

South African challengers to watch in 2021

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The World Economic Forum has started The Great Reset initiative to urgently facilitate cooperation between global stakeholders in managing the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis. In such a context, no-one can predict what 2021 holds. However, the one thing we do know for sure, is that how we make business decisions has to change and that those who challenge the complacency, the conventions, the contradictions and asymmetries in the categories in which they operate, are better set for success. Here are five brands we believe are worth watching in 2021.



Lift

In a year that grounded the global aviation industry, a brand new player welcomed the opportunity to reimagine the category and build a demand-driven business model that flies in the face over-supply. Rather than focus on price, Lift has set its sights on addressing the inflexibility in the category, from the customer's perspective. The ability to change flights multiple times, cancel flights or update flyer details at no cost (up to 24 hours before flying) might seem like simple things but they are fundamental customer pain points in the low cost, value end of category. Reimagining the in-flight experience through partnerships, *Lift* is dressing its crew via Superbalist, serving Vida e Caffè coffee on morning flights and offering wine tastings on later flights. Lift also crowd-sourced its brand name and logo from the general public in an explicit demonstration of its appreciation for consumer interests. Flying in 2021 looks like it could be a more pleasant experience.



Swiitchbeauty

Rabia Ghoor founded online beauty brand *swiitchbeauty* when she was 14 years old. Intrigued by watching friends show off their internationally made, cult-branded make-up, she asked: why isn't there an affordable, local product that young South Africans are proud to purchase; and more importantly, proud to use? Ghoor has challenged the big American, European and Asian brands with a homegrown offering built around customer intimacy. In true challenger style, *swiitchbeauty* has chosen to focus its content on being educational, aiming to 'sell an idea, not a product', and earlier this year the brand publicly stood up to social injustice. As a 21-year-old in 2021, we can't wait to see what Ghoor has instore for *swiitchbeauty*.



Pelebox

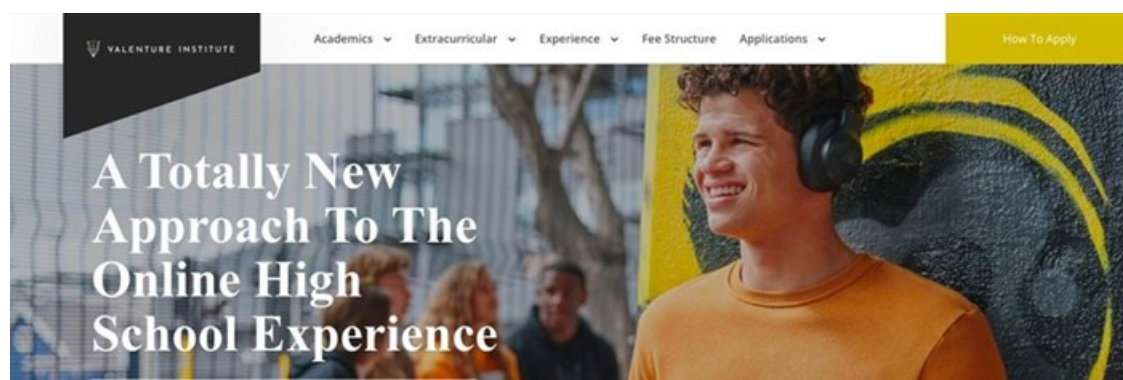
Neo Hutiri was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 2014 and started undergoing treatment at his community public clinic. For the next six months, he would wait in queues for his medication for over three hours on each visit. Frustrated with the system he asked: how can the collection of chronic medication be made much faster? And thus *Pelebox* was born with the aim to reduce the inefficiency, inaccessibility and knock on consequences of time off work for people who can least afford it. *Pelebox* is a smart locker system with a one-time pin that can be used by patients to collect chronic medication quickly, easily and securely. At the same time the *Pelebox* frees up health care worker time, enabling them to focus on treating more patients, not dispensing medication to long queues of people.

In 2019, *Pelebox* was featured in *Time Magazine* as one of 100 inventions that make the world better and smarter. While *Pelebox* looks for ways to scale the manufacture and deployment of its lockers, we look forward to seeing the mass roll-out of this service in 2021.



Gugu Intimates

Africa is a continent of extraordinary diversity, home to 55 countries, with over 2,000 languages and over 3,000 ethnic groups – but it only has a single shade of nude underwear? With women making up roughly half the continent's 1.3 billion population, you'd think that finding affordable, accessible skin-coloured underwear for brown-skinned women would be a breeze. Not so much. Enter *Gugu Intimates*, launched in 2017 and founded by Gugu Nkabinde, her mission is to 'adorn brown-skinned girls in beautiful, premium quality underwear that compliments your skin tone no matter what shade you are'. Her intention is not just to tackle the dynamics of the fashion world but to challenge conventional Western standards of beauty, empowering women of colour by helping them feel comfortable and confident in their own skin. While this brand has become immensely popular in South Africa, Zimbabwe and the USA, it is Nkabinde's vision of where she wants to take the brand that makes it a challenger to watch in 2021. This she aims to achieve by: expanding her range; partnering with local suppliers to make products more easily accessible to the African market; and partnering with retailers who speak to the same audience with the same message - you are beautiful in your skin, no matter your size, shape or colour.



Valenture Institute

The education system has 'remained largely unchanged for centuries', observes founder of *Valenture Institute*, Robert Paddock. *Valenture* is a global private online high school, which started accepting its first students in January 2020. While online learning has been around for some time, it is how this school has put together a fresh new model that sets it apart as a challenger, not only to traditional learning, but also to the nascent online learning space. *Valenture* is focused on empowering students to solve real-world problems by equipping them with critical-thinking skills, creativity and collaboration. They became the first online school to fully integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into their curriculum and have flipped the one-way teacher-led environment so as to encourage students to participate more meaningfully. Will a post-Covid world accelerate the need for quality alternatives to traditional learning? We think it will, and see *Valenture* as one of our five South African challengers to watch in 2021.

eatbigfish. global challengers to watch in 2021

The team at eatbigfish. HO in London has published a report on global challengers to watch in 2021. This list of 20 businesses and brands includes one of the businesses from our South African list – Gugu Intimates. Read the full report on global challengers to watch [here](#).

About eatbigfish.

eatbigfish. is a strategic brand consultancy whose unique focus is challenger thinking and behaviour. Our expertise is grounded in The Challenger Project – our study of how Challenger Brands succeed by doing more with less.

We act as catalysts rather than consultants and, through our collaborative approach, we provide inspiration and frameworks which enable 'would be' challengers to deliver breakthrough solutions for their teams and brand.



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