

SA consumers express willingness to help combat sustainability issues

As Earth Day is observed around the world on 22 April, new research on sustainability, commissioned by Mastercard, reveals a marked increase in consumer passion for the environment, as personal attitudes toward the environment evolve as a result of Covid-19.



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In South Africa, 98% of adults stated they're willing to take personal action to combat environmental and sustainability issues as compared to 85% globally. The vast majority (81%) of South African respondents also said they are even more mindful of their impact on the environment since Covid-19, with the trend being led by Gen Z (89%).

Social media appears to be driving an increase of environmentally-conscious consumers, with 52% respondents seeing information about climate change across social media channels. This signals a growing trend toward eco-conscious spending and consumption among people who want to turn their efforts and purchases into meaningful action for the planet.

Eco-actions essential for forward-thinking brands and businesses

The survey indicated three quarters (76%) of South African respondents think it's now more important for businesses and brands to do more for the environment. Nearly half of respondents (45%) will give more value to brands that act in a responsible, transparent and honest way.

Buying less impulsively by being more aware of purchases is one of the top changes South African respondents will make as a result from Covid-19.

As consumers across the globe call on companies and brands to behave in more sustainable and eco-friendly ways, respondents in South Africa highlighted the top three issues they want companies and brands to focus on, besides dealing with the pandemic. Specifically, they want brands to focus on the health and wellbeing of their employees (39%), reduce waste (34%), and reduce air and water pollution (34%).



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"Companies, consumers and communities must work together to make the significant changes needed to effectively address climate change," said Jorn Lambert, chief digital officer, Mastercard.

"By embedding sustainability into the very fabric of our business – from pay-on-demand solar energy products to tools that help inform consumer spending – we can unlock the power of our network, reaching billions of consumers and partners, to create positive change for the environment."

Eco-conscious consumers more aware of their actions

Three quarters (76%) of adults surveyed in South Africa feel reducing their carbon footprint is more important now than pre-pandemic. In 2021, 48% of adults in South Africa will actively try to recycle more, while 42% want to learn more about environmental subjects.

The trend toward more conscious consumption has grown over the last decade. However, changes in attitudes and actions have increased at a rapid rate as a direct result of Covid-19.

Fifty-four percent of South African adults admit that the increase in single-use plastic during the pandemic has encouraged them to make better environmental and sustainable decisions. Over half will also buy less impulsively and be more aware of what they buy, with this trend being led by more women (59%) than men (49%).



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Mastercard says it's equipping its global network to be a positive force for the environment. Last year it formed the Priceless Planet Coalition which unites the efforts of consumers, financial institutions, merchants and cities to fight climate change. The Coalition continues to expand and now includes more than 50 members. Collectively, it has committed to the restoration of 100 million trees. Planning is already underway for the restoration of 1.2 million trees in Kenya's Makuli Nzau landscape.

The company has also pledged to reach net zero emissions by 2050, building on existing commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions aligned with 1.5-degrees Celsius. Mastercard has also issued a \$600m sustainability bond and recently announced changes to its executive compensation model to help accelerate progress around three global ESG goals: carbon neutrality, financial inclusion and gender pay parity.

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