

# The need to construct an online strategy for the future

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In the FMCG market, South Africa has added 100,000 new traditional trade and modern trade stores to its retail universe over the last 20 years, according to Nielsen. This is a significant number and it clearly highlights the rapid pace at which the landscape is evolving.



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The modern and the traditional are coexisting at an uneasy equilibrium; there is an increasing movement of the offline to online and also a significant growth of direct to consumer operations. These trends are not only happening in the commerce sector, but across industries.

The end customer is at the centre of these mega shifts. Brands, big and small, need to come up with effective ways to engage with this increasingly tech-savvy consumer. There is an urgent need to construct an online strategy for the future.

A 2018 Global Digital suite of reports from We Are Social and Hootsuite say that there are more than four billion people around the world using the internet and Africa has seen the fastest growth rates, with the number of internet users across the continent increasing by more than 20% year-on-year. It is safe to say that a sizeable chunk of this is young users, who have grown up in the social media and smartphone era.

## The power of chat

With mobile phones becoming ubiquitous, tapping into the chat and messaging apps is a smart bet to take a tiny peek into this future. Consumers are looking at chat as a means for all communication - personal, business or commerce.

With the power of chat, a brand can potentially nudge a customer to buy a product by sending a contextual and timely message. For example, if a customer is browsing for an Amazon Kindle on an app, the platform can immediately send across a message which reads— 'If you buy an Amazon Kindle within the next two hours, we'll offer an additional 6% discount'.

While chat is just one platform, the overarching idea is to engage with customers through their preferred channel and enable businesses to generate more leads.

Customer engagement is the name of the game. Customers want the experience to be seamless between all their touchpoints with the brand. Be it chat, email, calls, or website. Customers do not want to repeat their problems across platforms or over and over with your agents. They expect you to just know. Brands must build systems keeping this in mind. They need to future proof their roadmap. Freshworks is enabling just that by offering a 360-degree view of the customer to brands with its suite of products.

With all the data that brands are collecting through various channels, technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big data and analytics will usher in a significant revolution in customer engagement, across industries. This shift is already underway.

It has now become amply clear that the old structure will no longer sustain the wants of the tech-savvy population. The future will be all about seamless connection and now is the time to put our heads together and reinvent the future of customer experience.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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