

# 'Cool' shopping on horizon in SA

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**W**HISPERING store windows and cameras that recognise your profile the moment you step into a store are just around the corner for shoppers worldwide.

This is the future of retail, according to New York-based trends guru and executive director of the The Avant-Guide Institute, Daniel Levine, who addressed 1 300 delegates at the SA Council for Shopping Centres conference in Durban this week.

Levine is the leader of an international team of "cool

## Future of retail linked to technology, says expert

hunters" comprising more than 10 000 spotters who search the globe for the latest products ideas and experiences and who help retailers get inside the minds and hearts of their customers.

According to Levine, there are four trends impacting on SA consumers – the tyranny of transparency, über personalisation, technology expanding walls and the immediacy of cellphones.

"The future of retail around the world is inextricably con-

nected to technology and the internet. The internet may be something to fear and fight against, but from a consumer's perspective, it is changing the way people think and feel," Levine said.

"Shopping centres and their tenants who understand what this means and adjust can make technology a winner, and the ones who don't will be left behind," Levine said.

Inside shopping centre's "whispering windows" equipped with speakers and a

touch screen will enable shoppers to browse catalogues around the clock and to leave messages for stores to call them. Shopping centres of the future will have technology that allows shoppers to use their cellphones to track products in stores, and retailers to target individual consumers with their specials.

"One of the biggest fears is of people using shopping centres as an Amazon showroom. The idea of people going into shopping centres to look at

products and then buying on the internet is on its way here," Levine said.

One way consumers would do it would be with a scanner that could scan a barcode in a store and then enable them to go online to find the identical product at the cheapest price, Levine said. And smart webcams can now take consumers' measurements and send them to online clothing stores.

Levine said consumers were also expecting "targeted experiences" for convenience, such as

Sweden's "man cave aisles" in supermarkets, stocking related items such as beer and crisps together and petrol stations for women with brighter forecourts, cleaner toilets and convenience stores stocking healthier foods, pantyhose and children's items.

While shops would still be needed as places to pay for and pick up goods ordered, virtual supermarkets were now a reality. Consumers in a Seoul train station and at Gatwick airport could order their goods from

Tesco's interactive supermarket using their cellphone to scan barcodes and request delivery when they returned home, Levine said. Consumers could now also search a particular product using Google Maps, which would reflect all the nearest stores stocking it.

"The immediacy of mobile is changing the behaviour and expectations of consumers. For example accessing an ATM via your mobile phone without using a card and mobile boarding passes no longer using paper. The world is heading to the whole idea of a cashless economy and it is already in use in trains in SA," Levine said.