

Internet becoming synonymous with economic access

According to the *Internet Access in South Africa 2017* study produced by World Wide Worx and Dark Fibre Africa (DFA), the internet has become a vital tool for communication and information in South Africa, highlighting the importance of connectivity as a key to economic access.



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“Internet access is becoming synonymous with economic access,” says Reshaad Sha, chief strategy officer and executive director at DFA. “For this reason, it is critical that the country prioritises the roll-out of infrastructure in underserved areas, especially outside the major metropolitan areas.”

Common usages

The report reveals that the single most common use of the internet among South African adults is communication, reported by almost a third (31%) of respondents, followed by social networking (24.9%) and information (23.7%), both reported by almost a quarter of respondents. Only then comes entertainment, at 22.1%.

The report includes data from the Target Group Index (TGI) survey conducted by Ask Afrika. World Wide Worx collaborates with Ask Afrika in the structuring of e-commerce, digital and electronics components of TGI, which comprises 15,000 interviews across a vast range of consumer topics and behaviours.

The question on primary uses of the Internet was answered by a sample representing 4.1-million South African adults across all income and education levels.

Email becoming less important

While communication is the single most important use, email use is reported by only 16.1% of respondents, indicating that it is becoming a less important element of the communications mix as social media becomes a default channel.

Shopping and finance applications is cited by only 15.2 per cent of respondents, confirming previous World Wide Worx research that showed e-commerce was still not a major element of South African retail in general.

“The findings emphasise the potential of the internet to enhance lives when we have greater penetration across all segments and demographics,” said Arthur Goldstuck, managing director of World Wide Worx. “Over time, we will see higher proportions of people engaging in a wider range of activity, but the barriers to more active use will first have to come down.”

Sha states, “A country’s capacity to connect its economy to the internet and make these services available and accessible to its citizens and businesses is key to its success in the digital age. Open access fibre infrastructure deployment and availability play a critical role in enabling service providers to deliver a range high speed of fixed and wireless internet access technologies and services to their consumer and business markets. This contributes significantly towards the further development of the knowledge economy in South Africa.”

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