

Book Review by : Shifa Faizal  
 Title : The fall of Advertising and the rise of PR  
 Author : Al Ries and Laura Ries  
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According to the authors, great brands are built through the use of PR. This book focused on the greatness of building a brand using PR instead of advertising. Advertising has also been mentioned to live today only as a form of art, something that is invaluable, but has lost its true functions. As a believer of advertising, this book seemed rather intimidating.

Al Ries, one of the most renowned marketing strategists, and his co-author who is also his daughter, Laura Ries, have expressed their bold ideology through this book. He was also one of the distinguished co-authors who introduced the positioning concept to readers of *Advertising Age*, first published in April 1972.

In this 295-page book, the authors clearly conveyed the general idea that companies today have given too much importance on advertising, so much so that they have neglected the strength of PR. Big marketing budgets were allocated to the efforts of advertising, with PR ending up with only the remaining budget. It is believed that this is a big mistake many companies still make today.

In order to express the main idea in the book, real life examples were cited to clarify the reversal roles between PR and advertising. Al Ries suggested that in any Marketing Communications strategy, PR efforts should come prior to advertising.

According to him, advertising approach should only take place after the media has created the appropriate mentality in the prospects' minds.

There are four ideas put forth by the author; firstly, as advertising lacks credibility, PR should instead be used as an essential component in brand building to gain credibility. PR allows marketers to convey a message indirectly through third-party, primarily the media that automatically gives it a higher credibility, unlike advertising.

Secondly, it has been stated that many successful marketing efforts came from PR strategies instead of advertising. The authors cited some examples of brands, namely Starbucks, the Body Shop, Amazon.com, Yahoo!, Harry Potter, Red Bull and Blackberry that were built with virtually no advertising at all. All of these afore-mentioned successful brands have been noted to use PR related activities for brand building.

The third idea circled around the traditional way of marketing new products and services, and how advertising did not fit in the whole strategy. As explained in the book, launching a new product or service with a "big bang" advertising campaign was seen as a weak approach. Furthermore, the authors have strongly suggested that such a concept should be

abandoned today in favor of a slow build-up of PR.

The fourth idea stressed the role of advertising today. As argued by the authors, advertising does not build brands, however publicity does. Advertising should only be used to maintain brands once they have been established through the use of publicity.

However, not all said in this book accurately reflect the nature of advertising and PR. It has been noted that the authors only highlighted the successes of PR and failures of advertising as a basis of their argument. On top of this, they have failed to acknowledge that advertising too has its own ways and advantages of building a brand.

It has also been quoted from the book that an ad 'is a butterfly, that lives for a moment and then it dies'. On the contrary, some advertisements can really have a long lasting impression on a person.

It is advertising that keeps the media industry alive, a fact that further proves that it is not just going through a 'butterfly' phase. Undeniably, advertising does generate income for the media, but in no doubt that as long as media is alive, advertising would prevail.

In conclusion, a successful product or service is all about getting it correct with having 'the right kind of product, serving the right kind of target market, launched at the right time'.