

The year of the millennial car buyer

 By [Kriben Reddy](#)

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When it comes to buying cars in South Africa, 2018 may be the year of accelerated digital transformation for the auto sector.



Kriben Reddy, senior director: business development at TransUnion

A very buyer-friendly year in 2018

In South Africa currently, we have around 21 million active internet users, over 30 million social media accounts, and a total of around 87 million mobile connections.

Take into account the young age, urban location and upward mobility of these digital natives, and an interesting overlap emerges – these are the very same people who will make up the bulk of South Africa’s car buyers over the next few years. And as TransUnion’s latest VPI shows, we’re setting up for a very buyer-friendly year in 2018, with new vehicle sales expected to outstrip used cars significantly.

This means that automotive brands and their dealer networks will have to shift their business models to accommodate a market that functions far more seamlessly online than their predecessors did – and quick-moving automakers are racing to update their customer experience accordingly.

Future tech giving new life

Many are familiar with the recent viral video posted by 20-something celebrity forex trader, Sandile Shezi, in which he describes [buying his new Maserati entirely over WhatsApp](#). What most aspiring car buyers don’t realise is that this customised, “millionaire treatment” is close to becoming a reality for all car buyers.

“ From AI-powered chatbots to augmented and virtual reality, future tech is giving new life to test-drives and up-close inspections. ”

The days of walking into a dealership to peruse the cars on offer are soon to be long gone. The showcasing of vehicles in South Africa has already taken a heavily digital turn and the trend is accelerating.

Browsing, enquiring after, and applying to test drive a new vehicle is now done in a matter of minutes, rather than hours or days, and the process is only set to become even more streamlined in the next months and years.

ABOUT KRIBEN REDDY

Kriben Reddy is senior director: head of auto information solutions at TransUnion. His key focus over the last three years has been around digital transformation within the auto industry. Reddy introduced the industry's first mobile application (1Check) that has become the de facto offering for auto dealers. 1Check has been recognised through winning multiple industry awards. Reddy has created value across the vehicle market through driving innovation, efficiencies and profitability.

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