

Don't be a (m)all flower | The Great Retail Revival and why mall activations have never been more relevant

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E-commerce has never been easier, safer, or more convenient. But, as it turns out, us humans haven't gone full cyborg, yet. We love connecting over real-life shared experiences. And shoppers, starved of everyday opportunities to connect during the pandemic are making up for lost time in SA's malls in a big way. It's time for brands to follow suit. Stop being a wall flower on supermarket shelves. Get back into the forecourts of malls and forefronts of consumers' minds with experiential events and brand activations.



What you'll learn:

- Retail-revival by the numbers
- Trade and brand marketers' secret weapon
- A case study: How a premium instant coffee brand achieved 100% volume uplift with mall activations and promotions
- Phygital, explained

Many analysts predicted that the pandemic and national lockdowns would spell the final death knell for bricks-and-mortar retail.

But the latest quarterly "[Retail Trends Report](#)" by the SA Property Owners Association shows just how resilient the sector is. And proves - yet again - that mall-going is as much a part of South African culture as burning boerewors on a fire and shouting at the TV on a Saturday arvie.

Retail-Revival | By the numbers:

- Annualised Trading Density (sales turnover/m²) reached record highs at R36,000/m² in the 2nd quarter of 2022 – 6.4% above pre-pandemic levels.
- Foot count saw an 18.6% year-on-year increase compared with mid-2021 (a solid recovery although still approximately 25% below pre-pandemic levels).
- Spend-per-Visit increased by 38% from pre-pandemic R110 to R152.
- Vacancy Rate is approaching pre-pandemic levels of 4% at 5.8% (from 7.5% peak in March 2021).



The Trade and Brand Marketer's secret weapon

According to [Andreas Smit](#), independent marketing and growth specialist to Tradeway Promotions, Africa's largest independent BTL Agency, brands should be following suit. "Brands should return to our malls with experiences that excite and connect consumers", says Smit. Smit asserts that the channel's inherent value proposition – Point-of-Sale proximity and accurate LSM targeting – remain, but adds that the potential to expand into omnichannel retail and Phygital marketing are what make it really exciting.

This is in keeping with international trends. As [Ian Scott](#), a UK based retail consultant put it – "physical retail is alive and well, but boring retail is dead."

[Tradeway Promotions](#) is at the forefront of innovation when it comes to mall brand activations. The company specialises in bringing brands to life and bridging physical and digital channels for maximum reach and influence.

[Lauren Durant](#), CEO of Tradeway, notes that successful activations have many moving parts and require multiple disciplines – probably the reason why the channel is often neglected by trade and brand marketers.

"As in all things marketing, you need solid strategy and creative, but in addition, great brand activations and experiential events demand project management, logistics, procurement, venue booking, and talent and training", says Durant. "But, with the right executional partner, these activities can really drive bottom line performance and enhance brand equity. They are an essential part of every successful Trade and Brand Marketer's arsenal."

A case study | The proof is in the tasting...

Premium Instant Coffee Brand Achieves 81% Engagement Rate and through Activations and Promotions

Jacobs secured their place as market leader in premium instant coffee in South Africa through consistent quality, and a largely Above-The-Line marketing strategy. But in 2021, to cement and expand on their position as market leader, they embarked on a national Below-the-Line in-store shopper marketing and consumer connection campaign with Tradeway.

The results of the campaign far exceeded expectations in terms of projected volume uplift over the campaign period such that, in 2022, Jacobs looked to expand significantly on these BTL activities.

To this end, they combined in-store promotions, influencer marketing, mall activations and social media amplification.

Mall Activation Mechanics | People, Place and Proposition

The mall activations, conceptualised and produced by Tradeway, took the form of a mobile, branded coffee van and chill

area, where coffee-lovers were delighted with free samples and engaged by friendly, vibey brand ambassadors. The 'Magical Jacobs Aroma' van was deployed in malls whose demographics aligned with the brand's target market, filling centre courts with the alluring aroma of fresh brews. The primary objective was education, brand awareness - driving trial, consideration, and purchase.

The Results

These mall activations delivered an 81% engagement rate and resulted in over 3,000 trials in just two days. They also created hype and the type of immersive experience that resonated with and enticed target customers – transporting shoppers from a busy mall to a relaxing street-side café.

Let's get Phygital

By creating a sharable experience, engaging social media influencers and incorporating QR digital competition entry into the campaign, Jacobs and Tradeway were able to bridge the physical and digital marketing domains. This Phygital approach yielded well over two million organic impressions, in addition to the Human-to-Human (H2H) consumer connections on the ground.

Phygital, explained

Today's tech-savvy consumers may browse and compare online but try and buy in-store – and not necessarily in that order.

Getting Phygital is about consolidating digital and physical marketing strategies for a holistic, coherent approach that allows consumers to navigate seamlessly between channels. It's evolved marketing that facilitates the hybrid way consumers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions.

A best of both approach, Phygital means consumers can touch and feel products in store when they need to, and order online when it suits them.

Mall activations are a great platform to introduce Phygital strategies into your marketing campaigns. They deliver awareness, experience, and engagement, and with the right integrations and tech enablement can lead directly to digital purchases.

Conclusion

The fact of the matter is, if all we consumers wanted from brands was to restock our homes and pantries, we would do it online. Consumers want more. They want compelling retail experiences that they can relate to, share, and compare. And the more brands deliver these experiences, the more demanding and discerning consumers become.

Don't be a (m)allflower

It's not enough to rest on your brand's legacy laurels or to be a wall flower on retailers' shelves. To stand out in trade and win consumer consideration and loyalty, brands must tell their stories and demonstrate their values in ways that target customers can see and identify with. Physical spaces with proximity to point of sale like shopping malls provide a great platform to do this.

Let the team at Tradeway help you execute mall brand activations and in-store promotions with confidence. We sell more products and delight more consumers with our full-service best in class creative mall activation solutions. It all starts with an obligation-free discover session. [Get in touch today.](#)

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