

**OGILVY
ON
ADVER-
TISING
IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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INTRODUCTION

VIEW FROM TOUFFOU

Unlike authors who have to worry about why they are writing at all, my purpose is very narrow. The point of this book is to persuade people to read or re-read *Ogilvy on Advertising* by David Ogilvy. It is still pure, pure gold. Yes, the cast has changed, the scenery is different, the plumbing is new, but the tragic and comic plots, sub-plots and counter-plots of this business remain persistently and defiantly unchanged. Of course, this irritates some people who really would rather all had changed completely.

I am writing these words in Touffou, the home David retired to in South West France, in the room he used as his study. The desk on which *Ogilvy on Advertising* was partly written is still here, although in a different room. The shelves in the study contain a range of books, which testify to his belief that the most productive people read the most widely. There's history, biography, architecture, travel – spines with titles that sum up a man's life. And, of course, there are the advertising books.



Touffou evolved over several centuries, but the original keep, built for defence, dates from the twelfth century.

The house nestles between some low wooded elevations and the banks of the River Vienne as it winds lazily through the countryside of Poitou. David settled here in 1973 with his third wife, Herta. The couple spent the next decades restoring Touffou, turning the grounds into a magnificent garden and creating a grand but friendly home.



David and Herta in San Francisco, 1984.

David died here in 1999, and his ashes are scattered in the garden. Herta remains Ogilvy & Mather's materfamilias; and we continue to hold Board meetings, Executive Committee meetings, client meetings and workshops here.

In 2013, I called our Digital Council to Touffou. This was a group of young enthusiasts from around the world and from around the eco-system – mobile, customer relationship management (CRM), social, creative, technology. Our previous meetings had taken place in Palo Alto, CA, but there did not seem anything incongruous in talking about the future of communication in a medieval setting. In fact, it gave us something that we simply could not so easily get in California: perspective. Well into Ogilvy & Mather's own digital transformation, I wanted a discussion of a more fundamental kind. What is

digital? Is it an evolution or a revolution? Is it so novel and specialized that we should treat it apart? Or it is something that needs to be baked into the heart of the business, an integrator in itself? We had guidance, in part, from a videotaped last testament that David left. He called it “View from Touffou”. We still play it in training sessions. It makes a point about press advertising, but one that helped us answer the questions.



David’s ‘View from Touffou’ video provides a posthumous take on digital. He would have viewed digital as a channel not as a discipline, one that cries out for rich content, and always in the service of selling.

His argument provided a flash of illumination, bringing into high relief the primacy of content over form. The meeting continued along a path divergent from the one being followed by so many others. It led us to see “digital” not as a “discipline” but rather as just a channel, a dramatic enhancer of “traditional” business, but not a parallel universe.