

opinion

Planning for digital retail: What does the future look like?

In the age of hyperconnectivity, enabling seamless experiences will be key

By Nomzamo Radebe, CEO of Excellerate JHI

Today's consumers are well-informed, demanding and always in a rush. And while the death of the brick-and-mortar store has often been "foretold", people continue to go to malls for shopping and entertainment. Retailers and property development partners have to balance contradictory messages: do we prepare for a fully digitally-driven environment with e-commerce at the centre, or find a way to merge hyperconnected digital habits with physical shopping experiences?

Seamlessly connected, 24/7

As of 2017, there were 3,4-billion Internet users in the world – 46% of the population, according to Euromonitor. By 2022, that figure will be 58%. Along with more people, more "things" will be connected via the Internet of Things (IoT). In homes, connected fridges will send notifications

when supplies are low, and may even send a grocery list to the owner's device.

For retailers, the rise of the IoT and overall hyperconnectivity mean that consumers will be very specific in what they want, and will demand their needs be met seamlessly and instantaneously. Retailers will have to harness technology to create a "friction-free" environment.

Embracing cash-free living

Some analysts are forecasting a shift towards an entirely cashless society. In South Africa, many are already ditching their wallet as smartphones become the new (digital) wallet. According to a study by PayPal, 85% of respondents used a mobile phone to make a purchase in 2017. Tellingly, most South Africans would rather leave home without their wallet than without their beloved device.

Conscious living, conscious shopping

With climate change now firmly on the global agenda, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their environmental impact, which includes their shopping habits. According to research firm J Walter Thompson Intelligence, consumers expect brands to be sustainable and are willing to pay more to support those that are. In a 2018 study, "New Sustainability", the firm stated that 89% of those surveyed "care personally" about protecting the planet, 92% said they are trying to live more sustainably, and 83% would always pick the brand that has a better record of sustainability.

With digital transformation becoming a global business imperative, local retailers will have to ensure their digital strategy closely reflects the evolving needs and values of their customers.



Samukelo Nkosi, founder and CEO of Quickprop Systems

In the era of digital transformation and the 4th Industrial Revolution, it is not surprising to find entrepreneurs working on apps and digital solutions. And Samukelo Nkosi believes he has come up with a unique one.

"I was speaking to a potential client about property systems that are currently available, and we realised many are outdated," he says. "The solution for us is to create a bespoke system and app tailored specifically to a client's needs."

Quickprop is a start-up that was conceptualised in 2018. It's affiliated with SEDA and Property Point.

Dare to dream

Meet entrepreneur Samukelo Nkosi, the founder and CEO of soon-to-be-launched Quickprop, a cloud-based property management system

By Mark Pottipher

"It will be a pay-per-feature offering," says Nkosi. "That way, you only use what you need. We interrogate your business needs and apply our core cloud-based system, configuring it to allow for a holistic and conferable solution."

"We understand that each client has a unique way of doing business, so our system offers tenant screening, lease administration, employee management, facilities management, service providers, the issuing of work orders, and even property accounting. There is also a tenant portal, where maintenance requests and payments can be made via the app."

Nkosi's entrepreneurial journey has been one of discovery and tenacity. He started – and closed – a construction business in his first year at Wits University, where he struggled with funding for his first two years as an undergraduate.

A bursary from Services SETA means he's able to complete a BSc in construction. He has been involved in the property industry through networking, being part of the South African Institute of Black Property Practitioners (SAIBPP) Learning and Growth Committee, and helping to launch SAIBPP's Wits Student Chapter in 2017. He is also currently a member of the Youth in Property Association, and is a project manager for Wits's skills development and graduate programme.

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