

People

I'm looking to build a brand big enough to bring me business

DAISY OKOTI

Ian Mbutia, 28, is a fourth year student at KCA University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. But, unlike other millennials who are eager to make a difference in their personal lives and society, going to school is not the only thing Ian does every day.

He is a photographer, filmmaker and disc jockey who goes by the name DJ Mavela. Research shows that one in five working millennials have more than two jobs. Reasons range from a need to have an outlet for their creativity, to catering to their needs and wants. Ian is a good case study for this. He is both a student and proprietor of a photography studio called Shots by Mavela. He has directed two short films titled *Cul de Sac* and *Dark Truth*, which are available on YouTube. On a good day, he can be booked for two or three events. He has played music in Nairobi, Meru, Nakuru and at an unplanned event in Rwanda.

"My interest in becoming a DJ started at a *disco matanga* (a funeral night vigil) in 2012. Someone at the event had a software called Virtual DJ which piqued my interest. I asked questions, downloaded the software (it's free) and started 'mixing songs'. That's how deejaying grabbed space in my heart," he says.

After Ian completed high school, his mother wanted him study computer packages, but he wanted to learn to deejay.

"My mum is a Christian and always associated deejaying with waywardness. I however refused to register for the computer packages. If you are in a similar situation, I'd say just push and look for ways to support yourself and grow your passion. Your parents will see the fruits later. Now, my mother has become my champion. She even brings me new clients," he says.

Ian eventually registered for a three-month course in Deejaying in 2016, and using the skills he had gained from using the Virtual Deejay software, he began getting invited to provide sound at events. However, at the beginning, more experienced deejays were not very supportive. They only allowed him to play for a short time at events, but even the short time was enough for him to showcase his mastery.

"After I completed my DJ classes, I started hosting summer pool parties at my school. The event brought together three DJs – myself and two others. We pulled together resources. For around sh30,000, we hired a venue, paid for sound equipment and catered for the ticketing and marketing. All the events were held at the KCB sportsground on Thika Road," he says.

Although the event initially targeted students at KCA University, the turnout also included students from Zetech and Kenyatta Universities.

The primary goal for hosting the event was for students to come together and interact. But are parties good for students? Ian sees them as a way to release pressure. They are also an avenue for students to socialise with their mates. Student leaders from different universities meet and exchange ideas. It was also a form of networking. If student leaders from other schools had events, they invited Ian and his team to help with planning. Finally, they provided a platform for other aspiring DJs to learn, and photographers could also come to take photos and earn money.

"Seven pool parties later, I closed shop. I needed to focus on my school work. It took at least two months to prepare for an event. The process involved campus tours and meeting with student representatives to promote the event, and this consumed a lot of my time," he says.

Armed with his experience, confidence and ability to interact with



crowds, Ian put himself out as a freelance DJ. His most interesting event was deejaying on EBRU TV for a gospel show in 2018.

"In August this year, I was a DJ at a wedding between a Kikuyu and a Borana. That was the most challenging event. I had a playlist but still, I had misses. I asked someone from the community to sit next to me and guide me on the playlist so that I maintain the hype. It made me realise that being versatile is important, and takes time," he says.

Now that he is already earning income, why is he focused on completing his degree?

"As much as I am talented, I know

that a degree is an added advantage and increases my access to opportunities," he says.

But his work does not come without challenges.

"I have had to let some opportunities go because I couldn't agree with a client on the quotation. There is also the issue of delayed payments. The process of building your audience is difficult, but I can't give up. When I was starting out, I did many events for free, so I advise young people not to be in a hurry to make money.

"I hope to get to the level of DJ Joe Mfalme, where my brand is big enough to bring me business," he says.

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CAMPUS WHISPERS

How I became a husband without dating the girl

BY BRIAN KHALAVAJI

In whose hands are we safe? I wonder for the umpteenth time. And every time I think about it, I am more convinced that one can never be safe in anyone else's hands. As I type this, I am beside myself with rage. I am very angry at my friend, a long-term crush who I was chasing in second year. Turns out, while I was busy growing a beard to appear likable and keep up with the trend, things were changing fast.

I went to great lengths to grow the facial hair, but by the time I had a full beard, campus girls were attracted to guys with dreadlocks. I jumped on the new trend and put artificial dreads. And still I couldn't win my crush's attention. By the time I was on my third challenge, which was learning to dance to West African Afro beats, my crush Connie was into men with good scents – *marashi ya woria*.

It was almost clear that we would never be an item, so I stopped trying. Later, much later, Connie told me that I "should have insisted" because "I was into you too." Ladies!

Yet the more I pursued her, the more I felt like I was dancing in the realm of the friend zone. At one point, Connie asked if she could put my name forward as a guarantor to secure a loan from a money lending app.

If you have been to university, you know you can easily sing "*msaada wangu unataka kwa Tala...*" or any other digital money lending app. On this particular day, Connie had committed to financing lunch for her new catch, a handsome Ugandan boy who had just joined our school. I agreed to help her because of our friendship. Deep down, though, I believed that allowing her to use my credentials as a guarantor would increase my chances of finally walking out of campus with a wife (Connie) after graduation.

The next few weeks of the semester saw her treat me to fries, a movie night, and later, she ditched the halfhearted side hugs and started offering me those never ending bear hugs. I was so willing to pay an annual subscription for those.

Later, it dawned on me that she was employing public relations tactics on me. That afternoon, my phone rang while I was chilling in my crib. "Your wife Connie has mentioned you as a guarantor, could you tell her to please pay her debt?" I froze. Connie? Mentioned me as her husband? Wasn't she busy gallivanting around campus with her cute Ugandan?

The caller ranted about the headache Connie had caused her and other agents, and I felt pity for her. But, I was also mad at Connie for making me her husband without my permission. She never gave me a chance to date her! I felt it was unfair to be used as a guarantor AND a husband.

When I told the caller that I was not Connie's husband, she started crying. I could tell that she was really intent on making Connie pay this debt. Or maybe she was a lastborn, and being Gen Z, debt collection was a tough job. Or maybe she was just sad that I was denying my responsibility as a husband. Whatever it was, I will never know.

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