

AUSTRALIA IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN E-COMMERCE

JOSEPH DI GREGORIO

Definition of the digital economy

- The term ‘digital economy’ covers the global network of economic and social activities that are enabled by digital information and communication technologies such as the internet, mobile and sensor networks [source: DBCDE, Australia’s Digital Economy: Future Directions, 14 July 2009]:
 - the application of information and communication technologies (otherwise called ICT) to social and economic activity
 - internet and internet protocol (IP) technologies increasingly at the centre of digital economy developments.

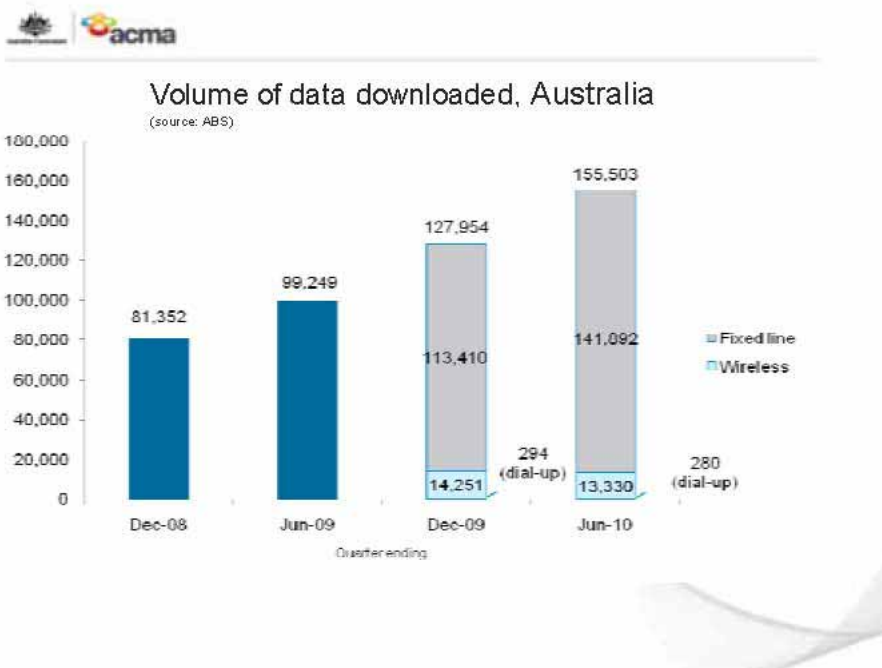
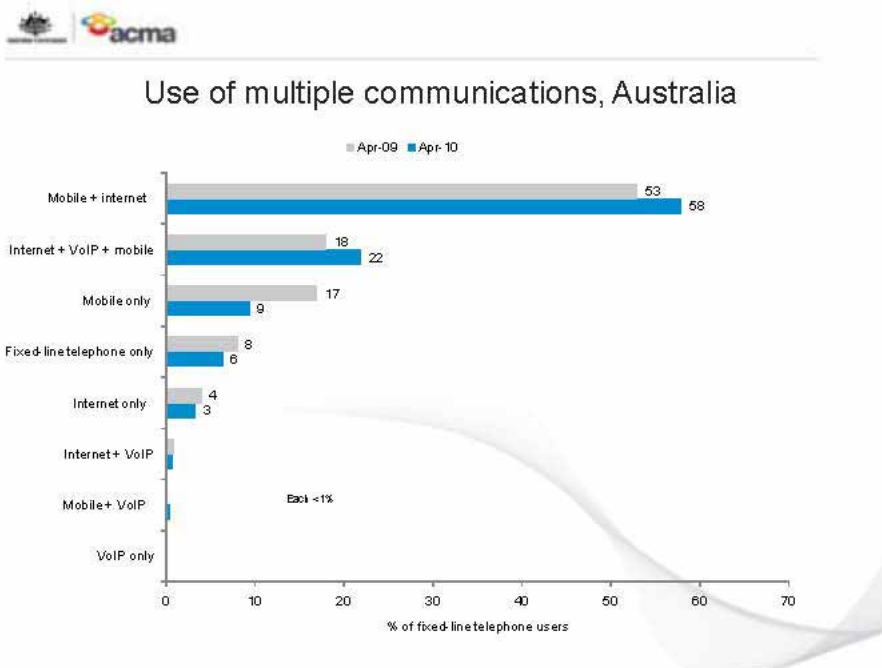
Why is the digital economy relevant to the ACMA?

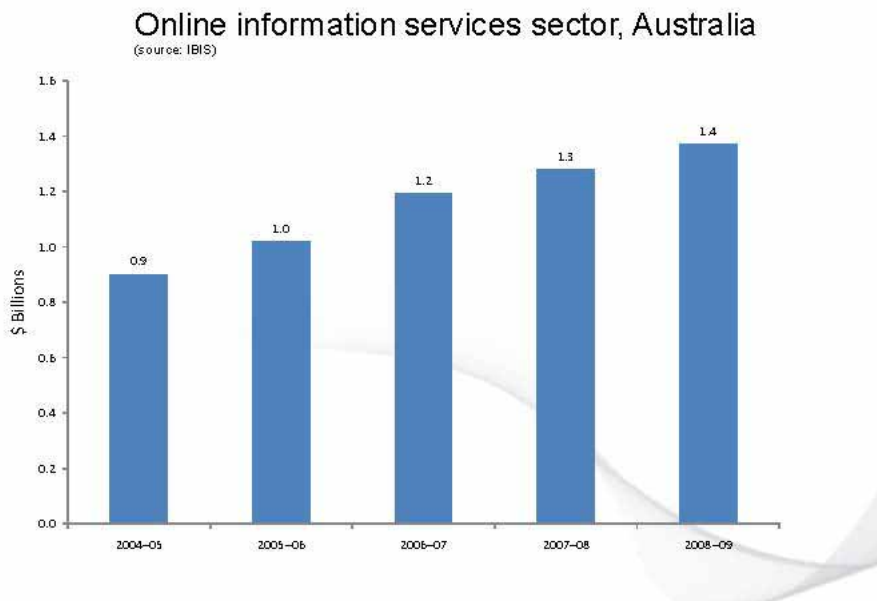
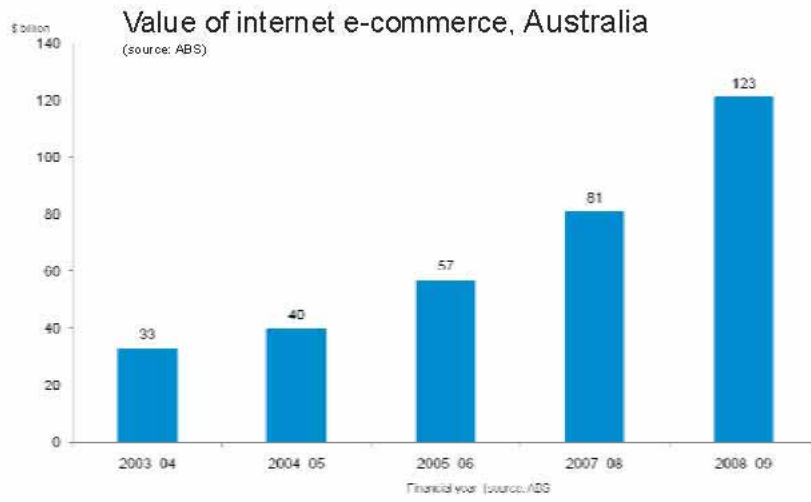
- Governments internationally have promoted the development of the digital economy to deliver economic and social goals.
- The sectors that the ACMA regulates — telecommunications, broadcasting and radiocommunications — are at the centre of digital economy activity.
- The DE is a growing source of ‘regulatory pressure’ — convergence of networks and services, consumers accessing voice and content services across multiple networks and devices.
- Scope of ACMA’s involvement (just a few examples):
 - NBN implementation: transition of voice consumer protection
 - Numbering and identity management
 - Building trust and confidence: cybersafety, e-security, SPAM, filtering, interception
 - Consumer protection issues
 - Effective management of spectrum resources: the switch to digital TV, the Digital Dividend.

As an evidence-based regulator, the ACMA has an interest in monitoring and understanding the developing digital economy in the context of:

- regulating for the citizen in an IP-based media and communications environment where usage of voice over internet protocol (VoIP), mobile communications and the internet continues to grow, which in turn provides challenges for safeguards, such as access to the emergency call service and online security
- voice regulation, where continued growth in VoIP usage and the number of people identifying mobile phones as their main form of communication pose challenges when it comes to applying regulatory requirements that are based on traditional fixed-line voice services
- supporting consumers making informed decisions in an environment of ongoing network, device and service innovation
- regulating content in an environment where content is increasingly available on multiple platforms including the internet, mobile and traditional broadcasting networks.

Figures 1–4: Broad level indicators of the emerging digital economy

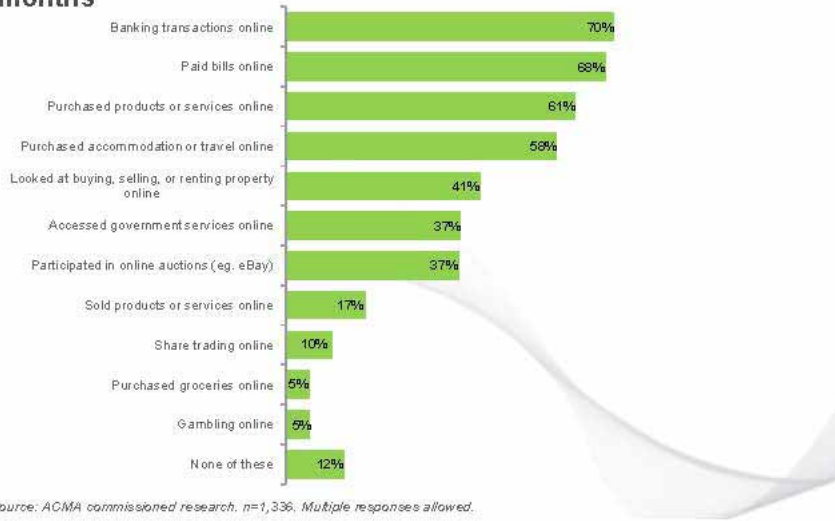




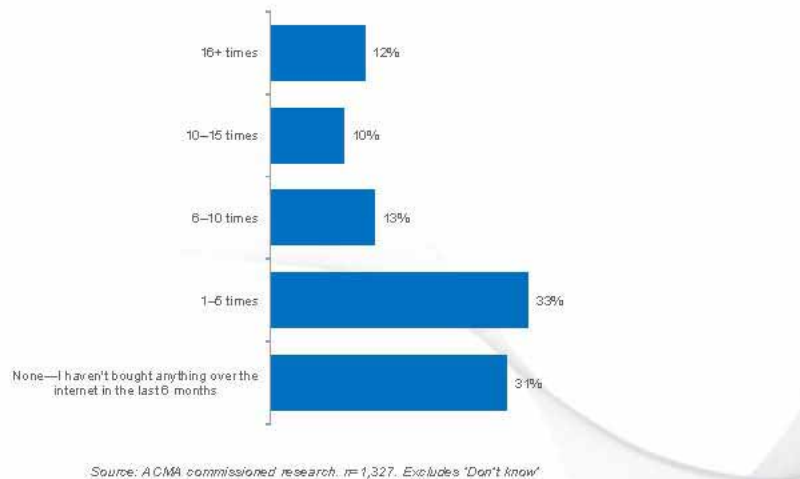
Figures 5–9: Where do Australian consumers fit into this picture?



Adoption of e-commerce by household internet users in the last six months

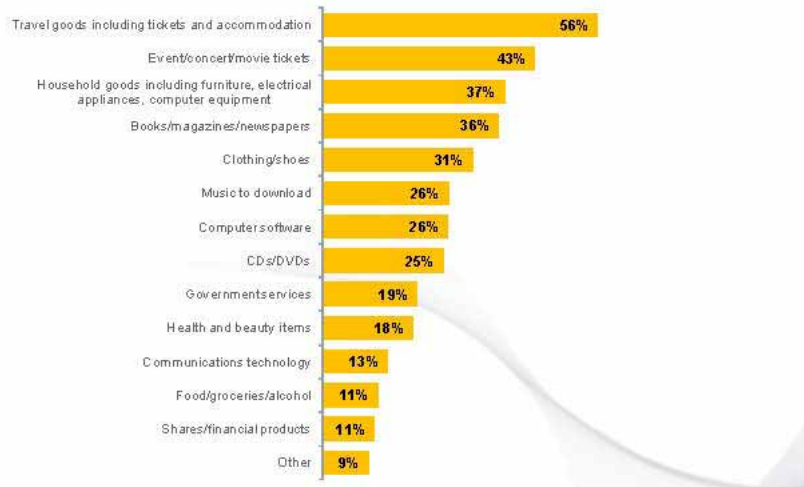


Frequency of online purchase in the last six months





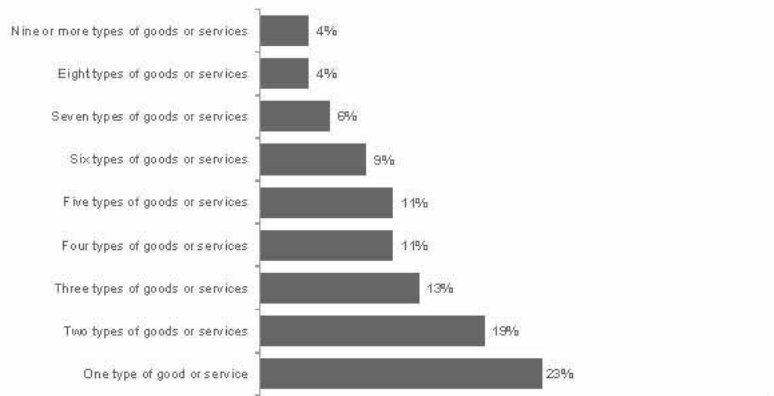
Goods and services purchased online in the last six months



Source: ACMA commissioned research, n=922. Multiple responses allowed.



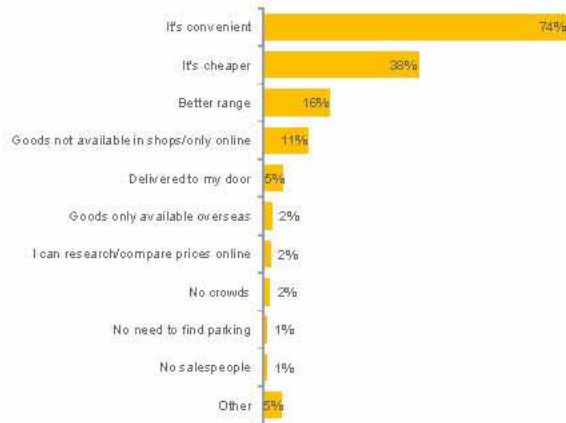
Number of different types of goods and services bought online in the last six months



Source: ACMA commissioned research, n=922. Note: The figure excludes respondents that refused to give response or indicated they had not purchased online.



Reasons for purchasing online



Source: ACMA commissioned consumer survey, November 2009, n=916. Multiple responses allowed.

