BIZCOMMUNITY

# Jan Hofmeyr

By Louise Marsland

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Jan Hofmeyr is head of behaviour change at TNS and the co-founder of its market research solution, the ConversionModel, which TNS recently re-engineered and relaunched to market.

The ConversionModel was developed to assess how people actually make decisions, something that traditional brand tracking failed to do. Brands will often appear strong in the usual brand tracking surveys, but this will not be reflected in sales.

"When we look at the way in which people actually choose a brand - we see a number of factors at play which are never normally captured in brand tracking," explains Hofmeyr.

The new ConversionModel analyses two factors to address the weaknesses in traditional models: 'power in the mind' - how people feel about a brand; and 'power in the market' - external factors, such as price and availability.

Hofmeyr's soapbox is the fact that brands still don't really appreciate what creates a strong bond with the consumer and that emotions are mostly a superficial measurement. What creates a deeper connection is the extent to which you connect with people on what is important to them. Brands in the service industries get it least of all, he says.

## If a brand makes you happy...

"What broadly underpins market research is that if a brand makes you happy, you will be loyal. That if you meet the customer's needs, they will stay and be happy."

He is a straight talker about the shortcomings of the research industry.

"Brands understand the importance of an emotional bond. But emotions are an artificial bond. If you look at the incredible work being done in neuroscience, emotion is a very superficial layer. Our industry is pathetic when it comes to theory."

His core advice is that human nature hasn't changed so circumstance and technology might be changing, but:
• We have a very limited ability to take in info; we suffer from limited 'bandwidth'.
• Image building takes a long time. To connect a brand to the things that are important to a person takes a while.
• In the face of massive info overload, Hofmeyr's message is relatively simple: calm down, recognise that human nature hasn't changed and get basics right.

"Marketers are so focussed on tactical sales, they don't really want to know what their consumers think of them. Great creative does lead to really good business... What characteristics it is when a brand carries a truth that touches us in a human way."



## ABOUT JAN HOFMEYR

*Jan Hofmeyr is TNS' leading expert on consumer behaviour, with a career spanning 20 years advising many of the world's best-known brands. He developed the ConversionModel whilst working for the Customer Equity Company (acquired by TNS in 2000), on recognising a need for better quality insight on consumer motivations. Prior to working in market research, Hofmeyr was a senior political advisor for the African National Congress during and after the first democratic elections in South Africa. He is the co-author (with Butch Rice) of* Commitment Led Marketing *and the author of numerous, award-winning papers on brand equity.*

**Q: Why research?**
**A:** I seemed to be very good at figuring out what was in people's minds from the way they answered questions. And it was a lot more lucrative than being a professor at UCT.

**Q: Most important attribute?**
**A:** The ability to think inside other people's heads.

**Q: The biggest trend in your industry?**
**A:** The use of digital technology (mobile surveys, search and social data) to create marketing information.

**Q: What surprises you about consumers?**
**A:** Nothing.

**Q: What inspires you?**
**A:** Everything we're learning about human nature. There's been an explosion in knowledge about people - what they think, how they think, what they value, how they make choices, how they relate to each other, how they compete and yet co-operate.

**Q: What are you currently reading for work?**
**A:** I don't read anything for work. Everything that I read might have relevance. I'm reading Gigerenzer: *Gut Feelings*; Pinker: *The Better Angels of our Nature*; and Pentland: *Social Physics*.

**Q: What would you like to change in the world?**
**A:** I'd like to get rid of poverty.

**Q: Tell us something about yourself not generally known?**
**A:** The men in my family have somehow managed to avoid fighting in a war for more than 300 years. (Plus, I don't have a cellphone!)

**Q: At the top of my 'bucket list' is...**
**A:** There's nothing that I really miss having seen or done. There's nowhere that I really want to go. Most of what I'd like to do, I've done. Maybe see the Northern Lights.

## ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMCG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.
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