

Move over Musk: meet the 25-year-old SA tech billionaire in the making

South Africa has produced some of the most talented tech entrepreneurs in the world, from Mark Shuttleworth, founder of the Ubuntu Project - a popular Linux-based operating system and the first African to travel to space - Elon Musk, world-renowned tech entrepreneur and the brains behind Tesla's electronic car model.

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Jesse Casanova

While their stories are well-known, South Africa is making room for a new tech entrepreneur – Jesse Casanova, a former student at [Vega](#) (a brand of The Independent Institute of Education – [The IIE](#)) whose “next-generation social media app” is recently gained international attention.

“The idea came from observing people and how mobile technology has encouraged us to spend more time engaged in the virtual world,” explains Casanova. “What we’re working on uses the same technology to bring them back to brick and mortar stores to enjoy real-life experiences again.”

While Casanova is limited in terms of the information he is able to share about the app at the moment, he can reveal that it is more than a social platform – it’s also an opportunity for businesses to engage with the right audiences in a way that has never been seen before.

Having graduated with an IIE Bachelor of Arts in Creative Brand Communications in 2014, Casanova says that he relied heavily on the skills he learned at Vega during the development and pitching process for his app.

“I specialised in Multimedia while studying at Vega where I developed the skills essential to building my app idea,” says Casanova. “Having skills like video-editing, digital marketing, branding and design allowed me to achieve so much on a limited budget. I’ve managed every element of this journey, and I’m grateful to Vega for instilling a holistic way of thinking in us.”

The app is still in its early development phases, and Casanova has been invited to meet with high level investors in China later this year, which will potentially help him find safe passage into the Chinese market.

“Securing my position in the Chinese market would almost be like accomplishing the impossible, especially considering that Facebook and the rest of my competitors are banned in China. China also has over 640 million smart phone users, a number that seems to epicly double the United States entire population.”

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