

Is Africa ready for increased online shopping?

By [Mhokozisi Ndlovu](#) 19 Feb 2016

Africa is increasingly migrating into online shopping, as its consumers continue to change their culture of shopping, indicating a massive migration and adoption of e-stores.

As Africa witnesses this growth in most of its developed countries, the internet and information technology infrastructure still holds back some parts of Africa. In the past decades, there have been numerous studies about Africa – on how the world perceives the continent and how African citizens are changing the so-called ‘War zone continent’ into an investment destination, innovation hub and prosperous continent.



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Apart from being known as world’s investment destination ‘as most multinationals are progressively establishing themselves in African territories’, Africa is now taking further strides by entering the digital and online shopping era.

This increase is the indication that people are now shifting into online shopping; even though Africa still holds only about 1% of world’s online transactions – as indicated by MasterCard Worldwide Online Shopping Behaviour, conducted in 2014. However, online shopping in Africa is growing repeatedly, particularly in more developed markets in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Expansion across Africa

Online stores, such as Jumia, which operates in several African countries including Kenya, Cameroon, Egypt and Nigeria among others, are surprisingly expanding their footprints across Africa. Zando, a South African clothing and lifestyle online shop is also continuously gaining new customers particularly urban dwellers.

One may argue that Africa is far behind with internet and information communication technology infrastructure compared to its counterparts, such as North America and Europe – then why am I saying that Africa is increasingly adopting online shopping? Yes, Africa might be far behind but we see a large number of people taking advantage of smartphones to access internet - which allow them to shop online even if the

are in remote areas.

In Cote d'Ivoire, Jumia has been operating since June 2013, according to its website; it is now marking more than 1000 orders per day in just three years of its presence. Countries like Cote d'Ivoire are regarded as 'developing markets' in Africa, unlike countries, such as South Africa, which are categorised as 'developed markets'. This further shows that online shopping is not only growing in most-developed countries in Africa but also in under-developed countries where technology is still a huge challenge.

According to an article published by MyBroadband late last year, Naspers, the owner of South Africa's largest online store Kalahari.com – said e-tail (online retail) revenue had increased 64% to R20.3bn in 2014/2015 financial year and, as per World Wide Worx, e-tail growth rate in South Africa is estimated at 30% to 40% per annum.

As online stores continue to shape Africa's shopping culture, there are still challenges faced by most parts of African countries. The lack of ICT infrastructure holds back many African countries as some of their citizens struggle to access the internet – thanks to mobile technology as consumers are increasingly accessing the internet via smartphones, meaning that consumers are no longer restricted from accessing the internet.

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