

Moms breathe life into Babalust



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

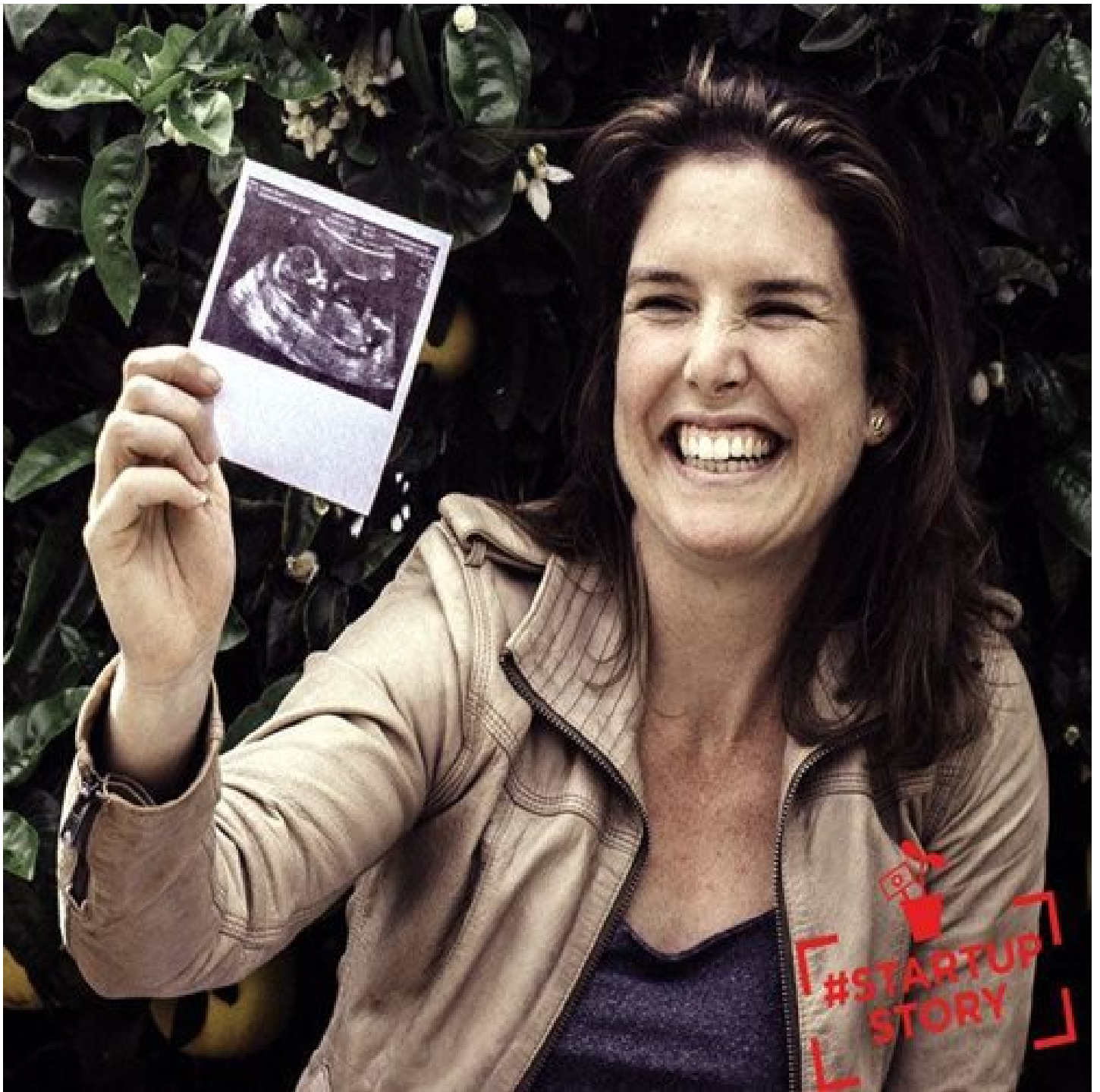
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As first time moms, co-founders Kim Grant and Nikki Banner experienced first-hand the overwhelming task of preparing their lives, and homes for the welcoming of a new-born baby. Searching to equip themselves with the necessary baby products they found a confusing and disappointing trend. Trying to find trustworthy advice, unbiased product reviews and quality goods that didn't come with an endless list of chemicals seemed to be impossible.

Nothing made them feel confident that the decisions they were making would be the right ones for the little lives that were about to come into the world.

Inspired to find a way to help other expectant mothers overcome the issues they had encountered, the two moms turned motivation into action and began working on an idea. That is how the [Babalust](#) brand was born.

The two doting moms share the story of their newly born startup.



Kim Grant



Nikki Banner

■ **Can you tell us a bit about Babalust?**

Kim Grant: Babalust is an online baby registry service for new moms wanting to easily source trusted baby products and share their Babalust with their friends and family in time for their baby shower.

Nikki Banner: It's also an online baby shop that offers moms a wide variety of quality, trusted and locally sourced baby goods to help them prepare for parenthood.

We've built our offering for moms by moms and we are constantly working to expand and evolve our mother-to-mother network, whilst growing the local maternity market.

“ We are incredibly proud of the local brands that we represent and we are thrilled to be able to show them off to new

parents who may otherwise not have discovered so many of the outstanding producers that South Africa has to offer. ”

Our aim is to become the helping hand that guides new parents through their pregnancy and connects them with both their village, and ours so that they can feel equipped and ready for their great adventure.

■ **When, how and why did you get started?**

Kim: Nikki approached me with her vision at the end of 2018 when she was pregnant and my son was just five months old. I was immediately struck by the necessity for a platform such as Babalust, and how much the genuine ethos of Babalust that she presented spoke to me. Combining locally sourced, responsible and trusted products under one roof sounded like any new moms' dream come true and we got started straight away with creating a wireframe for the new website.

Nikki: Kim and I started Babalust because we felt that, as new moms, we had a great deal of hindsight knowledge to share with the world. Preparing for a baby is no easy task and was one that neither of us took lightly. We both put in the hard yards and researched furiously in the lead up to our babies arrivals, however, we found it difficult to find advice that was unbiased and locally relevant.

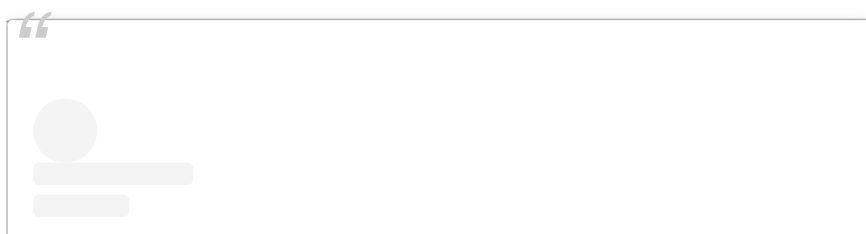
Then came the baby shower - the perfect opportunity for new parents to cross off items from the long list of products that they still need. The sad reality was, that even with the best intentions, family and friends had spent fortunes on so many things that, really, we did not need, while most of our must-have items were yet to be ticked from our wishlists.

“ We felt that there was a better way for soon-to-be parents to connect with their support systems and, in doing so, make it easy for them to really be there for the expectant parents. Inspired by the superior baby products that were coming out of South Africa, we decided to build a platform dedicated to doing just that. ”

We began developing our website at the beginning of 2019 and by October of that year we were ready to go live!

■ **What is the core function of Babalust?**

Babalust's core function is to act as an information hub for expecting new moms to ease their journey into motherhood by placing products and information in front of them that they can trust, and put their mind at ease knowing that they are doing the right thing for their new baby.





Expecting moms visit our site and create their baby registry - or as we call it, their "Babalist". After a simple sign up process, they are able to browse products on our site from a well rounded service offering and simply add them to their registry. In doing so they have the ability to tailor their lists to their exact needs, by specifying quantities, sizes and even ranking items in terms of their priority.

They then share their registry via a URL with their family and friends who can then in turn visit the website and purchase gifts for the new baby, and add a gift card with a personal message. Babalust then orders, beautifully wraps and delivers the gifts ahead of schedule to the baby shower to be opened in front of friends and family on the special day.

What are some of the local brands that you're working with?

It really is difficult to name just a few as we work with so many incredible local brands servicing all areas of the baby industry from carriers to feeding to maternity care. Some of our well loved local brands include Jean Kelly, Ubuntu Baba, NurtureOne, GROW Baby, Oh Lief and Pure Beginnings.

■ **What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?**

Online shopping, while taking the international market by storm, is still relatively new in South Africa and it has been a mission of ours to demonstrate the efficiency and security of online shopping to South African shoppers. Furthermore, on start up, there wasn't another successful online baby registry service out there, so essentially we were paving the way through uncharted waters and this certainly has been a fun but challenging experience.

■ Covid-19 and the national lockdown has impacted many businesses. What impact did it have on Babalust?

The largest impact it had on our industry and so in turn on us as a business was that social gathering was no longer possible, and physical baby showers had to be cancelled. However, Babalust was able to come to the rescue under these conditions too, as although baby showers weren't possible, showering the new baby with beautiful gifts was something we could fulfill as an essential service. And our products support local businesses to boot.

■ How did you prepare for the lockdown?

Communication was key. After registering as an essential service to remain operational, we contacted all of our suppliers to establish their capacities. We set up weekly virtual meetings within our team to keep our lines of communication open. We communicated which parts of our business remained operational to our industry via social media channels and kept our suppliers abreast of the developments as the lockdown regulations eased or tightened.



■ What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?

Small businesses are suffering as the economy has been put under such threat during the lockdown. We are doing our best to keep placing our local suppliers in the spotlight in order to give these hardworking people as much support and exposure as possible during this challenging climate.

■ What sort of assistance will you need going forward?

As a startup business, we are operating in a very lean financial framework and redirecting our profits straight back into the business to allow optimal growth. Additional capital investment would alleviate time and budget constraints allowing us to make logistics as efficient as possible and streamline our service delivery to meet the highest expectations.

■ What measures have you put in place for your employees?

We are keeping our business small and manageable, remaining debt free, and keeping transparent communications between all employees.

📊 **E-commerce is a very competitive market right now. What competitive advantage do you have?**

As parents of little ones ourselves, we know our service offering is something new moms can't do without. And we think our target market is moving more and more into a demographic of new parents who are very receptive to the benefits of streamlined online processes.

“ We are focused on fostering a strong sense of community between Babalust, our suppliers and our customers which we believe will convert to brand loyalty and give us that competitive advantage. ”

Furthermore, we plan to grow our platform in alignment with our audience as their babies develop so that the benefits extend beyond the first year of their child's life, providing a resource to parents as their children grow.

📊 **What do you predict the next six months will be like?**

As a result of lockdown, we predict the next six months to be unprecedented but that they will also hold a lot of growth potential for our business as more and more people are looking to shop online and support local businesses wherever they can. We are excited by the challenges that the future presents and look forward to being a disruptive force that will shift consumer behaviour, creating a healthier and more sustainable consumer culture.

📊 **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

I think one of our biggest lessons has been to be open to how your business grows organically and seemingly with a mind of its own despite how you might have expected it to grow when you first put together a business proposal. Being in tune with industry and economic trends allows your business to sit where it can best serve its industry and it's important to be fluid and remain open to accepting these shifts and changes.

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