

2 Matie students on a mission to make sustainable fashion accessible

For both Stellenbosch University's full-time, third-year students Wihan Joubert and Bernard Combrink, it's been the "craziest" six months of their lives as they join the thrift revolution with their startup Drip Markets, a buy-and-sell platform for preloved clothing...



Bernard Combrink and Wihan Joubert. Image supplied

Joubert is studying Investment Management and Combrink is doing Accounting, but they have managed, through creative time management and plenty of passion, to develop Drip Markets as a successful app with more than 3,000 users looking to buy and sell pre-loved clothing.

The idea for an online thrift marketplace was sparked when Joubert returned to South Africa after attending high school in the United Kingdom. Accustomed to buying clothing on one of the UK's popular apps, Depop, Joubert identified a need for something similar in SA. Joubert met Combrink at Paul Roos Gymnasium in 2020 during their matric year, and the two decided to develop a local equivalent.

Over the next two years, they worked on the concept and tried to develop a web application that could host Drip Markets. After considerable trial and error, the pair took part in the annual Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Educations (EDHE) Entrepreneurship Intersarsity competition, with the support of Stellenbosch University's LaunchLab.

The experience was a turning point for the enterprising friends, leading to a collaboration with other entrepreneurs. One of these was Arnold Hattingh, an electrical engineering student who developed Djol, an app that finds the best dinner and drinks specials in Stellenbosch. Within a few months, the duo was able to launch Drip Markets as an app-based platform on Apple and Google Play.

Sustainable fashion

“It’s part of student life to buy cool vintage clothing, but we soon realised that the impact of this application was far broader,” says Joubert. “Drip Markets is not just about creating a platform to sell second-hand clothing; it is also an opportunity to tap into sustainable fashion.” Every sale made on the platform removes the need to consume additional resources. So, for example, every time a second-hand T-shirt is bought instead of a new one, 713 litres of water are saved.

Drip is also about empowering people to make money and start their own businesses, he adds. Anyone can sell their clothing via the app, which is open to buyers and sellers around the country. What distinguishes Drip from other similar platforms is that it is founded by locals, for locals. “We believe in involving South Africa’s youth and marketing ourselves as a proudly South African business, while providing users with an excellent service,” says Joubert.



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Meanwhile, the pair are learning how to balance the rigorous demands of a startup with their own academic obligations. Combrink is also involved in the leadership of his residence, Dagbreek. Both have their families’ full support – Combrink’s grandfather was a former Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

No matter what the future holds for these Maties on a mission to develop a thriving business with social impact, they both agree that the journey has been a massive learning curve.

Combrink’s advice to aspirant entrepreneurs is: “Dream big and be imaginative. You have more time on your hands than you think, and the best time to learn, make mistakes and grow is in your years of studying. Don’t be afraid to ask questions, even when it may be embarrassing. Lastly, enjoy the process and make sure you are having fun throughout your journey.”

The startup was named by Stellenbosch Network as Entrepreneur of the Month in June and the company now has its eye on tripling the number of users within the next few months. “We have learned the reality of how much time and sacrifice is required (to start a business),” says Joubert.

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