

25 years in, nearly 450 stores later - the secret sauce behind The Crazy Store's success

 By Lauren Hartzenberg

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Value retailer The Crazy Store aims to have 500 stores operating in southern Africa by the end of 2023, which would signify a major growth milestone for the company that started out as the 'cheap and cheerful' R10 Store when the first outlet opened in Edenvale, Johannesburg in 1995.



Kevin Lennett, The Crazy Store MD. Source: Supplied

Since then, The Crazy Store has worked hard to shake any misconception that it stocks 'cheap and nasty' goods and has positioned itself as a trusted retailer that delivers value and variety.

And what sheer variety there is. With more than 6,000 product lines across categories including toys, kitchenware, novelty, confectionery, party, pet essentials, stationery and homeware, The Crazy Store has cast its customer net far and wide, appealing to shoppers in virtually every life stage and staying true to its pay-off line 'Hey, you never know what you might find!'

"Our shelves are filled with products based on customer feedback, requests, and of course, their shopping patterns. All our products are tested in-house, ensuring our offerings are of good quality and value," said The Crazy Store's managing director, Kevin Lennett.

Delivering value

The retailer has reported solid double-digit growth year-on-year, and its store footprint – comprising 425 in South Africa, three in Botswana and 14 in Namibia – continues to expand.

Lennett credits the constantly evolving product offering as a key differentiator that has driven The Crazy Store's success these past 25 years, alongside the retailer's focus on value and five-star service.

In an economically-constrained environment, the search for value intensifies as shoppers tighten their purse strings.

Commenting on how The Crazy Store expects to fare in tough operating conditions, Lennett said in an interview with *Bizcommunity*, "Price increases are a major factor in all our lives and the consumer is having less in their pocket while at the same time having to pay more for goods and services. Our challenge is to keep our prices as competitive as possible to ensure that our customers still get the best value possible.

"We have noted how our appeal has extended to the full range of the customer spectrum including all income bands ... Unit sales will always be under pressure in inflationary times, but we will continue to find ways to drive these sales through great value offerings."



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Value drives all buying decisions at The Crazy Store, Lennett noted, and it will continue to underpin the strategy. But he also pointed out how an extensive store network plays into this focus on value as hard times bite.

"Our large footprint of 444 stores means you can find a Crazy Store on almost every corner. In these tough times with petrol prices on the rise, it is now easier than ever to find a store close to you, cutting down on drive time and fuel consumption." He added, "There is no doubt that our value, service and convenience will continue to drive sales and keep us very relevant in the customer's world."

Culture of service

Speaking at The Crazy Store's recent birthday celebration in Canal Walk, Cape Town, Lennett said that "heart" is lacking in the retail industry and he credited the retailer's superior customer service as being integral to its success.

The company has more than 2,000 employees across South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, and staff are trained to go the extra mile to delight shoppers. "They love our customers; they know the needs of the customer and strive to deliver world-class customer service in stores," Lennett said, adding "we have to be mindful of good and bad service each and every day, and we need to live this through our customer interactions."

He explained to *Bizcommunity* that to maintain a culture of high-quality service, the company has three customer service training programmes, daily product knowledge training and a customer care centre that sees every complaint and compliment reaching the inbox of Lennett and two other directors.

"We take each compliment and complaint to heart and being involved in this day-to-day feedback keeps us humble and

focused on our customer's experiences in our stores. If you have a problem, consider it sorted!"



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Eyeing 600 stores

Looking ahead, The Crazy Store will continue to direct significant capital towards store upgrades and rollouts, with potential sites being explored on an ongoing basis.

"We continue to invest in store layouts and presentation to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable shopping experience for our customers. We have revamped 67 of our stores this year and will continue to ensure that the in-store shopping experience is world-class.

"This year we are opening 32 new Crazy Stores (and maybe more)... New store openings remain a focus and there are still many opportunities for new sites. Next year should see us break through the 500-store mark and before long, we will have 600 stores!" said Lennett.

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