

## Career Profile: Buyer

Buyers play a key role in retail business. The products they buy vary from high fashion for groups like Foschinis and Truworths to homeware, furniture, hardware, nonperishable foods, meat, fruit and vegetables for big groups like Pick and Pay, Shoprite and Woolworths and smaller supermarkets. Purchasing is an important element of the supply chain which is common to all, but each category of products has its own characteristics. Buyers have to develop a thorough knowledge of the products in their own area. Food and fashion require very different interests, approaches and product knowledge. The suppliers are different, seasonal variations are different, factors affecting delivery are different, and above all potential customers are different.

Buyers have to know their potential markets and predict anticipated customer demand for what products and how many they buy for their organization and at what price. Their predictions must be based on a careful study of fashions and trends, seasonal availability and sound knowledge of current and potential suppliers. An important element of buying is accurate assessment of the capacity of suppliers to meet their commitments reliably, and flexibility to cope with unexpected crises. Good decisions about product lines can be undone if suppliers do not meet their commitments. Both assessment and ongoing communication with suppliers are vital.

## Education Requirements

### National Senior Certificate (NSC)

For a career in retail students are advised to select Mathematics and to add to this a selection from the designated subjects. These are subjects that are particularly suitable for tertiary study.

### Bachelor Degree

#### **Bachelor of Commerce – BCom (3 years)**

A three year degree programme that develops good financial skills, analysis and problem solving to prepare the graduate to be able to function effectively in the fast-paced, competitive environment of retail.

#### **Offered at:**

- [University of Johannesburg](http://www.uj.ac.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.uj.ac.za/management)<sup>1</sup> (Faculty of Management)
- [University of Limpopo](http://www.uj.ac.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.uj.ac.za/management)<sup>2</sup> (School of Economics and Management)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uj.ac.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.uj.ac.za/management>

- [University of Pretoria](#)<sup>3</sup> (Department of Marketing & Communications Management)
- [University of the Witwatersrand](#)<sup>4</sup> (Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management)
- [University of Venda](#)<sup>5</sup> (School of Management Sciences)
- [UNISA](#)<sup>6</sup> (College of Economic and Management Sciences)

### Specializations offered:

The most relevant BCom would be a general degree or one specializing in Business or Retail Management.

## National Diploma / BTech

The National Diploma is a three year course which includes guided practical experience. The diploma is a pre-requisite for admission to a Bachelor of Technology - BTech

### Offered at:

- [Tshwane University of Technology](#)<sup>7</sup> (Faculty of Management Sciences)
- [University of Johannesburg](#)<sup>8</sup> (Faculty of Management)
- [UNISA](#)<sup>9</sup> (College of Economic and Management Sciences)
- [Vaal University of Technology](#)<sup>10</sup> (Faculty of Management Sciences)

### Specializations offered:

There are a number of National Diplomas and BTech degrees to consider.

#### **Tshwane University of Technology**

**National Diploma:** Retail business management

**BTech:** Marketing, Retail business management

#### **University of Johannesburg**

**National Diploma:** Retail business management, Fashion design

**BTech:** Marketing management, Fashion design

#### **Vaal University of Technology**

**National Diploma:** Retail business management, Purchasing management, Fashion

**BTech:** Retail business management, Purchasing management, Fashion

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ul.ac.za/index.php?Entity=School%20Main%20Menu&school\\_id=5](http://www.ul.ac.za/index.php?Entity=School%20Main%20Menu&school_id=5)

<sup>3</sup> <http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=753>

<sup>4</sup> <http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/CLM/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.univen.ac.za/management\\_sciences/index.html](http://www.univen.ac.za/management_sciences/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=32>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tut.ac.za/Students/facultiesdepartments/managementsciences/departments/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.uj.ac.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.uj.ac.za/management>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=32>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.vut.ac.za/metadot/index.pl?id=19737>

## Admission requirements

As admission requirements vary from one institution to another, find out what the specific requirements are by checking on the website and contacting the university if you have any queries.

## Possible Employers

- [Truworths](#)
- [Foschini Group](#)<sup>11</sup>
- [Mr Price Group](#)<sup>12</sup>
- [Woolworths](#)<sup>13</sup>
- Other retail organisations

## Find out more

Find out more about planning, buying and merchandising, bursaries and jobs:

- [Reviews](#)<sup>14</sup> of some interesting books on buying.
- [The Institute of Purchasing and Supply South Africa](#).<sup>15</sup>
- Information about [Truworths Graduate/Trainee Programme](#)<sup>16</sup> including trainee planners.
- [The Foschini Group](#)<sup>17</sup> runs a Graduate Programme each year for talented graduates interested in fashion and retail. It offers on the job training.
- [Mr Price Group](#)<sup>18</sup> has a Graduate Programme with several different possibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.foschinigroup.co.za/careers/organisational.asp>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.mrpricegroup.com/careers>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.woolworthsholdings.co.za/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.sacareerfocus.co.za/content\\_sub.cfm?AgentsID=302&PageID=453&SubPageID=882](http://www.sacareerfocus.co.za/content_sub.cfm?AgentsID=302&PageID=453&SubPageID=882)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ipssa.co.za/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.truworths.co.za/cms/cmsll.asp?cmsid=2552&act=cm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.foschinigroup.co.za/careers/organisational.asp>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mrpricegroup.com/careers/grad.asp>

## Are you suited to this career?

This quick quiz can help you to identify whether you are suited for this occupation.

Quiz	Yes	No
Are you interested in the competitive world of retail?		
Are you able to think broadly when seeking solutions to problems?		
Do you like to work in a systematic and organized way?		
Are you good at mathematics?		
Would you describe yourself as dynamic?		
Do you plan your activities to make sure you accomplish your goals?		
Are you decisive and willing to take risks?		
Do you work well with other people?		
Are you able to work under pressure?		
Do you communicate your ideas clearly to others orally and in written form?		

If you have mainly yes answers it may be an indication that this is an occupation to consider.