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FACE BEAT

DON'T
CONCEAL THE
TRUTH

BEAUTY IS
PAIN

She already faced
PAIN
she doesn't need your
BLAME

Black
& Blue
doesn't say
"I LOVE YOU"



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Response to Roland Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image*

Stop The Blame, Advertising Campaign

Advertising is the way in which products interact with their users. Their purpose is to inform and influence people in order to make them use their products. It includes images, illustrations, colors, text, etc. The rhetoric of the image in advertising help us to understand the way images communicate meaning to the audience and designers have to take that into account if they want it to be efficient. As Roland Barthes said, the study of the *Rhetoric of the Image* is “undoubtedly intentional”, it is closely linked to the message they are trying to convey. However, in the advertising industry we have to be careful because the same image may mean different things to people from different cultures or societies and to avoid that, the creator has to be very careful when choosing the audience they want to address.

As the contemporary society becomes increasingly visual, knowing and understanding the Rhetoric of the Image becomes more significant. In November of 2017, a Nigerian agency named *Up in The Sky*, created a print advertisement for Project Alert, they wanted to depict violence against women. In Nigeria, blaming the victim of domestic violence is a recurring problem which society chooses to ignore and for that reason, they put the topic on the front page.

The image shows a dark-skinned woman with short hair and whose hands are located around her face, but not on the same position, one is higher than the other. She wears eyelashes

and thick makeup, her eyes have a light blue eyeshadow with a mix of pink on top and white in the corner. Her eyebrows are dark, and she's also wearing pink lipstick. She is also wearing nail polish which is, in fact, the same light blue she has on her eyes. The eye on the left is red and there is also a bruise in the lower part of the same eye. She also has a bruise and a scar on her nose and in the left side of her lips. The lighting of the picture helps you to see her face more clearly and to distinguish all the things she has on her face.

The background of this photograph is black, the lighting creates a really nice contrast between her skin and the background. In terms of typography, they are combining serif and sans serif fonts, the colors used for the text are white and pink. The logo of Project Alert is located at the bottom right of the advertisement. The title of the text says “Face Beat”, it is located on the top-center of the page and written in a pink serif font; the date and issue are located on the top right. This ad contains four short texts, the first one says “Don’t conceal the truth”, it is located at the bottom left of the title in white sans serif and pink serif type. The second one says “She already faced pain, she doesn’t need your blame”, it is located at the left bottom of the page with a white and pink serif font. The third text says “Black & Blue doesn’t say I love you”, it is written in white serif and it is located at the right bottom of the page. Written in white small caps letters is “Beauty is pain”, located on the right bottom of the title, using a sans serif font.

Using images in an advertisement can be both, valuable and confusing. This happens because people's perspective changes due to their culture and biases. As Roland Barthes suggested, we will be able to study and analyze an advertisement if we deconstruct it, this is also a good way to know if the ad is giving the user the message we want to convey. This ad was designed to send a message to women, in other words, they are their target audience.

The strategic use of non-linguistic items such as the imagery can help us identify the non-coded or denotational message in this advertisement. The signifier can be found in the face of the woman in the photograph. Her expression instills fear and the purpose (signified) of that is that they wanted the audience to empathize with women.

The photo, however, gives us an iconic message and it goes beyond the expression on her face. She has scars, bruises, and blood on her face, it also give us a message of violence and suffering. These signs show us that the woman has been victim of violence, she has been physically assaulted and for the makeup she is wearing, it is most likely that she wanted to hide it. She might be ashamed because some people put the blame on her. In other words, the image itself is able to transmit the message they wanted to convey.

The linguistic message of this advertising is very strong. It help us to get a better understanding of the overall image. The *anchorage* they included here narrows the perspective of the viewer to the idea that they want to convey. “Face Beat”, “Don’t conceal the truth”, and “Black & Blue doesn’t say I love you” are supporting the message to stop violence against women, and the only way to do that is with themselves. The text that says “She already faced pain, she doesn’t need your blame”, makes reference to what women in Nigeria experience. They are judged by their community who attribute the blame to them but not to the person who has beaten them.

The rhetoric of the image is key when it comes to design because depending on their biases and culture, people can perceive ads in completely different ways. This exercise helped me a lot to understand the right way to create an ad. Knowing how different audiences can react to it will make it successful.

Works Cited

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