

Faculty of Business Environment and Society

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LIKING ISN'T HELPING
(CRISIS RELIEF SINGAPORE)



At a denotative or cognitive level (Naman 2011), the ad shows a Black & White image illustrating a woman holding an approximately 7-year-old boy which appears to be losing consciousness while being held in between the woman's hands and lying on her lap while they are both sat in a side of the road with dirt in its surroundings. There is an overlying image of 12 hands with their thumbs up positioned on the left and right hand side of the image, pointing at the scene in the centre. At last there is a phrase positioned on the left hand-side that says "Liking

isn't helping". The logo of Crisis Relief Singapore can be seen on the bottom right of the banner.

On a connotative level, the link of the woman and the boy in the ad leads to the interpretation of a mother losing her child in her hands. It represents a story (Watchman & Johnson 2009) of the tragedy some families are going through during war. At the same time, all the hands with their thumbs up are a human-made symbol meaning a "Liking" or "Approval" (Andre et al 2011) of developed countries towards the tragedy of countries in war.

Shock: Showing a shocking scene has been proven to have great impact in persuasiveness (Huhmann & Brotherton 1997) which are higher order emotions that need more complex processes for a person to understand (Poels & Dewitte 2006). In this ad, the scene shows loss of a loved one and destruction, which may induce to emotional distress (Kemp, Kennett-Hensel & Kees 2013). This "Shock" may be unpleasant but tactical (Matusitz, & Forrester 2013) to cause greater impact in the viewers' mind. However, unpleasant stimuli tends to associate negative attitudes towards a brand (Pretty & Brinol 2015). Therefore this may be of disadvantage for Crisis Relief as it may prompt the viewer to associate them with the unpleasantness of the scene shown.

Sadness: Pretty & Brinol (2015) made a valid point on how happiness and positive emotions increase confidence and safety in consumers' mind, while sadness increases doubt. The ad's overall sadness puts into question and doubt if people's behavior is the appropriate one, triggering to doubt their own behavior. Furthermore, happy consumers tend to engage less to ad message persuasiveness, than sad consumers (Pretty & Brinol 2015). At the same time Anger works better than surprise for persuasion (Moons and Mackie 2007), although research in this field needs further development (Tiedens and Linton 2001). This explains why this ad is changing consumers' behavior into sadness and anger, to persuade them better.

Color metaphor: Black colors in advertisements signify night, emptiness, death and negation of spirit (Farooq 2016). While white colors express cool, snow, pure, clean and brightness of spirit (Farooq 2016, Clarke & Honeycutt 2000). B&W colors are used here as a metaphor of destruction and lack of emotion, shown in the ad by a scene between a mother and a dying child, and white highlighting the cool

and bright spirit of the innocent. It can be argued this ad is more difficult to recall as it lacks of vivid colors that the viewer can associate with the brand (Hoek & Gendall 2010, Tchernikov & Fallah 2010). However, B&W is used in ads to give resemblance to an art photography, and art tends to make statements, and reflect social issues (Schroeder 2006). B&W images can also be of great impact if attached to another element to power up their significance (Schroeder 2006); if the image is powerful, words have to be simple, if the image is simple, words have to be strong (Adir et al. 2012). In this case the tagline “Liking isn’t helping” is simple and contrasts the powerful image. Therefore, this ad uses the contrast of simple words and powerful image to increase persuasion.

The “Like” metaphor: People in developed countries are using Social Media to “Like” content and make claims to reflect people’s values and concerns (North 2013). Research shows altruistic, helping behaviors can also be triggered by egoistic motives such as enhancing mood and reducing distress (Kemp, Kennett-Hensel & Kees 2013). Therefore, this ad uses hands with their thumbs-up as a metaphor signifying this egoistic behavior of Social Media users that “Like” but don’t help the cause, which increases levels of guilt.

Guilt: Making the viewer feel guilty as been proven to be persuasive in advertisements (Coulter & Pinto 1995). However, followed by the same statement by Brookes & Harvey (2015), it can lead to exaggerate. This ad in particular makes the viewer feel bad about thinking they could change anything by just “Liking” it on Facebook. A downside of the advert is, that by persuading viewers to stop thinking this way, they also persuade them to stop “Liking” on Facebook, which can reduce awareness of social causes on Social Media. Therefore, this ad is good at persuading to take action, but may reduce awareness as a consequence.

The underlying paradox: The image also shows a contradicting scene where it’s approved for tragedy to happen, Schroeder (2006) defines it as a paradox between people “liking” and the scene underneath. A visual representation of the difference between classes and reflecting social issues between what is happening in the Middle East and how people from developed countries is reacting. This causes distress (Kemp, Kennett-Hensel & Kees 2013) against the viewer’s morals and ethics of what is right and wrong which consequently persuades them to change.

The “Dirt” metaphor: The “dirt” signifier (Adir et al. 2012) is used as a metaphor for despair, loss of hope (Clarke & Honeycutt 2000). Vinikas 2003 explains how people started perceiving clean hygiene as an index of social status when cities started growing back in 1857. Applied to this ad, showing dirty surroundings can be interpreted as lesser social status. Dirt is also associated with concepts such as “feces, urine, vomit and rotting food” and are unpleasant nodes linked negatively in consumer’s minds (Farooq 2016). Therefore, when using dirt, this ad sends an “alert” sign to the viewer showing what needs to be avoided.

Body language: Body language in advertisements can have a stronger impact than what is written (Motschenbacher 2009), and tends to create instantly first impressions (PR Week 2013) which makes it crucial for advertisers to show the right first impression. The position of the mother shows concern, care and worry towards her child. The position of the child shows inactivity, signaling close to death (Andre et al. 2011). The gesture of the hands “Thumbs Up” Is a normative gesture meaning “Approval” and it increases persuasiveness as long as the viewer is familiar with the established meaning (Andre et al. 2011). For this ad, the target demographic is familiar with this symbol as they are present users of Social Media.

Facial expressions also convey a large amount of non-verbal communication (Andre et al. 2011). His facial expression lacks of emotion, transmitting sadness to the viewer. The mother’s face is hidden from the viewer, as she looks down to her child. Eye contact creates a connection (Motschenbacher 2009), so avoiding eye contact may induce problem avoidance, or embarrassment.

Accessories: The use of a head scarf/ burka, shows a ritual only used as an Islamic tradition by people from a Muslim religion (Gökariksel & McLarney 2010). This can lead the viewer to think this scene is happening in Syria, where the Muslim religion is predominant and where there is social/political turmoil and war.

The use of Muslim women in advertising can be used to reflect values such as “modesty, thrift, spiritualism, and communitarianism” (Gökariksel & McLarney 2010), in this ad we can see a reflection of communitarianism, of a collectivist culture predominant. The hair scarf also becomes an icon or label of a culture regarding Orientalism, with its colonial and postcolonial history attached to it (Gökariksel & McLarney 2010).

Position of the image: Meyers-Levy & Peracchio (1992) explain how viewers link their emotions from our experiences when growing up with the camera angle. We tend to look-up to things that are visually above us (For example looking up to our parents). At the same time, we tend to subordinate or see negatively things that are below us. The angle the photo puts the scene below the viewer, giving a sense of the scene being subordinate, weak and powerless below the spectrum of a dominant, powerful and superior viewer (Meyers-Levy & Peracchio (1992), Gorman & Eastman 2010).

To sum up, this ad has shown a contrasting paradox and a variety of metaphors well-linked to their meaning behind. It is not only persuading consumers, but teaching them new behaviors, acting as a statement in society and as a powerful tool for social change.

AD 2: WWF



On a connotative level, this ad shows a jungle, which is abundant and green on the left hand side, while on the right hand side there is an empty field where the trees are missing, only their roots are visible and there is a truck positioned at the back. The sky is grey and dark clouds are dominant. In front of the image there is a man positioned in the air but appears to be falling. The man is only wearing shorts, which are leopard printed. At the bottom of the ad is says “15km of rain forest disappears every minute” and the logo of WWF.

On a denotative level, the man shown is interpreted as Tarzan, the King of the Jungle, a Disney character. He travels around the jungle helping himself with branches and hanging vines, but when he reaches the deforestation camp, he runs out of branches and clumsily falls. The forest which is full of color and life on the right has been torn down by construction laborers leaving only an empty field, while the dark clouds are predicting a big storm coming up. This is a WWF ad explaining in a humorous way what can happen if we don't stop deforestation.

Humor: Research has shown humor increases attention paid into ads (Strick et al. 2013). Some researches may find humor to distract attention from the product or

service itself (Krishnan, H. S., & Chakravarti, D. 2003). Seeing the nature of this ad as giving unpleasant news, WWF has opted for humor to distract the unpleasantness of the news. However, it can be argued if humor is the right approach for such an issue as deforestation.

Furthermore, unpleasant stimuli tends to be associated with negative attitudes towards a brand (Pretty & Brinol 2015). By the same rule, pleasant stimuli leads to positive attitude association, which may be the reason why WWF has opted to approach the issue with humor. On the other hand, a humorous approach may not create such big of an impact as other tactics such as shock (Matusitz, & Forrester 2013) and may remove the seriousness of the message behind the ad, making it not only less persuasive, but a target of mockery, which can lead to a perceived offended public (Blum & McClellan 2006). However, shock is common for environmental ads, together with fear and guilt (Banerjee et al. 1995), opting for a humour approach may give it a different touch compared to other ads. However, using it as a differentiation factor does not necessarily make it more persuasive.

The ad uses a *slapstick* approach through “Vigorous arm and leg movement” which mocks his clownish behavior shown by the man’s exaggerated body language (Buijen & Valkenburg 2004). There is also an unexpected **conceptual surprise** to change the “happy ending” expected by the story, to a more tragic ending, which leads to minor disappointment (Buijen & Valkenburg 2004). Cifuentes (2002) classifies this humor as hostile, as it ridicules a person and a situation. It also **impersonates** Tarzan, using already associated nodes in consumer’s brain with a Disney hero well known by the audience, this is also called an allusion (Cifuentes & Sanchez 2006). Poking fun of this myth and character makes it a **satire** (Buijen & Valkenburg 2004). The use of fantasy-animated characters increases persuasiveness among children (Rose et al. 2012), when growing up they associate the feelings they felt during the movie (excitement, fun, joy...) with the advertisement itself, as explained by Pavlov and his Classical Conditioning theory (Cifuentes & Sanchez 2006). Therefore, this ad may persuade the youngest viewers, but may have an opposite effect on an older segmentation who associates deforestation with “Concern” and “Serious” and may be offended by the impersonation of Tarzan to represent such serious issue.

Storytelling: Wachman & Johnson (2009) explain it is impossible to describe emotions such as love or friendship without telling a story. Narratives in ads have more impact on recall and recognition, and increases levels of “connection” on a deep emotional level (Rose et al. 2012). The interesting part of story-telling is how, according to Wachman & Johnson (2009) there’s a limited number of stories in human experience, stories may reappear in history with varied content, but with the same underlying structures. The story behind this ad connects with people from different generations as they grew up with Disney and can relate to it. The underlying **myth** is the “Battle of good and evil”; a battle in between chaos (Deforestation) and order (Nature). Furthermore, a key story element is the concept of “Awakening” or “Collectivism” triggering people to change our ways and do something, all together. The story also holds an **epiphany** in between the forest and the destruction followed, a sudden realization that we must do things differently. The story itself shows why it is not recommended to include hostile humor to it, as it reflects serious deep issues attached underneath.

Colors as a Metaphor: **Green colors** tend to be used to reflect nature, as cool, refreshing and peaceful (Farooq 2016). Used as a metaphor of a healthy, abundant living ecosystem represented through green leaves and trees (Banerjee et al. 1995). While **browns, greys** and blacks are representing death, depression and emptiness (Farooq 2016). The colors and their position in the image can be seen as a contrasting metaphor for the living and dying nature. The grey sky with dark clouds are signifying “Bad times are ahead”. Therefore, when it comes to signifying meaning, this ad has chosen the right colors linked appropriately with the story behind.

Nature: Verlegh, Franssen & Kirmani (2015) explain how a brand is perceived more ecological when there is elements of nature shown in their ads. However, companies have over-used this element to claim their sustainability/healthy side, which has lead consumers to lose belief (Spack et al. 2012). However this tends to happen when associated with foods, this specific ad does not seem to show a jungle as an element of ecology, but as an element representing nature itself.

Environmental messages: The statement “15km of rain forest disappears every minute” shows in white small letters next to the WWF logo. Assertive language has a positive effect in environmental ads (Verlegh, Franssen & Kirmani 2015). It can be argued it only has positive effects on those consumers motivated to perform

in this behavior, while it has not impact at all on those consumers who lack of concern (Bickart & Ruth 2012). Furthermore, environmental ads tend to make environmental statements to make consumers learn about facts, without prompting to take any action (Banerjee et al. 1995). Applied to this ad, the message comes across as only informative and not persuading them to take any action.

Furthermore using humor to teach about a serious issue destroys all credibility and persuasion from consumers who show concern, while might get a laugh out of those who don't show concern. Therefore, the ad should have focused on the reaction of the target they were trying to reach, but instead they have distanced them by using the wrong approach.

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