

What is shaping culture? Online shopping

By Brett Rogers

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From the original online experiment by 'Dotcoza' to Amazon having an impact on global affairs, online shopping has annihilated all doubters. A distant cousin to mail order catalogues, online shopping took a chore like shopping and removed that 'chore', in some cases making it therapeutic.



The impact has not all been positive: online shopping facilitates shopping addictions and contributes to the demise of brick and mortar stores. Workers' rights too have been a subject of scrutiny as big online retailers flex their powers over their staff.

But parents rejoiced when their time was freed up. So, too, did spotty faced teens who no longer had to stand perspiring in corner store queues with an adult magazine in their clammy hands.

The Dotcoza Experiment

It was launched in early 2000 as an experiment by Andersen Consulting to see if a person could survive for 3 months on e-commerce alone, something which at the time was unthinkable. 20 years later and now people are ordering dildos during a pandemic.

THE CHALLENGE
For 3 months, survive alone entirely via e-commerce.

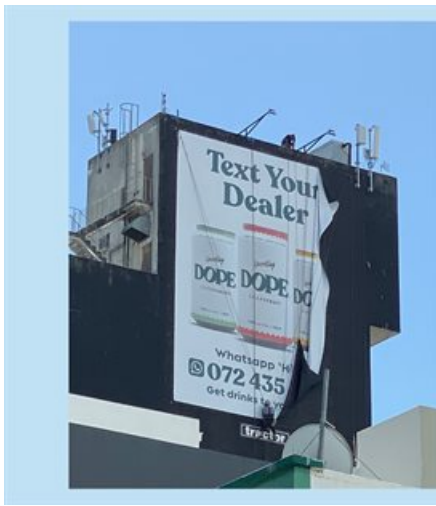
NAME:
Dotcoza (Chris Botha)

DATE:
22/02/2000 - 22/05/2000

TOOLS:
Computer, credit card, mattress, sleeping bag, a bar of soap and the clothes on his back.

"I'm looking forward to doing commonplace things again - like driving, for example."

For those too young to remember, the year 2000 was a big year. We thought the banks were going to crash from Y2K and, if that didn't happen, the Mayan calendar was predicting doom. That same year, a man dubbed Dotcoza was part of an experiment to see if you could survive entirely on e-commerce without leaving the house for three months; something utterly unbelievable at the time.



When DOPE first came about we were up against all the usual beverage start-up challenges - How to get listed? Set up distribution partnerships, brand building etc. On top of this, we had the legal issues and public perception that surrounded Cannabis to contend with. We decided that we needed to launch ourselves as a brave brand and eliminate as many of the 'middleman' hurdles as possible. We built a direct to consumer sales model utilising the WhatsApp Business platform and launched with a billboard that encouraged consumers to "Text Your Dealer". Needless to say, it caused a stir and was forcibly removed 5 days into the campaign but the impact immediately put us on the map as an innovative brand.

We podcasted with the fairy godmother of online shopping fashion and shopping icon, Rafeeqah Larney. Always at the front of the pack when it comes to sales and deals, Rafeeqah (a former colleague of mine) is the go-to person to work the system to your benefit.

Someone who's company totally shook up the online shopping model was founder and creative director of Dope drink, Andrew Davenport. Dope drink launched his WhatsApp-based shopping model on a billboard in Johannesburg urging consumers to 'text your dealer'. The clever tongue-in-cheek play on words almost single-handedly launched the WhatsApp business model in South Africa, as well as gave the business massive attention for the five days the billboard was allowed up before being unceremoniously removed. They have since extended the business's online shopping footprint with Corner Store, a dark store housed on UberEATS.

Oniomania

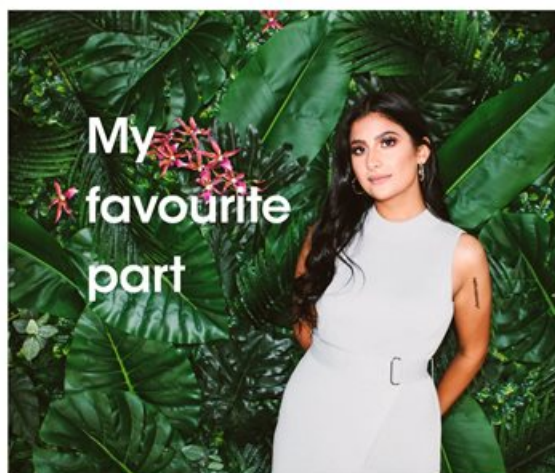
n. compulsive shopping, or an uncontrollable impulse to spend money and to buy without regard to need or use.

The European Report stated that 3% of European adults and 8% of European young people have a level of shopping

addiction which could be considered as pathologic. Shopping addiction has become a growing problem amongst young adults, who are more likely to shop online than their older counterparts. This phenomenon has not been fully explored in South Africa.



How old were you when you started your business? Rabia Ghoor was uniquely positioned as a young person in a new digital world to take advantage of this new style of business when, at 14, she created switchbeauty. As she answered my questions over text, she was also being interviewed by Forbes magazine, something she modestly neglected to mention. For her, as with many others, one of the major issues when creating a business online was trust: a big challenge for me then was just getting people convinced that you weren't trying to scam them," she said. The South African market is notoriously reluctant in shopping online when compared to more developed countries. Word of mouth and user-generated content/reviews go a long way in terms of helping here.



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makeup.

One of the big pluses to online commerce is the ability to pivot quickly, to react to changing moods and, in some cases, product needs. Someone who knows about that is podcast guest, Vincent Viviers, co-founder and co-CEO of Bottles. He and his partner reacted overnight to lockdown by partnering with Pick n Pay to deliver essential items in those early months of, resulting in them not only surviving but thriving.

Online shopping is a growing industry in South Africa and, as our trust levels grow, so do the bank balances of businesses that sell online. It doesn't matter what your product is, consider how your online presence can be elevated by providing your customers with an online shopping experience.

ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for In_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. In_ talks to those

interested in in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in.

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