

Vida e Caffè expands its African operations

As Starbucks makes its way into South Africa to start its foray onto the continent, local coffee supplier Vida e Caffè has set its sights on Africa. With 185 stores across South Africa, of which a significant number are positioned on Shell forecourts, the brand now plans to push itself further into Africa.



Announcing its development plans in four African countries, the homegrown coffee brand is experiencing a sharp uptake in international interest. Starting in 2012 with Mauritius, the brand now has 17 stores in Mauritius, Kenya, Ghana and Namibia with the additional four in the pipeline before the end of the year.

Craig Gravett, business development manager for International and Corporate, explains, “Africa is an emerging market and we noted some significant opportunities with partners in Africa that had originally been based in South Africa and wanted to see how it might work outside of the country.”

The brand's Africa stores are not owned or operated by Vida e Caffè but are all franchises, with a joint venture partner or master franchisee. Management teams then visit South Africa to go through the full training, which includes employing a set of standard operating procedures and audited standards, while Gravett visits the region on a regular basis, assessing training and new product development needs.

“Understanding that each country and culture is unique is imperative. For instance, while coffee is traditionally perceived as a morning thing, in Ghana it is an evening pastime with the majority of stores trading to 10pm and 11pm at night. Then there

is the approach to staff and labour and each skill set is different, plus working with what is available locally or imported. The recipe is simple but hard to get right – it needs strong working relationships with the right partner in the right region.

“Store layouts are very similar to the South African market, as all designs are signed off here and often the store is manufactured in South Africa as it is sometimes tailor-made to the environment. The mall stores are similar to the high street, while some sit on the forecourt. We need to understand the audience first, so we apply an 80/20 principle - 80% has to be produced and then we allow an element of local product based on availability in country.”

Its most popular African store to date is Bagatelle in Port Louis, Mauritius, with Ghana and Mauritius being the two biggest growth regions. The balance of stores are Namibia with two, Kenya with four, Ghana with seven and Mauritius with four stores. Two new stores to be opened this year in both Ghana and Mauritius.

The brand has adopted a forward-thinking business model in a highly competitive environment, by blending high street outlets with forecourt stores, its African expansion and recently a drive into South Africa's corporates.

“It is no secret that our environment is hotting up. However, we have been strategically planning for several years and our hard work is coming to fruition. We have the first mover advantage in a number of new business development areas. It is exciting to be involved with a South African brand that continually adapts as things evolve,” concludes Gravett.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>