

Gap brand returns to SA with first store opening in Gauteng

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

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A standalone Gap store opened at the Mall of Africa in Midrand on Thursday, 26 November, signalling the return of the American clothing and accessories brand to South Africa.



Gap store launch at Mall of Africa

Gap has been absent from the local market since 2017, but a distribution partnership with Mauritius-based Hyvec Group will see three Gap-branded stores introduced across South Africa and Mauritius by April 2021. A sustained growth plan will follow.

“Since we exited the market in 2017, it has been a priority to evaluate future partnerships for Gap in South Africa and to restore confidence in our loyal Gap customer base. By partnering with Hyvec Group, we are opening an exciting chapter in our growth strategy and are incredibly energised about what the future holds,” said Roy Hunt, SVP of Gap Inc. franchise and strategic alliances.

Hyvec Group began life as a modest construction company, but has since diversified its strategy with a footprint into various business segments, including fashion retail. The decision to reintroduce Gap to South Africa was made last year, and despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Hyvec Group and Gap settled on pushing ahead with their plan.

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Commenting on the Gap brand fit in South Africa, Hunt told *Bizcommunity*, "The Gap positions itself as a brand whose pillars specialise in family, the classics and a sense of 'collective individualism'. The same goes for South Africans in general, and especially during the pandemic, we are seeing a new wave of finding comfort in the clothing we wear, as well as quality in what we wear. Hence, right now people want clothing that is durable, comfortable, and stylish – something that encapsulates Gap clothing as well as the South African market."

Gap is the namesake brand of parent company, Gap Inc., which also houses Old Navy, Banana Republic, Athleta, Intermix, Janie and Jack and Hill City brands. The company is headquartered in San Francisco, California, the same city where the first Gap store was opened by Donald and Doris Fisher in 1969; it sold only men's Levi's jeans and record tapes.



The first Gap store. Credit: Gap Inc.

Elevated essentials for the whole family

Visitors to the new Gap store in Mall of Africa are able to shop the brand's summer and autumn collections for men, women, kids, toddlers and infants. The store will offer a variety of elevated essentials including denim, t-shirts and hoodies

as well as Gap's signature logo products for the whole family.

Yogesh Soowamber, Hyvec Group's regional manager for Africa (fashion division), commented, "Gap is not only the embodiment of youthful energy, but is also a range of denim-led and responsibly-produced elevated essentials. And we are bursting to return this family brand to Mzansi."

A local online Gap store is not yet available, however, Hunt told *Bizcommunity* that the introduction of an e-commerce offering is "a top priority" for the brand.

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