

Social marketing, and true word (of mouth) power

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

15 Jan 2019

When Marian Salzman, one of the world's top trendspotters, invited me to discuss all things social marketing trend-related over coffee at the end of 2018, I jumped at the chance. This is the first of three overviews of our talking points.



Marian Salzman, global trendspotter, now heads up comms - owned and paid - at Philip Morris International (PMI).

Salzman set the context by stating that while we tend to see a lot of movement in the digital realm, the general consensus is that social media is it, and digital marketing is then simply about putting out your marketing message on social media.

Instead, Salzman believes that true marketing word power lies in one-to-one conversations – from mom to mom, mom to neighbour, and neighbour to neighbour.

“ *It's word, but not necessarily word-of-mouth, as that word can be just as powerful when it is typed.* ”

It all depends who types it.

Salzman says the fundamental difference between 'then and now' is this: If you wanted to send out the 'marketing word' to or through a seventeen-year-old girl, pretty much anywhere in the world before the advent of social media, that used to be spread through the home phone.

Today, it's probably communicated through Instagram or Snapchat. And that seventeen-year-old now has a broadcast channel she controls, not just a phone handset, but the marketing message ultimately comes from her.

The continued continuum of message blurring

“ *That's what a lot of brands get wrong. They think of it as a digital message, but it's actually a human message* ”

transmitted by digital habits.” ”

So for Salzman, that's the main story when it comes to social marketing. The secondary story links to that and is around the role of the influencer.

Salzman has questions about the role of celebrities as influencers, as well as the role of people who have created their own persona around influence. While influencer marketing is crucial in point, brands need to target those who actually hold the influence.

For example, Salzman says if she worked for a frozen food brand, she'd want to speak to the most influential moms in every community. Because no matter whether you're a high- or low-income household, at 4pm every day you ask the same question: "What's for dinner?" It's the great equaliser.



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Leigh Andrews 10 Jul 2017



Salzman likens this to the "EasyJet of life: Everyone gets on board the EasyJet flight, and it doesn't matter who you are in your real life, you wait in line and grab a seat."

She says the question of what's for dinner is the same phenomenon in action. Social platforms are trying to tell us that they can solve that problem for us, but chances are you don't trust Facebook to tell you what's for dinner from a sponsored post.

You're more likely to trust the person standing next to you in line at the supermarket.



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Salzman says sometimes when she sees somebody put a new grocery item in their shopping cart, she'll ask what they use it for.

And most of us are the same. We would rather trust an actual person making the purchase of their free will, rather than a carefully crafted, branded marketing message.

Message men and millennials where they meet

Salzman says this also relates to men's marketing.

We think we can pump out all the messages intended for men through sports channels, and sure we can, but usually, that's just about what's happening on the sports field.

We need to find new ways to target men in the places they chat to other guys to have more impact.



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Marketers also need to rethink the way they talk to and about millennials in 2019.

Salzman says to focus on how to cause a buzz during happy hour, because in big cities all around the world if you want to send a message to millennials, you need to be where they are between 5pm and 7pm on a Friday night – particularly when there's good weather.

Salzman concluded this section of our talk with a reminder that digital is the organ of amplification, and is incredibly important, but it's not the message itself.

Make sure your brand is taking its message to people who talk to others, in real life and online.

Also, read Salzman's broader trends for SA and the world in 2019:

#BizTrends2019: Top 12 trends for SA and the world





Marian Salzman 8 Jan 2019



ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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