

# OUT OF LOVE FOR BRANDS

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Acclaimed by some of the branding specialists, pinned to the wall by others, Kevin Roberts, Worldwide CEO Saatchi & Saatchi, strongly claims that the *brand*, as we know it, is dying and that the new force in marketing is the *lovemark*. Lovemarks are brands which inspire unconditional loyalty. In an interview granted exclusively to ***Biz*** magazine, Roberts explains why passion weighs more than ration, as well as his theory on *lovemarks*.

by CRISTIAN MANAFU

## **1. How has the notion of 'brand' changed in the past years? What is a brand today?**

In the late twentieth-century companies competed for recognition, respect and trust. This was a tough, uncompromising contest ruled by expectation and won through clarity of purpose, consistency of meaning and restless leadership. The race to brand led to commodification - the erosion of distinctions, rapid imitation of innovation, higher standards of product performance and - accelerated by technology - a final transfer of power to consumers. In the consumer's world today, brands look like wallpaper. The snacks are crisp, cars start first time and beer is always ice-cold. Most brands today are high on quality and performance. Respected and trusted – but not loved.

## **2. You gave a new definition to this notion. What is a Lovemark exactly? And how is it different than a brand as we all know it? And where did it come from? How did you come up with this idea?**

Lovemarks are the charismatic brands that people can't live without. Take a brand away and people will find a replacement. Take a Lovemark away and people protest its absence. These super-evolved brands make deep emotional connections with consumers in new ways. Through mystery, sensuality and intimacy they inspire love. The idea's origins? Instinctively I've always felt brands could evolve to a higher level. My early thinking circled around trust and the idea of a Trustmark. Alan Webber (Founding Editor, Fast Company) and I were discussing it around the turn of the century. We realized that trust lacked transformational power. I went home and late at night, in time honored fashion, added a fine French red wine to my brainstorm. In the small hours, surfing on inspiration I asked "Could I get my brand to be loved as well as trusted?" Experience, and some stunning new research, say yes.

### **3. Can you please extend the idea of "Loyalty beyond reason"?**

Lovemarks change people's lives. The connection isn't rational. It is deeply emotional. The example *du jour* is Steve Jobs' stunning iPod. Its competitors outperform it in numerous ways. Yet they can't outsell it. As one inspired consumer put it: "I'm in love with this machine and I may start sleeping with it". If you google "I-pod therefore I am", you'll catch on fast. For the full spectrum of loyalty beyond reason, check out the hundreds of Lovemarks nomination at Lovemarks.com. The site drips with consumer passion.

### **4. Is the emotional involvement stronger than ever? And what happened to reason?**

We live in the attention economy. Consumers have less time and more options than ever. Give people more reasons to do or buy stuff and their eyes glaze over. Connect with the power of emotion and eyes light up. Emotion is the new frontier of marketing. Science has proved we think with our hearts. At the moment of truth, we choose the one we love. As US behavioral economists recently put it: "cognition is a smart pony, and emotion a big elephant."

### **5. How far can the love for a brand go?**

A long way. Love isn't something you put limits on.

### **6. Some people said you have exaggerated peoples' love for the brands. How do you feel about that?**

Pretty good. I've always zigged when others zag. Ideas that push the boundaries are the ones that most people think won't work. The ones that no one thinks are worth doing. And the ones that a year later everyone is taking credit for.

### **7. In most cases, love implies exclusivity. How do Lovemarks make the difference [between] one [brand and] another?**

Emotion is an unlimited resource. Emotional connections are rarely the same. Each Lovemark is infused with a unique blend of Mystery, Sensuality and Intimacy. The mix will vary by sector, offering and intent. In the late 1990s, Procter & Gamble's Tide laundry detergent faced the threat of commodification. Instead of focusing on cleaning power, P&G strengthened the emotional communication by showing empathy for women's busy lifestyles. This intimacy boosted sales in some markets as much as 25%. Love is inclusive not exclusive. It

changes peoples' lives. It makes a difference wherever it goes. I'm trying to put it at the centre of business.

## **8. You said "branding is dead". What's left?**

A slippery slope lubricated with the "-er" words. Brighter, stronger, cleaner, faster... cheaper.

## **9. What should a marketer do today for his brand and with his brand? How can they put the love in their brands?**

Mystery, Sensuality and Intimacy are three terms you won't see at a business or marketing school. They are fundamental to improving people's lives. Put them to work, in any space, and you can inspire love. They let you connect with people in ways you never dreamed possible.

**Mystery** to draw together stories, metaphors, dreams and symbols. Where past, present and future become one. Most brands squeeze out Mystery with too much information. People are drawn to what they don't know. When we know everything, there's nothing left to learn. Without mystery and surprises, relationships – and the people in them - get tired. **Sensuality** is a portal to the emotions. Sight, sound, scent, touch and taste determine our every thought and feeling. This is how we experience the world. When our senses are aroused in concert, the results are unforgettable. **Intimacy**. The fine art of being close to family, partners, customers and consumers, without getting in their faces. Empathy, commitment and passion. The intimate connections that win undying loyalty.

## **10. You work in the advertising business. How do you see advertising fit into this fast-moving branding world? And how does advertising interact with the Lovemark idea?**

Advertising is the vital link between producers and consumers because it inspires action. Its role is to communicate ethical, true, entertaining ideas that translate thought into action. Without advertising, commerce stops. Through advertising, commerce transforms. In a market reality, Lovemarks connect consumer choice with a genuine commercial desire to a make difference to this world. The question each brand and its marketers must ask is this: Would you like consumers to respect your brand or to love and respect it? Today, brands need to be loved to be sustainable. And to be loved, you have to be lovable.

## **11. What are the most common mistakes marketers do with their brands? Why do many brands fail?**

Success and failure come down to language, or more specifically, letters. The marketers and the brands that succeed are the ones with the 'I's and the 'E's. I for Ideas, Imagination, Intuition, Insight and Inspiration. E for Emotion, Empathy, Exploration, Enchantment, Edge. People without this lexicon cannot do great work. People with it can do anything.

**12. Can you name several brands that got branding right over the years and tell me why they didn't fail? Are these brands the true Lovemarks?**

Making mistakes is part of building a successful relationship. The key is to welcome, embrace, inspire and love consumers, not command and control them. David Ogilvy was right. The consumer is not a moron. She's your wife. Apple Computers learnt this the hard way in the 1990s. They moved from innovation miracles to beige boxes and suffered for the change in the market. Now they are back into world-class design. What sustained the Mac lovers over the tough beige period? I call it "Love in the bank." With Loyalty Beyond Reason, Apple could make mistakes and still be forgiven. Back on track, the company went to the leading edge and stayed there. All those committed consumers are now more loyal than ever.

**13. Romania is an emerging market and now it is the time for many producers to start building brands. What suggestions do you have for them?**

Leapfrog brands. Anchor respect into everything you do. Then connect your business, your people, your customers and your brand with nothing short of love. The new world of business is anchored by Respect at one end and inspired by Love at the other. The more you inspire love, the more you are rewarded. The more you command it, the less relevant you become. Focus on the rational and you get incremental growth – you're stuck in the commodified world of brands. Focus on emotion through mystery, sensuality and intimacy and you're headed for the premium world of Lovemarks. This is the territory of quantum growth.