INSPIRING PEOPLE

Meet the Entrepreneur Behind the Trendy Hand Sanitizer You're Seeing on Instagram

BY DEANNA PAI | APRIL 15, 2020

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When Andrea Lisbona traveled from her native Barcelona, Spain, to USC's® Marshall School of Business℠ for a semester, something stood out to her: Virtually all of her classmates carried the same three items. "Mobile, keys, and hand sanitizer," recounts the Touchland® CEO and founder. And she heard the same complaints about hand sanitizer from everyone — it smells like alcohol, it feels sticky, it makes skin dry, or it spilled all over their bag. It was a lightbulb moment.

Lisbona took those complaints as both a miniature focus group and a personal challenge, leading her to one question: How could she make hand sanitizer better? "I have always been a big fan of Steve Jobs and [his philosophy of] reinventing stuff that isn't good enough," she explains. "I was fascinated that, for years, no one thought about making a product people actually enjoy using." After business school, Lisbona set off to learn more about the hand-sanitizer industry, working in distribution for a company based in Europe. In 2015, she decided it was time to strike out on her own.

As luck would have it, an international manufacturer was looking for a start-up to partner with and incubate at the same time. "They ended up investing over $1 million in dedicated equipment and FDA testing and everything," says Lisbona, who is in her mid-thirties and now lives in Miami. "And that allowed us to dream big." Touchland officially hit the United States in November 2018, appearing in retailers that might seem weird for a hand sanitizer — think Urban Outfitters® and Revolve® versus the usual drugstore chain. But that was all part of Lisbona's plan to turn Touchland into a beauty product. Let's just say, she's succeeded: As of a few weeks ago, Touchland is now sold at Ulta®, and the beauty behemoth has already placed four reorders.

Here, Lisbona shares how she made that happen, as well as her own beauty philosophy and habits.

Spotlyte: Why did you zero in on hand sanitizer in particular?
Andrea Lisbona: Some products are not life-changing, but hand sanitizer [can] really make a difference between you falling sick and you *not* falling sick. For me, that's an incentivizer. If I do something, I want it to have meaning and leave a mark on this world. I totally think that Touchland will go on — it's a brand you will remember, and that's why I started it.

Spotlyte: How did you know you had something big on your hands? (Editor's note: Pun intended.)
AL: We started a KickStarter® campaign in July 2018. I'm a very impatient person, so I couldn't wait until November [2018], when the product would be ready to go to market. We got some feedback and buzz — and were fully-funded in 24 hours. It was amazing. We ended up being 450 percent funded in a month.

Spotlyte: How has social media played a role in the brand's success?
AL: [With KickStarter, we] created this social media community of people that started loving the brand. They are your best people: They share with their friends, pass it around, and all say good things about Touchland. We have not spent one dollar on paid collaborations, so everything that you see on social media is non-sponsored. We provide products to beauty bloggers to review, but without any compensation — so they are free to review and say whatever they want to say about the product. But we've had such great feedback from everyone.

Spotlyte: How did you explain that hand sanitizer could be a beauty product?
AL: Initially, beauty bloggers were surprised. They were like, "Okay . . . you are asking me to review hand sanitizer? I never thought a beauty blogger could review that." But we've been working really hard to communicate the skincare-grade formulations, the clean ingredients, the cruelty-free and vegan [aspects], and why we developed something that goes beyond a beautiful bottle. It's actually good for your hands.

touchland
POWER MIST
Moisturizing hand sanitizer
1.3 FL OZ (38mL)
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touchland
GIORGIO ARMANI
BOBBI BROWN
Dior
BETTER THAN SEX
CHANEL
GABRIELLE
touchland
Glossier.

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Spotlyte: What beauty products do you use in your everyday life?
AL: I apply everything. Every time I enter Ulta, I end up with $300 [worth of products] in my basket. Right now, I'm using Chanel® Hydra Beauty® Micro Sérum™ — the whole line is very good. I use Kosas® Tinted Face Oil; I love lightweight solutions. And I use Laura Mercier® Translucent Loose Setting Powder to eliminate shine, because I live in Miami and am shiny all the time. I love the KVD Vegan Beauty™ Tattoo Liner — I always wear eyeliner — and Too Faced® Better Than Sex Mascara®. I'm a lipstick addict, so I buy everything I can. And I love gloss. My lips are not very hydrated, and as much as I try to use all the products in the world with hydration . . . you should see my lips.

Spotlyte: What are some of your favorite lip colors?
AL: Normally, I go with Bobbi Brown® Luxe Shine Intense Lipstick in Bare Truth™, which is what I wear during the day for my meetings, since it's a very neutral color. When I have any kind of business or an important presentation, then I wear something more like Armani® Beauty Ecstasy Lipstick™ in 504 Flirt™. Then, when I go out for dinner, I wear a classic red. Right now, I'm using Le Rouge [Chanel]® Crayon de Couleur™ in Subversion™.

Spotlyte: How do aesthetic treatments factor into your routine?
AL: I met with Dr. Adam Kolker and got injectable wrinkle reducers in my forehead for the first time two weeks ago. I'm fascinated. I make a lot of expressions when I talk, which generated the lines.

EDITOR'S NOTE *Injectable wrinkle reducers are used to temporarily smooth the look of moderate to severe wrinkles in certain areas of the face such as the forehead, frown lines, and crow's feet. They should not be used more frequently than every three months. Like any medical treatment, they have potential risks and side effects. Be sure to talk to a licensed provider to see if they're right for you. Have more questions? Chat with our team of trained aesthetics specialists now.*

Spotlyte: How was your first experience?
AL: I am scared of needles, so before it, I was quite concerned . . . but my first injectable wrinkle reducer experience [went really well]!

Spotlyte: Do you plan to do it again?
AL: Yes! I have been so happy with the result.

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Spotlyte: Are there any other professional skincare treatments you love? If so, why do you like them?
AL: I enjoy hydrating facial treatments very much. I used to get them all the time in Barcelona, and have been meaning to find a new spot here in Miami. They make my skin feel very refreshed and glowy. And I'm considering organic keratin treatments, because I lose so much time every time I straighten my hair. There's so much humidity in Miami, and it kills my hair.

What are your favorite beauty destinations in Miami?
AL: I *love* spas! My favorites in Miami are the Four Seasons® and the St. Regis®. There's nothing better than a Swedish or hot stone massage after a crazy week of work.

Spotlyte: What's your beauty philosophy?
AL: I perceive beauty as self-care. It's not like I do it because I have to. I love it — I'm very lazy with other stuff, but in that moment where I get to relax, clean my face, or put makeup on, I can find my vibe.

Spotlyte: Did you always know you wanted to start a company?
AL: I grew up in an entrepreneurial family, and that helped me get where I am. Many people want to be an entrepreneur, but when they realize it's not all happy and there are obstacles and insecurity, most back out. I grew up in this environment where we grew with the business, and crisis came in and we lost everything — so I have a different perception. When we have an obstacle, we adapt it into an opportunity. As an entrepreneur, you have to be willing to go to hell. It's like fighting fires every day, but it's part of the adventure — and I love it.

Spotlyte: What do you love most about Miami?
AL: I'm from Barcelona, so obviously the sun and the sea are a must for me. I love that it's an eternal summer and [that] I get to dress comfortably every day. When you live in a place full-time, you get to know it in a way that's difficult to forget.

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Spotlyte: What would your advice for a young entrepreneur be?
AL: The first thing is to find something that you're willing to fight for. There are many entrepreneurs who want to be entrepreneurs, but they don't have a real reason why. If you don't have a real motive, you're going to lose hope very easily. The other thing is perseverance. It's what makes a difference with a true entrepreneur. We've been through so many problems that I think if I wasn't perseverant enough and I didn't keep pushing forward, I wouldn't be where I am. The difference between my story and entrepreneurs who have failed is that I didn't give up. I just believed in what I was doing and I tried in every possible way to do it.

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