

Women need to support each other in the workplace

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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As the head of consumer experiences at Pernod Ricard South Africa, Elizabeth Lee Ming's role involves strategising and optimising customer-centricity across some of the leading brands in the premium spirits category, including Jameson, Chivas Regal, Absolut and Olmeca Tequila.



Elizabeth Lee Ming

Armed with more than 17 years' experience in marketing, working in the UK, USA and South Africa, the scope of Ming's expertise ranges from CRM and loyalty, to direct and digital marketing, communications strategy and social media.

Admired beyond the bounds of the liquor industry, she consults to companies operating in the spaces including retail, entertainment, financial services, motoring and petroleum.

Ming considers herself a social behavioural scientist at heart, passionate about social CRM and the intersection of technology and social to deliver service to clients and engage in authentic online interactions.

In the spirit of [Women's Month](#), Ming shares her views on marketing to the modern consumer, advice for women climbing the corporate ladder and the importance of women supporting each other in the workplace.

■ ***As head of consumer experiences at Pernod Ricard, what does your average day look like?***

My day usually starts with meetings either with my team, internal stakeholders or our agency partners. My day fills up pretty quickly with more meetings that range from sessions to facilitate alignment, optimise or clarify ways of working, creative briefings with brands or agencies and meetings that support our deliverables to drive consumer centricity across all the touchpoints, entrench value and leveraging off our existing or forging new partnerships to enhance the consumer value proposition for our consumers both internal and external.

In addition to this, I spend a portion of my day dealing with our global team. This can range from providing global with deliverables or aligning with global on best practice and implementation or application of global tech and tools.

I endeavour to also spend time checking on my strategy to ensure that we are on track or to make adjustments where required. I use information and the outcomes of the day's meetings to identify any gaps or opportunities that need to be picked up on or included in the current or next fiscal strategies.



▣ *What are the leading trends that you've picked up in terms of what SA consumers expect from brands?*

Consumers are definitely more discerning with much greater expectations from brands. They are exposed to so many more options and messages vying for their attention. Consumers no longer revolve around brands but it is the other way around, and consumers now have a repertoire of brands (often within the same brand vertical) that they are loyal to. For example, more than one bank account across different banks.

Another trend is that consumers expect brands to anticipate their needs. With the volume of data being created at every touchpoint or interaction with brands and across social platforms, they expect brands to use this data to provide more relevant experiences and products that address their specific needs in much more effective ways than ever before.

▣ *What inspires you, personally and professionally?*

I'm inspired by so many things. In my personal life, my children inspire me. They inspire me to be better and bring about meaningful change whether at work or in how we live on this planet. They fill me with a consciousness of my impact and what I'm doing to leave a legacy.

Professionally I'm inspired by incredible work. I'm fortunate to judge many local and international awards and it's inspiring to see work that is delivered to such excellent standards, and that has made meaningful differences for consumers through innovation and disruption.



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▣ *With Women's Month in the spotlight, how do you think corporate South Africa can better empower women?*

Corporate South Africa needs to recognise that women are not only critical within the workplace in senior positions, but in addition to pursuing more responsibility at work through senior roles, we are also wives, mothers and caregivers with responsibilities to our families.

Corporate South Africa needs to seriously review and adjust or amend policies and evolve environments to meet the needs of the multi-faceted woman through more female-friendly policies and working environments. This can be in the form of flexible working to allow for working-from-home or remotely, support for working mothers through programmes or physically within the environment through childcare services offered for younger children, etc. Women need to be engaged on policies to evolve the workplace.

In addition to this, women need to learn to support each other better within corporate and to lean in to ensure that we actively participate in driving the changes needed in influencing and directing businesses.

■ ***With women being a powerful consumer segment and key influencers and decision makers, leading brands need to devise smart and innovative ways to marketing to women. How is Pernod Ricard doing this?***

Pernod Ricard is recognising that women are key decision makers and influencers in the preference and selection of brands for in and outside home consumption and entertainment at bars or clubs. As a result, we recognise that women are increasingly influencing purchase and prefer the sweeter drinks. We will be launching the Beefeater pink gin and our Mumm champagne variants that will cater to these preferences.

We are also focusing our events and consumer education by taking into account women's preferences and consumption behaviours, ensuring we are more relevant and involved at these occasions. We are also investing in understanding our consumers better in order to anticipate the needs of all of our customers in ways that are more relevant for them.



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■ ***Is there a female figure that has had a particularly positive influence on your life?***

Yes definitely! My mom, she was the most incredible woman and role model. She worked her entire life alongside my father and raised 10 children.

She instilled in me the values and importance of education, hard work and humility. She was an avid reader and was always looking to grow her own knowledge constantly. She was a Wonder Woman in her own right and the bravest and most courageous woman I've ever known, who rose above insurmountable circumstances and remained optimistic through even the toughest situations. She was wise and not afraid to stand up for what she believed in and I loved her for that.

I miss her every day.

■ ***What advice do you have for other women wanting to climb the corporate ladder?***

Be the expert. Whatever you choose, spend time and effort on your craft and build your brand's knowledge base constantly and consistently. We have access to more information than ever before. Use your time wisely, especially your digital time. Make it meaningful and impactful and play the long game. In other words, plan what success looks like for you and go out and make it happen, but know that you're playing a long game.

More importantly, recognise that as women we have a responsibility to support each other in the workplace. This doesn't mean being soft or not challenging each other, but rather treating each other with respect and demonstrating empathy in the workplace. It means being able to have courageous conversations on how we are showing up at work in a way that is supportive of each other. As women, we bring this to the workplace and we must honour that.

And finally, be excellent at what you do and in everything you do. Strive for it and seek it out from within and from others. Excellence is a mindset, hold yourself to a standard of grace and treat others with grace and respect.

And help other women. I believe that all ships rise on a rising tide. I feel very passionate about this and love mentoring others and sharing my knowledge and experience with others.

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