

Tech breeds new type of bargain hunter

 By [Gareth Pearson](#)

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'Professional shoppers' literally use all the resources at their fingertips, such as smartphone apps, website, cut-out coupons, QR codes, broadsheets and loyalty cards to find the best value deals. As a new breed of consumers, they are challenging and questioning the way that retailers package, price and distribute their products.

Protracted economic pressure and technological advances have been the key drivers behind the rise of this 'omni-channel' consumer who is highly motivated to find the best value deals. It has also become much easier for shoppers to access the myriad money-saving options on offer because they have become so much more informed and tech-savvy. Retailers have responded by becoming more innovative with their promotional offers, bundling products together for a more attractive package, adding value to their loyalty programmes, offering special deals on delivery, integrating their online and offline shopping experiences and investing more in their private label and home brands to attract consumers.

Showrooming - where shoppers research items in-store then buy them cheaper online - has been trending for some time but what has changed, is that the 'professional' shoppers have branched out from big-ticket items such as televisions and furniture to everyday products.

In the US for example, myGroceryDeals, a free grocery-comparison website, claims that a good shopper can save 20-30% off their grocery bill each week - savings that some well-informed South African consumers are also achieving by shopping around.

Research from one of BMI Research's strategic partners, IRI, shows that over 70% of shoppers make a list prior to going to a store and a third of shoppers download coupons from retailers, brands or third party sites.

However, whilst digital deals are on the rise, we are also seeing an increase in the number of shoppers making use of traditional promotional tools such as broadsheets, cut-out coupons and newspapers inserts. People will happily map out a route to buy various items from a number of different retailers in order to get the best deal.

Rewards programmes also remain a key retail strategy in South Africa, with an estimated 10 million people carrying at least one loyalty card from the 70-plus programmes in operation.

The retailing landscape is dynamic and it is not always apparent what is driving the change. Is it consumer demand, is it technology or is it the retailers themselves setting the pace? One thing is certain - the new breed of professional shoppers is confidently navigating this changing landscape and using every available opportunity to save money and find value.

ABOUT GARETH PEARSON

Gareth Pearson, CEO and shareholder of BM Research (www.bmi.co.za), is a market research specialist with particular focus in the industrial and FMCG markets in various sectors, including the retail market. He serves as a member of the South African Institute of Packaging's Regional Committee and is involved with the South African Packaging Council. Gareth was responsible for the merger of BM Foodpack and Adcheck Research during 2008. Contact Gareth on tel +27 (0)11 615 7000.

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