

SU student and techpreneur awarded for innovative e-commerce startup

Lunga Momoza has won Stellenbosch Network's Entrepreneur of the Month award for Basket, an e-commerce and agritech startup that is digitising the supply and value chains between township-based farmers and traders across the Western Cape province.



Lunga Momoza | image supplied

Momoza says his business idea took shape after he witnessed first-hand how the pandemic impacted his aunt, who at the time was herself an informal trader and entrepreneur.

“It was a very difficult situation. The tough regulations meant that only a handful of traders could stock-up on fresh produce. This caused a major backlog for farmers, who had to quickly find a new way of selling their goods before they perished,” says Momoza.

At first, Momoza and the team developed a digital application, however, they soon discovered that informal farmers and traders were wary of adopting new technologies that deviated from traditional business models. As such, their initial efforts to get users on board saw little success. But Momoza refused to call it quits.

“Truth be told, this was a fairly new and confusing technology for our market, so we went back to the drawing board. After more research, we found that – while farmers and informal traders lacked computers and a stable internet connection at home – they were very adept at mobile phones and frequently used WhatsApp to liaise with family and friends,” Momoza

says.

As such, the company pivoted to a chat-based model, with producers and retailers now able to meet and negotiate terms completely online.

Balancing business with academia

In addition to starting his own business, Momoza is also completing a degree in international relations and economics at Stellenbosch University.

“I find it fascinating to learn about how changes in the global economy can have such a pronounced effect on people at a grassroots level, and I feel that my studies are contributing greatly to my overall understanding of doing business in South Africa – but I must admit, it is sometimes a challenge to juggle my entrepreneurial and student lives,” Momoza says.



Using AI in agriculture could boost global food security - but we need to anticipate the risks

Asaf Tzachor 31 Mar 2022



At the end of the day, he says it's all about balance and good time management – two qualities that have proven hugely beneficial when trying to solve other issues facing the business.

“Initially, I had thought that funding would be our major problem. However, as we grow, our focus is now on on-boarding more farmers and traders from across the province on to our system. This is complicated by the fact that we receive very little support from government stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, who are key to connecting us with big commercial players. But with time and persistence, we will be successful in reaching them,” Momoza says.

Solving South African challenges

With his own hurdles in-mind, Momoza believes that young people in South Africa are fortunate to live in a country that presents so many challenges to its people.

“I see it as endless opportunities for innovation. As the next generation of leaders, we are faced with issues such as the high unemployment rate, which need us – the youth – to start thinking differently about how we solve them.”

He adds: “Especially young entrepreneurs, they should not be afraid to take that leap of faith, explore how and where we can make a difference, and utilise what we have available to kick-start our solution. We need to change our mindset, in which we tend to shy away from hardship, to one that welcomes adversity and recognises the growth and opportunity behind it.”

To this end, Momoza calls on young people in South Africa to have the courage to take the first step in their entrepreneurial journey and become an active players in moving the country forward.

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