

Step into the future with mobile

 By [Dave Nemeth](#)

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When mobile phones hit the market in South Africa around 1994, there was a sentiment by many that, having lived life quite effectively without these devices, they simply did not need one. For many, they were seen as a gimmick suitable only for a flashy consumer. Businesses, however, soon embraced the technology realising just how effective these tools were, especially for their sales reps who previously had to rely on pagers.



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Today it is difficult to find a person who doesn't have a mobile phone. There are currently around 16 million active mobile phone users in South Africa, and this number is rapidly on the rise as the services and data become cheaper and free Wi-Fi connectivity is being offered in more and more spots.

The sale of smartphones continues to rise and with models getting increasingly sophisticated, they are becoming serious game changers. The technological leaps have been impressive, especially considering that the first Apple iPhone was only released in SA in 2009. Since then, the average "smartphone" now has an incredible amount of functionality proving that we really do live in an 'APP' world. From research to banking and buying movie tickets, almost everything can be done on this incredible device whilst one is on the move.

It is obvious that business has been quick to jump on the bandwagon by spending a fortune on mobile apps as well as platforms, in order to allow for secure transactions and purchases. What many companies have failed to grasp, however, is that apps are not a replication of their websites. The marketplace is still flooded with apps like this and many companies continue to invest in apps that give no true value to the end user. The banking sector has mastered the integration of the mobile phone by making it easy and simple to do one's banking transactions on the fly and my guess is, that they will continue adding great value to their clients through these devices.



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The future of retail

One industry, however which does seem to be lagging behind here in SA is the retail industry. Whilst some have successfully transitioned to online stores, the majority have not quite got this right. It is clear that, while online shopping will continue to grow, it will not be a replacement for the good old brick and mortar store.

The future of retail will rely heavily on great experiences being created at every touch point, thereby creating a journey from the web through to the physical store. This is where transactions and mobile devices will become vital. Computing has also become intuitive and devices such as beacons are able to pick up the physical behaviour of humans within a space, and this is where I believe the future lies.



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Here is a slightly futuristic view of how the retail experience will become more reliant on the mobile device.

Scenario 1

You are strolling around a shopping mall, when you suddenly get a notification from one of the stores that they have a special on running shoes. You have been looking for running shoes, and this behaviour has been tracked by your searches on google via your mobile device. You enter the store and are directed, via your phone to the relevant section where you can see and try on the actual product. The store carries your size but unfortunately not the colour you are after. A quick check on the store's mobile app confirms that another branch has this colour and you are immediately able to order it on the app, do the transaction and the goods are delivered to you within 24 hours.

Scenario 2

You go to a grocery store to do your monthly shopping and spend your time whizzing through all the aisles. When you return home, you are suddenly notified of future discounts based on the actual goods you have purchased. Not only do you get these electronic vouchers but also exciting recipes to try, based on the products you have just purchased for the month. The app has picked up the type of dog food you have bought and sends you quality information related to your pets as well as discount vouchers for suitable pet products. It could also include information such as dog trainers and veterinarians in your area.

Although some of the above features may currently be taking place through various apps, there is, as yet, no complete integration and value-add as mentioned in the scenarios above. I think we will see some huge developments in this area within a very short space of time as all businesses hunt for that much-needed market share, coupled with customer loyalty.

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ABOUT DAVE NEMETH

A leading blue chip international company recently identified Dave as one of the top creative influencers in the country. Dave Nemeth is a qualified designer who has held a variety of senior as well as executive positions with some of the countries leading retail groups, spanning a career of twenty years. Email Dave at daven@worldonline.co.za, follow @davenemeth on Twitter and connect on Facebook.

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