

# Wholesale & Retail LEADERSHIP CHAIR

## PRESS RELEASE

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### 'LIVING THE BRAND' - THE WAY FORWARD FOR SA RETAILERS

*A recent study of the role played by brand orientation (BO) in the South African retail environment found that a high degree of BO positively influences retailers' success. BO in the retail environment is a strategic approach focusing on store brands as resources and in which the organisation focuses on the creation, development, and protection of the corporate retail brand in a continuous interaction with customers, in order to achieve a competitive advantage.*

Despite retailers investing considerable budgets in building and maintaining their corporate brands, very little research focussed on the effect of BO on the performance of retailers has been conducted - and none in South Africa. This is astonishing since previous research in other industries has shown that BO has a positive impact on a company's economic success as well as on non-economic objectives.

Generally, BO consists of a brand-related behaviour and a brand-oriented culture. This BO culture is made up of:

- Values – in a brand oriented company, the brand is deeply embedded in unspoken, taken for granted values, which form the basis of culture. These values influence norms.
- Norms – conscious strategies, goals and philosophies; the guiding rules and procedures for behaviour within an organisation. Norms in turn influence symbols.
- Symbols – the most obvious element of culture; tangible, overt, visually or verbally identifiable elements, such as branded name tags, uniforms, store image and layout, and others.

The results of research carried out by the Wholesale & Retail Leadership Chair (WRLC) at Cape Peninsula University of Technology showed that having strong brand values strengthens the retailer's brand oriented norms, which in turn ensure the establishment of a strong set of brand related symbols. Values, norms and symbols positively influence brand-oriented behaviour which itself contributes to retailers' success. Additionally, it is the existence of brand related symbols that directly influence market performance.

Overall, the findings emphasised the importance, to a retail store's performance, of 'living the brand' via all staff, and of the positive store image created by symbols. The results support the need for commitment by top management, investment in branding, talking regularly about the brand and ensuring all staff are committed to what the brand stands for. Clear rules of brand oriented behaviour should be implemented as well. Additionally, managers should ensure correct, accurate and strong use of visible symbols such as corporate logos and signs, uniforms and colours in their stores.

For more information contact:

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