite (wordpress) to park our resources. This meant that our resources would be presented in a reverse chronological order with the latest additions shown at the top of the site. As the average Joe may not be familiar with library terms, extra efforts were made to ensure that the IL resources developed by the team were easy to understand (i.e. written using layman's language instead of library jargon), and more importantly, visually attractive.

The team also believed that IL awareness and the 4-step adoption should be promoted to target audiences at the point of need. Hence, with inputs from Ministry of Education curriculum planners, we developed resources that are closely tied to the national school curriculum (for subjects such as secondary school History, Geography and Social Studies). In so doing, we ensured that these resources would be relevant and useful to our target audiences (in our case, students, parents and educators are key target audiences among the general public); while at the same time, equipping them with the much-needed IL search tips and evaluation techniques related to their topic of interest.

Our suite of free-to-access resources range from daily blog articles (written by librarians with an IL learning angle on various topics ranging from arts, parenting to education), [videos](#), [parents' handbook](#) and [resource list](#), [children's' activity book](#), [libguides](#), [comic strips](#), magazine-style [interviews](#) with professionals (which provide insights into how people in various occupations use IL skills in their area of work), [infographics](#), and [cheatsheets](#)<sup>8</sup>. In 2014, multi-lingual resources (on Chinese, Malay and Tamil contents) as well as bite-size [e-Learn](#) modules were added. A sampler of e-Learn titles include “Cite it right to avoid plagiarism” and “Info literacy for Educators”.

In addition to the above-mentioned range of free resources developed in-house, the team increased awareness of this campaign by cultivating suitable “ambassadors” to help us disseminate S.U.R.E. messages to their respective fan-bases. We collaborated with 2 local authors to weave in S.U.R.E messages in their latest instalment of fiction books (Sherlock Sam and Triple 9 Sleuth) which were commercially available at major bookstores. To take this further, the team also collaborated with a well-known local comic author to develop a limited edition comic instalment of “Mr Kiasu” series, and this special edition comic book with S.U.R.E messaging was redeemable by members of public when they attended S.U.R.E information literacy workshop at the libraries.

### *(2) Library and Public Venue Dress-up to Promote Awareness*

In conjunction with the campaign launch, 6 campaign posters with catchy slogans were created (refer to Figure 3). To maximise and sustain visibility throughout the campaign, a systematic ‘dress up’ of various venues which are regarded as oases of information was

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/>

<sup>8</sup> Infographics cover general topics which might interest the wider public members, while cheatsheets focus on school curriculum topics.

organized. From October to December 2013, all 24 public library branches island-wide as well as the National Library were dressed up with a variety of S.U.R.E posters and collaterals. They included educational wall posters, shelf & tabletop decals, customised bookmarks inserted into library books and screensavers in library OPACs and multimedia stations. These bore S.U.R.E messages to encourage library patrons and staff to visit the new S.U.R.E. portal for more information about the campaign (refer to Figure 4 for images on library dress-up). In order to maximise exposure to even the non-library goers, the “Dress up” also extended to public venues like news-stands, popular hawker centres, bus-stops (refer to Figure 5).

### ***(3) Promotion through Traditional and Social Media Channels***

In terms of media strategy, media buys during the campaign duration were driven by key events, such as S.U.R.E Day in November 2013 where members of the public were invited to attend a talk at the Central Public Library where they could learn how distinguished speakers applied IL skills in their various job domains. Filmmaker Anthony Chen, who won the Cannes and Golden Horse awards, was one of the speakers at S.U.R.E Day 2013 and he shared how he cross-checked and verified information with a number of sources during the research phase of producing a film. Media buys during this period included print advertising and out-of-home advertising at bus-stops and these were mainly used to drive visitorship to S.U.R.E events.

As the key target audience consisted of mainly the youths and working adults who are active on social media, it was important to utilise social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter as these were the platforms the target audience were familiar with. Recognizing that IL for the mass public was not an easy topic to disseminate via Facebook, there was a concerted effort by the project team to contextualise IL messaging to local tastes. Starting up with trivia information and infographics on common myths, the Facebook posts not only functioned as a means to demonstrate the importance of checking sources and facts through the S.U.R.E 4-step process, they also promoted IL resources and drove traffic to the S.U.R.E portal (See Figure 6). After the initial months of establishing a social media presence, the Facebook contents went on to demonstrate the real-time debunking of viral content with weak sources, and directly encouraged followers to be S.U.R.E of their information. This helped to establish the S.U.R.E Facebook page as credible and timely. As of April 2014, the page has garnered 46,000 likes.

### ***(4) Engagement to students via S.U.R.E Club***

As part of S.U.R.E campaign’s continuous engagement and outreach efforts to students, S.U.R.E Clubs were launched in secondary schools from June 2013, a few months before the media launch. S.U.R.E. club is an activity-based supplementary enrichment programme that allows secondary school students to learn about information literacy in a fun-filled manner through completion of hands-on activities related to daily life. This programme is administered by teachers, who would usually be English Heads of Departments (HODs) or Library Teacher-in-charge, through a Resource Pack developed by the National Library Singapore, to (usually) the student library club members. The Resource Pack contains a menu of activities for students to choose from, as well as Activity Guides, general instructions, and templates to help teachers facilitate the various achievements required by the students to earn their rewards. These activities are designed as self-directed activities that student members

can undertake using the Activity Guide and templates provided. The intention is for students to learn more about information literacy through completing these activities. (See example activity in Figure 7). There are 3 levels in the programme –Gold, Silver, Bronze and upon completion of each level, students will be awarded Certificates of Achievement in the annual Awards Ceremony organized by the National Library. In addition to building students' characters through these meaningful activities, the students would also be rewarded with S.U.R.E. tokens like T-shirts and pencil cases when they complete a certain number of activities. Written feedback from teachers was positive and many felt that "the resources provide a structure for student librarians. (They) are clearer about the skills required" and "the programme does give them [students] a sense of recognition for the work that they have been doing. The lower secondary students are more excited to try the different tasks."

Students in S.U.R.E. clubs also get the opportunity to participate in NLB-organized Learning Journeys such as the visit to tech giant Google Singapore Office. In 2013, an information literacy-themed Book Display Competition was organized among the S.U.R.E. club students and the top 3 winners showcased their book display at the 2013 IFLA Information Literacy pre-IFLA Satellite Conference held in Singapore. This platform gave the aspiring student librarians an opportunity to rub shoulders with international IL practitioners from around the world (See Figure 7). As of March 2014, there are 352 students from 29 Secondary schools in Singapore participating in the S.U.R.E. club programme.

#### ***(5) Promoting S.U.R.E. to Teachers and Parents through Workshops***

While the S.U.R.E. campaign itself is meant for the general public, the team continued to engage parents and teachers who form the 2 important groups of influencers who will help to inculcate information literacy skills in school-going children. This includes S.U.R.E. workshops for pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as targeted outreach to parents via self-help community organisations. As of March 2014, more than 3000 teachers and parents were trained and exposed to S.U.R.E.

## **CONCLUSION**

The National Library of Singapore promoted information literacy on a national-level for the first time through the S.U.R.E. campaign in 2013. Results from the campaign recall survey conducted at the end of the campaign (in March 2014) were encouraging and stood at 14%. While the IL resources and social media engagement received positive feedback, one learning point that the Project Team gained was that the marketing messages could be a tad high-brow for the average Singaporean, considering that Singapore is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic city. The 2013 S.U.R.E. campaign was a first attempt at getting Singaporeans to be more aware of the importance of IL and a baby step towards the long journey to encourage Singaporeans to apply the S.U.R.E. steps for the information they need. Plans are underway to do a second run of the Campaign in end 2014.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

### **Gene Tan**

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Gene is a librarian by training and was also the President of the Library Association of Singapore spearheading the representation of librarians' and libraries' interests in Singapore. In his career as a librarian, he has done innovative projects to reinvent the nature of librarianship. These include the original library@orchard and being involved in the development of the National Library Building. He was the winner of The Enterprise Challenge (TEC) Champion award for developing and promoting innovation in Singapore's public service. As Director of the National Library, Gene directs the Singapore Memory Project, a whole of nation project that was announced by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at his National Day Rally in 2011. It aims to develop a national bank of content on Singapore through collecting, preserving, organising and promoting the use of anything that has ever been said or thought about Singapore. And through OurTreasures - another national project, Gene is also developing a national portal to have Singapore's culture proliferate throughout the whole of Singapore through every level of society.

### **Wan Wee Pin**

Deputy Director, Engagement Division, National Library Group, National Library Board, Singapore

Wee Pin has been intimately involved in the development of innovative library programmes as well as other initiatives to develop meaningful learning experiences for library patrons as the head of the Engagement Division for the National Library. Besides programming, Wee Pin concurrently looks after the following functions such as Marketing & Publicity, Publishing, Partnerships, Social Media Engagement as well as Donors Management – each of these compliments and reinforces the effort by the National Library to engage and involve the community in growing their knowledge capacity and discernment skills. Incidentally, Wee Pin also doubles up as the Programme Head for three National Campaigns namely the Singapore Memory Project, the National Information Literacy Programme, as well as the OurTreasures Project. Prior to joining the National Library Board, Wee Pin was a broadcast journalist with MediaCorp radio and also has experience working with information websites during the Dotcom era.

### **Jaclyn Teo**

Senior Manager, Engagement Division, National Library Group, National Library Board, Singapore  
Secretary, IFLA Info Literacy Standing Committee (2013-2015)

Jaclyn oversees the National Projects Management Office in Engagement Division within the National Library Group in NLB (National Library Board of Singapore). She is the Programme Manager for the (1) National Information Literacy Programme; (2) Singapore Memory Project and (3) OurTreasures Portal. Jaclyn implemented the S.U.R.E. awareness campaign which brings information literacy closer to the man on the streets. She was also responsible for the successful organization of 75<sup>th</sup> IFLA Info literacy Satellite conference that was held in Singapore in 2013. Jaclyn is also the current Secretary of IFLA Info Literacy Standing Committee (2013-2015) where she is involved in international projects and is also the Deputy Convenor for the 2014 IFLA IL satellite in Limerick. In addition, she also contributes in Library Association of Singapore in the Awards Committee. Prior to joining the National Library Group in July 2011, Jaclyn was rotated to Public Libraries Services Division (as Children's librarian) in 2008, Library & Professional Services Division (Legal Deposit division) in 2009 and Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (NL) in 2010 where she served as a Business Reference Librarian.

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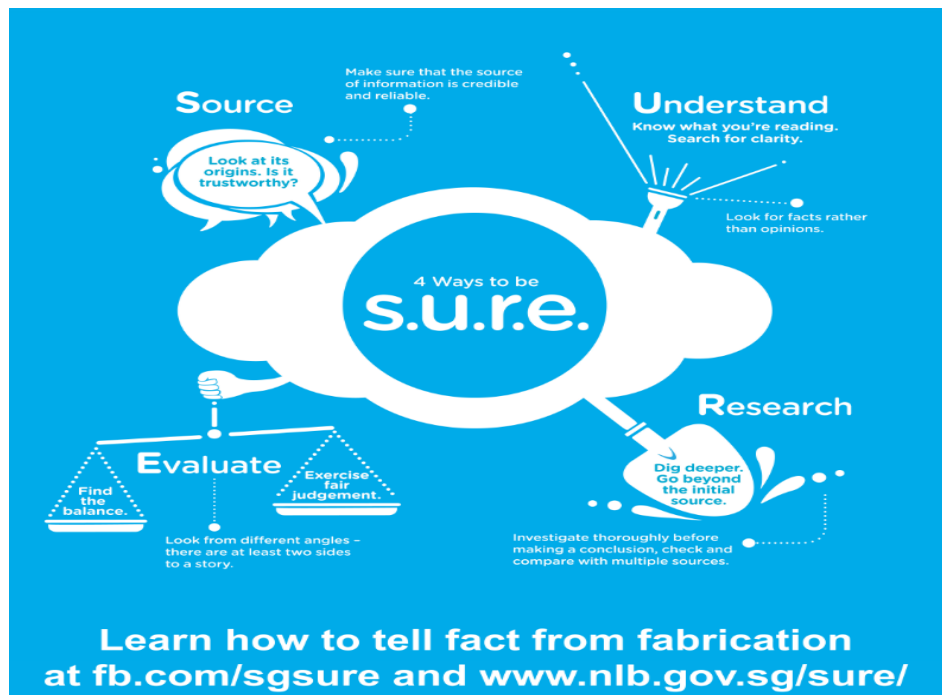
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<http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/>



**Figure 1: S.U.R.E Explained**



**Figure 2: Campaign Logo**



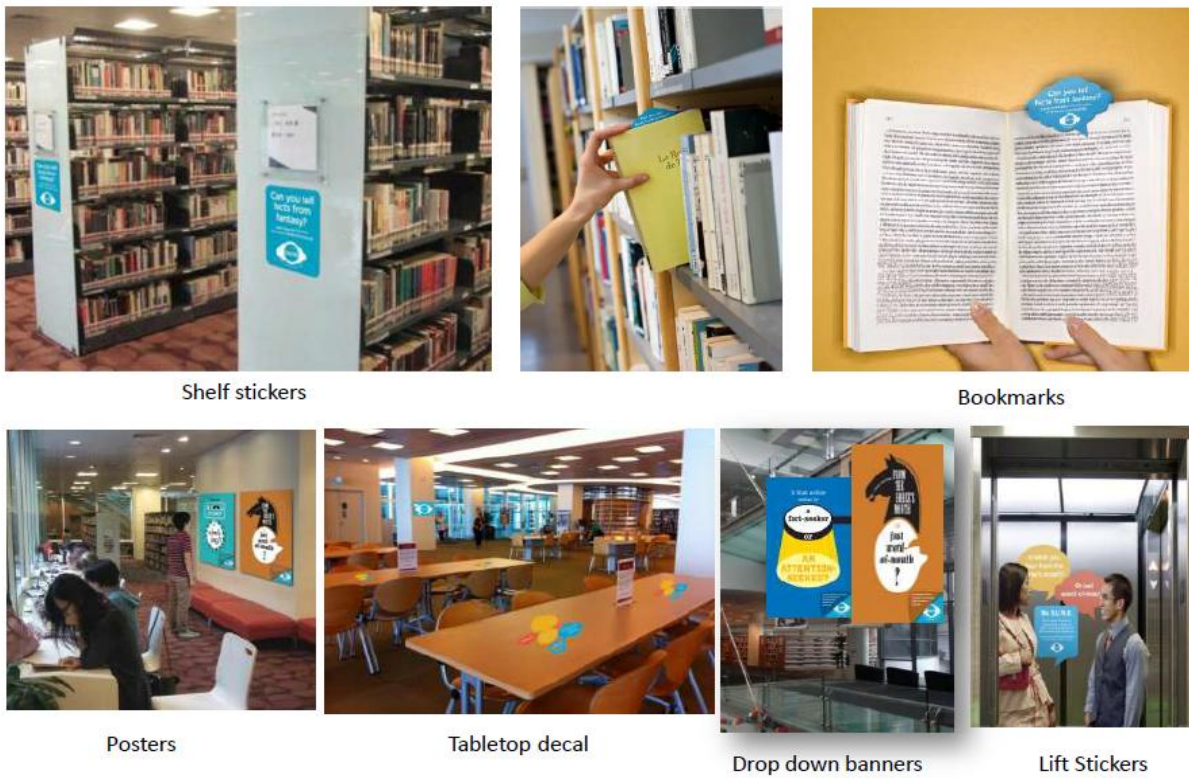
**Figure 3: S.U.R.E Campaign Posters**



From left to right:

- Is that status update a well-meaning share or unhealthy scare?
- Is that article written by a fact-seeker or an attention-seeker?
- Is what you hear from the horse's mouth or just word-of-mouth?
- Is that post a cool story or a fool's story?
- Is that email a golden opportunity or a dirty scam?
- Are your newsfeeds in the morning a head start or headache?

***Figure 4: NLB Library Dress Up***



***Figure 5: Dress up of Public Venues in Singapore***



**Figure 6: S.U.R.E. Facebook Page and Sample Post**



**SURE Singapore**

Can you lose weight by indulging in regular sauna? Would occupying a "hot" seat that was just vacated by someone cause piles? This infographic verifies 8 popular health and body beliefs that many of us may have!

Click here to view larger version and more infographics:  
<http://bit.ly/1bRejyy>





***Figure 7 : S.U.R.E. Club and Sample Activity***

## **A fun-filled info-literacy enrichment programme for secondary students through school library club**



Sample S.U.R.E Club Activity found in Resource Pack:

### **Be S.U.R.E in daily lives**

In the following scenarios, how can you ensure you are obtaining the most authoritative or reliable information? Or making the best decision?

- Buying a DSLR camera
- Buying a pet
- Going on a holiday
- Purchasing an item from an online shopping website
- Embarking on a body-building regime
- Choosing a restaurant for a special occasion
- Have medical queries
- News of death of a celebrity

Choose one scenario and answer these questions:

- What are your sources of information? Would you consult more than 1 source?
- Provide specific sources
- How do you know your sources are most reliable?
- What is your eventual decision?