

PwC releases consumer insights survey for 2019

Anton Hugo, retail & consumer leader for PwC Africa and associate directors Rashaad Fortune and Andries Geertsema presented PwC's 2019 Global Consumer Insights Survey at the Peech Hotel in Johannesburg on 3 April.

The survey assesses the behaviour, habits and expectations of over 21,000 online consumers in 27 territories, revealing rapidly changing consumer behaviour in a host of sectors other than entertainment and media.

"Not only are consumers the strongest link in the global economic chain, but it [the survey] shows that the technological tools available to them have put them in a position to demand a tailored, seamless and multichannel shopping and social-media-powered experience," said Hugo. "Retailers can achieve this by using a blend of both physical and digital approaches. The result for companies will be a greater return on experience with the customer and gaining a competitive advantage."

When it comes to news, it is notable that 33% of South African consumers, compared to 25% of consumers globally, go to social media first to hear about current events. "The survey findings are not surprising given how pervasive social media is today."

Social media-placed ads that allow consumers to interact with a brand are now ranked as the third most effective form of advertising globally, and among millennials, this is the most popular form of advertising – beating out traditional television ads. In South Africa, consumers still look to traditional television ads as the most influential followed by social media ads.



Anton Hugo

The easier and better the experience, the more consumers will spend

The study finds that consumers – bombarded with a multitude of choices – are constantly seeking tools to help simplify their purchasing decisions. In addition to using digital technology, they are looking to their trusted communities and other experts:

- According to those surveyed, the top three attributes that can improve an in-store shopping experience are easy store navigation, knowledgeable sales associates and easy payment options. In South Africa, consumers also stated that the use of technology could assist the shopping experience, for example self-service kiosks and scanners. "Our survey findings show that shoppers who are willing to pay premium prices want better services, such as a personal stylist, and added conveniences, such as mobile payments and cutting-edge technology."
- Globally, 61% of consumers are influenced by social media for their purchases, either as inspiration or following positive reviews. 46.5% of South African consumers say they have been influenced to buy a product/service following positive reviews on social media.
- Almost 50% of those surveyed globally let family and friends' opinions guide their choice of a vacation travel provider. Less than half of South African consumers (49.4%) say they are influenced by special offers when choosing their vacation/travel provider and 46.1% are guided by their family and friends' opinions.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

PwC's survey shows that consumers are increasingly willing to engage in non-traditional activities online. This trend is especially noticeable in healthcare, where almost two-thirds of our global sample stated they are willing to access non-traditional health services online. Nearly 75% own health-related apps (South Africa 57.7%), with exercise/health monitoring being the most popular (South Africa 71%).

Consumers are pushing other boundaries too. Forty-six percent of consumers surveyed would like to have an autonomous vehicle today or would consider one in the future, and an additional 21% would be interested in learning more about the technology. They are mostly interested in automotive features that eliminate the human element of driving decisions and actions, such as braking, hazard perception and parking assistance.

The findings also confirm that smartphones have become the go-to technology for online shopping, with more than half (51%) of our global sample of consumers saying they use a smartphone to pay bills and invoices online, and the same percentage transferring money online. In South Africa, 63.2% of consumers have used digital channels to pay their bills and invoices in the past 12 months, while 67% have transferred money online. For the first time in the 10 years that PwC has conducted this survey, consumers surveyed are using smartphones over other mobile devices to shop online, with 24% of consumers globally (compared to 23.1% in South Africa) using a smartphone to shop online weekly.

In emerging countries, mobile payments in stores are increasing with Vietnam seeing the biggest increase to 61% in a period of one year, followed by the Middle East (45%). Globally, there was an overall increase of 24% over the past year. In general, Asian countries are more likely to adopt this behaviour more quickly than western countries.

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