

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RETAILING AS AN OCCUPATION

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ABSTRACT

No matter what the economic conditions, university students often look to complete their degrees and join the labour force, hoping to find an appropriate job for their acquired academic skills. The retailing sector is a possible avenue to find employment, but historical perceptions of retailing occupations suggest that these jobs are often not viewed as viable occupation choices for university students. As an initiative between the School of Retailing and the Retail Council of Canada, a small exploratory survey was developed to assess students' current perceptions about retailing careers. In total, seventy-one individuals responded to a survey conducted on September 29th, 2009 at the University of Alberta, Retail Career Fair. The results of the brief intercept survey suggest that the majority of survey respondents do not think that retailing is a low skilled industry, or that it is a low reward career, or that it

means working in a store. However, respondents do think that the retailing industry pays poorly (even though this is not necessarily the case).

As a result, there is a contemporary perception, on the part of students, that "retail pays poorly." Information is and can change individuals' opinions about retailing as a career, and respondents prefer information about retail career choices via information sessions, through guest lecturers in the classrooms, and by electronic media (like email and online information). Economic climates impact a company's ability to successfully recruit employees. Poor economic climates can serendipitously highlight retailing as a potential employer for highly educated individuals. Therefore, getting relevant and timely labour force information to future graduates is of the utmost importance.