

Travis Coppin of Food Lover's Market

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Seven years ago, Food Lover's Market co-founder Brian Coppin roped his son Travis Coppin, a trained chartered accountant, into the family retail business.



Travis Coppin, Food Lover's Market managing executive for marketing and buying, with Lisa Currey, managing director of Hamiltons Advertising.

Starting out as a fresh produce buyer, Travis has grown with the business and today enthusiastically occupies the dual-focused position of managing executive for marketing and buying at Food Lover's Market.

Here, he fills us in on the principles that guide Food Lover's brand strategy, and what it takes to survive and thrive in the competitive grocery retail business.

■ ***As Food Lover's Market's managing executive for marketing and buying, what does your role entail exactly, and what does your average day at work look like?***

The core output of my role is to set and deliver the sales budget for the year and to ensure we increase our market share by creating a fantastic shopping experience for our customers.

Daily, I'm focusing on buying better quality products, selling it at a far better price than our competitors, and employing innovation in our stores to make it the best shopping destination – all to offer more value and deliver on a great consumer experience.

■ ***You're a chartered accountant, so how did you end up working for the family business, and what's that like?***

My dad (Food Lover's Market CEO and co-founder, Brian Coppin) called me on the first day after I completed my articles and said, "The vacation is over. Be at the Epping market tomorrow at 4:45am, it's time to start working." This was in January 2014 and my first role in the business was as a fresh produce buyer.

Working in the family business is the best thing in the world.

■ ***Describe the Food Lover's brand in a sentence.***

Food Lover's Market aims to be the best one-stop shopping destination in the communities we operate by consistently delivering a 'theatre of food' that is driven by innovation, value and fantastic quality products – which includes an expansive range of both fresh and grocery items.



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■ **What would you say are the core tenets of the general Food Lover's Market marketing strategy?**

The core tenet of our business is to be the 'Best in Fresh', which means fruit, veg, butchery, seafood, bakery and deli – whilst offering the consumer a full grocery basket at incredibly affordable prices.

We want to offer value and create a huge amount of theatre for the consumer. We believe that shopping at a Food Lover's Market must be fun. So, we have invested intensively in creating stores that have a unique market feel, with food destinations dotted around the store, all underpinned by value.

■ **What's on your wish list of brand objectives for 2021?**

To continue driving the Food Lover's Market brand promise, which is to be the 'Best in Fresh'. Our newer stores, such as Food Lover's Market Boksburg, William Moffett in Port Elizabeth, and Waterfall Ridge in Midrand, are testament to this objective. All of these stores boast innovative design, a fantastic fresh produce offering, as well as a full grocery section.

The expanded grocery range allows for a full-service shopping experience and provides more convenience for customers. Customers can now expect to get the same value on groceries as they have come to enjoy in other departments, such as fruit, veg and butchery.

■ **Can you share some of your favourite Food Lover's campaigns and brand activities that you've worked on?**

We have always been passionate about unique price points and offering insane value. We enjoy planning campaigns such as the Double Whammy Wednesday promotion, Ten Buck Tuesday or Fifty Buck Friday because we're able to tangibly show the customer that we deliver on our promise to offer value. Our Summer and Winter Carnival campaigns have always been bookmarked by customers as in-store campaigns that must not be missed.

In recent years we've started offering rewards programmes, such as the popular Goodness Gang, Thomas Knives and Thomas Cutlery. These have all been fantastic campaigns to work on and the response from shoppers has been amazing.

We will be launching our exciting Marvel Mugs rewards campaign in May and we're confident consumers young and old will love it.



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■ ***In your opinion, what skills and qualities are key to being a successful brand custodian?***

As the brand custodian, I want Food Lover's Market to be the most loved and adored brand for food lovers across South Africa. For me, it's about having a great work ethic and that is something I have definitely inherited, but still work hard at as it's key to building any brand.

There needs to be an obvious passion and a sense of living the brand everyday. A very clear understanding of the company values that needs to shine through in all of the marketing is important, and of course adaptability and constantly thinking future-forward.

Retail is not for the weak. You have to love what you do to survive retail.

■ ***What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned from your experience in the retail sector?***

The South African consumer expectation is evolving at a very fast pace, especially as far as value, convenience, variety and the overall shopping experience are concerned. Within this tough new economic climate, we see customers becoming far less predictable and better informed, with value for money being the biggest factor when considering a purchase decision.

Increased health consciousness as a result of the pandemic has also steered consumers toward buying more fresh food and eating at home. Our challenge, which we are happy to meet, is to ensure that our offering is the best quality in fresh and grocery, affordable, and consistently available.

The introduction of rewards programmes has also enabled us to generate greater loyalty – but only if we offer the right reward. Consumers want something fun, that is also practical and of great quality.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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