

Research Paper: David Ogilvy Advertising Principles Still Hold Firm Today

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COMM 330: Principles of Advertising

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February 16, 2021

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Are Ogilvy's principles on advertising still true today, or are they a bit out of date? This research paper will examine several research articles defending the idea that the principles in the book *Ogilvy on Advertising* written by David Ogilvy still hold to the modernization and innovation of advertising today. While the medium in which advertisers convey messages has changed, the framework and foundation Ogilvy crafted in 1983 have not changed. Before defending the position that Ogilvy's principles and guidelines still hold firm to today, it is important to introduce David Ogilvy and the beginning of his vocation in advertising.

Research Articles

Who is David Ogilvy?

As found in the *New World Encyclopedia* (2017) David Ogilvy was born into a middle-income family in 1911 (paras. 1). He was an extremely keen individual who attended Fettes College in Edinburgh at the young age of 13. However, because of the entrance into college at such a young age, he left without graduating and spent a year in Paris before returning to England to become a salesman. After his time as a salesman, Ogilvy was offered an account executive position at the same advertising agency his brother worked at. It was at this agency where the father of advertising was born. One day, a man walked into the agency in search of an idea to advertise for the opening of his new hotel. With only \$500 to offer the agency, Ogilvy decided to buy \$500 worth of postcards to send to everyone in a local telephone directory. This decision led to a full house at the grand opening of this man's hotel. After this "light bulb" moment for Ogilvy, he spent the remaining years of his life bringing advertising innovation to life through the opening of a world-renowned advertising agency, the creation of his book *Ogilvy on Advertising*, and a long list of ideas that still hold firm to advertising today. This

research paper will reflect on the ideas within Ogilvy's book, "Ogilvy on Advertising" and attest to why many of his principles are and will always be the foundation of advertising.

Ogilvy on Advertising

When defending the stance that Ogilvy's principles still hold firm to today's modernized form of advertising, it is crucial to examine concepts from his famous work of Ogilvy on Advertising. This research analyzes chapter two (How to Produce Advertising that Sells) and chapter twenty (I Predict 13 Changes).

In chapter two of Ogilvy's work (1983) he explains that it takes a big idea to attract consumers and to convince these same consumers to buy your product (p. 16). However, determining what is a big idea and what is not is difficult because an advertiser cannot predict the total value of a big idea, making them extremely evaluate at face value. Ogilvy created a framework to help advisers recognize a big idea which includes five questions. These five questions are as stated: Did it make me gasp when I first saw it? Do I wish I had thought of it myself? Is it unique? Does it fit the strategy to perfection? Could it be used for 30 years? Authors that advertise big ideas for sponsors should be able to answer "yes" to these five questions to determine whether this is a big idea or not.

Now, the question to examine at hand is not whether this is an effective strategy, but rather if this same framework is still being used today. To analyze the effectiveness of the 2021 Super Bowl advertisements, the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University (2021) looks at an AdPlan framework that asks if an ad contains six distinct parts (Table 1). The six parts include attention (engage the audience), distinction (unique in delivery), positioning (appropriate category represented), linkage (brand and benefit memorable), amplification (viewers thoughts favorable), and net equity (consistent with the brand's history and reputation).

When comparing Ogilvy's five questions to determining whether an advertisement is offering viewers a big idea and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, the concepts are nearly identical. This evaluation process Ogilvy created in 1983 still holds firm to today's standards of determining an advertisement's effectiveness as shown in determining the success and reach of Super Bowl advertisements in the past few weeks of 2021.

Ogilvy introduces readers another idea in chapter two regarding the repetition of successful advertisements. Ogilvy states, "If you are lucky enough to have written a good advertisement, repeat it until it stops selling. Research shows that readership of an advertisement does not decline when it is run several times in the same magazine" (Ogilvy, 1983, p. 19). There are many concepts within this statement to analyze and ask, does this still hold firm to advertising today? First off, technologies of advertising have expanded immensely since 1983 when Ogilvy stated that the readership does not decline when an advertisement is run several times in the same magazine. Advertising platforms have expanded way past magazines into TV and social media to name a few, and advertisers can use new technology to determine when an advertisement stops being effective through analytics, etc. However, does this idea of repeating your winners still hold firm to advertisements today? Do consumers ever see the same TV advertisement run more than once through that platform? Do consumers ever see the same advertisement (or close to), on a variety of social media platforms? The answer is yes. Although advertisers may have a better idea of when an advertisement becomes ineffective, this framework and concept of "repeating winners" is still the same in 2021 as it was in 1983.

Chapter twenty of Ogilvy on Advertising offers thirteen predictions of where David Ogilvy predicts the direction of advertising was going from 1983 when the book was written. Ogilvy states (1983) in prediction number one, "The quality of research will improve, and this

will generate a bigger corpus of knowledge as to what works and what doesn't. Creative people will learn to exploit this knowledge, thereby improving their strike rate at the cash register" (p. 217). Regarding this prediction, several modern examples prove this to be true. To address the first portion of this prediction, "The quality of research will improve, and this will generate a bigger corpus of knowledge as to what works and what doesn't..." the ability of consumers to complete deep research is only becoming greater from year to year. Due to the internet, and review websites such as Yelp, consumers have only increased their ability to research products and reflect on their opinion of a product or brand from word of mouth advertising. This research increases consumer's ability to compare and contrast competitive products and companies.

To address the second portion of this prediction, "Creative people will learn to exploit this knowledge, thereby improving their strike rate at the cash register," David Ogilvy seems to predict the shift of retailers to becoming omnichannel focused, rather than solely brick and mortar or even multi-channel focused. The omnichannel focus assists retailers in becoming more consumer-friendly and efficient due to the ability to seamlessly integrate a company's online and brick and mortar methods. With consumers being able to research a company's products beforehand, or even purchase a product in-store at the register which is not available in-person, the strike-rate of consumers at the cash register has increased. Therefore, this prediction made by David Ogilvy offers another example of how his principles, and even predictions, hold firm to today's modern advertising standards.

Argument Against Modernization of Ogilvy's Principles

One argument individuals may possess regarding the outdated nature of Ogilvy's principles include the addition of new tools in advertising, such as data analytics or tracking, and how these tools changed the game for advertisers and created a shift in the old rules Ogilvy

created. One new tool that created this shift is influencer marketing. Influencer marketing takes the focus off the target market as a whole and places the focus on individuals who can influence potential buyers and their buying decisions. According to Gary Henderson from Digital Marketing (2018), Influencer marketing is more about showing consumers your “authority, credibility, and thought-leadership within your industry” (paras. 2-3). This type of marketing differs from Ogilvy’s idea that the product should be the hero, rather than the person promoting the product or the creativity within an advertisement. To combat this argument, this research material will be looking at Bonnie Wannamaker from Idea.

Bonnie Wannamaker (2018), focuses on the question “In a world full of web, automation, and social media, how relevant are David Ogilvy’s words today?” (paras. 1-2). This question relates to innovation, such as influencer marketing. Is this marketing tactic effective, and if so, do Ogilvy’s principles play a role in this new type of marketing? New marketing mediums and technologies such as analytics, split testing, remarketing, and tracking have created a shift in the way to measure results for marketers and advertisers. However, Wannamaker (2018) states that it is about the importance of having the foundation to measure the results, not the tools we use. Successful marketing comes from branding (paras. 2-4). While marketing strategies such as influencer marketing offer short-term solutions that will be effective for a time, they will eventually become ineffective and cause the brand to fade as the influencer who is promoting a brand does. Ogilvy (2018) states, “There isn’t any significant difference between the various brands of whiskey, or cigarettes or beer. They are all about the same. And so are the cake mixes and the detergents, and the margarines... The manufacturer who dedicates his advertising to building the most sharply defined personality for his brand will get the largest share of the market at the highest profit” (p. 14). So, while some individuals may be focused on the short-

term success new marketing mediums offers, the foundation Ogilvy sets stating the most successful marketer puts the greatest focus on the personality of a brand, is everlasting and will be a foundation that will hold firm for years and years to come.

Conclusion

The defended position in this research paper is David Ogilvy's principles of advertising, clearly defined in 1983, hold firm to the modernization and innovation of advertising strategies today. This research is of importance in understanding the framework of advertising so advertisers can produce advertisements that do not clutter the already "noisy" world of advertisements, but rather create effective and meaningful advertisements for consumers. While some individuals believe that Ogilvy's principles are outdated and "old school," his overall framework of creating a meaningful brand with a personality is of the utmost importance when advertising for the long-term, and will hold firm for years to come.

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