

FAIRY READY

HOW TO SPOT A NARCISSIST

Why are so many women **SWINDLING OFF SEX?**

THE NEW AGENT HUNTS
All hands on deck for the **sexiest** women in the city

50+
How to get the most out of your **50th birthday**

50+ and over? you must read!
How to make people love you again. **Warning!**

PLUS 20 PUZZLES

Starts from the silver side. **Love** more on www.fox.com

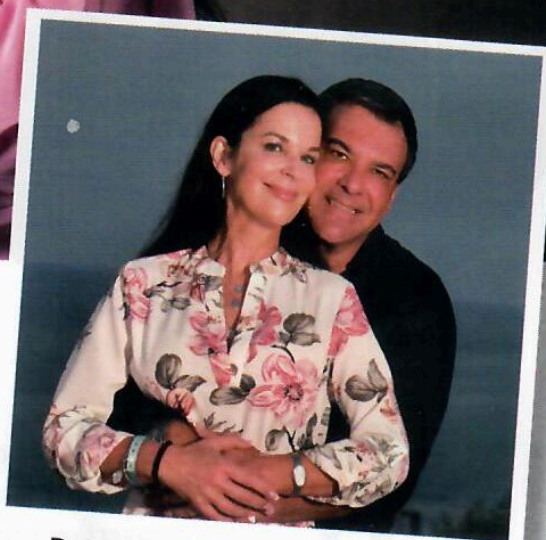
IMPRESSIVE RECIPES FROM *Food Network*



Kristien Bell IS IN A GOOD PLACE
AND SHE KNOWS HOW TO GET THERE



'We want to attract people who are genuinely interested in serious relationships.'



Dr Lize Naudé and Ruahan Naudé

Smooches

DR LIZE NAUDÉ
& RUAHAN NAUDÉ

START-UP COSTS: 'The start-up costs were substantial, even though we handled much of the development ourselves. But the stress levels involved in starting up – there's no way to put a number on that. Marketing costs across platforms like Google and Meta, as well as billboards and other promotional efforts, are ongoing.'

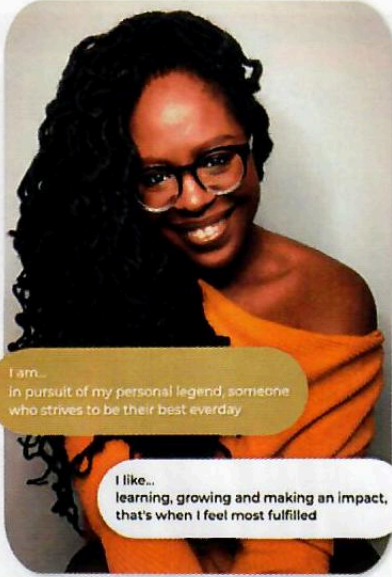
UPTAKE: 'We have about 4000 people registered on the platform, with 2000 of them at various stages of completing questionnaires or profile verifications. We're seeing 30 to 50 new registrations daily.'

perfect partner'. Combining her expertise in relationship psychology and his business acumen, they designed a dating app that goes beyond the superficial. At its core is a comprehensive survey that focuses on essential values, traits and preferences. A user's answers to these questions ensure that their matches align with what they want in a partner.

What inspired you to create Smooches?

Ruahan: We first met as students back in 1992. After years of friendship, we each married other people. Following my divorce, I spent seven years in the dating world, trying various dating sites. I found dating apps daunting.

Smooches is the brainchild of Dr Lize Naudé, a psychologist, and her husband Ruahan Naudé, an optometrist and former 'serial searcher for the



I am...
in pursuit of my personal legend, someone
who strives to be their best everyday

I like...
learning, growing and making an impact,
that's when I feel most fulfilled

I started out looking for casual connections, but later wanted a soul mate. That's when I realised how limited dating apps were. As a professional, I didn't feel comfortable with a public profile. Also, in South Africa, traditional ways of meeting people have faded.

Lize: I've been a psychologist for 30 years, and I've noticed that loneliness has become a pandemic. People crave meaningful relationships, and many are disappointed by the superficial encounters they tend to find on dating apps. After my own divorce, Ruahan and I reconnected and eventually married. We discussed how a better dating platform could help people who are genuinely seeking love. That's where Smooches came from.

How does Smooches filter out casual daters?

Ruahan: One standout feature is our 180-question survey. We want to attract people who are genuinely interested in serious relationships.

Lize: Our slogan is 'Smooches: For People Serious About Relationships'. We also include a verification step: users must complete a Zoom meeting with a consultant to confirm their identity.

Could you explain the survey and the algorithm?

Lize: The questions cover 11 key categories: language, ethnicity, age, religion, income, qualifications, habits, interests, physical appearance,

personality and desirability. The algorithm matches two core ideas: 'Who am I?' and 'Who do I want?' One person's 'Who do I want' is then matched with another's 'Who am I?'

We also look at personality traits, like how you handle conflict. Lifestyles are also matched.

The questions ensure that there are no unexpected surprises or disappointments on your first date.

Ruahan: Lize added control questions to ensure honesty. For example, if someone claims they're into sports, we might ask if they'd prefer cycling on a Sunday morning or sleeping in.

Lize: We also address sensitive topics upfront, such as sexual preferences or boundaries. Users can specify up to 10 personal deal breakers to fine-tune their matches.

How do deal breakers work?

Ruahan: They are customisable, and users can set them at any time. For instance, if you don't want to date a smoker, you won't be shown profiles of smokers.

Lize: After feedback from users, we added more deal-breaker options, such as preferences around religion, race or location, as well as things like where your pet sleeps – which isn't something we initially thought of, but it's very important when you're in a relationship.

Ruahan: This feature may slow down the matching process slightly, but it's worth it for the quality of connections.

How does Smooches ensure user safety?

Ruahan: Smooches is exclusively for South Africans. Users undergo a thorough identity verification

process, and our Zoom verification adds another layer of security as we're able to match the profile to the person. It weeds out those who might not be genuine.

Lize: And unlike most other apps, you cannot browse through profiles. You only see profiles of compatible matches after completing the survey. This privacy feature ensures users aren't exposed to everyone on the platform, unlike swipe-based apps where profiles are publicly accessible. **Ruahan:** Users can block anyone who makes them uncomfortable, with prompt support from our team to handle complaints. We've even added an in-app voice and messaging feature so people can interact safely without moving to WhatsApp.

How much does it cost to join Smooches?

Ruahan: Our joining fee is R1 999. Thereafter, there's a monthly fee of R290.

What are your plans?

Ruahan: Our main goal is to grow the user base so more people can find compatible matches. Ideally, satisfied users will share their success stories, encouraging more people to join.

Lize: Ultimately, we want Smooches to be a go-to for people serious about meaningful connections. If we can grow to 100 000 or 200 000 users, matching will become even smoother. Our long-term plan includes a phase where users who want companionship, not necessarily romance, can also join. It's part of our vision for the future. ❖

smooches.co.za

GREAT OFFER!

FAIRLADY
Smart Women

TO GET A 20% DISCOUNT
ON THE '7 STEPS TO YOUR
START-UP' BUSINESS COURSE
use the code **FSWFeb2025**

Sign up for the course using this code before 13 February 2025, and pay only **R760**, a 20% discount on the full course fee of R950. To sign up, visit smartwomen.fairlady.com