

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

What is a chief brand officer? Rebecca Minkoff's Ana Andjelic has the answer

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At the Cannes Lions 2018 advertising festival: left to right, Ana Andjelic, chief brand officer, Rebecca Minkoff; Daniel Hodges, CEO, Consumers in Motion; Rebecca Minkoff, founder, Rebecca Minkoff

By [Daniel Hodges](#)

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CANNES, France Ana Andjelic describes herself as being "in favor of taking big and unorthodox risks." The first of which, for her, was moving from Belgrade, Serbia, to New York. With a master's degree in Media Studies from the New School and a doctorate in Sociology from Columbia University, her next leap was from academics to digital media.

In an October 2015 interview, Ms. Andjelic described how her academic training has given her a broader perspective on solving problems, allowing her to approach them from multiple angles, including business, organization, revenue model and consumer standpoints.

Ms. Andjelic says getting a Ph.D. is "like a boot camp for thinking you have to get up to speed in very structured problem-solving, and that is incredibly helpful when defining a problem, and approaching it from the right way, and finding a solution."

Most recently, Ms. Andjelic left a senior position at agency Havas LuxHub to become chief brand officer of fashion and accessories label [Rebecca Minkoff](#). All the while, even as she was navigating the corporate world, writing on industry issues was a constant.



Ana Andjelic

Ms. Andjelic's first blog, "I [love] Marketing," which she wrote from 2008 to 2014, was an outlet for her ideas, helped her write her dissertation "in record time," and gave her networking and job opportunities in the marketing industry. Her opinion articles now appear on the online publishing platform Medium, as well as in *Luxury Daily*, *LeanLuxe*, *Adweek* and *Advertising Age*, among others.

Not one to shy away from being bold or controversial, in a presentation at Marc O'Polo's 50th anniversary event in 2017, she predicted that what the Internet did to media will happen to retail. We caught up with Ms. Andjelic at the Cannes Lions advertising festival which she attended along with Ms. Minkoff. Here she shares some thoughts on connecting with consumers and the responsibilities of a chief brand officer:

What is the future of the brand?

When you look at the history of the brand, it always revolved around the founder.

[Now], it is not surprising that the future of the brand will be tied into the identity of the consumer.

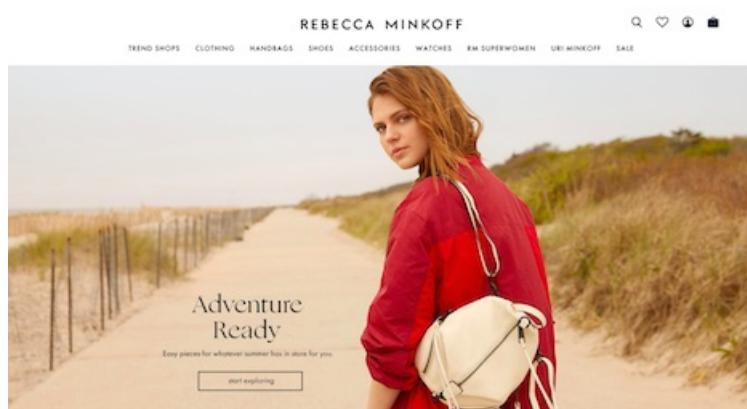
We need to be asking ourselves what is important to their lifestyle. We need to understand their passion.

Defining a brand by the audience is not enough. Our job is to understand the identity networks of the people who use our products.

Think of a brand as a network of people with common interests and aspirations. Today, you cannot just talk about the brand, you need to get an organic conversation started.

Take "Away" (<https://www.awaytravel.com>), which is a travel brand. They talk about everything related to travel, from packing your bags to what the weather will be in your destination city.

Another brand that has connected with its audience is Goop, which has a unique brand experience. We ask ourselves what is the on the mind of the consumer.



Rebecca Minkoff Web site homepage showcasing latest handbag. Image credit: Rebecca Minkoff

How is your job different from a chief marketing officer's?

The CMO and the CBO [chief brand officer] have different lines of accountability.

The CMO owns the marketing funnel and the communication stack. They are doing marketing and are responsible for the return on investment of their expenditures.

The CBO is concerned with the overall brand experience in the stores, the digital and mobile channels, and much more.

I am concerned with the branding culture and the need to combine the brand culture with what consumers know about the brand and what they know about the brand culture.

Anything to do with a customer's journey across our many platforms is my focus.

How is your current job different from working in an ad agency?

An ad agency provides their best thinking and strategy to drive awareness and demand. They are very smart.

The big difference is, now in my role of CBO, I own the execution and am as good as my execution.

I am responsible for making sure that all the media ideas mesh with the brand experience in the store. I own the results.



Dan Hodges is CEO of *Consumers in Motion*

*Daniel Hodges is CEO of **Consumers in Motion Group**, New York. Reach him at dan@consumersinmotion.com.*

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