

Mobile shopping set to boost Digital Mall

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Online shopping portal Digital Mall aims to increase turnover fivefold in the next two years as mobile shopping becomes a reality in SA and on the continent.



Yaron Assabi, CEO of Digital Solutions Group, said yesterday, 14 April 2009, that the company's Digital Mall concept had naturally grown from having an online presence to becoming available on cellphones.

The group, of which Digital Mall is a subsidiary, develops software for use in the mobile, online and logistics arena. Assabi said Digital Mall and the group had a symbiotic relationship that allowed company-developed software, created for the mall, to be sold to other clients.

The mall, which has been open for 10 years, retails items that range from George Foreman grilling machines and Apple Macs to music and Verimark's products.

Assabi said the mall had doubled turnover each year over the past three years and, with a move to mobile, expected to increase turnover fivefold. He said mobile communications were huge in Africa, with Google indicating that 80% of searches from Africa were either through cellphones or 3G data cards. "Africa is getting connected," he said.

Assabi's future vision is to have Digital Mall embedded on cellphones, so that it can be accessed as a menu item. The company is also investigating low-cost options for Africa.

However, said Assabi, Africa offers logistical challenges, such as clearing a small item through customs, the cost of air freight and the lack of road infrastructure.

But the continent offers great potential as there is far more demand than supply. "We want to fill that gap," said Assabi.

Digital Mall, as a result, is undergoing a reinvestment with the aim of serving the consumer better, said Assabi. The online

portal is backed up by a 24/7 call centre that also offers people assurance, he said. He believes this was key to the site's success.

Growth will also be spurred by the fuel price, convenience and environmental factors. This will boost growth in mobile shopping as people find cellphones a convenient way to access the internet as costs come down.

Bandwidth costs are expected to come down as new international cables make more bandwidth available from the end of June.

Source: Business Day

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