

Shopper marketing



By [Sarah Britten](#)

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"The solution for integrating the digital and physical worlds lies in finding a real shopper need and answering it."

The era of consumer marketing is over, and now we're in the age of shopper marketing. With retail as the new centre of marketing gravity, agencies, clients and media across the spectrum need to get to grips the new marketing reality.

It's a common misperception that "shopper marketing" refers only to in-store activity. In fact, it's about understanding the entire path to purchase and how the right message in the right place at the right time will result in a purchase. In social media, the hashtag has become as much a part of US retail campaigns as the [key visual](#).

In-store displays are supported by product information on retailer websites and apps, while conversation is generated both on social media platforms and with bloggers and other influencers.

Marketers that understand how to use social media to engage shoppers before they even walk into the store - and continue the conversation after they buy and use the product - will be the winners.

Mall culture

With approximately 1,780 shopping malls and over 1 million square metres of floor space, South Africa has more retail space than the rest of Africa combined. With more malls opening and in development - especially in under-serviced areas - malls will continue to dominate the local retail landscape. At the same time, South Africans prefer to shop locally, so the catchment area for malls has shrunk. Malls are also an important entertainment destination - which means that they will need to recognise and get better at understanding the process and behaviours of how of people are 'gathering' - which can be physical (in a mall) or virtual (on a social platforms) and how both of these converge.

Malls will continue to be the places where more South Africans gather to shop, eat and play. Understanding how individual malls plug into their local communities will be key to attracting shoppers and building programmes that create value for shoppers, retailers and brands.

Authenticity chapter

The corollary to the growth in malls - and their inherent "sameness" - is the quest for authenticity. Hipsters have shown us the way, and now more mainstream shoppers are discovering the joy of buying artisanal margaritas at 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning. The success of the Maboneng Precinct, Neighbourgoods and the Old Biscuit Mill are testament to a hunger for more tactical, personal shopping experiences built around discovery of the local and the handmade.

Many shopping malls are now bringing the market experience to their shoppers, with varying degrees of success.

The new Watershed market at the V&A Waterfront, with its curated, handcrafted products, is a good example of how markets are providing more high quality goods with a good story. The steady gentrification of Braamfontein near the Johannesburg city centre is another indication of a search for authentic urban spaces outside of the contained, somewhat artificial limits of shopping malls. However, this will remain niche.

Along with the shift in emphasis from consumer to shopper marketing, media owners will have to look at how to offer a proposition to advertisers that moves beyond simple awareness to engagement and an impact on behaviour. For example, the *Daily Sun* carries a weekly supplement of cash and carry offers to help shoppers buying for spaza stores and stokvels. It's simple, but useful for shoppers, and an incentive to buy the paper. Media channels able to offer platforms that take the path to purchase into consideration will be able to offer the kind of innovative packages that advertisers are looking for.

Personalisation

Major trends for 2015 include:

- **Personalisation** is a major trend expressing itself in multiple ways. The success of something as simple as putting names on Coke cans is a reminder of how even a very basic level of personalisation can impact on sales. South Africans are queuing to try out personalised ice-creams at the Magnum pop-up store; while at [Bite Lip Labs](#) in the US, it's possible to customise your lipstick down to the colour, the finish and the flavour.

Personalisation does not only apply to product. Shoppers are becoming more willing to trade their own personal data for a more specialised (and even localised) service or offer or price. Loyalty programmes will be part of this, as retailers look to make their loyalty programme knowledge bases work harder to influence shopper behaviours. How retailers reward loyalty in the future is already starting to emerge internationally though the principles of ['dynamic pricing'](#) tailored to a shopper's lifetime value. Finding ways to personalise products, prices and offers while driving profit and without excessively complicating the rest of the business, will continue to be a major trend in 2015 and beyond.

- **Mobile** has been the star of the story of digital in Africa for years now, and the cellphone has a natural place in the store - after all, it's the digital device that almost all shoppers have with them all the time. Finding ways to integrate mobile into the shopper journey will continue, whether it's about providing coupons or making the process of finding the things you want just a little easier. Snapscan, the Payment Pebble and other mobile-enabled payment devices are making it easier for shoppers with credit cards to purchase outside of formal retail spaces.

Mobile apps can help in multiple ways such as list writing, prompts and ideas, and giving location of products in stores. 'Anticipation' will be a key theme as retailers rise to the challenge to connect shoppers with the items they want to buy quickly. Price comparison apps are growing in popularity globally. [Memeburn](#) did a useful overview of the 2015 prospects for mobile retail apps in South Africa.

Hype around mobile technology in retail will continue to be par for the course. RFID tags, NFC and now beacons have all promised to [revolutionise](#) the shopping experience. We expect to see South African retailers experiment with new ways to add value to shoppers, but it will be a while before we see anything on a large scale.

- Once upon a time, **online retail** was going to render bricks and mortar irrelevant. That hasn't happened; instead, online retailers like [Bonobos](#) are opening physical showrooms that allow shoppers to try on merchandise, which they then buy online. "There's still growth on the internet, but there's more growth in fitting digital into the physical world," says [Kevin McKenzie](#) of leading mall operator Westfield.

Shopper need

The solution for integrating the digital and physical worlds lies in finding a real shopper need and answering it. For example, online grocery retailing remains tiny in South Africa. Rather than isolate online retailing as a specific vehicle for growth outside of physical retailing, the key in online will be retailers who can help shoppers with particular tasks, such as making routine replenishment of regularly purchased items easier. The investment into home delivery (Pick n Pay TukTuks) and Click and Collect (Walmart/SASOL) services is a strong indicator that 'making routine replenishment easier' is getting attention in online strategy discussions.

Marrying the best of the digital and physical worlds in a way that increases emotional engagement for consumers and shoppers will continue to be a major driver of innovation.

Reducing clutter in-store has been a long-term strategy of South Africa's big retailers. At the same time, brand owners are less willing to spend on point-of-purchase material that gets damaged or displayed incorrectly. (The FSU graveyard is still a common sight in many larger supermarkets, where free standing units are lined up like tombstones in a corner of the store, ignored by shoppers). Simplicity and ease of navigation are major drivers. For example, Pick n Pay together with Y&R has instituted new rules for displays. Everything in store must do one of the following four things to justify its presence: help shoppers navigate, educate, inform or inspire.

Brands that are able to collaborate with retailers to come up with simple, robust and attractive displays will be the winners.

Africa allure

With the South African economy under pressure, the allure of growth in Africa will continue to attract retailers, brands and investors - and there will continue to be losers, as well as winners.

This is impacting not only on retailers and brand owners, but the agencies that service them. With the South African economy under pressure, many South African agencies are expanding into the rest of the continent, either by buying agencies in Nairobi or Lagos, or servicing clients further north.

Understanding the nuances of shopper behaviour - and how it intersects with consumer attitudes - in different African markets will become more and more important to getting shopper strategies right. Given that information and tracking in most African markets is still a major challenge, researchers that are able to offer practical, affordable and fast access to shopper insights and data will be the winners.

Shoppers typically make three investments when they enter a store:

1. Money - looking for a good deal doesn't discriminate across LSM. South African shoppers love broadsheets and the magic word 'sale' is still a major trigger.
2. Time - they want to save time and retailers are looking to convert those seconds into sales.
3. Angst - the emotional capital spent when shoppers can't get what they want or are confused by the offering available (too few or too many choices).

Retailers and brands that can minimise the first and second factors and maximise the third will win. This means keeping shoppers front of mind, understanding how to make their lives easier, and not losing sight of what matters to them in the quest to innovate or maximise profit. Help shoppers to find the value they want while making the experience as enjoyable as possible. This has always been true of shopper marketing, and always will be.

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Dr Sarah Britten has 21 years of experience across various clients and multiple strategic disciplines, including social media and shopper. Her client experience includes Nedbank, Investec, FNB, Bothongo Group, Sanofi, Colgate Palmolive, Aspen, Adcock Ingram, Kraft Heinz, Citroën and Land Rover.

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