

GCSE Media Unit - February 2001

Compare the ways in which two Charity Appeals, one from a newspaper and one from TV, persuade readers/viewers to support them.

Printed Text Image: CCF appeal - "Amie has a mother and father who love her" (copy attached)

Moving Image Text: Oxfam appeal (copy of transcript attached).

The first media article which I am studying is the printed text image, an appeal from the Christian Children's Fund. The article is laid out with a photo of a young girl, Amie, with text surrounding on the left and right hand sides of this image. There is a form at the bottom, to pledge money to the charity, and more artwork at the bottom, in the form of pictures of other young children which the charity have supposedly helped. The text explains about Amie, her lifestyle, family and suffering, and how the reader and the charity can help out others like Amie, by pledging money to sponsor a child like her, through the fund.

The Oxfam charity appeal, a brief advertisement from the television, starts with images depicting poverty in developing countries and dark colours and sad music. This then goes on to another scene, which represents the childhood of the narrator (an African man) and shows a young child, in pain and suffering, with dark colours and somber music. The next shot is of a native African woman (the mother of the young child) looking to the sky, in hope, and the sun shines down her, whilst the narrator explains how the viewer can help people in this situation, through the charity. The following frames consist scenes of African villagers, smiling and being happy, with laughter and bright colours, with the voice-over explaining how things could be in the third world, with the help from the viewer. The penultimate shot is simply the number of the charity being flashed upon the screen, before the images of the actual reality of the suffering of these people.

The two campaigns are both to promote charities which help support those in poverty, and use similar techniques to persuade the public. The articles are both asking for money from the reader/viewer, and both use tactfully images of suffering and use the word 'you' constantly throughout the propaganda pieces, which makes the audience feel involved and responsible, and makes them think that they can make the difference. By doing this, they also both inflict guilt upon the audience, making them feel selfish unless they give money. They are both aimed at adult audiences, and at people with a regular income. Both advertisements use children in the feature, and refer to the helplessness of the parents of

these children. In the CCF article, it reads, “However hard they work, they have no way of providing for Amie’s needs.” For this reason, I also think that they are aimed at parents.

The main graphic image in the CCF appeal is of Amie, the young girl featured in the appeal. The picture shows her gazing up from the page, and her expression evokes empathy from the reader, and conveys sadness and desperation from the child. It takes up over half the page, and dominates the appeal. The text is arranged in columns around this picture, and the headline is cleverly placed on opposite corners of the picture, with half of it starting at the top of the left hand column, and finishing at the end of the right hand column. When reading the entire headline as one sentence, the readers eyes will automatically fall onto the image of Amie. This may then tempt the reader to read the rest of the article, and possibly even pledge money. There are also pictures of more children, at the bottom of the page, separated by the CCF logo. The children pictured before the logo are unhappy and in suffering, but the children pictured after the logo are happy and smiling. This gives the impression that the foundation helps many children lead a better life. The children pictured are also of many different races, religions, and ages. This shows that poverty is a worldwide problem, and not just confined to one particular country. There is also text around the edge of the page, which makes the reader pay close attention to the advertisement. This could also be interpreted as the way in which people become trapped by poverty, as the text ‘traps’ the appeal.

The televised Oxfam appeal uses dark, slow, sad images and silhouettes of people in poverty, to provoke sympathy from the viewer. This, alongside the slow, low music, creates a somber mood in the advertisement. The music used in is native music to the countries in poverty. It shows that the whole nation is suffering, and not just those featured in the appeal. The camera shots in the first part of the campaign are in slow motion, and this represents the struggle of the people who are in the situation, and much of it is blurred which suggests helplessness and confusion within those who are suffering. As in the CCF appeal, this appeal also uses examples of particular people to be featured in the advert, and these people are pictured throughout the appeal. The shots used of these people are of them living in dirty, unhealthy conditions, with few proper clothes. The young boy pictured in the second scene is drinking from a puddle, which would make parents of young children feel sorry for him, and want to donate to the appeal. There are lots of different shots used in the appeal, most of which are shocking to watch. The narrative is read by an African villager, and the tone he uses in his voice is desperate and pleading. However, in the latter part of the appeal, the colours and images used change dramatically. Instead of drab, sad colours and camera shots, there are bright colours and happy voices, and even laughter. This shows to the viewer that this life is a possibility for the villagers, with the money donated to the appeal. Once this has faded, the image of the telephone number (to donate money) is used repetitively. This consists of white writing on a black background, and the two colours contrast, making the writing stand out. The black background could represent the suffering, while the white writing, which includes the number, brings hope to the people. The main difference between the use of graphics in the two appeals is that in the Oxfam appeal there are images to represent not only the suffering of these people, but also happy images, which bring hope. The Oxfam appeal

relies far more on colour impact than the CCF appeal, and uses far more graphics than the CCF advert. (Although this may be down to the fact that the Oxfam appeal is broadcast on television, where visual elements are far more important, and there is more scope to use lots of graphics.)

In both appeals, the creators try to evoke sympathy in the language they use, to help get the message across. In the CCF appeal, the word 'you' is repeated throughout. This emphasises that the reader can help these people to have a better future. In the fourth paragraph, it reads, "Can you imagine the pain?" This makes the reader feel helpless to the situation, and want to do whatever they can to help the situation for other people. The language is rich with imagery, and asks the reader to "imagine" and says that the people "live a life of quite unbelievable poverty." This suggests that the reader cannot actually imagine, however hard they may try, the suffering that these people have to endure. Metaphors are also used in the text, with the situation being described as a "destructive scourge of poverty." This is a metaphor, comparing poverty to the thrash of a whip, as they are both painful, long lasting and unnecessary. Another metaphorical phrase used in the text is "the soul destroying effects of poverty". This is used because the soul is the part of the body which supposedly goes up to God when a person dies, and this gives the person hope. To destroy the soul would be to kill the hope for the people. It is also likened to the devil, which also takes the souls from people, and is evil. The process of "destroying" suggests that it is a long and painful process, and completely unjustified.

The Oxfam appeal also uses strong language, and similar techniques to those used in the CCF appeal. Again, this appeal repetitively uses the word 'you', and the guilt technique. The tone used is personal, as the viewer is being addressed directly. In this particular appeal, imagery is not used widely because the narration does not need to describe the visual aspects, as this is dealt with well by the actual images on the screen. However, the idea of a 'dream' of the villagers is used. During the fourth voice-over, the scenes of poverty and suffering disappear, and are replaced with happy scenes, while the narration changes to talk about what the charity could do with donations from the viewer. It describes how, with money from the viewer, the charity can "line a well with cement to keep water safe to drink." This is showing to the viewer that, with only a little donation, they can change the lives of the villagers with a simple improvement.

Because of the advantages of moving images and sound, I found the Oxfam appeal to be the more effective of the two appeals. With this appeal, you are forced to watch it, because it is on television - you can't just skip at as you would a page in a magazine or newspaper. The contrasts between the current situation facing the people in the advert, and the situation which they could so easily be in, with a donation, I found to be particularly effective. It shows how a small gesture from someone in a developed country, could mean the difference between life and death to a person suffering in poverty in a less developed country. This, to me, really brought the message home clearly. Another technique which I found to be effective, was the repetitive use of the telephone number. It means that the viewer has no excuse for not donating, because the appeal is long enough for them to find a pen and write down the number, and it is repeated several times, to

plant the number firmly in the mind of the viewer. The only reason the viewer would not be inclined to donate after numerous reminders throughout the appeal, would be that they are cold-hearted. I think this appeal manages to make the viewer feel like this very well.

The CFF appeal is also very persuasive, but it is mainly the text which is persuasive. Without having read the text I would not have felt inclined to pledge money or to sponsor a child. I do not think it is very eye-catching either, and if I had seen this appeal in a magazine or newspaper I do not feel that I would have looked at it closely. I think the light-coloured page makes it look like a light-hearted issue. If it had been darker, I think I would have found it more shocking upon looking at it for a first time, and may have read further. Although I feel that the idea of using Amie as an example is a good idea, the way it is told makes it sound like a story, and in my opinion it does not sound true. With the Oxfam appeal, they used an actual villager (played by an actor) but I feel that this made it more realistic, because it was being told by an 'actual' person who had experience first-hand the suffering that goes on. For this reason, I find the Oxfam appeal to be more effective.
