

# Elsabe Lemmer launches an online platform for local artisans to sell their wares

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Artisan products and handmade things are becoming increasingly sought after as the quality of such items improve and exceedingly match that of their commercial counterparts.



Elsabe Lemmer

Picture: Supplied

Elsabe Lemmer recently founded an online marketplace in support of local artisans specialising in clothing and accessories, and homeware. [Wearels.co.za](http://Wearels.co.za) offers a carefully curated selection of brands in each respective category that reflect the various values, perspectives and styles of South Africans.

Elsabe strongly believes in this up-and-coming industry as holding much promise for the future of the local economy. “Artisans and their skills are vital for our economy and will always be needed. Innovators are constantly coming out with a better solution to creating a product, and this challenges the more advanced manufacturing companies. South Africa needs to focus more on the training of artisans otherwise we cannot grow the economy like we want to,” she said. This echoes Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande’s sentiment at

this year’s National Artisan Development Conference, where he said, “There is nothing more patriotic than developing artisans, they are the heart of South Africa’s economic development, and will be the main driver behind the manufacturing sector in years to come.”

She founded the boutique e-commerce store in June this year with the hope to provide a unique perspective that speaks to those of a similar mind, and to showcase local artisans and their contribution to the creative South African community. “South Africa is such an amazing country with so many different talents... We want to make the rest of the country, and world, aware of the talent that we have. We want everyone to support our local artisans and appreciate their work.

“We just need more platforms to help each other to grow and expand one another’s small businesses.”

Here, a Q&A with Elsabe on the challenges to starting the business and the opportunity selling online presents.

## ■ What gave you the idea to start an online shop, and when was this?

It’s funny, because an online shop was never my dream, it all just came together at the right time in my life. I relocated about two years ago and struggled to find something I was passionate about in the area. I am very focused on the quality and the beauty of a product, and saw that there was a gap in the market for an online shop that sells unique, excellent quality, stylish products.

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# WEARELS

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## ■ How did you decide on the name?

It's a mixture of my nickname and 'wear' for the clothing and accessories, and a play on words for 'where else' would you find products similar to ours online?

## ■ What were some of the challenges to starting the business, and how have these changed since launching a few months ago?

Every day I face different challenges. Starting a business on your own with not much experience in business is challenging as a whole, but if you've set your mind to it, you will find ways to deal with your challenges. There are new and more hurdles since I have launched, but it's exciting and we have great ideas for the future.

## ■ Competing with the likes of Superbalist and Hello Pretty, what is your competitive advantage?

We are a small business, and that's a great advantage as we can focus on each customer and have a more personal relationship to them. We also have the advantage of being more selective with the products we sell, to ensure it's not too commercial.

## ■ In an effort to showcase the entrepreneurial talents of South Africa to the rest of the world, do you also ship your products to international locations?

Yes, we ship internationally, and we are aiming to target the rest of the world and wow them with African products.

## ■ According to the launch release sent to Bizcommunity, you believe that selling online is the future for shopping. "If a customer cannot view your brand online, you will be losing out on the opportunity to grow your business to its fullest potential." Why did you decide to start online, and do you plan to open a brick-and-mortar store at a later stage?

I decided to only go online, because my husband's job could cause us to be relocated at any time, and because e-commerce is the way forward!

One of the biggest benefits the internet has brought into the world, and our individual lives, is the ease of shopping online.

You can see things you like online today, buy it and have it delivered to your doorstep, without you having to step out of your house! We are not sure what the future will hold for a store, but we are planning a few pop-up events. Depending on the response, we will not rule out anything just yet.

### ■ **What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?**

Believe in your concept; ensure that the four elements of finance, customer service, quality product and admin is strong. Always work hard. Always improve your quality and service. Your customer is always right, and must always be happy with your quality, price and service, and customer satisfaction is more important than profit.

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. [marketingnews@bizcommunity.com](mailto:marketingnews@bizcommunity.com)

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