

Introducing new conscious clothing rental platform Shared Collective

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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In response to the rise of fast fashion and over-consumption, entrepreneurs and business partners Simone Veitch and Kishana Naidoo recently launched [Shared Collective](#), a rental wardrobe platform available for all South African women that promotes conscious fashion consumption and empowers women to monetise certain clothing items through their rental platform.

We got in touch with Veitch and Naidoo to chat about empowering women, the future of fashion and greenwashing.

“ Our aim is to create a brand that is transcend-able - not only offering a service but also communicating matters of importance surrounding sustainability and creating a community.” - Shared Collective co-founder Kishana Naidoo ”



Kishana Naidoo, Simone Veitch - Image: Supplied

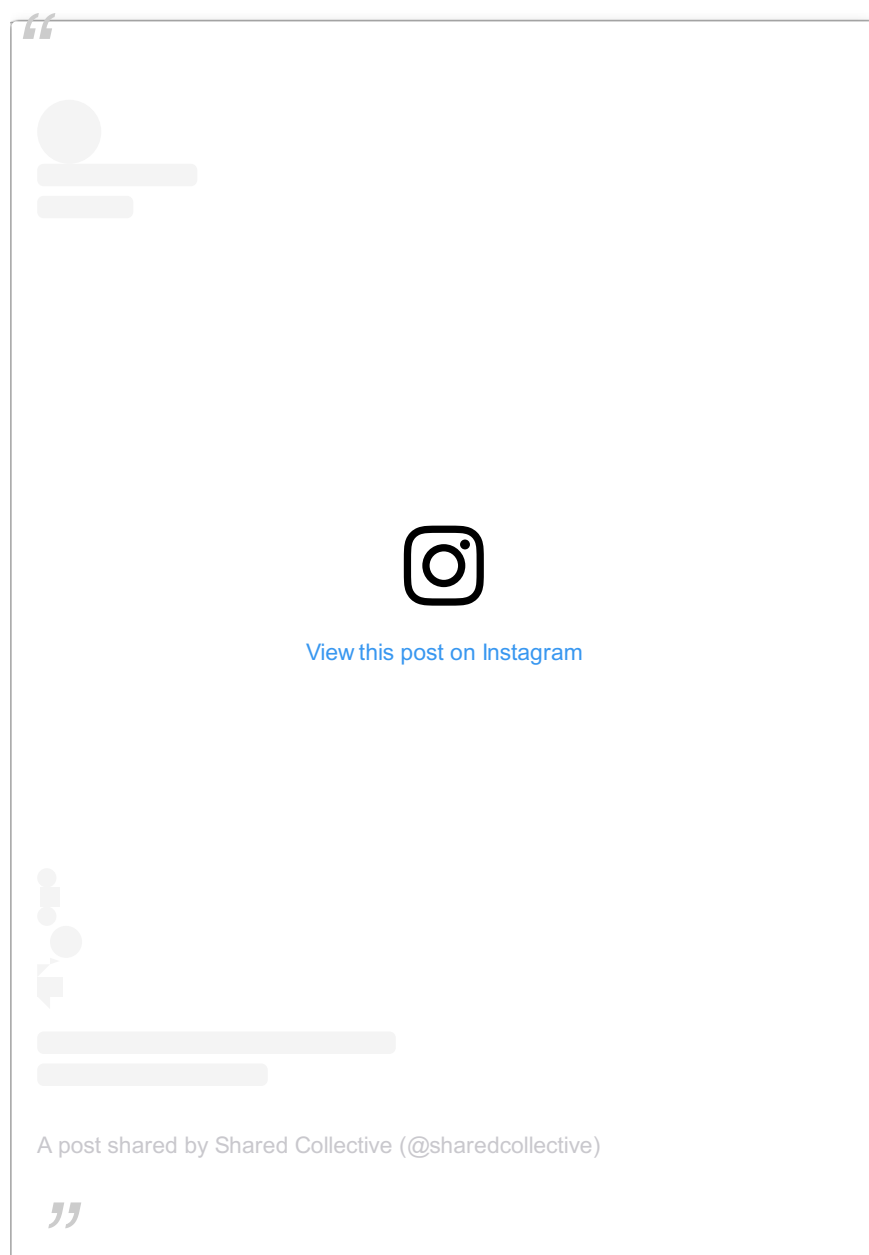
■ **Can you please share with us how Shared Collective came to be and the response you have had since launching?**

Simone Veitch: We started Shared Collective off the back of our own experiences. When we were students, we were always looking for creative ways to make money. We didn't realise the assets we had sitting in our wardrobes, things we wouldn't necessarily wear but kept for sentimental purposes - like matric dance dresses and bridesmaids dresses. We wanted to create a platform that not only empowered women to make money but also provided a sustainable option to fast fashion and overconsumption and so Shared Collective was born.

Launching a business during Covid has come with its own challenges. However, Shared Co. has been received positively and we are slowly building a community of women who share the same values as the brand.

Kishana Naidoo: Before the creation of Shared Co., Simone ran a brand named Little Borrowed Dress (LBD), which is the same concept as Shared Co. but specifically for matric dance dress rental. When Simone moved overseas, the business took a little break and when it was time to revive it, Simone reached out to me and we have been happily partnered up ever since. Shared Co. has been our passion project and Covid baby. That being said, like so many businesses, Covid has

definitely impacted us as people are not socialising that much so rentals have been limited. However, Shared Co. is so much more than a rental platform. Besides sharing clothes, we also share stories and ideas. In this slow period, we have been able to connect to our community in other ways. We are proud of our IGTV series named *Brandter* in which we ask local female brands to share their stories and tips for success.

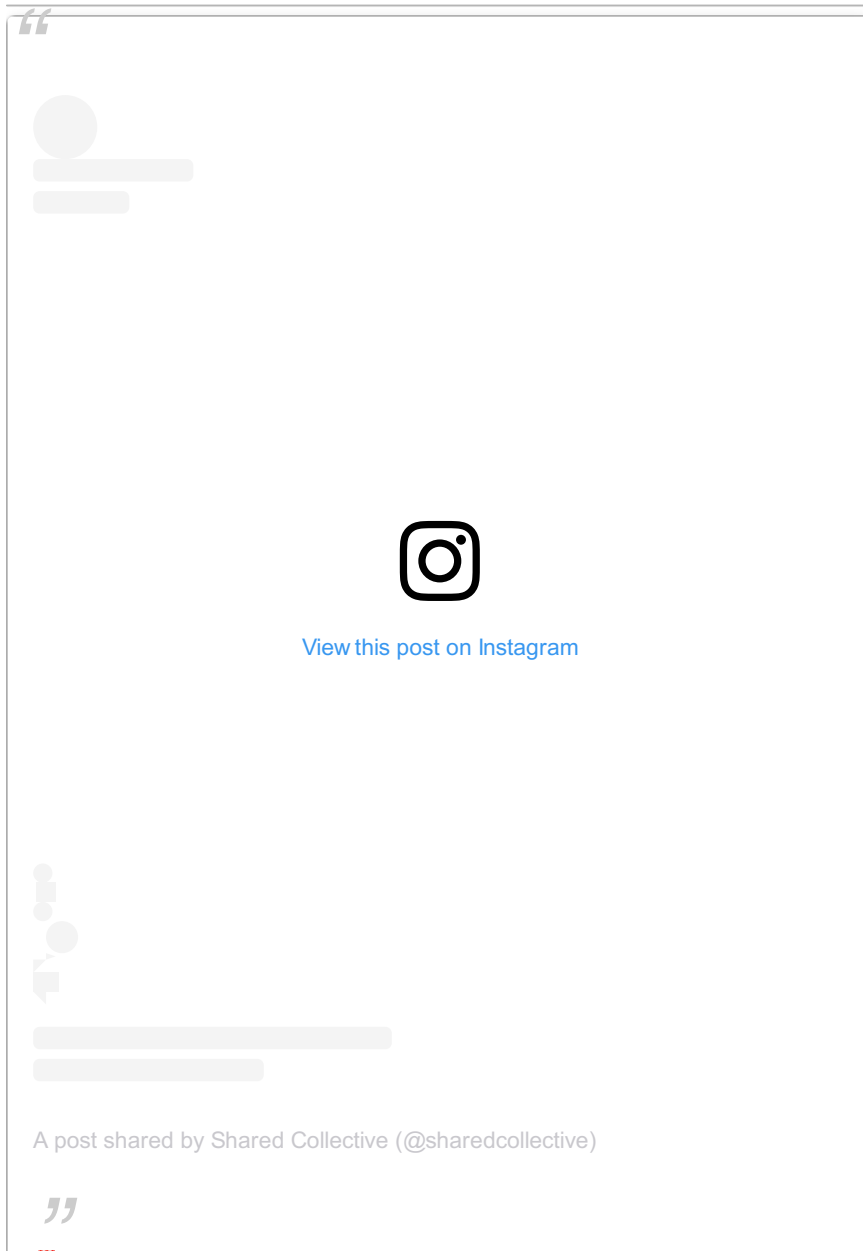


📌 **What would be your top tips for living in a more conscious and sustainable way?**

Veitch: Make small changes, one by one. I used to feel pressure to live a more sustainable life but felt like I couldn't financially support that. It was all overwhelming. Then I decided to take one product and purchase at a time - when something finished in my home, I replaced it with a more sustainable and ethical option. Supporting small brands, knowing the ingredients in your products and knowing that you're making an impact is a rewarding feeling.

“ *Naidoo: Sustainability and conscious consumption are a journey made up of small steps. Often we can feel overwhelmed because we think that we need to change everything we do all at once but it's okay to take it slow.* ”

After all, slowing things down is exactly the aim. My biggest tip is to pick one thing at a time that you would like to swap for a more sustainable option e.g. carrying a water bottle with you to the shops or to work instead of buying water when you are there. At the end of the day, these habits need to stick in order to be truly impactful, so aim to give yourself time to consciously commit to one thing at a time instead of striving to be perfect at doing everything. Let's make being imperfectly sustainable a thing.



A post shared by Shared Collective (@sharedcollective)

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What is your hope when it comes to the future of the fashion industry and its environmental impact?

Veitch: I hope that, as customers, we can shift to conscious consumption. Social media has fueled fast fashion; trend cycles are becoming shorter, there is pressure to dress a certain way and temptation to consume on every scroll. I think we can now see other trends emerging, thrifting is becoming more popular and I'd like to believe that people are seeing the negative consequences of fast fashion. However, I understand that often sustainable clothing is unaffordable and thus inaccessible to many. Fast fashion has created unrealistic ideas of how cheap clothing can be.

“ I hope that there can be more transparency in the fashion industry, and less greenwashing. If the consumer is buying a cheap item let them understand why that is possible - cheap materials and cheap labour. The same goes for buying more expensive items - explain where the cost is going, because sometimes it's just a brand name. Ultimately, an empowered consumer can make empowered decisions. ”

Naidoo: Less talking and more action. Often there is a lack of authenticity that comes with big fashion brands messaging about environmental impact and strategies to fix the problems at hand. It's often fluff. We see beautiful campaigns yet human rights are still being violated in their factories or pollution still continues. I would like brands to do the work and after a significant change has happened, then they should create beautiful campaigns telling us all about it. It's time for brands to be transparent along their entire supply chain. Sustainability and inclusion are not items of a checklist. These things are the bare minimum.

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📌 ***What advice would you give to women who want to start their own business?***

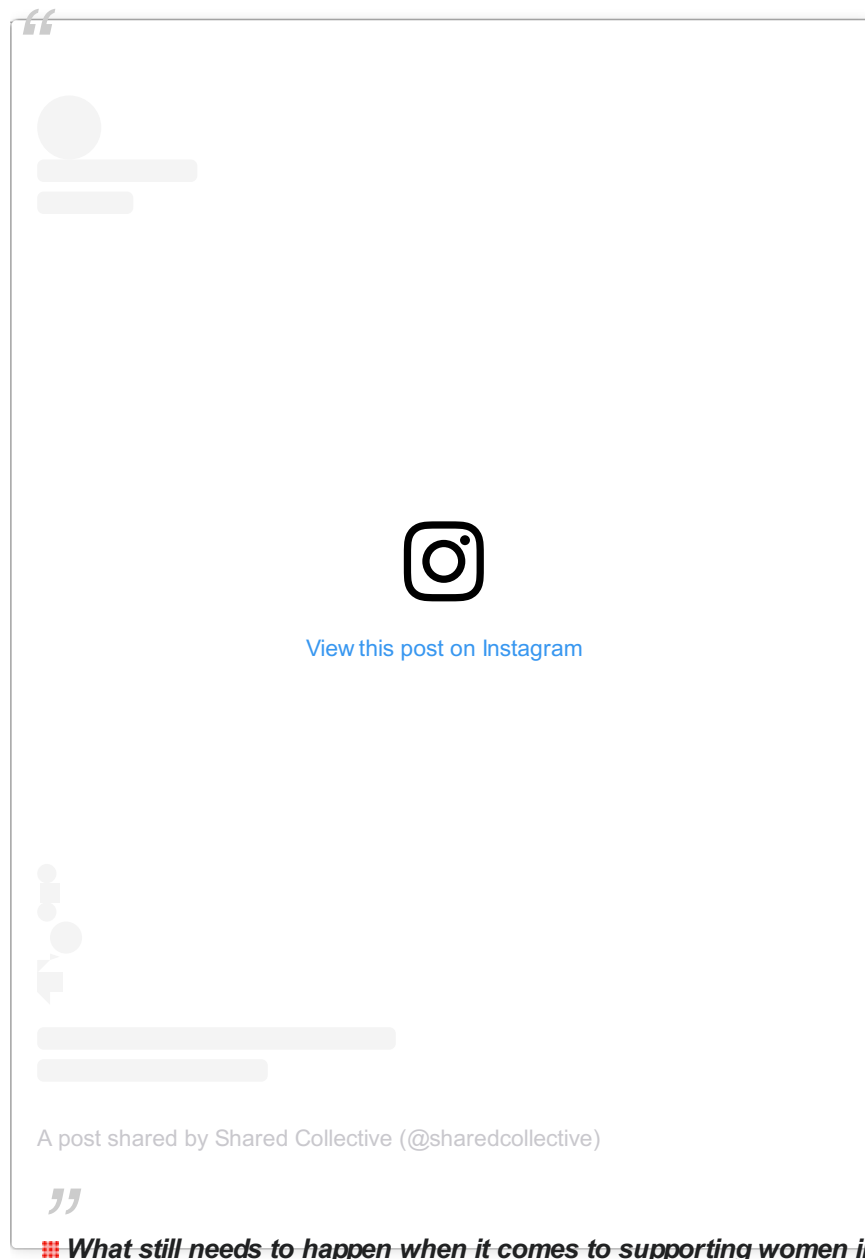
Veitch: Not to infringe on the Nike slogan, but just do it. And do it as affordably as possible, be agile. Rather put out an 80% polished business and let your customers mould the other 20% - they will tell you what they want and how they want it.

Use your connections too, our friends have helped us create our branding, build our website and do PR. It's really important to work with people you can trust.

Naidoo: Know you 'why' and know that starting a business isn't as glamorous as Instagram makes it look.

Knowing why you do what you do is so important because if you don't live by this, how can you expect your consumers to? Authenticity is such a buzzword but people are able to spot your sincerity and passion. Be intentional about what you put out into the world and it will come back to you.

Like any relationship, your business needs a lot of TLC and time. On social media, one can get caught up in the belief that things happen overnight and that it's a walk in the park. But, in reality, some days are easy and some days require a lot of hard work and sacrifice. Set realistic expectations for yourself and your business. It may be hard but it is worth it. You may succeed or you may simply learn. As Oprah says: "There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction."



What still needs to happen when it comes to supporting women in the fashion industry?

Veitch: Pay garment workers fairly. The fashion industry cannot be sustainable without treating the workers who make our clothes ethically. And support local brands, even if it means you spend more. When you support a small brand you know, in a way, who your money is enriching and have the peace of mind that it will stay in our local communities.

Naidoo: Well, I think that firstly our South African society needs to first normalise protecting and supporting women, period. When we as a society do this, it will trickle down into all these many industries we find ourselves in. There is a lot of unlearning to be done in our country about women and this is a decision that needs to be made on an individual level as much as it needs to be made on a societal level.

However, since we are looking at fashion specifically, I think that more women need to support local female-owned

businesses. Support can be shown in so many different ways like promoting these brands to your friends personally or on social media, making donations, sending supportive reviews or letters to brands, of course buying from a brand or using their service and the list goes on. Again, it's about starting small and choosing what works for you but brands like Shared Co. will not be a success without the support of other women. No matter how big or small.



Image: Sourced

What do you love about being a woman?

Veitch: I love the sense of community that being a woman creates. We deal with so much adversity, from period cramps to harassment and feeling unsafe. The persistence to continue to build a better world for future generations makes us resilient. Womanhood is its own community because we innately have so much in common.

Naidoo: I love how in touch I am with my emotions. This is one of my strengths. Through understanding my own feelings I am able to understand other people so much more. I love having a good cry and then getting down to business. By showing myself kindness and permission to be vulnerable, I am able to cultivate a space for others to do the same.

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A post shared by Shared Collective (@sharedcollective)

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■ Are there any female figures who have had a particularly positive influence on your life?

Veitch: Kellyn Fung. She was the fashion director at *Marie Claire* and offered me an internship. That experience was a huge pivot in my life. I continue to see her as a mentor, even going to her for advice before launching Shared Co. She has empowered so many young women who have gone on to have amazing careers in the fashion and media industries.

Naidoo: The first would be my mom. She is the lifeblood of my family. I am in awe of how much responsibility and pressure she has on her shoulders and how she somehow wakes up every day with faith to push through. As a healthcare professional, her passion to help and empower others inspires me to want to do the same.

The second would be my partner Simone. I am lucky that I get to call her my best friend and my business partner. Her encouragement and advice are golden and I can't wait for her to write a book one day with all her gems of wisdom. She is the big sister I never had.

■ What's your hidden talent?

Veitch: Cooking. My mom is an amazing home cook and has passed the passion onto me. The only downside is that I'm a huge food snob because of it!

Naidoo: I'm not sure if this is a talent but I am really good at untangling jewellery when it gets all tangled together. If anyone has experienced this, you know how frustrating it can be but I actually enjoy it so call a girl up if you are in need.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity. ruth@bizcommunity.com

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