

The Future of Healthcare Marketing: An Interview With Melanie Lysaght

BY KEVIN WOODWORTH

The healthcare marketing landscape is constantly evolving, fueled by technological advancements, shifting consumer behaviors, and a growing emphasis on patient empowerment. To understand the future of this dynamic field, I spoke with Melanie Lysaght, Director, Innovation, at CMI Media Group. Our conversation explored emerging technologies, changing consumer preferences, and innovative solutions poised to revolutionize healthcare marketing.

Q: BASED ON YOUR OBSERVATIONS AT SXSW, ARE THERE ANY TECHNOLOGIES THAT HEALTHCARE MARKETERS SHOULD BE PREPARING FOR?

A: AI dominated SXSW, and for good reason. It's transforming everything, impacting not just healthcare marketing but our daily lives. Panelists discussed leveraging AI to reach specific audiences, focusing on understanding its potential as a strategic tool.

However, my observations went beyond AI's immediate appeal. A panel on reaching diverse audiences, particularly in the American Heartland, highlighted a critical oversight. Marketing strategies, often conceived on the coasts, tend to

treat America as a monolith, neglecting the nuances of the Heartland.

The study emphasized the need to acknowledge this region's distinct voice, often overlooked and judged. To connect effectively, marketers must understand their values and connect authentically, not just reflect back what they think they want to hear.

As a member of our Innovation team, I believe a solid understanding of the basics is crucial for true innovation.

This includes connecting with your key audience and leveraging audience insights, a CMI strength. By incorporating these insights into campaigns, marketers can stay ahead.

Ultimately, while AI is crucial, we also need to revisit fundamental principles to truly innovate. This means grounding strategies while exploring AI's possibilities.



Melanie with cast members of the Netflix reality series, *Love Is Blind*, in front of the promotional statue for the series.



Melanie Lysaght, Director, Innovation, alongside Carly Kuper, Senior Vice President, Public Relations and Corporate Communications, and Melissa Giordano, Chief Client Officer, upon arriving at SXSW.

Q: BEYOND THE SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGIES SHOWCASED, WERE THERE ANY SHIFTS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR YOU OBSERVED THAT YOU FEEL MARKETERS NEED TO ADDRESS?

A: Podcasting was another key focus. While not new, it's experiencing a resurgence, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Podcasts are now deeply embedded in the culture.

For marketers, understanding podcast advertising nuances is crucial. Differentiate between 30- or 60-second ads and custom podcast series or episodes. Each has strengths and challenges. For specific product launches or awareness campaigns, short ads can be effective, leveraging existing listening habits.

However, to shift perspectives or educate on complex topics, invest in custom content. Custom episodes or series offer evergreen content for repurpose, providing a greater ROI.

While custom podcasts require creative effort and navigating content approval, industry professionals agree it's worth it. Podcast studios like iHeart can guide marketers through the development process, ensuring effective and compliant content.

Q: LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE, WHAT EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES OR TRENDS DO YOU THINK WILL HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE MARKETING IN THE NEXT THREE-TO-FIVE YEARS?

A: AI will undoubtedly remain dominant. We're seeing growing patient empowerment since Google's rise. Patients are more informed and engage in meaningful discussions with doctors.

With online resources, patients research symptoms and suggest diagnoses, especially for chronic diseases. This transforms the patient-doctor dynamic, particularly for women. Historically, women's health concerns have been dismissed. By researching beforehand, women can help drive the conversation and investigation with their physician with supporting evidence, revolutionizing their experience.

For physicians, AI offers easy access to vast data, helping them synthesize information quickly. This transforms care delivery and alleviates burdens on HCPs. Furthermore, AI allows brands to target HCPs seeking solutions, providing relevant information at the moment they are searching for information and are likely most receptive to a brand's message

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Melanie experiencing the K-Beauty Mart pop-up shop at SXSW.

Q: WHAT SKILLS OR EXPERTISE WILL BE MOST CRITICAL FOR HEALTHCARE MARKETERS TO DEVELOP TO STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE?

A: Innovation requires a pioneering mindset. Everyone wants innovation, but few are willing to be first. When vetting suppliers, the common question is, "Has anyone done this before?" However, innovation often lacks case studies. To navigate this, cultivate a pioneering mindset and substantiate

ideas with strong hypotheses. Support this with audience intelligence insights and strategic planning. Grounding ideas in data mitigates risks.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST EXCITING INNOVATION YOU SAW AT SXSW THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REVOLUTIONIZE HEALTHCARE MARKETING?

A: SXSW offers insights beyond our industry. I attended a panel featuring Joe Manganiello, an investor in Colossal, a genetics company bringing back the Woolly Mammoth. While they are years away from the rebirth of a real Woolly Mammoth, Colossal recently announced the existence of the Woolly Mouse, a prototype, and the first step towards bringing back the Woolly Mammoth.

Where AI, Mammoths, and Healthcare intersects is most interesting. Colossal believes de-extinction can help save the planet and conserve species that play a vital role

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6. **Sentiment Analysis:** By scanning social media or online reviews, AI can gauge public perception of a healthcare brand or issue. Agencies can use this to pivot campaigns – e.g., if skepticism about a new treatment emerges, they might focus ads on patient testimonials or expert endorsements.

AI doesn't just make ads – it makes them smarter, faster, and more effective. It's about connecting healthcare solutions to the people who need them most, with precision that traditional methods can't match.

In conclusion, the importance of AI in healthcare cannot be overstated. From enhancing diagnostic accuracy and

not only in our ecosystem but in healthcare advancement as well. Some endangered species may hold clues to combat cancer.

Colossal is leveraging AI to synthesize tremendous databases in the fight to preserve our planet's biodiversity. The future of healthcare marketing hinges on AI and the embrace of innovation. By developing a pioneering mindset, grounding strategies in data, and exploring emerging technologies, marketers can navigate this dynamic landscape and drive meaningful impact.

The path forward for brands demands bold thinking, data-driven strategies, and a relentless pursuit of what's next. It's a journey of continuous learning, experimentation, and adaptation. By embracing these principles, we can not only navigate the future of healthcare marketing, but also shape it, creating a healthier and more equitable world for all.



Melanie alongside colleagues, including Mark Pappas, Executive Vice President, Innovation, and Mollie Garza, Head of Brand/Agency Sales, Sports Innovation Lab, at a networking event at SXSW.



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