

The right product, to the right customer, at the right time

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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As [Cape Union Mart Group](#)'s director of e-commerce, Amanda Herson has the mammoth task of ensuring a seamless online experience for some of South Africa's most loved retail brands; from the outdoorsy Cape Union Mart to the fashion-forward Poetry, Old Khaki and Tread & Miller.



Image credit: Poetry

With mobile now accounting for the lion's share of Cape Union Mart Group's online traffic, Herson shares with us the importance of adopting a mobile-first strategy and delivering a seamless omnichannel journey for today's retail customer.

❏ ***Considering South Africa's online retail market is still tiny when compared to the likes of China, for example, what do you believe are the main barriers to online growth in our country?***

I believe that there are very few barriers to growth and that our curve is just slightly behind other more established countries. Last mile delivery is still a challenge, but with the innovations around 'click and collect' and the expansion of locker programs, I believe this can be solved.

Payment has also been a barrier as we have a much lower rate of credit card penetration and a higher demand for COD. These issues are not insurmountable and we have the unique ability to leapfrog more established markets with innovative solutions.

❏ ***Has Cape Union Mart Group experienced a significant shift to mobile over the last five years?***

Absolutely! We have seen a huge uptake in mobile traffic and mobile conversion.

Currently, mobile comprises more than 50% of our traffic.

❏ ***What do you think are the most notable ways that mobile phones are impacting purchasing/shopper behaviour?***

Everyone can comparison shop all day and every day and have access to almost any item they want from anywhere in the world.

If you don't have the best product, at the best price, with the best service... you don't really stand a chance.

■ ***To what extent should South African retailers be prioritising mobile in their e-commerce strategy?***



Amanda Herson

I believe that you have to be 'mobile first' and everything else follows from there. Being 'mobile first' also ensures you have the simplest and cleanest design and functionality. The assumption is that the majority of your consumers are browsing on mobile.

Of course, your desktop experience still needs to be exceptional and this is where there is an opportunity to expand features and provide even more in-depth information or choice.



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■ ***Do you think South African fashion retailers are cracking omnichannel retail at present? If not, what do you think could be improved upon?***

I am impressed with the strides that South African retailers have taken. The opportunity lies in the back-end, in truly having a single view of the customer across all touchpoints and in fully integrating across all channels.

The experience should be seamless regardless of how your consumer chooses to cross channels. This thinking applies to customer service, vouchers and overall experience.

■ ***Mobile shopping apps... a worthwhile investment at the moment, or not?***

Not for us. I believe it makes sense for very frequent purchases or 're-orders'. We would rather invest in the best-in-class mobile site.



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■ ***Can you share some insight into Cape Union Mart's online strategy going forward?***

Our online strategy is to create the most exceptional omnichannel shopping experience. We really don't mind which channel you choose to shop in. You should be able to research any item you are looking for, find the information you are looking for, and purchase it wherever is most convenient for you.

■ ***Any final thoughts on the opportunities that mobile can offer local retailers?***

Mobile allows you to offer the right product, to the right customer at the right time (and hopefully at the right price). This is a unique opportunity and with the advances in AI and a desire to truly understand the customer, I believe the future is exciting!

Visit our [Mobile Commerce](#) special section for further insights throughout the month of July.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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