Birthday Cake or A Piece of Meat?

Imagine getting a piece of meat for birthday cake. It would be strange to say the least. It comes natural for people to have a birthday party and a birthday cake with candles on it. However, there are a lot of people all over the world who can’t even afford a piece of meat. Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that “provides shelter, food, health, and mental health services to help families and entire communities get back on their feet” (Red Cross). Typical advertisements use logos, ethos, and pathos to lead people to buy a product, whereas nonprofit organizations use the advertisement to encourage people to support the world to transform in a positive way. Therefore, if the viewer makes a call or sends money to the organization after watching the advertisement, the ad would be considered successfully made.

One of multiple Red Cross’s advertisements, this advertisement efficiently points out the social issue via figurative image and thoughtful words, which engage viewers logically and emotionally. Also, by appealing the fact that there are no targeted audience because people in general are potential audience, the advertisement effectively draws the viewers’ attention to face the advertisement in a bigger picture.

Simply looking at the image, the audience might question themselves what meaning it is containing and what message it wants to deliver to people. First, let’s focus on the lighting. Everything else excluding the meat birthday cake with candles stuck to it is dark, and this lighting effect creates a depressing atmosphere. The Red Cross might have intended to make an emphasis to the meat cake, which is not a cake that typical people would get. In addition, empty seats around the table covered in dark make the mood feel even more desolated.
Second, a question arouses why candles are stuck to a meat instead of a birthday cake. The meat is the fundamental sustenance for the human body, but if financially insecure families cannot afford the most basic diet how could they buy a birthday cake for themselves or for their offspring? Therefore, sticking candles to the meat has created a darkly ironic image, which makes the audience think twice. Middle class people and even upper class people can become oblivious to helping others who live hand to mouth subsistence. And this particular advertisement appeals to and reminds people to give a hand to people in need.

To turn the attention to the three rhetorical elements of analyzing the advertisement which are logos, ethos, and pathos from the visualization of the image, the audience would find out that the advertisement contains each of these elements. First, because the Red Cross has come up with the logical data, the information has made the advertisement more persuasive and appealing. The factual data provides the example of Belgium where 1 in 10 families face the choice of whether they should buy a food that would support their health or an unnecessary food that would cost extra money (Red Cross). To clarify the data provided by the Red Cross, “this choice” from the caption might blur the comprehension of the viewers due to not precisely pointing out what “this” refers to (Red Cross). However, the choice signifies the option between a birthday party or a piece of meat. The advertisement moreover accentuates not only logical data but also reliability of the Red Cross logo. According to logodesignlove website, it states that the International Red Cross used a red cross on a white background to make an emblem of the armed forces’ medical services (logodesignlove). And now whenever people see a poster or a flag with a red cross on a white background, they spontaneously recall Red Cross, the medical service. Therefore, the logo itself has built credibility to the audience. In addition, as Red Cross is known for giving support to people who have lost just about everything because of a natural disaster and to the poor, people barely doubt the organization.
Lastly, the all capitalized captions “A BIRTHDAY PARTY OR A PIECE OF MEAT ON YOUR PLATE?” reveals a tone of empathy. People in the middle or upper classes have birthday party and eat birthday cake once a year. But people who must sustain their life a month with 55 euro would have a piece of meat for special occasion such as birthday. And it is incredible to see how people with money and without money would live such contrary lives. Getting the viewers’ eye back to the slogan, it seems like the Red Cross is asking the audience what they would do if they were in the position of people in poverty. By putting the audience in the shoes of the poor, the Red Cross appeals for donations by providing the bank account number. Not only the big words at the top left of the advertisement but also the bottom left words, which explains the value of 55 euro for the families in need appeals to emotions of the audience. And the Red Cross further appeals to emotions in the representation of the value of 55 euro, which is “One month worth of groceries for an entire family at the Red Cross social grocery stores” (Red Cross). Adapting the exchange rate, 55 euro is 62.41 dollars. To make a comparison with a household in United States, the website called “transferwise” shows the average living expense required for a four-person family which is 4,045 dollars (transferwise). And with 4,045 dollars, a family in need in Belgium can live for about 65 months. Additionally, the advertisement leaves the actual bank account number kindly instructing the audience to donate for a family and suggesting specific amount that would prevent people from confusion.

In conclusion, arguably the advertisement is a perfect example of multimodal advertisement that aims at persuading audiences to donate their money to Red Cross. Because it contains logical data, emotional appealing slogan, and Red Cross logo, which creates credibility, it doesn’t have a falling short element at all. Furthermore, the image of a piece of meat candles stuck to it indeed revolves around in people’s mind. Not only the image but also the caption asking for donation leaves an aftertaste and provokes the empathy of the audience.
to make a donation. Another reason for saying the advertisement is successfully produced is that even if people have decided not to donate the organization including the impoverished families, the advertisement would be still in their head. The words and image would float around their head so that whenever they actually see a homeless or poor family, they would recall the advertisement.
A BIRTHDAY PARTY
OR A PIECE OF MEAT ON YOUR PLATE?

In Belgium, 1 in 10 families faces this choice.
Join the Red Cross in the fight against poverty.
MAKE A DONATION: BE72 000-0000016-16

55 € = one month’s worth of groceries for an entire family of the Red Cross social grocery stores.
Work Cited


