

Analyzing an Advertisement (Yoshida)

Yoshida 1

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Sometimes a Cup of Coffee Is Just a Cup of Coffee
A farmer, her hardworking hands full of coffee beans, reaches out from an Equal Exchange advertisement (“Empowering”). The hands, in the shape of a heart, offer to consumers the fruit of the farmer’s labor. The ad’s message is straightforward: in choosing Equal Exchange, consumers become global citizens, partnering with farmers to help save the planet. Suddenly, a cup of coffee is more than just a morning ritual; a cup of coffee is a moral choice that empowers both consumers and farmers. This simple exchange appeals to a consumer’s desire to be a good person—to protect the environment and do the right thing. Yet the ad is more complicated than it first seems, and its design raises some logical questions about such an exchange. Although the ad works successfully on an emotional level, it is less successful on a logical level because of its promise for an equal exchange between consumers and farmers.

The focus of the ad is a farmer, Jesus Choqueheranca de Quevero, and, more specifically, her outstretched, cupped hands. Her hands are full of red, raw coffee, her life’s work. The ad successfully appeals to consumers’ emotions, assuming they will find the farmer’s welcoming face and hands, caked with dirt, more appealing than startling statistics about the state of the environment or the number of farmers who lose their land each year. It seems almost rude not to accept the farmer’s generous

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Yoshida summarizes the content of the ad.

Thesis expresses Yoshida’s analysis of the ad.

Details show how the ad appeals to consumers’ emotions.

Marginal annotations indicate **MLA-style formatting** and **effective writing**.

offering since we know her name and, as the ad implies, have the choice to “empower” her. In fact, how can a consumer resist helping the farmer “[c]are for the environment” and “[p]lan for the future,” when it is a simple matter of choosing the right coffee? The ad sends the message that our future is a global future in which producers and consumers are bound together.

Yoshida interprets details such as the farmer’s hands.

First impressions play a major role in the success of an advertisement. Consumers are pulled toward a product, or pushed away, by an ad’s initial visual and emotional appeal. Here, the intended audience is busy people, so the ad tries to catch viewers’ attention and make a strong impression immediately. Yet with a second or third viewing, consumers might start to ask some logical questions about Equal Exchange before buying their morning coffee. Although the farmer extends her heart-shaped hands to consumers, they are not actually buying a cup of coffee or the raw coffee directly from her. In reality, consumers are buying from Equal Exchange, even if the ad substitutes the more positive word *choose* for *buy*. Furthermore, consumers aren’t actually empowering the farmer; they are joining “a network that empowers farmers.” The idea of a network makes a simple transaction more complicated. How do consumers know their money helps farmers “[s]tay on their land” and “[p]lan for the future” as the ad promises? They don’t.

Yoshida begins to challenge the logic of the ad.

Words from the ad serve as evidence.

The ad’s design elements raise questions about the use of the key terms *equal exchange* and *empowering farmers*. The Equal Exchange logo suggests symmetry and equality, with two red arrows facing each other, but the words of the logo appear almost like an eye exam poster, with each line decreasing in font size

Clear topic sentence announces a shift.

and clarity. The words *fairly traded* are tiny. Below the logo, the words *empowering farmers* are presented in contradictory fonts. *Empowering* is written in a flowing, cursive font, almost the opposite of what might be considered empowering, whereas *farmers* is written in a plain, sturdy font. The ad's varying fonts communicate differently and make it hard to know exactly what is being exchanged and who is becoming empowered.

What is being exchanged? The logic of the ad suggests that consumers will improve the future by choosing Equal Exchange. The first exchange is economic: consumers give one thing—dollars—and receive something in return—a cup of coffee—and the farmer stays on her land. The second exchange is more complicated because it involves a moral exchange. The ad suggests that if consumers don't choose "fairly traded" products, farmers will be forced off their land and the environment destroyed. This exchange, when put into motion by consumers choosing to purchase products not "fairly traded," has negative consequences for both consumers and farmers. The message of the ad is that the actual exchange taking place is not economic but moral; after all, nothing is being bought, only chosen. Yet the logic of this exchange quickly falls apart. Consumers aren't empowered to become global citizens simply by choosing Equal Exchange, and farmers aren't empowered to plan for the future by consumers' choices. And even if all this empowerment magically happened, there is nothing equal about such an exchange.

Advertisements are themselves about empowerment—encouraging viewers to believe they can become someone or do something by identifying, emotionally or logically, with a product.

Summary of the ad's key features serves Yoshida's analysis.

Yoshida shows why his thesis matters.

Yoshida 4

In the Equal Exchange ad, consumers are emotionally persuaded to identify with a farmer whose face is not easily forgotten and whose heart-shaped hands hold a collective future. On a logical level, though, the ad raises questions because empowerment, although a good concept to choose, is not easily or equally exchanged. Sometimes a cup of coffee is just a cup of coffee.

Conclusion includes a detail from the introduction.

Conclusion returns to Yoshida's thesis.

Work Cited

"Empowering Farmers." *Equal Exchange*, equalexchange.coop/.
Advertisement. Accessed 14 Oct. 2014.

Work cited page is formatted in MLA style: First line of the entry is at the left margin; extra lines are indented 1/2".