

# Data shows seven interesting shopping habits of South Africans during the lockdown

The worldwide pandemic has forced millions of people around the world to make dramatic changes to their lives. In South Africa, one of the major areas that have changed considerably is how people shop. But exactly how have our shopping behaviours changed? Data shows interesting trends and demographics that may predict the South African shopping landscape for the future. Let's explore this data to find out what South Africans are buying and how they are shopping during the lockdown.

## How South Africans' shopping habits have changed in 2020

### 1. Essentials, essentials, essentials

The fear of getting sick is still a major concern. As a result, South Africans are stocking up on masks, vitamins, soaps and hand sanitisers. Trending search terms such as 'Clicks specials' and 'Pick n Pay pharmacy discounts' also show that there is an increase in people looking for savings on these products, and they are using the internet to compare prices and to browse around before they buy.



### 2. Sustainability

There are two major factors contributing to a focus on sustainability during the pandemic. Firstly, with a third of the world's population in some form of lockdown during the months of March and April,

the world looked on as nature slowly returned to some of the otherwise busiest parts of the world. Secondly, many countries' economies took a tumble, leaving people to realise how important it is to support local businesses.



As a result of these factors, people are now opting to buy from local sellers and are generally making healthier more sustainable shopping choices.

### 3. Spending more on data

Data from Google Trends shows that during the lockdown, some of the most online searched shops are mobile service providers. In fact, online catalogue directory latestspecial.co.za reports that with almost 100 000 sessions during the period of March to May, MTN was the most popular store on the website. People are now working from home and staying in over weekends, using their mobile devices for all kinds of day-today tasks. Consequently, they are searching for terms such as MTN deals and MTN data specials online.

In an effort to support South Africans during the transition of working from home, many mobile services providers launched special promotions

during the lockdown. Telkom, MTN and Cell C all offered a R99 data special. These packages included 10 GB of data or more and were launched with remote workers, who also use their devices for entertainment purposes, in mind. While data prices are still high compared to some other countries, it is predicted that the trend of searching for lower data solutions from South African mobile services providers will continue.

### 4. Focus on online buying

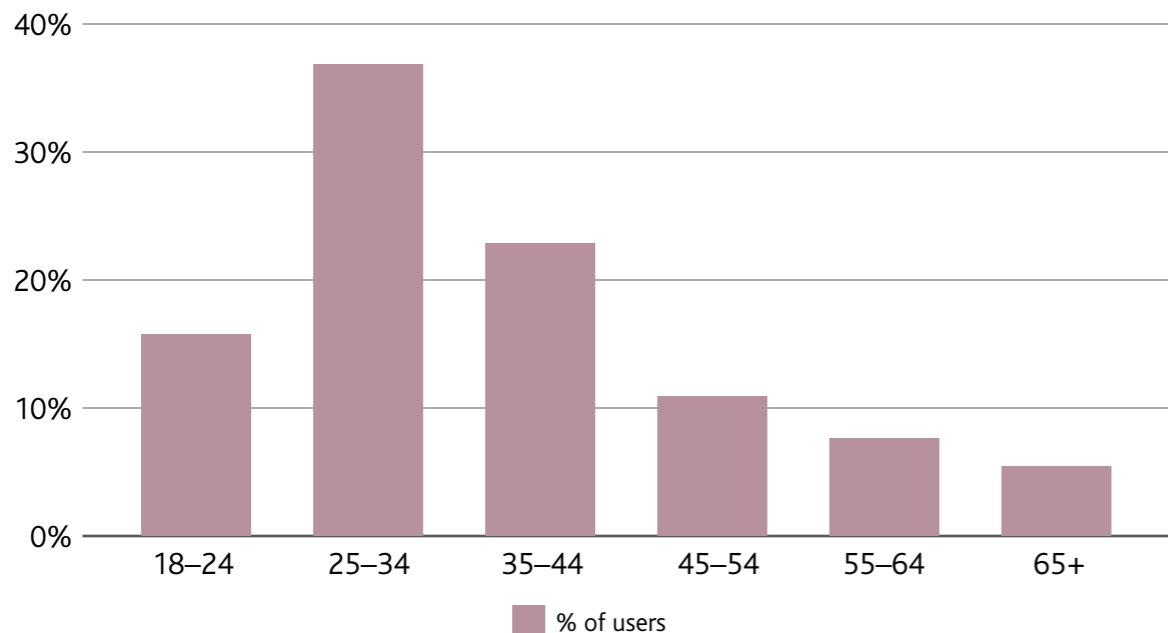
Due to the focus on social distancing and staying at home, increasingly more consumers are buying online. Latestspecial.co.za reports that there has been a large increase in people searching for online leaflets from popular stores: They've compared the period of three months before the pandemic, from December to February, and the period of March to May, and found that searches went up by 33%.

As expected, younger people spend more time online. When looking at data of people browsing online leaflets, browsers aged 25 to 34 dominate the group and people over the age of 65 make up the smallest percentage. The graph below left shows what percentage of people from other age groups looked at online leaflets from March to May.

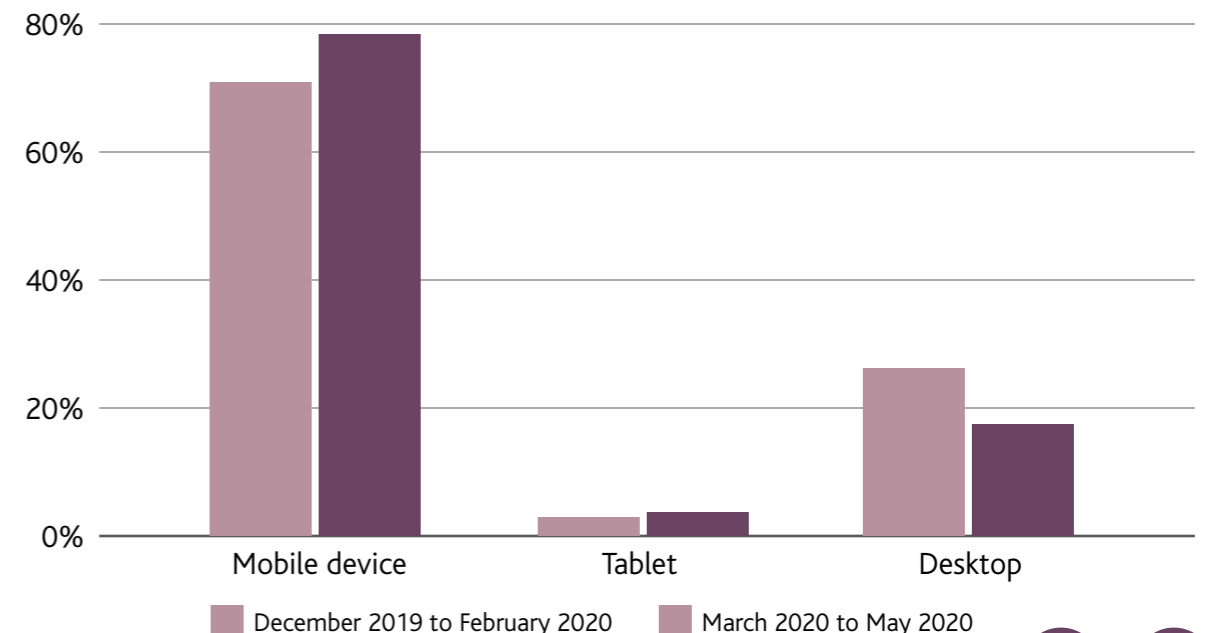
E-commerce is standing out as one of the sectors that are booming, despite people spending less. Latestspecial.co.za also reports that people are mostly accessing their website through mobile devices. During the period of March to May, 78.37% of browsers accessed the site through a mobile device, 17.96% used a desktop and only 3.63% used a tablet.

The graph below right shows how people used their mobile devices more between March and May compared to the period of December to February.

Users by age during March 2020 – May 2020



How device usage has changed



So, what are people buying online?

Consumers are spending their money on:

- Storage solutions
- Office supplies and furniture
- Groceries
- Alcohol
- Personal hygiene
- Plants and garden tools

### 5. Buying in bulk

Remember the panic buying that happened in March? While that may be a thing of the past, for now, people are generally still buying in bulk. The ban on alcohol has also contributed to this, as consumers feel they have to be prepared for any changes in regulations. Bulk suppliers such as Makro and Ultra Liquors are popular for grocery shopping.

### 6. More affordable purchases

Due to the struggling South African economy, consumers are now looking for more affordable shopping options. Stores such as Fair Price and Pep Stores, which are focused on lower-income households, are popular and consumers frequently search for their weekly catalogues online.

### 7. 'No' for luxury items

Many shoppers say that they are uncertain about the future and are, therefore, saving a bigger chunk of their income. Items such as clothes, luxury beauty products, electronics and homeware are no longer selling as it used to. This may change as we come out of lockdown, but for now, consumers are shopping more for what they need and less for what they want.

### But will it last?

#### New shopping habits:

South Africans have experienced dramatic changes to their daily lives over the lockdown period. And while they're slowly getting used to their new ways, it has to be asked: Will it last? No one knows how long the pandemic will be around, so it is safe to say that this may be the way consumers shop for a while. One thing is for certain...

“ More 'mindful' shopping will become a necessity, as people realise some habits are no longer sustainable. ”

So, as the country eventually emerges from lockdown, this might be the most significant change to develop from this uncertain time. **SR**

