

Wholesale & Retail LEADERSHIP CHAIR

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E-retail in SA – new technologies, new skills requirements

The future growth of E-Retail in South Africa is dependent upon a range of innovative new technologies. To access and leverage the technologies will require very specific skill sets, which will need to be developed. A recent Wholesale & Retail Leadership Chair study set out to analyse these skills and plan for their development.

Stated Objectives

The study set out to achieve three objectives:

1. Profile the South African e-Retail sector.
2. Identify current, and predict future, technologies and skills required to support, sustain and develop the SA e-Retail sector towards global competitiveness.
3. Investigate and develop suitable training solutions, to facilitate the development of the skills necessary to achieve this.

Initial data gathering was done via an online survey directed at retail management, to get an idea of e-Retail readiness within SA. Focus group sessions further examined the landscape and skills profile for e-Retail, and a group of experts were the source of potential training strategies.

Findings of the study

A comprehensive range of pivotal and breaking technologies likely to influence the successful implementation of e-Retail in South Africa were identified. In addition, essential business process elements necessary to drive the change agenda for e-Retail in SA were pinpointed.

Attention is also drawn by the study to aspects of business and social change associated with e-Retail internationally, as well as the evolution of its functions, skills and services. To this end, the study has drawn extensively from national and international case studies.

A variety of mega trends likely to impact e-Retail in SA were also identified during the study. Cyber Security is imperative in ensuring that data management and financial transactions are secure. The provision of valuable information through the manipulation of Big Data will also become a major factor in e-Retail. In addition, there is a strong trend towards the development and take-up of Wearable and Pervasive Tech.

This study has helped paint a clearer picture of e-Retail in SA today and of its likely trajectory for the years to come. Crucially, it has identified skill sets which will be pivotal, and made suggestions for their development. The study is thus an important starting point for very necessary further discourse on e-Retail and its future in SA.

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