



EPISODE 22

Elevating customer experience in sleep technology: Insights from Lisa Tan, chief marketing and strategy officer at Reverie

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Lisa Tan, chief marketing and strategy officer at Reverie

Alan Hart: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is marketing beyond where we talk about the questions that spark change and share ideas that challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

On the show today, I've got Lisa Tan. She's the chief marketing and strategy officer of Reverie, a sleep technology company that's on a mission to help people live better lives through the power of sleep. Lisa leads strategic initiatives and marketing and customer experience teams across their wholesale and direct consumer verticals, and she's got two decades of strategic marketing and management consulting experience. A passion of hers, which we talk about, is the Reverie Innovation Summit, an annual event designed to spark new perspectives in the sleep industry. On the show, of course we talk about sleep and how its role in marketing and whether she's marketing

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

products or marketing better sleep. We talk about the role of technology and marketing and how events can help power your channel partner relationships. That and much more with Lisa Tan.

Well, Lisa, welcome to the show.

Lisa Tan: Thank you. Excited to be here, Alan.

Alan: Yeah, I am looking forward to talking about business and all that stuff. But before we go there, I have to know, you grew up on the edge of a canyon in New Mexico. What was that like?

Lisa: I did. I grew up in Los Alamos, New Mexico, which is a mountain town way up—like way up. The elevation is around 8,000 feet above sea level. Small town, 2,000 people. It's a scientific lab town, so really interesting place to grow up, but it's beautiful. So a lot of who I am today comes from growing up surrounded by nature. And our backyard was a canyon. So whenever I felt the need to recenter or take a breath, take a moment to think, I would go out to the backyard and sit on a rock on the edge of the canyon and hear the wind blowing, see the trees moving, watch the Hawks flying overhead hunting. And it was very relaxing and grounding, and it really gave me an appreciation for nature and for how small we are in the grand scheme of things.

Alan: Yeah, I mean that's a real gift, to be honest. Like, as you were describing the imagery, I was feeling an inner peace with myself.

Lisa: For sure, for sure. It's still the image that I use to center and ground myself.

Alan: Yeah, that's awesome. That's awesome. Well, from early days in New Mexico to where you are now, you are, I believe, the chief marketing and strategy officer at Reverie.

Lisa: That's correct.

Alan: How did you end up there. Where did you get your business start, and what were some of the stops along the way?

Lisa: Sure. So, I went to the East Coast for college and then moved to New York City afterwards, which was my dream. My career path was interesting. I was originally going to do management consulting out of college. I was never exactly sure what my exact career was going to be and management consulting felt very appealing. So I signed up for that, got a great offer coming out of college, and then the internet bubble burst. I was actually checking my email at an internet cafe while I was backpacking through Europe and found out that my job was deferred indefinitely. So I ended up working for a professor for six months, which was fantastic. I was a social psychology research assistant. Then I ended up moving to New York City and crashing on my aunt's couch while I looked for a job. And I ended up working in publishing and PR for three or four years. And then my "indefinitely deferred" offer actually came back, and I was still ready for some rapid learning in management consulting. So I took that offer and ended up staying there for quite some time. Went to business school, came back, and had the opportunity to explore a lot of different industries and really learn about businesses at a macro level. In my final years consulting, I spent a lot of time in media really trying to figure out at the time how to digitize content, how to monetize content, how to make massive digital transformations. And that gave me a taste of all things marketing. So, that was about 12 years of work experience at that point. I got married and my husband Martin is the founder of Reverie. So I said, I don't want to continue the consulting lifestyle. I am interested in sinking my teeth into one company. Why don't I do a three-to-six-month project for you? I'll help you figure out what your DTC division would look like, and I'll help you find some marketing resources. And here I am, 12-plus years later, still at Reverie.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

Alan: I love it. I love it. I guess he's technically the founder, but you guys are working in this together. Where did he even come up with the idea for Reverie?

Lisa: So his background is certainly not in mattresses or bedding. He and his cofounder were thinking about ideas pretty much right out of college, and they had some access to foam and latex manufacturing. So they were thinking of all the different things they could do with that. Sports pads came to mind. And there are a lot of things to do with foam, but in the end they said the mattress and sleep space is really interesting. And they came up with a really cool design, which is still the core of our DreamCell mattresses. It's a unique technology that really allows for full customization of the sleep surface. So, they started building that. In the meantime, at trade shows around the globe, Martin was intrigued by adjustable bases. They were becoming more and more popular in Europe as a lifestyle product. And so he started figuring that out, got really into the engineering of the product, and ended up in building some prototypes that eventually started manufacturing for large brands like Tempur-Pedic. So that was the start of Reverie, really, as a sleep technology company. And really, the company got its boost in the early days through doing a lot of manufacturing for large mattress brands. It was also an interesting time because the category itself is still not a very well-known category. Most people don't go into a furniture store seeking out an adjustable bed, but they are introduced to the category as a lifestyle product for them when they go shopping for a mattress. So it's been an interesting ride over the past two decades to see the evolution of the category, and to see an increase in customer awareness of adjustability is something that everybody can benefit from underneath their mattress.

Alan: Right. Well, so you've got, I guess, bed technology, sleep technology at the core. What does the organization look like today? It sounds like you've got mattresses, you've got adjustable bases. Give me the size and the scope, if you will, a little bit.

Lisa: Sure. So the organization has been through many different variations over the years. As I said, in the beginning, it was really focused on manufacturing adjustable bases as an OEM [original equipment manufacturer] product. When I came on in the early 2010s, we were starting to think about how to expand and how to innovate. So, at that point, there were already programs with retailers, selling adjustable beds under the Reverie name. And then that is and has become our primary business. So we sell adjustable beds to top 25, top 50 furniture and mattress retailers, primarily in the US, although we do have some global distribution. And then we also, over the years, have expanded our direct consumer presence with the adjustable base plus the mattress as a sleep system. So that is also a business unit that ebbs and flows with the economic environment. Over the past 10 years, there was a huge influx of money into mattresses coming from third-party investors. And that was interesting for us to participate in, although we didn't seek outside funding. So all this effort we had put into, and advertising, had to be scaled back a bit when we were competing against unlimited budgets. And now we continue to support customers who are looking for better and customizable sleep, both direct to consumer and through our retail partners.

Alan: I love it. I love it. Well, as the head marketer, if you will, do you feel like you are marketing sleep as much as your products, or how do you think about the anchor, if you will—what you're putting out into the world?

Lisa: So what excites me when I wake up every day and go to work is our mission, which is to help people live better lives through the power of sleep. And when we think about new campaigns or when I am thinking about what the customer ultimately will benefit from when they are using our product, it is a tool for better sleep. And, I think, over the years, we have always tried to resist the temptation or the industry standard of focusing on the promotional periods throughout the year. Our industry is very much centered around promotions, big retail promotions. But it is a balance of catering to what the customer needs in the moment of the sale and helping educate them about the product and how it will impact their health overall. So we do try to anchor very much on sleep education—and do

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

that over the duration of the product life, which is long. We are not a quick-turn product. So figuring out how to engage with the customer pre-purchase, as they are considering what they need, as well as post-purchase over the years, as they adjust to their product and then as they figure out all the cool features that the product, especially the adjustable base, has to benefit their lifestyle.

Alan: Right. Well, as you think about how do you go to market, what does marketing look like in terms of—it sounds like you've still got a strong OEM business, but you've also got a little bit of a direct business as well. I'm just curious how the go-to-market looks like?

Lisa: Yeah. So when we go to market on the adjustable base side, our focus is to serve our retail partners with market assets that are going to benefit their explanation of the product to the customer as well as helping the customer over the life span of the product. So that could be as simple as assets that help differentiate our product versus others. In a retail store, when you go in to purchase a mattress, there are usually 60 to 80 white rectangles on the floor that a consumer is trying to differentiate. So figuring out how to create really strong training materials that help a retail sales associate explain the product quickly and in a differentiated manner matter. We've really started to use a lot of 3D renderings that allow customers to see the entire bed in a virtual space, either through AR [augmented reality] or through being able to rotate and look under the bed and see all the different components in greater detail. And then a lot of content that supports product usage and sleep improvement. We geek out a little bit on sleep health. We have some really cool quizzes that we developed with Sleep Advisory Board members to make sure that as you think about what is going to improve the quality of your sleep, you're considering your sleep environment, your habits, and of course the tools that you use, which would include a mattress and an adjustable base.

Alan: Got you. And then in terms of like when you are selling direct or direct to consumer, like how does that take shape?

Lisa: Yeah. So that's where we really spend a lot of time emphasizing sleep. And our customer, our best and easiest customers to acquire are the ones who already appreciate how important sleep is. Often, they are at a point in life where they don't wake up feeling great every morning. Maybe they wake up with back pain or they are constantly exhausted because they are trying to juggle a very rigorous profession as well as a demanding family life. Often, they are a couple who has very different body types and sleep preferences and sleep needs. And that's where we can speak their love language when it comes to sleep products because very few couples have the same sleep needs or preferences. And if we can deliver one thing to each person on each side of the bed, we know that they're going to be happier in their nightly routines.

Alan: I'm laughing and smiling because I'm hearing my wife in my ear—metaphorically hearing her at my ear, “We should really try one of these!” [laughs] “Because you need to be a little elevated for obvious reasons, and I am tired of hearing you.” [laughs]

Lisa: That is a common problem, and it is easy to adjust. Pun intended.

Alan: Ah, I like what you did there. I like what you did there. That's awesome. Well, as you think about marketing, whether it's in partnership and sales enablement through retail partners or it's direct to consumer. What role does technology or a tech stack or technology in general play as it relates to marketing for you?

Lisa: A lot, and I have found that over the past five to seven years, my role has very much been one of working closely with my IT partners on what our tech stack looks like and how we're going to deliver on that in a way that is relatively easy and affordable to implement, easy to train on, easy to manage data within or without. Because I think

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

as a 20-plus-year-old company, the legacy data that we have can become a burden as we think about our tech stack. That's definitely always a consideration. But our tech stack matters. Everything that we do has to consider the communication between our ERP [enterprise resource planning], our CRM [customer relationship management], and then all of the connecting technologies or softwares that plug into the CRM. We actually spend a lot of time talking to customers through our customer experience teams on the phone. So our whole VoIP set up and all of the plugins there that we have now for virtual agents and chatbots and the proper and seamless transfers from one mode of communication to another, be it chat to a live agent, or virtual agent to a live agent. All these things we are working through constantly because they are evolving pretty rapidly for us right now. And then making sure that our CMS and our ESP [email service provider] systems plug into everything and that we are able to set up those personalized journeys and communications and touchpoints as we talk about staying with the customer and engaging with the customer over the life span of their product—especially because often we are not actually touching the end consumer until maybe even several years into owning the product. Because they'll call us with a product question or a service issue, and that's the first time that we engage with them.

Alan: Interesting. I mean, I hadn't thought about that, but you're right. If you're delivering it through a retail partner and they take delivery of it, yeah, it could be. Because hopefully beds last many years. Do you think about registering them as customers earlier on in the process? I'm just curious how that works.

Lisa: Yes. So the ideal for us would be that a customer registers their warranty when they purchase the product. And we have a very, I mean, there are two things that are very important to us in that delivery package, and we label them very clearly. So one is the manual that has the product information on it. You have the serial number and the product code. And then a bright, fluorescent-yellow sheet that says "please hand this to the customer" and has a QR code to register your warranty. So if we are able to get that warranty registration upfront, that allows us to ensure the customer has the education they need and the resources they need to maximize use of the product.

Alan: Yeah. Awesome. Well, when you were talking about all the tech that you've got, your ERP and your CRM and connecting chatbots and making sure your CMS and your VoIP, all coordinate, I mean, it feels like you're not only a CMO, but, maybe, I don't want to say "fly by night" but a part-time moonlighting CTO as well. I don't know if you feel like that, but...

Lisa: I would never claim to be a CTO, and I am thankful to have partners both internally and externally to help with the technical bridges. But I do think that as a CMO of an SMB, being able to understand—like, really understand—how all of the tech stack works and integrates is critical for success. Because it's easy to walk into a meeting and be sold on this beautifully integrated tech experience. And I have learned over the years that it is not as easy or as pretty as it sounds. And there is always coding involved, and code is very much like a fingerprint. So, you get too customized, and you're not in a good position. You do too much off the shelf, and nothing speaks to each other. There really is this balance of truly understanding what the need is and then working with the right teams to figure out how to make sure that those needs are met.

Alan: Beautifully architected. You'll be a consultant one day. [laughs]

Lisa: Consulting has definitely helped me throughout my career, so I am very grateful for having that as my training ground.

Alan: I love it. I love it. When we first met at a trade show, you mentioned the Reverie Innovation Summit, and I was just blown away by what you are doing there. And it's not your normal event and your normal kind of corporate thing. Can you share with the audience a little bit about what it is and why it matters?

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

Lisa: Absolutely. So this year we will be putting on our sixth Reverie Innovation Summit, and this is an intentionally small gathering where we invite our top retail partners to spend a day with us focusing on innovation. And every year the theme changes a little bit. But what is always the case, is that we want to bring in speakers and programming that share amazing innovation stories that mostly have nothing to do with the bedding or furniture industry. And the reason we do this is because it's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day, especially when there are a lot of things grinding you down. In our case this year, that would be constant flux of the tariff situation. And being able to step away and spend time with retail partners, learning about the way that other companies approach problems and being inspired by people who are truly doing things differently, helps us (a) just take a breather. So, it's a bit of hey, let's take a breather and step back. Let's have conversations about what we are hearing, what we are seeing, what we are learning today that may or may not impact how we think about our day-to-day when we get back to work tomorrow. And we found it's just been a really healthy way for showing that we care deeply about what we do and how we do it, and also bringing amazingly smart people together to solve problems that are inspired by things going on outside of the little world that we spend a lot of our time in.

Alan: It's a lovely idea that you've executed., This will be your sixth year. Where did you get the idea to start something like this?

Lisa: Where did we get the idea? That's a really good question. I think the first time we did it, we were coming up with a bunch of really cool innovations. We had an app and we had sleep tracking and all these things, like 2012, 2013, 2014, and they were so cool and innovative, but they were not things that our retail buyers were necessarily ready to commit to or price into their product. So I think that initially sparked the idea of, well, let's get some feedback. So the first year that we did the summit, it was really more of a product showcase of all these innovations of all these features that may or may not—they were all innovative, but were they appropriate for the bed? So that's what we did the first year and got a lot of feedback. And then from there, we started shifting into more programming and looking even more externally, and we've spent a lot of time internally doing that. So being able to share our philosophy and that value of pushing innovation with our partners has also been a big part of showcasing who we are as a company as well.

Alan: Right. It does sound like, I mean it's a way to differentiate yourself and to push the relationship with your partners into new territories, to create space for both of you to figure out how to innovate together in the future.

Lisa: In an industry where there is a big focus on promotion and there is a lot of commoditization, we believe it's important to continue pushing that envelope. The bedding industry is much smaller than it should be, considering that everybody sleeps on a mattress every night. The fitness, the coffee, the fast-food service. They're all much bigger than the bedding industry. And I think that speaks to how consumers and retailers currently value sleep products. So, we always want to push the envelope and try to do more.

Alan: Cool. One of the things we love to do on this show is to get to know you a little bit better. We know where you started your journey, as a little person growing up on the edge of a canyon, to reflect and center yourself. And that might have something to do with my next question, which is my favorite question to ask. Has there been an experience of your past that defines and makes up who you are today?

Lisa: One experience that defines who I am? I think I spoke a little bit to just, yeah, the environment I grew up in mattered, my early-career start—that was sort of stop and start and a lot of job changes over a short amount of time—was a big impact on who I am today. I also think if I think back to one thing that impacted me from an early age and has continued throughout life, it would be, as a child we took a lot of—I felt like I spent a lot of time in the car. Part of that was growing up in New Mexico, where everything is a drive, and I was also the youngest child. So I was always tagging along to my older siblings' activities. But we did do a lot of road tripping, and when we went on a

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

family vacation, it was usually fairly unscheduled and we ended up doing a lot of walking through cities—wandering, wandering, wandering. I have a great appreciation for that now. Not necessarily always having everything set in stone, but being able to step back and enjoy the ride, and enjoy the journey. So, as a result, I tend to be a pretty keen observer of what's going on around me, and I will sit back and watch and learn before I speak, which often benefits me depending on the situation, but I think a lot of that time spent in cars waiting, wandering, all of those things have really formed who I am and how I approach the world.

Alan: What advice would you give your younger self if you are starting this journey all over again?

Lisa: I would say when you're starting off, everybody who has come before you knows that you don't know everything. So as a newbie in the workplace, don't feel like you have to pretend like you know everything. Don't be afraid to ask the questions and to show your inexperience and your ignorance because you are not there to be the most knowledgeable person in the room. You are there to add value with fresh thinking and with the desire and curiosity to learn.

Alan: Beautiful advice. Well, is there a topic either you are trying to learn more about or you think marketers in general need to be learning more about today?

Lisa: Yes. I would say, obviously learning how to use AI more efficiently and effectively is a topic that all marketers need to learn about. I am spending a lot of my time trying to be smarter about using my brain to enable the power of AI versus rely on it, sort of aimlessly. I think understanding human behavior is something that has always fascinated me and ultimately is super important as a marketer. And over time and over my career, I have a very clear understanding that who I'm speaking to as a brand is not what I understand as a person experiencing life. So being able to understand all the different motivations that drive people is so critical as a marketer and as a human being and citizen of the world. So I like to read up on human behavior and on trends. I am actually really fascinated by how trends form right now, because watching my tweens—well, I have one tween and one kid that's acting like a tween. Like, how they are ingesting information and picking up on trends is fascinating to me, and even though they don't have—neither of them have—direct access to social media, the way that trends are forming is fascinating. So I have been trying to understand that a little bit more as well, just to try to keep up.

Alan: Is there any of those trends that you yourself are going down the rabbit hole, if you will?

Lisa: Well, maybe it's tangential. I think it's really interesting to me to see 7-8-, 9-, 10-year-olds obsessed with cosmetics. I mean, really, just wanting all the cosmetics, and a lot of that has to do with the packaging. And a lot of that has to do with influencers that they don't even know directly, but that friends of friends have pulled out of the ether and are spreading in the elementary school. But I think tangential interest for me, which probably isn't so far, is just trying to use food and exercise and habits as a means for longevity. So, it's easy to tap into a trend like must take creatine. Must take magnesium before bed, which is actually a great sleep tip. Must eat blueberries in the morning so I have better cognitive performance. It's kind of similar because there's so much information out there and a lot of it is relevant, and some of it's overblown, and some of it's false, and figuring out how to make sure that you are staying on track and not diving into everything and trying out everything to your detriment is something that I guess I ingest all the information and try to parse out what's real, try to keep my sources real, as we all do. And I think that's an important part of being a participant in a social media society today and making sure that we're helping the children and young adults in our lives work through the right processes to maintain integrity of the information.

Alan: Yeah, that's fascinating, especially as you're talking about all those health tips and the longevity. I mean, it is a slippery slope of people out there trying to hack every element of their life, if you will. A colleague of mine, he's not

Marketing Beyond | Episode 22

a colleague anymore, but he was tracking the data and trying to figure out—optimize each little element, if you will. So, like, you're mentioning, creatine is the latest thing I've heard about as well—or magnesium. And then monitoring his vitals to say, well, how is that improving or decrementing my sleep or my recovery for the day, etc. In many ways, it's really refreshing because growing up in the US, I don't think we've ever really been this health conscious before. But I also think that, in some cases, we still have many more ways to go to adopt this more broadly and help our population become more healthy, but it's exciting. It's exciting to watch and learn, and I've got this little thing on my wrist that tracks my data every day too. So it's, I guess, drinking the Kool-Aid. [laughs] Well, my last question for you. What do you think is the largest opportunity or threat facing marketers today?

Lisa: So I already mentioned AI, but I think that the biggest opportunity and threat to marketers today is AI. It's really important that we continue to use it critically. It's important to remain a critical and creative thinker when using AI, and I am already so thankful for all the things I have been able to do and all the processes I have been able to expedite and all the leaning out we've been able to manage and create more with AI, but I think there's also a risk and a downside. There is an article I came across the other day. It was an MIT study that said something like 80-plus percent of people who wrote an essay using AI couldn't remember what they wrote right after writing the essay. And that's the scary thing about relying heavily on a tool without really putting the thinking into it. So, for me, as I think about what my team needs to know and understand as we build these things out is the creative brief still matters very, very much. The prompting really matters very much and spending time to learn how to do those things effectively. And to take the time to do them right is so important.

Alan: I agree with you, and I love the notion of—you said earlier, when you mentioned AI originally—"using my brain better to use AI." And it does seem to be like, at least for now—we'll see what the AI does in the future—but human-plus-AI is the only way to drive this forward. And to your point, it does take a lot on the human to understand how to get the most from it. So yeah.

Lisa: Yes. Absolutely.

Alan: I totally agree. Well, Lisa, thank you for coming on the show. I really appreciate it.

Lisa: You bet. I enjoyed our conversation today, Alan.

Alan: The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed are the speaker's own and do not represent the views, thoughts, and opinions of Deloitte. The material and information presented here is for general information purposes only and does not imply endorsement or opposition to any specific company, product, or service.

Hi, it's Alan again. Marketing beyond is a Deloitte Digital podcast. It's created and produced by me with post-production support from Sam Robertson. If you're new to Marketing Beyond, please feel free to write us a review and subscribe on your favorite listening platform. I also invite you to explore the other Deloitte Digital podcasts at deloitte.digital.com/us/podcasts and share the show with your friends and colleagues. I love hearing from listeners. You can contact me at marketingbeyond@deloitte.com. You'll also find complete show notes and links to what we discussed in the episode today, and you can search our archives.

I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond.

Learn more



Visit the Marketing Beyond library:

www.deloittedigital.com/us/marketingbeyond

This podcast contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this podcast, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This podcast is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this podcast.

About Deloitte

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee ("DTTL"), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the "Deloitte" name in the United States, and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.

Copyright © 2025 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.