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 LIFESTYLE Eswatini's Premier Lifestyle Magazine



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WHAT'S INSIDE

LUNGILE MOTSA

Wine Boutique founder on bringing new flavour to Eswatini's lifestyle scene

MONGI BOTANICALS

Preserving indigenous treasures & taking local heritage to the world

SD'S NEXT GLOBAL STAR

!Sooks Making His Mark

MORE THAN A GOLFER

Nobuhle Dlamini, Eswatini's most prolific Golfer, shares on her journey through the fairways, challenging stereotypes, empowering the next generation of golfers and entering motherhood while sustaining a high-performance career.

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FROM THE TEAM DESK Living With Intention

“Our lifestyle is the rhythm of how we live, what we prioritise, and the experiences we choose to hold onto.”

This issue leans into that idea, exploring a softer, more intentional way of living, one that values presence over pressure, and meaning over excess. From curated social spaces and the connection between beauty and self-expression, to food, travel, and the subtle art of slowing down, we are reminded that lifestyle is deeply personal, yet constantly shaped by the world around us.

There is a noticeable shift in how we define 'having it all.' It is no longer just about access or aesthetics, but about alignment, what feels right, what makes sense, and what sustains us beyond the moment. In a time where everything moves quickly, choosing to move with intention becomes its own kind of luxury.

Within these pages, you will find stories that reflect this balance, between indulgence and mindfulness, ambition and ease.

You will encounter Emaswati who have pushed boundaries, created where there was once a gap, and built concepts that are unapologetically by us and for us. Their journeys remind us that lifestyle is not just about consumption, but about creation, identity, and legacy.

As always, this issue is an invitation: to explore, to refine, and to take pleasure in the everyday moments that quietly shape who you are. Because in the end, it is these small, intentional choices that define the fullness of how we live.

Welcome to the 4th issue.

Fezzz!



NGUBANI MBALI?

Not while he is driving...

The interrogation can wait. On the road every second of focus counts. Distracted driving doesn't just risk your life - it risks everyone else too.

Drop the questions and let the driver focus on the road.



Remember to obey all road safety laws!

CONTENTS IN THIS ISSUE



16



10



22



42

On The Cover

NOBUHLE DLAMINI

We speak to Eswatini's leading female golfer on her humble beginnings, discovering her talent that has taken across the globe and dive into how she is inspiring Eswatini's youth. **P16**

Features

!SOOKS

Eswatini's House Music Dynamo shares on his journey, his music, networking, and the origin story of the iconic exclamation mark that precedes his stage name. **P10**

HOSPITALITY WITH PURPOSE

Celebrating the impact of Christine Ndlovu's leadership and the elevation of women in the hospitality industry with the Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane. **P14**

HOW LUNGILE MOTSA BUILT ESWATINI'S WINE BOUTIQUE

From a Corner Shop to a Cultural Movement - The maturing of Lungile Motsa and The Wine Boutique. **P26**

MONGI BOTANICAL - GROUNDED IN PRESERVATION, INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY.

Unearthing the pioneering business known for its innovative use of indigenous plants to create sustainable and eco-friendly products. **P28**

Regulars

TRENDING

Inside the Pick'n'Pay Beauty Connection Experience **P6**

MTN Bushfire Firefly Ignites The Next Generation of Stars **P8**

FOOD, TRAVEL & LEISURE

Discover Zambia - A swati travellers' guide to the Copperbelt **P20**

Checked In with Noxolo and the allure of Vietnam **P31**

The weight of every bite - Dietician Cece Nsibande unpacks the impact of our dietary choices. **P34**

Farm 443 - The Kingdom's new lifestyle destination **P40**

STYLE

Timeless style & resilience - The evolution of Sgonian Republik **P22**

WELLBEING

Inside EduCope's transformative learning model **P32**

Career driven & single? Why high achievers struggle with maintaining relationships **P38**

SPORTS & RECREATION

LIVPadel - The new social sport taking over Eswatini **P42**



GLOW SEASON

ACTIVATED

By: Fezile Mkhathwa // Pics: Supplied

Inside the Beauty Connection 'Glow Getter' Experience

Rain may have poured over, Malkerns on the 21st of March, but nothing could dim the energy of the Pick n Pay Beauty Connection Glow Getter event...

Hosted at Malkerns Square Clubhouse, the sold-out experience sold 600 tickets to guests weeks before, proving just how much anticipation surrounded what has quickly become one of Eswatini's most talked-about lifestyle events which is only 2 Editions in this year.

Despite muddy grounds and grey skies, attendees arrived in style. Bright colours, soft glam, and confident silhouettes filled the space, turning the venue into a moving showcase of beauty and individuality. The mood remained upbeat throughout the day, with guests embracing

every moment and refusing to let the weather interfere with their glow.

Carefully curated, the event offered a seamless mix of entertainment, wellness, and retail. The programme moved effortlessly between a winter fashion parade by Pick n Pay Clothing and locally accessories, live DJ sets and performances from 100% local acts, and engaging Clubhouse talks, ranging from beauty, health, mental health, partner profiles, the read-a-book culture and giving back, to name just a few. This balance gave the day a natural rhythm, allowing guests to explore, relax, and return to the main stage without missing out.



A standout feature of the day was the interactive “passport to goodies” concept. Upon arrival, guests received passports that guided them through over 15 brand and experience stands. Each stop offered not only product insight but also free items, stamps, and the chance to engage directly with brands. It transformed the event into an immersive journey rather than a passive experience while still entering a draw where seven glow getters walk away with a voucher valued at E1000! A win-win for attendees.

The variety of stands ensured there was something for everyone. Beauty and wellness brands were complemented by a strong food and beverage presence, adding another layer to the experience. Guests enjoyed offerings from familiar favourites like KFC, alongside local flavours including Shelela Gin and Spotted Horse Rum. Smash burger stations kept energy levels high, while homegrown brand Luna Hair stood out as a proud example of local innovation within the beauty space.

This blend of international names and local products gave the event a well-rounded feel, celebrating both accessibility and homegrown excellence. It also reinforced the event’s role as a platform not just for consumption, but for discovery and support of local enterprise.

Beyond the shopping and sampling, Glow Getter created space for meaningful conversation. Wellness talks and lifestyle discussions reminded attendees that beauty extends beyond appearance. These sessions added depth to the experience, encouraging a more holistic view of self-care while



PnP
BEAUTY
CONNECTION
Glow Getter

maintaining the light, social tone of the day.

The main stage remained a central attraction, hosting performances and appearances that kept the crowd engaged. DJs provided a steady soundtrack, moving the energy from relaxed daytime grooves to more lively afternoon moments. Fashion shows added visual excitement, showcasing styles that reflected both global trends and local creativity.


Equally notable was the sense of community that carried through the event. Friends attended in groups, colleagues connected outside of work settings, and new conversations sparked easily between strangers. The layout encouraged movement and interaction, making the entire space feel open and inclusive.

Even as the rain persisted, the spirit of the event never shifted. Guests adapted, laughed through the inconvenience, and continued exploring each stand with enthusiasm. If anything, the weather became part of the story, a reminder that the Glow Getter experience is about showing up fully, regardless of conditions.

As the day came to a close, attendees left with more than just goodie bags valued at over E800. They carried with them a shared experience of beauty, connection, and enjoyment. With its strong turnout, diverse offerings, and vibrant atmosphere, the Glow Getter event has firmly positioned itself as a standout on Eswatini’s lifestyle calendar and a clear favourite among those who managed to secure a ticket.



This blend of international names and local products gave the event a well-rounded feel, celebrating both accessibility and homegrown excellence.



MTN BUSHFIRE FIREFLY

Ignites Eswatini's
Next Generation of Stars

The MTN Bushfire Firefly stage has firmly established itself as one of the most exciting and transformative platforms within Eswatini's creative landscape; an energetic, youth-powered space where emerging talent is not only discovered, but developed and celebrated.

By: Ayanda Dlamini | Photo Cred: MTN Bushfire

Since its inception in 2017, Firefly has grown from a bold concept into a cornerstone of the MTN Bushfire Festival, reflecting the festival's broader commitment to creativity, cultural exchange, and African expression. Set within the iconic House on Fire venue, the Firefly stage pulses with a distinct kind of energy; raw, unfiltered, and deeply authentic. It is here that young artists step into the spotlight, often for the first time, and introduce audiences to new sounds, fresh perspectives, and the evolving identity of Eswatini's music scene. More than just a performance space, the Firefly stage represents possibility. It is where ambition meets opportunity, and where dreams begin to take tangible form.

From the beginning, the Firefly initiative was designed with a clear purpose: to connect youth, creativity, and technology in a meaningful way.

Driven by MTN Eswatini through its youth-focused Pulse platform, and integrated into the larger Bushfire experience, Firefly created a new entry point into the music industry, one that is accessible, digital-first, and aligned with how young creatives engage with the world today.

What makes the Firefly stage particularly compelling is its role within a larger developmental journey. Artists do not simply arrive and perform; they are selected through a competitive process that evaluates talent, originality, and potential. From there, they are guided through a structured programme that includes mentorship, digital training, and performance preparation. By the time they step onto the stage, they are not just contestants, they are emerging professionals.

"The Firefly stage is where we begin to see transformation happen in real time," says Penny Bower, MTN Bushfire Firefly Project Manager. "It's not just about performance; it's about confidence, exposure, and stepping into an identity as a professional

artist. For many of these young creatives, this is their first experience performing on a world-class stage, and that moment can be life-changing."

Indeed, for many participants, performing on the Firefly stage marks a turning point. It is the moment when they transition from aspiring artists to recognized talent, gaining visibility among industry professionals, festival audiences, and fellow creatives. The experience builds confidence, sharpens performance skills, and opens doors to new opportunities that extend far beyond the festival.

We are building more than performers—we are building careers...The goal is to ensure that artists leave Firefly with tools, networks, and visibility that extend far beyond the festival weekend.



Over the years, the stage has showcased a diverse range of musical styles, reflecting the richness and dynamism of Eswatini's youth culture. From Afro-pop and hip-hop to soulful ballads and genre-blending experimental sounds, Firefly artists bring a refreshing authenticity that resonates with audiences. This diversity is not only celebrated—it is encouraged. The platform thrives on originality, giving artists the freedom to express themselves without constraint.

Audience engagement is a key part of the Firefly experience. Festivalgoers are drawn to the stage not just for entertainment, but for discovery. There is a shared excitement in witnessing new talent emerge, in being among the first to hear a voice that could shape the future of the industry. This creates a powerful connection between artist and audience, one rooted in authenticity, support, and shared cultural pride.

Beyond the performances, the impact of Firefly is increasingly evident across the broader music ecosystem in Eswatini. Former participants have gone on to release music on major streaming platforms, collaborate with established artists, and secure bookings at other festivals and events. In this way, the Firefly stage has become a recognized pipeline for talent, an incubator that feeds into the wider creative economy.

"We are building more than performers—we are building careers," Bower explains. "The goal is to ensure that artists leave Firefly with tools, networks, and visibility that extend far beyond the festival weekend. We want them to see this as the beginning of a journey, not the end."



This long-term vision is central to Firefly's continued growth. While the stage itself is a highlight, it is the ecosystem around it that truly sets the initiative apart. By investing in mentorship, skills development, and industry exposure, Firefly ensures that its impact is sustainable. It is not just about who performs this year, but about who continues to grow, evolve, and contribute to the industry in the years to come.

As the platform matures, there is also a growing ambition to expand its scope. Plans are underway to evolve Firefly beyond music into a broader creative platform that includes other forms of artistic expression such as dance, visual arts, and digital content creation. This reflects a deeper understanding of how young people create and consume culture in an increasingly interconnected world.

At the same time, there is a deliberate effort to reach more young creatives across the country. By expanding access and deepening engagement, Firefly aims to ensure that talent from all corners of Eswatini has an opportunity to be seen and heard. This inclusivity is key to building a vibrant and representative creative industry.

Yet, even as it grows, Firefly remains grounded in its original purpose: to create a space where young people feel seen, where creativity is validated, and where dreams feel



possible. It is a platform built on belief—the belief that young people have something valuable to say, and that given the right opportunities, they can shape the future of the creative sector.

Following their selection, the Firefly journey extends beyond performance into structured industry engagement and professional development.

MTN Bushfire Arts Round Table - Artist Workshop

The MTN Bushfire Firefly finalists all receive an invitation to participate in the MTN Bushfire Arts Round Table (ART).

The Arts Round Table is Eswatini's foremost arts industry development workshop, promoting skills sharing, digital media development, and best practices across the continent. It creates a dynamic environment where creativity intersects with industry knowledge, offering artists practical tools to navigate the evolving creative landscape. It also provides valuable opportunities for brands to connect with the arts sector and expand their reach within a vibrant cultural community.

An ongoing partnership with the Berlin-based Africa Rising Music Conference (ARMC) further strengthens this platform by enabling direct networking and collaboration between European and African music markets.

In addition to online sessions held ahead of the festival, the ART workshops take place annually on the Friday of the MTN Bushfire festival weekend. These sessions bring together aspiring creatives from a wide range of disciplines with established performers, producers, and industry experts from across Africa and around the world, enabling meaningful conversations on the professionalization of the arts, digital transformation, to intellectual property, and sustainable career development. To date, more than 940 artists and industry professionals have participated in the ART workshops, underscoring the scale and impact of this initiative.

As the lights come on and the music begins, the Firefly stage continues to stand as a symbol of what is possible when vision meets action. It is a celebration of youth, creativity, and the courage to step forward. And for the young artists who take that step, it is more than just a performance; it is the start of something far greater.

!SOOKS

HOUSE MUSIC DYNAMO

On Emotion, Evolution, & The Exclamation Mark



By: Fezile Mkhathswa | Photos: Supplied

The global electronic music scene is taking notice of !Sooks, South African-based DJ and producer originally from Eswatini, whose full name is Sukoluhle Dlamini. His sound is a unique blend of dark, emotive deep house, which he dubs 'emotions and a touch of groove.'

In this in-depth feature, we delve into his journey, the symbolic meaning behind his music, the importance of networking, and the origin story of the iconic exclamation mark that precedes his stage name.

Behind the Name: Arrogance, Ambition, and an Australian Crab

The striking element of his moniker is the exclamation mark at the beginning: !Sooks. He reveals the origin is bravado, speaking to a desire to stand out, and in part a complex wordplay.

"So with the exclamation mark, I must admit, back in the day I was

really arrogant, so it started as a thing of fighting the norm, like why should there be an exclamation at the end of a word? Why not put it in front and have that as my name? Because also, I am that guy, it must be known".

He explains that he also wanted the name to stand out just as much as his unique feel of music, which at the time was 'a very dark version of Deep House'.

Later, the name gained a profound second meaning through research, as he is also an admitted avid reader. He explains,

"Sooks on its own without the exclamation is an Australian female crab. They call it a sooks, and by its character, it is known to be a coward"

Then, adding to that, comes another layer of mathematical logic.

"So in another light if you put an exclamation before a word or anything, it means 'not' that thing or



word,...in this case translating to not a 'sooks' / 'coward' to mean, I am not a coward!"

A fitting sign-off for an artist pushing boundaries in the house space locally, regionally and pushing global.

Kintsugi takes off

!Sooks kicked off 2025 with the single 'Kintsugi', a track whose inspiration is rooted in the Japanese art of the same name, which is putting together broken pieces to give it greater value than its individual value separately.

"I was in a season where I made something that I was really proud of. I was also carrying a lot of stuff at the time, so much stuff and a lot of pressure as well," he explains.

"So writing the track sort of became a way of stitching those pieces together. The struggle, the joy, and the growth I am experiencing. So it's very, very symbolic. And dropping it at the beginning of the year was also symbolic because I feel like it really set the tone for 2025, of me evolving and being a better version of myself".

The reception has been phenomenal even in 2026.

"I think for me, it still feels like it has connected with people in a way that feels real. Especially the emotional depth behind it... They play it almost every weekend. I get tagged. And the crowd loves it. Even when I don't play it during a set, the audience literally gets mad at me".

Defining the Sound

His sound has been described by others as "emotive and euphonic cinematic", but for the artist himself, it's a constant shift and balance.

"I guess I'm still looking for the right words or just one word to describe my sound. I've experimented with sound design and found a way to let real emotion guide the music instead of just drums and arrangement".

He identifies a shift in his work after the COVID-19 pandemic, moving from groovier tracks to more emotion-packed, darker pieces.

"The older stuff that I dropped, maybe 2020, before COVID, like 'Constellation Lupus', 'Wolf', 'white dessert vault', they were more groovy, and what I then dropped after COVID started to have much more emotions, like 'cry me a river', 'Kintsugi' for instance. I don't know what happened during COVID. Maybe I had an epiphany. Because clearly, I went through something".

Key Milestones and the Power of the Building Block

"It's so hard to pin one overall milestone, because everything for me is significant. The most recent win, I'd say, was opening for Keinmusik, the biggest electronic and Afro house trio in the world, a big deal! But if you unpack that and look at it backwards, it's been small things leading up to that one big moment," he reflects.

The 'big moment' was the importance of the opportunity: "It's not just you one day, and you're like, yo, let me go open for Keinmusik. It's also the fact that I am not even an Afro Dj, yet I still got trusted with that. And think it went really well".

“ I guess I'm still looking for the right words or just one word to describe my sound. ”

This idea of connection, relationships, and keeping momentum has been a fruitful approach to gigs for !Sooks.

"You also need the smaller gigs, the more intimate ones, in order for the big gigs to happen. It's that small venue, the small crowd that allows you to gauge how in touch you are with the people. They are right close to you, and all the energy is contained right there, unlike in large festivals that have a lot going on, multiple acts, bigger venues, and sometimes, there's a disconnect there."

The Unleash the Wolf Philosophy and Future Strategy

His signature event series, Unleash the Wolf (UTW), has evolved beyond simply curating a line-up.

"Our main thing is, we want to have a strong identity of bringing people a unique experience, which we call a sonic experience, more than just a party. It's more than a gig; I've taken that mindset and also applied it into everything that I do with my music as well. It's not just a song. There has to be more to it. There has to be more depth to it".

Looking to his 2026 and beyond ambitions, he is mindful of the current music consumption trends.

"More music is coming, definitely. I might just drop an album, or not," he states, explaining the current difficulty of sustaining attention with a full album because of how people now receive music.



"People consume music like crazy these days. You can drop an album now, and two weeks later, another artist has dropped theirs. So the general consumer attention span is fractured, maybe because of platforms like TikTok and streaming. It has really, I guess, changed the dynamic, whereas before, a project like that could sustain you for a year."

He sees singles as a "smarter strategy" in the current environment. "I'd need to drop a single now and drop another single next month, and so on, to stay relevant and keep my audience engaged. But albums give you enough room to express yourself thematically," he says.

It's Networking Over Talent

!Sooks describes himself as reserved more than an introvert, which people assume him as, a trait he's had to actively manage in the demanding South African music industry.

"I've always been like that, but I feel like coming to Joburg, you realize the importance of networking, getting your name out there, and just speaking to people. Being quiet is not going to help. So I am still working on it".

He mentions his support system, such as King Lenhle, who actively assists with critical admin, filming, and encouraging him to attend gigs specifically for networking—something he has never had to do before. This leads to his critical assessment of what the local Eswatini scene still needs in order to grow and flourish.

"In Eswatini, that's where one of our biggest challenges is, where it's like DJs specifically feel like, because they are so dope, you know, they deserve to be on the big stages because they play great music or they are really good.



It's not about just the talent; it's about the value that you bring as an artist, and this needs you to invest in your brand and understand the spaces you want to work in."

He explains that promoters book acts based on who brings value (i.e., people/money),

"DJs that are way doper that could be playing at the gigs that I'm playing" he shares candidly. "But because again, they're not booked or trying to build brand value and trying to be out there to be seen. Then, you know, it's just how it is. You're not going to be seen, and you'll stay with your talent, and nothing's going to change".

Regarding his success's impact on the Eswatini scene, he remains humble but hopeful.

"Our country is very small, right? But the truth of the matter is there's a lot of talent, sometimes all it takes is just one door opening for others to believe it's possible".

He credits others like Uncle Waffles for setting a precedent, proving

that it can happen for Eswatini.

"And if my own progress inspires another producer at home to push harder or convinces a promoter to take a chance on someone from Eswatini, then I feel like it's already bigger than me. So I'm just doing my part, man".

He expresses a deep sense of faith, saying, "Honestly, it's just, it's, it's God... That's not me on stage. That's just me worshiping God or thanking God".

The Potential of Diverse Sound & the Johnny Walker Analogy

The conversation naturally shifts to new trends like Amapiano and Afro House, and how a deep house purist stays relevant. He reveals that a potential pivot is on his mind, not a switch.

"I'm constantly evolving, and I'm constantly adapting to what's happening," he shares. "Like this whole Afro thing that's going on, it's actually a sign, if I'm just being honest with you... and I'm starting to see that now, man, like it's, it's calling me".

He reassures his core audience that any evolution in his sound will remain distinctly !Sooks. "Even if I do make Afro House music, I'll make it on my terms, and I'll make it a !Sooks Afro House thing, as it were. It won't be like a typical Afro House song. You'll still hear that this is a !Sooks song, which is very, very important."

He illustrates this strategy with an analogy from the whiskey industry:

"There's a book, it had an interesting story about Johnny Walker," he explains. "They have Johnny Walker Blue, which is the premium whiskey brand, and the most expensive in their brand line. They have Johnny Walker Black, which is sort of in the middle, and then they have Johnny Walker Red, which is their cheapest brand, more easily accessible. That's three different whiskey profiles and markets, but they are all made by one company."

The lesson: "They're not limiting themselves to saying, 'We'll just make Blue, and this is the one premium quality product.' You have to sort of have all of them. You need the Johnny Walker Black, you need the Johnny Walker Red as well, so that everything connects, and in turn, that makes the brand bigger."

He concludes, "So my making Afro House will not change the identity or the signature. It'll just be me branching into a different market, possibly a bigger market."

Personal Reflections and Future Eswatini Stars

TO MY 16-YEAR-OLD SELF:

"Do not be too hard on yourself and understand that everything takes time and that's the beauty of it, because life just works at its own pace, I guess. And not to rush things," he advises. "Everything happens at the right time, and that's something I also learned this year, actually." "I've been dreaming of playing at Spring Fiesta for well over three years, and what I'm sure about is that it wouldn't have taken off the way it did without the wait, the work put in, or without Kintsugi. Waiting is a chance to perfect yourself for what's coming."

ESWATINI'S MUSICAL CREATIVES TO LOOK OUT FOR:



Nakiso (House DJ, Producer)

"I think he's doing the groundwork; he's one guy that is currently not getting recognition, but he does a lot of work including putting Eswatini on the global map. He's not the only one, though; a number of producers in the house music space are doing some great things. If they continue to put in the work, to network, as I mentioned earlier, they will soon hit international status, no doubt".



Grixly (Rapper, All round creative)

"No doubt here, He has been authentic since day one and has in fact put in the work into building his brand, and just the pure genius speaks through his sound".

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Leading with Purpose

Celebrating Women in Hospitality at Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane

By: Ayanda Dlamini// Pics: Supplied

As the culmination of Women's Month approaches, it invites reflection on the growing strides women continue to make across industries. Notably, the hospitality sector offers its own inspiring narrative, one defined by leadership, resilience, and empowerment. At Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane, that story is being shaped through a culture that actively champions the advancement of women and is carefully guided by the energetic leadership of the General Manager, Christine Ndlovu.

With over two decades of experience in global hospitality, Ndlovu has steadily risen through the ranks, building expertise across every layer of hotel operations, from housekeeping to executive leadership. Her journey is driven by experience with renowned industry brands and key leadership roles at Hilton Hotels and Resorts across cities like Johannesburg and Durban. Since 2018, Ndlovu has led Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane, shaping it into a leading destination known for service excellence and meaningful community impact.

Hospitality has always been an industry rooted in people, driven by warmth, attention to detail, and the ability to create lasting experiences. Increasingly, women are playing a defining role in shaping this environment, not only on the front lines of guest service but also within boardrooms and management teams where strategy and culture are set.

For Ndlovu, empowering women is not a concept reserved for a single month, it is a principle embedded in

daily operations. Through mentorship, professional development, and inclusive leadership, the hotel continues to create pathways for women to grow into influential roles across the organisation.

Within the Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane, women are represented across a wide spectrum of departments, from front office and guest relations to culinary teams, housekeeping, and management. Each contributing to the welcoming atmosphere that defines its impeccable guest experience. For Ndlovu, a shared sense of purpose and teamwork is essential to delivering the high standards the brand is known for.

Hospitality has always been an industry rooted in people, driven by warmth, attention to detail, and the ability to create lasting experiences..

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Her leadership philosophy centres on empathy, collaboration, and attention to detail, qualities she believes are key to building strong, motivated teams. When employees feel supported and valued, they naturally extend that same care to guests. In this way, empowering women internally directly enhances the overall guest experience.

Mentorship plays a central role in this approach. Many women enter hospitality through operational roles, but with the right guidance and exposure, those positions can become stepping stones to leadership. By investing in skills development and cross-departmental learning, the hotel helps women unlock their full potential and view hospitality as a long-term, rewarding career path.

This commitment extends beyond the hotel itself, aligning with the broader growth of Eswatini's tourism sector. As the country continues to attract regional and international travellers, hospitality remains central to shaping its reputation for warmth and authenticity, with women playing a vital role in that success.

At Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane, fostering an environment where confidence and creativity can thrive is part of the journey. Employees are

encouraged to share ideas, expand their skills, and innovate in their roles, whether enhancing guest experiences at the front desk or introducing new culinary concepts in the kitchen.

For young women considering their future, hospitality may not always be the first industry that comes to mind.

As the country continues to attract regional and international travellers, hospitality remains central to shaping its reputation for warmth and authenticity, with women playing a vital role in that success.

Yet it offers a dynamic, people-focused career path with opportunities for cultural exchange, global exposure, and professional growth within an international network.

As Women's Month highlights progress and possibility, the story unfolding at Hilton Garden Inn Mbabane is a powerful reminder that empowerment often happens through everyday actions, mentoring

a colleague, recognising potential, and opening doors for others.

In an industry built on welcoming people, that spirit of support creates ripple effects far beyond the workplace. And when women are empowered to lead, the entire hospitality landscape becomes richer, more inclusive, and more inspiring for all.

SWINGING FOR CHANGE

The Story of Nobuhle Dlamini...
...from Lobamba to the World Stage.

By: Ayanda Dlamini | Pics: Nobuhle Dlamini

In the quiet hills of Lobamba, a small community in the Kingdom of Eswatini, a young girl once walked across open fields chasing golf balls she had just hit. She carried only a few balls with her, striking one after the other, following them across the space, retrieving them, and hitting again. It was simple practice done in solitude, but it would become the beginning of a journey that would place her among the most recognized sporting figures from her country.

Today, Nobuhle Dlamini stands as one of Eswatini's most prominent sporting ambassadors and one of the best female golfers in the Southern African region. Her professional career has taken her across Europe and beyond, competing on international tours and representing her country on some of the world's most competitive golf stages. More importantly, she has become a symbol of perseverance and possibility for young women who once believed that golf was a sport reserved for men.

Her story is not only about athletic success; it is about resilience, identity, and the quiet determination to open doors for others.



A Childhood Rooted in Simplicity

Growing up in Lobamba, Nobuhle's early years were far removed from the glamour often associated with professional sport. Her childhood was shaped by village life, simple, practical, and grounded in the rhythms of rural living. Her family relied on small-scale farming to survive. Chickens wandered freely around the homestead, cattle grazed nearby, and the family worked the land together. Life was not luxurious, but it was stable.

"We were not a family that was very well off," she recalls, "but we were never hungry."

That sense of gratitude for what they had left a lasting impression on her. It taught her that success was not always measured in wealth, but in resilience, resourcefulness, and the ability to make the most of what was available.

For Nobuhle, the wide-open spaces of Lobamba became her earliest training ground. With just a handful of golf balls, she practiced tirelessly. She would hit a ball, walk after it, strike it again, and repeat the process over and over. What she lacked in equipment or facilities, she made up for with persistence. Even today, she often returns home, still deeply connected to the place where her journey began.

Discovering a Dream at Fourteen

By the time she was fourteen years old, Nobuhle had already made a decision that would shape

the rest of her life. She wanted to become a professional golfer.

For many teenagers, dreams shift constantly, but for her the goal became crystal clear. Golf, she believed, was not just a sport, it was an opportunity. She recognized that the game had the power to open doors far beyond the golf course.

To pursue that dream, she made a difficult decision: leaving home to continue her development in neighbouring South Africa. For a young teenager, the transition was anything but easy. She missed her parents deeply and the familiarity of home. In South Africa, she was alone, navigating a new environment while carrying the weight of her ambitions.

But her focus never wavered. "I was so focused on what I was there to do," she explains, "which was to play golf."

Gradually, the hard work began to show results. Her game improved, confidence grew, and the sacrifices she had made started to feel worthwhile. Looking back, she says she has no regrets.





*...from Lobamba to the world stage,
Nobuhle's journey continues to inspire...*



Breaking Barriers in a Male-Dominated Sport

Golf has long been perceived as a male-dominated sport, particularly in many parts of Africa. When Nobuhle began pursuing it professionally, she often found herself as the only woman on the course. That could be intimidating. The imbalance sometimes made the environment feel isolating, and social dynamics within golf clubs could be challenging.

Yet Nobuhle never approached the game with the mindset of fighting battles. Instead, she simply focused on playing. She showed up, competed, and allowed her performance to speak for itself.

"I was never really the person who tried to prove something," she says. "I just played golf."

Over time, her presence began to shift perceptions. Seeing a woman competing confidently in a traditionally male space gradually normalized the idea that women belonged on the golf course too. Across Eswatini,

more girls began to notice, and slowly the landscape of the sport began to change.

Representing a Small Nation on the Global Stage

Competing internationally has brought Nobuhle both pride and unique challenges. One of the most common hurdles she encountered had nothing to do with golf itself—it was simply explaining where she came from.

Because Eswatini is a relatively small country, many people abroad are unfamiliar with it. At tournaments, she often heard announcers mistakenly introduce her as being from Switzerland instead of Swaziland, the country's former name.

She would politely correct them. "No, not Switzerland," she would say. "Swaziland."

Even after the country officially became Eswatini, confusion sometimes remained, with people occasionally mixing it up with Estonia. Instead of frustration, she chose to see these moments as opportunities to introduce people to her country, its culture, and its identity.

Gradually, people became curious. They would return later to tell her what they had learned about the

country's traditions, monarchy, and location in Southern Africa. Through golf, Nobuhle had unintentionally become an ambassador for Eswatini.

Inspiring Women to Enter the Game

One of the most powerful impacts Nobuhle has had on the sport is the inspiration she provides to young women. For years, many girls in Eswatini viewed golf as inaccessible or irrelevant to them. The sport was often associated with corporate networking or male-dominated social spaces.

Nobuhle's success began to change that perception.

Her message to young women is simple: golf is a sport of opportunity. It is not only about professional competition. Golf also creates spaces for networking, business connections, and personal growth.

"Different people from different industries play golf," she explains. "You never know where opportunities might come from."

For young women entering the sport, those opportunities could lead to scholarships, international exposure, or professional careers.

*Different people from
different industries play golf...
You never know where
opportunities might come from...*



The Vision Behind the Junior Golf Challenge

Recognizing the influence she has gained, Nobuhle has taken deliberate steps to give back to the sport that shaped her life. Her most significant initiative is the Nobuhle Dlamini Junior Golf Challenge, a program designed to introduce children to golf and nurture young talent in Eswatini.

The idea was born from a simple realization: many children now see her as a role model. Some even study her story in school. When she visits home, young golfers show her their textbooks and proudly point to sections where they are learning about her journey.

That moment made her reflect deeply.

If young people were already looking up to her, she felt a responsibility to help guide them.

The Junior Golf Challenge began as a single tournament, but the response was overwhelming. Soon the initiative

expanded into a year-long program hosting monthly competitions and training opportunities



es.

Today, young golfers have the chance to compete regularly, receive coaching, and develop their skills in a structured environment. Her goal is to grow the game holistically and, perhaps one day, see more international golfers emerge from Eswatini.

“Maybe we’ll see more Nobuhles representing the country,” she says with a smile.

Balancing Motherhood and Professional Sport

Recently, Nobuhle entered a new chapter in her life, motherhood. Becoming a mother has naturally shifted certain aspects of her routine. Professional golf involves extensive travel and balancing that with family life requires careful planning.

Rather than slowing down, she has adapted. To make training more flexible, she installed a golf studio inside her home, allowing her to practice while still being present with her child.

“I’d like to spend as much time as I can with my baby,” she explains.

Instead of playing every tournament on the international calendar, she now selects events more strategically, travelling for several weeks and then returning home to spend time with family before heading back to competition.

Life Beyond the Fairway

When she is not competing, Nobuhle prefers a quiet lifestyle. After weeks of international travel, she finds comfort in simple routines at home. She enjoys spending time in the garden, surrounded by flowers and greenery, and occasionally participates in half marathons with her husband, who shares her passion for sport.



Despite her success, Nobuhle believes there is still work to be done in strengthening the sports ecosystem in Eswatini, particularly in attracting corporate investment.

In many countries, golf is closely linked to business networking and fundraising events. Corporate tournaments generate resources and support athlete development. In Eswatini, she believes this potential remains largely untapped.

Golf, she says, should be seen not only as a sport but also as a business platform where companies can sponsor events, build networks, and support athletes.

A Legacy Built on Passion

Looking ahead, Nobuhle does not define her legacy solely by trophies or rankings. What matters most is the impact she leaves behind.

She hopes to be remembered as someone who loved the game deeply and shared that passion with others, someone who helped expand the sport and encouraged people to get involved.

Her story proves that greatness does not always begin in grand stadiums or elite academies. Sometimes it begins with a few golf balls, an open field, and a dream carried by determination.

From Lobamba to the world stage, Nobuhle Dlamini’s journey continues to inspire, and with every young girl who picks up a golf club, her impact grows even further.



A Swati Traveller's Guide to "The Copperbelt"

By: Fezile Mkhathwa // **Pics:** pirtedpursuit.com + Tripadvisor + Platinum Zambia + Lusaka Street Food Market

With Eswatini Air's introduction of a direct flight route from Eswatini to Lusaka, Zambia is fast becoming one of the most accessible and exciting regional destinations for emaSwati travellers. Just under two hours in the air from the King Mswati III International Airport to Kenneth Kaunda International Airport, Zambia offers a rich mix of wildlife, culture, cuisine, and urban energy, all without the stress of long-haul travel.





Warm, welcoming, and rich in experiences, Zambia is a destination that feels both close to home and refreshingly different.

For those seeking a seamless getaway, Zambia ticks all the right boxes. Eswatini passport holders typically don't require a visa for short visits, and with both countries sharing the same time zone, there's no need to worry about jet lag. English is widely spoken, making it easy to navigate cities and tourist areas, while local languages such as Bemba and Nyanja add to the country's cultural texture.

Lusaka, Zambia's capital, is more than just a stopover. The city blends modern convenience with authentic African character. Spots like Arcades Shopping Mall offer a lively introduction to local life, with restaurants, markets, and craft stalls all in one place. For a deeper cultural experience, the Lusaka National Museum provides insight into Zambia's history and artistic heritage. Just outside the city, the Lilayi Elephant Nursery offers a heartwarming look at conservation efforts, where orphaned elephants are rehabilitated before returning to the wild.

Beyond the capital, Zambia's natural beauty truly comes alive. A visit to Victoria Falls, known locally as Mosi-oa-Tunya, "The Smoke That Thunders" is a must. Located near Livingstone, the falls are among the most spectacular in the world. Nearby, Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park offers game drives, rhino tracking, and scenic cruises along the Zambezi River. For thrill-seekers, activities like white-water rafting and bungee jumping add an adventurous edge to the experience.

Zambian cuisine will feel both familiar and exciting to emaSwati visitors. The staple dish, nshima, is similar to pap and is served with a variety of sides including vegetables, grilled meats, and kapenta. Street food culture is

vibrant, with roasted maize and local snacks readily available in markets and roadside stalls.

Getting around is simple, especially in cities where ride-hailing services like Yango, Bolt, and inDrive operate alongside taxis and minibuses. While card payments are accepted in major establishments, carrying small amounts of cash in Zambian Kwacha is advisable for markets and local transport.

Accommodation options cater to every traveller, from budget-friendly guesthouses to luxury safari lodges near the Zambezi. Whether you're travelling on a modest budget or indulging in a premium escape, Zambia offers excellent value for money.

Warm, welcoming, and rich in experiences, Zambia is a destination that feels both close to home and refreshingly different. For emaSwati travellers looking to explore beyond the familiar, this is one journey worth taking.



Decades of Timeless Style & Resilience

The Evolution of Sgonian Republik

By Ayanda Dlamini | Photos: Philani Mpanza



In the fashion industry, few brands manage to preserve their foundational identity while deftly navigating the dynamic and ever-evolving terrain of consumer trends and market demands.

Sgonian Republik (SR) is one of those exceptional stories.

Founded over a decade ago, SR has become a symbol of timeless style, local pride, and resilience. What started as a youthful passion for fashion and entrepreneurship has blossomed into a powerhouse brand that blends traditional Swati elements with global appeal.

Despite the challenges of the past decade, including a global pandemic and the rapid digital transformation of the fashion industry, SR has not only survived but thrived.

This is the story of SR's journey, its commitment to quality, and how it remains

a steadfast player in Eswatini's fashion scene.

From Humble Beginnings: The Birth of SR

The roots of SR can be traced back to 2002, when a young Philani Mpanza, the brand's founder, first found his creative spark.

As a high school student, he was fascinated by clothing brands and logos, sketching designs on the pages of his exercise books.

This early passion for fashion was nurtured by his mother, who sold second-hand clothes at Siteki Market-Place.

Through this experience, Philani learned the art of connecting with people through clothing, and it ignited his desire to one day create a brand that was both personal and meaningful.

"Growing up, I was always obsessed with the idea of fashion," says Philani. "It was more than just clothes it was a way to express yourself, a way to tell a story without saying a word. My mother's second-hand clothing business gave me my first taste of fashion, and that's where I really started to understand the power of clothing and how it can connect people."

In the years that followed, Philani's vision evolved. While studying at the University of Eswatini (UNESWA), he decided to bring his vision to life. He started by purchasing a few basic t-shirts from local stores, which he customized for himself. The reaction was immediate: his peers on campus loved the designs, and before long, Philani found himself

...the rapid digital transformation of the fashion industry, SR has not only survived but thrived....

selling these handmade pieces. This success led to the creation of Sgonian Republik; a brand that aimed to give Eswatini a proudly Swati presence on global fashion stages.

"The name Sgonian Republik came from a place of wanting to share what mattered to me and my community," Philani explains. "It wasn't just about creating cool clothes it was about representing something bigger, something that resonates with my people."

The dream was simple yet profound: to craft high-quality, timeless pieces that could be worn with pride and passed down through generations.

The brand's essence was not driven by fleeting trends but by a desire to create sartorial pieces that spoke to local pride and cultural relevance.

Design Aesthetics: Tradition Meets Modernity

Over the past decade, SR's design aesthetic has evolved significantly, but its commitment to craftsmanship and cultural relevance has remained unchanged. One of the most notable developments in the brand's visual identity is the incorporation of traditional Swati elements into the fabric choices and designs. This unique fusion of modern streetwear with traditional cultural symbols has become a signature of the brand, allowing SR to stand out in an increasingly crowded fashion landscape.

"The incorporation of Swati traditional elements into our designs is something I'm really proud of," Philani shares. "It's not just about

fashion for the sake of it. It's about celebrating where I'm from and bringing that heritage into contemporary fashion. We're telling stories through fabric, patterns, and textures."

The brand has also expanded its offerings, blending ready-to-wear street fashion with bespoke tailoring. However, SR has remained focused primarily on streetwear, creating pieces that resonate with both young professionals and high-flying executives. The designs are minimalistic but sophisticated perfect for a weekend out or an important business meeting. SR's commitment to simplicity and timelessness has made it a favourite among those who appreciate understated elegance.

The Digital Age: Adapting to Changing Times

As the world became increasingly digital, SR embraced technology not only in its design process but also in its marketing and sales strategies. Social media and digital platforms have played a significant role in elevating the brand's visibility, helping it connect with a global audience. From Instagram to Facebook, SR has used these tools to showcase its designs and build an engaged online community.

"Technology and social media have transformed how we present ourselves," Philani says. "It's an incredible tool that allows us to connect with people all over the world. We can now share our story in real-time, engage with customers directly, and showcase our designs to a global audience."

In addition to traditional marketing, SR has also explored the integration of AI and other digital technologies to enhance customer experience. This has included the use of AI chatbots for customer service, improving the efficiency of online orders, and developing an interactive shopping experience that is both seamless and personalized.

Overcoming Obstacles: A Resilient Journey

Like many businesses, SR faced significant challenges along the way, the most defining of which was the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic created a domino effect, forcing SR to close its flagship store, Ministry of Style, in 2021. This was a tough blow, but it also gave the brand an opportunity to reflect and pivot. The closure led to a rapid embrace of digital retail, with SR quickly establishing its online store, sgonianrepublik.com. This transition to e-commerce has not only allowed SR to expand its reach but has also introduced new ways of engaging with customers; whether through AI-powered chatbots or social media campaigns.

"COVID-19 was a challenge, no doubt," says Philani. "But it forced us to think differently. We had to pivot fast, especially when we had to close our flagship store. But it was also a blessing in disguise. The move to digital retail has allowed us to engage with customers in new ways and reach a broader audience, both locally and internationally."

In many ways, COVID-19 proved to be a catalyst for growth. While brick-and-mortar stores remain an important aspect of SR's identity, the brand's ability to adapt to digital retail has allowed it to continue connecting with its audience. The shift has also opened up opportunities for SR to grow internationally, tapping into global markets and positioning itself as a brand with a clear vision: to create timeless fashion that transcends borders.





A Brand with a Social Conscience

In an era where sustainability is increasingly important to consumers, SR has made strides to ensure that its business practices are environmentally responsible. The brand is committed to using leftover fabric scraps to create items like bucket hats, contributing to a circular economy by reducing waste. Additionally, SR's denim patchwork designs not only celebrate craftsmanship but also demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility.

"Sustainability has always been a priority for us," says Philani. "We try to do our part by using fabric scraps to create new products and minimizing waste wherever we can. As a brand, we believe it's our responsibility to be conscious of the impact we have on the environment and to make choices that help create a better future."

What's Next for SR?

As SR celebrates its tenth anniversary, the brand stands at a crossroads. The lessons of the past decade, coupled with its ability to adapt to new trends and technologies, have positioned SR for continued success. The brand is committed to expanding its reach, both in terms of product offerings and geographic markets, while staying true to the core values of quality, craftsmanship, and cultural pride.

Looking ahead, SR is focused on further enhancing its digital presence and exploring new avenues for sustainable production. The brand is also committed to maintaining a strong connection with its local community, continu-



ing to celebrate and elevate Eswatini's cultural heritage through its designs.

"As we move into the next decade, we're more committed than ever to staying true to our roots," Philani concludes. "We'll continue to create pieces that tell stories and celebrate our heritage. Our future is bright, and we're excited to see where it takes us."

Quality and Customer-Centricity

One of the most striking aspects of SR's journey is its unwavering commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. The brand's ethos, established from the very beginning, is centered around creating clothing that is built to last, pieces that can be passed on to future generations. This philosophy has earned SR a loyal customer base, from high-ranking business executives to everyday fashion lovers.

"Our customers are at the heart of everything we do," says Philani. "Without their feedback and support, we wouldn't be where we are today. We are constantly listening to what they want, and we do our best to create what they love. That's what makes SR special—it's not just about selling clothes, it's about building a relationship with the people who wear them."

SR's commitment to its customers is also reflected in its responsiveness to feedback. Whether it's through direct conversations on social media or feedback gathered through online sales channels, the brand has always been attentive to the needs and desires of its community. This customer-centric approach has been integral to the brand's growth and success, ensuring that SR's collections remain relevant and loved by its audience.



TAILORED BY • SR
Sgonian Republik had the honour of crafting the Winner's Jacket for the 2025 FNB Eswatini Challenge. From vision to actualization SR presented a bespoke crisp white single-breast blazer, lined with exclusively developed FNB-logo emblazoned lining.





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From a Corner Shop to a Cultural Movement

How Lungile Motsa Built Eswatini's Wine Boutique

By Ayanda Dlamani | Photo Cred: Lungile Motsa

When Lungile Motsa opened a small corner shop at The Corporate Place in Mbabane in 2014, a few could have imagined that a decade later, she would stand as one of Eswatini's most inspiring entrepreneurs the woman who brought wine culture to life in the Kingdom.

Today, her thriving establishment, Wine Boutique, located in Ezulwini, has become more than just a retailer; it is the beating heart of Eswatini's growing appreciation for wine, fine dining, and sophisticated leisure.

For Lungile, the journey began long before the first bottle was sold. "I grew up in the Kingdom of Eswatini, born, bred and buttered," she said with a laugh. "Liswati lemdzabo. I grew up loving our culture and celebrating it from joining the reed dance as a little girl to attending the incwala ceremony every year. I've always carried that pride in my identity."

That cultural grounding, she says, shaped her business philosophy. "Being Swazi is about hospitality, community, and celebration values that translate beautifully into the world of wine," she explained.

From Hospitality to Wine

Before stepping into entrepreneurship, Lungile's path took her through the hospitality industry, where her passion for wine first began to take root. "My time with Sun International was incredibly influential," she recalled. "Working in hospitality and traveling exposed me to the world of wining and dining and how food and wine could transform an experience."

But it wasn't love at first sip. "The first time I tasted wine, I honestly thought it was awful," she admitted, smiling. "I thought the trick was to gulp it fast so you didn't have to taste it. But as

I began to appreciate the finesse, the craftsmanship, and the way the right pairing could completely change your meal."

That curiosity deepened when she moved to Namibia, where she met a Swazi woman named Mrs. Ntando, who introduced her to wine clubs and tasting events. "She was amazing she practically adopted me and my family," Lungile shared warmly. "She'd take me to her wine club meetings, and I was fascinated. I loved the idea of people gathering to learn, taste, and discuss wine. I knew then I wanted to bring that experience home."

The Turning Point

Two defining moments pushed Lungile to take the leap into the wine business. "The first was pure frustration," she said. "When I came back to Eswatini and went wine shopping, the options were so limited. I felt like there was a gap waiting to be filled."

The second was more personal.

"I was retrenched from my new job after re-

turning from Namibia. At first, it felt like a setback, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Comfort is the enemy of growth. Losing that job pushed me out of my comfort zone and into pursuing something of my own."



So, in 2014, she opened Wine Boutique a humble shop tucked in a corner at The Corporate Place in Mbabane.

The early days were tough but full of lessons. “When we opened, people said there were no wine lovers in Eswatini. They thought the idea was too risky,” Lungile recalled. “But when we launched, customers came. They had opinions, ideas, and preferences and we listened. That’s when I learned my biggest lesson: the customer is king.”

Her initial location, however, posed challenges. “We wobbled at first,” she admitted. “Not because of a lack of customers, but because the space wasn’t right. We eventually closed and reopened in a new location, and everything shifted it was a turning point for the business.”

That resilience and willingness to adapt became her formula for growth. “If you see the ship is sinking, go back to the drawing board. Don’t be afraid to restart,” she advised. “There’s no shame in re-strategizing.”

Curating Quality, Craft, and Consistency

As Wine Boutique grew, so did the sophistication of its clientele. Lungile’s focus on quality and craftsmanship became her hallmark. “When selecting wines, we seek producers who prioritize quality and consistency,” she explained. “Some vintages change drastically not always for the better. So, we taste every release to ensure we’re offering our customers only the best.”

In an increasingly competitive landscape, she says, the brand’s authenticity keeps it ahead. “The wine space in Eswatini has become very competitive. Everyone now sees the potential of this community. But what sets us apart is our customers — many of whom have been with us since day one. They’re our biggest supporters. We are deeply grateful to them. Siyabonga.”

Creating a Wine Movement

More than just a retailer, Wine Boutique has become a platform for community building and education. Through tasting sessions, curated pairings, and the now-famous Wine & Dine events, Lungile has cultivated a vibrant wine culture that celebrates sophistication, connection, and local pride.

“Events like our Wine & Dine are about more than just tasting wine,” she said. “They’re about creating



experiences bringing people together to enjoy, learn, and celebrate. We want to demystify wine and make it accessible to everyone.”

These events have become a cornerstone of Eswatini’s evolving food and beverage scene, highlighting a growing appetite for cultural and culinary exploration. As more people discover the nuances of different varietals and pairings, the country’s wine community continues to expand, a trend Lungile helped pioneer.

The Power of Listening and Learning

Lungile credits much of her success to her openness to feedback. “Customers are our mentors,” she said firmly. “When someone makes a suggestion and later sees that you’ve actually implemented it, they feel like they’re part of the journey. And in many ways, they are.”

Mentorship, networking, and collaboration have also been vital. “No one succeeds alone. Every partnership, every conversation, every event it all adds up. It’s about building relationships and constantly learning.”

A Message to Women Entrepreneurs

Looking back on her journey, Lungile’s advice to aspiring entrepreneurs — especially women is both practical and empowering. “It

may sound cliché, but the customer really is king. Listen, engage, and deliver,” she said. “And don’t be discouraged by competition or imitation. There will always be copycats, but your authenticity will set you apart.”

Her message is one of courage and action. “Your dreams are valid,” she said. “Implement the ideas in your head stop procrastinating. The worst mistake you can make is never starting.”

A Toast to the Future

Today, Wine Boutique stands proudly in Ezulwini a space that represents not only Lungile’s personal triumph but also Eswatini’s growing confidence in embracing global trends while celebrating local identity.

“This is only the beginning,” Lungile said at a recent Wine & Dine event, where guests savored curated pairings under the soft glow of candlelight. “Our goal is to build a vibrant wine culture in Eswatini one that celebrates craftsmanship, supports local hospitality, and connects us with global wine communities.”

As guests raised their final glasses in a toast to the evening, one thing was clear: Wine Boutique isn’t just about selling wine. It’s about creating a culture one glass, one story, and one shared moment at a time.



Mongi Botanical: Grounded in Preservation, Innovation & Sustainability.

By Ayanda Dlamini | Photos: Sasha Thorne

Mongi Botanical, a pioneering business founded by Sasha Thorne, is quickly becoming a household name in Eswatini, known for its innovative use of indigenous plants to create sustainable and eco-friendly products.

In 2025, Mongi Botanical was awarded the prestigious title of Most Innovative Business of the Year at the Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, a well-deserved recognition of the company's unique approach to wellness, beauty, and food.

The story of Mongi Botanical began over a decade ago, rooted in a profound experience that Sasha Thorne had during a trip to Zanzibar.

The journey was intended to explore the spice farms and learn about the rich heritage of natural ingredients.

Sasha, who had always been passionate about plants, food, and natural wellness, was immediately

the farms, the spices, and the culinary practices she witnessed.

It was on this trip that she realized her dream: to bring the concept of wellness and botanical healing home, but with a twist, by focusing solely on Eswatini's own indigenous flora.

The Birth of Mongi Botanical

Sasha's vision for Mongi Botanical was born from a deeply personal place.

She wanted to create a line of products that were not only natural and beneficial for the body but also rooted in the rich heritage of Eswatini.

"When we were in Zanzibar, I was inspired by the concept of using plants for both food and wellness," Sasha recalls.

"But I knew that I wanted to do this with ingredients that were local to Eswatini."

Her inspiration grew stronger when she discovered the local botanical treasures surrounding her home in Malandela, Eswatini.

Plants like marula, shea butter, and other indigenous herbs became her focus, and her passion for using these plants for wellness was solidified when she became pregnant with her first child.

At that point, Sasha began experimenting with natural ingredients for her own skin and wellness needs, choosing to create everything from scratch in her kitchen.

"I was using shea butter from South Africa, but I wanted something local," she says.

"I wanted to make my own things and share them with family and friends. So I started gifting homemade skin care products for Christmas, birthdays, and special occasions."

As word spread, more people began asking for these products, leading to the natural evolution of Mongi Botanical.



It was only when her sister-in-law, who ran Dala Spaces, encouraged her to start packaging and selling the products that Sasha realized there was potential for this idea to grow beyond her circle of friends and family.

However, despite the positive feedback, Sasha wasn't sure if there was a market for her products or whether they would be well received by the public.

Still, the growing demand and constant encouragement from those around her pushed her forward.

A Deep Connection to Nature

At its core, Mongi Botanical is a business that places a significant emphasis on the preservation and promotion of Eswatini's indigenous plants.

The name "Mongi" itself means "preservation of indigenous flora," a fitting reflection of the brand's ethos and mission.

The company's goal is not just to create skincare products but to ensure that these ingredients, many of which have been used for generations, are preserved and protected for



future generations.

In addition to its line of natural wellness products, Mongi Botanical also offers a range of educational experiences.

The company runs workshops, retreats, and training programs that teach people about the plants, how they are harvested, and their benefits.

As part of its mission to promote environmental sustainability, Mongi Botanical has also launched an ecological arm focused on educating people about the responsible harvesting of plants and the importance of preserving these resources for the future.

The company's commitment to sustainability goes beyond just education. Mongi Botanical operates a botanical garden where they grow the very plants that make up their products. From immune-boosting teas to relaxing, calming blends, everything is cultivated with care and respect for the land.

Ingredients such as "umhlonwane," a potent herbal remedy, are carefully harvested and combined to create teas and wellness products that cater to the needs of modern consumers.

"We are focused on making products that are both good for the body and good for the planet," Sasha explains.

"It's about connecting people with the land, with the plants, and with the wisdom that has been passed down through generations."

The company also taps into the culinary potential of indigenous plants. Many people are unaware of the versatility of plants like sorghum, which is often thought of only as an ingredient for brewing beer.

Mongi Botanical is changing that perception by incorporating sorghum into its wellness products and teaching people how to use it in creative, health-conscious ways.

This culinary aspect of Mongi Botanical is an exciting development, as it highlights the potential of indigenous foods and their important role in both nutrition and wellness.



...a unique offering in the Eswatini market...



Since its inception, Mongi Botanical has been positioned as a unique offering in the Eswatini market, and its reputation has grown rapidly. With a focus on local and indigenous ingredients, the company's products are both innovative and accessible, making them popular among locals and international visitors alike.

What sets Mongi Botanical apart is the ease with which its products can be incorporated into everyday life.

The company ensures that its products are safe for all ages, including babies, and they avoid harsh chemicals in favour of gentle, natural ingredients. As a result, Mongi Botanical has quickly gained a loyal following, with consumers appreciating the authenticity, quality, and cultural relevance of the products.

Located in the Mandela Lifestyle Centre, Mongi Botanical benefits from a steady flow of both international tourists and local consumers, providing the company with valuable feedback about its products. This direct interaction with customers has enabled Sasha and her team to continually refine their offerings and better meet the needs of their diverse clientele.

Beyond local success, Mongi Botanical has also gained recognition at some of Eswatini's largest cultural and lifestyle festivals, including the

MTN Bushfire Festival and the Standard Bank Lujulu Food and Lifestyle Festival. These platforms have allowed Mongi Botanical to showcase its food products and further establish its presence in the wellness and lifestyle sectors.

WINNING THE MOST INNOVATIVE BUSINESS AWARD

The announcement of Mongi Botanical as the Most Innovative Business of the Year at the 2025 Entrepreneur of the Year Awards was a moment of profound personal significance for Sasha Thorne. "Winning this award made me reflect deeply," she says. "I walked into the shop the day after the award ceremony, and I just stood there, closed the door, and felt a rush of gratitude. For me, this award is not just about the business. It's about preserving something meaningful for future generations."

Sasha attributes her success not only to hard work but also to her belief in the importance of wellness.

"For me, wellness is not just about chasing beauty, it's about nurturing the body, mind, and spirit," she says.

"And being recognized for that is incredibly affirming."

She also emphasizes the importance of ancestral knowledge and the legacy of the land. "This is about more than just products. It's about

connecting with something deeply rooted in our history and our culture. It's about giving people the tools to take better care of themselves, using ingredients that are not just safe but truly beneficial."

Sasha's journey with Mongi Botanical is far from over, and she views the award as a validation of the importance of her work.

"This award has made me realize that taking care of myself, my well-being, and my mind is an essential part of this journey," she says. "It's about nurturing something bigger than myself."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As Mongi Botanical continues to grow and evolve, Sasha remains committed to the company's core values of sustainability, wellness, and education. The future looks bright for this innovative business, with plans to expand its offerings and continue to share the wisdom of Eswatini's indigenous plants with the world.

With a focus on innovation, authenticity, and sustainability, Mongi Botanical is setting the stage for a new wave of eco-conscious and wellness-driven businesses in Eswatini. And with Sasha at the helm, it's clear that Mongi Botanical will remain a trailblazer for years to come, helping to preserve both the natural beauty of the land and the wisdom of the generations that have come before.



LET'S TRAVEL Checked In With Noxolo

Guest Writer: Noxolo Nkabinde | Pics: Freepik

Welcome to **Checked In With Noxolo**, your passport into the evolving world of travel, the trends shaping it and the insights that make every journey more meaningful.



As a travel curator and luxury travel planner at Luxe Quests, my days are never the same.

Every itinerary teaches me something new, every destination carries its own rhythm and every traveller reminds me why we explore.

This column is where I share the knowledge I have gathered along my journey, lessons learned (sometimes the hard way), and insights to guide fellow wanderlust seekers: the dreamers, the planners and everyone in between. Whether you are drawn to familiar favourites or curious about the unexplored, I bring to you stories, ideas and practical guidance to help you travel well, safely and with intention.

Intention in travel matters more than ever - As the days go by and we start to envision travel plans for the year, we tend to think about where we will rest, celebrate milestones or even discover something new about ourselves.

For many travellers, one destination sits firmly on that list: Cape Town. Its ocean breeze, wine-soaked afternoons and effortless sophistication have made it our reliable reset. It feels accessible, yet still special enough to mark an escape.

But lately, even the Mother City feels more discovered than ever. Demand continues to rise, prices follow closely behind and the calm we travel for can sometimes feel just out of reach.

Thankfully with travel, the possibilities to find the perfect escape are endless and this is a great time to expand our travel map and consider destinations that offer the same sense of beauty and comfort, with a little more space to breathe.

Why Vietnam, Why Now?

Vietnam is not always the first place that comes to mind, and that is precisely its appeal. Picture long golden coastlines, lantern-lit streets filled with culture and resorts where luxury still feels peaceful and personal. The pace is gentler. The atmosphere feels welcoming. The experience feels intentional.

Vietnam is quietly rising among curious travellers because it consistently delivers on what matters most today: safety, value and meaningful experiences.

For Southern African travellers especially, safety remains a top priority, and Vietnam stands out. It is consistently ranked among the safest destinations in Southeast Asia, often mentioned alongside global safety benchmarks such as Dubai and Singapore.

Even solo female travellers often describe a reassuring sense of comfort. It is the kind of ease that cannot be purchased, yet makes all the difference.

Cost also plays an important role in your travel decisions. As global tourism continues to recover, many popular destinations are experiencing significant price increases. Increasing demand has travellers everywhere paying more for the same experiences.

Vietnam, however, has a rare sweet spot. High-end accommodation does not require an extreme budget. Exceptional local cuisine can be enjoyed for prices similar to, or even lower than, a casual meal at home. Domestic flights between cities remain affordable, allowing travellers to experi-

ence beaches, culture and natural beauty within a single journey.

The Experience That Changes Everything

One experience that consistently earns glowing reviews is a five-star cruise through Ha Long Bay.

For many first-time travellers to Asia, this is where Vietnam truly becomes real. Imagine waking up on calm emerald waters, surrounded by towering limestone islands rising through a soft morning mist. Days are spent kayaking through hidden caves, enjoying fresh local cuisine on deck and simply watching the landscape change colour as the sun sets.

It is immersive without being overwhelming. Luxurious without being loud.

Cape Town will always remain close to our hearts. It is stylish, warm, familiar and easy to return to whenever we need a quick reset. There is no need to replace it - Yet there is something re-energizing about discovering new places.

Let the beaches of Da Nang reset you. Let the lanterns of Hoi An draw you in. Let the calm remind you that luxury is not only found in the places everyone knows, but also in the places quietly waiting to be discovered.

Vietnam is one of those places. And it's waiting.





BUILDING FOUNDATION BEFORE THE CLASSROOM

Inside EduCope's Transformative Learning Model

By: Nothando Masilela // Pics: Supplied + Freepik

In Eswatini's evolving education landscape, one early childhood centre is redefining what it means to prepare children for school and for life. At the forefront is Educope Kindergarten & Special Needs, founded by visionary educator Chantele Ward.

Chantele Ward, founder and principal of Educope, describes the school as more than a preschool, it is a developmental foundation. Deeply passionate about early childhood development, she set out to change how education is understood and delivered in Eswatini.

The name Educope combines two powerful ideas: Education and Cope. It reflects a core belief before children can excel academically, they must first be equipped to cope. Rather than rushing children into reading and writing, Educope prioritises building the brain and body behind the learning.

"It represents our belief that children must first be equipped to cope, to sit, focus, balance, regulate emotions, and think critically before they can truly succeed in a classroom. We don't rush children into academics. We prepare them for it," Chantele explains.

Ward founded Educope after noticing that many children were being labelled too quickly —

"naughty," "slow," or "not ready." Instead of accepting these labels, she questioned whether the real issue was a lack of foundational development.

Chantele observed that many early learning centres leaned heavily toward academics or unstructured play, with little emphasis on neurological and emotional readiness. Educope was designed to fill that gap to intentionally strengthen attention, coordination, confidence, and emotional security so that academic learning can unfold naturally.

"We don't just teach letters and numbers, we develop the brain and body behind the learning," she says. "Educope is intentional. Nothing we do is random."

At its core, Educope is guided by five key values: Dignity for every child, holistic development, inclusion, consistency and excellence. The school operates on the belief that every child deserves to be understood rather than judged. Education, here, is meant to build confidence and capability, never diminish it.



Wellbeing

What distinguishes Educope is its intentional integration of structured academics with guided developmental support. Children are not only introduced to letters and numbers; they engage in activities that strengthen posture, motor skills, balance, concentration, and emotional regulation. Montessori-inspired methods, play-based learning, cultural awareness, and strong academic preparation are woven together to create a comprehensive learning environment.

Inclusion is also central to Educope's identity. Children with developmental delays, attention challenges, or physical difficulties are supported through structured, consistent reinforcement. The focus is always on growth and ability, not labels. Every aspect of the programme is purposeful.

"Inclusive education is not a trend for us, it is a responsibility," she says. "Children with special needs do not need sympathy; they need structured support, consistency, and opportunity. Inclusion means adapting the environment to the child, not forcing the child to fit into a rigid system."

One of the greatest challenges Ward has faced is shifting parental expectations.

Many parents naturally want immediate academic results.

However, without the ability to focus, sit properly, hold a pencil, or manage emotions, academic pressure can lead to frustration rather than progress.



www.kulture.co.sz

Educope addresses this by educating parents, maintaining open communication, and demonstrating measurable transformation. Over time, visible improvement reinforces the philosophy. Children with special needs, she believes, require structured support and opportunity, not sympathy.

We don't just teach letters and numbers, we develop the brain and body behind the learning...

"So we educate parents, we show them progress, we communicate consistently and most importantly, we let results speak. When parents see transformation, they understand the value," Chantele says. "Our role is not to replace specialists but to reinforce development daily so that progress is consistent and sustainable."

True inclusion means adapting the environment to support the child's development. At Educope, the emphasis remains on building ability and strengthening each child's unique potential.

Interactive learning plays a central role in the Educope model. Children learn best through movement, exploration, and hands-on engagement. When children build, experiment, and actively participate, they strengthen neural pathways that support memory, creativity, and critical thinking. Classrooms are therefore dynamic and engaging designed to stimulate growth rather than enforce stillness.

"My proudest moments are not awards or recognition. They are the quiet transformations," she says. "The child who arrived withdrawn and left confident. The child who struggled to sit still and now completes work independently. The parent who once worried and now celebrates progress."

On a personal level, Chantele says the journey has required resilience and courage. Introducing a new educational approach often means challenging conventional expectations. But leadership, she believes, is rooted in responsibility.

And for her, Educope is about more than early childhood education. It is about strengthening foundations for families, for communities, and for Eswatini's future because when children are built properly, hope is rebuilt alongside them.

Through Educope, Chantele Ward is not only shaping young minds. She is reshaping the foundation of education itself, one child at a time.



THE WEIGHT OF EVERY BITE

Dietician Cece Nsibande unpacks the true impact of our dietary choices.

By Ayanda Dlamini

In a world increasingly shaped by fast food culture, convenience meals, and nutritional misinformation circulating on social media, the role of trained nutrition professionals has never been more vital.

Among Eswatini's emerging voices in evidence-based nutrition is Dietician Cece Nsibande, a certified dietitian whose passion for food has evolved into a mission to transform public perceptions about healthy eating.

Through clinical practice, community outreach, and continuous study, she has become an influential advocate for balanced diets, disease prevention, and realistic approaches to wellness.



Today, as lifestyle-related illnesses continue to rise across the country and globally, she speaks with clarity and conviction about why nutrition should be a priority for everyone—and why dieting is far more than a short-term trend.

A JOURNEY ROOTED IN PASSION AND PURPOSE

Cece's introduction to the world of nutrition started with something simple: a deep love for food. But what began as curiosity has transformed into a career rooted in science, compassion, and public health.

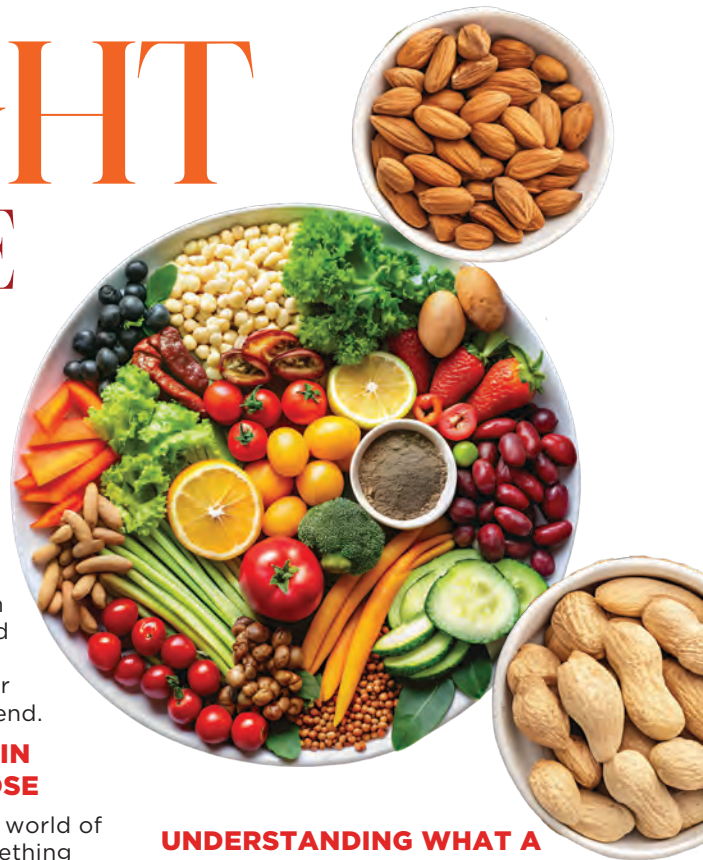
"I qualified as a dietitian in 2017, and at the time my motivation was rooted simply in my love for food," she recalls.

"But once I began practicing as a clinical dietitian, I came to understand the deeper impact of nutrition on health outcomes."

Her early years in clinical settings exposed her to the human realities behind diet-related diseases. From patients in critical care to individuals trying to manage chronic conditions, she saw firsthand how food, often overlooked, was a determining factor in health outcomes.

"I was motivated by the knowledge that my work directly improves the health of my community," she says.

This desire to broaden her impact has now taken her to the United States, where she is furthering her training with a focus on health systems, food policy, and cost-effectiveness analyses of nutrition interventions. Her aim is clear: to strengthen population health in Eswatini and globally by shaping nutrition policy and improving access to sustainable dietary guidance.



UNDERSTANDING WHAT A 'HEALTHY DIET' REALLY MEANS

With so much conflicting information online about what is considered "healthy," Cece emphasizes the importance of simplicity and balance.

"A healthy diet is a balanced one; both in the types of foods you eat and how often you eat them," she explains. "If you choose nutritious foods most of the time and occasionally enjoy foods simply for pleasure, you're maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet."

She stresses that healthy eating is not about deprivation or perfection. Instead, it is about fueling the body with a variety of nutrients while allowing space for foods people enjoy. It's a philosophy grounded in sustainability; because habits that are overly restrictive rarely last.

WHY BALANCED EATING MATTERS FOR OVERALL HEALTH

The age-old saying "we are what we eat" may sound cliché, but Cece insists it remains true. "Nutritious food gives the body the fuel and nutrients it needs to function well," she says. "When we don't provide our bodies with this nourishment, our organs gradually lose their ability to function optimally."

She highlights that a balanced diet plays a major role in preventing disease, maintaining energy levels, supporting immunity, and keeping the body's systems running smoothly. Conversely, poor dietary habits especially in younger adults, can lead to long-term health consequences increasingly seen today.

"We are seeing an increase in incidences of stroke and heart attacks in people as young as 30 years old," she notes with concern. "Healthy eating habits formed early can prevent these risks and support long-term well-being."

One of the most persistent misconceptions Cece encounters is the belief that healthy eating is expensive.

"People think a healthy diet must include aesthetically pleasing foods in trendy packaging bought from higher-end grocery stores," she says.

"But nutritious meals can come entirely from affordable foods bought at a local market or street vendor."

She explains that nutrients are found across a wide variety of foods; many of which are inexpensive and widely accessible.

"Healthy eating is less about where the food comes from and more about understanding how to combine accessible foods to create a balanced, nourishing diet," Cece adds.

This, she says, is where nutrition education and professional guidance become essential.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT DIET: WHY ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

With so many diets trending, from Mediterranean to keto, plant-based, paleo, and intermittent fasting; Cece encourages individuals to avoid choosing diets based on popularity alone.

"I recommend consulting a dietitian first, especially if you have allergies or a chronic health condition," she says.

But for the average person with no medical complications, she highlights one eating pattern consistently backed by science:

"The Mediterranean diet is one of the most balanced eating patterns. Its mix of fruits, vegetables, whole

grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats provides nearly all the nourishment the body needs."

It is sustainable, adaptable, and suitable for different cultures—including African diets—once appropriately modified.

RED FLAGS WHEN TRYING NEW OR TRENDING DIETS

Not all diets are safe, and Cece warns the public to be cautious about plans that eliminate entire food groups.

"If a diet restricts an entire food group, such as carbohydrates, you should be cautious," she says. "Eliminating food groups can cause nutrient deficiencies and affect your health."

She advises people to seek alternative food choices within the same food group, rather than cutting out the group entirely. Professional guidance, she emphasizes, helps align diets with personal preferences and nutritional needs.

DIET AS A TOOL FOR PREVENTING LIFESTYLE DISEASES

Lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity continue to rise, yet Cece believes many of these conditions can be prevented—or managed—through proper nutrition.

"A healthy diet keeps blood sugar, blood pressure, and weight in a healthy range," she explains.

Whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and lean proteins help the body function optimally while reducing the risk of overconsumption. Limiting sugary drinks and highly processed snacks also plays a crucial role.

"Overall, a balanced diet supports your body so it can work the way it should and stay healthy," she says.



"...nutritious meals can come entirely from affordable foods bought at a local market or street vendor."





DIET AND EXERCISE: A PARTNERSHIP FOR OPTIMAL WELL-BEING

Cece emphasizes that exercise and diet should not be seen as separate goals.

“Eating nutritious foods gives your body the energy it needs, while exercise strengthens muscles and supports metabolic and heart health,” she says. “Together, they reduce the risk of lifestyle-related diseases.”

She encourages an active lifestyle for everyone, regardless of age or weight.

NAVIGATING FESTIVE SEASON TEMPTATIONS

The festive season often disrupts eating routines due to celebrations, family gatherings, and the availability of indulgent meals. But Cece reassures that enjoying holiday foods is not inherently harmful.

“It is the festive season, after all,” she laughs. “It’s fine to indulge. But remember that festive meals are often high in sugar and fat, so balance enjoyment with moderation.”

She suggests eating smaller portions, paying close attention to your hunger cues, and avoiding the habit of skipping regular meals to “save room” for bigger festive feasts. She also recommends incorporating

fruits or salads on the side to balance heavier dishes, and staying active through simple movements like taking walks to keep your body energized and digestion steady.

HOW TO ENJOY FESTIVE FOODS WITHOUT COMPROMISING HEALTH

For individuals with chronic illnesses, Cece recommends consulting a dietitian before the holidays to help plan safer, personalized food choices.

For the general population, moderation and mindfulness are key.

“You can enjoy festive foods by having smaller portions, balancing indulgent meals with whole foods, and staying physically active,” she says. “Sharing dishes and planning meals can also help.”

Cece encourages people to return to balance and consistency rather than chasing extreme diet overhauls.

“Start with simple steps regular meal times, more fruits and vegetables, hydration, and light activity like daily walks,” she says. “Aim for progress, not perfection.”

Building Long-Term Healthy Eating Habits as a Family

Families, she explains, have tremendous influence over children’s lifelong eating behaviors.

“Encourage everyone to participate in meal planning and preparation. Make healthy eating enjoyable, not restrictive,” she advises.

Limiting processed foods, modeling good behavior, and involving children in food decisions helps create a supportive environment.

“If you have the space and resources,

a small family garden can be incredibly valuable,” Cece adds. “It makes fresh, nutritious options more accessible and encourages healthier choices.”

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MAIN- TAINING HEALTHY EATING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Cece offers several practical strategies to help you stay mindful during the festive season. She encourages planning ahead to avoid impulsive food choices and controlling your portions, especially when it comes to indulgent dishes. She also suggests balancing your plate with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to keep your meals nutritious. Staying active through simple exercises can support your overall well-being, while listening to your body’s signals can help you avoid overeating.

Above all, she emphasizes maintaining regular meal times to keep your eating habits steady and intentional.

Skipping meals, she warns, almost always leads to overindulging later.

SMALL CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE NEW YEAR

Cece recommends three powerful adjustments for those looking to start the year on a healthier note:

1. Add vegetables to every meal, even if only a small serving.
2. Prepare simple balanced meals ahead of time, especially for busy work or school days.
3. Consult a dietitian to tailor eating patterns to your lifestyle instead of relying on generic advice.

In her words, “Aim for progress, not perfection.”





A Siswati word meaning "a place where men meet to talk"

A safe space for men to speak honestly about what they carry, their struggles, growth, and role in their families and communities.

A space for listening, reflection and meaningful conversation



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Why High Achievers Often Struggle with Maintaining Relationships

By: Fezile Mkhathswa Photos: Freepik

Qualifications earned, promotions secured, recognition gained, milestones reached, and trips across the world every few months, yet no one to share the moment with. Why is that?

This is a conversation that has quietly lingered beneath the surface for some time, shaped by shifting relationship dynamics and a growing culture of individualism. Today's go-getters, the early risers, the vision chasers, the people balancing demanding careers, side ventures,

community commitments, and leadership roles, often find themselves struggling to show up in relationships with the consistency required.

From the outside, high achievers can appear to have every aspect of life firmly in place. Yet when it comes to love and partnership, many are navigating a far more complex and often unspoken reality.

It's not because they don't care. In fact, many still deeply desire love, friendship, and genuine companionship. The challenge often lies in how they are wired, driven by performance, productivity, and high standards. These qualities can power remarkable ambition, yet they can also make the openness, vulnerability, and emotional presence that relationships require far more difficult to sustain.

What Research Says About Overwork and Relationships

As conversations around ambition and success evolve, researchers have increasingly explored how intense work habits affect personal relationships. Several studies point to a consistent pattern.

Research by Arnold B. Bakker of Erasmus University Rotterdam, along with other scholars in Organizational Psychology, shows that individuals with strong "workaholic" tendencies, those who work compulsively or feel

an obsessive passion for their work, often report lower levels of relationship satisfaction. The main drivers are emotional and physical exhaustion, which gradually erode the quality of time and connection with a partner.

Another large-scale study by Professor Hyunil Kim and colleagues examined the relationship between long working hours and marital stability in South Korea, analysing data from more than 125,000 married workers. Their research found that individuals working more than 52 hours per week faced a significantly higher risk of divorce or separation compared with those working more standard hours and maintaining regular time off.



A third body of research reinforces these findings, showing that when one partner consistently works extremely long hours, typically more than 50 hours a week, the stress levels of the other partner often increase. At the same time, the couple's shared time decreases, and overall relationship quality tends to decline. Some studies suggest this effect can be particularly pronounced when the overwork comes from the male partner.

Taken together, these findings point to a clear pattern: when work shifts from being part of life to becoming the centre of it, consuming most waking hours in pursuit of success, relationships often pay the price.

But What Do You Say?

Research tells one story, but lived experience tells another. To explore this further, we spoke with several individuals about how ambition, demanding careers, and long working hours have shaped their own relationships.

To encourage honesty and openness, we've protected their identities.

Here's what they shared

1. Female, Married (age 55+) University Faculty Administrator

"Many young people today struggle to find lasting relationships, and even when they do, some fail to endure because so much time and energy is invested in making money and pursuing education. At times, it also comes down to insecurity, particularly when a woman is financially more successful than her partner, which can create an inferiority complex for some men. On the other hand, when the man holds most of the financial power and owns the assets, it can sometimes lead to controlling behaviour, which may eventually cause the re-

lationship to break down, especially as women today are more confident and assertive in standing their ground."

Male, Single & thriving (age 30-39) Digital Marketing Specialist

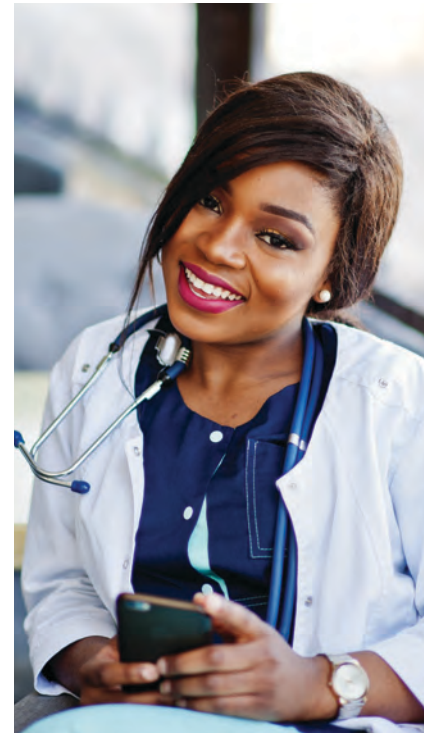
"As a high achiever myself, I'm single because I don't have time to entertain a relationship. As much as I may crave attention at times and envision a life with someone else, the constant problem that arises is that I never have time to either respond to texts or go on dates as frequently as one would hope. Personally I'd never pick another person over the commitments of my work because I love stability and certainty and relationships don't give me that but my job does, in fact my job is more exciting by the day, I enjoy the challenges I face because in a way I can control the situation and verdict of the situation, rather than investing into someone and hoping not to lose them, forcing me to change a routine I had gotten used to and attachments made along the way."

2. Female, Married (age 40-49) Religious leader, business owner

"High achievers often struggle to maintain relationships because the success they build comes with power, and that power can easily spill into controlling or abusive dynamics. Their confidence sometimes turns into pride, making it hard for them to humble themselves or accept that they might be wrong. They tend to dominate conversations, insist on having the final say, and dismiss opinions that don't align with theirs. And because they are always striving for perfection, they have little tolerance for mistakes and expect everyone around them to match their pace."

3. Male, Married (age 40-49) Academic, PhD holder, University Lecturer, businessman

"From what I've seen, high achievement and a functional relationship are not opposites at all; many of the most accomplished people I know actually thrive because they are rooted in family. In professional circles, commitment and stability are even treated as indicators of loyalty and resilience, which makes relationships an asset rather than a barrier. The real issue is not that high achievers can't balance love and ambition, but that each person's circumstances, past hurts, or partners' misunderstandings make the journey different. So instead of assuming they don't want to commit,



I think it's more honest to ask why they're struggling to commit, because every case is unique."

4. Female, single & thriving (age 20-29) Nurse, content creator

"Well, I can't fight off that feeling. I have done all the learning and achieved my goals, created a name for myself, I have to hand this over to a gent who might just be looking for a house help and child bearer. It's scary, the definition of respect for men I've interacted with is a lot about what you do for him and his, yet the definition of a wife is mostly bedroom and kitchen-bound. Men with my achievements or better can be celebrated, but for me as a woman, it creates resistance, that I should leave my education at the gate in order to be a good wife. Can't stand the double standards."

And, Finally

In the end, these views remind us that the experience of high achievement and relationships is not one-size-fits-all. Some people say ambition strengthens commitment, while others argue it brings pressure, pride, or imbalance. Both realities exist, and both deserve honest reflection.

What matters now is for readers to look at their own lives, question the stories they've accepted, and decide what kind of relationships they want to build, whether with a partner, with themselves, or with the future they're working toward.

Farm 443

A New Lifestyle Destination Rooted in Food, Music & Community

By : Nothando Masilela | Photos: Supplied

Set in the scenic Malagwane mountains, Farm 443 is quickly becoming one of Mbabane's most talked-about lifestyle destinations. More than just a place to eat or socialize, the space was created with a deeper purpose: to bring people together in an environment that feels both elevated and familiar.

At the heart of the concept is one of its founders, Prudence Ngwenya, who envisioned a venue that offers quality experiences while still maintaining a warm sense of home.

"We created the space to offer something intentional in Eswatini," she explains. "A place where people can enjoy quality food, good music and beautiful surroundings without losing the feeling of home."

Farm 443 was built on the belief that premium spaces do not have to feel distant or exclusive. Instead, they can be welcoming, rooted in community and filled with genuine hospitality. From the moment guests arrive and see the words "Kusekhaya La" meaning "This is

home" — the message is clear: everyone belongs here.

For guests visiting Farm 443 for the first time, the experience begins with a warm welcome. Visitors are comfortably seated while taking in the surrounding mountain views, with music carefully setting the mood for the day. According to Prudence, the space was intentionally designed to encourage people to relax and enjoy themselves.

"Farm 443 is where food, music and community meet. It's a place where people can gather, breathe and enjoy the moment," she says.

This people-first approach is part of the venue's identity. Whether someone is visiting for a quick lunch, a celebration with friends or a weekend outing, the goal is always the same, to create an atmosphere where guests feel at ease.

More than just a tagline, "Kusekhaya La" is the philosophy that shapes how Farm 443 operates. It is a guiding principle that shapes the culture of the space. It influences how food is prepared, how staff engage with guests and how relationships are built with partners and the surrounding community.

"It's not only about what we offer,

but how it feels to be here," Prudence explains.

Part of what makes the venue special is its natural rhythm. A quiet lunch can gradually turn into sunset drinks, which can then flow into a lively evening filled with music and energy. The seamless transition from day to night is part of the charm that keeps guests coming back and what makes the venue stand out.

Farm 443's menu reflects the same philosophy of familiarity and quality. The kitchen focuses on comfort food elevated with thoughtful presentation and consistency. The menu includes a mix of traditional Swati dishes, grilled meals, seafood, light options and family-friendly selections for children.

Among the standout favorites are the makhaya chicken, umbhidvo served with pap, and the signature Farm 443 Rainbow cocktail. Another highlight is the venue's pap, made using coarse imphuphu legayiwe, which has become one of the meals guests specifically return for. By combining traditional flavors with modern touches,





the menu celebrates local tastes while offering variety for different diners.

Weekends at Farm 443 are not just about dining, they are carefully curated experiences designed to match different moods. Fridays kick off with Log Off Friday, a relaxed social gathering where guests ease out of the work week and unwind.

Saturdays introduce the Day Night Shift, a flowing experience that starts in the afternoon and transitions seamlessly into the evening. Sundays at the Farm slow the tempo with a nostalgic, old-school musical vibe, creating the perfect atmosphere for reflection and relaxation before the new week begins.

“Each day has its own personality,” says Prudence. “But at the core, it’s always about good music, good food and a space that allows people to fully enjoy the moment.”

Trying to categorize Farm 443 into a single label can be difficult and that is exactly the point. Prudence believes the venue successfully blends multiple roles: restaurant, lifestyle destination and community hub.

“I would consider it to be all of the above because each element complements the other. We serve great food, create a visually and socially engaging environment, and actively connect with the communities around us through sourcing, partnerships and shared experiences,” she explains. “That balance is something the Farm 443 team and I are very proud of.”

Since opening, one of the biggest highlights for the team has been the steady support from guests. Seeing people walk through the doors every day and choose Farm 443 has been both exciting and humbling.

A particularly memorable milestone was Valentine’s Day, when the venue was fully booked a moment that signalled strong support from the community. Like any young business, the team continues to learn and refine the experience with every event and every guest.

Although details remain under wraps, Prudence confirms that exciting developments are already in the works. Farm 443 was designed with growth in mind, and future additions will continue to expand the experience for visitors. For now, the invitation remains simple.

“Come through and experience it for yourself,” she says. “Whether it’s for a meal, a celebration or a business gathering — Kusekhaya La.”



LIV Padel

The New Social Sport Taking Over Eswatini

If you've passed through Malkerns Square lately, you've probably seen the energy, the crowds, the laughter bouncing off the glass walls. LIV Padel Eswatini has quickly grown from a new addition to the Square into one of the country's most exciting lifestyle hubs, drawing fitness lovers, families, professionals, and curious first-timers from Malkerns and beyond.

By Phesheya Mkhonta

What makes padel so addictive? It may resemble tennis at first glance, but step onto the court and you'll instantly sense the difference. The lower net, the solid paddles, the smaller ball, and those iconic glass walls create a fast, fluid, easy-to-learn game that keeps everyone moving and smiling. It's a sport built on teamwork and connection rather than power, which is why more Emaswati are picking it up as their new social routine.

Padel is rapidly growing across South Africa and the region, driven by its social, accessible nature and strong fitness appeal. The sport has drawn over 100,000 active players within just a few years. The operating company, **LIV Padel**, has been central to this boom, developing key venues and nurturing vibrant playing communities as one of the market's leading operators.

LIV Padel in Malkerns celebrates exactly that. Here, it's not about who serves the hardest, it's about showing up, playing together, and discovering just how fun fitness can be. Whether you're a seasoned player or you've never held a racket before, padel welcomes you in. No complicated rules, no intimidating courts, just pure movement,

laughter, and community. Padel vs. tennis? It's not a competition. It's a reminder that padel is everyone's game.

Since unveiling its three world-class Spanish-imported courts in July, complete with full glass enclosures, artificial grass flooring, and night lighting, **LIV Padel** has quickly become the heartbeat of Malkerns' growing live-work-play community. Situated beside Sage Café and the children's play area, it has fast become the go-to destination for families, friends, and social or fitness groups seeking a fresh, active, and social addition to their lifestyle.

And now, with the festive season in full swing, **LIV Padel** is opening its doors even wider.

Looking for a fun, high-energy year-end experience? **LIV Padel** is currently taking bookings for groups, families, private parties, birthdays, and business events. Think sunshine, safe activity, friendly competition, drinks, snacks, and endless laughs, all against the backdrop of Malkerns' most exciting property development. It's the perfect way to wrap up the year with action, connection, and a whole lot of fun.

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