

Christine Meintjes and Berdine Swart



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Welcome to the future of online shopping! These entrepreneurs are celebrating homegrown talent and changing the way we shop online for local designer goods.

BY CHARIS TORRANCE

The Local Edit CHRISTINE MEINTJES & BERDINE SWART

START-UP COSTS: 'Initially, the technology and the team working on The Local Edit were our key focus and our most significant investment to date.'

TURNOVER: 'In our first year, we paid back more than R1 million to the brands we sell on our platform. We are extremely proud of this contribution to local small businesses.'

In 2021, Christine and Berdine launched The Local Edit, an e-commerce platform that makes it easy to find and buy a wide variety of South African brands in one place.

So, what is The Local Edit?

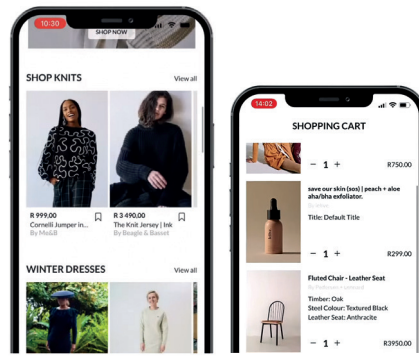
In a nutshell, The Local Edit is the e-commerce platform with the widest variety of local brands all in one place. There are lots of great independent brands in South Africa, and most of them have an e-commerce presence. The problem is that the average South African, tourist or expat often battles to discover them. On The Local Edit, you can find sought-after local brands and discover similar brands alongside them. We currently showcase more than 14 000 quality products from about 200 local brands via a native app or online store. You shop from one cart and at the same price as if you were to shop directly from their independent stores.

Where did the idea for The Local Edit come from?

I launched The Pretty Blog in 2010 as an online platform for sharing inspiring lifestyle content. We showcased lots of amazing products from local designers, and readers would often ask us where they could find them. We realised there was no one place where these brands were indexed. Berdine and I saw this opportunity and started building The Local Edit in 2019. We launched our native app at the end of September 2021, and the e-commerce website mid-2022.

What sets The Local Edit apart from other retail offerings?

I love the tactile experience of visiting a store and being able to



‘Accessibility and convenience are a big deal for us.’

touch the merchandise. But there is no physical store where you can find as wide a variety of products from local brands as you can on The Local Edit. Accessibility and convenience are a big deal for us. Nothing is more convenient than shopping on *your* terms, from wherever you are.

What are you looking for in a brand partner?

We are storytellers at heart. We are looking for local brands and artisans who have created unique product lines with roots in South Africa. To showcase them on The Local Edit, we integrate their existing e-commerce infrastructure with our innovative tech platform. So they have to already have a compatible online shopping solution. We delve into the story behind every brand and develop content that we put out via curated edits, a newsletter and our *Behind The Edit* podcast.

So you use drop-shipping?

Yes. This was an important business and environmental decision for us. All orders go directly to the brand, where they're packed and shipped to the customer. This eliminates the need for warehousing, which would end up costing the consumer, and allows us to offer the product to the customer at the same price as the brands' independent stores.

Some entrepreneurs might see this as a risk because we are relying on others to make sure the package gets to its destination with care. My argument is that because their livelihoods are on the line, small businesses take more responsibility and care than most people might think. There are teething problems with any start-up, but most of our customers are pleasantly surprised that their orders arrived quicker than expected.

What goes into a great business idea?

Many great business ideas come from solving a problem in the market. That said, you also need to test if your assumptions are true. For The Local Edit, the assumption was that people would want to shop more locally if they could find incredible products easily. We realised technology could be the solution, and we decided to build the first test to see if people would buy from us... and they did!

With each business idea it's important to build, test, adapt and develop further. The agility in a start-up is really your superpower, and you shouldn't become too precious about anything. Change as you go and adapt to get to that perfect product-market fit.

What do you hope your customers will discover?

By showcasing unique products of exceptional quality, I hope to inspire consumers to support and invest in the local creative industry. Ultimately, our goal is to foster a sense of pride and appreciation for local talent, and to encourage people to make conscious purchasing decisions that support the growth and success of our local businesses.

Website: thelocaledit.com
Instagram: @thelocaledit



Katleho Mchalla and Neo Dulaze

'We want to attract the best and the brightest talents.'



wall art and packaging. We even have a Berry Homeware Spotify account.

N: When you buy a product from Berry Homeware, you create memories. Picture it: you are in your kitchen; you've got the Berry Homeware playlist on in the background and your Berry Homeware apron on, the Honeywood scented candle is lit and you're setting your glass of wine down on your Berry coaster.

They say 'family and business don't mix'. What made you decide to work together?

K: When people think of family businesses, they often think of what they see on TV: sibling rivalry, everyone fighting for the family jewels. But because of our shared interests, it seemed inevitable that we would work together.

N: When we were younger, our family emphasised loving the space that you are in. Even though we didn't have a lot of money, we learnt to make the most of what we had. Our mother, who is passionate about interiors, allowed us to express ourselves in the space we had. But it was the renovation that started it all for us.

Berry Homeware
NEO DULAZE & KATLEHO MCHALLA

START-UP COSTS: 'We had an investor who was able to give us the money to start Berry Homeware. A large portion of that money went into product development and getting the business compliant, while the rest was spent on photography and setting up the website.'

TURNOVER: 'Even though our company is young, having launched only in December, the web traffic we've seen over these past few months has been encouraging.'

Siblings Neo and Katleho have created a full sensory and emotional experience for consumers with their brand Berry Homeware.

Berry Homeware is more than just an online shop. Tell us about the concept.

K: We wanted to create an authentic South African brand that spoke to the senses – sight, sound, smell and touch. Our products should encompass all of those things, from our fragrance range to our textiles,

The renovation?

N: Our mom invited us to work with her to renovate the family home – and the experience ignited this passion for design, decor and art. It also made us realise how difficult it was to find what we wanted in one place.

K: Our thinking was, if it's not available in South Africa, why don't we fill that gap?

And Berry Homeware was born! What goes into everything featured on the site?

N: We value quality, so we wanted to ensure that all the items on the site are well thought out and that they're made well. We make most of the products: we make the scents and candles in-house, and we design the artwork and textiles.

K: A lot of thought goes into the packaging – ensuring it's eco-friendly while also looking good and being durable, the type of tissue paper we use and the ribbon we use on the throws. When someone opens a Berry Homeware package, we want it to be a special moment.

What are your long-term goals for Berry Homeware?

K: We want to take on the South African design industry in a big way and make our presence felt. But we also want to attract the best and the brightest talents to work with us and create something that people can feel a sense of ownership over and take pride in. And we would like to become a fully fledged interior design firm.

What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome?

N: We have so much respect for entrepreneurs. As a consumer, you purchase a product but you don't think of every detail that went into getting it to you. Dealing with all that red tape to start your business has been an eye-opener.

K: The biggest challenge we experienced was finding local suppliers that cater to SMEs. A lot of them have MOQs (minimum order quantities); they cater only to larger companies. We understand that's where the money is, but it becomes another barrier for new entrants to the market.

N: We found ways around it though. The suppliers we're working with now have been so helpful with navigating that stuff. And though some have stuck to their MOQs, we've thought of the process as an investment.

Has your relationship changed since you started working together?

K: We talk about work a lot. When we should be relaxing on a Sunday afternoon, watching *Manifest* on Netflix, one of us will inevitably say something like: 'You know what would be a good idea...?' and off we go, we'll start talking about packaging!

N: To avoid that, we're thinking about setting some boundaries and saying 'no shop talk' at certain times.

K: But it has also brought us closer, if that's possible. ❖

Website: berryhomeware.com **Instagram:** @berryhomeware

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Cybercrime is the most prolific global risk of our time for individuals and businesses alike. South Africa is the sixth-most impacted country in the world where cybercrime is concerned, resulting in our business sector losing up to R2.4 billion a year to cyberattacks.

The latest threat is a collaboration-tool-based attack impacting businesses that use Microsoft Teams, Google Workspace and Slack to streamline workflows for remote working teams, but the most common hacks are still email phishing attacks on individuals and small businesses.

TELL-TALE SIGNS YOUR COMPUTER HAS BEEN BREACHED

- A dramatic drop in your internet speed – illegal actions use up a lot of bandwidth
- Strange pop-up windows on your screen
- Pop-up tabs on your web browser that open automatically – a sign of a malware attack
- A pop-up window saying you need to pay a ransom to access your files or software
- Your passwords suddenly don't work – they may have been changed by a hacker
- Acquaintances notify you of strange spam emails from your account

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