How Shea Origin's Mobola Sagoe is empowering women in Nigeria

Since starting Shea Origin, Mobola Sagoe has used her business to empower women in Nigeria - giving them the power to create, manage and thrive at their own businesses.

According to market research company Fior Markets, the global shea butter industry will reach $3.82bn by 2025. From small business owners to west African companies exporting the raw product, thousands of brands worldwide have seen great success in the trading of either a finished product containing shea butter or selling the nuts to companies for production.

The recent surge in demand is predicted to be as a result of the rise in consumption of skincare and chocolate, and a commensurate increase in disposable income. Sagoe has dedicated her career to the sustainable growth of this industry.

From beauty school to the world

Since graduating from beauty school in 1985, the budding entrepreneur started her career as a beauty therapist in the United States and the United Kingdom. After honing her skills abroad, Mobola decided to return home to Nigeria in pursuit of a career in skincare.

Upon her return, she opened a boutique spa in Lagos called La Feminic and quickly realised that the industry had much to gain from skincare.

“I realised that at that time in Nigeria, a lot of people were not accustomed to skincare routines. It proved to be a challenge to educate our market and get people interested in more extensive skincare,” comments Mobola.

It was this realisation that led her to the decision of launching her own natural skincare line – Shea Origin. Since its inception in 2014, the brand has grown exponentially and went from supplying clients at her boutique spa to well-known hotel chains like Bon Hotels.

The brand started off humbly, and Mobola sourced a laboratory in the UK to produce her skincare products. Through the beginning stage, she noted that shea butter had extensive benefits for the skin, but the quality of butter produced in Nigeria did not quite match other markets – like Ghana.

A multi-million rand African skincare business built from Marula oil

28 Aug 2018

Passing the baton

After learning the craft of producing shea butter in Ghana, Mobola passed on this knowledge to local women in Nigeria, allowing her company – and the businesses of the women she trained – to produce and sell a higher grade of shea butter. Through the success of the initial training, the Nigerian government and the World Trade Organisation (in collaboration with the International Trade Centre) donated equipment to Mobola’s training centre and assisted with leasing land for the project.

Through the training centre, women in Nigeria – who had already been processing shea butter – were now able to sell a higher-quality product at better prices and, in turn, improve the living conditions of themselves and their families.

As it stands, Shea Origins now runs this training facility as an NGO called The Ifedawapo Co-operative Society. Over 1,000 women have been trained at this centre through weekly sessions, for which they receive grants by local governments and Shea Origin.

#AfricaMonth: Why Africa is primed for prestige beauty growth

Lauren Hartzenberg 31 May 2019

Sustainable shea butter

An important factor that Mobola is now focused on is sustainability: “Our trees grow naturally, and until now women have been sourcing product from their villages. As a result, many shea trees are being cut down, which has led us to investigating a more sustainable way of harvesting shea nuts. We are now in the process of growing plantations in order to resupply and regrow the trees cut down.”

With the global demand for the product skyrocketing, Mobola comments that hotel clients, in particular, put in large-scale orders and the same goes for their international clients.

“We export raw shea butter to the US and the UK, and most of these international exports are for cosmetic use. In terms of hotels, we supply around 10 Bon Hotel properties in Nigeria. Each hotel, on average, orders 300 bottles of body wash, 240 bottles of shampoo and conditioner and 240 bottles of lotion every month,” says Mobola.

News of the Shea Origin products has travelled as far as Europe. An Italian company has recently visited the training centre to observe the workshops and processes conducted in Nigeria.

Following a positive response, the company may now receive the stamp of approval for compliance by EU standards, which opens many more doors for not only Shea Origin, but the thousands of women who have been – and will, in the future, be – benefiting from this empowering initiative.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com