

# A Business Initiative Fit For a Zulu King



*His Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini pictured with an array of products which are to be marketed under the banner of the innovative South African business initiative titled 'Bayede'.*

**A** limited but sophisticated array of products was laid out on the table; linen shirts, various bottles of wine with African beads settled over each bottle neck, a cotton towel, a pillow case and a leather handbag.

Across the table were His Majesty King

Goodwill Zwelithini and Antionette Vermooten. In this boardroom capsule, we had the core of a brave and innovative South African business initiative, titled 'Bayede'.

As job creation projects go, Bayede (the traditional salutation for 'Hail the

King') is, to date, a humble adventure. Yet the ceremony and announcements surrounding the 50-guest dinner and presentation at Durban's Beverley Hills Hotel suggested that there is some real potential in this endeavour.

Antionette Vermooten is the CEO of

Bayede and she lost little time outlining the philosophy and hopes of the company's business model; a unique South African job creation initiative encompassed in the manufacture of homemade, 'top-end' products that carried the Zulu Royal emblem of endorsement.

"Our range of products is expanding: It started with wines and now we have beads, a wide variety of linen, organic soaps, handbags and jewellery. In fact, the brand is gaining steam as many businesses want to carry the Bayede trade-mark. We are terribly eager to conclude joint agreements with as many of them as we can, although quality, local content and work creation are conditions of our acceptance," she said.

As part of a countrywide tour to update and familiarise people with the progress and origins of the project's development since its launch back in 2008, the occasion was distinguished by the presence of his majesty and his wife Royal Highness Queen Mantfombi Zulu. As Vermooten emphasised throughout the media briefing and at the subsequent dinner, 'Bayede' owed its marketing appeal to King Zwelithini's commitment to leaving a legacy for the South African nation. And he said as much:



*Dean Gorrie, Michele Gorrie, Sean Moffat, Deanne Gordon*

"Our country has so much poverty and such a waste of talent. If I can do anything that might give people a chance to find work and develop skills then this must be my legacy. Yes, I am hoping Bayede might be this legacy," said King Zwelithini.

Despite the Zulu Royal stamp of approval the Bayede enterprise has rather obscure origins, founded by a Swiss philanthropist and businessman Hans-Jeug Saager at his wine farm Eikendal outside Stellenbosch. It was here that King Zwelithini was

invited back in 2008 to launch a brand of merchandise that would carry the royal seal, so to speak.

Unsurprisingly, then, the Bayede range of wines was the first product to be launched, boasting such labels as the King Shaka Jubilee 2006, the HM King Goodwill Shiraz 2006, the Queen Thomo Sauvignon Blanc 2010, the Prince Red and Prince White (2009 and 2010) and the Queen Mantfombi Brut Rose 2008.

And a new label was launched at the Beverley Hills, titled the King Goodwill Pinotage Reserve, 23/40. (The 23 being King Zwelithini's age at the time of his coronation and 40 for the longevity of his reign to date). This and another bottle were auctioned at the dinner, raising some R15 000 that will be donated to a non-profit organisation of the company's choice.

Essentially, then, 'Bayede' is a business venture involving Hans-Jueg Saager, his wife Francesca and Ben and Antionette Vermooten, all based in Paarl in the Western Cape, along with the Zulu Royal household.

The products on display revealed this Zulu / Cape Province fusion. Beads



*Kish Vithal, Surita Vithal, Deborah Samuel, Ruben Reddy*



**Francesa Saager, HM King Goodwill Zwelithini, Hansjuerg Saager, Queen Her Royal Highness Queen Mantfombi, Dickie King.**

and hand-woven designs of Zulu origin adorn such Western Cape manufactured products such as the Bayede wine collection and luxury bed and table linen as well as designer linen shirts with beadwork, hand-worked top stitching and decoration.

The Cape’s influence extends further to the supply of luxury leather (ostrich, crocodile, Springbok and Nguni) handbags manufactured by a company called Lugro as well as pens manufactured by another Cape company called Charl.

But as stated its trade mark would appear to be expanding as Vermooten announced that the ‘Love Letter’ (trade name) range of bed linen has now been bought by the Weatherly’s retail store. Commenting on this development that evening the company’s chief buyer Deanne Gordon said he was particularly happy with both the quality and local content components of the fabric.

“Yes, I’m delighted with the 200-400 thread count, pure cotton percale linen with satin stitching and embroidered crest. They will soon be on sale within all our 32 stores nationwide,” said Gordon.

Perhaps the most glittering announcement came in the form of the Royal ‘by appointment’ Jewellery Collection (or Royal Signature Jewellery Range), as demonstrated by the



**Princess Gugu Hlatshwayo, Princess Thuluvheke Thabethe**

Gauteng-based company African Romance. Vermooten said the company had recently signed a joint venture with this jewellery store to manufacture Africa's first range of Crown Jewels. The gold and diamond examples shown on the night included the Bayede Zulu pendant, Shield Cufflinks and the Queens Circle pendant and earrings.

In line with Bayede's guiding foundation of job creation and local content, African Romance CEO Mosheen Valli Moosa spoke of the "huge potential" for South Africa to market a range of Crown Jewels.

"Our country's history reveals that all our prized raw materials were sent out of this country for beneficiation elsewhere. Now we are looking at moulding them into exclusive products that have been made here with a Royal signature. It's a fabulous venture with great potential," he said.

Asked if the Bayede range of products was essentially limitless, Vermooten said so long as these products offered



*Dieter Zettler, Jeanne Zettler, Jerome Ngwenya*

work and skills opportunities as well as top quality, she could see no reason for the range developing substantially. While she agreed that the Bayede range as presently constituted had a Cape manufacturing bias, this was not the intention.

"Let me explain, please. The Royal

signature as a trade mark of excellence and exclusivity has not been used in this country. We aim to realise this in all the products we offer throughout South Africa. And while our range of retail stores is small we will expand these, too."

As a brand, she said, Bayede was stimulating interest amongst world



*Mthembeni Mkhize, HM King Goodwill Zwelithini, Pieter Germishuis, Londile Shembe*

renowned stores, including Harrods, and she anticipated export orders to happen soon.

One other announcement made to support this statement was that a Chinese company had just placed an order for 600 cases of the Bayede wine label.

Asked to expand on the number of people that the company helped employ, Vermooten said it was difficult to evaluate; "but perhaps 300".

"It takes time to get something like this off the ground. Our budgets are very tight but as both the quality and philosophy behind the venture spreads, so too will job numbers increase. But you are right. We do need support from national and international investors."

And to help do this she felt South Africans should take pride in the venture: "We can begin this right here. The Royal trade mark should be identified for what it symbolises and aims to achieve in this venture. It should be embraced by all our people as a symbol of hope and unity; a symbol of all that is great in this country".



*Yoninah B. Israel, His Eminence Ben Ammi Ben Israel, Edem Adzogenu*



*Thabo Mpama, Rachel Crots, Ernst Crots*

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*Minister Ahmadiel Ben Yehuda, Ahavahtyah Estet Ahmadiel, Adzogenu Dorys, Prince Immanuel Ben-Yehuda*