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# Consumers are planning to spend big on Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019

**PwC's survey of South  
African consumers'  
intentions to spend**

**20 November 2019**



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## Introduction

Some retailers are not particularly fond of Black Friday/Cyber Monday due to the pressures that the short-term event places on medium-term supply chain planning. Local consumers, in turn, go bonkers about the shopping even. As such, local retailers are responding with gusto. Some of their campaigns have been stretched to several weeks, with PwC seeing the event morphing into 'Black November' over the past few years. It has rapidly gone from being a novelty American import to being a significant generator of sales for retailers and brands going into the Christmas period.

*For the first time, PwC South Africa is part of a growing Black Friday/Cyber Monday consumer survey run by the global PwC network over the past four years.* In 2019, the poll was run in six territories: France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, UK, and South Africa. The research was coordinated by Dublin-based PwC Research – our global centre of excellence for bespoke end-to-end research and insight. UK-based strategic insight agency, Opinium Research conducted the survey amongst 1,000 South African adults between 26 September and 4 October 2019.

Why is this shopping event – so seldom reported on in company annual reports and macro-economic statistics – so important to retailers and consumers? There are several reasons:

- On Black Friday 2018, South African retail sales increased by 1,952% compared to an ordinary shopping day. (For comparison purposes, the global average is an increase of 663% in sales.)<sup>1</sup> Compared to an ordinary Friday, Black Friday sales increased by 2,571% in South Africa in 2018 – ranking the country in the top five globally.<sup>2</sup>
- South Africans are the second-most price sensitive society in the world, with three out of four consumers knowing the prices of goods that they regularly buy. The country's shoppers are amongst the most active in doing price comparisons.<sup>3</sup>
- Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019 sales will receive a boost from being held very near the end of the calendar month. Black Friday is scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup> which this is after the private sector payday, traditionally falling on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Over the past two years, Black Friday has occurred before payday – on the 24<sup>th</sup> in 2017 and 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2018.

Using our survey results, this report looks at Black Friday/Cyber Monday from several perspectives. The following five sections reviews this information:

1. Consumers plan on spending 36% more this year vs. 2018
2. Durables goods the most popular product categories
3. Online purchases gaining strongly on in-store buying
4. Customer experience is everything – retailers need to get it right
5. Finding information on discounts and deals



**Anton Hugo**  
Partner and Retail & Consumer Industry  
Leader  
Email: anton.hugo@pwc.com



**Lullu Krugel**  
Partner and Chief Economist  
Email: lullu.krugel@pwc.com

P.S. According to behavioural economists, rational decision-making abilities are at their weakest during this kind of heavy-discount events, as retail marketers leverage consumers' cognitive make-up and weaknesses to get them to spend more. PwC South Africa's economists previously looked at the behavioural traps that consumers should be wary of as they navigate the frenzy of the Black Friday/Cyber Monday. The information is available [here](#).

## Executive Summary

**Consumers plan on spending 36% more this year vs. 2018:** South African shoppers are planning to spend an average of R3,812 during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019 – and increase of 36% over last year. Some **85% of South Africans surveyed confirmed that they were intending to buy something or would consider it if there is a good enough deal.**

Six out of 10 consumers who are planning to spend the same or more than last year are trying to take advantage of savings on offer, while 43% of these shoppers are hoping that more retailers will have deals this year. Intentions to save on Christmas spending by bringing forward this expenditure into November is another important motivator.

**Durables goods the most popular product categories:** South Africans are suckers for a good special and the increasing frequency of discount campaigns are training consumers to buy on promotion. Despite consumers indicating that it is not a good time to purchase durable goods, **the most popular product categories during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019 will be durables like electrical equipment, technology goods, homewares, clothing, shoes and accessories.** However, food and drink are becoming increasingly important purchases on Black Friday/Cyber Monday, as this is the main place that households are trying to save money. Some 30% of shoppers placed the food and drink category in their top three.

**Online purchases gaining strongly on in-store buying: South Africa's Black Friday/Cyber Monday shoppers plan to make 50.4% of their purchases in brick-and-mortar stores compared to online retailing (43.4%) and utilising virtual assistants (5.7%).** Opinium Research's survey found that online retailers offered some of the best customer service during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2018. Growing investment in telecommunications infrastructure has resulted in the country now having 30 million internet users. On average, youth shoppers (aged 18-34) intend to make 51.5% of their purchases through online channels and voice recognition services, while those shoppers in the age bracket 35-54 intend to make 51.9% of their purchases through the same avenues. In contrast, buyers older than 55 will spend only 35% of their shopping efforts online or via voice recognition services.

**Customer experience is everything – retailers need to get it right:** Retailers need to step up in the way they service their customers during this shopping bonanza. A great customer experience does not happen by accident and is not created overnight. It is the crown jewel of a carefully planned and executed customer strategy that knows who the customers are and what the retailer can do for them. PwC's synthesis of Opinium Research data on customer experience yielded **four key customer experience priorities, namely: addressing crowds, physical and virtual queueing; offering great deals and big discounts; providing safety and security; as well as avoiding stock shortages.**

**Finding information on discounts and deals: Social media will be the (joint) top source of deals information this year, 48% of male and 52% of female shoppers intend to research their purchases via this avenue.** (South Africans spend two hours and 48 minutes on social media per day.) Some 50% of Black Friday/Cyber Monday shoppers will also look at television advertising, followed closely in third place (48% of shoppers) by searching on general (non-retail) websites. (Two out of three South Africans have access to the internet.) Deals and clearance websites are the third most popular source of information, while lower down on the popularity list, 40% of shoppers will source information from newspapers, magazines and leaflets.

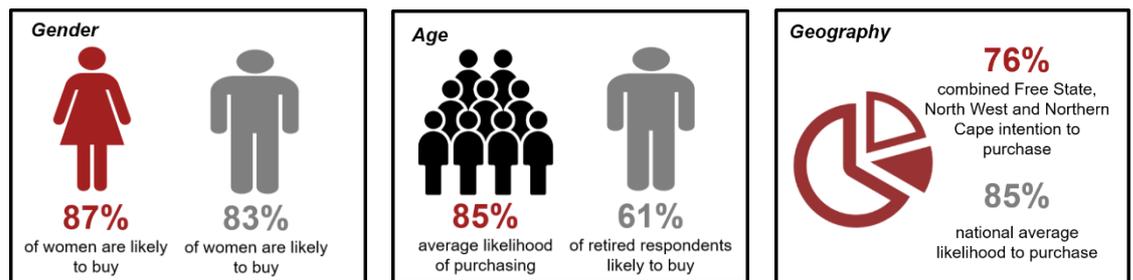


# 1. Consumers plan on spending 36% more this year versus 2018

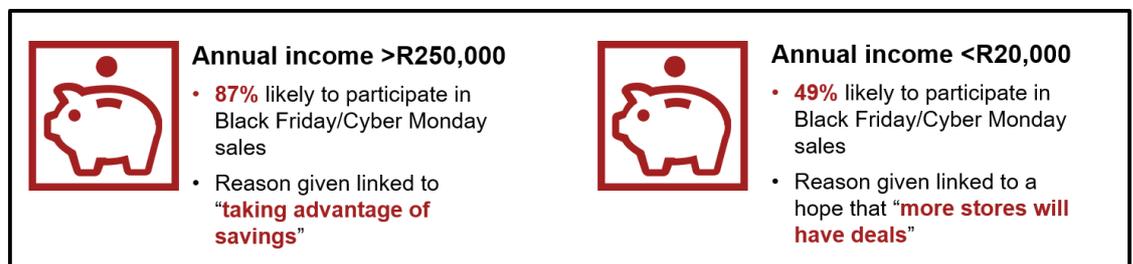
South African shoppers spent on average R2,803 during the Black Friday/Cyber Monday sales in 2018. Based on survey results, this is expected to increase by 36% in 2019 to R3,812.<sup>4</sup> (This is more bullish than local online payment service provider PayGate’s prediction of a 30% increase.<sup>5</sup>) The positive outlook suggests customers have remained optimistic following significant disappointment of the discounts offered in 2018. This, in turn, was linked to the misalignment of expectations: shoppers get discounts of 50%-85% in the United States of America (USA) versus an average of 20% provided in South Africa. In addition, frustrations were expressed last year around order delays and delivery charges.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, South African retailers designed the shopping holiday to focus on a Black November, providing a larger volume of smaller sales during the month, rather than solely on the four-day Black Friday/Cyber Monday event. Due to the extension of the shopping period, a certain disinterest was borne among customers leading to the overall disappointment in the Black Friday/Cyber Monday discounts themselves.<sup>7</sup> (PwC reviewed the 2018 outcome [here](#).)

Despite the lacklustre results of Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2018, only 15% of respondents surveyed in late September and early October showed no interest in taking part in the event this year – and these could have changed their mind subsequently. (Only 3% of respondents indicated that they had made purchases before but will not do so again this year). Some 85% of South African adults surveyed confirmed that they were intending to buy something or would consider it if there is a good enough deal.<sup>8</sup>



When prompted to provide a monetary value to spending over the Black Friday/Cyber Monday, 26% of respondents intending to shop said they would spend between R2,001 and R5,000. Across the age demographic breakdowns, this was also the most popular proposed spending bracket.<sup>9</sup> This is a hefty sum given the weakness of the economy at present.



Why are shoppers planning to spend more this year? Survey data suggests that 59% of shoppers who are planning to spend the same or more than last year are trying to take advantage of savings on offer.<sup>10</sup> This has become part of the retail fabric in South Africa: as discussed in the following section, the country’s shoppers are increasingly buying only when prices are discounted. As such, the main motivator for spending more on Black Friday/Cyber Monday this year could be due to shopping behaviour in general, and not necessarily because of the unique nature of the November shopping bonanza.

**TABLE 1: CONSUMERS EXPECT SAVINGS FROM MORE RETAILERS:**

	Total	Male	Female
I am trying to take advantage of the savings in the sales	59 %	60 %	59 %
I am hoping that more stores will have deals this year	43 %	40 %	47 %
I am trying to cut down on the cost of Christmas present shopping by buying in the sales	35 %	34 %	36 %
I am confident I am getting genuinely good deal	34 %	36 %	32 %
The deals continue to be very exciting	26 %	32 %	20 %
I have more disposable income to spend this year	22 %	22 %	22 %
I have a need to buy a lot this year	16 %	15 %	16 %
I have more Christmas presents to buy this year	12 %	14 %	10 %
I am confident in my finances due to economic growth	7 %	7 %	6 %
I didn't know about Black Friday/Cyber Monday last year	4 %	4 %	4 %
Other	4 %	4 %	4 %

Source: *Opinium Research*

At the same time, 43% of shoppers are hoping that more retailers will have deals this year.<sup>11</sup> By November 18 this year, digital marketing specialists Nichemarket already listed 126 Black Friday/Cyber Monday campaigns. These were grouped into categories like automotive, bags and luggage, beauty, books, deal sites, digital services, DIY & Hardware, fashion, food and wine, financial services, fitness, general retailers, health and wellness, hobbies, home and living, jewellery and accessories, Packaging & Logistics, pets, photography, footwear, sport and outdoor, and travel.<sup>12</sup>



Intentions to save on Christmas spending by bringing forward this expenditure into November is another important motivator. The net impact of Black Friday/Cyber Monday on retail income is challenging to calculate exactly because of some shift in holiday spending from December to November. Ironically, many retail shops and malls have already draped their operations with Christmas-themed decorations, so holiday-focused shopping in November should not be such a surprise.

Only 22% of survey respondents who plan to spend the same or more compared to 2018 indicated greater income this year to expend on Black Friday/Cyber Monday.<sup>13</sup> Local retail sales are already showing positive momentum: real (i.e. inflation adjusted) retail sales increased by an average of 1.6% y-o-y in the six months ending September 2019.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, y-o-y growth in retail sales during November have been above the calendar year average for the past four years.

## 2. Durable goods the most popular product categories

South Africans are suckers for a good special. Some 30% of the volume of FMCG products sold are at a discounted price. In fact, the increasing frequency of discount campaigns are training consumers to purchase on promotion. (Ironically, analysis by Nielsen finds that this is hurting retailers' bottom line. Based on an analysis of 200 product categories, only one in three promotions surpassed an efficiency threshold that translates into these discounted sales at least breaking even.<sup>15</sup>

Despite respondents to the FNB/BER Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) survey indicating in 2019Q3 (for a fourth straight quarter) that it is not a good time to purchase durable goods,<sup>16</sup> the most popular product categories during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019 will be durables like electrical equipment, technology goods, homewares, as well as clothing, shoes and accessories. More than half of surveyed shoppers intend buying electronics and tech products, with all but the lowest income category listing this as their number one purchase intention.<sup>17</sup>

**TABLE 2: DURABLE GOODS ARE THE KEY FOCUS OF SPENDING PLANS**

Percentage of surveyed shoppers selecting categories in their top three to spend the most money on	Total	Under R20,000	R20,000-R79,999	R80,000-R249,999	R250,000 or more
Electricals/technology	54%	48%	58%	56%	59%
Adult clothing, shoes, accessories	47%	53%	48%	46%	45%
Homewares	34%	31%	26%	37%	45%
Children's clothing, shoes, accessories	32%	41%	33%	30%	27%
Food and drink	30%	34%	34%	27%	26%
Christmas stocking fillers and treats	20%	19%	20%	20%	21%
Health and beauty	19%	19%	17%	23%	17%
Toys	14%	12%	15%	11%	16%
Travel and leisure (e.g. holidays)	8%	10%	11%	6%	8%
Other	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Do not know	1%	0%	2%	3%	0%

Source: Opinium Research

Not surprisingly, low-income households are prioritising adult and children's' clothing more than higher income earners. The changing of the seasons as well as upcoming new school year will be a key driver of this behaviour. In turn, higher income households will spend more of their money on luxuries like homewares, toys and gifts. Families earning between R80,000 and R249,999 stand out for their planned spending on health and beauty products.<sup>18</sup>



Food and drink are becoming increasingly important purchases on Black Friday/Cyber Monday, as this is the main place that households are trying to save money.<sup>19</sup> South African consumers are certainly cash-strapped: nominal remuneration paid to workers in the private and public sector increased by just 4.7% during the 2018 calendar year – the lowest since the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) started keeping these records in 1971.<sup>20</sup>

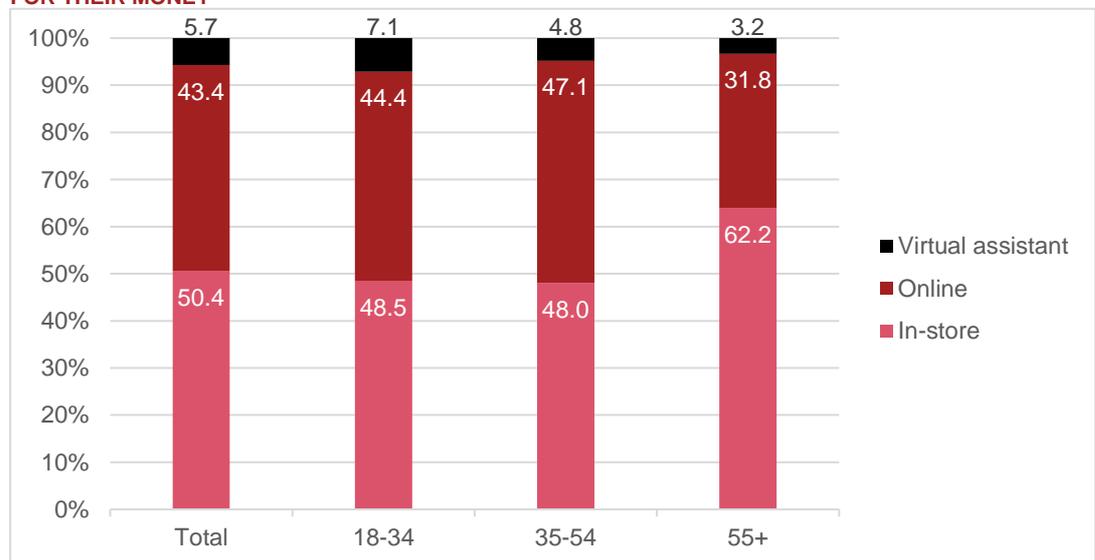
Some 30% of surveyed shoppers placed the food and drink category in their top three.<sup>21</sup> The need to save on nutritional costs has resulted in South Africans reducing the number of trips they make to shops and increasing their comparison of prices.<sup>22</sup> Online comparison tools have become necessary in assisting customers prepare for Black Friday/Cyber Monday. However, while providing customers an overview of the deals available, this removes the impulse and spontaneity in shopping that Black Friday/Cyber Monday tends to incite. This is likely to affect both online and in-store purchasing trends.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Online purchases gaining strongly on in-store buying

South African shoppers are planning to make 50.4% of their Black Friday/Cyber Monday purchases in brick-and-mortar stores. The remainder are split between online retailing (43.4%) and by utilising virtual assistants (5.7%) like Apple's Siri and Google's Assistant.<sup>24</sup> This not only highlights the significance of online shopping around Cyber Monday, but also the growing importance of online sales for brick-and-mortar retail companies around Black Friday.

Opinium Research's survey found that online retailers offered some of the best customer service during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2018.<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, online retail accounts for just 1.4% of South Africa's overall retail expenditure and is expected to only reach the 2% mark in 2022.<sup>26</sup> However, this low number obfuscates the volume of South Africans that spend time at online shops. A 2018 survey found that 49% of local internet users visited an online retail store in the month of the poll, while 47% of internet users searched online for a product or service with intentions to buy.<sup>27</sup>

**FIGURE 1: ACROSS AGE BRACKETS, ONLINE SHOPPING GIVING BRICK-AND-MORTAR SALES ARE RUN FOR THEIR MONEY**



Source: Opinium Research



Growth in South African e-commerce has in the past been hampered by the cost, quality and reliability of internet services and delivery mechanisms.<sup>28</sup> However, growing investment in telecommunications and related infrastructure resulted in the country now having more than 30 million internet users.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the exposure to a large segment of the South African population is resulting in significant annual growth rates in e-retail: online retail increased by 25% in 2018.<sup>30</sup>

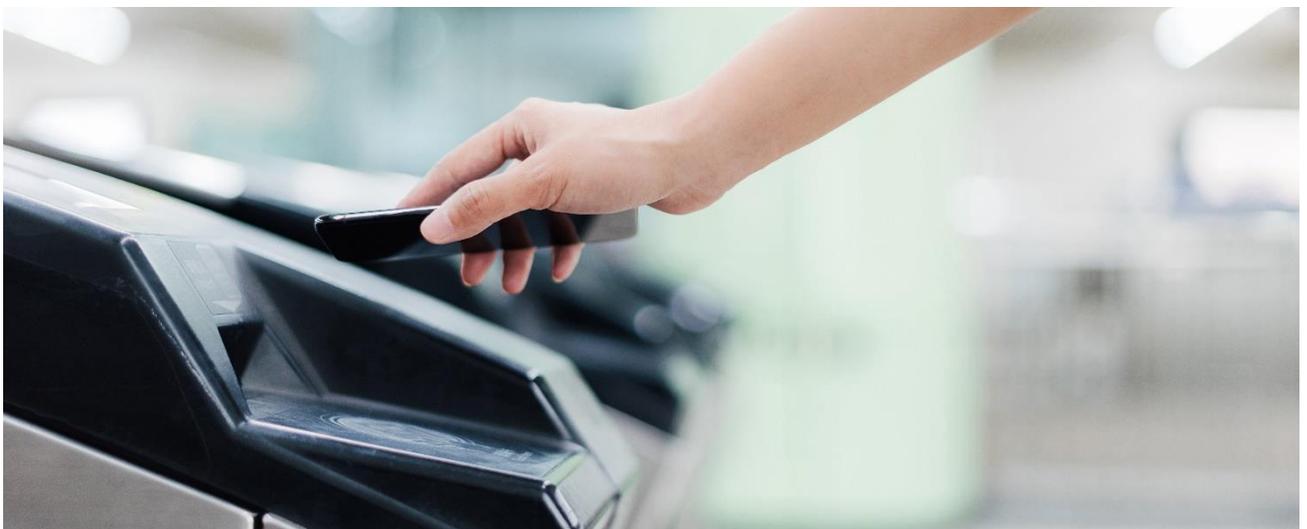


“It has now been a full decade since the Great Recession ushered in what is often called the new normal, a supposed recalibration of what is possible in terms of global economic growth. But a funny thing happened: the world’s consumers displayed unexpected resilience, driven by technological advances that have unleashed a Golden Age of consumption, offering a worldwide bazaar of goods and services – open day and night – to anyone with a mobile phone.”

PwC Global Consumer Insights Survey 2019<sup>31</sup>

As could be expected, younger more tech-savvy shoppers intend to favour online shopping over instore purchases. On average, youth shoppers (aged 18-34) intend to make 51.5% of their purchases through online channels and voice recognition services, while those shoppers in the age bracket 35-54 intend to make 51.9% of their purchases through the same avenues. In contrast, buyers older than 55 will spend only 35% of their shopping efforts online or via voice recognition services with the remainder in-store. Higher household income brackets also favour a greater focus on online shopping compared to more traditional retail outlets lower down on the income scale.<sup>32</sup>

Online shopping is taking off in South Africa because it comes with no physical barriers, such as till point queues and parking lots. There are also no emotional barriers like rude fellow shoppers or store personnel that do not make eye contact. In a way, online shopping is helping consumers enjoy deeper relationships with their favourite retailers and brands by reducing frustrating, high-friction interactions.<sup>33</sup>



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## 4. Customer experience is everything – retailers need to get it right

All indications are that, despite challenging economic conditions, Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2019 could be a bumper spending period. The FNB/BER CCI reflects continued positive sentiment about the outlook for household finances. Less affluent households, for example, have seen a boost to income prospects from the introduction of the national minimum wage earlier this year, continued above-inflation increases in social grants, as well as a significant acceleration in credit extension to low income consumers.<sup>34</sup>

This is a terrific opportunity for local retailers to boost their revenues ahead of the important Christmas shopping period. However, while revenues are up for grabs, retailers also need to step up in the way they service their customers during this shopping bonanza. Give customers a great experience and they will buy more, be more loyal and share their experience with friends. Customer experience is everything.



“Whether your organisation sells household goods, health services, cars or financial services, delivering a superior experience will be what makes you a winner.”

John Maxwell, PwC’s Global Consumer Markets Leader.<sup>35</sup>

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A great customer experience does not happen by accident and is not created overnight. It is the crown jewel of a carefully planned and executed customer strategy that knows who the customers are and what the retailer can do for them. What makes for a good experience? For a start, the basics help – speed, convenience, and friendliness. Then efforts to make the shopping interaction as hassle-free as possible. People love great value, but it has got to be delivered with the minimum friction or stress. And in this technology-crazed world, where online retail is booming, people also still want the human touch. Furthermore, giving customers a great will bring them back, and probably bring their friends with them.<sup>36</sup>



“If you think of the high-growth organisations that are winning in the market, names like Apple, Amazon, Disney and Netflix, they focus on creating amazing customer experiences, capturing and interpreting customer insight, investing in and creating employee experiences, creating environments where experimentation and innovation flourish, and see revenue as important – but a result rather than an areas to focus on.”

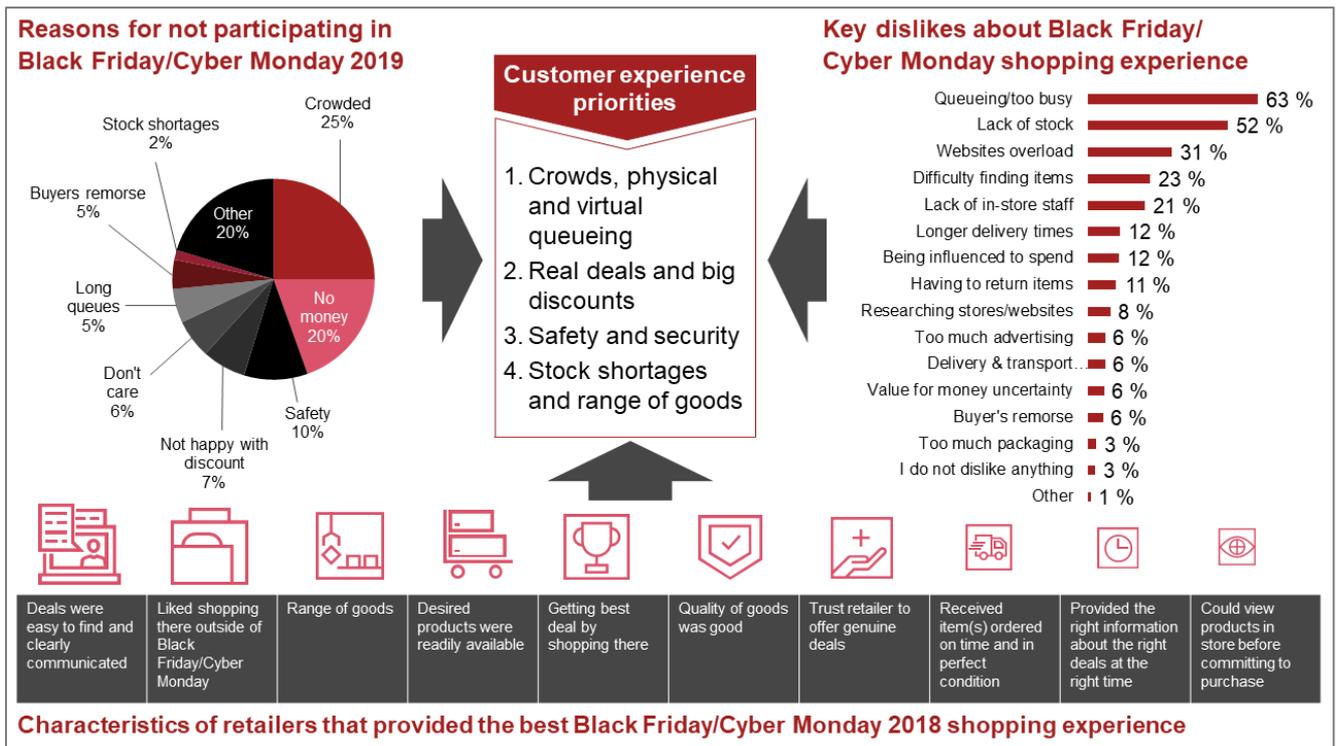
Quinton Pienaar, PwC South Africa Customer Engagement Leader<sup>37</sup>

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Opinium Research asked South Africans three important questions regarding customer experience: what you dislike about Black Friday/Cyber Monday, why will you not be taking part this year, and what do retailers do that offer the best overall experience. Based on global best practice regarding customer experience, Opinium Research data, and the South African context, PwC has synthesised these elements into four key customer experience priorities for retailers:

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- **Crowds, physical and virtual queueing** – Crowds and queuing is the number one factor highlighted by shoppers for what they dislike about Black Friday/Cyber Monday – and what discouraged some from even taking part in the shopping bonanza. The average customer will shop between 08:00 and 11:00 – thereby intensifying queues early in the day. Innovative strategies to reduce queuing and payment times are no longer encouraged by imperative. For example, mobile payments (via smart phones and wearable devices) are gaining popularity amongst small retailers and services companies because they are convenient. It opens the door to retailers to create newer and faster checkout processes<sup>38</sup> for Black Friday/Cyber Monday.
  - **Great deals and big discounts** – PwC’s analysis following Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2018 found that social media sentiment turned sour as the event kicked off due to what consumers viewed as disappointing price discounts and underwhelming offerings. The build-up towards the day was larger than life, but with discounts averaging only 20% in stores and online compared to much higher expectations, many consumers were left disappointed. It appeared that, rather than only concentrating on heavily discounted sales on one or two days, many retailers aimed to stimulate spending during the entire month of November with more moderate spending cuts.<sup>39</sup>
  - **Safety and security** – Several local media reports<sup>40</sup><sup>41</sup> as well as the South African Police Service (SAPS)<sup>42</sup> identified safety issues during Black Friday/Cyber Monday 2017 and 2018 as crowds stampeded to gain access to shops. (Admittedly, 2018 appeared more peaceful compared to the preceding year.) One in ten South Africans who are not interested in this year’s Black Friday/Cyber Monday sales are blaming security concerns. These included remarks about people getting injured and shops being vandalised. In a country where personal safety is already a factor daily, customer expect retailers to have in place safety and security processes that mitigate this risk.
  - **Stock shortages and range of goods** – This is certainly a massive challenge for supply chain managers.<sup>43</sup> Months of planning and supply chain processes to get enough of the right stock on the shelves will never be 100% effective in ensuring enough goods are available for all customers. In many cases where large discounts are given, demand will outstrip supply. (And there are also media reports of local retailers purposely restricting stock volumes.<sup>44</sup>) Here it is crucial to have staff available to engage with customers. It is unlikely that a stock mishap on Black Friday/Cyber Monday will damage a retailer’s reputation for service delivery during the other 51 weeks of the year, but it could have a knock-on effect for the next year’s Black Friday/Cyber Monday’s sale prospects.

**FIGURE 2: CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PRIORITIES FOR BLACK FRIDAY/CYBER MONDAY 2019**



Source: PwC calculations and analysis based on Opinium Research data



## 5. Finding information on discounts and deals

**Social media** will be the (joint) top source of Black Friday/Cyber Monday deals information this year: 48% of male and 52% of female shoppers are intending to research their purchases via this avenue.<sup>45</sup> The top-spot for social media – with 50% of shoppers identifying it - is not surprising. There are 21 million Facebook users in South Africa. Furthermore, some 96% of big brands make use of this platform to advertise and engage.<sup>46</sup> This makes for a mega space of potential matchups between buyer and seller.

South Africans spend eight hours and 25 minutes a day connected to the internet – that is 25% higher than the global average of six hours and 41 minutes. This includes two hours and 48 minutes of social media activity compared to a global average of two hours and 16 minutes. South Africans have eight social media accounts on average.<sup>47</sup> Social media-placed ads that allow consumers to interact with a brand is now ranked as the third most effective form of advertising globally, and among millennials, this is the most popular form of advertising – beating out traditional television ads. Some 46.5% of South African consumers say they have been influenced to buy a product or service following positive reviews on social media.<sup>48</sup>



“Not only are consumers the strongest link in the global economic chain, but ... technological tools available to them have put them in a position to demand a tailored, seamless and multichannel shopping and social-media-powered experience. Retailers can achieve this by using a blend of both physical and digital approaches. The result for companies will be a greater return on experience with the customer and gaining a competitive advantage.”

Anton Hugo, PwC Africa Retail and Consumer Leader<sup>49</sup>



Some 50% of the survey shoppers will also look at television advertising, followed closely in third place (with 48% of shoppers) by information searching on general (non-retail) websites.<sup>50</sup> Two out of three South Africans have access to the internet,<sup>51</sup> with the country's most popular non-retail websites by page views including local news and media sites News24, TimesLIVE, IOL and Eyewitness News.<sup>52</sup>

**Deals and clearance websites** – those that send out daily emails with discount offers from diverse vendors – are the fourth most popular source of information. Despite the closure in 2016 of a large international contender's local arm,<sup>53</sup> these sites have proliferated in the South African markets to offer consumers large discounts on popular goods and services. Apart from significant discounts on goods and services, these websites also offer e-commerce and delivery functionality to ease purchasing processes. Nichemarket have even suggested that “[e]very day is Black Friday with these popular online deal sites”.<sup>54</sup>

Lower down on the popularity list of information sources is **newspapers, magazines and leaflets**. Roughly 40% of surveyed shoppers will be looking at these physical printings for discount information.<sup>55</sup> Admittedly, this number is not much lower compared to those attributed to electronic media. Still, the print media numbers would have been higher just a year ago. For example, newspaper sales were down 5.0% y-o-y in the first quarter of 2019,<sup>56</sup> and magazine circulation in the country fell by 18.7% y-o-y in the same period. This is blamed on an increase in living expenses – turning newspapers and magazines into luxury items – and the decline in data costs.<sup>57</sup>

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## Contacts

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**Anton Hugo**  
Partner and Retail & Consumer  
Industry Leader  
Email: [anton.hugo@pwc.com](mailto:anton.hugo@pwc.com)



**Lullu Krugel**  
Partner and Chief Economist  
Email: [lullu.krugel@pwc.com](mailto:lullu.krugel@pwc.com)



**Andries Geertsema**  
Associate Director  
Email: [andries.geertsema@pwc.com](mailto:andries.geertsema@pwc.com)



**Christie Viljoen**  
Manager and Economist  
Email: [christie.viljoen@pwc.com](mailto:christie.viljoen@pwc.com)

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