



PRESS RELEASE

Attention: Editors, Journalists, Producers and Bloggers

VUT to Host Mega Student Conference: "The Consumer of the Future"

On 1 November 2024, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) will host a groundbreaking student conference themed ***"The Consumer of the Future."*** Organised by VUT's Department of Marketing, Retail Business Management and Sport Management in collaboration with the Marketing Association of South Africa (MASA). The conference will take place at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall.

Drawing from the fictitious roles in Star Trek – Discovery, the conference aims to explore uncharted frontiers by delivering a futuristic overview of what the consumer galaxy will look like in the next few decades, following the unavoidable impacts of the digital and robotic revolution on each consumer's way of life. To grace the occasion will be a plethora of internal and external stakeholders, supported by marketing practitioners from the private sector. The conference promises to deliver a cohort of industry experts who will demonstrate the power of cutting-edge technology and decode the mysteries of this dynamic consumer universe.

The Vice Chancellor and Principal of VUT, Prof Khehla Ndlovu will deliver a welcoming message. Featured guests include Mr Marnitz van Heerden, a MASA affiliate and a certified Customer experience Practitioner (CXP), currently serving as the Head of Customer Experience at Discovery Health Pty Ltd. Mr Peter Ivanoff, a chartered Marketer and a futurist will deliver insights on the future direction of artificial intelligence, from the strategic vantage point of the Marketing Centre. To provide a perspective about digital upskilling in retailing, Mr Rayvin Daniels, currently the Divisional Training Manager for Checkers Gauteng South will deliver an engaging perspective on the upskilling required to meet the needs of future retail customers. On the other hand, Mr Ceasor Mongwe, an Athlete Welfare Coach will deliver a case study outlining how artificial intelligence will continue to penetrate the roles of sport coaches, globally. Ms Jessica Wheeler, a Chartered Marketer and Director at Nando's South Africa as well as Professor Felix Mavondo, who is based in Wellington, Australia will be patched in online. To provide responses throughout the conference.

The Head of Department (HoD), Professor (Prof) Nobukhosi Dlodlo has indicated her excitement about the collaborative work that has gone in building up to the conference. She mentioned that the key highlight for the day, will be the dual prize-giving ceremony. In July and August 2024, students within the department voluntarily participated in an inaugural competition where they were required to design a digital marketing programme for the university. On 18 October 2024, the participating students presented their ideas to Dr Visser and Ms Cholofelo Basi from UNISA, who were the primary external evaluators. Following the evaluation, the winners will be given sterling prizes at the conference. Moreover, the HoD highlighted that she launched the departmental "difference award" for staff to be honoured for unique efforts delivered throughout the academic year. Prof Dlodlo anticipates that the unique award will be delivered annually. It is expected that the conference will be highly visual, engaging and there will also be a pop-up store, where selected entrepreneurs that have been previously supported by the department as community service will showcase their merchandise. Ms Peu and Ngobeni, lecturers within the department will be responsible for manning the pop-up store. As a reflection, the Prof Dlodlo stated that "the

intended impact of the conference will be to go beyond satisfying our internal and external customers, to a position of ensuring they succeed; especially regarding the success of our students who are our chief customers.”

NOTE TO EDITOR:

MASA is a national professional body representing the marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines. The professional body is responsible for designating the professional status of academics and practitioners within the Marketing discipline. MASA collaborates with various educational institutions in setting the pace for the required skills in the sector, including best practices, continuous improvement activities, training and networking opportunities for marketing professionals to stay current on industry trends and technologies.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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