eCommerce/mCommerce stream, Atlantis

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In Africa, and South Africa specifically, the future is undoubtedly mobile. Mobile penetration is measured at greater than 100% and more users access the net through a mobile device than traditional desktop. "eCommerce is well established and web-based buying is a part of everyday life, while the growth of mCommerce is seeing a huge lift through the penetration of smartphones, increased payment capabilities and enhanced user experiences," says Chris Wood, head of Group Innovation at Nedbank. "Today it is predominantly digital goods that are purchased through mobile devices, but this increase in the overall mobile ecosystem provides a massive opportunity for the migration to the purchase of physical goods through mobile as well."

In addition to app-based payment capabilities, the emergence of mobile card payment solutions has opened the door for many more business owners to take secure card payments through a mobile device rather than traditional point-of-sale devices. In February this year Nedbank launched the first fully certified mobile card acceptance solution in South Africa, known as PocketPOS™. This was a landmark occasion for the payment industry in South Africa and an important step towards accelerating the growth of businesses, allowing business clients to accept card payments through their smartphones and tablets. By reducing the need for cash transactions (which come with security risk, theft and reconciliation issues) and electronic payments (which often result in payment delays and an additional administration burden), PocketPOS™ provides an attractive payment alternative, especially for mobile businesses.

"We have seen great interest not only from small businesses, but also from larger corporates with mobile sales forces. As both consumers and businesses get more familiar with the solution and explore the full range of potential applications, we expect demand to increase in line with US and European trends', says Ingrid Johnson, Group Managing Executive of Nedbank Retail and Business Banking. 'What's more, PocketPOS™ provides us with a fantastic platform from which to innovate further."

It is this platform that introduces the opportunity for the mCommerce developer challenge at the Tech4Africa event. Nedbank will make available its PocketPOS™ application programming interface (API) to developers for building apps that are innovative and designed for a variety of uses. These apps will incorporate the payment technology built into the PocketPOS™ solution, but can be created for anything from a retail customer to a fast-food chain. Nedbank will make prizes available for the best apps developed during the course of the event.

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