

# Making online trading safer

By [Claire Cobbledick](#)

24 Apr 2014

The majority does still not accept online trading in South Africa, due partly to distrust but there are safeguards put in place by both the websites and its regular users to make it safer. A recent poll of nearly 10,000 respondents showed that when it comes to meeting with online traders through classified sites, about 51% say that they do not transact online and 31% say they prefer to browse online but transact face-to-face.



© mikkolem - Fotolia.com

As with any other e-tailing platform, there are risks associated with classifieds but also great benefits. Reputable classifieds offer goods at significantly lower prices than retail value, localised services and a variety of items, generated by an active community, such as rentals, jobs, cars and household goods.

Our site has several safety mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of the community, although the diligence of the users has made it a particularly safe place to trade. We conduct random ad screenings, but our support team personally reviews all ads that are flagged by our community as suspicious. Users love the site and are quite keen to ensure that it keeps doing what it does best - providing a link between buyers and sellers. If a scammer does slip through, they report it extremely quickly.

This is crucial, as the site works closely with government, industry bodies and local law enforcement to track down these individuals. We also collaborate with numerous government and industry partners to share best practices, support investigations and help raise public awareness of online safety.

It also employs extremely sophisticated filtering systems that prohibit known fraudsters from accessing the site again. In addition, we have a customer service support team that is fully operational seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to assist users that have queries or concerns about safety or any other issues on the site.

Users can visit the on-site blog for regular updates on common scams that have been doing the rounds across various online classifieds sites. The reality is that although one is more likely to read about negative online experiences, there are

30,000 new ads posted every minute but only about 30 complaints lodged per month. Aggressive combating of online scams, combined with our ongoing efforts to educate and alert users will make it even safer to transact online.

## Safety tips

Here is advice for users making use of online classifieds for the first time:

- It's best to meet in public places (such as coffee shops or the local police station) when meeting a trader face-to-face.
- If you are showing your house to prospective tenants, ask them to provide proof of identity before scheduling a visit and make sure that you are not alone in the home at the time.
- It is advisable to obtain the buyer/seller's name, phone number and place of work before meeting. These details should be verified.
- Refrain from giving out too much personal information via email or SMS - particularly account details. Never provide anyone with passwords to your accounts.

For a detailed list of current online scams, go to <http://blog.gumtree.co.za/common-online-scams-south-africa-avoid/>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Cobbledick is the head of marketing at Gumtree.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>