

THE LOCAL ENTREPRENEUR

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JOURNEY

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MINISTER OF TRADE TIROEAONE NTSIMA

Exclusive Interview: Transformational plans for SMME's

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[C O N T E N T S]



● NTSIMA UNVEILS BOLD NEW FOR SMME's

SMME's are the backbone of the Botswana's private sector accounting for over 90% of registered businesses and driving economic diversification. But they continue to face persistent challenges around market and credit access. In a wide ranging interview we discuss plans to unleash country's SMME potential



● CARPENTERS IN INFORMAL SECTOR NEED STATE SUPPORT

Informal traders offers employment opportunities for many young people but continue to suffer from inconsistent access to credit and inadequate support



● THE AGAMOTSE CENTRE - CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL REPOSITORY

A local museum's efforts to preserve childhood memories is serving as a cultural and education hub stimulating local economy by boosting tourism

CYBERSECURITY STARTS WITH YOU

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Editors Note

We live in a world of evolving realities. Historically, graduates were absorbed by the civil service but increasingly graduates seek jobs in private sector after completing tertiary education looking for better salaries and faster promotion opportunities.

The consequence of this trend is that government is getting smaller as it desires to reduce its wage bill. Job opportunities in the public service are dwindling. The employment opportunities for fresh graduates are becoming fewer. It makes the role of SMME's and the private sector bigger – as conduits for job creation and economic development.

Unemployment

Botswana's unemployment rate sits at between 21% and 24.5% with youth unemployment sitting at about

an astronomical 38% to 45%. This is disturbingly high especially when you consider that the highest unemployment rate is among junior certificate holders. University graduates also face bleak times with 11.4% of them unemployed according to officials estimates. We need to support job creators who operate in SMME space.

Especially for those innovative, risk averse local investors who are employers and manufacturers. Government procurement processes should have an open bias for local manufacturers and service providers. That is not what is happening on the ground – historical biases remain entrenched.

Role of State

We therefore find ourselves in a situation where we are actively analyzing the critical role of the state, amidst dynamic, fast changing geo-political realities. It is charged with the onerous task of retaining traditional job security while modernizing skills in an environment of rising unemployment rate and broader socio-economic shifts. This calls for proactive public procurement processes supporting local manufacturers.

Civil service

Botswana's civil service is undergoing a major transitional phase with the government shifting from traditional public-sector hiring to a private sector-led job model to combat an unemployment. The public sector, which employs roughly a quarter of the formal workforce, is facing hiring freezes and rationalization in an effort to curb government spending.

A situation exacerbated by poor diamond sales and a lack of economic diversification. It is common cause that rough diamonds typically accounted for 50% of government revenue and 80% of export earnings. Slowing diamond sales and threat posed by synthetics has prompted a reality check.

Local reservation policies

It is the impetus for calls for local reservation policies to support local SMME's. Yet not much is known about our

local SMME's. These anchors of innovation and economic development operate almost invisibly – often seen and not heard. We therefore thought that we should amplify their voices and share their stories, challenges and successes – whilst they are still alive.

It should also ignite a shift in our thinking to celebrate our own local manufacturers. We have a patriotic responsibility to support local investors. Not all are useless and produce sub-standard products and services. We need to stop generalizing. The age old discourses by sceptics and prophets of doom built around deifying foreign investors should not be done at their expense.

Global Trends

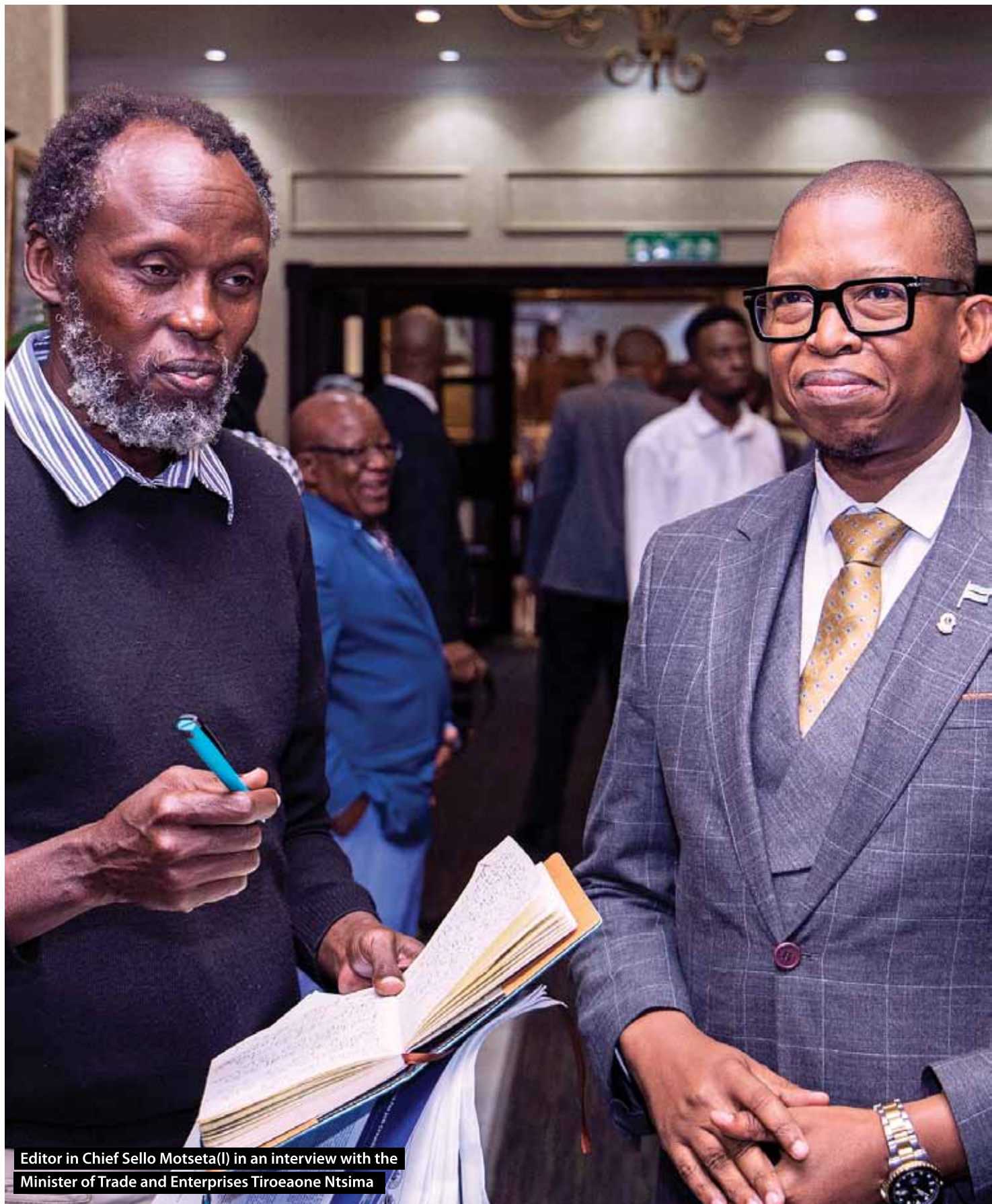
Whilst the role of government in most countries is getting smaller – this turn of events is not uniform or universal. It needs to be studied and contextualized. We need to focus on what works for us. There is no one size fits all approach to economic development.

The share of general government employment varies significantly across (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) OECD countries. It is highest in the Nordic countries, with the government accounting for a third of total employment: Norway (30.1%), Sweden (28.2%), Denmark (27.3%) and Finland (25.2%). In contrast, Chile, Japan and Korea accounted for less than 10% of total employment.

Local Solutions

Our economic model follows more closely the example of the Nordic countries. It has however got inherent weaknesses like poor service delivery, slow decision making and flawed procurement practices. Whatever regulatory reforms are pursued should prioritize supporting local manufacturers and service providers.

Sello Motseta



Editor in Chief Sello Motseta(l) in an interview with the
Minister of Trade and Enterprises Tiroeane Ntsima

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW : SELLO MOTSETA

NTSIMA PLANS BOLD NEW ERA

A raft of proposals is planned to improve market access, financial reforms and competitiveness of local SMME's

1. SMME's face tremendous challenges that threaten their survival and growth. The challenges include access to markets, financial issues and Competitiveness. What are your plans to address these longstanding challenges?

A: Our Ministry is implementing a three-pillar SMME Recovery and Growth Strategy:

- Market Access Expansion: Strengthening Local Procurement, enforcing Local Reservation schemes, and opening regional markets through trade missions.
- Financial Reform: Enhancing CEDA and LEA offerings with streamlined

processes and tailored packages for manufacturing, agriculture, and digital businesses.

- Competitiveness: Supporting technology adoption, certifications, training, and incubation to ensure SMMEs can compete locally and internationally.

As a Ministry, we are moving from fragmented support toward a coordinated and performance-driven SMME ecosystem.

2. I know forensic audits are currently underway across the board for State Owned Enterprises like CEDA etc. However what improvements

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Trade Minister Tiroeane Ntsima (third from left) at launch of Botswana, EU green value chain development programme

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can we expect in governance from parastatals which are under your Ministry to ensure that these organisations are running properly with limited corruption and in alignment with respected guidelines on good governance and ethical behaviour?

A: The Ministry of Trade and Entrepreneurship (MTE) is implementing the Public Enterprise Performance Monitoring Framework, which includes:

- Independent forensic audits.
- New governance standards aligned with King IV and OECD guidelines.
- Performance contracts for executives and boards.
- Transparent procurement and digitized monitoring tools to reduce corruption.

Institutions under the MTE will demonstrate accountability, efficiency, and measurable impact.

3. Can we expect you to include term limits for Board Members or sector representation for different entities to ensure alignment. It appears to make little sense to populate boards with civil servants and not entrepreneurs. Is it reasonable to assume there will be changes?

A: Reforms are underway to:

- Introduce fixed term limits for board members.
- Ensure sector-specific expertise, especially entrepreneurship and private-sector representation.
- Maintain government shareholder representation on boards to provide oversight.

Board appointments will reflect competence, industry expertise, and accountability.

4. The main problems of SMME's also

include lack of funding, lack of questionnaire business acumen. Why do you think these problems persist despite the existence of institutions like CEDA?

A: Access to finance, land, and electricity are among the most frequently reported constraints. Persisting skills gaps reinforce these challenges. The Ministry is introducing national mentorship networks and targeted capacity-building to address:

- Limited foundational entrepreneurial skills.
- Insufficient mentorship and post-funding support.
- Market saturation in certain sectors.
- Low uptake of technology.

We are strengthening enterprise clinics, specialised industry support programmes, and introducing patient capital and blended financing to improve sustainability.

5. There are a number of vehicles to fund SMME's like CIPA, Youth Grant and CEDA. It should however be noted that no matter the amount of funding, if an SMME has little or no access to markets, failure is imminent as business success comes through sale of products or services? What market access opportunities are you creating for SMME's through Local Reservation Policies and EDD initiatives to ensure they succeed?

A: Local Reservation Policies are being expanded and EDD initiatives are integrating SMMEs into value chains to reduce over-dependence on government tenders. The MTE is working on strengthening market access through:

- Supporting export readiness through training, financing, and exposure missions.

- Establishing SMME supplier development programs with large corporates, a case in point the PhushaBW campaign by BITC.
- Expanding local reservations in manufacturing, agriculture and services.
- Prioritising Botswana-made products in government procurement. Market integration is essential for sustainability.

6. The majority of SMMEs have depended on the government as their sole customer for a long time. It is a system that has supported tenderpreneurs at the expense of entrepreneurs. How do you plan to facilitate a seamless transition to support deserving SMME's?

A: A national mindset shift is necessary. The MTE aim to shift SMMEs toward private sector and export markets by:

- Fostering partnerships with retailers, mining companies, and manufacturing value chains.
 - Creating platforms such as SMME trade fairs and business-to-business linkages.
 - Supporting new, technology-driven business models.
- The ultimate goal is a competitive and self-sustaining enterprise sector.

7. The influx of cheaper foreign products particularly from Asia on the Botswana market has brought stiff competition for local SMME's. What will you do to protect local manufacturers and service providers?

A: The MTE is enforcing standards through BOBS and exploring localisation incentives to protect domestic producers from unfairly priced imports. Measures include:

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Trade Minister Tiroeane Ntsima

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- Stronger quality standards enforcement.
- Expansion of local content requirements.
- Incentives for local manufacturing, including tax and facility support.
- Trade remedies where unfair competition or dumping is detected. Competitiveness and fair trade enforcement will go hand in hand.

8. Many African countries have just signed a continental free trade area agreement and the whole world is investing heavily in the continent providing proof that Botswana SMMEs have a great untapped opportunity. Yet local SMME's are slow to enjoy these opportunities especially in countries like Nigeria, Kenya etc. Why do you think this is the case?

A: Many SMMEs face challenges related to scale, consistency in quality, and export readiness. The Ministry is addressing this through export training, financing for cross-border expansion, partnerships with trade attachés in key African markets and expanding export-readiness programmes to close these gaps.

9. In the past 10 to 20 years, international trading regimes have been liberalized... How are you helping local SMME's could possibly start with neighboring countries before going continental or overseas?

A: The Ministry is prioritising SADC as the first stage for SME exporters through simplified documentation, trade fairs, and cross-border distribution partnerships. Export preparation is structured and phased.

10. The majority of beef farmers depend on Botswana Meat Commission (BMC)... What are you

doing to increasing market access opportunities for local livestock farmers?

A: BMC is not the only buyer; feedlots and butchers also provide alternative market channels. That being said, the Ministry is working on:

- Diversifying markets beyond the EU to the Middle East and Asia.
- Supporting private abattoir growth.
- Strengthening veterinary systems to minimise disruptions.
- Supporting value-added beef processing domestically.

11. Another challenge for SMME's is the vast distance between districts and cities... What will you do to address this perennial challenge?

A: The Ministry:

- Supports aggregation initiatives such as the Letsema Horticultural Market.
- Incentivises transport cooperatives.
- Promoting agro-processing and green value chain development to reduce raw product transportation.
- Strengthening rural-urban market linkages.

12. Africa is a huge market for Botswana SMMEs... How can local SMME's take advantage?

A: Continental value chain integration is a strategic priority. Botswana SMMEs can benefit through:

- Export-ready training.
- Support to meet African standards and certifications.
- Participation in AfCFTA-linked trade programs.
- Government-facilitated matchmaking with African distributors.

13. Botswana government is applauded for efforts so far in supporting SMMEs through funding, training, mentoring and otherwise. However, it is recommended that she should

put policies that help SMMEs to access Africa's domestic market. This can help to secure international partners, joint ventures and international collaborations as done by Ghana's Capacity Development Centre [CDE]. Is this likely?

A: Botswana has joined the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative, enabling 15 local companies to participate in continental trade pilots in Kigali. We are exploring:

- A Botswana Export Development Fund.
- Strategic alliances with African business development centres similar to Ghana's model.
- Support for joint ventures and technology partnerships. Structured continental engagement is part of our reform agenda.

14. Botswana government has promoted an entrepreneurial spirit in high schools for years now through Junior Achievement Botswana (JAB). However, a lesson can be taken from Brazil where the entrepreneurial spirit is much higher than in Botswana. JAB should be available to all students not just as a club. JAB should also be introduced to Primary school students to let them catch the entrepreneurial spirit earlier on. Is this likely?

A: We support earlier entrepreneurship exposure and are working with the Ministry of Education to:

- Increase JAB coverage.
- Introduce early entrepreneurship programmes.
- Integrate innovation clubs in schools.

15. With the high level of unemployment, Botswana needs to introduce entrepreneurial studies in the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools. This will support the Vision 2016: An educated and informed society, a prosperous, productive and innovative society

with a diversified economy and full employment. Currently, business subjects such as Business Studies, Commerce, Home Management, Food & Nutrition, Art & Design, Design & Technology, Accounting and Economics are not core subjects in secondary schools. A consideration should be made to make Business Studies a core subject from Junior Certificate. This is hoped to equip all students with basic information for starting and running a business. Do you think that this reform is likely?

A: With unemployment between 23.1–24.4% (2024), embedding entrepreneurship education earlier is necessary. Policy discussions are underway. Our position is that:

- Entrepreneurship should progressively become a core subject.
- Curriculum reforms must align with Vision 2036.
- All students should graduate with basic business and financial literacy.

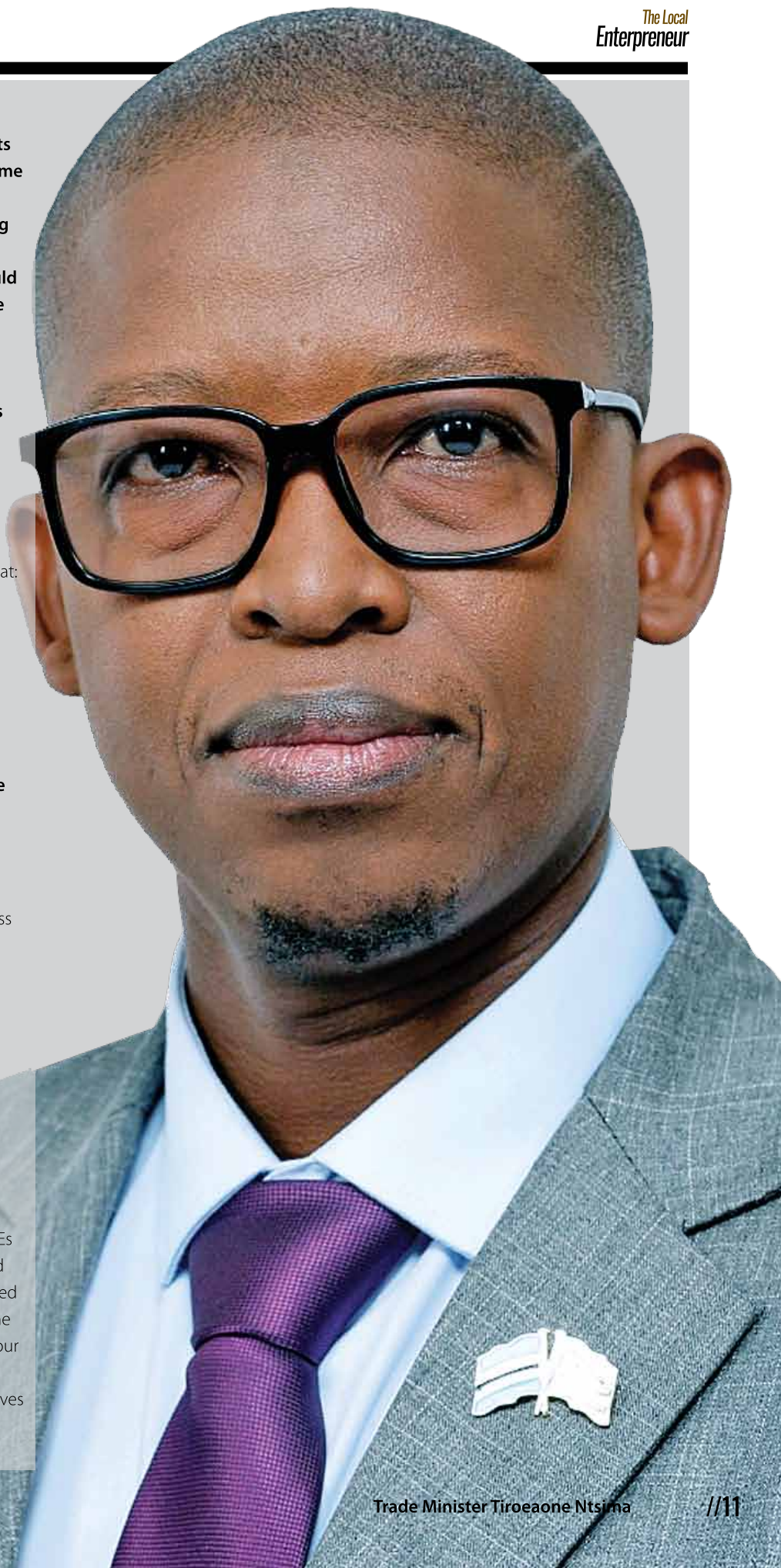
16. Why do you think you will succeed where others have failed?

A: Our approach is data-driven and focused on root-cause barriers such as high rentals, land constraints, and export logistics costs. Success will be anchored on:

- A results-driven, data-based approach.
- Strong private sector and development partnerships.
- Technology-enabled monitoring systems.
- Transparency and accountability.

17. Any parting shots?

A: Botswana exports to over 120 countries and sits within a market of 1.3 billion people under AfCFTA. Our priority is ensuring SMMEs seize these opportunities through improved financing, governance reforms, and expanded market access. Botswana's SMMEs remain the heartbeat of economic diversification, and our commitment is to build an economy where entrepreneurship thrives and innovation drives national growth. **LE**



// Pictures: Tshekiso Tebalo //



Matilda Mpai - CEO and Founder of Divine Morula

ARTICLE : BAKANG TIRO

DIVINE **MORULA** COMPANY TARGETS EXPORT MARKET

Despite local reservation policies and a commitment to economic inclusion, a significant number of SMME's struggle to penetrate the local market

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Founder of Divine Morula, Matilda Mpai is optimistic that her business is on the right track to meet its expansion plans to export to regional and international markets.

As CEO and Founder of Divine Morula, Mpai began her development journey by processing and manufacturing Morula Oil body products, such as Morula Oil Lip Balm, Morula and Shea Butter Skin and Hair Moisturizer, and others, for her subsidiary company Divine Scents, now referred to as Setlolo.

Following the discovery of the nutritional properties of the Morula Fruit, including its high levels of Vitamin C and E, anti-aging properties, reduction of inflammation, as well as its availability

throughout Botswana, Mpai revealed that she began producing products derived from Morula, including Morula Pulp Concentrate, Morula Pulp Juice, Morula Achaar, and Morula Jam.

"I love morula so much and when I discovered what Morula can do, I was just blown away. I started making body products from my company called Divine Scents. It was in trying to do this business that I discovered body oils. "Divine Morula was born from being trying to make my own Morula oil for my cosmetic range i.e.

lip balm and body lotions," she said. She said she was also interested in the rich nutritional value of morula fruit particularly Vitamin C. It has a higher Vitamin C presence to oranges and so after this discovery she started to develop morula juice, jam and concentrate.

"My feeling at that time was that we could have morula products in the retail shops and the hotel industry because whenever people are coming in the country want to taste what is local and we got such in abundance in our country. When I started

I love morula so much and when I discovered what Morula can do, I was just blown away. I started making body products from my company called Divine Scents. It was in trying to do this business that I discovered body oils. Divine Morula was born from being trying to make my own Morula oil for my cosmetic range

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a major innovation of Divine Morula is that it manufactures and sells products made from Morula fruit and Morula oil, a fruit that people tend to discard and not appreciate. Morula food products include Morula Pulp juice, Morula jam, Morula Achaar, and Morula Pulp concentrate. Morula body products are oil lip balm, hand and body lotion, body butter, and hair cream.

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the business, I actually managed to go into the hotel industry and supplied businesses such as Avani, Sanitas and Botswana Craft and when COVID-19 hit, we had to review strategy" she added.

According to her, a major innovation of Divine Morula is that it manufactures and sells products made from Morula fruit and Morula oil, a fruit that people tend to discard and not appreciate.

Morula food products include Morula Pulp juice, Morula jam, Morula Achaar, and Morula Pulp concentrate. Morula body products are oil lip balm, hand and body lotion, body butter, and hair cream.

"Our mission at Divine Morula is to promote indigenous fruit flavours, particularly Morula, which is abundant in Botswana and Southern Africa. Therefore, the main markets the business aims to exploit are Large corporate events, Executive meetings, executive caterers, School cafeterias, businesses, food courts, diners, eateries, hotels, lodges, bush safaris, social events, parties, weddings, funerals, travel agencies airlines, retailers, corporate gifting, private gifting restaurants, etc.," buttressed upbeat Mpai.

Exporting

According to her, the company is

targeting the year 2027 to commence exporting products abroad.

Mpai noted that they would like to start servicing hospitality and airlines industry. She also acknowledged that the company needs to grow its production capacity and acquire certain standards that will enable it to fully qualify to export to lucrative markets in Europe and America. She is optimistic she will achieve these loft ambitions.

She said Morula Divine has a staff complement of four (4) full time employees, two (2) part time and four (4) who are seasonal, adding that as the business grows capacity it will increase employment levels.

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Are you a small, medium, or micro business owner in Botswana? We're excited to invite you to be a part of a community dedicated to your success. The Association of Small, Medium, and Micro Business Enterprise in Botswana (ASMMEB) is now officially launched and welcoming new members!

As an ASMMEB member, you'll have access to an array of benefits, including advocacy, market promotion and development, entrepreneur training, and much more. We're working hard to foster an environment where your business can thrive, and we'd love for you to join us on this journey.

Our understanding of our constituency is driven by the definition of an SMME in Botswana, which is based on the number of employees and annual turnover of business. Micro Enterprise: Up to 5 employees and turnover of up to BWP 250,000.00. Small Enterprise: Up to 50 employees and turnover of up to BWP 4 million. Medium Enterprise: Up to 100 employees and turnover of up to BWP 10 million.

To join ASMMEB at P500 per annum, simply visit our website and fill out the membership form:
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Together, let's transform Botswana's business landscape – one enterprise at a time!

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Looking forward to welcoming you to ASMMEB

Our heartfelt gratitude to our stakeholders – LEA, BURS, Hollard, Liberty Life, and BOBS – for their generous support and sponsorship during our launch.



ARTICLE : KUTLO MOTSETA

FROM SCIENCE TO THE FOOD BUSINESS

‘THE PIE LADY’

who rose above the national graduate unemployment challenges in a tasteful manner

From her working kitchen in Otse, Ms. Keneilwe Molosankwe is slowly becoming the talk of the streets because customers cannot get enough of her food delivery services. Mololankwe never imagined that she would be in the food industry. She studied information technology (IT) and graduated from NIIT (now Botho University) and University of Sunderland (England) through the Botswana Accountancy College, then worked in the IT

industry. But how did IT worker without any experience in culinary services end up in the food industry? Her graduation experience is no different from scores of graduates nationwide, who leave school after years of sleepless nights of study, equipped with qualifications in internationally lucrative industries, only to find that there are no jobs in the marketplace. Faced with this reality, she did not sit on her laurels, like a true entrepreneur, she saw an opportunity and decided to test her skill in the

market place. Molosankwe narrates her eureka moment:

“Every time I ate a steak and kidney pie, it felt jelly when I put it in my mouth ... [so] one day I bought pastry from shop ... I made a pie and everyone enjoyed it at home,” she said.

Molosankwe was unemployed, so she decided to test the marketplace and sold the pies at offices.

“Every time I went to sell, my baskets would come back empty,” she explained.

She started in 2016, then went back to work the same year till 2020. When covid



Molosankwe attempted to solicit venture capital from the Chema Chema program, which was initiated by the former government in order to expedite the growth of the business.

"I was in their offices everyday, I have not benefitted yet ... we were in the last batch to be approved [but we never received funding]."

struck her employers closed shop. So, she decided to dedicate herself and monetize her cooking skills and was encouraged by her customers who requested special dishes. That is how mokwetjepe - a popular local dish - ended up in pies on her menu, where it is also offered as a separate dish. She has worked zealously from her home kitchen ever since.

"I was doing it every day ... I was treating it as if I was working in a bakery ... from there I opened a Facebook page (Healthy Laine Foodies) ... after that I went and registered it as a business ... so I have been hands on from 2020 till now," she said.

"We are growing, so we are trying to work towards finding a [shop] place to sell from." She added.

Her company describes its business as "the home of artisan pies that are generously filled and showcase Botswana's beef".

"We are not just selling pies we also sell seshabo packs ... my customers enjoyed the seswaa pies and asked me to prepare it separately."

Molosankwe described the ease of her transition: "The shift was not difficult, because I spoke to a people at work, this now helps with customer service," she added. LE



Ms. Keneilwe Molosankwe, affectionately called The Pie Lady

ARTICLE : BAKANG TIRO



ORGANIC NATURAL SKINCARE

GENERATING WEALTH

from Botswana's natural resources.
Its diverse skincare products bring
about confidence and longevity

The home grown and fast-growing SMEs business, Organic Natural Skincare is a manufacturing company operating in the capital city Gaborone and its manufactures diverse skincare products using indigenous plants found in the country such as Morula and Moringa to retain skin moisture and heal pigmentation.

The award winning company says that it exists to revolutionize beauty in the context of Botswana skincare and also exists to provide organic and chemical free skincare solutions for African men and women.

In 2021, Organic Natural Skincare won 2021 SEED Climate Adaptation Award recognized for empowering African women with regards to skincare. The business was registered in 2019 and has operated since then.

In an interview with The Local Entrepreneur, the company's Operations Manager Didintle Moreki said they use Mowana and Moringa plants to manufactures a wide range of organic chemical free skincare products consisting of bar soaps toners, clay masks, serum butter, body butter and body oils respectively.

"Our core mandate is to restore confidence in people and to equip them with knowledge on how best to take care of their skin to avoid using chemicals and being exposed to sun rays which can in turn lead to confidence issues and life diseases," she said. The business is upbeat on market expansion plans.

Currently, Moreki said the business sell and distributes in

Botswana, South Africa and Namibia markets.

"Our company specializes in a diverse range of high-quality products, including cleansers, moisturizers and serums. We are committed to delivering effective and innovative skincare solutions that are tailored to enhance the beauty and health of all our customers skin," stressed Moreki.

Misaligned Policy Making

Moreki said the company is enduring some challenges in its quest to do business locally, adding that beyond funding which is a major challenge for most SMEs, another key one is of policy.

"The nuances of policies that are made without a reality check of what is on the ground is sickening. As manufacturers, we find ourselves inhibited by rigid and outdated policies such as where to manufacture from or where to sell ones products. Policies often work against the entrepreneur and do not provide the required enabling environment.

Moreki further articulated: "Or even when you are seeking for funding support from our commercial development banks- as manufacturing SME, you are punished for taking a step to grow your business as and let alone to think outside of the box." Studies have shown that funding is key issue for local SMEs and that she is not alone in raising this concern. With often stated concerns about quality - despite some local entrepreneurs not falling in this bracket. Organi Naturals is such a case. Their story inspires confidence.

In an attempt to break the barriers encountered such as access to the markets, Mmereki said Organic Natural Skincare is affiliated with the Natural Product Association of Botswana (NPAB), adding that their involvement with the association has without doubt opened up various opportunities for the business.

According to information contained in the NPAB official social media handles, the organization says it represents the natural and indigenous producers of Botswana, buttressing further that its mandate is to also promote the growth of the natural and indigenous products manufactured by

Botswana businesses.

Meanwhile, Mmereki said at the moment, Organic Natural Skin Care as a business has not yet taken advantage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for exporting to the American markets.

However, she revealed that the business has plans to explore and utilize this opportunity in the future so as to enhance their market footprint presence and growth in the international market as a business.

Women Empowerment

Organic Naturals Skincare works with local businesses, women-led cooperatives who collect and supply indigenous plants such as Moringa and Mowana – raw materials that become the main ingredients for the production line of its products that are channeled to the market for consumption by its customers.

The raw products are processed into oils that are used as materials of the skincare products. Their sustainable competitive advantage is providing skin assessments for customers and linking clients' skin problems with a sustainable solution. "We believe beauty empowers Women and Men to show up! Our Organic Naturals Story is about confidence and exclusivity! Today the core of Organic Naturals Skincare is to empower and support African Women to sustain and support for their Families."

Organic Naturals provides a variety of products such as facial bar soaps category include Turmeric and Carrot Bar Soap, Neem and Green Tea Bar Soap and Rooibos and Papaya Bar Soap to mention but just a few products.

Body Oil boast of skincare products such as Moringa Body Oil with Lemongrass and African Rooibos with Moringa body. 



Organic Naturals provides a variety of quality assured products



Johannes Visagie, founder of Secret Kalahari, poses for a photograph in Airport Junction, Botswana. Infused with pristine milk from donkeys that wander the Kalahari, the soap is beloved for its intensely hydrating lather softening the skin while providing gentle relief for eczema-prone and sensitive complexions

ARTICLE: BANYANA NAMETSO

OLD ART OF **SOAP-MAKING** WITH THE REMARKABLE BENEFITS OF DONKEY MILK.

In the quaint village of Werde, nestled amid rolling hills and timeless landscapes, resides a man whose journey is as extraordinary as the products he crafts. At 63 years old, **Johannes Visage** has become a beacon of innovation and tradition, blending the age-old art of soap-making with the remarkable benefits of donkey milk.

Johannes' story began at the tender age of 13, when he found himself captivated by the intricate process of soap-making taught to him by his mother. "My mother was a soap maker, she made soap for domestic use and I used to help her." What once started as a domestic endeavor for the family's use soon evolved into a lifelong passion for Johannes.

Inspired by the wisdom passed down through generations, he embarked on a mission to create products that not only nourish the skin but also embody the healing properties of nature.

At the heart of Johannes' creations is the key ingredient—donkey milk. Renowned for its rich composition of vitamins and minerals, donkey milk forms the cornerstone of his cosmetics and supplements with meticulous care, Johannes blends the donkey milk with indigenous oils such as morula oil, moringa oil and others to make medicinal skin supplements like anti-aging

cream and capsules used for health benefits and rejuvenation.

Source of hydration and rejuvenation

The journey from a humble cosmetic maker wasn't without challenges, Johannes did not allow himself to be shaken by his competitors as he went through research on the safety of his products. His commitment to excellence is reflected in the certificates that adorn his workshop, validating the efficacy and purity of his creation.

"I research and make all these products myself then take them for testing in Cape Town for safety evaluation and they have all passed", Visagie revealed.

What sets Visagie apart is the holistic vision for his business. His products are not merely commodities, they are instruments of healing he stressed. Botswana are tired of harsh chemicals with adverse effects and everyone wants to go back to the basics, so he is bringing people healing inside and

outside. They are instruments of healing. Each capsule, every soap bar, and drop of donkey milk he sells carries with it a promise to heal people inside and out.

As he looks toward the horizon, Johannes envisions taking his unique creations beyond the borders of Botswana. This year marks a significant milestone for him as he prepares to export his products to international markets. His dream is to share the magic of donkey milk with the world, bringing the healing touch of nature to individuals far and wide.

Johannes Visagie, with his blessed hands and a heart steeped in tradition, is not just a craftsman; he is a storyteller, weaving tales of healing and heritage through his remarkable donkey milk products. In a world where authenticity and natural remedies are valued more than ever, Johannes' journey is a testament to the timeless allure of age-old wisdom meeting modern innovation. **LE**



Vanessa Visagie (L) and Johannes Visagie (R), founder of Secret Kalahari, poses for a photograph in Airport Junction, Botswana. Infused with pristine milk from donkeys that wander the Kalahari, the soap is beloved for its intensely hydrating lather softening the skin while providing gentle relief for eczema-prone and sensitive complexions.

// Pictures: Tshekiso Tebalo //



Ma Neo poses for a portrait at her Mokatse Cash and Carry dealership in Mokatse, Botswana



ARTICLE : SELLO MOTSETA

MOKATSE CASH AND CARRY IS A PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

Entering the retail space with humble beginnings as a Semausu adjacent to Naledi Primary School she serves as an example of the Magic of Perseverance

A small innocuous brick building housing Mokatse Cash and Carry and the Mokatse Bar adjacent to it is the cornerstone of the local community in the Kgatleng area bordering Rurese and a model of inspiration for budding entrepreneurs endeavoring to enter retail space.

The general dealer owned by family matriarch Gaopalelwe Mesotlo also affectionately called Ma Neo, who hails from Tswapong up in the north, in a village called Ratholo started from humble beginnings alongside Lesedi Primary School in a small kiosk in Gaborone.

A member of a small family of 10 with 5 boys and 5 girls, Ma Neo's entrepreneurial journey is a story of grit, tenacity and perseverance. She started as an informal trader, with a small table selling basic necessities like sweets, biscuits and ice pops mainly for school going children.

"When there were football matches at the National Stadium, we would go there to make extra income,"

said Mesotlo.

In about July 1993 Mesotlo leased a shop in Kumakwane, 25 km west of Gaborone with the rental at the time being P450 a month. They ran the shop in Kumakwane operating a general dealer and offering fresh produce whilst starting to build their current building in 1994. In 1996 with the building left with only minor touches they settled in Mokatse.

"We opened the shop in November 1996 with stock from our savings and focused on business in Mokatse," said Mesotlo. She said, "I cooked the food myself. I had a small complement of staff."

Mesotlo says in the beginning business was very slow. It was separated into a butchery, general dealer and a bar selling liquor.

"Business was very slow. You could cash P15 from meat sales in a whole day," revealed Mesotlo. She said, "In the shop sales could top P100 for a day."

Mesotlo says she persevered and she did not give up. Sales only started to build up after 6 months.

"There were not a lot of people in Mokatse at the time. It was only after 2 years that people started getting used to our existence and started visiting our shop in numbers. During the holidays and weekends the numbers would continue to rise exponentially.

"The business would have its challenges.

There was a high turnover of staff," said Mesotlo. She said, "Sometimes an employee could leave without notice and it would look like you have fired them."

The lack of consistency in buying patterns of local community meant she often struggled to generate the savings to buy stock for general dealer and bar. She has built the shop with savings.

"Things were not as expensive as today," said Mesotlo. She said, "It took 5 years to recover sales losses and begin making a profit. Between the years 1998 – 2004 she was able to save money because the cost of living at the time was not prohibitive.

The local community would invite her to funerals and weddings and she begun to participate in Gotso Molo – a crowd savings initiative. In November 2026, the shop will be 30 years old.

"Business needs a lot of patience. It does not need a person who wants quick returns," said Mesotlo.

She said, "If you are dealing with customers you must be patient with them. If you do not treat them properly you will struggle to get repeat customers."

Mesotlo said that people face various challenges and so mood swings are part of the challenges one needs to overcome. "You must listen to them even when you disagree," said Mesotlo. Mesotlo has 4 children – 1 girl and 3 boys. **LE**



ARTICLE : SELLO MOTSETA

COMBI DRIVERS HUSTLE DAILY TO SURVIVE

Informal sector offers
job opportunities for
many unemployed and
indigent youth

meet a youthful looking Thero Gaadingwe, a 39 year old native of Thamaga in the congested bus rank area around lunch time. He is looking across the parking lot area - earnestly enthusiastically for potential customers and breaks his routine to discuss the challenges of this cut throat business.

Gaadingwe cut his teeth in the turbulent world of the transport sector early in his adult life because he did not have the resources to continue his studies in electrical engineering. With his parents deceased and an elder brother also deceased he was forced to fend for himself.

"I have almost 10 years in this business," said Gaadingwe. He said, "I started as a driver after Junior Secondary school in Moshupa Senior Secondary School. I lost my parents at a young age."

Gaadingwe started his early foray in the world of employment as a security guard at Safety Security.

Formative Years

"I used the savings to enroll for a drivers license," said

Combi Owner Thero Gaadingwe

Gaadingwe. He said, "After I acquired my Drivers License I entered the combi business with my first combi."

Gaadingwe used the savings he accumulated as well as some start up capital from an older brother to buy his first combi.

"I had long dreamed of owning my own transport company," said Gaadingwe. He said, "Shortly after buying my first combi I was approached by Nando's staff to transport their staff. This revenue opportunity along with my daily takings enabled me to buy another combi."

Gaadingwe currently has 5 Combi's and has a wealth of experience in transport sector.

"I bought my combi's using instalments at car dealerships in Mogoditshane. No bank was prepared to assist me," said Gaadingwe.

He said, "Insurance companies also refuse to insure combi's. They say risk is very high."

Gaadingwe stresses that no bank will help you buy a combi – even if you have a permit. Dealerships in Mogoditshane will only release a car when it has been fully paid. Botswana's transport sector offers opportunities in informal sector as well as lucrative opportunities in cross-border logistics, dry port operations, and agri-business cold chains, driven by the country's central location in the SADC region and the Trans-Kalahari Corridor. High-growth areas include IT fleet-management systems, cold-storage warehousing, and passenger transit.

Sector Opportunities

Regional Transit Hubs: Leverage the P1.4

billion Kazungula Bridge Project to establish cross-border trucking and freight forwarding routes from Gaborone to Zambia and the DRC.

Cold Chain Infrastructure: Investing in refrigerated transport and distribution networks to support Botswana's push for agricultural and beef exports.

Airport Logistics: Capitalizing on business concessions offered by the Civil Aviation Authority of Botswana (CAAB) for parking, cargo, and aircraft handling at Sir Seretse Khama and Francistown International Airports.

ICT for Logistics: Developing innovative software and tracking platforms to manage fleet efficiency and supply-chain transparency, a specific priority area for domestic entrepreneurs.

Local entrepreneurs dominate the informal sector especially for Combi's and Taxi's. It however has a number of barriers to entry. Combi owners are required to pay roadworthy tests every 6 months, pay for permits on a yearly basis and pay their disc licences for vehicles yearly.

"We are being charged a lot," said Gaadingwe. He said, "If you lose your permit you are charged P650. This is the same charge as the cost of getting a permit."

Gaadingwe believes this penalty is too high in an informal business with nominal returns and critical to country's economy. It provides a means of transport for most civil servants with rail transport basically moribund and ineffectual. But access to credit remains a pipe dream.

Trading conditions

"There is no profit during the current economic climate," said Gaadingwe. He said "Maintenance is high and petrol costs are escalating."

Gaadingwe also complained that there is a growing problem of piracy.

"It is difficult to get a permit for routes with authorities demanding business proposals, initial capital and a vehicle," Gaadingwe.

Gaadingwe stressed that the regulations governing industry are outdated and need to be reviewed.

"If you have an accident you are exposed. You have no protection or recourse. Buyt Government collects annual fees from us and they do not help us with anything," said Gaadingwe.

He said, "The roads are not very good with an increasing number of potholes affecting the longevity of our vehicles."

Transport sector

Botswana's public transport sector is creating employment even for people with formal education qualifications who cannot be absorbed in other industries. The employment trends in the industry indicate high level of turnover on the part of drivers.

It is apparent that in developing countries the development of the public transport industry is not a priority government terms of support and nurturing - though the industry appears to be making a noticeable contribution to employment and economic diversification. **LE**



ARTICLE : SELLO MOTSETA

CARPENTERS IN INFORMAL SECTOR NEED STATE SUPPORT

Public authorities would do well to commission local carpenters to build office furniture for local authorities to support local industries and bolster job creation

Barely as a teen Koorepetse Morwaagae, 44 years old of Maitegwa village in the northern part of the country begun his early foray as a carpenter working as an assistant for members of the Zazuru community in the high density extension 27 area bordering the BBS precinct.

He started at 10 years by performing simple tasks like disassembling pallets and removing nails from wood. Within a year this vocation developed as an extra-curricular activity escalated to developing structures using measurement instruments.

Teenage Years

"I was getting small allowances for performing menial tasks," reflected Morwaagae.

He said, "I started by making tables and dog kennels as an 11 year old boy. I also started making partitions and cabinets."

Morwaagae took an intensive tutelage period of about two years before making structures with limited supervision. This passion for carpentry deprived him of the best years of his adolescence.

"I did not have a lot of time to play with my peers. It only came over weekends typically Saturday, when Bazazuru were not working," revealed Morwaagae.

Morwaagae says carpentry for him has always been a passion precipitated by a love for working with his hands. There was however limited commercial incentive for this northern native who rented workshops after completing Form

3 to ply his trade to irk out an existence.

"You can spend two months without any income," said Morwaagae.

This compelling narrative is important especially in the light of persistent allegations that Batswana are lazy. It ignores the grit and hard work for those locals in the informal sector. This observation is ever more important if you look at how cost effective they are for most potential consumers.

Competitive Prices

Unlike furniture bought in retail outlets around Gaborone and other urban areas – prices are very affordable. Dog kennels cost P600, Puppy kennels P350, Coffee Tables P450, Kitchen Tables P350, Double Chest wardrobes P1500, Chest of Drawers P850 and TV Stands P700.

Public perceptions around quality cause many Batswana – to target furniture sold by retail franchise. The consequence of this tendency is to ignore local products and service, exacerbate difficult working conditions because of limited income generation in informal sector.

As is true of other building trades, carpentry work is often very strenuous. There are periods of prolonged standing, climbing, bending, and kneeling.

Occupational Hazards

There is also the persistent risk of injury working with sharp or rough materials, using sharp tools and power equipment, and working in situations where they might slip or fall. Consequently, workers in this occupation experience a very high incidence of nonfatal injuries and illnesses.

They however receive no formal Government support. With meagre income and revenue streams carpenters like Morwaagae, working outdoors are subject to variable weather conditions.

Many carpenters like him work a standard 45 hour week; however, some work more to support families with others working part time to generate revenue using multiple revenue streams.

Carpenters are critical for developing countries like Botswana. This is because they construct, erect, install, and repair structures and fixtures made from wood and other materials.

Activities

Carpenters are involved in many different kinds of construction, from the building of highways and bridges to the installation of kitchen cabinets.

Each carpentry task is somewhat different, but most involve the same basic steps. Working from blueprints or instructions from supervisors, carpenters first do the layout measuring, marking, and arranging materials in accordance with local building codes.

They cut and shape wood, plastic, fiberglass, or drywall using hand and power tools, such as chisels, planes, saws, drills, and sanders. They then join the materials with nails, screws, staples, or adhesives. It requires training and years of practical experience.

Livelihood

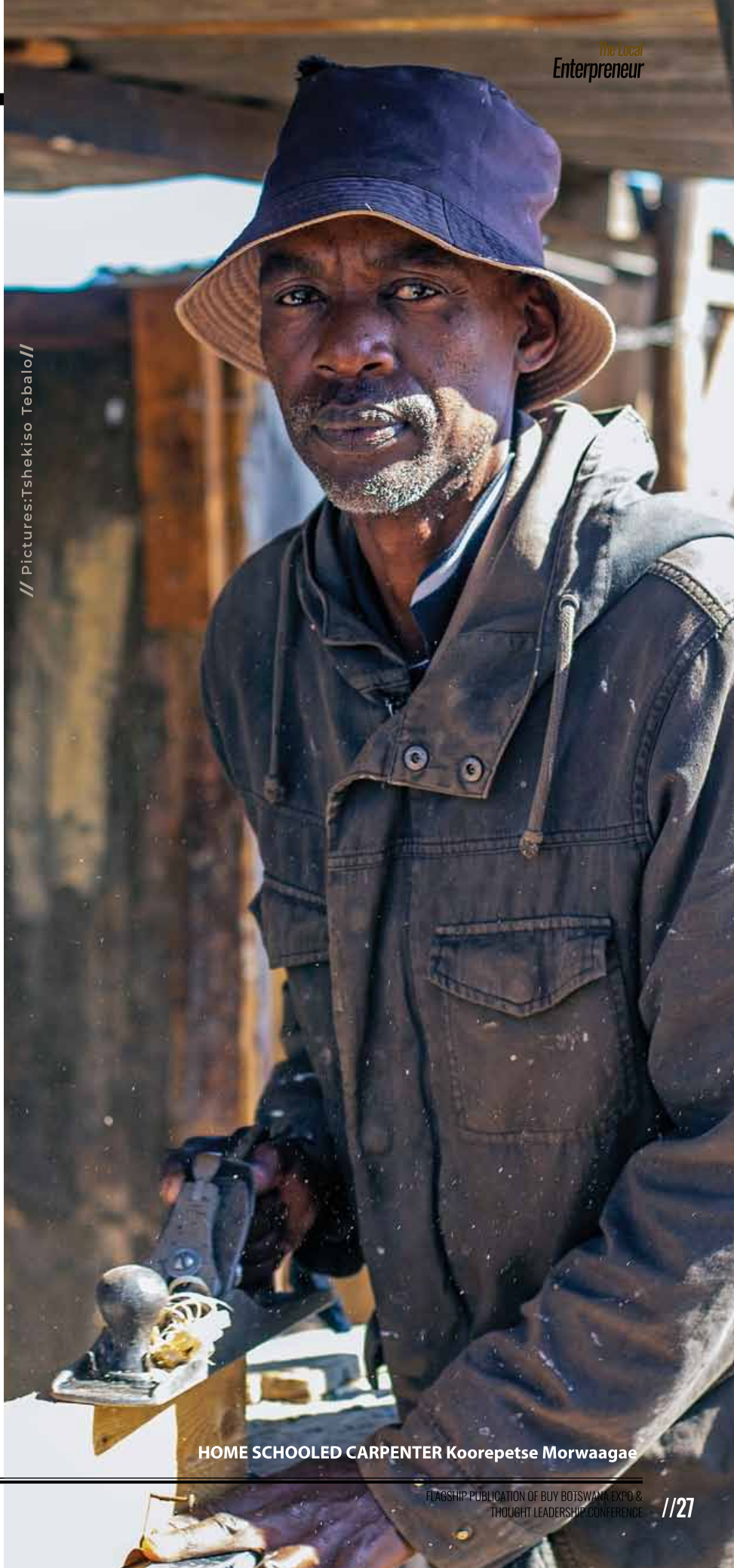
Morwaagae however finds himself stuck in never ending circle with revenue generated barely enough to allow him to sustain himself. This means he is not able to market himself. It is a budget considered a luxury for some in the informal sector.

"Government has never supported my business. I deal exclusively with individuals generated by referrals," said Morwaagae.

Morwaagae complained about harassment by officials who warn them against displaying their products alongside the roads.

"We are told to keep them at home," he sighed. 

// Pictures: Tshekiso Tebalo //



HOME SCHOoled CARPENTER Koorepetse Morwaagae

ARTICLE : WAME MOLEFHE

THE AGAMOTSE CENTRE

Initially the residence of one of Botswana's most respected diplomats, it now sits as a platform for the preservation of local culture and cuisine

The AgaMotse Centre operates from Partial, Gaborone, established in 2023 after years of being imagined into being. Its name combines the Setswana words "aga" (build) and "motse" (home), a description of what its founder is attempting: creating a space for cultural preservation and community use.

On its walls are written the following words, adapted from John Berger: "No single story shall be told as though it were the only one." This is the principle we live by.

What We Are About

AgaMotse is a living archive, functioning as an active space of remembrance, preservation, and celebration, where history exists alongside contemporary creative practice.

The Centre's purpose is clear: to be "a place of remembrance, preservation and celebration, of art and history to support the sharing of knowledge by those whose concern is our lived experiences, which are concrete, creative inspiration and imagination-driven." It is sanctuary for artistic treasures that might otherwise be lost to time, indifference, or the simple erosion of memory, whilst simultaneously creating

connections between art, history, and community.

Those words set the tone for everything AgaMotse attempts. Multiple stories, multiple voices, cultural authority that belongs to all of us: these aren't merely philosophical positions but practical commitments shaping how the Centre collects, preserves, and shares.

Our Values

AgaMotse's values emerge from its commitment to lived experience over institutional authority. The Centre honours "those who came before us" whilst remaining firmly engaged with the present. This dual commitment means that preservation never becomes static display; artefacts aren't meant to gather dust but to inspire new creation.

The eclectic nature of the collection reflects a democratic approach to cultural value. How the Centre operates extends this philosophy. The growing number of "regulars who drop by," the conversations, the collaborative improvements ("could I make that look better?"), the lifters: all these transform the Centre from collection into community.

AgaMotse is deliberately inclusive, conscious of providing a safe space for dialogue across difference. We value

participation over passivity, use over preservation for its own sake, accessibility over exclusivity. The Centre is committed to gender awareness, anti-ageism, and non-discriminatory practice. Here, multiple voices matter equally; diversity of experience and perspective strengthens rather than threatens the work of cultural preservation and creation.

The Space

AgaMotse offers something increasingly rare: tranquillity, accessible. The Centre occupies a green space marked by orchards: oranges, lemons, naartjies, pomegranates, mulberries, guavas, peaches, grapes, mangoes. A more Botswana weather-conscious garden is envisioned, but the existing greenery already provides a peaceful setting for contemplation and creativity.

The indoor workshop area includes writing space. It leads to an open-air area, which transforms into a fireside gathering space during cold months. We are creating a home, a place lived in, welcoming. The Centre offers privacy and focused quiet.

This tranquil, accessible space has already proven its versatility. AgaMotse has hosted book launches, creative writing workshops, art exhibitions and film screenings, both indoors and outdoors. It has welcomed its first artist residency and provides quiet, private space for meetings and workshops. The Centre is available for book readings, book club meetings, art-sharing, podcasters, researchers and writers, musicians and poets, and for those simply seeking peace and quiet to think.

What We Offer

AgaMotse provides various practical services alongside its role as cultural repository. Writing coaching and book writing services support emerging and established writers. Mentoring, editing, and proofreading are all available. The Centre offers itself as "a space to think," recognition that creative work requires not just technical support but also mental space, freedom

► page 30

“

A place of remembrance, preservation and celebration, of art and history to support the sharing of knowledge by those whose concern is our lived experiences, which are concrete, creative inspiration and imagination-driven.

”

The AgaMotse Centre Curator Wame Molefhe



Historical musical instrument



The AgaMotse Centre entrance

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The artist residency programme expands how we fulfil this purpose. By providing artists with time, space, and the inspiration of the archives, the Centre ensures that preservation actively feeds creation.

The small library houses a modest but growing collection of rare, out-of-print books. The archives themselves offer unique resources. VCR tapes, cassette tapes, photographs, a record collection spanning jazz, classical, R&B, rock, gospel, model trains.

AgaMotse provides an independent, community-centred space where cultural memory is shaped by lived experience rather than institutional mandate. The Centre shows that preservation needn't require enormous resources or official sanction and that memory work can happen in converted spaces with donated materials, volunteer labour and community support.

The significance lies in the model itself: small-scale, intimate, eclectic, alive. AgaMotse keeps the past alive not by freezing it but by putting it to use, nourishing present creativity whilst safeguarding cultural treasures for posterity. ^{LE}

Art Creating Worlds.

The AgaMotse Centre, Partial, Gaborone.
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ARTICLE : EDNAH ROSEN

TASTE OF BOTSWANA

Preserving Culture, Inspiring Enterprise Through Food



Taste of Botswana Author Ednah Rosen

Food is the most immediate way to know a culture. In Botswana, traditional cuisine has long been a quiet keeper of knowledge passed from generation to generation. Yet for many years, these food stories remained undocumented, existing in homes, villages, and oral tradition. Taste of Botswana changes that narrative, positioning local cuisine as cultural heritage, source of pride, inspiration, and economic possibility.

Value Offering

At its essence, Taste of Botswana is a celebration of indigenous foods, ingredients, and culinary practices that have shaped the nation's relationship with land and community. It highlights meals rooted in survival and simplicity, foods developed in response to climate, seasons, and collective living. These dishes tell stories of resilience, resourcefulness, and respect for nature. By recording them in a published work, Taste of Botswana preserves knowledge that might otherwise fade, while making it accessible to new audiences at home and beyond. What sets this work apart is its vision. Rather than presenting traditional food as something fixed in the past, Taste of Botswana treats it as living culture, something that can evolve while remaining grounded in its origins. The book invites readers to see local cuisine as relevant, valuable, and worthy of contemporary expression. In doing so, it challenges long-standing perceptions about what is considered refined, modern, or marketable.

Storytelling

Importantly, Taste of Botswana also reframes storytelling around food as a viable business idea. Writing about cuisine is often viewed purely as cultural documentation, but this

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project demonstrates that it can also be entrepreneurial. A recipe becomes intellectual property. A food story becomes a product. A cultural practice becomes a platform for education, tourism, and enterprise. This approach opens doors for small, medium, and micro enterprises rooted in creativity and heritage. In a global context where African cuisine is frequently interpreted and commercialized by outsiders, Taste of Botswana plays a critical role in reclaiming narrative ownership.

Ownership

It tells Botswana's food story from within, with authenticity, respect, and context. This act of representation matters. It ensures that cultural value is defined by those who live it, and that the economic benefits of sharing these stories can flow back into local communities. The impact of Taste of Botswana extends beyond the pages of a book. It reflects a broader philosophy that food can be a tool for empowerment, particularly for women and young people. By demonstrating how cultural knowledge can be transformed into tangible offerings, the work encourages others to look at what they already know differently.

History

The meals prepared by grandparents, the ingredients gathered from the land, the techniques learned informally over time, all of these hold potential when recognized as assets rather than ordinary routines. In a country where economic diversification is

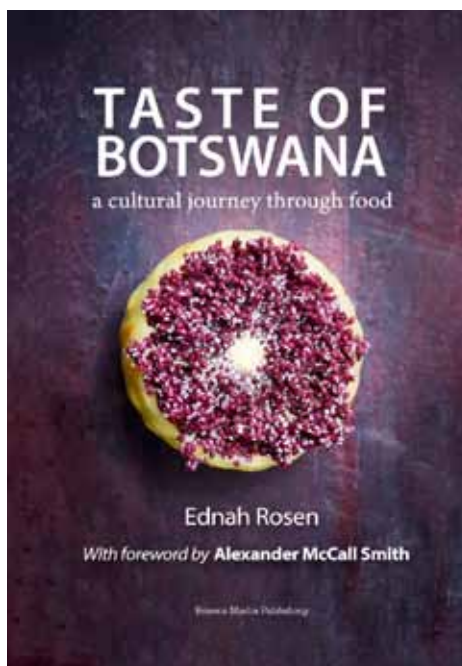
increasingly important, projects like Taste of Botswana offer a compelling model. They show how culture and commerce do not need to be in opposition. Instead, when approached thoughtfully, culture can be the foundation for sustainable livelihoods.

intention affirms its worth. It encourages Botswana to take pride in their culinary heritage and to see it as something that belongs not only in homes, but in public, professional, and international spaces. This shift in perception is subtle but powerful, influencing how culture is valued across generations.

Ultimately, Taste of Botswana is about remembering where we come from and recognizing that our stories have relevance in today's world. It reminds us that innovation does not always require new inventions, sometimes it begins with listening, documenting, and honoring what already exists.

Culture

As part of Botswana's evolving cultural landscape, Taste of Botswana stands as both a preservation effort and a call to action. It invites creatives, entrepreneurs, and cultural practitioners to think differently about the resources around them. It asks a simple but transformative question: what if our culture is not just something to protect, but something to build with? In answering that question, Taste of Botswana offers inspiration, not only for those passionate about food, but for anyone seeking to turn local knowledge into meaningful enterprise. It is a reminder that culture, when valued and shared with intention, can nourish both identity and opportunity. **LE**



Educational

Publishing, culinary experiences, food education, and gastronomy tourism all become possible extensions of a single idea rooted in identity. The book also contributes to cultural confidence. Seeing local food presented with care and



Taste of Botswana: Rosen preserves local delicacies by chronicling recipes for posterity

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Children 0 - 11 Months	2,500	5,000	7,500	10,000	12,500
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41 - 50	13.00	25.00	38.00	50.00	63.00
51 - 60	20.00	40.00	60.00	79.00	99.00
61 - 65	31.00	62.00	93.00	123.00	154.00
66 - 70	42.00	84.00	125.00	166.00	208.00
71 - 75	53.00	106.00	158.00	210.00	263.00
76 - 80	63.00	126.00	188.00	250.00	313.00
81 - 85	72.00	145.00	216.00	287.00	360.00



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