

Creating shopper chemistry for brands

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Macy's in New York City calls itself the world's largest store. Not only is this not true, but no-one cares because in the new world of retail and shoppers, choice is not a differentiator.

Why? Because today consumers are only a tap away from any product, making the size of your premises is irrelevant. For example the Chinese owned ecommerce store, Alibaba, has one billion items on sale. Last month its market value was US\$231bn.



Evolution of retail

The evolution of retail through digital and social channels is relentless; with some calling it retail Armageddon; with software eating retail. Regardless this is the new retail reality and it is global, digital, polarised and personalised which has led to a shift in shopper behaviour. Previously it was about going shopping; now we are always browsing.

So says Jon Bird, Global managing director of Labstore, who was in South Africa for the launch of Labstore SA at Y&R's Johannesburg offices in Bryanston.

"It was with this in mind that Labstore was created," he says. A digitally-led retail and shopper marketing network, Labstore is a full-service home to store shopper marketing agency that focuses on connecting shoppers at key touch points to ensure that brands resonate where it really counts.

Labstore is in 20 markets across the world; now including South Africa. While only officially launching yesterday, LabstoreSA has been in operation for a few months and its team of eight has already picked up five clients. By the end of the year LabstoreSA will have grown to 11 people. Current clients include Tiger Brands, Citroen, Sodastream and Colgate-Palmolive.

Heading up LabstoreSA is Carolyn White, regional business director - South Africa and Africa Labstore, whose mission is to build LabstoreSA across the Y&R offices locally and join the global network of 20 offices across the world. Her passion is getting closer to shoppers. She has 12 years of experience in through the line agencies and five years in shopper marketing. For her this is a three year dream come true. "Shopper marketing is a hard gig. The programmes need time and hard work. It is akin to putting together pieces of a puzzle, bringing together the science and art of shopping."

How shoppers engage

Dr Sarah Britton is the regional strategic director for South Africa and Africa Labstore. A well-known blogger, speaker and thought leader, she has 12 years of experience as a communications strategist in various marketing disciplines. She says she fell in love with shopper marketing two years ago. She brings to LabstoreSA an expertise in social media and mobile technology, allowing for the incorporation of digital and social thinking in shopper marketing. She maintains that in the future most briefs will be led by shopper and integrated across the entire path to purchase.

The strategic Creative Director, South Africa and Africa Labstore, Brian Ferns, believes the shopper is where truth, beauty and joy came together. "It is about solutions. We solve problems. Truth, beauty and joy is how shoppers engage and makes them want to engage. But the brand must get the truth and beauty right or the shopper will not buy again. We do cool stuff that delivers sales that help people buy brands."

Andrew Welch, CEO of Y&R South Africa, adds to this saying that LabstoreSA is another discipline and expertise Y&R is offering its clients. "We want to solve our clients' problems, which are increasingly real issues they want help to overcome. They want solutions and we are in the business of providing these. Everything we do is to create a disproportionate preference for our clients across other brands. The aim is to deliver value to clients through the disciplines that make up our brands."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.
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