

Why Wi-Fi is a viable solution for better customer relationships

 By [Michael Fletcher](#)

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The retail and service industry across Africa is constantly under pressure to not only increase their customer base, while meeting profit targets, but to do so whilst satisfying its consumers' needs.



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Today the challenge for this sector is to find ways to improve service offerings and to reduce churn, while still remaining customer relevant. However, while consumers have different needs and wants, there is still a common denominator - they all expect a great customer experience when interacting with service providers.

In today's 'mobile generation' this reality is ever more prevalent as customers don't want to spend extended periods of time running errands and are therefore demanding 'easier' interactions with their service providers. In fact, if possible, customers would rather interact with their service provider of choice online, than stand in queues for hours.

As a result, the opportunity exists for local retailers and service providers to examine the impact that Wi-Fi can make on their service delivery.

Providing a variety of channels

Delivering exceptional customer experience in the retail and services sector should also be defined by providing customers with a variety of channels, which are seamless and deliver fast response times, when interacting with the provider.

While South African retailers have been slower in embracing the idea of offering Wi-Fi, there has been positive change. The reason for this is because a solution, for example such as location-based Wi-Fi services, or LBS, can alert

retailers/providers when their clients are in their physical vicinity, such as in a branch location or at a specific retail shopping space. This information then in turn allows the retailer to immediately 'connect' with that customer, via their mobile device, and deliver information that may be of value to the customer. For example, store specials, new product announcements or even relevant staff information can all be relayed in real time. The impact on the customer is immediate.

With new Wi-Fi solutions coming to the fore any past issues around capacity, reliability and performance within Wi-Fi infrastructures are taken care of, and today, both enterprises and carriers have become keenly interested in offering location-based services to their customers. In fact, we are seeing a real change when it comes to delivering point-of-sale services and offers, which in turn has increased operational efficiencies of their businesses.

Wi-Fi uptake increasing rapidly

The uptake of Wi-Fi locally has started, and is increasing rapidly, with some service providers providing Wi-Fi at stadiums, banks and within hospitality areas - demonstrating a definite shift in the way Wi-Fi, as a solution, is being viewed these sectors. These organisations have responded to the need of their consumers to remain connected at all times by making Wi-Fi easily accessible to improve the customer experience.

In the retail industry, it's important for businesses to understand their business model, their customers' needs and how to maximise on technology solutions that are available today that will best suit their business to improve the overall customer experience.

The aim

The aim is this - to retain and grow your customer base and to entice potential clients through technological advancements. While infrastructure remains a bottleneck and we may not see accessibility of free Wi-Fi in major cities across South Africa in the near future, we are definitely seeing an improvement within the retail industry and certainly this is where it should start - making consumers the catalysts for this change and driving businesses to create more connected opportunities.

Solutions such as Smart Wi-Fi can certainly help, but it's important that any Wi-Fi deployment is undertaken correctly, as consumer expectations are always high and therefore, good functionality and performance is key.

Businesses that take that first step, recruit the right technology, and set the benchmark for service provision, through utilising Wi-Fi, will set themselves ahead of the game and, I am sure, will encourage other CTOs to start looking at why Wi-Fi is a very viable solution for a more connected and ultimately better business/customer relationship.

ABOUT MICHAEL FLETCHER

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