

Top 12 trends for SA and the world

By [Marian Salzman](#)

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Marian Salzman, one of the world's top trendspotters, shares 12 of the top trends to expect as we delve into 2019.



Global trendspotter, Marian Salzman.

1. The end of “C”

Four big ones — civility, compromise, constraint and conversation — are fading fast. From [politics](#) to business leaders, the notions of character and decency are becoming relics. Today, a conversation is often reduced to a quick text, an urgent command (another C word—but one that’s growing) or an emotion conveyed with an emoticon.



The Emoji Movie fans set Guinness World Records title celebrating World Emoji Day

17 Jul 2017



And make no mistake, there are emoticons for everything now. There’s even [World Emoji Day](#), and alternatives have popped up like GIFs and musical mentions to insert easily to humanise or soften the message.

In recent months, Americans have mourned the deaths of two great statesmen, [Senator John McCain](#) and President [George H. W. Bush](#) (“41”), both lauded for their decency — read civility. In farewell messages to these men, political adversaries celebrated their civic contributions but especially their civilised ways: fairness, honesty and the ability to listen. The loss of these good men — i.e., civilised conversationalists — hurts more because what we are missing is their artful and civil mode of talking *with* us versus *at* us...

2. It’s never nice to fool Mother Nature

Mother Nature has been getting angrier for years—and I’ve been sighting this trend in one form or another for decades. But today extreme weather is only getting more violent and, ultimately, devastating: [California burns](#) with multiple wildfires, including the deadliest in its history, the [arctic “browns”](#) at an unprecedented velocity and [greenhouse gas levels](#) balloon to their highest ever.

[Warnings are dire](#) on the [economic impacts](#) this growing ecological disaster will have across the globe — with vulnerable supply chains from farmland to shipping ports affecting the livelihoods of millions. Less obvious potentialities abound, as well, including [languages lost](#) forever.

Also on the rise: Our sense of powerlessness to right the ship. This generation of DIYers wants to solve societal problems but can't see the big picture; their solutions tend to the microlevel (plastic bottles, espresso machine pods, compost) and hyperlocal (we've been saying global is the new local for ages; we can now say the converse — local is the new global, because everything touches). Watch the great debate that continues to this day on whether the evil focus lands on Mother Nature or human nature.

3. Red flags for the red planet

Going to the moon seems so last century. A new frontier is — finally — seemingly within reach, and the Mars quake is rumbling. NASA has recently [landed a ship](#) there to study and map the planet's interior.

Considering our rapidly depleting resources on our home planet, might Mars be a fresh source for the things we humans need to survive? [Not so fast](#), say some physicists and scientists, who worry that with human contact will come contamination — and the possibility of [wiping out any microscopic life](#) native to Mars. Not surprisingly, the always controversial Elon Musk already has designs for [taking a trip there himself](#). With a full-blown refugee crisis ongoing here on earth, will we be seeing the uber-wealthy becoming willing planetary expats? Expect the practical — and ethical — debates to rage on.

4. Breakdowns to the left, breakdowns to the right

The breakdown of the United States of Europe is still in the works. After voting to take its leave from the E.U. almost two years ago, [Britain still can't agree](#) on how to make a graceful Brexit ([calls to take another vote](#) are getting louder). Other E.U. countries are weathering their own breakdowns. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is seeing her long [reign come to an end](#) — while for French President Emmanuel Macron, the honeymoon is already over.

Across the pond, with red versus blue angst so pervasive it's even [making its way into our bedrooms](#), there's very little "united" about the U.S. When does this disunity erupt into actual skirmishes or more? Could a 51st state (Southern Cali and southwestern Arizona) emerge, or will California, Arizona, New Mexico contemplate a merger with Mexico? The one thing that we all — regardless of left, right, centre — may have in common is a constant feeling of embattlement.

5. China—up or down?

China is ever more powerful, and its relationships — and ambitions — continue to grow. Watch the Chinese sail through the Suez Canal into Africa and build roads and infrastructure links across the ancient silk road from China through Eurasia, the Middle East and all the way to Europe. It's called the [Belt and Road initiative](#), and it's hailed as the most ambitious infrastructure development project in modern history. But some argue that China has already reached its peak and what's in store is, actually, a [giant's decline](#).

Sheer volume doesn't always a winner make—for example, the explosion of [fintech firms](#) being established in China has been deemed risky. No one can deny, though, that "crazy rich" mania (named for the [greatly acclaimed](#) Hollywood comedy *Crazy Rich Asians*) is upon us, and China is having its [fashionista moment](#).

What kinds of [over-the-top looks](#) will be served up for the global fashion plates, many of them *fu'er dai*, who pay full tuition at American and British and Australian universities?

6. Life on the (small) farm

[Hydroponic](#) and [vertical farming](#) are bringing [agriculture to urban sites](#). The survivalist movement has yielded a rise in home

and subsistence farming.

Coincidentally, a novel new study found that almost one-half of land used agriculturally across the globe [consists of small farms](#). And with pot legalisation growing (as mentioned), more folks will harvest their own at home, whether hydroponic or old-school (that is, in a small patch of soil in the backyard). Ikea is partnering with designer Tom Dixon on a new collection to help [make “homes the new farmland.”](#) So watch the growth of next-generation appliances that bring hydroponics to the kitchen table (e.g., Babylon Micro-Farms). It's the ultimate in retro-futurist and a nod back to indigenous people and what they farmed; [corn](#) will have a resurgence (health concerns aside) because it is considered hardy — beans, too. If mushrooms are affordable lux, cannabis a hipster mainstay, corn is tried and true.

7. Civil unions the most civilised

After decades of something like a status quo, the state of the union of matrimony has [finally evolved](#) to better represent a greater swath of individuals. The [right for all to marry](#) has been won in many parts of the world (it may be under attack, but it stands), the average age of first-time marrieds is up and the [divorce rate is down](#).

Marriage doesn't seem so obligatory now, and millennials and Gen Z are foregoing it in increasing numbers (they're also [having less sex](#); go figure). Socio-economic factors are working almost directly opposite as they have in the past — rather than those in the lower range marrying young, they are more often choosing not to marry at all. College graduates are more likely to wed later, and for life. What marriage signifies, how it's [arranged](#) (or not) and the benefits it confers will continue to change with the times. But—more significantly—many will realise remaining unmarried together may wed the best of both worlds.

8. Facing ageism but increasingly age proud

It's the Yin and the Yang. First it was 40 is the new 20, then 60 is the new 40; now, who wouldn't agree that 80 is the new 60? Remember “The picture of Dorian Grey”? Now it's a portrait of a [generation](#) that refuses to go gently into that good night.

#BeBoldClaimOld is a mantra beginning to resonate at a time when Sharon Stone and Angela Bassett recently turned 60 (both posted [bikini pics](#) to [celebrate](#)), and Jane Fonda's still going strong at 81. As we age healthier, it should follow that society recognizes that maturity equals wisdom, and the value of elder statesmen often far outweighs any downside. And yet, [ageism](#) is still rampant in [more workplaces than not](#). Multigenerational workforces will be the norm — as elders want to stay vital and active, and youngers will realise they have much to learn from their older colleagues.

9. Women still bear the weight of the world

From [all corners](#) of [the world](#), we pay lip service to the ever-increasing [powerful voice of women](#) that resonates when they protest, create and [nurture](#). And yet strong females face [backlash](#); the risk of being counted as too loud, [too opinionated](#) and even [too predatory](#).

Still, they are increasingly demanding their fair share of what they've worked to create — and the respect they deserve. Watch these times descend into a battle over what that is — their fair share — and how to share it. The ad agency formerly known as J Walter Thompson finally settled a landmark suit by a courageous woman who wouldn't take discrimination sitting down (while Google has been the subject of [numerous lawsuits](#) claiming it discriminates against men). Despite an overwhelming marketing call for “empowering women,” there are still efforts afoot to [silence them](#) or hold back information — such as when the U.S. [refused](#) to promote a breastfeeding initiative that would curb “misleading marketing of breast milk substitute.”

Might such attempts to “protect” women from marketing messages or sponsored news (not to be confused with fake news) actually prevent them from learning about better options... such as, say, alternatives to combustible cigarettes?

10. Leadership in flux

What makes a good leader is a moving target — we want them to check all the boxes but are resentful if they're too polished. We talk about the importance of leadership skills, but there is mounting resentment of the “professional” leader — instead, the insurgent is considered “genuine” because he [shoots from the hip](#).

[Emotional intelligence](#) is touted as a must-have. But then as women leaders emerge, so, too, does [bifurcation](#) — we want them to be effective leaders but also to act like ladies, [exuding traditionally “feminine” traits](#) (love of family, nurturing, warmth).

Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg is on the [chopping block](#), getting slammed — in part — for staying in and leaning in. But how can she get it right when the rules are being rewritten and overthrown? The [promoter personality](#) is resurging as voters say yes at the ballot to some “straight talkers.”

It's been a long time since we've seen such a preponderance of what could charitably be classified as promoters — or, if you're feeling less charitable, labels like [bloviators](#), [narcissists](#) or [hucksters](#) would fit the bill. Conflicting ideologies will continue to clash but with more efforts to course correct on choosing — and standing by — leaders.

11. If smart is sexy, what does that make AI?

As it becomes exponentially more difficult for people to compete with tech, and almost every aspect of our lives seems poised to go on autopilot, we are taking a step back, [assessing](#) through a more pragmatic lens... and expecting more accountability.

Smart is sexy — that's a trend sighted more than 20 years ago, and it still holds — so AI is super sexy (and we're not just talking about sexbots). It's seductive, compelling, mysterious (still, after all these years), promising — and [scary](#). In a world that feels out of control, we simultaneously crave the order and logic that AI represents and fear the implications of fully embracing it.

We will continue to explore the ethical ramifications, because we expect more and better from our superhuman friends— whether we “know” them as assistants/co-workers/[customer service reps](#)/household help/marketing data collectors/[video game avatars](#)... or, increasingly, all of the above.

12. Reality meets virtuality

That [real-virtual blur](#) we've been talking about for a decade or so is increasing — and increasingly important — as [clicks become bricks](#) for retailers.

VR is [still developing](#): [Augmented \(mixed\) reality](#) is the latest and greatest; it enhances the real world for users. It's not yet a mature technology — but its uses are many and growing at an exhilarating pace. [Businesses](#) are leveraging it to help in training and virtual R&D, among other uses. Consumers are having fun with it — using [fitness apps](#) to inspire workouts, [style assistants](#) to advise on what to wear and more.

Meanwhile, the Dubai Mall [debuted an amusement park](#) that combines augmented and virtual reality. VR and AR have the potential to serve a higher purpose, too — already fulfilling it in some arenas. It's been found helpful in treating returning soldiers suffering from PTSD and in [treating addiction](#); it allows people to experience what it's like [living with autism](#).

Add 'saving the planet' to that list — VR can take people to see firsthand the [ravages of climate change](#), and those who want to travel but are concerned about their carbon footprint can visit far-flung locales without worry. [Look for virtual travel](#), particularly, to really take off.

ABOUT MARIAN SALZMAN

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