

Develop products and market them with women in mind

By [Kerry Thomas](#)

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When it comes to buying power in South Africa, women come out on top. Although they are more likely to be unemployed and earn less than their male counterparts, research has found that women hold the buying power in most South African households.



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While this trend is true for many other countries too, it's particularly relevant because of our high number of female-headed households, which is [estimated at around 38%](#). This high number highlights the importance of factoring female influence in marketing campaigns and products.

With more women predicted to enter the labour market, businesses ignore women at their peril. Smart marketing campaigns and products developed with women in mind have the potential to benefit both businesses and consumers.

Women and the economy

[Research has found](#) that over 60% of women in South Africa are the primary purchaser within the household. Essentially, this means they make buying decisions. Women's buying power shouldn't be overlooked, as their influence and decision-making power are reinventing the consumer market

as we know it.

With women making the bulk of buying decisions, the question that arises is: why are there so few women-owned businesses in our country? In 2017, [only 38%](#) of small businesses in South Africa were owned by women. This number needs to increase drastically if businesses are to keep up with the demands of an evolving consumer market.

A huge opportunity exists for women-owned businesses or for companies that support women-owned businesses to use their unique insights to speak to this important female market. Who better to reach out to the household decision-makers than like-minded individuals?

If businesses that aren't women-owned want to connect with this market authentically, they need to make sure that women are involved in every aspect of the product development and sales process.



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How are women shaping the SA retail market?

A [study by Nielsen](#) revealed that 80% of women purchase most from supermarkets, with an average expenditure of R220 per visit. However, this isn't linked to one specific store, and women regularly visit, on average, five different shopping locations.

[Their spending habits](#) show that despite earning less than men, they spend more in many categories, including toiletries,

grooming products and medical screening – this includes pregnancy tests, STI tests as well as glucose and cholesterol monitoring.

To truly meet the diverse range of women's needs, it's important not to treat them as a homogenous group and to note that their spending habits and needs change as their lifestyles and life stages change. [Moms tend to do research online](#) before making a purchase, while women without children are more likely to splurge on luxury items and often make impulse buys.

[Research has found](#) that single people are 45% more inclined to make an impulse buy as opposed to their married counterparts. In addition to this, women were found to be 52% more likely to make an impulse buy while shopping.

Despite their importance in the market, [US research shows](#) that 91% of women feel like advertisers don't understand them, again highlighting the importance of involving more women in marketing products to their peers.



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Let the numbers guide you

As more women enter the labour force, their buying power is set to increase, and so retailers should be prioritising women's needs if they want to secure their market share.

Of course, not all women want the same thing, and market segmentation always applies, but some stand-out figures [from shopping research](#) can be used to guide businesses. Eighty-one percent of women enjoy shopping. Factors that influence their shopping experience include the customer service provided - with 90% of women saying that this forms an important part in choosing where to shop.

Women are also conscious spenders, with 84% planning their shopping trip, while 71% report that they are price-conscious when it comes to buying household items. Promotions and specials are also a great way to attract the female shopper, with 37% actively looking out for them when visiting a store. Often, when properly executed, promotions and specials may lead to unplanned, or impulse purchases. They also have the potential to convince consumers to invest in an alternative, more rewarding brand.

It's clear that women play an important part in the consumer market in South Africa, and that their importance will increase in the future. We need to look into ways of including more women in the development and marketing of products and services so that businesses can harness this buying power while meeting the needs of a complex target market.

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