

Dear Retail. Let me cheer you up.

 By [Howard Saunders](#)

5 Jan 2022

Dear Retail, let's not dwell on the last couple of years shall we? You were already in the doldrums, what with the endless onslaught from your greedy online cousins. We worried about you back then, but I guess you must be feeling seriously battered after what we've put you through recently.



Retail futurist Howard Saunders. Source: Supplied

But here's the truth: the future is ours to shape and you are at the beginning of a retail revolution my friend. So cheer up and brace yourself because there's more to look forward to than you can imagine.

Surely, if lockdown taught us anything it was that having our ankles photographed by the UPS man three times a week was pretty meaningless in the end. Turns out humans are a social species after all and getting out of the house occasionally, well that's what retail is for!

A new dynamic retail landscape

In fact, the butcher, the baker, the fishmonger and yes, the candlestick maker if you like, have never had it so good now that we are allowed out of the house again. Believe me, a renaissance army of independent entrepreneurs is waiting eagerly in the wings to join them when they get the chance; young blood, primed ready to furnish your avenues and alleyways with trendier bars, delis, takeaways and restaurants than you could throw a stick at.

Lower rents and shorter leases will kickstart a fast-changing, much more dynamic retail landscape. And funnily enough, the revitalisation of our towns will be spearheaded by guess what? Yes, hospitality of course, now that we've finally learnt the long and painful lesson as to how critical it is for our towns, our communities, our status, our well-being and even our souls.



Durban. Source: Supplied

But perhaps the most important lockdown lesson of all was the one where we learnt to master the invisible, interlacing grid that connects everything with everything else. It's obvious now that the consumer of the Twenties wants to check stock levels online, reserve items online, try things in store, pick up in store, have things delivered at a specific time, return them in store, pay via the mobile in store, read reviews, give feedback and receive after-sales advice both in store and online.

In other words, we want, and expect, a completely seamless experience that extends from our tiny screens to the store and back, for absolutely everything. That awful word 'omnichannel' has simply become everyday life.



#BizTrends2022: What's next for retailing in Africa?

Christele Chokossa 5 Jan 2022



Urban centres the playground for brands

But back in our browbeaten cities things are about to get very exciting indeed. Now that those lacklustre legacy brands have finally left the stage we can start encouraging more innovative and entertaining attractions to take their place. No not traditional or conventional retail, that's for our towns and provinces: our major urban centres will become the playgrounds for brands, spaces for storytelling, venues for impressing and seducing us with their unbounded creativity.

Let's be honest, those big, old department stores were hardly inspiring once we had TikTok and Instagram in our pockets. But just you wait, the money that brands used to spend on conventional advertising will be redirected and channelled into

immersive living advertisements for all kinds of products and services, not just fashion and beauty, but for food, fitness, wellness, pharmaceuticals, technology, music and travel. Cities will be where we go to be entertained and have fun, so you'd better start sprucing yourself up in preparation!

Our urban centres then, will become the interactive showrooms for our aspirations, much as they always were in a sense, but ignited now with magic technology that knows more about our tastes and desires than we do.



Beyond omnichannel: Embracing 'un-retail' and the store as a stage

18 Oct 2021



Egographics

Marketeers once collated us into clumsy groups, called demographics. With today's data, egographics can target each of us specifically and individually. Smart brands already know precisely how many milliseconds we lingered over that image and exactly which bit we enlarged before swiping it away. They know the colours and styles we're most drawn to, what our best friends are into and when we're next getting paid.

The next phase will take us on in-store journeys to discover products tailor-made exclusively for us...all we'll have to do is click 'accept'. Scary yes, but boy it will give our cities one almighty shot of adrenalin...enough to blow our cynical little cotton socks off, that's for sure.



Egographics. Source: Supplied

So dear Retail, don't rush to convert your empty stores into offices and apartments just yet. The future is being prepared for you right now and all you've got to do is stop feeling sorry for yourself, and smile.

ABOUT HOWARD SAUNDERS

Howard Saunders, aka the Retail Futurist, is a writer and speaker whose job it is to see beyond retail's currently choppy waters. Howard spent 25 years at some of London's most renowned retail design agencies where he created concepts and strategies for dozens of British high street brands. His move to New York in 2012 inspired the book *Brooklynization* (2017). This cemented his role as champion for retail's future in our towns, cities and communities.

- #BizTrends2023: Retail's reality check - 17 Jan 2023
- #BizTrends2022: Dear Retail. Let me cheer you up. - 5 Jan 2022
- Covid-19 will bring about a retail apocalypse - 8 Apr 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>