

From startup to leading manufacturer: The family business making waves in the baby care industry

Twenty-five years ago, a KwaZulu-Natal family launched a small enterprise with the goal of becoming Africa's largest manufacturer of disposable hygiene products. Today, Cleopatra has a significantly expanded workforce and supplies millions of nappies each month to Shoprite, Checkers and Usave supermarkets across the African continent.

"And now, we're embarking on what is probably the biggest innovation in our business to date," says Yuraaz Osman, a director of Cleopatra. "Following the installation of our new high-speed diaper plant, we have just launched Lovies Ultra, making premium diapers both affordable and accessible to consumers from all walks of life."

Having started its journey in a 1 500-square-metre facility, Cleopatra now operates from a vast 15 000-square-metre factory and warehouse space. "Since partnering with the Shoprite Group we have grown our staff complement from around 10 to 170 and if all goes well that will expand over the next year by another 30%. We have also been able to stay ahead of market trends, expand our product range, and invest in cutting-edge technology," says Osman.

Cleopatra's commitment to innovation and quality control sets it apart from competitors in the market, according to Osman. He says that with one of the most advanced quality control departments in the country, the business ensures that its products consistently meet the highest standards.

The company's dedication to research and development, coupled with its agility as a family-owned business, allows for swift decision-making and adaptation to evolving consumer preferences.

Founded in 1975 as Oscar Holdings by Yuraaz's father, initially supplying refrigeration equipment and sundries to the retail industry, the business expanded its operations with the launch of Cleopatra in 1999, focusing specifically on baby products.

"The Shoprite Group's guidance in software development has given us the ability to work with live data, providing invaluable insights into customer shopping patterns, while also providing the best service to stores across the continent," says Osman.

In recognition of its excellence, Cleopatra has been honoured by the Group at its annual Supplier of the Year Awards twice, most recently in 2023.

Additionally, Osman says plans are underway for a comprehensive sustainability programme over the next three years, specifically focused on wastage, recycling, and responsible production to limit its environmental impact to the environment.

In line with this, they already have an on-site, eco-friendly recycling centre, with all waste and depleted raw materials carefully processed in accordance with sustainable recycling practices.

"We are excited about the future," says Osman. "Our focus remains on delivering innovative, high-quality products while upholding our commitment to sustainability and social responsibility."

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