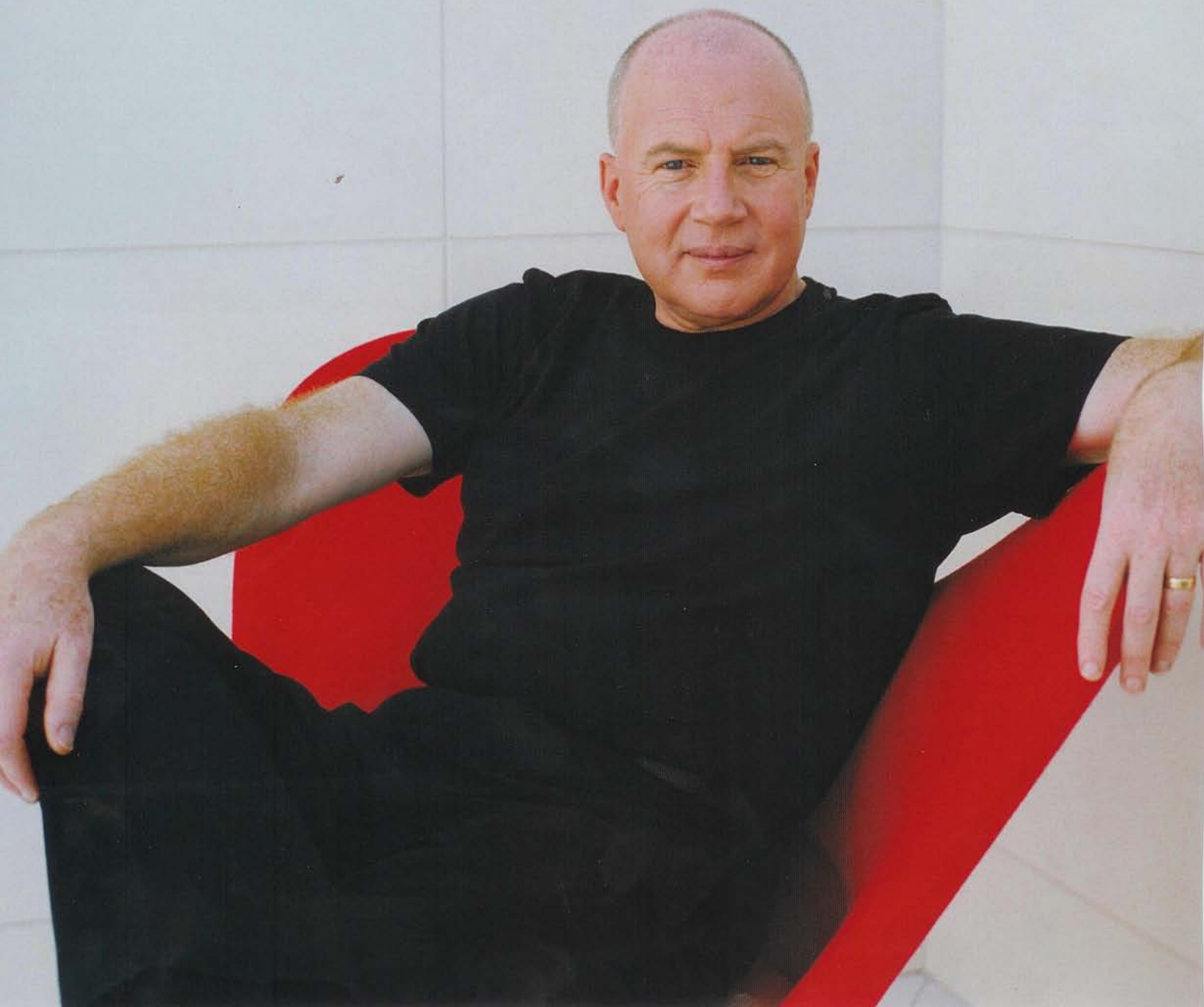




**LOVE
PASSION
DEVOTION
OBSESSION
BELIEF**
**AND OTHER TRENDS
IN BRANDING**

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO LIKE A PRODUCT – NOW YOU MUST GIVE
YOUR HEART. KEVIN ROBERTS TALKS TO **IAN SCLATER** ABOUT
MYSTERY, SENSUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF BRANDS



In his book *Lovemarks* (Powerhouse Books), Kevin Roberts, global CEO for Saatchi & Saatchi, says that in future the most enduring brands will be those that elicit an 'emotional connection'. Having evolved from mere 'trademarks' into the now universal 'brands', products in search of a sustained market will need to burrow deep, not into consumers' pockets but into their hearts. It is there that a lovemark is born.

Roberts draws attention to those brands that inspire 'loyalty beyond reason' in their customers, who in turn become 'inspirational consumers' – evangelists for their favourite products. The hue and cry that erupted some years ago when Coca-Cola introduced its 'new formula' showed that the manufacturers did not fully understand the emotional connection its customers had developed with the brand. The vehement protests forced Coca-Cola into an expensive U-turn that brought back 'Classic Coke'.

The three key ingredients of a lovemark, says Kevin Roberts, are mystery, sensuality and intimacy – strange attributes to associate with a brand, but essential elements of a truly great love. The 'L' word is at the heart of this changing relationship between brand and consumer. It all means a radical shift in how marketers view and make connections with consumers. Out go demographics and psychographics, and in come consumers as individuals. Listening to the voice of the consumer, says Roberts, is the fundamental essence of marketing – R.I.P. ABCs.

You say in your book, 'Maybe life's taking over brands.' What do you mean?

Naomi Klein, in her book *No Logo*, got it completely wrong. She said that brands had become so omnipresent that there would be a big consumer backlash against them. In fact, consumers have moved into a position of power. The big brands, such as Coca-Cola, Head & Shoulders and Persil, used to have the power. About six years ago, power switched to the retailers, and it was all about Tesco, Sainsbury's and M&S.

love me do

Now, the power has switched to the consumers. They've become more discerning and brand-sensitive. Because of the internet and mobile communications consumers can now interact with brands, spread the word about them and give them feedback.

Brands are not taking over the world. Consumers have fought back, and they're taking over brands. They've forced brands to think much more about creating a dialogue and a relationship with consumers.

You tell the story in your book about the Qantas flight attendant who, seeing in you a fellow 'bloke', and a weary one at that, replaced the usual 'Chardonnay, sir?' with 'Beer, mate?' Strictly speaking, that was a break from Qantas' First Class protocol. So should employees – that is, brand's representatives – be allowed to use their personal discretion when it comes to how to present the brand in a given circumstance? More than allowed. That steward empathised with me. He knew I didn't want to be called 'sir'. That's corporate nomenclature. He put himself in my place. It's the antithesis of the American 'Have a nice day'. They couldn't care less if you walked outside and became roadkill. The best personnel manual there is belongs to the US department store chain

Nordstrom. It has one page that reads: 'Use your best judgement at all times.' End of story. When you go into Nordstrom, you feel as if they know you, care about you and are interested in you. In contrast, the duty-free shop at the airport is the worst experience of all. Women just stick perfume up your nose.

In the past, British organisations have been run on a 'command and control' structure. Consumers today are not interested in that. It's got to be about 'unleash and inspire' – unleash your people to be the best they can be and inspire them with the dream of your brand. Then get out of the way.

How can lovemarks empower marketers when a product or service seems to become a lovemark entirely at the consumer's discretion? Isn't it out of the marketer's hands?

It empowers you by you giving up control. It's freedom. If you have to keep a bird in a cage to keep it, you haven't got a thing. If you let the bird fly free, you've got everything.

You have to get over 'owning' the brand. Brand managers and marketing managers do not 'own' the brand. The brand belongs to the consumers. If you let go, it's the most powerful and empowering thing. It allows you, the marketer, to think differently. It doesn't keep you trapped in the same old cage.

It allows you to build mystery, sensuality and intimacy. How many marketing plans have those headings? They're all about 'strategy' and 'objective'. Marketing people today think of consumers as targets. Does that mean they're going to shoot me? I want to be embraced by a brand. That is liberating.

This is about radical optimism and reminding marketers why they got into the business in the first place before there were rules, success models and research. The marketers were the entrepreneurs. Nowadays all they need to do in their jobs is not mess up.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the marketers were curious and innovative. Then it all became processed and safe. The research industry killed us. They all had the same funders, asked the same consumers the same questions and interpreted the data the same way. That's why 90% of products fail. They're all going through the same stupid research.

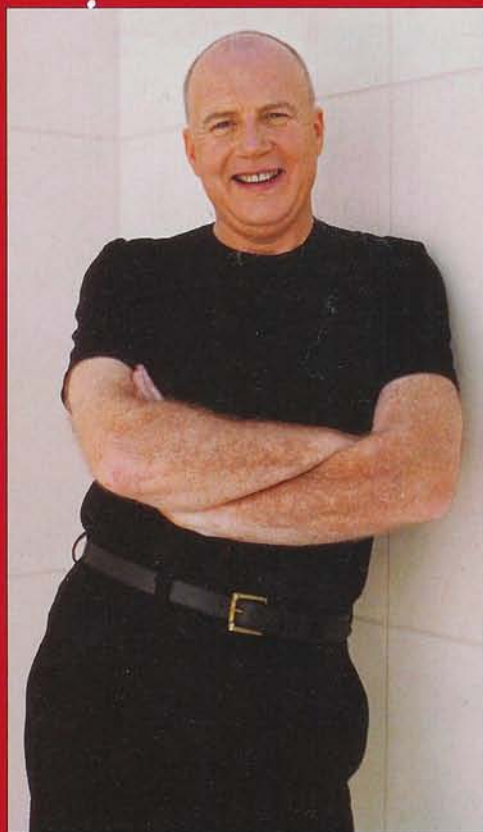
They need to be in the home side by side with the consumer, watching how she actually uses the product, not what she says about it in front of her peers. She doesn't want to look stupid.

And they're using focus groups – the worst technique ever invented. It gets dominated by a loud-mouthed consumer and manipulated by the focus group researcher. And all these brand managers think they're 'in touch with the consumer'. They're asking about behaviours. They're not probing into emotions.

But isn't the new marketing approach more haphazard?

The trick is, you've got to find a research technique that measures emotions, not just facts. You can't use a thermometer instead of a ruler to measure your height. That's what it's like with the techniques we've got right now.

The real game is to get marketing to innovate itself, and get the research industry, which has become a total commodity, to innovate. Some 60% of money spent on research is from syndicated studies. How lazy is that? They are not innovative. Consumers are looking now for relationships not transactions.



"Just because you put a logo on something and create a slogan doesn't make it into a brand"

To order your copy of *Lovemarks* by Kevin Roberts visit: www.cim.co.uk/shop



MEASURING REACTIONS

Market research consultancy QIQ International worked with Kevin Roberts on the lovemarks concept and understand the 'new' consumer similarly. Managing director John Pawle says, "People now feel about brands the way they feel about people. Brands are no longer passive objects. In research terms we're measuring the nature of relationships between people and brands."

Pawle cites the (granted, extreme) case of a man in the US who suffered an industrial accident in which the emotional parts of his brain were destroyed. While he could function fully in every other way, he could no longer make any decisions. "In marketing terms that's really important. If it's true, our clients need to understand what the emotional factors are which are driving their brands. Brands don't differentiate very much on functional attributes, but quite a lot on the way people see them on a more intuitive, subconscious basis."

To gauge how consumers rank a brand's sensuality, they might show them textures, play them music or ask them to associate colours with brands. "We're not great believers in 'the norm'," Pawle explains. "We ask people to not think too rationally. Our approach is quite radical, but it's following a trend. People talk about measuring emotional response in advertising and it's more widely accepted that it is important to do so."

QIQ has also worked on relating emotion to purchasing behaviour and claims that, by increasing the levels of consumer-brand love and respect, it can increase sales by five to seven times. Visit: www.qiqinternational.com.

The research industry has got to find ways to measure that, so that we can still be liberated but not screw up. It's about measurement (see 'Measuring Reactions' panel, above).

Doesn't it take too long a time for a lovemark to emerge? How does this meet the typical client's need for immediate results?

It's a journey. You've got to build respect first, just the way you would in a normal relationship, then add to that respect more emotional connections.

Brands can't just develop overnight. Just because you put a logo on something and create a slogan doesn't make it into a brand, simply a trademark. More and more of us are saying that when we want to partake, we will do so on our terms. We will go past the brand, past the ad, past the slogan. We will check the ingredients. Consumers are very informed. All the information is there. All the source material is transparent.

Nonetheless, we are not a pack of cynics. We're optimists. We live in a world where we are very insecure and are looking for relationships. We believe we have the power. You just look on the internet and make up your mind. It's up to you as a consumer to exercise the power you have. **tm**