Pernod Ricard invests R38m into combating unemployment

By Emily Stander   24 Nov 2021

Pernod Ricard is investing R38m locally into its 2021 festive season campaign, Phakamisa ispirit (lift the spirit) - in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED).

Ashley Lovell

When South Africans purchase a bottle of participating brands, each presented in unique packaging, they will receive a bespoke gift. Participating brands include Jameson Select Reserve Irish whiskey, Ballantine's Finest Blended Scotch whisky, The Glenlivet Founders Reserve Single Malt Scotch whisky, Chivas Regal 12YO Blended Scotch whisky, and Beefeater London Dry gin.

Part of the proceeds from every bottle sold will help provide local artisans with SETA-accredited courses covering business management, manufacturing, technology, and accounting.

We spoke to Ashley Lovell, head of consumer trade experience at Pernod Ricard, to find out more about the initiative, the impact they hope to make, and what we can expect from the future…

The growth of small businesses

Lovell's team is responsible for creating memorable, engaging, and sustainable commercial experiences.

Lovell believes that a big part of the potential solution to the unemployment challenge in South Africa is the development of small, local businesses. "Unfortunately, government and large corporates do not have the capacity to create enough jobs to address the problem adequately," he said. "So, the only real solution lies in trying to work together to help grow small businesses and create more jobs."

Phakamisa ispirit was created in the spirit of this idea. Holding each of the participating brands, bespoke cylindrical cartons with lids made of wood were shaped to something beneficial for consumers. Three designs were created - a lemon squeezer, a cellphone amplifier, and an ice mould.

"When it came down to numbers and especially the scale of the project, we soon realised that local craftspeople did not have the capacity or access to the necessary infrastructure to produce the number of gifts we needed or meet the precise specifications we required," Lovell said. "This obstacle forced us to partner with a large local manufacturer but inspired our intention to address this challenge in a meaningful way."

The city of Ekurhuleni Municipality has donated a warehouse in Thokoza that is being converted into a workshop for approximately 20 artisans. The warehouse will accommodate workers who work with wood and will have access to Pernod Ricard and other partners for a guaranteed stream of income.

The plan is to have five workshops established across Gauteng in the next five years, and businesses who are involved will have access to training, technology, and markets.

The challenge

"This is not a short-term quick fix," said Lovell. "We are entering the next post-pandemic phase, which will present significant growth opportunities for all business, especially small, local, and agile businesses that respond quickly to opportunities."

The challenges presented by Covid-19 have seen many small businesses struggle to grow, let alone survive in the current economic climate. Coupled with pre-existing challenge of unemployment in South Africa - only exacerbated by the pandemic - initiatives like this are essential in trying to combat these challenges.

"Without a doubt, [I look forward to] seeing small entrepreneurs, many of whom I have become friends with during this journey, grow into successful businesses and make their mark on the South African economy," Lovell concluded.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games
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