

KZN accelerator connects big retailers with promising clothing and textile SMEs

Business owner Abdulqadir Shaik of Instyle Linen took the top spot at the [KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and Textile Cluster Business Accelerator's](#) fourth Dragons' Den event, and walked off with a R20,000 cash prize.



Source: Supplied

Runners-up Mahlatsi Mashile from Reapso SA received the Most Promising or Innovative Business award, and Bawinile Nzimande from Bidywood Design took home the Industry Gamechanger award. The event was held recently at the Toyota Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies (TWIMS) in Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal.

Facilitating market access

The main objective of the Clothing and Textile Cluster Business Accelerator is to connect leading retailers in the sector with their future suppliers. Selected SMEs from KZN's clothing and textile sector were presented with an opportunity to pitch their business to retailers including Mr Price Sport, Miladys, Mr Price, Pepkor Speciality and Woolworths, which are looking for garment manufacturing specialists as well as unique sustainability offerings incorporating innovative packaging, logistics and raw materials into their value propositions to customers.

Beyond recognition for the three winners, Kyle Ballard, head of KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and Textile Cluster, says that the accelerator will also provide growth opportunities for many of the other SMME finalists as well. He explains that the finalists that unlock mutually beneficial commercial opportunities with the retailers will be given access to development support that will help to take their businesses to the next level.

“High-potential SMMEs will have the opportunity to receive hands-on mentorship from industry experts in addition to gaining access to valuable procurement opportunities with leading retailers such as Mr Price Sport, Mr Price Apparel, Pepkor Speciality, Woolworths and TFG.”

According to the Business Accelerator, this event not only provides developmental opportunities for small businesses but also benefits large retailers by facilitating market access to new ideas.



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Supporting localisation

Ravesha Govender, the programme manager of the economic development unit at eThekweni Municipality, says that the regional clothing and textile sector is bursting with talented entrepreneurs and small companies with great business concepts. She adds, however, that they often lack access to commercial opportunities, a key challenge that the Business Accelerator aims to solve.

“Leading enterprises in the sector are eager to identify and partner with high-potential local suppliers. The annual Business Accelerator plays a critical role in bringing these two groups together and this year, I was particularly impressed by the pitches and have no doubt that the industry giants were too,” she says.

Ballard adds, “The connections made by the Business Accelerator have been invaluable for the growth of the regional sector and are critical in driving localisation and enabling meaningful transformation. The Business Accelerator’s success continues to attract the leading retailers in the clothing and textiles sector including Mr Price Sport, Mr Price, Pepkor Speciality, Woolworths and TFG.

“These retailers are committed to increasing local procurement opportunities and are eager to find and develop their future suppliers through their active involvement in the Business Accelerator.”

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