

Around the world in a few clicks

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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The way people buy and sell online has changed, with mobile becoming the link between online and offline shopping, says Efi Dahan, PayPal Regional Director: Africa and Israel.

Speaking at the [eCommerce Africa Confex](#) in Cape Town, Dahan says PayPal is active in 43 countries across sub-Saharan Africa. The three main markets are South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, with more than 1-million account holders in South Africa alone.

With this background, the company recently conducted a survey on trends and habits of South African online shoppers (18 years and older).

The survey shows that of 105 South African internet users who responded, 22% have purchased online, while 48% expect to in the future.

Mobile results

Given the mobile penetration in the African market, Dahan explains that his company is expecting significant growth in the use of mobiles for e-commerce.

The survey says that about 50% of South African online shoppers who own a smartphone have used it to shop online, while another 21% say they will in the future.

“Shoppers still like to visit a store, but while standing in the queue waiting to pay, they may use their phone to compare prices for the same merchandise at other stores, and then make a purchase decision,” he explains.

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What we buy

South Africans shop mostly for digital goods (52%) online, followed by event tickets, travel or transportation, and fashion, consumer electronics and physical entertainment.

In terms of future buying patterns, 58-70% of respondents say they are likely to spend the same or more online this year.

Cross-border trade

The survey also looks at whether South Africans shop online outside the country's borders. A total of 42% say that they do.

In addition, 37% shop for fashion internationally, while 30% use e-commerce for electronic goods. They favour the US and the UK for the variety of products, while China is the market of choice for price.

Barriers and drivers

According to the survey, barriers to e-commerce are security, concerns about non-delivery of goods and shipping costs, while 53% say they would shop online more if there is free shipping and 43% say free shipping to return goods would influence their choice of platform.

In terms of payment processes, 45% say they want transactions to be processed quickly and securely, while 35% say they want the process to be convenient in terms of the number of steps they have to go through to pay for their goods and services.

The [eCommerce Africa Confex](#) is currently under way at the CTICC.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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