

Machine learning can keep SA's retail shelves stocked

The recent Covid-19 fuelled rush on retailers in South Africa, as consumers start stockpiling grocery staples, is leaving many shelves empty.



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Some, such as Makro, have recently announced that they will be “enforcing customer limits on shoppers ... to give customers fair access to essential items.”

Morne Laubscher, CTO of Logicalis South Africa comments, “Both online and brick-and-mortar retailers are experiencing a run on products, which is limiting their ability to service the needs of their entire customer base.”

Retailers have the data that they need for customer buying patterns but often aren’t always able to access the benefits. The 2019 Global CIO Survey from Logicalis, a global provider of IT solutions, questioned 888 CIO’s from around the globe. The survey revealed that just under one in ten (9%) respondents believe that their organisation is very successful at understanding the advantages of AI technology in some areas of business; whereas 44% believe their organisation is not very successful at all.

“Implementing technology with machine learning capabilities will provide retailers with the ability to run insightful analytics and augment this data with trends from other markets already dealing with this crisis. This gives them the ability to predict behaviours and stabilise supply chains,” Laubscher says.



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He adds that this information can inform better decision making, cost containment strategies and how to prioritise the delivery of certain products over those currently less likely to be in demand.

“We don’t know how long and to what extent the Covid-19 is going to affect South African business, but we do know is that it is having a significant impact on the way companies will need to change the way they operate,” says Laubscher. “And using the technology and data that the business already has, and perhaps adding other solutions to augment functionality, will create resilience and the ability to adapt in line with consumer demands during this challenging time.”

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