

# PAINT THE SKY RED

*Kevin Roberts, the creator of Lovemarks, sees a brighter future for Italy. In this article he looks at how Italy can counter and ride on the forces of globalization.*

The stuff you read on Italy these days takes the shine off your loafers. Low-flying dragons laying entire industries to waste. Bra wars (gulp). Company dwarfism. An economy that needs rocket fuel.

But I'm smiling. I'm smiling because the very idea of Italy plays to the future – and no other country can match that idea. Italy's cold hard rational decisions on structural shifts must be made. What will ignite the Italian future is something hugely irrational.

Look around. The days of consumers passively accepting what's put in front of them have gone. Competition, choice and technology have changed all that. The shift is from 'view' to 'do' and from distraction to attraction. Alessi to Aterballetto, the new consumer wants to be attracted and lean forward, not be pulled forward. She wants to be involved in experiences that speak to her heart. We're in the Attraction Economy.

The Attraction Economy is hot news for Italy. The most powerful attraction is not 'like' or "really like". It's love. Not air-kissing Hollywood love. Smouldering Italian love. Love that cries in public, laughs out loud in church, takes your breath away, takes over your life and changes it forever. This was the idea I cut loose in the world's boardrooms to create Lovemarks, a connection that knows no competition.

The equation of differentiation is this. Brands are irreplaceable. Lovemarks are irresistible (How can Alitalia capture our hearts again and become irresistible?). When the irreplaceable gets savaged by the forces of globalization, playing structural lego does not bring velocity. If you can't compete rationally, better to compete emotionally. The answer is to plunge headlong into the irresistible. The Italian choice? Play to your strengths or lose to your weaknesses.

Lovemarks burn with emotion. They create loyalty *beyond* reason. Vespa reminds me of my youth, of Quadrophenia, of The Who, of the wonderful Italian movies of the '50s. Vespa is no brand. It is a myth.

Like the Riva motor boat, it is a Lovemarks story filled with classic Italian style, charm, celebrity and beauty.

Italy's purest strength is non-replicable, its design and feeling. No one can touch authentic Italian creativity, in Asia, Europe, anywhere. For fast movers and global connectors, this represents immortality.

Italy must concentrate its essence beyond its borders. In the Attraction Economy, it is the Italian in any line up who generates heat. Remember the power of 'Intel Inside'? It is time to unleash Italy Inside. Time to bottle the spirit of Italy. To connect it. To unleash it.

We've done this in New Zealand with swift results. Imagine the competitive challenge facing four million people falling off the edge of the world. To cultivate an export culture we built an emotional bridge at [nzedge.com](http://nzedge.com) to the one million kiwis lost in the world. They're out there now, connecting the dots and inventing new ones. Italy needs bigger clusters and fatter dots. Connect your passionate believers, creative connectors and dynamic diaspora Italy! Do it now. [Italiansonline.net](http://Italiansonline.net) feels like a fantastic launch pad.

This Lovemarks challenge is championed by Inspirational Players. Ferrari red is their colour. Red is symbolic in terms of competition. Red is for passion and vitality. It is the color of attraction, of Lovemarks.

Lovemarks is an Italian winning the 2007 Formula One World Championship in a Ferrari. Get the feeling from Valentino Rossi: "Riding a race bike is an art - a thing that you do because you feel something inside.... I race to win. If I am on the bike or in a car it will always be the same."

Inspirational Players light a fire. Follow Luciano Benetton's Ring of Fire!! I'm betting it will be Patrizio Bertelli and Francesco de Angelis in Luna Rossa who battle my guys, Team New Zealand, for the honour to sail for the 2007 Americas' Cup in Valencia. Ducati too is showing sparks of red passion in North America, and wasn't it fantastic to see flames of rhythm passion and speed at the Olympics in Turin.

Azzurro is forever, but Italy's creative flame must blaze. From the dangling closure on a Fendi Spy bag to the blood heat in Ducati. As one owner of both a BMW bike and Ducati told [Lovemarks.com](http://Lovemarks.com): "there is

something the 996 installs that is lustful. It is the only bike I have ever ridden that makes me want to hunt another bike down and destroy it in the twisties.”

It's great to see Vespa and Moto Guzzi firing. It's great to see Ducati and Fiat with foreign ownership in the exhaust and air in the tyres. Italian passion, style, attitude and irreverence will be the difference.

I see legacy Italian brands on the come back trail. I'm with Fiat's Lapo Elkann – riding in on his MV Agusta Brutale from the school of life. I'm with Diesel and Renzo Rosso - fifty years of wild attitude celebrated in the fantastic Fifty book, and I'm with every Italian who refuses to compromise their spirit.

Now Fiat, the great Italian company, is returning with industrial-strength emotion – look at Punto surging to No.1 European seller at the start of 2006. Lapo, Giorgetto Giugiaro and Sergio Marchionne look to be infusing Fiat with the three secrets of Lovemarks - mystery, sensuality and intimacy. Every Fiat must drip with Italian essence. And to mainstream passion, how about a Ferrari Compact Sergio?!!

And look how Pierre Berbizier built on John Kirwan's legacy with the Italian rugby team in this season's Six Nations. They filled the Flaminio Stadium in Rome every game and 75, 000 came to see them in Cardiff. Watch out for a great World Cup performance in 2007 from the Azzurri.

Lovemarks are a flash point for Made In Italy. Mystery deepens the complexity of a relationship. It is the stories, metaphors, dreams and icons that give a relationship its texture. Sensuality is a portal to the emotions. The five senses turn out to be acute benchmarks of lasting customer relationships, outstanding innovation and inspired execution. Intimacy is empathy, commitment and passion.

The fusion of Ballantyne shows Lovemarks in evolution. The mists of Braveheart meet the feel of Fellini to design with sensual exuberance. The wonderful touch of Alfredo Canessa and Massimo Alba has brought the magic of Italy to Scotland, without compromising heritage. Hats off to Charme Investments – the Fund promoted by the Montezemolo family – which owns a percentage of Ballantyne. Like Enel - the energy that listens to you – they understand that building long-term intimacy

forges diamonds.

I look at Italy and see brands with Lovemarks potential. Yomo yoghurt could be unleashed with touch, empathy, and red hot passion. Segrafredo could explode through coffee's competitive intensity with more mystery and sensuality. Amaro Averna can tap its truly Italian heritage to create loyalty beyond reason.

The opportunity is there for enterprises with public dimensions. Frankie Byrne said "Respect is love in plain clothes". Some strugglers, like Trenitalia, are still getting dressed in public. Others not only look sharper, they're gunning for Lapo's best-dressed spot in Vanity Fair! There's Banca Intesa building a theatre of dreams, Telecom connecting with real emotion, and Alitalia looking leaner and fitter after tough times.

It has been said that size matters in men, diamonds and countries. Big balls, fast feet, magic hands and warm hearts will win Italy's future. Italians have the stuff, and a new breed of open innovators know it. How did Procter & Gamble boost Pringles potato chips into double digit growth in North America? They talked to an Italian bakery. P&G found a professor in Bologna who'd invented an ink jet method for printing edible images on cakes. Want pop culture on your chips? Not a problem. Call Italy.

Craft and connections, passion and romance, speed and a desire to grow, this is Italy's El Dorado. As we Google our world into submission and commodify its soul, emotion will command ever higher premiums. Already we're seeing online ad money migrating from search-engine ads to more emotion-laden displays.

Mystery will be like gold. The games industry is already onto it. I agree with Danish futurist Rolf Jensen, "The highest-paid person in the first half of this century will be the story-teller." Sensualists in the mould of Stefano Giovannoni and Pietro Lissoni will rule this Attraction economy, as they differentiate product and store. Art will become priceless. As purchasing migrates online, watch the store transform from trading post to entertainment and joy centre.

Nastro Azzurro – one of my favorite beers – needs to develop some new stories in Italy to re-capture its heartland quality popularity (its UK campaign is artistically sensational; it drips sensuality).

Mystery, sensuality and intimacy are an Aladdin's Cave for Italy because she has a natural reservoir. Few outside companies can tap such emotion. Harley Davidson hit the mark, and won loyalty beyond reason. A sound so rebellious they patented it. No wonder Harley is the world's second most popular tattoo design. And no surprise the first is the only word that can knock an Italian off his Harley. Mum!

The biggest company of the next 25 years has yet to be invented. It could be Italian. It will be built by creative emotion. Exponential growth is not about analysis, not for Italy. It's a hot idea driving a Ferrari on the open road. Rev your engine and put the pedal to the metal Italia, your race is on. Cross borders. Jump into new markets. Fail fast. Learn fast. Fix fast. Unleash your creative fire. The world sees red.

*Kevin Roberts is CEO Worldwide of Ideas Company Saatchi & Saatchi. He is also inaugural CEO-in-Residence at Cambridge University's Judge Institute of Management, and Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Limerick, Ireland, and the Waikato Management School in New Zealand.*

*Websites: [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com); [www.saatchikevin.com](http://www.saatchikevin.com)*

*Books: Lovemarks: the Future Beyond Brands; the Lovemarks Effect; Sisomo: the future on screen (powerHouse Books)*