
Rhetorical Analysis Of A Print Advertisement

There are four medical bags of blood against a solid black background. They are arranged in the form of a square. Although the blood in each of the bags seems to be identical in nature, the bags are supposed to be distinct from one another. At the very top of the image and in uppercase letters, the advertisement states, "racists. Your child needs a pint of blood to live." In the center of the four bags — still in uppercase letters — there is a message that instructs the reader to "pick the white one." At the bottom of the advertisement, there is another message that reads, "Black white, brown, or yellow. Whatever the color of your skin, we're all the same underneath." Right below that, a smaller message says, "campaign against racism sponsored by Emma."

Racism has persisted as a major social issue for centuries. The advertisement described in the first paragraph argues against racism by challenging the idea that some races are inherently inferior on a biological level. This essay will analyze the advertisement's main claim that, "we're all the same underneath." The advertisement's successful attempts to appeal to the observer's emotions, use of the ethical appeal, the appeal to logic, and a fallacious element of the argument will also be analyzed. One way the advertisement successfully supports their argument is by means of the emotional appeal, or pathos. The advertisement intentionally creates a scenario that involves the potential death of an observer's child. The message, "your child needs a pint of blood to survive" is an attempt to elicit an emotional response from those who care about their children. Most parents would feel afraid — or at the very least, uneasy — at the thought of their child dying. If the advertisement had just said, "a child needs a pint of blood to live," the observer would have no personal connection to the child and would easily be able to ignore the question, rendering the appeal to emotion ineffective. By asking the observer a question about their own child instead of a random child, the advertisement successfully appeals to the observer's emotion. The advertisement utilizes the ethical appeal — or ethos — by acknowledging a sponsor. At the very bottom of the advertisement, the website states, "campaign against racism sponsored by EMMA." The Ethnic Multicultural Media Academy, or EMMA, is a UK based organization that celebrates ethnic diversity and challenges racism. Their website, emmatrust.com, reflects the organization's purpose as well as its values: EMMA (The Ethnic Multicultural Media Academy) was established in 1997 to celebrate diversity, equality and multiculturalism within the UK through the successful launch of the EMMA Awards. Since then, EMMA has striven to promote equality, social cohesion, corporate social responsibility and universal human rights. This has been achieved through various Advertising and awareness campaigns that challenge ignorance, extremism, and racism in all their forms.

EMMA's sponsorship of the advertisement establishes its credibility. Because EMMA is an organization that is known for its advocacy for racial equality and its stance against racism, the observer is more likely to place trust in the advertisement and agree with the argument. Thus, the advertisement successfully employs the ethical appeal. Although the logical appeal is not stated outright, the advertisement successfully employs an appeal to logic, or logos. The appeal to logic in the advertisement is the indistinguishable quality of the bags of blood. Even if a racist person wanted to "pick the white one," it would be impossible because a person's blood is not unique to their race. The indistinguishable quality of the bags of blood, as the advertisement argues, proves that "we're all the same underneath." Whether a person has white, black, or

brown skin, everyone is identical on a fundamental level. Without directly stating it, the advertisement appeals to logic and supports the main claim that, “we are all the same underneath.”

Despite its effective appeals to emotion, ethics, and logic, the advertisement commits the ethical fallacy of ad hominem on the very first word. The first word in the image is written in all capital letters and reads “racist.” Whether the reader is racist or not, they are immediately subjected to an insult. The advertisement attacks the character of every person that reads the message on the image, rather than attempting to attack the issue of racism itself. Thus, the advertisement commits the ethical fallacy of ad hominem. Another fallacious aspect of the advertisement’s argument is the logical fallacy of the “straw man” argument. In modern society, the concept of scientific racism based on the idea of the biological inferiority of certain races is no longer prevalent. Most people that are racist would agree that all humans are biologically identical on a fundamental level. Thus, the advertisement’s claim that, “we’re all the same underneath” attacks the weak, outdated concept that some races are biologically subordinate.

In summary, the advertisement’s argument against racism is rhetorically effective. The advertisement effectively implements appeals to emotion, ethical appeals, and appeals to logic as rhetorical devices. However, it also commits the ethical fallacy of ad hominem and the logical fallacy of “straw man.” Despite the ethical and logical fallacies, the advertisement constructs a well-supported argument.

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