

SA consumers 'want it all' from retailers

By [Zeenat Moorad](#)

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Retailers, take heed: South African consumers want it all - convenient physical store locations, websites that enable them to find and purchase products, and easy-to-use mobile websites or apps.



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Research from professional services firm PwC on Tuesday, 18 March 2014, revealed that while online shopping was growing fast, consumers still enjoyed shopping at a physical store so they could see and touch merchandise.

Local retailers were increasingly taking the ecommerce route, but poor delivery and infrastructure, and low levels of internet usage as a result of the cost of broadband remained significant inhibitors.

PwC retail and consumer industry leader John Wilkinson said consumers expected a consistent experience across all purchase channels. "Consumers are raising the bar for retailers, they're often a lot more tech-savvy than the retailers.

"They want to be connected to their favourite retailers 24/7 and they expect technology-enabled services by retailers."

According to PwC, 25% of South African online shoppers made their first online purchase less than a year ago and 45% within the past two years. Only 15% of South African survey respondents said they had never bought anything online.

South Africa's consumers are mainly buying books, music, electronic goods and clothing.

The PwC survey was part of a global report covering 15 countries including Turkey, the US and Brazil. It polled about 15,000 online shoppers.

By 2017 there will be 32.3-million mobile internet subscribers in South Africa and 2-million fixed-line ones, PwC predicts. At present, 75% of online purchases were through a PC, about 14% were made on tablets and 11% on smartphones, which were also used to compare prices, research products and locate stores.

The report found that cyber security was a major issue in South Africa. Local shoppers were most worried about personal data security.

"This mistrust of online security could be rooted in the fact that South Africa had the highest percentage of new online shoppers in the survey," Wilkinson said.

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