

4 e-commerce trends, and how to use them to accelerate your business

2020 proved to be a year of unprecedented consumer demand when it came to e-commerce adoption and popularity, as the Covid-19 pandemic and global lockdowns led to an acceleration in buyers switching to online purchasing platforms.



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From groceries to wine to clothing and furniture, everything was suddenly available at the touch of a button, purchased from the comfort and safety of your own home.

“Our own customer research shows that the average e-commerce spend increased by 30% in the first half of 2020 compared to the first half of 2019. We expect the sector’s value to surge by 150%, to R225bn, within the next five years,” says Thokozani Dlamini, CEO of FNB’s merchant services.



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Going into 2021, there are several e-commerce trends that have been identified. Dlamini goes through the top four trends and how you can leverage them to grow your business:

1. Change in shopping habits: Although the massive shift to online shopping was spurred on by the pandemic, many are likely to continue with the convenience of online shopping now that they have first-hand experience.

What you can do: Set up a company website if you don't already have one. You can easily set up a site geared for online purchasing through platforms such as Shopify.

2. Comparison tools: Consumers have never been more empowered to rate goods based on reviews or compare prices across different suppliers at the touch of a button. Price comparison websites have made it simple to determine which brands are better at customer service and where to get the best possible value for money.

What you can do: Conduct market research regularly to ensure that your products are competitively priced. Interact with consumers online to ensure that your brand is recognised for positive engagement.



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3. Social media: The increasing popularity of social media has led to the advent of new e-commerce platforms via media such as TikTok and Instagram.

What you can do: In addition to photos of your product and competitions, you can run videos of your top-performing products to boost sales and direct consumers to your website. Your account could include unboxing videos, tutorials and even photos of top products in a slideshow format.

4. Customer data: In an age where the consumer has become the product, consumer data has never been more vital to a company's success. Your consumer data gives you insights into your customers' demographics, which advertising channels are most popular; and which content is achieving the desired targets. With the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA) coming into full effect this July, you need to ensure that your customer data is secure.

What you can do: If you do have customer databases, you must be able to show where that data was obtained, for example, a competition, website or trade show and you must be able to show proof of customer's consent to receive marketing information.

"With consumers likely to continue shopping online even beyond the pandemic, these trends are worth noting to ensure your business' success going forward," Dlamini says.

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