

Pick up on developing trends to stay at the top of your game

 By [Vera Valasis](#)

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Electioneering in 2019 is sure to take up much focus and energy and while I understand that elections come around every 4 years, I wish we could do without them purely based on the fact that if we had to channel all the election energy and marketing spend into promoting small business we would have a very different economy.



Vera Valasis, Franchise Association of South Africa.

So I think for the first few months of this year, business owners and consumers' attention may be elsewhere!

While many articles in the press deal with AI and robotics and how these developments may impact on business in the future, some say it has been happening for years and is nothing new.

However, I believe the influence and impact of technological advances and developments in the way business is being done is going to impact business more and more as time goes by. These developments will have a direct correlation to manpower deployment and scheduling in business as well as stock management, site location, marketing and many other areas of business.

Commercial property conundrum

Let's discuss the old clichéd issue of online sales and bricks-and-mortar stores – especially as it applies to the franchise sector that we represent. More and more brands report a marked increase in online sales and yet, generally speaking, commercial property owners seem to ignore the increasing number of empty stores in their malls and continue with business as usual charging exorbitant rents.

It is reported that the UK government is considering setting funding aside for the redevelopment of derelict shopping centres into housing – surely those are alarm bells ringing ...for us as well?



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We know South Africa follows international trends albeit a bit delayed. Pizza brands, in particular, are doing brisk online business and a change in strategy in respect of site location is around the corner - could a pizza brand place its distribution network in off-beat site locations or in low traffic areas where the lease and rental profiles are vastly different from a shopping centre location? It makes perfect business sense and I would guess this could be a fast developing trend.

Resilience of personal services

Businesses in the personal services sectors are seen to be recession proof/internet proof and I tend to agree. Hairdressers, beauty therapists, pet groomers, funeral parlour undertakers, plumbers, electricians and the like could well continue to thrive provided the owners are tech-savvy and clients can interact online and have home-based services done in some instances.

We have seen many beauty therapists, for example, doing home visits and mobile pet groomers servicing pets at their homes. Again, business owners in this category would not require a high street location for their businesses which would impact further on commercial letting.



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Social media marketing

Social media is definitely changing the way businesses promote themselves and it has become imperative to promote products and services in such a way that they are 'Instagram' friendly. The days of radio and television promoting are numbered as the spotlight falls on consumers and clients who have now become the Instagram celebrities. Business owners need to take note of this trend and consider dedicating resources to ensure a steady stream of relevant Instagram/social platform postings through an effective and well-managed online communications strategy.

Generations Y and Z have been born with 'a device in hand' and these young consumers live their lives online – their every action, decision and emotion are discussed via tech and unless brands mimic this lifestyle and ensure that their brands have an online 'life', relevance quickly disappears and brands fall off the 'being seen and talked about' online marketing imperative.



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Adaptive business models

With a plethora of new courier and delivery services entering the market which is good news for consumers as the speed of delivery has increased dramatically and the costs are being driven down, I wonder how quick and nimble existing businesses are at changing and adapting their business model. It is a huge challenge when 'every guy on a bike' is your competitor and there is nothing stopping 'anyone' who is mobile to also deliver an item or parcel.

Crossing over into different business categories or products is a developing trend – the courier business being a perfect example where a company that traditionally used to deliver food now delivers parcels, documents and even groceries to a consumer base that prefers the ease of ordering and the convenience of home deliveries.

There appears to be an app for everything and clients or customers are app driven – it is a trend to watch as I wonder when customers are going to suffer from app-fatigue. But for the time being, reliance on apps to do business appears to be the go-to place for consumers.

ABOUT VERA VALASIS

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