

Wholesale & Retail LEADERSHIP CHAIR

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E-Business Developments and Skills Requirements in the Retail Sector

E-business, or the use of web-based applications to support economic transactions, is changing the way people buy products and the way companies do business.

Research shows retailers are arguably most affected, and have a huge challenge adapting to rapid change.

Lead researcher Professor Doctor Udo Klaiber, of Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg, Germany and Terence Hermanus of the Department of Retail Business Management, Cape Peninsula University of Technology Wholesale and Retail Leadership Chair, conducted global research on the influences of IT developments on retail businesses and resulting skills requirements of employees.

The researchers examined trends in e-commerce – where sales are expected to increase by an average 20% annually worldwide until 2017 - including mobile shopping or m-commerce, apps, privacy issues, viral communication and customer retention. The most important development trends include 3-D printing, internet of things (or machines), payment systems (including micro payments) and big data.

The researchers established that e-business implementation can increase sales, improve customer service, and result in better distribution and cost reduction. Retailers will require technological, administrative and marketing and sales expertise, and there will be much more competition for qualified employees.

The researchers said while some offline trade will vanish, in countries like South Africa, where malls have a strong position, retailers will be able to defend themselves against online competition.

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