

# Give Me Sexy

Sex is a serious subject. I was asked by the editors of L'Espresso to meditate on "sex and business". Why me? How could I be so lucky? Think of the alternatives: death, politics, travel... or sex!!

Sexuality affects us in extraordinarily important ways. Survival of the species is one. Health, happiness, fun and love are others.

Sex can transport us to ecstasy, greatness, madness and tragedy. History is shaped by sexually-led impulses, by rushes of the blood and battles for the heart. Mark Antony and Helen of Troy would probably have agreed. And through life's journey, these reptilian impulses never leave us. Anyone who tells you different is a stranger to the truth.

Gore Vidal said: "I never miss a chance to have sex or appear on television." This is a helpful start point. Many professionals – from Darwin to Freud - have studied sexual behavior. Religions set different parameters, and they are to be respected. I am no relationship therapist, thankfully (although as a Worldwide CEO in the creative industries, I sometime wonder). Still, casual observation of universal mating rituals gets you thinking.

Why do people have sex? It's not such a dumb question, if recent investigations are anything to go by. In a 2007 survey, psychologists at the University of Texas, Austin categorized 237 reasons, surveying nearly 2000 people. Almost every reason got a primary vote! The responses were grouped across four general categories: physical, emotional, goal attainment and insecurity.

As you might expect, attraction was the No.1 motivation and as you would hope, love was a top 10 reason. Here are 20 of the more eyebrow-raising motivations given by respondents to the survey and to a follow-up blog in the New York Times soliciting a 238<sup>th</sup> reason.

1. To change the topic of conversation
2. To see the face of God
3. To get rid of a headache
4. Hillary was out campaigning
5. To find the supernatural
6. To prevent prostate cancer
7. Because she was funny and pretty and her hair smelled great.
8. Not to die with any bullets left
9. To confirm that I was indeed gay
10. As a sales rep for Pfizer, it's company policy
11. The TV was broken
12. To prevent a worldwide nuclear war
13. To cure jet-lag
14. To burn calories
15. Because it's Wednesday
16. To be allowed to stay in the country
17. Because the other person had a great record collection
18. Because the Cubs won the World Series
19. To get a good grade
20. To return a favor

The list may say more about America than it does about sex. However valid these responses are, I believe sex belongs in the context of love, with emotion everywhere and calculation nowhere. People travel to Italy to experience this feeling. The aura of romance surrounding Italy represents a spontaneous state of bliss. It's a feeling the world yearns for, and the world loves Italy for it.

In November I was talking with Francis Ford Coppola in Mexico City, where we were presenting at the same conference. He made a compelling case for fusing art with commerce. He outlined the need for artists rather than what he called "the engineers", to have a greater say in business, and to bring to it persistence, belief and a refusal to give in to "the struggle".

I'd add sex to the art, by which I mean, sexiness. Not "Ready, Fire! Aim" sex, which is bent on the act, and tends to the dark transactional side. I'm talking languorous Italian sexiness, the smoldering sexuality of Claudia Cardinale. That cultivated lust stoked by French actress Catherine Deneuve. I'm talking vintage Euro classics like Gina Lollobrigida and Monica Vitti.... And did you see Monica Bellucci in Shoot 'Em Up?

On Planet KR, life is sexy, desirable and beautiful, not covered up but not fully exposed. Many years ago

Sophia Lauren, in a moment of discomfort, described nude exposure to the camera as 'a lot of nakedness'. Perhaps she was foretelling of a global culture that has since taken its clothes off. This bare state of affairs is humorously reflected in Britain's Bad Sex in Fiction Award. The late great Norman Mailer recently won it, with phrases like "her most unmentionable part" and "his old battering ram". Norman, rest in peace!

(By the way, I just bought a great 6 foot by 4 foot canvas of a young Sophia with a graffiti line scrawled across it saying "All you see I owe to spaghetti", by up and coming NY artist Daniel Dens.)

On the covered-up side of things, Singapore recently refused to abolish a law which makes homosexual sex a crime, but indicated that the ban will not be "proactively enforced".

Between the extremes, sex appeal is a strong force in today's Attraction Economy. The Attention Economy is over. Today's consumer leans forward. She is too smart and connected to be pulled or pushed. She wants to be inspired, turned on (not turned off) and she wants her life and that of her family to be safe and sustained.

The role of business is to make the world a better place. It will do that by putting structure, calculation, numbers and process at the service of art, romance, seduction - and also safety. At the moment, it's the other way around.

On the seduction side, consider the famous Moravian economist Joseph Schumpeter. He wore jodhpurs, dueled Librarians, womanized incorrigibly, and apparently told stories of advanced sexual techniques (A modern day STING!). Today he is enjoying an academic resurgence. He said entrepreneurs have the dream and the will to found a private kingdom. He was the "It" guy who put some sizzle in the dismal science.

The professions could use more Schumpeterian sauce. In Mexico, Ford Coppola told me that he

personally approves all his wine and food products against one criteria: "Will people love it or not?" That's a sublime question, an erogenous zone and an Italian standard. It's also the future of business. Here's how to add sizzle to any business for faster returns, inclusive outcomes and a better world:

## 1. **Keep the Mystery**

In the Attraction Economy, Loyalty Beyond Reason is the goal. The Attraction Economy is not "one hit and you're it." One-night stands are transactions. The goal is loyalty for life in relationships.

Mystery matters because it gives our lives surprise and delight. People don't want to understand everything - that's why we move away from know-alls at parties. In Berlin the mystery mavens are starting restaurants where diners eat in the dark.

*Lost* creator JJ Abrams says mystery is more important than knowledge, and I agree. In the future, experiences drawing on mystery will earn a premium.

Mystery is not remote and intimidating. It is inclusive, compelling and creative, and sex is a valid attractor (with magnetic power). Witness the TV behemoth *Sex and the City* now being shot as a movie; the speculation around this is intense.

The issue with mystery is how much to reveal so you don't *fail* to attract and you retain respect? The lingerie industry can help us. In the past, lingerie has been over-sexualized and marketed from a male perspective (remember the WonderBra ad – Hello Boys!), leaving next to nothing to the imagination. But Lovemarks.com tells us hot shops like Kiki de Montparnasse, Agent Provocateur, Coco de Mer, and La Perla have made sex sexy again. It doesn't matter who you are, if you feel sexy, you'll be sexy to others.

Coco de Mer's Sam Roddick (the late Anita's daughter) gets it right: "True eroticism is having your sexual imagination inspired as opposed to confronted."

## **2. Add Sensuality to Sexuality**

The senses are portals to our emotions. Stimulate all five senses, and people will love you forever. If sensuality is the engine that attracts, then sexuality is the turbo booster. It can heighten the experience. The trick is to not to cheapen the ride. Too much sex in the engine, and it overheats. People tire of it. You've got a fad on your hands.

The advertising industry shows us two extremes. The French phenomenon of "porno chic" – sexualizing ordinary products - took plenty of liberty on cultural grounds, and has since faded. The well known example was for the Babette brand of crème fraîche. "Je la lie, je la fouette et elle passa à la casserole" translates literally as "I mix it, whip it and pop it in the pan".

The British, by stark contrast, can hide from their sexuality under the covers. A few years ago they banned an ad showing a woman drinking Lambrini sparkling wine while using a fishing pole to hook a sexy guy. They said he "looks quite attractive and desirable to the girls" and would need to be "overweight, middle-aged, balding, etc." The ad was run using an overweight, bald model. Confusion reigns.

Here's an offbeat example of sophisticated sex. In 2006, motoring magazine *Top Gear* named the Cinquecento (Fiat 500) the Sexiest Car in the World. Behind it were the Aston Martin DBS, Maserati Quattroporte, Chevrolet Camaro and Citroen C6. The Cinquecento's "wholesomeness" made it the sexiest car in the world. The reason is very Italian. The Fiat 500 driver "doesn't have to try." Bravo Lapo and the boys in Torino!

## **3. Make it Intimate**

It is known that sex keeps us healthy and long living. But researchers tell us this longevity is less about the biological response from sex and more about the intimacy. With intimacy, our stress decreases and

contentedness increases. When we experience this in a commercial context, we surrender loyalty forever.

Intimacy is the all-powerful attractor. A feather-light caress or the curve in a smile can set the heart pounding. In 2000, some of you will have opened an e-mail attachment on reading the subject "I love you". Intimacy is irresistible and it can travel the globe in a day. That worm infected 10% of all computers connected to the Internet, with around 5.5 billions dollars damage. Intimacy's dimensions are as sweeping as the human condition. See the movie *Secretary* starring Maggie Gyllenhaal.

As commodification squeezes the life out of brands and digitization pumps in the special effects, intimacy will count more and more. To quote one commentator: "Click. Friendship. Scroll. Sex" is not a healthy end game for relationships.

Italy does family, intimacy, and empathy better than any country I know. And my son Ben knows. He and his Italian partner Clarissa just had a baby girl in Roma – Stella Antoinetta – their first baby; my first grandchild. Bella Stella.

#### **4. Bring in the Italians!**

The problem we have is that Italians are declining (despite Ben and Clarissa's best efforts). We need to get things going in Italy. To raise the temperature in business, we need the sexiest country to be making a lot of love.

At a nation's population "replacement level", women are on average having at least 2.1 children. Italy's fertility rate is below 1.3. Long term, this means ageing and a shrinking economy. Not good.

Plummeting fertility is a feature of traditional societies and modern economies. According to the *Japan Times* last year, your average Japanese has sexual intercourse 45 times a year. The global average is 103.

Making it easier to be a working parent is said to make a real difference to population growth. Personally, I'm a big believer in work / life integration. Eighty percent of the stuff people do at work they can do in their sleep, so I'd shorten the work week for efficiency and lengthen the weekend for recreation! This could work, as most people "get active" in the weekend. In fact, just 1% of people make love on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.

If a CEO spurring a nation into the bedroom sounds odd, consider that in Australia miners are being given sex education to increase production.

Apparently hundreds of men at the Bulga mine in Australia's Hunter Valley have been attending classes on topics like menopause and foreplay. The reason? Management has decided miners who don't get regular sex can be "grumpy at work". What's more, the classes have been a great success. It says a lot.

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*Websites: [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com); [www.saatchikevin.com](http://www.saatchikevin.com); [krconnect.blogspot.com](http://krconnect.blogspot.com); Books: Lovemarks: the future beyond brands; the Lovemarks Effect – winning in the consumer revolution; Sisomo: the future on screen (powerHouse Books)*