

The power of new

By [Diana Springer](#), issued by [M&C Saatchi Abel](#)

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In 2015 Bloomberg ranked South Africa the second "most stressed out" nation in the world, according to the *Mail & Guardian*. Plus, with the sixth highest number of shopping centres in the world, South African consumers love to shop. But what's the connection between the two?

Well, one in three South Africans – 11.5 million people in total – agrees with the statement, "Shopping makes me feel that my life is worthwhile" (AMPS, 2014). It's certainly cheaper than therapy.

Because shopping in SA is an activity for the whole family, providing escape, upliftment, and 'retail-tainment', this article briefly examines how retailers can capture maximum attention from these experience-driven consumers.

The treasure hunt

Shopping is not a rational sport. A study by researchers at Stanford, MIT and Carnegie Mellon showed that the brain's pleasure centre, the nucleus accumbens, lights up when shown a desirable object for sale. However, while pleasure kicks in just from the act of looking, there's also pleasure in purchasing – or more specifically, in getting a bargain.



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US outlet chain **TJMaxx** understands this phenomenon, titling it 'the treasure hunt'. People love visiting TJMaxx not because they fall into a specific socio-economic segment but because they like to shop in the same way: for newness and fun; for the hedonistic pursuit of a hidden bargain.

Newness and fun

'Fast fashion retailers' have tapped brilliantly into our local zeitgeist, exciting SA consumers by presenting them with constant newness and surprise, and delivering it at very compelling price points.

Global retailers like **H&M** and **Zara** have brilliant merchandising and quick turn-around strategies, designed to leverage consumers' strong FOMO (fear of missing out); the sense that, 'If I don't buy it now, it might not be here next week.'

Zara and its fellows also enjoy the supply chain and big data analysis required to react to what customers like and dislike: adapting rapidly to the whims of fickle consumers and keeping the brand largely immune to retail ups and downs. This could explain why Zara is well-known delivering new products twice each week to their 1,670 stores around the world – that's more than 10,000 new designs each year.

Boredom: the enemy

This sense of urgency is important, especially in context of the message of **Printemps** CEO, Paolo de Cesare, at the World Retail Congress in 2014: that the brands enemy is boredom. A shoppers voluntary attention spans are a mere 90 seconds, so if retailers don't very quickly capture their imagination, they risk losing the sale altogether.

The bottom line?

For South African consumers, shopping is a pastime, a social activity and a form of entertainment. The retailers who are

winning are those tapping into the prevailing desire for a visceral and uplifting experience when visiting a mall.

My advice to retailers in SA is: Pique your consumers' curiosity, offer them an exciting experience, and leave them with a 'what if...' that keeps them coming back for more.

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Diana Springer is the Partner: Head of Strategy at M&C Saatchi Abel.

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