

Major distributor invests in local haircare brand Nilotiqa

South African beauty distributor Sunpac has partnered with small business owner Thokozile Mangwiro and invested in her natural haircare brand Nilotiqa.



Thokozile Mangwiro, Nilotiqa founder. Source: Supplied

Sunpac, which locally distributes well-known international beauty brands including Hask, Marc Anthony and Cantu, states that the Nilotiqa partnership aligns with its growth strategy which is focused on making local haircare products accessible to local consumer needs and wallets - which it says can be difficult when compared with imported product pricing, which often implies a premium or niche offering.

Commenting on this strategy, Sunpac CEO Shaun Laffer says, “Our business has matured past the point of focusing on short-term earnings and survival and is now at the point where we are setting long-term plans and making key investments for growth.

“What is particularly exciting about Nilotiqa, is we can achieve our long-term goals and at the same time offer benefits and support to local entrepreneurs which in turn accelerates their growth and development. We are thrilled to be partnering with and welcoming Thokozile Mangwiro into our family and have our full team working with her on this exciting brand and in support of local products and local manufacturing.”



Source: Supplied

Laffer says the Nilotiqa brand is hot property, but past financial constraints and economies of scale have limited its local market share, which Sunpac aims to address.

In 2020, Sunpac acquired another local brand The Perfect Hair in the same category when they partnered with founder Taryn Gill.

“Our appetite to acquire other local brands, not only in this category, is high,” says Laffer. We are acquisitive. We onboarded Investec in 2021 as a minority shareholder in our business to assist with our acquisitive growth strategy and it is an upward trajectory from here.”



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Lauren Hartzenberg 28 Aug 2020



Plugging a gap

Mangwiro describes herself as an unintentional entrepreneur, “As a Black woman with natural hair, we face the continuous social perception that our hair is not considered ‘done’ when it is in its most natural state. Most haircare products that are aimed at Black women offer benefits to change or alter the structure of our hair. I wanted to create a product that is specifically suited to my type of hair; a product that would not have to change the structure in order to ‘help’ me maintain it. I wanted to be able to keep my hair in its healthiest form.”

With a Master’s degree in Information and Communication Technology from the University of South Africa and a Bachelor’s degree in IT and Web Development, Mangwiro worked in corporate for eight years before turning her focus to haircare after spotting a gap in the market for natural and organic haircare products for maintaining afro natural hair.

She launched the Nilotiqa brand in 2016 with organic, professionally formulated products that include Deep Moisture Butter, Curl Activating Gel and Nourishing Scalp & Hair Oil currently available nationwide through retailers Dischem, Clicks and Pick n Pay.

“Through my research, we found that African hair is characterised by tight coils that grow closer to the scalp, which makes it a challenge for the hair’s natural oils to travel down the hair strands to their tips. The hair is therefore often dry due to the lack of these oils and therefore moisture. Nilotiqa is the solution that adds high-quality oils and butters to help the hair maintain its natural moisture.”



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30 Jun 2021



Mangwiro is clear that the Nilotiqa brand is not selling women dreams about how it will change their hair to something so different that they will not recognise themselves, but rather is a solution that retains the moisture that their hair requires for healthy maintenance and growth, something which is often tarnished by the use of harsh and harmful products set to alter Black women’s natural hair.

With the recent partnership funded by internal Sunpac capital, Laffer says Mangwiro is both knowledgeable in the category and her product development is guided by her personal intelligence of what consumers want, with Sunpac now working to make the range more affordable and accessible to more consumers, as well as increasing the current Shea & Coco Collection and Creamy Collection ranges to include new on-trend products.

Category growth opportunity

According to Laffer, the multicultural, natural haircare category in the formal market is growing at double digits, and as the fastest-growing segment in haircare it is valued at hundreds of millions of rands. “Nilotiqa’s market share is still very small, but we have a plan to get to a meaningful number in the next 24 to 36 months.

“We believe the Nilotiqa business has scale to grow exponentially from its present size. Current challenges to growth are the time required to test and launch some of the new products and to open up our distribution footprint in retail, which will require a solid and consistent track record of consumer adoption to support the request and need for more retail space,” says Laffer.

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