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Sunday, July 10, 2016
English 15

“A Simple Act of Caring...”

“A simple act of caring creates an endless ripple.” This is the slogan of a Care and Share Movement advertisement. The Care and Share Movement is an associate of the Singapore Community Chest organization, which raises funds for community efforts in Singapore. They commissioned this advertisement in 2014 to encourage citizens to contribute to the organization. This advertisement, while exaggerated at some points, encourages viewers to donate by drawing them into a positive emotional state, using relatable characters and the compassion of the viewer.

The four-minute advertisement resembles a short film rather than a traditional commercial. The advertisement starts with a grandmother and two grandchildren shopping in a grocery store, grabbing only the discounted items. A few seconds into the scene, the female grandchild is shown alone, looking at a cake in a glass display counter. A man joins the girl and grabs the cake. Noticing the girl looking at the cake, he offers it to her. The next shot cuts to the family checking out. The cashier rings up the items, but the family does not have enough food vouchers or money, causing the grandmother to return the cake. The girl becomes upset, but submits to the grandmother’s wish. The family leaves, but the shot remains on the checkout counter. The man from the cake counter is shown making his purchases, including the returned cake.

The family is then shown walking from the store. The man from the cake counter catches up to the family. He offers the cake to the girl, but the grandmother refuses. He tells the family about a story from his childhood. When he was a child, his mother took him to buy a birthday

cake. However, the cake that he wanted was too expensive, causing a kind gentleman to make the purchase. The shot then cuts back to the family scene. The grandmother now accepts the cake and tells the man to write down his address, so that she can repay him for the cost. The man hands the paper to the girl, then leaves with a smile.

Next, the family appears in the grandparents home. The children offer the cake to the grandfather, who is revealed to be the older man that bought the cake years ago. The girl hands the grandfather the paper. He reads the note, only to find the same words that he wrote when asked his address years ago. The note reads: “A simple act of caring creates an endless ripple.”

Throughout the advertisement, Community Chest draws heavily upon viewers’ emotions. The advertisement uses a tender underscore to place viewers in the proper mood. This underscore continues as the family shops, eliciting emotions of melancholy from the viewer. The viewer develops a degree of compassion for the struggling family, especially when the food vouchers are revealed. This degree is further intensified by the family relations. The use of young children and grandparents allow the viewers to connect more with the family.

The use of family makes the viewing experience more realistic. It is not uncommon for families to rely on food vouchers, nor is it uncommon for grandparents to be responsible for grandchildren. The man who bought the cake for the girl is also relatable. He is portrayed as an average man, not as some famed philanthropist. When the man and the family come together, the man practices his generosity. The advertisement makes this believable through the same emotional tactics used on the viewer. Like the viewer, the man can see that the girl wants the cake. He can see her sorrow. The sorrow of the young child rubs off onto the man, compelling him to purchase the cake.

Based on the plot and message of this advertisement, the intended audience were viewers who could relate to a struggling family. This includes viewers who have personally experienced economic stress, viewers who are empathetic, and viewers who care about their families. The emotional manipulation will capture empathetic viewers, regardless of personal connection to impoverished conditions.

However, not empathetic viewers will not be convinced by emotion alone. Realizing this, Community Chest developed a plot that draws in a wider audience. Viewers who have experienced economic stress will create a connection with the family. These viewers intimately know what the family is going through, so they may feel convinced to contribute to help similar families. Furthermore, viewers who care deeply about their own families will be moved by this advertisement. This set of viewers observe the conditions of the family in the advertisement. They begin to question what would happen if their family was in the same condition. These viewers would never want to live in those conditions, so they contribute to keep themselves and others from the poor condition shown in the advertisement.

Despite these positive aspects of credibility, the advertisement does throw in some exaggeration. The outrageous price of the small cake was necessary for the plot, but it drew away from the realism. The near exact stories between the man in the white shirt and the girl were too much of a coincidence to go unnoticed. However, this too was required to achieve the maximum effect of the advertisement. Another weakness of the advertisement, aside from plot-related issues, is the lack of facts or statistics. Many humans are drawn to story, but some prefer hard facts. This advertisement's intended audience did not include fact-driven people. This dampens, but does not cripple the advertisement's effectiveness.

At the end of the advertisement, the music swells as the grandfather finishes reading the note. The family gathers around the grandfather, singing the birthday song. Community Chest leaves the viewer with positive feelings by the end of the advertisement. The lack of blatant organization-related influence in the video increases the effectiveness of the advertisement. The only direct visual influence of Community Chest appears at the end of the advertisement, lasting only a few seconds. This placement states the true purpose of the advertisement: convincing viewers to donate to Care and Share. By the end, viewers are placed in a positive, emotional state. The carefully planned emotional tactics leave the viewers in the mood to contribute. In this sense, despite its weak points, the advertisement achieves its goal.

Works Cited

Community Chest Singapore. "Ripple." Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 16 September 2014. Web. 7 July 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6v8OPX4p1A>>