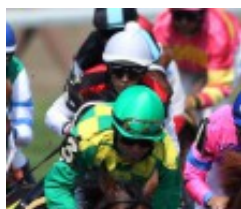


Advertising Week 2015: How brands can remain relevant today

Author : Tanya Dua

Date : September 30, 2015



There has been no dearth of [posts](#) and [prophecies](#) in recent months declaring that **brands** are, at best, becoming irrelevant and, at worst, dying. This topic also seemed to be on the minds of **brands** and marketers on Monday, the opening day of Advertising Week 2015.

Ogilvy & Mather shared the stage with **Coca-Cola** and **Facebook** at Liberty Theater Monday to unveil new, multinational research suggesting **brands** do indeed still matter — just in radically different ways than before. Meanwhile, **Dentsu Aegis** and **MasterCard** jointly discussed what legacy **brands** could do to “ride

A few takeaways: Competition is fiercer than ever and consumers are making more-informed choices, but as long as a **brand** is engaged and providing some sort of value to them, they can thrive. Here’s advice from marketers from both the agency and **brand** side on how to remain relevant as a **brand**:

Make service a global strategy

According to **Ogilvy’s** study, **brands** are not only expected to offer valuable products, but also valuable services to consumers. It is no longer enough to take some kind of ideological stand, **brands** are now expected to walk the walk as well.

“It’s like an archaeological dig, image attributes like **brand** personality are being crushed by purpose and service,” said **Colin Mitchell**, worldwide head of planning at **Ogilvy & Mather**. “Purpose needs more purpose, service and **marketing** are merging.”

He pointed to **UPS** as an example, which sought to serve its customers and make their wishes come true through its #wishesdelivered campaign last holiday season.

Be contextually relevant

“We talk about it as a buzzword, but being contextually relevant is more important now than it’s been ever before,” said Mari **Kim Novak**, **CMO** at the **Rubicon Project**. With a proliferation of

platforms that facilitate engagement, it's tempting for **brands** to get carried away. But, cautioned **Novak**, **brands** need to be deliberate with their messaging.

Novak added that the great **brands** have learned how to combine **social** responsibility with customer service and **innovation**. She pointed at **Amazon**, which is as much an entertainment and service **brand** today as it is an ecommerce **brand**.

Have a point of view and be present in the moments that matter

At 129, **Coca-Cola** has managed to remain relevant. At the Ogilvy panel, **Jennifer Healan**, **Coke's group director** attributed it to the **brand** being present in "the moments that matter the most in people's lives."

She explained how both "America is beautiful" from the 2014 Super Bowl and "Share a Coke" — one of its most successful campaigns in recent times — were tied to celebration and stood for positivity and optimism.

"It's about having a point of view and being present in the moments that matter in people's lives," she said.

Focus on internal organization

MasterCard completely overhauled its **brand** positioning a year-and-a-half ago — shifting its focus from "things" to "experiences" as a part of its long-running "Priceless" campaign. Whereas once the company might have offered deals while shopping at a department store, [now you might just get the chance to greet your favorite pop star](#). The most important factor in this transformation, according to **Raja Rajamannar**, **MasterCard's CMO**, was internal organization.

"When you embark on a transformational journey, it cannot happen through mandates — you need to get the emotional buy-in of everyone on the team and the organization," he said. "The agenda needs to be absorbed and internalized by everyone, because the employees, first and foremost, need to be **brand** ambassadors themselves."