

Megan Simones

Prof. Hollar

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### Ogilvy on Advertising: A Strategic Analysis

The book *Ogilvy on Advertising* was written by David Ogilvy in 1983. Ogilvy was known as “the father of advertising” at the time, and launched his own highly successful advertising business called Ogilvy and Mather. This agency was one of the four biggest agencies in the world at the time, so many of Ogilvy’s advertising principles are derived from his experience running the business. He has a lot of credibility in that he understands what it takes to make a business work and to create advertisements effectively. Although the book was created in 1983, so several of the key points and principles which worked for Ogilvy at the time are a little dated, many of the same things which held true for advertising back then hold true for today as well. *Ogilvy on Advertising* was written as an informative guide for his readers on how to advertise effectively, to put it simply, and there are some key takeaways which it seemed he was continually attempting to emphasize throughout the book. A few of these key takeaways which will be discussed later are his concept of the Big Idea, how to become a good copywriter, how to create effective designs and layout, and the importance of doing the research.

For some historical context, Ogilvy started his own agency(Ogilvy and Mather) in 1948,

and it was continued on through the 1980's until it was bought by another company. He had about 40 years of experience advertising, and during this time he learned a lot about the do's and don'ts of the advertising world. There was a lot more of an emphasis on printed works and newspapers, since the world of technology was not something he was immersed in at the time. The way he talked about finances and profit in the book is interesting, because everything back then was substantially less expensive. So historically the cost of advertising and the cost of buying a product was a lot different than it is today. Many of the statistics he gave regarding these things will not be as relevant to the current historical landscape of our country, however it is still helpful for putting things into perspective.

Olgivy highlighted many different principles and strategies that are important for one who intends to go into the world of marketing, however there are a few that stood out above the others as the most important. He mentions the Big Idea in Chapter 1. As he says on p. 22, "You can do homework from now until doomsday, but you will never win fame and fortune unless you put out *big ideas*. It takes a big idea to attract the attention of consumers and get them to buy your product. Unless your advertising contains a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night." Essentially, it is super important for a company to come up with campaigns that are unique enough to actually attract consumers. No one wants to be bored to death from an ad campaign that was done 20 different times before by other companies. It is also important to think of campaigns that can be used for a long time. It isn't really a "big idea" if interest in the campaign or the product fades out after only 5 years.

Doing the research is also a very important part of advertising, according to Olgivy.

All good campaigns come from an extensive amount of research and study, and most companies or ad campaigns that flop stem from a lack of research. Olgivy gives his readers a situation in which doing the homework helped him create an effective campaign. It was a Shell gasoline campaign, and when he reached out to the client for a briefing, an interesting piece of information was presented to him that he did not know about: gasoline has several ingredients, including Platformate, which help to increase mileage. This piece of information allowed for a campaign that helped to reverse a seven year decline in Shell's share-of-market.

Olgivy also stresses the importance of being a good copywriter several times. Some key points Olgivy makes with copywriting is that, first of all, people are more likely to read long copy over short copy, because this conveys that you have something important to say. Writing headlines in all caps is difficult to read, so Olgivy advises against that as well. It is important to write copy that will actually tell a story and entertain readers; if it reads like an essay some may become bored quickly and move on. Testimonials provide a lot of credibility, however using celebrities' testimonials are not always effective since many people assume they have been bought, which is often true. It is better to use testimonials from experts rather than celebrities. For example, "having an ex-burglar testify that he had never been able to crack a Chubb safe"(Olgivy, 120).

While the written content of the ad has a lot of power in convincing consumers to buy a product, the design and layout of an ad can really make or break it as well. I think three aspects

of design which Ogilvy stresses the most concerning this topic are: headlines, illustrations and font. On average, five times as many people are likely to read the headlines as they read the body copy. So if you don't "sell your product" in the headline, you are wasting 90 percent of your money, according to Ogilvy. Headlines work great if they contain news, make promises, offer helpful information, or contain quotes. Illustrations work wonders as well, because people are generally drawn to a picture before they are drawn to the words. It is a good idea to put captions under photographs. As for what typeface to use, serif is typically harder to read than sans serif fonts, as well as copy set in reverse(white on black) is harder to read than black on white. It is a good rule of thumb to avoid doing these things in order to increase readability.

As it was previously addressed, Ogilvy did not live during an age of advanced technology like we have today. There are many different platforms and avenues that we can take now to market our products, ones which Ogilvy did not have access to when writing this book. For example, social media platforms today are a huge way to advertise. Open up Instagram and Facebook and one will find a plethora of ads in just the first 30 seconds of being on the app. Because of the abundance of advertising from companies, the consumerism mindset is rampant among Americans today, as well as our short attention spans. It is likely that the majority of young adults today would actually prefer to read "short copy," since many people have less of an attention span today than they did in the 80's. Ogilvy's principles of design and layout generally apply very well to today's advertising techniques however. Headlines are still

important, people are generally more attracted to a striking picture on Instagram than to a long body of text, and reverse type is almost never used in advertising.

Olgivy notes the ethical considerations that arise from the advertising business. He specifically gives the example of the professor at the New School of Research in New York, who teaches his students that “advertising is a profoundly subversive force in American life.” He goes on to say that it is “intellectual and moral pollution, which trivializes, manipulates, is insincere and vulgarizes.” This is some strong language, but Olgivy refutes these claims. He says “Advertising is only evil if it promotes evil things.” In fact, there is quite a lot of good which can come from advertisements. For example, the promotion of a toothpaste brand might mean less visits to the dentist and less cavities. Advertisements can promote projects which are important for the environment, or help for a community in need. They can also discourage from doing certain activities that are detrimental to one’s health or well-being. For example, in 1974 the Norwegian government created a campaign to reduce alcoholism in teenagers. More than 70% of parents read the ad, it triggered a wide discussion across social media, and the percentage of alcoholism among teens decreased for the first time in many years. So while Olgivy believes advertising is generally harmless, there is one form of it which is always “flagrantly dishonest” he says, and that is the television commercials for candidates in presidential elections. This seems to be an even truer statement today. There has always been an agenda for each political party to hold their presidential candidate in the highest esteem, and to use puffery to win them votes. Political speech is protected under the 1st Amendment, so to some it doesn’t necessarily

matter whether it's dishonest as long as it promotes the candidate effectively. One ethical concern today which was not a problem in the 80's, is the introduction of artificial intelligence into our society. Students can use AI to write their papers for them, and it can lead to a loss of privacy, such as the AI Snapchat "friend" who will answer your questions for you and collect all your information. Another concern with AI that is becoming increasingly problematic is the use of deepfakes. Some people have had their voices and faces used by artificial intelligence to promote a certain product/idea/agenda, or to steal a large amount of money from a person or organization. According to an article called "Deepfakes in advertising-who's behind the camera?" "some brands will use deepfake technology because it reduces the time, money, and effort it takes to produce an ad campaign." For these reasons it is important to always be aware of these ethical concerns in advertising, and to discourage others from using unethical methods.

In conclusion, Olgivy truly does cover all the bases when it comes to the world of advertising. He provides claims that he is always able to back up with real-life examples and experience, which is immensely helpful to a person looking to enter the field. And not only is it helpful for advertisers, but it is helpful for photographers, for designers, for writers, and any director or leader of a business. He also provides a bit of humor as well, which is refreshing and makes the text more enjoyable for his readers. At the end of the day Olgivy was a very successful businessman, understood what it took to run a good business and wanted that for his audience. Many of the principles he highlighted are still relevant today, and will help to set many people up for success in their advertising career.

## Works Cited

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