

Significant growth reported by Faithful to Nature

There's scant research on the status of ethical consumerism in South Africa, but the 2015 Ethical Markets Report 2015 by the UK's [Ethical Consumer](#) reported an 8% rise in the UK, valued at GBP38 billion, despite a highly challenging fiscal year in that country.

The screenshot shows the homepage of Faithful to Nature, an online organic shop. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for FOOD, HEALTH, BEAUTY, BODY, KIDS, LIFESTYLE, HOME, GIFTS, SPECIALS, NEW PRODUCTS, and BRANDS. A search bar is located above the main content area. A promotional banner at the top right offers 'FREE DELIVERY options for all orders over R350!' and features a 'My Bag' button showing 'Items: 0 Total: R0.00' with links to 'View Bag' and 'Place Order'. Below this, a sign-up offer for a 'R100 VOUCHER!' is displayed, along with a 'SIGN UP >' button. The main content area features a large image of two bottles of Real Thing Pro-Probiotic and a bottle of Magwana's Kombucha, with a call-to-action 'Boost Your Gut Health' and 'Buy 2 Real Thing Probiotics and get a FREE 1L Magwana's Kombucha!'. A 'SHOP NOW >' button is also present. To the left, a sidebar lists categories: New Products, Bestsellers, Best Budget Buys, Shop By Brand, and Gifts, each with a corresponding arrow icon. Below the sidebar, there are thumbnail images of various products including a juicer, a bag of flour, a box of tea, a grain-free toast product, a yogurt container, a small bottle, and a circular logo for 'OUR INGREDIENT'.

South Africa's largest and most well-established organic and natural products online store, [Faithful to Nature](#) has reported a 70% average growth rate over the past three years. The past festive season was a particular boost to sales, and Faithful to Nature showed 100% growth compared to the same period during the previous fiscal. Founded almost a decade ago by entrepreneur and sustainability innovator Robyn Smith, Faithful to Nature has not just stayed the course through South Africa's challenging, pioneering e-commerce years, but has grown significantly and established an enviable model of customer retention. Year on year, 80% of Faithful to Nature's customers consistently return.

A vital aspect of attracting and retaining consumers of organic and natural products is the availability of trustworthy information that they can use to make more conscious buying decisions. Faithful to Nature has distinguished itself in the marketplace through its dedication to the transparent labelling of every one of the 11,000 products it features on its site, as well as providing the latest consumer education about product ingredients that ethical consumers want to understand.

Empowering customers

Smith said: "We devote extensive resources to empowering our customers with information on how they can take back the power to live in toxic-free homes and to cause as little damage to the environment as possible with their buying choices. In addition to our strict ingredient listing policy, we provide pocket guides that list common contentious ingredients found in cleaning, cosmetic and food products and maintain an up-to-date, educational blog to assist South Africans with ethical product choices, no matter where they shop."

Last year, Faithful to Nature's combination of a business track record, mission and customer service attracted the attention of Silvertree Capital, which resulted in a R10 million investment that is enabling the imminent launch of a mobile-friendly site, as well as the development of wholesale and private label streams of the business.

Founding partner of Silvertree, Paul Cook, said: "Faithful to Nature is one of our most exciting investments as it sits at the intersection of the rapidly growing e-commerce industry and organic movement. With the help of fanatical customer service, Faithful to Nature shows no sign of slowing down its explosive growth."

While ethical consumerism once focussed heavily on the food category, in line with current global trends, Faithful to Nature reported growth driven by best-selling products not just in food, but across the cleaning, health, home and beauty categories as well. Looking back over just the last fiscal year, Faithful to Nature has welcomed more than 14,000 new customers into its community, which is now 22,000 strong.

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