

4 advantages your small business has over Amazon and how to capitalise on them

By [Matt Brownell](#)

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Amazon is on its way to Mzansi. While many retailers may panic about losing customers to the world's biggest one-stop-shop, small businesses can remain hopeful as they have a few advantages over retail giants.



Matt Brownell, VP of commercial for Yoco | image supplied

Here are four advantages your small business has over Amazon:

1. You have an in-depth understanding of your customers

Bigger isn't always better – especially when it comes to understanding the unique attributes, preferences, and pain points of your customers. The invaluable well of information you've gathered about your customers (whether actively or as a by-product of interacting with them), means that you're far better equipped to provide them with the products and services – and crucially, customer service – that will convert them into shoppers and ultimately, into advocates for your brand.

Expand on your existing intel about your customers by:

More is more when it comes to learning about your customers (and target market). If you haven't yet asked for feedback – now's the time. This is where the good stuff is – even if it's in the form of a negative review – think of it as constructive criticism that'll only benefit your brand.

To get customers to spill their thoughts, it's crucial that you give them an easy way to leave a review or comment about their experience. Whether this is via a Google Business Profile or a casual conversation as they pay for their purchase.

2. You're well-equipped to curate a uniquely personalised customer experience

Smart algorithms may streamline the shopping experience – but they can't replace the human element that underpins an unforgettable (for all the right reasons) customer experience. Whether you operate online or offline – or a combination of the two – you're able to curate a uniquely customised shopping experience that big box stores can't compete with.

Whether it's giving a repeat customer a "just because" discount, handwriting a thank-you note with each online purchase, or patiently helping someone choose the perfect book for their beloved, you're armed with a bunch of tools to facilitate a one-on-one experience that's personalised and memorable.



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Up the ante of your customer service like this:

Ideally, you should dedicate as much time to improving and evolving your customer experience as you do on marketing your offering.

If a stellar shopping experience is going to be the differentiating factor between you and a faceless brand, you need to invest the time, people, and money needed to deliver a unique, positive experience to every single one of your customers – throughout the purchasing process.

This includes all interactions (online and offline) between you and your customers – so map out the buying process from beginning to end and identify ways in which you can improve or elevate it.

3. You're helping to rebuild SA's economy

The only thing South Africans love more than cooking meat over an open flame? Our country. When facing off with international competition, the 'local is lekker' angle can be an incredibly effective marketing tool – especially in a climate where the underdogs of Mzansi have had a run off it.

In short, tapping into our nation's unwavering patriotism can be a powerful way to garner support for your brand. By reminding your customers that their patronage isn't only crucial for your business' success, but that it plays a massive role in the recovery and growth of our economy, you can make a compelling case for supporting a local, small business over a global giant.

Appeal to your customers' inner patriot by:

Making use of local suppliers where possible. If you can't switch to homegrown everything, publicise the aspects of your offering that are proudly South African. From your ingredients and packaging to your card machine or online payment portal (wink wink), there are multiple touchpoints that your business can make use of to support small SA businesses just like your own.

Then, publicise the fact that your smoothies use bananas from Limpopo, or that your garments are made by local seamstresses – in other words, tell your customers about the big (or small) ways your business is actively contributing to the South African economy.

4. You're an advocate for conscious commerce

It's no secret that retail giants are riddled with problematic practices, (which I won't get into because we're all about positive vibes).

In short, household name retailers are the epitome of predatory capitalism, resulting in a growing contingent of shoppers seeking out ethical businesses that don't put profit over people. Now's the time to shout your conscious business practices from the rooftops – it could be the deciding factor between a browser and a brand advocate.

Put your ethical business practices to work like this:

Wherever you can, advertise the ways in which your business makes a difference. This could be by opting for recycled paper packaging over plastic, employing members of a community in need, or donating your time, goods, or services to worthy causes. Or, it might be as simple as the fact that you give all surplus supplies or products to your staff and their families.

There'll always be competition from 'the big guy', but look a little closer and you'll find opportunity hidden in adversity. What's your strategy when it comes to competing with big brands? Let us know on our socials.

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