

Game turns a corner on turnaround strategy

As a key part of its turnaround strategy to retain relevance in the African retail landscape, Massmart retailer Game has refreshed all of its 115 stores across the country to provide consumers with a more appealing and intuitive store experience.



Source: Supplied

The store transformation is an important milestone for the retailer, as physical stores remain a primary shopping channel in South Africa.

Game's vice president, Andrew Stein, explains that Game stores now provide improved accessibility, navigation and visibility, which allow for a smoother shopping experience. "We have conducted extensive market and customer research and consulted with key players across the business in reviewing our position in South Africa's retail landscape, with the aim of attracting and retaining emerging customer segments," he says.

"We've given more space to our ownership categories in-store – including Baby, Wellness, Appliances and TVs – and changed the way we display products, to give customers a better idea of how they can fit into their lives and homes. Our customers are shopping in-store because they like to be able to see, touch and test their items. In line with this, we have introduced an interactive zone for customers to test electronics, prams and bikes and a living room inspiration section in our newly-expanded homeware category."



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Uptick in sales

Stein notes that Game has also made significant improvements to its assortment – which is key to a better in-store experience. Earlier this year the retailer expanded and relaunched [its homeware offering](#) by replacing 75% of the range and introducing trendy items including wingback chairs and TV units in selected stores. "This was a positive, strategic move for our business. Since the launch our total sales grew by 40%," says Stein.

Just two years after replacing Fresh and Frozen [with basic apparel](#), Game reports having sold over 2.5 million items of clothing as local customers continue to seek value alternatives for essential items amidst turbulent economic times. The retailer has also worked to increase the number of South African suppliers, increasing this to 64% from 54% in 2020.

The retailer has also added over 300 new items to its baby offering this year to provide a more compelling assortment for parents. “So far, we’ve seen positive results from this, with sales in baby growing by 37% in stores where this change was made,” says Stein.

Refreshed online offering

While in-store shoppers will be reaping the rewards of the retailer’s turnaround strategy, Stein notes that online shoppers are not being forgotten. The retailer launched a refreshed website in April offering advanced sourcing logic for geo-location of products, improved search and navigation, and additional merchandise categories such as liquor – which was not available online before.

“This is an important move for Game, as our research shows that many South African consumers continue to bargain hunt and look for deals online. Our online transactions grew by 164% between April and May compared to the same period in 2021, following the launch of our improved website,” he says.

The retailer is also offering in-store pick-up for online orders, in line with customer needs and queries. “We run monthly consumer surveys and have launched several initiatives to better serve the Game shopper – including installation services on appliances and electronics and a Tech Squad to assist with set-up, upgrades and security on electronic devices purchased from Game. The South African retail environment is a competitive one, and we are working hard to ensure we are adding value beyond our product offering,” says Stein.



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Prioritising the consumer experience

Game has also embarked on some internal changes – specifically aimed at providing better customer service, which had been a pain point for many consumers. Stein notes that the retailer has implemented a customer experience training programme amongst all staff called ‘Happy to Help’. “Not only is this aimed at improving the experience for all our customers, but at recognising the wonderful talent that we have within in our business – as they are the face of this brand.”

Moving into the second half of the year, Stein notes that Game continues to work on its value proposition by looking into new partnerships, extending its online offering, and continuing to offer "best value" for its shoppers.

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