

# Revolutionising retail efficiency through the power of the cloud

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Technology has become not just a tool, but a catalyst for transformation to bring greater efficiencies as well as improve the customer experience. Central to this is the cloud that brings with it the combination of advanced technologies, edge solutions, and the ability to integrate within the existing retail ecosystem.



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Historically, retailers have stuck to traditional deployment methods. For instance, manually updating Point-of-Sale (PoS) systems outside of working hours. This not only presented a risk, with limited after-hours support but was also expensive, time-consuming, and lacked real-time testing.

Invariably, when the store would open the next day, there would be teething issues that had to be ironed out. This not only had a detrimental effect on profits, but also negatively impacted on the customer experience.



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Enter the concept of blue/green deployments. This deployment strategy, essentially allowing retailers to run parallel application versions in identical environments effectively enabling seamless transitions. In the world of retail, this means the capability to deploy changes during production hours without interrupting the shopping experience.

Instead of an overnight manual PoS update, we now have automated deployments that are tested rigorously, ensuring operational effectiveness.

Additionally, enterprise-class retail solutions could only be afforded by the largest stores. However, the emergence of major cloud providers like AWS and GCP in South Africa and the rest of the continent mean that even small-scale retailers at an individual store level can leverage powerful cloud-based solutions.

The cloud has essentially levelled the playing field, making world-class technology accessible to retailers of all sizes.

### **Mobilising the in-store experience**

The ubiquity of mobile devices, including mobile printers, scanners, and WiFi devices, has reshaped the retail environment. Gone are the days of tethered printers and wired devices opening up their own set of challenges.

With cloud integration, these wireless devices can seamlessly communicate, streamlining operations, and enhance the customer experience without being reliant on an on-premises server.

Historically, local retailers have faced significant connectivity challenges. Yet, with cloud advancements, especially in edge solutions, the dependency on international connectivity has diminished.

Now, even if undersea cables fail as was the case recently, retailers can still tap into in-country cloud solutions.



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There is also the opportunity to harness the potential of AI within the retail store environment. With cloud solutions, retailers can effortlessly integrate AI-driven managed services.

Instead of creating and configuring bespoke applications that must be hosted within their on-premises environments, the cloud offers plug-and-play solutions that provide instant benefits.

This also extends to the cybersecurity segment. At a time when cyber threats are constant, cloud deployments offer unparalleled security. Traditional non-cloud systems, often plagued with outdated security solutions, stand vulnerable.

In contrast, cloud deployments 'force' retailers to adhere to stringent security standards by the cloud providers, thereby safeguarding retailer data and customer information.

### **Disaster recovery and load shedding resilience**

The unpredictability of load shedding can wreak havoc on traditional in-store servers. However, with the cloud, disaster recovery becomes streamlined. Retailers can quickly restore operations with the click of a button, bypassing prolonged downtimes.



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Furthermore, while in-store servers might require uninterrupted power supplies (UPS) to function during load shedding, mobile devices, now integral to modern retail, rely on the cloud. This means a diminished dependency on in-store servers, pushing retailers towards a more resilient and agile operational model.

Deploying the cloud within an extensive retail environment remains a costly exercise. The retailer must understand the use case for it and know how the cloud can be fit for purpose as well as the benefits it can provide the store environment.

In navigating the challenges and opportunities of the modern retail landscape, cloud solutions offer an unmatched combination of agility, resilience, and efficiency.

The integration of the cloud into retail operations is not just a step forward; it's a leap into the future.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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