

Converting browsers into buyers: the number one challenge for retailers and manufacturers in SA

By [Sally Rothman](#), issued by [GfK – An NIQ Company](#)

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The South African non-food retail market is under growing pressure. Manufacturers and retailers face significant declines in sales volume and value as their markets mature, as the weakness of rand diminishes spending power and as a difficult economy erodes consumer confidence.

What's more, there's competition coming from every direction, especially in the fashion sector, where multinational brands are moving aggressively into the country's shopping malls. Consumer behaviour and expectations are also changing as digital channels start to play a bigger part in the customer journey.



Against this backdrop, our clients tell us that the biggest challenge they face is conversion. Put simply, how does one convert a browser into a buyer? From our point of view, we can break this over-riding challenge down into three more challenges and offer some solutions.

Challenge one: Keep visitors on your website

If you have a website, your primary goal is to keep shoppers on your site and then lead them along a seamless customer journey that ends with a conversion. Irrespective of whether they are visiting your website to buy, research prices or check stock

availability, your aim should be to keep them on your site.

The longer they stay on your site and off your competitors' channels, the better the chance that you can convert them. To achieve this, you should track your customer's experience on your digital channels, then optimise the digital user's experience to make improvements and beat your competition.

Challenge two: Convert in-store browsers into buyers

In the non-food sector, there is growing competition for the shrinking rand that the consumer has to spend on discretionary items. No retailer wants to let someone walk away without buying something if they have plans to spend money.

If you don't have the right size, colour or style, you must help the customer to order it from your website or offer a compelling alternative. Helping customers order online or offering click-and-collect services and free delivery can help facilitate that all-important sale.

Challenge three: Understanding the shopper journey

Today's connected consumer shops in a varied and complex way. If you can understand shopping behaviour and journeys, you can maximise the path to purchase. You can ensure your brand is present in 'the moment of truth' when a purchase is made. The key to success here is your omnichannel strategy.

It's not enough to be on all channels. You must also understand the types of consumer behaviour that they evoke and use the strengths of each to support your particular conversion patterns for all relevant shopper types.

Converting customers who are just looking into buyers

To maximise profits in this fiercely competitive market, you must follow shoppers along their unique path to purchase. Behavioural data from the passive measurement of different channels can help you understand purchase journeys in order to maximise the omnichannel environment.

We see a five-step process to improving your competitive advantage in today's omnichannel world:

- Understand your customers' unique omnichannel purchase journey to increase conversion — in other words, understand how your web, mobile and in-store environments interact in conversions.
- Focus your marketing activity on the touchpoints that directly impact your target audiences.
- Use insights based on behaviour observed at brand touchpoints to influence decision-making.
- Evaluate your in-store experience to maximise your physical presence.
- Analyse satisfaction levels of shoppers after their experience to address obstacles.

Each brand journey is different. However, if you can understand why someone didn't buy a jersey online, or why that person walked out of one store and straight into another to buy a similar item, you have the intelligence to crack shopper conversion.

GfK Shopper Specialists

GfK's Shopper research experts combine and analyse data from multiple sources to understand shopper behaviour and how to influence purchasing decisions. Through our Consumer Panel, we scan purchases made by 3,000 demographically representative households in South Africa, enabling us to provide a 360-degree view of shopper behaviour. We provide unique measurements and understanding both at retail and manufacturer level. GfK Category Management Assessment highlights opportunity potential within retailers and loyalty within retailers. We conduct additional surveys among our panellists, looking at typical usage and attitudes, as well as cross-linking consumption in the household to actual purchase behaviour.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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