

# Meet Banele Msimanga, brand manager of Hunter's Cider



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

22 Apr 2021

Banele Msimanga is the brand manager of Hunter's Cider and over the past year has worked on the brand creating great consumer experiences like Green Room events, Lock Down House Party, launching a new NPDs like Hunter's Chilled Non-Alcoholic as well Red Apple.



■ ***Tell us more about your role and what it entails exactly.***

My role entails bringing a renewed life to a brand so deeply entrenched in South African culture. I get down and dirty to understand the cultural nuances of the youth and distil them back into the brand. As one of the driver's behind this brand, I'm here to be at our consumer's service.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

Initially a veterinarian, I loved animals from such a young age and that coupled with being a natural empath. I just wanted to care for all the furry friends in my life. Later, I'd hoped I could travel and get paid for it, but the bills started coming in and being a person with a wealth of connections between my two brain spheres balancing the creative and the commercial, marketing ignited a passion in fulfilling a career path for me.

■ ***Tell us about your career: what you studied and why, and how you ended up where you are today?***

I studied at The University of Cape Town where I did my BA in Film, Media English & Web Design. I met a woman called Lauren Wolf who told me that since getting into advertising she was so fulfilled that she felt like she'd never worked a day in her life.

Our conversations really piqued my interest in marketing. I then did my Post Graduate Specialising in Marketing, and I've just been having so much fun on my journey. I interned at Distell for the whisky's portfolio. I then got promoted to international marketing co-ordinator, focussing on international wine business and got to travel outside the continent selling my favourite drinks.

After that fun year, I became the activation brand manager for Bernini, where my team and I brought the brand back from the bottom shelf and turned it to an affordable luxury for the ladies. I am now brand manager for Hunter's Cider and my journey continues.

■ ***What do you enjoy most about marketing and working in the FMCG/alcoholic beverages space specifically?***

Cooking up crazy ideas and seeing them come to life. This industry is very fast-paced, but it's loaded with so much fun as so much of our work is connecting with people through campaigns, events, etc.

■ ***What other sectors impact on your industry?***

There's quite a long value chain of actors that impact the industry, such as advertising and media, hospitality, restaurants, taverns and packaging companies that make glass bottle, cans and label printing manufactures, farming industry for producing apple juice, wine grapes and other raw materials.

■ ***What are some of your most recent brand campaigns and the rationales behind them?***

The most recent brand campaign I worked on was the launch of the Hunter's Red Apple variant. Research has shown that younger consumer's love experimenting with different brands and flavours to find the right one for them. In fact, they demand new product offerings so that they can stay enticed and continue supporting brands.

“ [#HoldMyHunters!](#) Refreshment just got amped up to a BOLD NEW level with NEW Hunter's Red Apple.

Enjoy responsibly. Not for persons under 18. [#HuntersRefreshes @AwareOrg pic.twitter.com/7liwjnBccG](#)— Hunter's Cider (@hunterscider) [March 1, 2021](#) ”

In the past few years there has been a rise in the fruity flavoured ready to drink space, and it felt only natural for the Hunter's brand to tap into these trends and have a delicious offering to suite the pallets of our younger consumer.

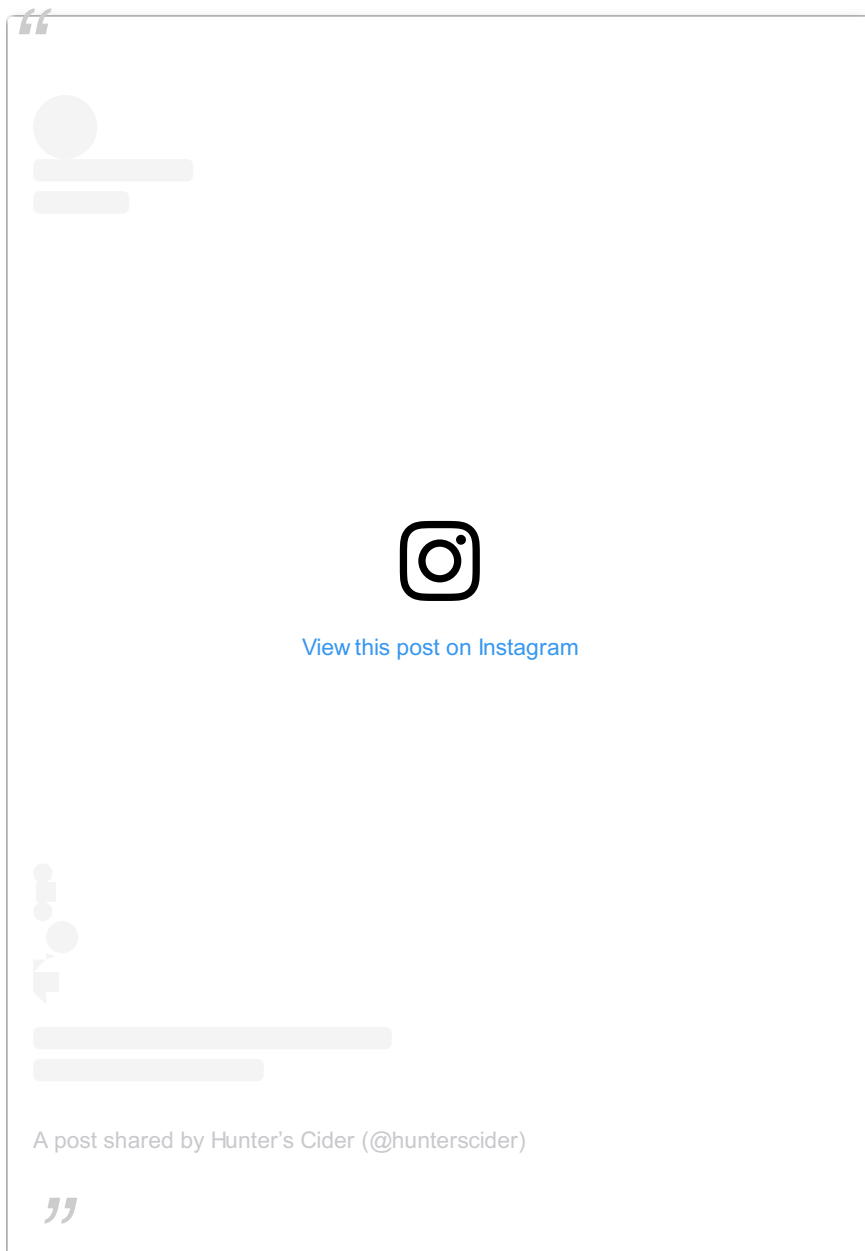
The new Hunter's Red Apple is a little rebellious, a little fruity and a lot of fun. It is a crisp, refreshing cider with characteristics of succulent, sweet red apples, complimented by a mouth-watering taste sensation with a berry nose finish.

Our influencers at the launch event loved this product, and they have done a great job in sending it into the market.

■ ***Tell us about your most successful marketing campaign.***

Green Room Experience, a five city experiential music tour. This was a refreshingly different pop-up party concept featuring a range of immersive interactive zones, thrilling activities with ample Insta traps.

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we managed to get the event #HuntersGreenRoom in the top ten Twitter trends where the brand achieved some of its best engagement rates.

In a space of one month our Instagram account grew from 7,000 followers to 12,000 and Twitter grew from 28,000 to 39,000 followers.

This is an experience we are looking forward to bringing back to consumer's once the climate allows.

■ ***In your opinion, what do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?***

Digital and social. With the average daily screen time of 10 hours, you have to communicate with your audience where they are.

■ ***Any career highlights you'd like to share.***

The first TV commercial I worked on in my career was listed 3rd under South Africa's Top 20 Best Liked Ads for 2018 by Kantar. This year we reached soaring volume sales for Bernini.

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Kantar announces South Africa's Top 20 Best Liked Ads for 2018

Kantar 10 Jul 2019





I also very happy of the innovations I've worked on that have hit the market and were well-received. I've worked on multiple activations and event properties that have left consumers begging for them to come back and saddened that lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented them from enjoying such experiences.

■ ***When it comes to branding, what can brands no longer ignore?***

You cannot ignore your core consumer audience. Consumers have become empowered by social media, they are keypad warriors and know the strength of their words in mass can make or break a brand.

■ ***If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to aspiring young marketing and branding professionals?***

Be relentless in your ways and don't shy away from sharing the crazy ideas it could be where the magic lives. Always stay hungry and continuously be a student of life; this is the only way to connect to people.

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