South Africa first with new Feastfox app

By Ruth Cooper   7 Sep 2017

Feastfox, a spontaneous dining-out app, which recently launched in South Africa aims to take the hassle out of last minute restaurant hunting and booking. After successfully raising R2.3m from Silicon Valley-based angels and VC firms, co-founder and Cape Town born Stuart Murless chose South Africa and specifically Cape Town's CBD to launch the app. We got in touch to find out why, and more for #InnovationMonth.

▦ *Can you give us some background on how the concept arose and how the app was developed?*
Two of our co-founders, CEO Daniel Petz and head of machine learning, Mattia Ferrini saw a problem that their lifestyle was generally spontaneous rather than pre-planned, especially when it comes to eating out. There was no platform that fit into that lifestyle. Daniel and Mattia then brought myself, and head of development, Endre Varga on and the four of us worked for months to bring this idea to fruition, conducting market research and talking to hundreds of people. The Feastfox app is our solution to this problem.

Spontaneous dining-out app launches in Cape Town
10 Aug 2017   ⤴

▦ *What were the reasons behind choosing Cape Town as the launch site for FeastFox?*
We picked Cape Town for the launch because of the high concentration of incredible restaurants, the sophistication of the local dining out scene and the openness to new, mobile solutions.

▦ *Are there any plans to launch FeastFox in other cities and countries and if so, when do you foresee this happening?*
Even though we have very strong ties to South Africa, Feastfox Inc. is actually incorporated in the US and most of our advisors and investors are from Silicon Valley.

For now, our focus is on the Cape Town launch only. However, given the location of our investors, we plan to expand to the United States in the next few years, after proving the concept in South Africa.

Stuart Murless

⊞ Can you explain your philosophy "South Africa first" when it comes to launching and testing new mobile related initiatives?
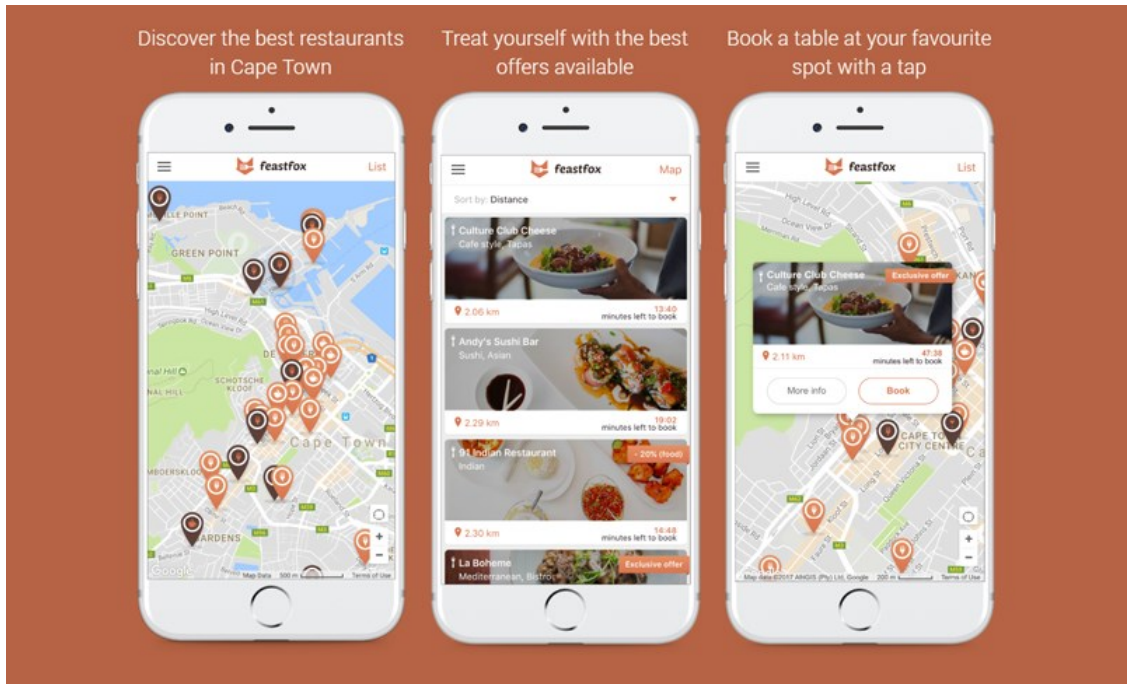
We are firm believers in a concept that we call "South Africa first". By proving a new mobile concept in South Africa first, we aim to showcase that South Africa is a perfect first market for new mobile companies that want to validate their idea before starting a global expansion. Cape Town is very similar to most developed cities. By entering South Africa first, we aim to prove to other international startups that Cape Town is an ideal first market for mobile companies with global aspirations.

Through our relationships in the European and US startup scenes, we hope to become great ambassadors of the Cape Town tech ecosystem. Hopefully, in the future other international companies will follow our lead and enter South Africa as their first market creating jobs and contributing to the economic growth of the country.

⊞ How do you choose the restaurants that are featured, can any restaurant become a partner? Is there a fee involved?

We want to create a curated list of great restaurants and don't necessarily want to have every restaurant on the platform. We focused on restaurants with high user ratings on review sites as well as those which we enjoy and which were recommended by customers during focus groups. Customers can trust that when they choose Feastfox every restaurant meets a high quality bar.

The restaurants need to apply to be involved in the platform and our team thoroughly reviews each application. As mentioned above, we need to ensure that every restaurant lives up to our customer's expectations and hence a highly curated platform. The restaurants don't pay any monthly fees but rather pay a small fixed fee per customer we bring in. They are thus only paying us when we fill tables and provide them with value.

Discover the best restaurants in Cape Town

Treat yourself with the best offers available

Book a table at your favourite spot with a tap

▦ *How has the feedback been so far?*

The feedback has been very positive thus far. One of the most promising things we have seen is that almost every person who has used the app once has come back and made a second booking. This shows us that people love the idea and we just need to get more people to try it out. We already have people using the app on a weekly basis showing that Feastfox is solving a real pain point.
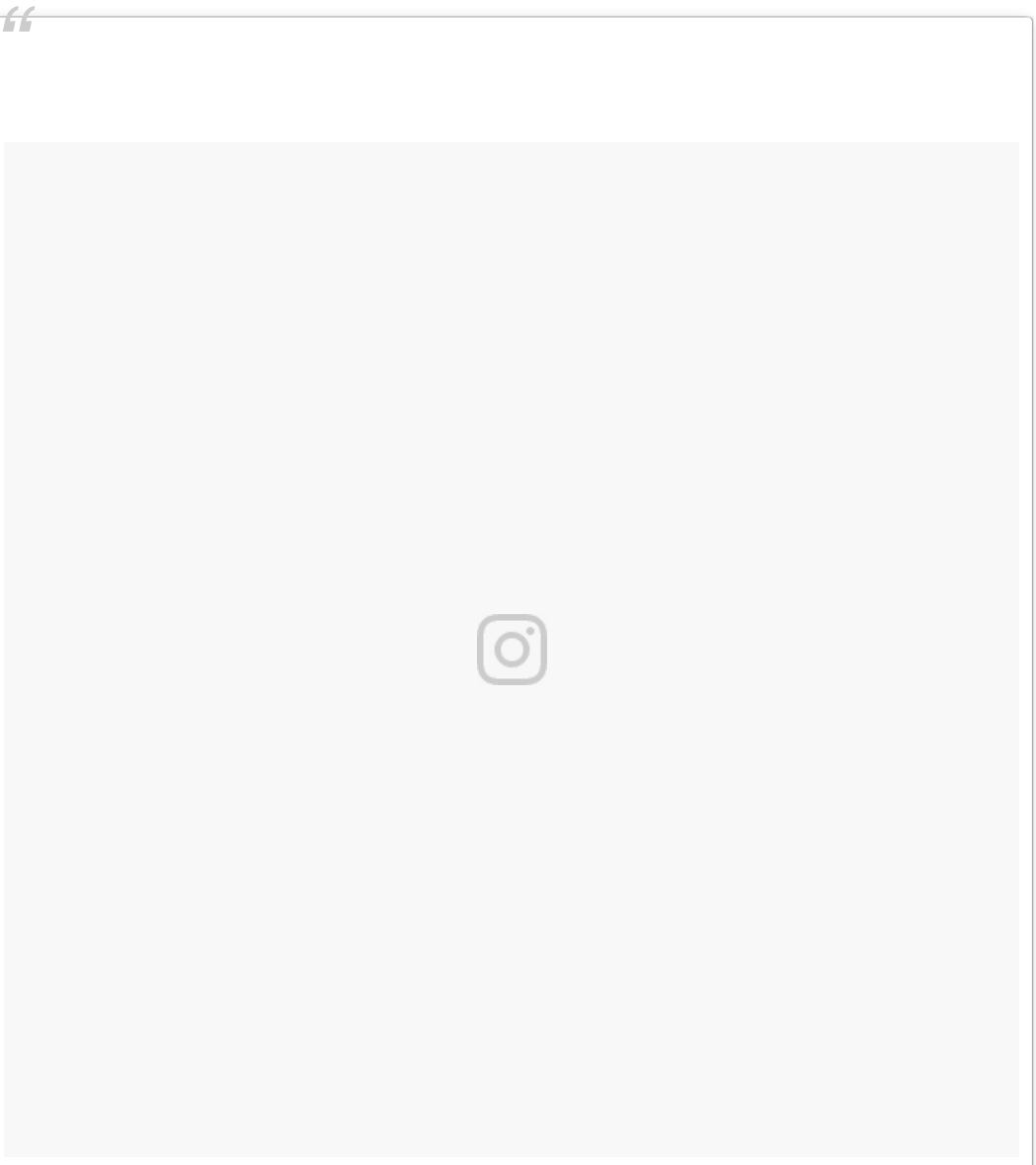
Ever wondered the real story behind the people who host you whenever you eat out? We definitely have. They work hard every day to bring us memorable experiences but only very few of us know about them. We are starting a new photo series called Faces of Feastfox to introduce you to some of the most iconic hosts in the Cape Town restaurant scene.□ □ ��Name: Mzimande ��Restaurant: The Woodlands Eatery □ ✍□Story: "I started working here whilst studying at UCT to earn a quick buck here and there to support our usual millennial habits. Since then it's been quite a rollercoaster ride, but I have loved every minute of it."□ □ When Mzi is not at Woodlands you can find him in nearby golf courses. "In my spare time I quite enjoy playing golf, and often find myself caught up on the 19th hole for too long, but that's all part of the experience!" □ □ "Spending time with friends and family are some of the things I value most, and also have a passion for reading and writing."□ □ So, whenever you see Mzi in the Woodlands next time, feel free to say hi or give him some pro golf tips or book recommendations. He will love it!

A post shared by Feastfox (@feastfox) on Aug 19, 2017 at 1:07am PDT

▦ *What advice would you give to entrepreneurs wanting to start or grow a business?*

First, when it comes to decision making try to rely on data, not on intuitions or gut feeling. In many organisations, decisions are made based on the HIPPO - the highest paid person's opinion. This can be dangerous and might severely limit a venture's potential. At Feastfox, we use data for almost every decision - including the smallest things, like the color or the shape of a button.

Second, be persistent. For example, when we decided to fundraise in Silicon Valley, very few people thought we could raise capital for a South African launch. However, we proved that it can be done and persistence played a key role in achieving this. People will say NO to you every day, you just need to keep going.

Last but not least, build a culture that you would want to work in. We believe that in problem-solving, there is no hierarchy and we encourage everyone to speak their mind and challenge ideas no matter where they come from. This openness is coupled with an ownership culture in which every single permanent employee owns a share of the company. We believe this is the only way to build a thriving team and make people feel appreciated and heard.

The Feastfox app is available for iOS and Android. www.feastfox.com

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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