

Heightened customer service expectations this Black Friday

Customers will assume a very different Black Friday experience on 27 November given the Covid-19 pandemic, and their service expectations will be higher, says Nathalie Schooling, CEO of customer experience company nlighten.



Credit: Roadnae Productions via Pexels

Since many will avoid physically going to the store and opt to shop online instead, there will be a demand for quality digital service. It's been nine months of adjusting to the Covid climate, and while retailers are by no means in the clear when it comes to recovery, consumer power has grown stronger and careful consideration will go into where they choose to spend their precious rands.

Schooling believes that despite retrenchments and salary cuts this year, consumers will still shop this Black Friday and are especially keen on hunting for bargains and saving money where they can.

"If you just look at the stores currently, people are out shopping and the roads are busy again. I think retail therapy will play a big role for many in dealing with the hard year. South Africans also want to support businesses where they can, it's been tough for everyone," she says.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 23 Nov 2020



Encouraging safe shopping

Schooling cautions companies not to take the continued support of consumers at this time for granted and encourages them to deliver on customer service and to pay extra attention to sensitivities around Covid-19 protocol.

“Not being able to deliver on promises and protocols will be a massive fail for retailers who can’t get this right. Standing in long queues that are not managed correctly is one of the biggest factors of a negative customer experience,” says Schooling.

Below she shares her advice to retailers on how to manage crowd control and tackle Covid-19 social distancing protocol this Black Friday:

- Encourage online shopping instead and make sure you offer the same deals online as you do in-store
- Extend your promotions without limiting sales to just a few days
- Have very clear multilingual signage to manage demarcated queue areas
- Have extra staff on duty to enforce protocols and manage the crowds
- Be very clear about maximum numbers allowed and don’t be afraid to turn people away
- Get creative and find a fun way to keep customers busy and entertained while waiting in line



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What will be the popular buys this year? In the past, it’s been TV’s and toilet paper, but since South Africans have been forced to make some lifestyle changes this year, electronics and wellness products are likely to top the list as this year’s favourites.

“Given the rise in home-based working, it’s likely that electronics like tablets, laptops, digital subscriptions, smartphones and other tech gadgets that can be used for both work and play will be a popular choice. A lot of South Africans used lockdown to focus on their health and wellbeing, so I also foresee a strong uptake of health products and fitness equipment,” says Schooling.

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