

International marketing communications

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



Amnesty International: 'IT'S NOT HAPPENING HERE, BUT IT IS HAPPENING NOW.' [pic] Concept 29 May, 2006, the streets of Switzerland's cities were transformed into a theatre of war. Youngsters with guns, bloody war victims and black-hooded tortured prisoners took over the streets at local bus stops, shopping centres and train stations. The organisation behind this attack was not an extremist terrorist group, it was Amnesty International. The children soldiers and tortured civilians were not actually there, but their images were. Real, life-size photographs of these victims of human rights violations were taken by photojournalists in war torn Sudan, and other human rights infringing countries including China, Iraq and Liberia. These shocking photos were digitally juxtaposed with images of local Swiss backgrounds, such as bus stops, to create the facade that the actions were happening 'here' on the streets in peaceful Switzerland. Written on top of two hundred different posters was the slogan, 'It's not happening here, but it is happening now'. On the chaotic posters there was a small but significant glimmer of hope. It was symbolised in the burning flame, Amnesty International's emblematic trademark. The small candle represented the possibility that, with the target market's help and support, these horrific violations could be eradicated. This paper is an analysis of Amnesty International's 2006 Swiss campaign 'It's not happening here but it is happening now', an innovative concept created and produced by Walker Werbeagentur located in Zürich, Switzerland. This paper will provide background into Amnesty International and explain the concept, context and target market of this campaign. It will discuss the role of advertising, including the campaign's goals and key creative ideas, as well as analyse its psychological theory and emotional approach, culminating

with an evaluation of the campaign's success. Context Like many other westerners, the Swiss enjoy free democracy and individual civil liberties. They live comfortable lifestyles in safe areas where violence is rare. For Switzerland and other modern democracies, it is all too easy to take these liberties for granted. They tend not to think about, or choose to ignore, people in other countries that live without these basic human rights. The Swiss value humanitarianism, if they were to see such human rights violations as those depicted in the 'it is happening now' campaign happening on their soil, they would most certainly try and put a stop to them right away. But the issues seen in 'it is happening now' do not occur in Switzerland, they happen in a world far removed. When human rights violations are not happening close by, it is easy to 'turn a blind eye' and forget about the problem. Looking at the 'it is happening now' advertisements made it appear that these violations were happening exactly 'here and now'. This brought the human rights abuse issue out of the 'third world' and into an entirely new context. These shocking images depicted in areas of their cities was designed to change Swiss perspective on human rights and familiarise them with Amnesty International's cause. History Amnesty International, established in 1961, actively works to stop human rights abuse around the world. The organisation is independent of all governments and political groups; it has over two million members in 150 countries and offices in over 80 countries. Amnesty International members organise campaigns to stop human rights violations by putting pressure on governments and other powerful groups through public demonstrations, direct lobbying, and other similar techniques (Amnesty International 2009).

Amnesty International has a reputation of accomplishing significant human rights victories through its effective campaigns. Its achievements include winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 and being regarded as setting the standard protocol for the entire human rights movement (Ronand, Ramos and Rodgers 2005: 563). In the advertising world, Amnesty International is known for creative and successful marketing strategies. The organisation's advertisements all tend to follow a similar format. They are straightforward, emotionally charged, and shocking. Most importantly, they make the viewer stop and think about its message. Amnesty International is not afraid to push the boundaries, it often handles tough issues such as ' violence against women', ' gun control', and ' terrorism and security' in their campaigns (Amnesty International 2009). The advertisements frequently use real pictures of human rights infringements, not just to shock and alarm the public, but to also make the unassuming majority aware of just how real the issues are. Amnesty International's ads command attention, and their emotionally intense message content makes them unforgettable. Amnesty international's heartfelt dedication and genuine sincerity to its cause is clear in its advertisements. The organisation is persistent in making sure its causes of interest are publicised. This sincerity and passion is engrained in Amnesty International's brand image. This likeable, trustworthy brand image has become the organisation's most persuasive focus. All of Amnesty International ads effectively convey the core values of the brand. This is imperative because it is a non-profit charity. In order to stay functioning, Amnesty International constantly needs positive public relations. The public must believe the group's intentions are genuine and its reputation is intact.

Amnesty International is able to achieve this through positive public relations, brand heritage and authenticity. Over its many decades of existence, Amnesty International has achieved its status of being one of the most credible and efficient charities in the world. Target Market The 'it is happening now' campaign communicates a universal message of philanthropy that would have been effective in any western country. Why then was the small, land locked country of Switzerland chosen for the campaign? Firstly, while the Swiss have a Western European mentality, they prefer things to be small and therefore tend to keep to themselves (All About Switzerland 2005). Because of this, Amnesty International was not as well known in Switzerland as it was in other countries such as the UK or USA. Before this campaign, the Swiss were not fully aware of what causes were important to Amnesty International. Thus, it was especially crucial for Amnesty International to increase its brand awareness by positioning the brand into the Swiss consciousness where it would be easily distinguished and recalled. Secondly, the Swiss people strongly believe in human rights, a bond shared with Amnesty International. Humanitarianism is deeply rooted in the Swiss culture. For example, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded in Geneva in 1863, (Swiss World 2009). Because of this, it could easily be assumed that the Swiss would be pleased to give their support to humanistic organisations such as Amnesty International. The general philanthropist nature of the Swiss combined with the unfamiliarity with Amnesty International made them ideal receivers of the 'human rights for all' message and the perfect target market for 'it is happening now'. The Role of Advertising The 'it is happening now' campaign was designed to

generate interest, public awareness, and favourable opinions of the Amnesty International brand (Creativity Works 7 2007). Together, Amnesty International and the Swiss advertising agency, Walker Werbeagentur Zuerich (Walker), created this campaign, one of the most effective human rights campaigns in history. ‘ The aim was to make the people of Switzerland aware of the issue of human rights abuse. Unlike other non-governmental organisations, Amnesty International’s line of activities wasn’t always clear to the public. We wanted them to know what kind of issues trigger Amnesty International action’, explained Pius Walker, art creative director of the campaign (Creativity Works 7 2007). In keeping with Amnesty International’s goal to create brand awareness and brand recognition, it tried to attract the Swiss to its humanitarian organisation by making itself look interesting through want-conception. As mentioned earlier, the Swiss were not familiar with Amnesty International and its mission. The main purpose of the campaign was to create higher brand awareness, and increase membership and support by making Amnesty International appealing to a new market. Amnesty’s universal campaign goal with ‘ it is happening now’ was to evoke curiosity and enthusiasm towards worldwide human rights issues, as well as increase brand awareness, support and membership of Amnesty International. The ‘ it is happening now’ campaign also carried out a social role. Besides increasing awareness of Amnesty International itself, it informed the public about important political and human rights issues around the world. Campaign Formulation Amnesty International went to the Walker advertising firm with hopes of designing a campaign that would increase its brand recognition by attracting media coverage and visitors to its website

(Creative Works 7 2007). Walker's experienced and talented team quickly developed the idea of 'It's not happening here, but it is happening now' and Amnesty International loved it. 'It was an intelligent concept that had the surprise factor and would catch people's attention — and we knew straight away that we could develop the campaign on this basis,' explained Amnesty International Switzerland's head of marketing, Paul Tschurtschenthaler (Creative Works 7 2007). There was a great deal of thought given to the individual design of the posters. The Swiss location and the original photograph had to fit together just right, no two were the same. According to Walker, all two hundred posters were created by just two graphic designers in only three weeks (Creative Works 7 2007). Highlights of the campaign included: a boy soldier, no older than 12, creeping over the train tracks of local Swiss train station, armed with an AK 47 assault rifle, amidst a busy bus stop in Geneva an older Chinese woman sits helplessly tied to a chair whilst she is bludgeoned by a police officer, and, two bound prisoners on their knees, heads covered by black sheets struggle in agony on a stone wall in a peaceful suburban town. All of the posters were entirely realistic and shocking. Key Creative Ideas The key to the success of the 'it is happening now' campaign was its innovative use of the print advertising medium. It used a ground-breaking new technique to digitally juxtaposed two photographs together, creating an entirely new picture with an entirely new meaning. There was so much thought given to the structure and the design that every single detail had to be just right for the two to work together. The idea of juxtaposing images of victims' human rights violations in daily Swiss life was unique, unforgettable and persuasive. The shock element of this

campaign stood out among the rest. The non-profit sector is overflowing with clique shock advertisements, such as blackened lungs for an anti-smoking campaign or a horrifying car accident for a 'wear your seatbelt' movement. 'It is happening now' was different. It was imaginative, original and artistic. It was just as aesthetically remarkable as it was persuasive. Its stunning use of imagery and imaginative context made it both frightening and beautiful at the same time. The posters were pieces of individual conceptual art that one could admire and reflect upon. 'It is happening now' placed art and advertisement together, not an easy task but an admirable one. The genuine attractiveness, creative design and dexterity of these posters can be appreciated as both exceptional advertisement and fine art.

Psychological Theory

The ad agency, Walker Werbeagentur, implemented a persuasive communication approach for 'it is happening now'. According to this theory, persuasion is reliant on three factors: individual receiver of the communication, the communication/information source, and the content/presentation of the message (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2004: 130). In order for an ad to be successful, the individual receiver of communication must be able to interpret the intended content accurately (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2004). As with any communication, the receiver may not decode the message perfectly, people may read into the ad too much or not give it enough thought. There are a few ways that are used to make sure it's message was interpreted as correctly as possible by their target market. The 'it is happening now' campaign directors realised that attention was selective. In today's world of over consumerism, not all advertisements get noticed. Because of Amnesty's unique non-profit,

humanitarian message, its advertisements, including this one, automatically stick out among the thousands of typical product advertisements that sell mundane items like dish soap or tooth paste. That said, being noticed is important, but becomes irrelevant if the message is not accepted. Amnesty International still needed to make sure they would be able to get their persuasive message interpreted. To do this, Amnesty International used a simple, direct strategy. The advertisements used a distinctive ad concept to attract attention. Importantly the message was simple, clear and persuasive.