At a glance | Black Friday 2024

1 Post payday Black Friday 2024 slightly boosts card spending

2 Black Friday 2024, encompassing the weekend and Cyber Monday, witnessed a 6% increase in card spending.

3 Food and Clothing: These categories were the primary growth drivers this year.

4 Cyber Monday: Online spending grew by 4% compared to 3% in-store spending.

5 Could the increase of debit card usage be signaling consumers have more money in their pockets?

Note: This report leverages Absa's MSA and offers valuable insights into consumer behaviour trends and emerging patterns.

The analysis presented in this report is based on the data available at the time of writing and is subject to change. Consumer spending data are inherently subject to limitations. Sampling methods and reporting lags can introduce some level of error. The findings presented in this report are based on our interpretation of the data and different interpretations are possible. This report may contain forward-looking statements about consumer spending trends. These statements are based on assumptions and are subject to risks and uncertainties. We encourage this report's users to carefully consider these limitations and to consult other information sources before making any decisions based on the information presented here.

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Black Friday 2024

Your story matters **absa**

# Black Friday 2024 | A faded glory but a flicker of hope

After a lackluster performance in 2023, Black Friday 2024 experienced a modest rebound. The previous year's challenging economic conditions, including high inflation (5.5%), interest rates (8.25%), and the lingering effects of load shedding, had significantly dampened consumer spending. However, in 2024, a more favourable economic climate emerged with lower interest rates (7.75%) and inflation (2.8%). Additionally, the 2-pot retirement reform and the post-payday timing of Black Friday 2024 further boosted consumer sentiment.

Early internal merchant data revealed a muted 6% increase in card spending during the Black Friday weekend and Cyber Monday. This represents an improvement over the previous year's 3% growth; however, it did not meet the previous double-digit growth seen in 2022. While the soft decline in transaction volume from 8% to 6% may be concerning, it is encouraging to see that card spending outperformed the current inflation rate. It is important to note that the post-payday timing of Black Friday 2024 likely played a significant role in the increased spending. Despite this modest rebound, Black Friday's overall performance seems to be struggling to regain its former glory.

Perhaps the full potential of the Black Friday shopping event could have been realised if retailers offered deeper discounts and a wider selection of discounted goods. The post-pandemic consumer, burdened by financial constraints, is a discerning shopper who remains highly price-conscious. Retailers, on the other hand, have evidently become discount fatigued and are protective of their margins. Furthermore, the "Black November" concept, characterised by extended discounts throughout the month, has somewhat diluted the impact of Black Friday. As consumers have been exposed to deals and promotions for a longer period, the traditional peak of Black Friday sales has become less.

Category performance (table1):

- **Food and Clothing:** The recovery of these categories were the primary growth drivers this year, collectively accounting for a substantial 58% of all transactions. It appears that consumers have increasingly opted to purchase festive season goods during the Black Friday sales period. As a result, it will be intriguing to observe how these categories perform in December, especially considering the potential impact of earlier festive shopping.
- **Business and Professional Services:** This category experienced a moderation in its growth trajectory this year. Despite its 12% share of all transactions and a secure position as number 3 in the top 10 **core categories***, the momentum that once characterised this category has seemingly slowed down. This category encompasses small businesses that utilise FinTech solutions for payments.
- **Home and Garden:** In spite of its 6% decline, it held down its 4th spot in terms of total number of transactions. In total it accounted for 8% of all transactions.
- **Games and gaming** category has emerged as one of the top performers growing at 126%, albeit from a lower base. This performance is highlighting that the consumer may be easing towards the purchase of discretionary goods and services.
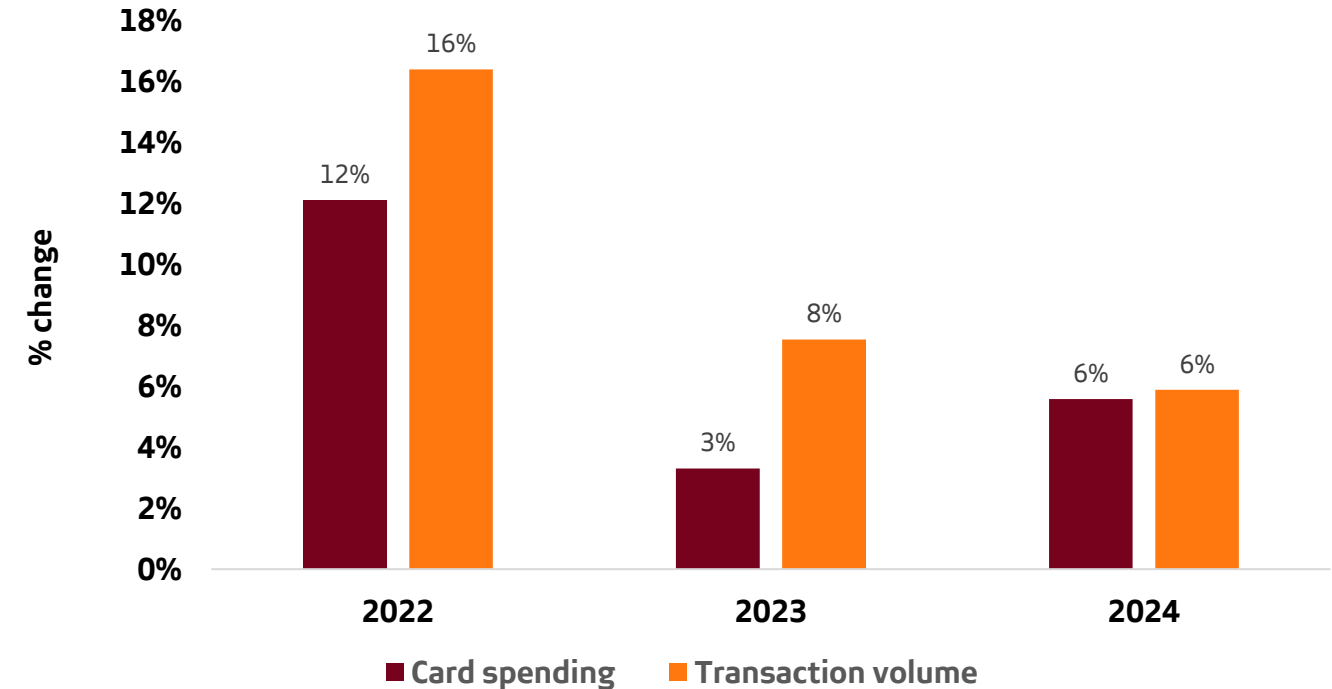
Graph 1
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

Tracked card spending categories	Black Friday 2022	Black Friday 2023	Black Friday 2024
Automotive	10%	1%	12%
Books & newspaper	14%	6%	13%
Building & hardware*	11%	3%	-1%
Business & professional services*	49%	27%	14%
Care services	-8%	9%	82%
Clothing*	-3%	-5%	8%
Commercial & industrial services	13%	3%	4%
Digital print media	195%	60%	42%
Domestic & cleaning services	-14%	6%	5%
Education	17%	-2%	34%
Electronic & computers	21%	-2%	4%
Food*	13%	2%	7%
Funeral services	24%	6%	55%
Gambling	35%	13%	25%
Games & gaming	7%	-8%	126%
Garages*	21%	-3%	-16%
Government	-3%	-2%	52%
Health & beauty*	10%	5%	-12%
Health practitioner	-6%	3%	10%
Home & garden*	4%	4%	-6%
Medical services	11%	-1%	13%
NGO: Social & religious services	14%	3%	34%
Speciality*	-10%	-1%	6%
Sports, outdoors & travel	407%	0%	12%
Stationery & office furniture	26%	14%	39%
Telecommunication*	36%	-11%	24%
Tourism	49%	11%	9%
Transportation*	33%	0%	-75%
Warehousing & storage	2%	0%	161%

Table 1
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics
**Core categories*

Black Friday 2024

Key trends and observations:

- **Online shopping** this year experienced no growth (table 2). This may be attributed to online retailers applying less aggressive discounting strategies that consumers have grown accustomed to in the online space. However, the adoption of online shopping remains a significant trend, driven by convenience and the growing number of online retailers.
- **In-store card spending** experienced a 6% increase compared to the 1% increase in 2023, driven by the post payday timing and retailers luring consumers with exclusive deals, product demonstrations, and festive atmosphere.
- **Payment Methods**: Surprisingly, debit card usage increased y/y while credit declined slightly (table 3). The rise in debit card usage suggests that consumers were relying more on their own funds during Black Friday 2024, potentially indicating the improving financial health of the consumer.

Day-by-day breakdown:

- **Friday**: Friday saw a significant surge in activity, with consumers taking advantage of early deals and promotions. Card spending and transaction volumes experienced a rebound on Friday, following a disappointing performance in the previous year (graph 2 & 3). This uptick can be largely attributed to the post-payday timing, which typically boosts consumer spending. While in-store spending recovered, online shopping saw a decline (table 2). This unexpected online performance raises questions for online retailers, who may need to re-evaluate their strategies to understand the factors contributing to this trend.
- **Saturday and Sunday:** Saturday saw slower growth in card spending and transaction volume compared to the previous year. In-store and online spending also slowed down on Saturday but remained relatively stable on Sunday.
- **Cyber Monday:** Cyber Monday experienced a muted growth of 4% in online sales, compared to the 37% growth in 2023. In-store sales on Cyber Monday were minimal, as expected. The lower growth rate on Cyber Monday can be attributed to the fact that the initial excitement and urgency of Black Friday had already subsided.

In closing:

As highlighted in earlier reports, the consumer's recovery will be gradual. The protracted period of financial strain has had a lasting impact, and a brief respite will not be sufficient. Nonetheless, recent economic indicators provide some grounds for optimism for both consumers and retailers. This year's Black Friday performance fell short of our expectations, and it remains to be seen whether the era of massive crowds, deep discounts, and empty shelves are truly behind us.
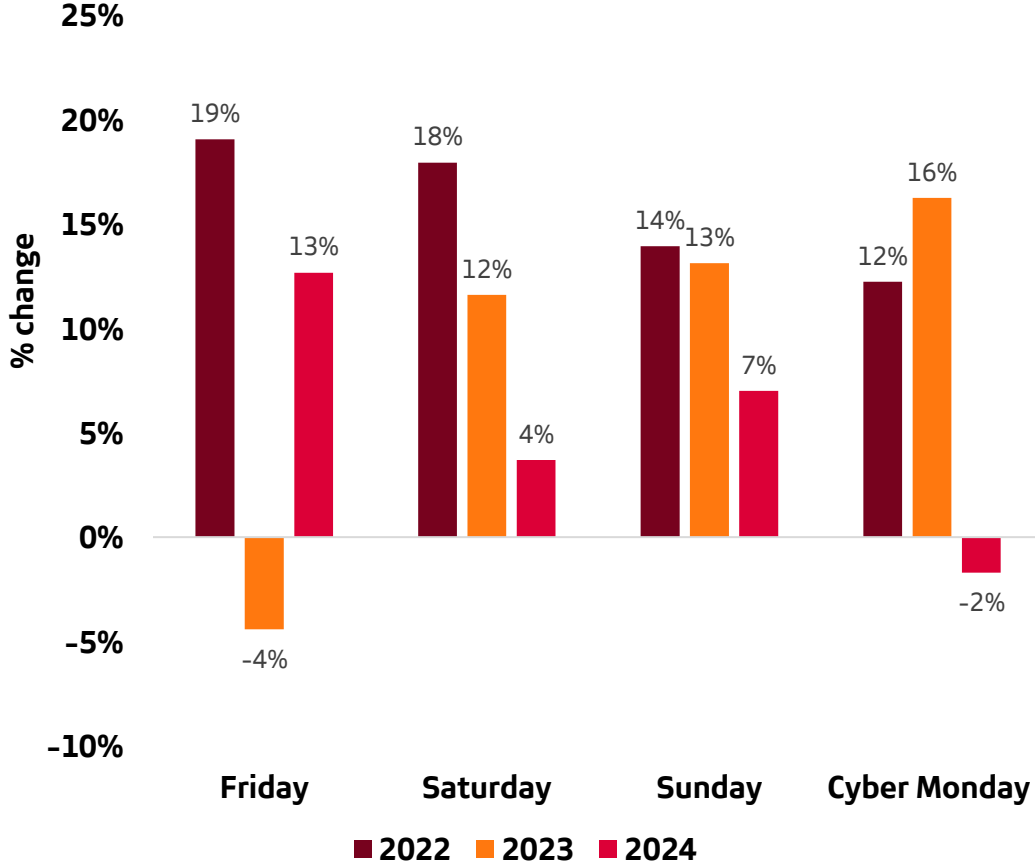
***To see category performance for each day, refer to the heatmap section.

Card spending
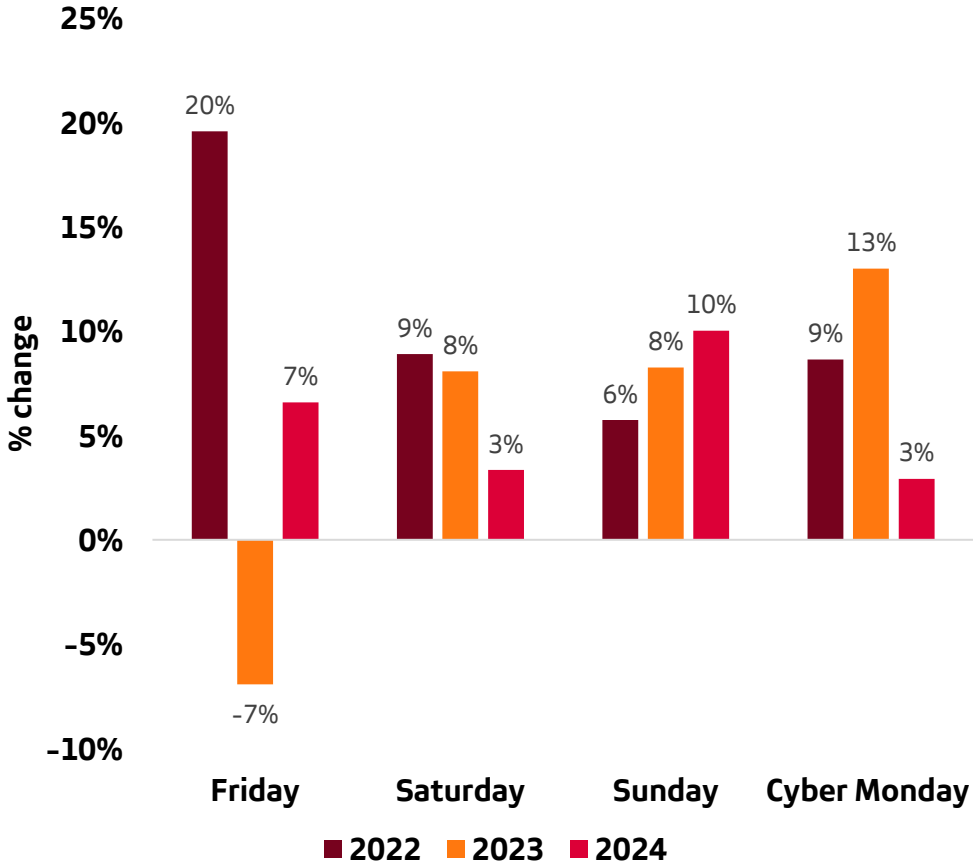
Graph 2
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

Transaction volumes

Graph 3
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

		In-store	Online
2022	Friday	18%	32%
	Saturday	8%	19%
	Sunday	5%	17%
	Cyber Monday	6%	27%
	Overall performance	**11%**	**26%**
2023	Friday	-10%	18%
	Saturday	6%	35%
	Sunday	6%	34%
	Cyber Monday	10%	37%
	Overall performance	**1%**	**28%**
2024	Friday	9%	-8%
	Saturday	4%	-1%
	Sunday	9%	17%
	Cyber Monday	3%	4%
	Overall performance	**6%**	**0%**

Table 2
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

		Credit card	Debit card
2022	Friday	18%	20%
	Saturday	6%	10%
	Sunday	5%	6%
	Cyber Monday	11%	8%
	Overall performance	**11%**	**12%**
2023	Friday	9%	-11%
	Saturday	13%	7%
	Sunday	13%	7%
	Cyber Monday	15%	12%
	Overall performance	**12%**	**1%**
2024	Black Friday	-2%	9%
	Saturday	6%	3%
	Sunday	11%	9%
	Cyber Monday	7%	1%
	Overall performance	**5%**	**6%**

Table 3
Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

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Heatmaps

Your story matters (absa)

Heatmap | Card spending (y/y)

Tracked card spending categories	Friday 2022	Friday 2023	Friday 2024
Automotive	11%	-4%	14%
Books & newspaper	34%	8%	13%
Building & hardware	18%	-1%	-1%
Business & professional services	46%	16%	17%
Care services	-8%	12%	60%
Clothing	11%	-20%	12%
Commercial & industrial services	25%	-5%	6%
Digital print media	215%	80%	18%
Domestic & cleaning services	-20%	14%	2%
Education	23%	-13%	28%
Electronic & computers	35%	-9%	-2%
Food	22%	-7%	9%
Funeral services	15%	2%	75%
Gambling	43%	6%	29%
Games & gaming	11%	-13%	-10%
Garages	31%	-9%	-15%
Government	-14%	-5%	42%
Health & beauty	15%	-2%	1%
Health practitioner	-6%	-2%	15%
Home & garden	7%	-3%	-9%
Medical services	15%	-4%	13%
NGO: social & religious services	38%	-21%	24%
Speciality	5%	-12%	7%
Sports, outdoors & travel	423%	1%	11%
Stationery & office furniture	26%	25%	12%
Telecommunication	45%	-29%	17%
Tourism	59%	4%	13%
Transportation	22%	-2%	-76%
Warehousing & storage	1%	0%	83%

Tracked card spending categories	Saturday 2022	Saturday 2023	Saturday 2024
Automotive	14%	4%	11%
Books & newspaper	1%	-2%	-5%
Building & hardware	17%	5%	-2%
Business & professional services	55%	31%	11%
Care services	-23%	9%	-11%
Clothing	-11%	5%	5%
Commercial & industrial services	18%	4%	9%
Digital print media	171%	20%	84%
Domestic & cleaning services	-15%	4%	-6%
Education	-13%	28%	249%
Electronic & computers	-1%	6%	5%
Food	12%	7%	4%
Funeral services	24%	12%	79%
Gambling	26%	25%	16%
Games & gaming	4%	-5%	0%
Garages	24%	1%	-17%
Government	-25%	12%	51%
Health & beauty	12%	7%	-14%
Health practitioner	-11%	3%	15%
Home & garden	2%	1%	0%
Medical services	8%	5%	8%
NGO: social & religious services	1%	28%	6%
Speciality	-22%	5%	3%
Sports, outdoors & travel	390%	2%	8%
Stationery & office furniture	32%	3%	72%
Telecommunication	35%	-2%	3%
Tourism	28%	16%	12%
Transportation	36%	1%	-71%
Warehousing & storage	16%	23%	218%

Heatmap | Card spending (y/y)

Tracked card spending categories	Sunday 2022	Sunday 2023	Sunday 2024
Automotive	5%	7%	29%
Books & newspaper	-14%	7%	65%
Building & hardware	10%	4%	-2%
Business & professional services	51%	34%	21%
Care services	49%	149%	-55%
Clothing	-14%	6%	13%
Commercial & industrial services	6%	5%	20%
Digital print media	235%	36%	84%
Domestic & cleaning services	-14%	-12%	7%
Education	5%	20%	193%
Electronic & computers	0%	3%	15%
Food	7%	6%	10%
Funeral services	-45%	33%	58%
Gambling	34%	6%	21%
Games & gaming	0%	-3%	9%
Garages	15%	-2%	-13%
Government	-10%	38%	115%
Health & beauty	4%	6%	-22%
Health practitioner	-10%	10%	9%
Home & garden	-3%	10%	-2%
Medical services	4%	6%	9%
NGO: social & religious services	-10%	26%	86%
Speciality	-28%	7%	10%
Sports, outdoors & travel	558%	-7%	16%
Stationery & office furniture	28%	5%	79%
Telecommunication	31%	12%	96%
Tourism	43%	12%	15%
Transportation	41%	-2%	-68%
Warehousing & storage	-34%	-38%	3736%

Tracked card spending categories	Cyber Monday 2022	Cyber Monday 2023	Cyber Monday 2024
Automotive	7%	5%	10%
Books & newspaper	6%	6%	-7%
Building & hardware	0%	7%	0%
Business & professional services	46%	36%	7%
Care services	-7%	-3%	149%
Clothing	-13%	15%	1%
Commercial & industrial services	2%	11%	-4%
Digital print media	165%	88%	34%
Domestic & cleaning services	0%	5%	20%
Education	18%	5%	-4%
Electronic & computers	42%	4%	8%
Food	8%	10%	5%
Funeral services	38%	7%	27%
Gambling	40%	17%	36%
Games & gaming	15%	-7%	1010%
Garages	12%	0%	-19%
Government	15%	-4%	56%
Health & beauty	5%	12%	-19%
Health practitioner	-5%	7%	5%
Home & garden	2%	26%	-9%
Medical services	9%	-3%	16%
NGO: social & religious services	31%	-11%	18%
Speciality	2%	10%	5%
Sports, outdoors & travel	272%	8%	13%
Stationery & office furniture	18%	8%	45%
Telecommunication	24%	0%	14%
Tourism	57%	15%	-1%
Transportation	42%	1%	-81%
Warehousing & storage	1%	-11%	115%

Heatmap

Online vs In-store: Total performance for Black Friday weekend including Cyber Monday

Online spending (y/)			
Tracked card spending categories	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Automotive	14%	109%	160%
Books & Newspaper	17%	11%	40%
Building & Hardware	9%	15%	-8%
Business & Professional Services	26%	27%	14%
Care Services	5%	14%	99%
Clothing	62%	28%	-6%
Commercial & Industrial Services	199%	-21%	40%
Digital Print Media	345%	98%	36%
Domestic & Cleaning Services	9%	-5%	13%
Education	11%	19%	134%
Electronic & Computers	79%	-10%	7%
Food	-8%	25%	7%
Funeral Services	0%	n/a	n/a
Gambling	467%	49%	56%
Games & Gaming	38%	14%	1129%
Garages	-26%	-30%	105%
Government	32%	41%	54%
Health & Beauty	-3%	5%	8%
Health Practitioner	22%	16%	124%
Home & Garden	8%	48%	-19%
Medical Services	-11%	15%	-42%
NGO: Social & Religious Services	34%	-5%	64%
Speciality	73%	-10%	26%
Sports, Outdoors & Travel	293%	10%	50%
Stationery & Office Furniture	-28%	7%	-19%
Telecommunication	63%	3%	66%
Tourism	76%	17%	12%
Transportation	28%	-4%	-70%
Warehousing & Storage	-36%	-59%	-21%

In-store spending (y/y)			
Tracked card spending categories	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Automotive	10%	0%	10%
Books & Newspaper	10%	-1%	-24%
Building & Hardware	11%	3%	-1%
Business & Professional Services	58%	28%	14%
Care Services	-8%	9%	82%
Clothing	-7%	-8%	10%
Commercial & Industrial Services	9%	4%	3%
Digital Print Media	88%	-7%	65%
Domestic & Cleaning Services	-13%	8%	4%
Education	19%	-5%	13%
Electronic & Computers	10%	1%	3%
Food	14%	2%	7%
Funeral Services	24%	6%	55%
Gambling	19%	4%	-6%
Games & Gaming	5%	-10%	9%
Garages	21%	-3%	-16%
Government	-8%	-10%	51%
Health & Beauty	10%	5%	-13%
Health Practitioner	-6%	3%	9%
Home & Garden	1%	-19%	7%
Medical Services	11%	-1%	15%
NGO: Social & Religious Services	10%	6%	29%
Speciality	-17%	1%	3%
Sports, Outdoors & Travel	424%	-1%	7%
Stationery & Office Furniture	27%	14%	40%
Telecommunication	33%	-13%	17%
Tourism	32%	5%	7%
Transportation	51%	11%	-87%
Warehousing & Storage	3%	0%	161%

Heatmap

Credit card vs debit card: Total performance for Black Friday weekend including Cyber Monday

Credit card			
Tracked card spending categories	2022	2023	2024
Automotive	9%	6%	10%
Books & newspaper	16%	10%	7%
Building & hardware	15%	6%	-5%
Business & professional services	33%	31%	14%
Care services	-25%	25%	26%
Clothing	10%	8%	0%
Commercial & industrial services	23%	19%	-16%
Digital print media	227%	83%	-14%
Domestic & cleaning services	-14%	6%	-4%
Education	25%	-2%	24%
Electronic & computers	21%	3%	-1%
Food	6%	10%	7%
Funeral services	70%	-63%	52%
Gambling	36%	11%	17%
Games & gaming	10%	-5%	-1%
Garages	23%	-4%	-23%
Government	-29%	1%	16%
Health & beauty	6%	8%	-6%
Health practitioner	-3%	6%	1%
Home & garden	-1%	25%	-18%
Medical services	12%	3%	7%
NGO_ social & religious services	14%	1%	17%
Speciality	-10%	-2%	8%
Sports, outdoors & travel	402%	-2%	13%
Stationery & office furniture	24%	16%	29%
Telecommunication	15%	20%	46%
Tourism	60%	11%	0%
Transportation	19%	-15%	-76%
Warehousing & storage	14%	-38%	735%

Debit card			
Tracked card spending categories	2022	2023	2024
Automotive	10%	-1%	8%
Books & newspaper	12%	-1%	-15%
Building & hardware	10%	2%	-3%
Business & professional services	56%	26%	11%
Care services	-3%	6%	81%
Clothing	-5%	-7%	7%
Commercial & industrial services	10%	-2%	1%
Digital print media	176%	42%	82%
Domestic & cleaning services	-13%	7%	7%
Education	15%	-1%	5%
Electronic & computers	21%	-4%	4%
Food	15%	1%	6%
Funeral services	20%	15%	48%
Gambling	34%	15%	28%
Games & gaming	5%	-10%	-1%
Garages	20%	-3%	-18%
Government	13%	-3%	60%
Health & beauty	11%	4%	-16%
Health practitioner	-9%	0%	0%
Home & garden	5%	-4%	-4%
Medical services	10%	-5%	5%
NGO_ social & religious services	14%	4%	36%
Speciality	-10%	-1%	3%
Sports, outdoors & travel	410%	1%	8%
Stationery & office furniture	26%	13%	39%
Telecommunication	38%	-14%	17%
Tourism	37%	10%	-1%
Transportation	38%	4%	-76%
Warehousing & storage	1%	5%	115%

Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

Source: Absa's Merchant Spend Analytics

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Your story matters (absa)

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