

It's not all about the money

 By [Doug Mayne](#)

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"Consumers expect marketing solutions to be tailor-made for them."

Malls are crazy places where anything can happen. Most importantly, the bulk of this country's retail spending takes place in this environment. Here are some of my key trends for 2015:

Trend 1: Omni-channel in malls

I believe that the malls that are more forward-thinking and innovative see the opportunity in this space and will benefit financially. The more astute mall owners will be able to encourage online retailers to rent physical space in their malls. Alternatively, malls should work with them to increase their offerings, like offering a 'click and collect' service, for example.

Other opportunities for malls include integrating their current offerings into omni-channel platforms. For example, allowing consumers to manage certain services online before they even enter the mall. Good examples include being able to book your parking spot, buy a gift card or book a dinner reservation, all online before you even get in the car. Shopping centres have a great opportunity to play a leading role here, unlock several revenue streams and embrace online/omni-channel to stay relevant for the modern shopper.

Trend 2: The customer experience

I know we've heard this before, but brands and retailers that focus on taking the shopping experience to another level will win. As human beings, it is our nature to want to touch, taste, feel and interact. It makes sense then that no matter how amazing an online experience is, we will still want to engage with people, and retailers should leverage that.

An example of really focussing on customer needs and great customer experience that I've noted in the banking world is FNB, because of several reasons. They deliver their banking cards free of charge to customers who'd rather not stand in an actual banking queue at lunchtime. They also offer the consumer a host of other benefits including being able to switch your account online in 'under 10 minutes'. It's clear that this is a key focus area for the bank, and this, along with aggressive marketing, is definitely improving market share and customer acquisition numbers.

Trend 3: Mobile retail marketing

Mobile and phones ruling our lives will be in every trend spotter's report. The major opportunity for landlords is to capitalise on this by embracing the mobile revolution, especially with regard to mobile payments. This would include a move from physical loyalty cards to a mobile application. The advantages of doing this are numerous: the card can't be left behind at home and malls can make e-vouchers available for shoppers.

As mentioned previously, parking spots, movies, dining options, etc. could be booked ahead of arrival. That's not to mention all the analytics that come with the reporting, which will make a world of difference in showing shopping centres who is spending what, where and how often.

Mobile payment options such as FlickPay and SnapScan are also becoming increasingly popular. These allow shoppers to scan their credit cards onto their phones through an app and use QR codes to make payments at participating merchants. Apple Pay is another option recently launched.

Trend 4: Social media

Reuters reveals some interesting upcoming trends for social media. These include that people may be able to send money to each other from Facebook's Messenger; the birth of (potential) new social networks including Ello and Nik Yak; wearables and household devices sharing notifications to Facebook and shopping finally coming to social media.

This last trend will allow consumers to purchase goods directly from social media sites like Facebook and Twitter through a 'buy' button, without losing any crucial browsing time. Deals could also be time-sensitive, which urges consumers to act fast - clever! We can expect a lot more online retail therapy coming our way next year, especially given the analytics and reporting that comes with online.

Pinterest and Instagram shouldn't be discounted - these platforms are being utilised to great effect by marketers that realise these platforms are being used more and more by consumers and marketers alike. YouTube is another under-utilised platform, considering that shoppers around the world and in South Africa are demanding more video content as bandwidth becomes less restricted.

Vine is increasingly being referred to as a 'go-to' for creating video content. This platform allows the user to create short videos and even provides editing software. For me, it's about a strong engagement level, not the amount of followers or likes that a brand has.

Trend 5: It's all about me!

We are no longer dealing in a world of USPs (Unique Selling Propositions) but in a world of MSPs (My Selling Proposition). Consumers expect marketing solutions to be tailor made for them and retailers and landlords should be taking note.

It's no longer just what we as marketers or landlords think, it's about what the shopper wants and thinks. The recent Coca-Cola name campaign was a resounding success because the brand made it all about the consumer, personalising each product with a different name. The Nike website is another brand that has achieved 'me marketing'. The website allows consumers to personalise their shoes. Superga recently ran a campaign at The Zone that allowed shoppers to purchase a pair of shoes and give them to an artist to customise. As a further example, the Magnum Pleasure Store that recently opened as a pop-up shop at The Zone allows shoppers to customise their own Magnum ice creams.

Brands that truly understand their shoppers and provide solutions that make shoppers feel unique and appreciated will once again be the winners.

Trend 6: Doing good as well

Globally, marketing efforts are already embracing mobile retail marketing and there is an increased awareness by marketers and retailers to do good within the communities they operate in. The Exchange Campaign, recently executed at Cavendish Shopping Centre, where consumers could only purchase clothes if they became an organ donor, or the Empty Shop (second hand clothes are donated and used to dress mannequins on a daily basis) concept in Sandton City, mirrors

this trend.

In conclusion, the retail landscape is an incredibly exciting one that keeps moving forward - and it's doing so at an incredible rate. Retailers and landlords have a host of new marketing opportunities at their disposal. The race is on to see who can do it right, and make it sustainable.

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