

# Mr Price online will be live from Monday

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Mr Price's online shopping offer will be live on Monday, 30 July 2012, the group's CEO Stuart Bird confirmed on Tuesday.

The fashion retailer's e-commerce venture will help the company gain market share and a competitive edge over rivals The Foschini Group, Woolworths and Truworths.

Competition in the clothing space has also been boosted with the arrival of foreign players such as Zara and Cotton-On, entering the SA arena.

"An online selling capability will enable Mr Price to further strengthen relationships with our target customers, who are tech savvy and require a convenient and secure way to get their fashion. Customers around the country will be able to access the full range of merchandise which was previously only possible by shopping at one of the larger stores," Bird said.

By global standards, the e-commerce platform in SA is small, but online retail sales have shown a steady increase over the last five years as the one-time timidity of local shoppers takes a backseat and a growing number of time-poor and techno savvy consumers turn to the net for retail therapy and bargain hunting.

Mr Price's online selling capability will offer the full Mr Price Apparel range, which includes about 18,000 fashion items.

It will cost shoppers R35 per delivery anywhere in SA and method of payment includes credit card, electronic funds transfer (EFT), Mr Price card and gift voucher card.

"The convenience factor is further emphasized by the site being web and mobi enabled, so customers will be able to transact via their computers or cell phones," Mr Bird said.

Mr Price Home and Mr Price Sport will follow with online offers next year.

The integration of both offline and online presence is often referred to as a "bricks-and-clicks" or "clicks-and-mortar" business model.

Traditional retailers who have extensive logistics and supply chains have been successful in implementing this type of model because establishing online presence based on existing perceptions is a great deal easier than it is for a start-up company.

Syd Vianello, analyst at Nedbank Securities, said he was not surprised that Mr Price was going the e-commerce route.

"At the end of the day, if a consumer trusts the brand and is relaxed they will buy the product online. Woolworths has moved in that direction. It's what's happening overseas - people are buying the George line from Asda online, as well as other big brands online," he said.

MasterCard's Worldwide Online Shopping Survey released earlier this year said that the number of South Africans shopping online had steadily increased over the past two years, with 58% of respondents in the survey of active internet users saying that they used the internet for shopping.

This was an increase from the 53% that said they shopped online in 2010.

According to Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx, once people are experienced Internet users and go online regularly, their propensity to shop online increases dramatically.

"The key is to convert that propensity into shopping behaviour," Goldstuck said.

He believes that from 2013 the participation curve will rise significantly and quickly, which will lead to growth in the number of online shoppers and online shopping options available.

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