

# Emerging markets, digitisation are game-changers: Manwani

'Asia will be single largest consumer block in 10 to 15 years'

**Our Bureau**  
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The most exciting of global trends that will shape the future for marketers was the 'shift of the economic centre of gravity to emerging markets,' according to Mr Harish Manwani, COO, Unilever; and Chairman, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL).

Quizzed by Mr Michael Roth, Chairman and CEO, Interpublic Group, on day one of Ad Asia on the theme 'Game Changers,' Mr Manwani added, "It has taken a while coming, but it is irreversible. And Asia is going to be the single largest consumer block in 10 to 15 years."

He noted that with 85 per cent of the world population living in emerging markets and 90 per cent of economic growth projected to come from there, "We are the world."



**Mr Michael Roth**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Interpublic (left), with Mr Harish Manwani, COO, Unilever, and Chairman of Hindustan Unilever Ltd, at AdAsia 2011 in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Kamal Narang

For Unilever, 54 per cent of business comes from developing and emerging markets, according to the COO.

The second big game changer was sustainable, responsible growth, he noted.

Citing Unilever's 'Sustainable Living Plan', he underlined the company's vision to double sales while reducing environmental impact by half.

"People say what can an FMCG company do. Our big-

gest leverage is the two billion consumers who use our products every day. It's not just about what we do at our factories - two-thirds of environmental impact comes when consumers use our brand. We have a role to play in the entire value chain. And integrating social mission with brands is critical," explained Mr Manwani. He cited examples of Surf, Lifebuoy and Dove to make his point about responsible business practices.

Mr Roth added, "We need to do a better job of getting the message - of what companies are doing in terms of responsible business practices - out there."

In the Indian context, Mr Manwani noted that Project Shakti, which involves 45,000 rural women from economically weaker sections who have been trained to become entrepreneurs, was taking the

message of hygiene and nutrition to schools and homes and selling HUL products.

"We have seen a reversal of the social order (with their empowerment). As a company, you make a difference by ensuring that your brands make a difference, are marketed with a difference, and you are fulfilling a social purpose," he added.

Mr Roth and Mr Manwani underlined the need to prepare for a digitised consumer environment.

Mr Manwani also pointed out that in the Indian market, it was necessary to straddle multiple segments of the pyramid, given 80 million people on the Internet, even as 300 million Indians lived in media dark areas.

On the opportunity that the ubiquitous mobile phone presented, Mr Roth said, "We haven't even scratched the top of that opportunity yet."