

A year of difficulties, giving back, and innovation at Africa's biggest retailer

As news of the coronavirus and its spread through South Africa broke, the Shoprite Group quickly [developed an action plan](#) that would form the core of its response to this devastating pandemic.

In the action plan, the Group committed to fully adhering to all critical plans and safety measures informed by government and international health authorities - while at the same time, to protect its employees, customers, and communities.

Although it was an incredibly trying year for all of South Africa, the Group worked hard to minimise the impact of Covid-19 - and to continue innovating at pace.

The Group proudly retained all of its employees' jobs, fed millions of hungry people, and even captured the country's fascination with some more unusual moments, including a [Jerusalema proposal](#) and a [brazen liquor heist](#).

Here are just some of the Shoprite Group's key moments during South Africa's first year of lockdown:

Business

- To enable customers to help those in need, the Shoprite Group [launched virtual vouchers](#) less than two weeks after the announcement of the national lockdown.
- In April, the Group became [the first retailer to offer contactless QR payments](#) and in the same month it teamed up with Mr D [to deliver medicine to its MediRite pharmacy customers](#).
- By May, the [sale of personal care products had soared](#) at Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets, indicating that South Africans are not letting the lockdown stop them from looking after themselves.
- Shoprite [launched its new Money Market Account](#) in August and Checkers [brought back its Little Garden](#) campaign with millions of locally produced seedling kits that created employment for more than 150 people.
- As demand for online orders increased, Checkers continued to expand [Sixty60, which had already created 800 new jobs](#).
- In mid-October, Shoprite launched its Xtra Savings rewards programme - which hit the [1 million member mark](#) in just 72 hours.
- In November Shoprite was [voted the Best Convenience and Grocery Store of the Decade](#) in the 22nd annual Sunday Times Top Brands survey, whilst Checkers FreshX announced [a new partnership](#) with Starbucks.
- Checkers continues to open new state-of-the-art supermarkets, most recently in [Rosebank](#) and [Brackenfell](#), and pledged its support for the [struggling local wine industry](#)
- Despite lockdown limitations, the Group [increased sales by 4.7%](#) between July - December 2020, and announced it would soon [launch its own mobile network](#).

Employees

- In March, just days before the national lockdown, [Shoprite thanked its frontline workers with a R102 million pay bonus](#).
- Videos of [Shoprite employees singing the national anthem](#) during the 21-day national lockdown captured the hearts of many South Africans.
- As the world gained greater clarity on the best ways to protect frontline workers during the pandemic, the Shoprite Group continued to [roll out - and ramp up -](#) measures to protect all of its employees.
- Covid-19's forced the Shoprite Group, with more than 141 000 employees, to [implement a work from home environment almost overnight](#) - by the height of the pandemic, the Group was hosting thousands of virtual meetings per day in order to keep operations running smoothly.

Communities

- The Group announced its [support for the Solidarity Fund](#) in March with an initial donation of R1-million, and committed to grow this amount daily with the support of the public via its in-store Act for Change Fund.
- The Group intensified its hunger relief efforts, and by mid-May it had [donated over R11 million in surplus food](#) to distressed communities, providing 3.7 million meals for the growing number of hungry South Africans.
- Customer contributions, together with the retailer's R2 million donation, [had raised more than R3.5 million for the Solidarity Fund](#) by July 2020.
- By the end of September, the Group had [donated more than R53 million in surplus food](#) - over R300 000 per day for 185 days - to various organisations tasked with feeding the hungry.
- Shoprite [continued its critical bread subsidy programme](#) - and had sold 63 million loaves of R4.99 in-house bakery bread in its 2019/2020 financial year. Recently this [R5 offering](#) was expanded, with sanitary pads added to the range.
- In November the Group announced it had served [over 130 000 nutritious meals](#) and delivered thousands of food packs to children at early childhood development (ECD) centres during lockdown.
- Since the start of the pandemic, Shoprite and Checkers had donated [over 12 000 care packages](#) to hospitals in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Free State, KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape. And even [surprised healthcare workers at the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital](#) with a performance by members of the world-renowned Soweto Gospel Choir.

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