

# Nissan South Africa is changing the car-buying experience



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

16 Jul 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a swift and severe impact on the globally integrated automotive industry. The global economy is currently in some form of lockdown and knocks to economic activity continue across the globe.



Shinkichi Izumi, managing director of Nissan South Africa

The automotive cluster is an important industrial sector in South Africa and its continuity is critical to the future industrial and economic landscape of the country.

With that being said, there is now an urgent need for car dealers around the country to find new ways of engaging their potential customers without exposing them to the risk of contracting the coronavirus. More and more consumers are now relying to the web and are looking for innovative ways to interact with the cars that they intending to buy before making their final decisions.

Taking the lead in innovation is Nissan South Africa, who have launched the shop@home services, a virtual experience that brings the showroom directly into potential buyers' homes. All the most popular services, queries and bookings associated with a trip to your local dealer can now be done virtually from the comfort of your home.

Shinkichi Izumi, managing director of Nissan South Africa, takes us through the future of buying a car...

## ■ ***How has Covid-19 impacted Nissan South Africa?***

The pandemic has had a profound impact on businesses and people. We are adapting to a 'new normal' by providing the functionality needed around buying and owning a vehicle, with the safety, flexibility, and ease of doing so from home or place of work. Now more than ever, it is about convenience for our customers.

## ■ ***What's the biggest challenge the company is currently facing during this pandemic?***

Like other organisations, there are different challenges. One of the recent challenges has been completing the manufacturing facility upgrades, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in a slight delay in the production of the new Navara.

### ■ **Nissan has launched shop@home services. What exactly does this entail?**

Through Nissan's newly launched shop@home services, customers can do the following:

- Have an interactive video call with Nissan's dealers nationwide linking digital solutions to the physical dealer environment
- virtually connect with our highly skilled sales executives for a real-time virtual demonstration of the vehicle.
- Order online the car of their choice
- Get a quotation or request a call back
- Complete the buying process online with the help of a finance calculator

More added value features are in the pipeline and will be added to these existing functions in the future.

### ■ **What was the process like?**

The process involved empathising with our customers, understanding all the services and queries associated with a trip to the local dealer, and finding simple ways to offer these same services from the ease of customers' own homes or place of work.

*“ At Nissan, our goal and mission is to create a seamless customer journey through digital solutions and tools to support the rapidly changing consumer expectations, and with this overnight change in customer needs due to Covid, we were agile enough to developed a range of online solutions and services that our customers can make use of, from the comfort and safety of their own homes. ”*

### ■ **Besides the obvious, what are the additional benefits of the shop@home service?**

In the next week, our pre-finance app and home test drive offered by selected dealers will be going live, including a comprehensive service and warranty information. Next on the list will be a full virtual showroom experience, providing a 360 virtual tour of the dealership and all vehicles from the safety of your living room.

### ■ **Do you think that this new customer experience will impact the future of how cars are bought?**

Well, people now have a choice between the physical and virtual experience of purchasing a vehicle. Due to Covid-19, there is evidence that more people will switch to online services. The digital space offers huge potential in revolutionising the vehicle purchase and ownership experience, and it is important to stay abreast of these changes.

### ■ **Are physical dealerships a thing of the past?**

Many people still regard a physical showroom as the best way to interact and purchase vehicles of their choice.

*“ We find that human interaction through face to face discussions still has an important role in guiding purchase decisions. We see the Shop@Home services as a flexible, efficient and innovative way of adding to, and complementing, the showroom experience. ”*

### ■ **For customers coming to dealerships, what sort of patterns and trends are you seeing?**

As expected, we are seeing that some of the customers are anxious. We have made sure that we adhere to all regulations as stipulated by the government, and guarantee safe and hygienic showrooms for our employees as well as our customers. We have also developed a range of online features and services that allow people to choose, compare, configure and even purchase a vehicle from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

■ ***What do you think the next 12 months will be for the automotive industry?***

We cannot deny that Covid-19 has had a tremendous effect on the motoring industry, however, we remain optimistic about the future of the manufacturing sector in our country. Vehicle sales figures will increase in the next 12 months despite a weak new vehicle market, brought on to us by the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ ***What has been the biggest lesson from all of this?***

Covid-19 has affected every aspect of society. It has changed concepts of medicine, societal systems, social distance and is expected to change the positioning of mobility going forward.

“ For Nissan, responding to this unprecedented crisis has meant taking measures to protect employees, customers, and all members of the global Nissan family by positively changing how we do business on a daily basis. ”

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