

LOVE IN ADLAND

{Catalyst, hidden persuader or a gentle, deceptive brand statement, LOVE - Monojit Lahiri insists – is much more than a 4 letter word in today's fiercely competitive market-scape.}

Act I. Scene I. Enter Irony, through a simple but loaded question: Isn't it truly intriguing that the most hymned, celebrated & revered emotion on planet earth is – alas – allocated just one day in the year for remembrance [Valentine's Day] when hard-sell, heart-sell goes on a maniacal overdrive? That done, on every other day this emotion is slung back in the deep freeze with technological prowess, pricing coups, strategic alliance et al, grabbing the spotlight?

Fact is, never in recorded history has there been a more desperate desire & need for love. Quickly translated, it means the love-market has never been so huge and inviting! Cynics & pin-striped collar-down marketers may scoff at this line of thought, but obviously the myopic cavemen are a universe away from the new, exciting world of the Attraction Economy. It explores the terrain created through narratives that are both engaging & insightful and connect directly with the heart. Champions of this movement believe that the old, ghisa pita branding practices have become stultified and need to be put to sleep with love-affairs with the brand, the new name of the game. Look around and see for yourself the scene exploding with people longing to invest in love, emotion, imagination & feeling with one huge stumbling block: They are clueless about how to hit which button! Declares an amused Corporate Consultant "They are caught

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flat-footed in the challenge of translating love into a palpable & tangible act that is warm and credible." To **real** people, it is not rocket science. Get back to basics. Junk those bulky reports and research studies. Leverage this emotion as a strategic device for consumer-connect and watch the bottom line soar!

Communication Guru Kevin Roberts in his landmark book The Lovemarks Effect, reckons three outstanding attributes define this template: Mystery, Sensuality and Intimacy. **"Mystery** is about stories, metaphors, dreams & symbols, a space where past, present & future becomes one. Also, what keeps long-term relationships alive. **Sensuality** keeps the five senses on a red alert for new textures, intriguing scents & tastes, great music, spell-binding imagery. **Intimacy** invokes empathy, commitment, passion – the small, perfect gesture. These are connections that win intense loyalty and remembered long after features & benefits have faded away. With intimacy comes the feeling of brand ownership."

Smart, sensitive & clued-in communicators have always understood, recognized and leveraged this emotion intelligently to escape from the 'commodity trap' to place brands where they belong – centre stage! Declares behavioral scientist Kishore Ullal [who specializes in brand studies] "This is a hallowed space reserved totally for charismatic brands – Pepsi, Coke, Reebok, Nike, Apple, Fevicol, Tanishq, Vodafone, Airtel, Lux, HDFC, Archies – which inspires passion and loyalties that are non-negotiable. What better time than today's cynical and complex times to get love back on track? Reaffirm what smart emo-driven marketers have always believed: In the war between reason and emotion, get your facts straight. Reason leads to conclusion. Emotion drives action!"

Finally, if fun, sensuality, mystery and intimacy enthrall, engage, entertain, enrich & empower life, why should they be blinkered off from the communication thrust related to trade



and commerce, business and industry? Aren't they driven to people? Why not substitute the dumb, impersonal, corporatised passion-trimmed-into-efficiency mode with a strong, personal & emotional connect? Starbucks, Cafe Coffee Day, Barista and the new Bank (ICICI) ads seem to be doing it, brilliantly, all the time. Explains Creative Director Kaushik Sen, "They've understood that the rules of the game have changed. Its no longer only about consumer contact progammes; its about hanging out and being involved. Not about taking notes – but taking the pulse. Also, they've recognised that the research guys, after researching the hell out of what they believe needs to be researched, have conveniently ignored the rest." The truth is – everything of value cannot be probed, dissected, analysed, scanned and researched for the right answer. Why? Because then we are in danger [as one perceptive pundit brilliantly put it] of being **exactly wrong** instead of being **approximately right**. Of placing consumers at the base of the pyramid rather than the centre of mistaking the fingers on our hands for the beat of our hearts.

So what's the take out? As an Ad Guru has pointed out with rare perception and sensitivity, we need to stop talking about love & emotion and set it to work, blend it to the rampaging, new age emotion economy. The entertainment industry is a brilliant setting, it appeals to our creative, unconscious and intuitive side – zones that operate beyond rationality & rules, celebrating story-telling mystery and metaphor.

So at the end of the day: Is love a mango? A four letter word? A many splendoured thing? The April rose that only grows in early spring? Nature's way of giving a reason to living, the golden crown that makes a man a king? You decide, but yes ... the jury is out and the popular consensus is that [everything considered], love is indeed the CEO that presides over all constituencies and target groups simply because it unfailingly conquers the most significant, critical, precious, sacrosanct and empowering territory of all – your heart! And its time we gave love a chance!