

"We are what we see" - Marian Salzman



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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International trends spotter Marian Salzman joined trend analyst and culture strategist Nicola Cooper and trend spotter at Flux Trends, Khumo Theko in highlighting the top pop culture trends affecting females at an event held at Inner City Ideas Cartel in Cape Town last month. This is what you missed.

“ At a *Evolution of Women in Pop-Culture & Innovation 2019 and Beyond* trend talk. [#evolutionofwomen](#)
pic.twitter.com/ACEXnPjkR— A writer who doesn't write (@thelionmutter) [March 14, 2019](#) ”

Terry Levin, COO of Bizcommunity MCed the event as Bizcommunity was a media partner and said that trends are very close to Bizcommunity's heart. Every year for the last 10 years editors have curated Bizcommunity's own trend report called [BizTrends](#), that includes usually between 150 and 200 contributions from South Africa and Pan-Africa contributors as well.

"What better place to be as trend forecasters on the trendiest continent on this planet, in Africa, on the brink of this mythical 2020 year, the year that we've associated with the future for so long. And also with this 2020 vision and looking towards trends in the future," she said.

Levin added that we are all connected, even though our speakers are coming from all over. "Because of our networkness we all have similar zeitgeists. We can all know what's trending at the same time. It's making us sort of cohesive and it is all very exciting."

She said that trends are not frivolous. Trends are informing communications and activations in corporates and in businesses and even governments at all levels. "If people aren't aware of the trends or how to apply them, then they won't be relevant or engaging to people and to target audiences. And that is why we have all these trend experts to help guide us through popular culture."

After introducing the speakers, Salzman, the senior VP of global communications for Philip Morris International was first up on the podium.

"I've been spotting trends for almost 30 years," Salzman started, "and at the beginning some of the tools we take for granted today were unavailable." She then shared with us how she became an 'online person' working with the likes of *Rolling Stone* magazine, *Glamour* magazine, *Esquire* magazine and AOL.

We are what we see

Reminiscing, Salzman said in the early 90s everything was possible and she was embarrassed to admit that in those days her role model was basically *Sex and the City*. "That was what I aspired to, that was who I wanted to be, that was how broke I was but unlike them, they were broke wearing expensive shoes; I was lucky if I had any shoes."

She brought this up because as a trend spotter, for her, that was aspirational but over time, after working in India and making many friends there, she realised that what was aspirational for her was every bit as exciting to the women in India



International trends spotter Marian Salzman. © [IFRA Twitter](#).

but it was pure fantasy to them.

Salzman says she heard someone once say: 'We are what we see.' And as a trends person, she said she thinks one of the biggest problems for women right now is: 'Who do we see?'

“ On a good day, we see Michelle Obama. On a good day, we see the prime minister of New Zealand. On a bad day, we see... I was searching for the top 15 most influential corporate women in South Africa and I couldn't find anyone. It was really hard because we are what we see. ”

Men and women see things very differently in some areas and we are desperately trying to find icons in men and women but we don't know what to look at.

Why mentoring is a bit like dieting

“ I don't believe in mentoring. I think mentoring is one of those great myths. It's a little bit like dieting. If you go on a diet, you're going to constantly chase and it doesn't matter how much you weigh, because you're worried about what you're going to gain and mentoring is the same thing. ”

“If your mentee is really good, guess what... he/she might end up becoming your boss and then what happens to that mentor/mentee relationship? Because the mentee grew up.”

Salzman says a big trend that we are going to start seeing is the end of these types of artificial relationships in business and innovation.



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Instead, you're going to see people who are insequential and monogamous. Insequential but monogamous relationships where somebody pulls somebody else up but there is no reciprocity in that arrangement. Her advice:

“ As you see trends look for what you know. Look for what you can identify and then flip it on its head. Think like a design disruptor. Say: 'If I went to the sink and turned on the water, what happens if orange juice came out?' ”

Check back on the site for coverage on Nicole Cooper and Khumo Theko's talks that will focus on the importance of identifying your consumer as a real person and identifying new urban tribes that brands should be aware of. You can follow Salzman on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and on [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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