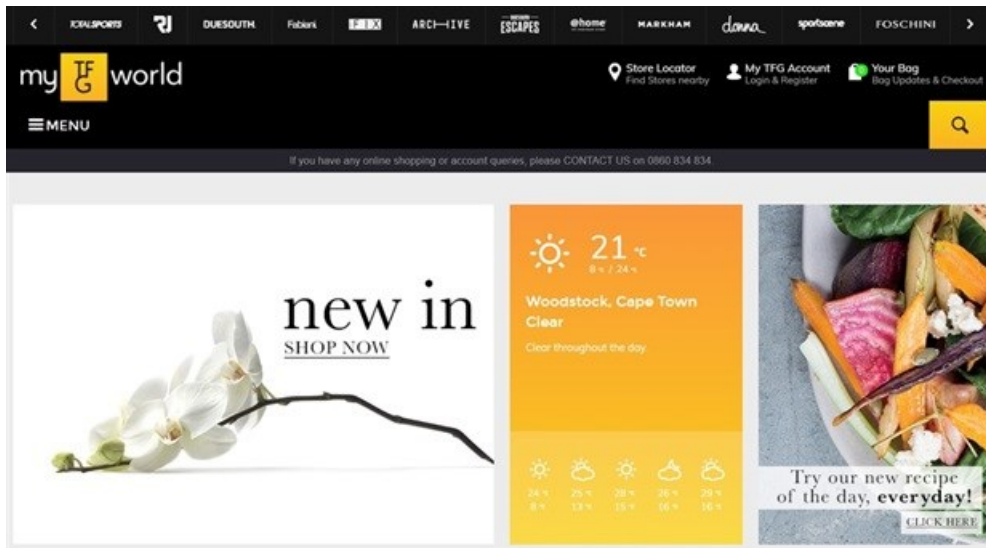


Introducing myTFGworld - SA's new multibrand online marketplace

By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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To amplify its online shopping presence, [TFG](#) has relaunched its e-commerce platform as a marketplace called [myTFGworld.com](#).



The platform, which officially launches today, offers a single URL to access products from the 17 TFG brands currently trading online, including @home, Donna, Foschini, Markham and Totalsports. Interestingly, myTFGworld.com also houses affiliate brands not within the TFG stable including bookstore Readers' Warehouse, French gift chain Pylones, toy store Hamley's, and flower and gifting service Bloomable.

TFG aims to have at least 40 affiliate brands on the marketplace by 2020 financial year end, to supplement gaps in their own offering. Planned product categories include travel, gifting, toys, books, food, education, décor, pets, babies, data, ticketing, streaming and drones, amongst others.

With the launch of its multibrand online marketplace, TFG boldly states that its no longer competing with the single retail brand sites of their competitors but is taking on global marketplaces, and preparing for the entry of giants like Amazon into the local market. myTFGworld is South Africa's first online marketplace supported by over 2,600 physical stores.

"Much of what TFG owns is homegrown. This factor has been shown, particularly in Amazon's evolution, to be important to

success in e-commerce. Retailers with homegrown brands have higher margins, more control, and a better customer interface. The majority of what we sell is manufactured and controlled locally, so has the added benefit of local job creation," says TFG CIO Brent Curry.



TFG CIO Brent Curry

The shopper experience of myTFGworld is slanted towards women, who make up the bulk of TFG's online shoppers. According to the company, the platform has been designed to offer a curated story-driven space with a more modern experiential interface than a tactical 'hunt and shoot' online store. There are also experiences to bring customers back daily, including daily recipes, weather forecasts and playlists.

Here, Curry shares with *Bizcommunity* the strategy behind TFG's refreshed online presence.

■ ***The move to include brands outside of the TFG stable is an unexpected one. What's the strategy behind this?***

If we are truly customer-centric, we cannot get precious about what goods and services we offer on our platform, we must give our customers breadth and depth in selection.

So our intention is to supplement gaps in our product offering through the additional affiliate brands. As a truly customer-centric platform, we place emphasis on ensuring the goods and services we offer provide customers with a one-stop-shop experience. We have to make shopping on myTFGworld.com as convenient as possible and the best way to do that is to provide as much as possible in one checkout.

We have launched the marketplace with 5 affiliates, but our customers will see these partnerships grow rapidly. We aim to have at least 40 affiliate brands on the marketplace by 2020 financial year end. These will cover diverse categories including travel, gifting, toys, books, flowers, food, meals, education, décor, pets, babies, data, ticketing, streaming and drones, amongst many others.

Shoppers can expect to find Quench and Drone World soon.

■ ***Are there any commonalities in the affiliate brands that TFG aims to stock on the myTFGworld platform?***

The affiliate brands are relevant to that target audience. We strive to be inclusive of all consumers, but our primary audience is mid to higher LSM women over 35 years old. They do most of the shopping online in SA.

■ ***Can you speak to the importance of myTFGworld offering shoppers an experiential, story-driven experience?***

“ The world is filled with so much noise, so much choice that when trusted retailers offer customers tailored experiences and curated, specially chosen products, they have the best chance of success. ”

Experiential retail is a global trend. It is also very important to our key target audience: women shoppers.

■ **And in a technical sense, how are you achieving this?**

When a customer visits myTFGworld.com, they are prompted by a series of stories. For example: Shop our Top Picks of Palazzo Pants; Shop the Best Slogan Tees; Teach Me Tuesday; Don't Cover Up, Contour Your Curves; Momma You Got This; Vegan-friendly Shopping.

These stories draw shoppers into a space based on their interests. Once inside, the products are beautifully curated across multiple brands relevant to that theme. This narrative style enables us to tailor the shopping experience, as well as inspire and inform our shoppers.



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■ **How does the design of the site cater to women?**

It is designed to be as convenient as possible, as that is what our women shoppers want and need more than anything – seamless shopping in their over-busy day.

With multiple ways to pay, multiple deliver options, product curated into spaces around themes that relate to their interests whether that is office, family, fashion, entertainment, beauty, friends, travel, decor, technology or sneakers – and in many cases all of those things within a day.

The personality of the site is Sassy Older Sister – she's vibrant, has a great sense of humour and knows how to fix a fashion faux pas in a flash. Her message to her sisters is: Queen, you've got this!

■ **With online retail still a nascent industry in South Africa, how can brands encourage otherwise brick-and-mortar shoppers to purchase online, and do so confidently?**

It's not a case of choosing online or offline stores, the two work best together. The greatest barriers to shopping online for many South Africans are 1) safety and security; 2) not having a credit card; 3) not having someone at home to receive parcels.

The online stores and bricks stores work well together. The bricks presence lends credibility to the online environment and make people feel safer shopping online. Also, online shoppers feel comforted knowing they can go into a store and view a product before shopping online and having it delivered to their door; or being able to take it back and exchange it at a store if it is not quite right.

Also, many people can't receive parcels at home or work, but they can order online after hours and have a product delivered to another TFG bricks store and then collect that online order at a time that suits them.

Accessibility is key. By allowing our customers to use store account cards or instant EFT to pay, we have opened up online shopping to far more potential customers. myTFGworld now offers 5 ways to pay: any TFG store cards, TFG eGift cards, credit cards, SnapScan and EFT. Online shoppers can also earn and redeem online vouchers and rewards.

“ The democratisation of online shopping is important to the success of ecommerce in South Africa. By not limiting South Africans to one type of delivery method, we give access to people who could not previously shop online. ”

Delivery options include: Deliver to your door, Collect from depot, Collect in Store, Pargo pick up, Deliver to Me (this is a geo-location service) and we have additional methods coming soon.

We are also inclusive through the product we offer. This year we added body positivity brand Donna to our online platform. Donna is a brand that celebrates curves. Donna offers stylish fashion to women from size 14 to 32. Donna's focus is on making fashion that is perfected by South African curves. This addition has been [a resounding success](#) for us.



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What would you say are the challenges and opportunities associated with launching a multibrand marketplace like myTFGworld?

The challenges:

- The competitive landscape is intense for marketplaces and customers are used to shopping in a very specific way – the Amazon effect.
- SA continues to suffer socio-economic volatility in retail, including VAT increases and petrol prices.
- The SA take-up of online shopping, whilst growing nicely, has been slower than expected.
- The costs of internet and data in SA are high.

The opportunities:

- It's shopping *plus* experiences, life-hacks, daily recipes, etc.
- Capturing new shoppers through the diversity of product we offer, all available in one place.
- Providing greater convenience for our core target audience who are the people who do the most shopping: mid to high LSM +35 women. Most brands target youth shoppers, and overlook the needs of the older shopper.
- Growing greater awareness for our e-commerce presence through a single url and online brand, which carries multiple brands.
- Grow online shopping in South Africa, by making it as easy and convenient as possible.

What is the long-term vision for myTFGworld?

To be a very large player in the online space, so when you think online shopping you think myTFGworld.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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