

Shoprite Group awards best suppliers of 2024

Celebrating growth and innovation

Comessa Food Services and Pasta & Me were among the standout suppliers at the Shoprite Group's 2024 Supplier of the Year Awards, celebrating their innovation and excellence alongside a distinguished group of exceptional nominees and winners.

The awards, held this past weekend at Vergelegen Wine Estate in Somerset West, recognise the vital contributions suppliers make to the Group's continued success.

Husband and wife, Zoegdie and Bilquees Essa – initially just hoping to supply quality snacks to local schools and corporate canteens – began Comessa Food Services as a home-based business producing flavoured popcorn in 2005. A year later, they expanded their production facilities to a corner shop, adding tortilla wraps and later also traditional flatbreads to their product range.

Determined to succeed, Comessa innovated to overcome challenges by, for example, designing and building their own tortilla-press machine line, thereby establishing self-sufficient manufacturing capabilities.

In 2012, Comessa was listed in selected Checkers stores. Under the retailer's continued mentorship, they were able to successfully transition from a small business to a nationally recognised supplier that now also supplies the supermarket chain's



Top left to right: Rui Andrade (Meridian), Vivek Pattundeen (Palm Stationery), Tommy van Zyl (ZZ2), Mark Erasmus (Scania), Tiff Whitehouse (DetPak) and Bernard Arthur (AMKA). Bottom left to right: Christel Emmenis (Kellogg's Tolaram), Claire Norris (McCain), Bilquees Essa (Comessa Foods), Pieter Engelbrecht (Shoprite Group CEO), Aziza Parker (Pasta and Me), Nishal Modi (Zeta Labs) and Guillaume du Toit (Cobus Schoeman Architects).

Bakery and Simple Truth private label product ranges. Today, the company employs over 100 people, with 65% of the workforce female and more than 70% youth.

"We are truly humbled by this award and would like to thank the Shoprite Group for their trust

and belief in us. It's been a hard journey, but their continued support has been a cornerstone of our success," said Bilquees Essa, Chief Executive Officer of Comessa Food Services.

Pasta & Me, a 100% female-owned business founded by Aziza Parker, won the 2024 Small

Supplier Award for its innovative approach to food affordability, offering a range of budget-friendly noodle meals that feed a family of four for just R20.

This affordable one-pot delight is part of Shoprite's Homegrown private label range, which showcases products from small, local suppliers.

"As an SMME it is difficult to get noticed, launched and scaled at the same time, but through Homegrown this became a reality. I want to thank the Shoprite team for thinking out-of-the-box and seeing the potential of our products. We are working to bring more innovations such as this to the market soon," said Aziza Parker, Founder of Pasta & Me.

The Awards evaluate finalists across 12 categories on criteria including the extent to which they had contributed towards the retailer's growth and improved earnings, their stock-holding and service levels, the efficiency of their administration processes, and their support at store level. **SR**

The full list of 2024 winners

- **General Merchandise & Furniture:** Palm Stationery
- **Professional Suppliers:** Scania South Africa / Cobus Schoeman Architects (joint winners)
- **Fruit & Vegetable Producers:** ZZ2
- **Fresh Departments:** Comessa Food Services
- **Alcoholic Beverages:** Meridian Wine Merchants
- **Groceries:** Kellogg's Tolaram
- **Snacks & Beverages:** Mondelez
- **Perishables:** McCain Foods
- **Personal Care:** Amka Products
- **SMME:** Pasta & Me
- **Sustainability:** Detpak SA
- **Private Label & Supplier Partnerships:** Zeta Laboratories



Above: Quintin Paladin (Shoprite), Bilqees Essa (Comessa Foods) and Renaldo Phillips (Shoprite).
 Left: Maude Modise (Shoprite), Aziza Parker (Pasta and Me) and Charles Osche (Shoprite).



How to build a successful franchise



By Karen Keylock, National Retail Services Manager at Nedbank Commercial Banking

So, your idea has taken off and is wildly successful. Next step is to franchise it and make some serious money, right?

Not so fast: while the franchising model can be applied to almost any industry, not all businesses are 'franchiseable'. In this article, we explore the journey to creating a successful franchise with our partners at Franchising Plus.

The feasibility test

The first step to building a successful franchise is having a concept that has been growing well as a freestanding business, and being able to understand how the business operates and what is at the root of its success. Several critical success factors need to be examined, which can be done by closely assessing your responses to the following twelve questions.

1. Does the business operate in a large and growing market?
2. Is the growth in the market sustainable?
3. Are the margins sufficient to cover the proposed management services fees?
4. Can the product demand a price premium?
5. Does the franchisor have access to sufficient capital?
6. Does the potential exist to establish a memorable brand?
7. Is there a substantial barrier to entry – not easily copied?
8. Will the development costs permit a satisfactory return on investment?
9. Is it possible to grow a franchise culture in the company?
10. Does the concept have staying power?
11. Is it relatively easy to transfer the required skills?
12. Are suitable systems and procedures in place?

This assessment helps you better understand the proposed business model to be replicated and allows you to gather the information needed to develop a strong franchise value proposition.

Develop an expansion plan

The next step would be to formulate a practical expansion action plan for the structuring, development and replication of the business. This plan should detail the ideal expansion format; identifying your ideal franchisee; the value proposition; franchise fee structure and documentation; franchisee needs, support and training; a geographical expansion plan; marketing of the franchise opportunity; a pro-active recruitment and selection process and the ideal owner-operator/franchisee profile.

During this stage, we recommend that potential franchisors operate at least one unit at arm's length to test the concept as a franchise. This helps address problems and eases the franchisor into their new business model. Retaining this company-owned outlet also helps to generate income to fund ongoing operations and forms the ideal base for providing training and testing new products or services.

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Franchising is a powerful tool to grow a business



Implement your expansion plan

During the implementation phase, the most important steps are training key management and support staff, and the development of franchise documentation in conjunction with industry experts. Marketing the franchise opportunity and franchisee recruitment, identifying training courses for franchisees and franchise support staff, and monitoring the progress of the franchise development are also undertaken during this phase.

A crucial component here is presenting the concept to commercial banks or funders. From Nedbank's point-of-view, this would entail us creating a preferential banking solution to be offered to your franchisees, including lending guidelines and transactional pricing at group benefit rates.

Once these phases are complete and successfully implemented, your business is ready for expansion, and you are now officially a franchiser! The process can be daunting and may take up to a year to complete but it's worth putting in the time and energy upfront as this gives your franchise business a better chance of success.



**Karen
Keylock**

More advice on creating a franchise business can be found at www.franchisingplus.co.za.vv

For financial advice for franchisors, please visit: <https://business.nedbank.co.za/commercial-banking/industry/retail-services.html>.



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**Do you want just any financial partner,
or a partner that thinks bigger to help
your franchise business grow?**



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