



'Media rules have changed'

Advertising chief says brands need to transform themselves to survive

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THE rules of the advertising game have changed, and brands that play by yesterday's rules are in for a rude awakening.

"Great brands have to engage the personalities of consumers and inspire them with exciting ideas and possibilities," said Mr Kevin Roberts (picture), the worldwide chief executive officer of advertising house Saatchi & Saatchi.

Mr Roberts told TODAY that despite this knowledge, several successful brands have struggled in the past decade. More demanding and intelligent consumers, fierce competition in the marketplace, and the increased media clutter have taken their toll on brands.

The YouTube generation has a modern day take on channel surfing — it can open and close ads with the click of a mouse.

"Most brands do not realise that the consumer is in control now. The need to transform them into something consumers love is the greatest challenge to business and brands today," he said.

Mr Roberts, who is in town for the Global Brand Forum, said advertising is undergoing an "attraction revolution".

"We are living in an attraction economy and the power to attract consumers is what branding, marketing and advertising is all about," he said. "The only way you can do this

is with empathy, authenticity and a dedication to creating emotional connections."

To establish that connection, brands should have an air of mystery, sensuality and intimacy — the emotional drivers that stir up consumers. Most brands have fallen into the pit of mediocrity, and that is what is hurting them.

"Consumers find it tough to tell one brand from another and they really don't care much about most of them," he said.

He believes that they have to evolve into lovemarks — brands that stir loyalty and respect within the consumer. They, therefore, have to turn themselves into something irreplaceable, and through time, irresistible.

But before that, the industry has to learn to understand the multitude of media possibilities and how these connect with consumers, and vice versa. While the Internet age is not the end for traditional media like newspapers and billboards, Mr Roberts admits that television and computer screens will continue to dominate the advertising landscape.

And he is excited about the future.

"In five years, all media will be interactive whether we're talking magazines, television or games. To me this is the most exciting time ever to be in the ideas business. The traditional media will never be the same again," he said.