

Say hello to the new South African shopper

 By [Gareth Pearson](#)

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Think you know South African shoppers? Think again. Recent shopper insights* research reveals local consumers have changed. A lot. And this radically redefined identity is tipped to gain significant momentum in 2017.



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Local consumers are transforming before our eyes in response to squeezed household budgets. We are seeing fundamental behavioural shifts in the way consumers shop – before, during and after they hit the stores.

Pre-shopping trends

The biggest pre-shopping trend is planning. Consumers are planning their shopping trips more than ever before and actively seeking out specials via broadsheets and pamphlets, comparing prices online, and then from this information, drawing up shopping lists.

But these are unlike traditional shopping lists; these lists are detailed, leave no room for impulse buys, are aligned to the monthly budget right down to the last cent, and are religiously adhered to (except in the case of onsite specials offering outstanding value).

That's right, the new-look SA consumer is well informed, budget conscious, and demonstrates a refreshing sense of financial discipline that manufacturers and retailers would do good to take note of.

This flies in the face of what we have historically come to expect from South African consumers, who are notoriously poor savers and big spenders (using money they don't actually have), but is a very strong driver that will continue throughout the next year.

Interestingly, all shoppers surveyed said they left either their children and or their spouses at home before heading for the shops. Why? The pester power factor and financially undisciplined spouses or partners posed too great a risk to the fragile monthly budget. This is a fascinating trend that demonstrates shoppers are consciously choosing to shop alone, and we expect it to gain traction in 2017.

In-store shopping trends

Inside the store, shoppers are filling their trolleys differently. Previously, brand loyalty was prioritised, but today shoppers are prepared to leave their old favourites behind as they gravitate towards other branded goods that offer increased perceived value or even private label products. Where branded items still make the cut, smaller pack sizes are preferred.

The issue of perceived value will become even more significant in 2017, with the new SA consumer not only pursuing specials, but specifically multibuy offers that they believe provide good value for money.

Luxury items have all but fallen off the shopping list, with shoppers preferring to strictly spend their hard-earned cash on necessities. This trend will continue in the next year in the face of increased economic uncertainty. And while some shoppers will reward their frugality with treats, these will not be the big-ticket items of the past.

However, luxury items still have a (small) place when it comes to special occasions, with most shoppers not willing to compromise on top quality, luxury goods for special events.

Post-shopping trends

The biggest post-shop trend is seen in product usage. The new consumer is critically aware of wastage, using expensive products like toiletries sparingly; choosing frozen vegetables over fresh; reusing products more than once, like cooking oil, and finding innovative uses for everything from leftovers to the last dregs of soap.

Multipurpose products are fast replacing multiple individual products around the home, and refill packages are in hot demand.

There is no doubt the recession chickens have come home to roost, and right here in our back yard, but acknowledging and providing for this refreshed consumer mindset will ensure producers and retailers don't fall foul of South Africa's new savvy shoppers in 2017.

*Value shoppers will be seeking in 2017, BMi Research, September 2016

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