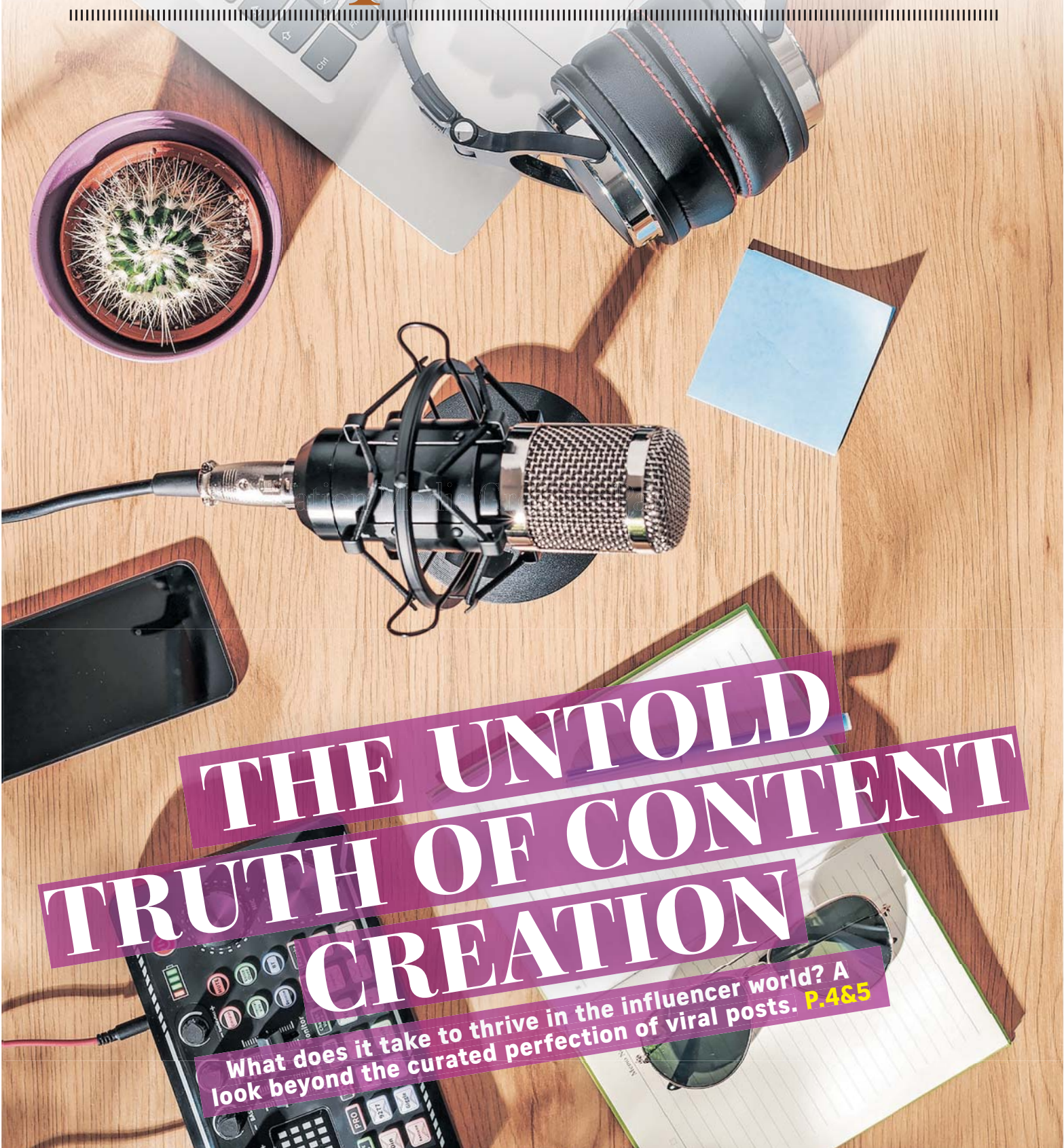


2 MyNetWork



THE UNTOLD TRUTH OF CONTENT CREATION

What does it take to thrive in the influencer world? A look beyond the curated perfection of viral posts. **P.4&5**

Nation Media Group "Paper Copy"

Nation Media Group "Paper Copy"

Podcast Review

So This Is Love by Julia Gaitho

This Is Love, hosted by Julia Gaitho, is an introspective podcast that takes listeners on a heart-felt exploration of love in its many forms—romance, heartbreak, healing, and self-discovery. Since its launch in 2022, the podcast has become a safe space for listeners seeking solace, understanding, and connection through shared experiences.

Julia's storytelling approach is raw, tender, and deeply relatable, weaving together personal narratives that invite listeners to reflect on how relationships past and present, shape our identities.

Each episode offers a window into the universal human experience of love, presenting stories that echo familiar emotions, from the sweetness of new beginnings to the ache of loss.

With every conversation, This Is Love dares to ask the timeless question: is it truly better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all? Julia's gentle yet insightful narration creates a sense of warmth, making listeners feel seen, heard, and less alone in their journeys.

Comedian JB Masanduku

T5

After battling alcoholism, artiste says he is excited about the next chapter in his life.

Renowned TV comedian Nathan Muya Kimani, popularly known as JB Masanduku, has long been a household name for his witty characters on various TV programmes.

However, the man behind the humour faced a challenging 2024, dealing with personal struggles, professional shifts, and a new calling.

In this candid interview, JB opens up about depression, rehab, rediscovering his faith, and charting a new course.

1. How would you describe your 2024?

The year 2024 for me was quite dramatic, to say the least. A lot happened, both good and bad. On one hand, I moved forward by starting work on several projects, but on the other hand, I had to confront some dark moments.

I fell into depression and ended up going to rehab around March or April. Thankfully, I only stayed for a month, and by God's grace, I came out of it stronger.

After rehab, I jumped back into work. I did two Showmax projects to reflect on how I had spent money unwisely in the past. I also collaborated with Maryanne Karanja on a project. The highlight of the projects was *NiliChoma*, which is a very personal story.

I also started writing a comedy special, which I plan to perform in March 2025.

This special is very personal; it's

about my journey and turning 35.

Apart from the comedy special, this year, I am working on two more shows.

One is for TV, and the other is with Netflix.

Yes, Netflix! It is a huge milestone for me, and I am beyond grateful.

I am also taking a break from alcohol, I have been sober for four months now. I wouldn't say I have completely stopped, but I am taking things one day at a time.

2. Looking back, what do you regret the most?

Honestly, my biggest regret is my journey with alcohol. It cost me a lot, my family, my career progress, and even my mental health.

Another thing I regret is slacking off at times.

Someone once told me, "hard work beats talent," which stuck with me. I have always been talented, but I didn't always put in the hard work. I feel like I am not where I am supposed to be, but I am determined to change that by working extra hard.

3. What do you think contributed to your struggles with alcohol?

I would say it is a combination of factors.

Sometimes it was peer pressure, other times it was financial stress.

But mostly, it was my mind running faster than it should. I stress easily, and alcohol became my fallback plan. Another challenge was the lack of support from my fami-

ly. They never fully accepted my career in comedy. Being an orphan made things even harder, but I have learned to rely on God.

4. You mentioned that you are now studying theology. What inspired that decision?

The inspiration came from my late father.

He was a well-known figure who eventually became an evangelist.

Before he passed on, he had built strong connections with prominent evangelists like Teresia Wairimu, Julian Kyula, and JB Masinde. I feel a deep sense of responsibility to journey what he started.

It is something I have always desired to do and now feels like the right time.

I began theology classes in November 2024, and I am already making good progress.

My goal is to become a pastor by the end of this year. It is a calling that has always been in my heart, and I am excited about this new chapter.

5. What do you celebrate the most about being in the entertainment industry?

The industry has helped me grow, especially financially.

Even though I am divorced, I have been able to support my ex-wife and children.

I would not say I am wealthy, but I am comfortable, and for that, I am grateful.

One thing I regret, though, is

not being tech-savvy. Nowadays, everything is on social media—TikTok, Instagram—and I have been more old-school. I would go do a show, and it would be aired on TV or written about in the papers.

This year, I plan to change that by being more vocal and active online.

I recently also recorded a song. It is not out yet because we are still mastering it, but I plan to release it soon with the help of DJs like Shinski and Kalonje.

I also plan to train young actors, as I am now a certified drama teacher at Little Fields Academy. This is the year of restoration and I am here to restore the 10 years I lost. With God's help, I will make it.

6. How do you balance your career and being a father?

Balancing my career and being a father is tough, especially since I am divorced.

I miss my children every day. My son is 11, and my daughter is nine. If I had my way, I would be with them all the time. Unfortunately, I only get to see them when their mother agrees. Despite the challenges, I remain hopeful. My goal is to rebuild my relationship with them and be more present in their lives. I also hope they learn from my mistakes. That is part of the reason I did the show *NiliChoma*, which was a very personal project.

I wanted young people, including my children, to learn from my journey and avoid making the same mistakes I did.

Hotspot

P-UNIT celebrates 20 years in style

If you grew up jamming to iconic hits like Kare and You Guy, this one is for you!

Legendary hip-hop trio P-Unit is marking an incredible 20 years in the music industry with an epic event set to go down on February 8th.

Dubbed #PUnitAt20Live, this celebration promises to be a night filled with nostalgia, good vibes, and of course, unforgettable performances. The venue is Mass House, Ngong Racecourse and the party kicks off at 2 PM till late.

"P-Unit has been in the game for 20 years, and we want to celebrate with you guys, our family, our fans. So on the 8th of Feb, mark your calendars. #PUnitAt20Live will be going down at Mass House on the Ngong Racecourse from 2 till late. Get your tickets now—let's make history together!" Frasha told My Network.



MOVIE

BY MICHAEL OCHIENG

CARRY-ON
Where: Netflix
Genre: Action, Thriller

Carry-On is a refreshing action thriller that brings back the charm of single-setting suspense films. Directed by Jaume Collet-Serra, the movie stars Taron Egerton as Ethan Kopek, a TSA agent who finds himself entangled in a high-stakes terrorist plot on Christmas Eve. The film kicks off with Ethan preparing for a routine day at work, only to be thrust into a life-or-death situation when a mysterious stranger, played by Jason Bateman, threatens his pregnant girlfriend, Nora (Sofia Carson). The villain's demand is simple yet chilling: allow a dangerous package to pass through security, or Nora will die.

What sets Carry-On apart is its ability to maintain tension and suspense throughout its runtime. The confined setting of an airport during one of the busiest travel days of the year adds to the claustrophobic atmosphere, reminiscent of classic action films like "Die Hard". The script, penned by T.J. Fixman, cleverly explores the moral dilemma faced by Ethan, making the audience ponder what they would do in a similar situation.

Taron Egerton delivers a compelling performance as Ethan, balancing vulnerability and determination. His understated approach allows the action and supporting characters to shine. Jason Bateman, in a rare villainous role, excels with his menacing yet restrained portrayal, making his character both terrifying and believable.

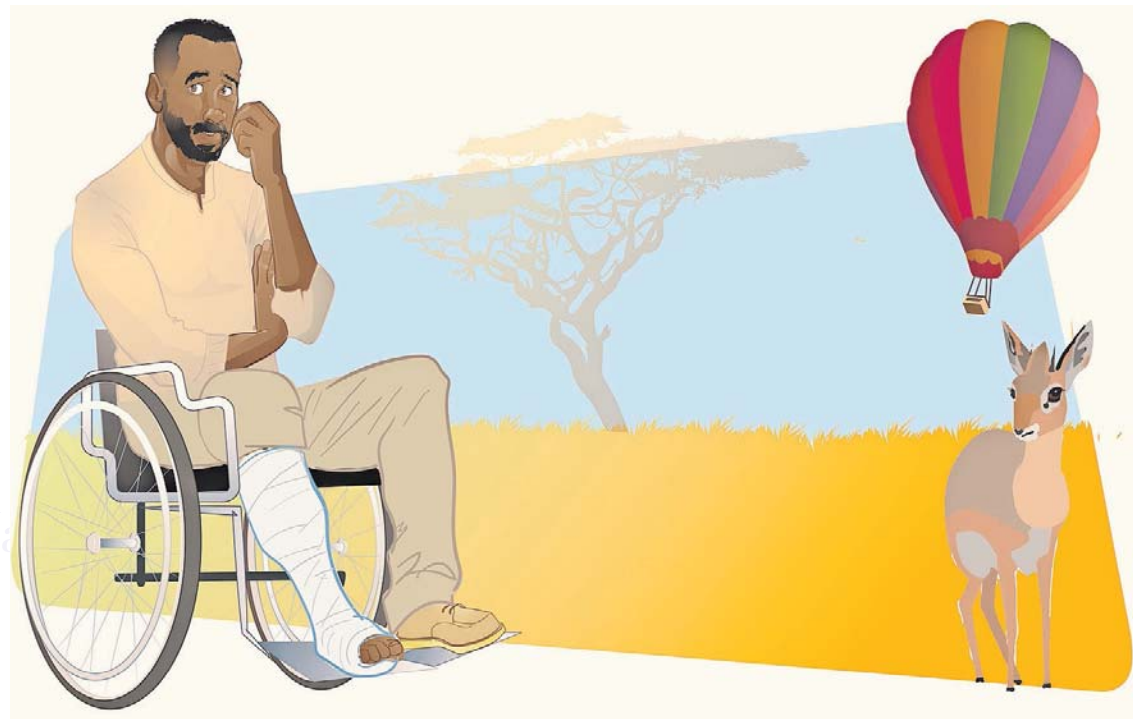
The supporting cast, including Logan Marshall-Green, Theo Rossi, and Danielle Deadwyler, adds depth to the narrative. Deadwyler, in particular, stands out as an agent piecing together the puzzle, bringing a sense of urgency and intelligence to the film.

Collet-Serra's direction ensures that the film moves at a brisk pace, with well-choreographed action sequences and moments of genuine suspense. The film's homage to the action thrillers of the past is evident, yet it manages to carve out its own identity.

To sum up, Carry-On is a thrilling ride that keeps viewers on the edge of their seats.

Safara I have made a New Year's resolution to order more books this year.

Why the Hustler is quitting alcohol in 2025



BY MIKE SAFARA

Happy New Year! The last few weeks passed by in a blur for your Hustler here. You will remember that on the last Friday of the year, we beloved cremated my first cousin, George Safari Safara?

Well, by that Saturday, we were off to the Mara – Ngoswani, near Olara – for much needed soul rest after the fire we had gone through.

The trip was financed by Margie, the oldest of the three surviving siblings there, although Josh works in IT in New York, and sis Angie with a 'gava' agency in Los Angeles – and with Margie married for decades to some loaded Texan, they have chapa.

I am the 'poor cousin' in this family crew, so they 'bebad' me for free, and I have reached that stage in life which every hustler reaches... where you check pride at the door. We were received by the proprietors Mimi Losell and Josip Kovanovich.

After checking into that Mara Conservancy late in the afternoon, and after a siesta, I took a cool shower in my cabin, then went out to join the Safara siblings for dinner. Later we all went to the gazebo, which had a private bar full of drinks. As Angie and Margie sipped

wine, Josh and I hit the whiskey hard, as we all told fond stories of our memories of our dear departed brother George Safari.

The ladies went to bed at about midnight, but Josh and I hang around the gazebo to drink more, and reminisce some more.

Hours later, we could hear the laugh of hyenas nearby, and I yelled into the dark:

"If you hyenas eat junk every night, like carcasses, and get to mate only once a year, then what the heck are you always laughing about?"

Josh literally fell down cracking, holding his sides that were splitting with mirth.

Two hours later, although I had no memory of getting back to the cabin, someone was banging on my cabin door.

"Yoohoo, lazy head," it was my cousin Angela, "time for the morning game drive."

I was about to decline – my head was dry and very heavy – but I recalled Margie had paid five grand each for this drive, which Angie called a 'mobile scenic healing clinic...'. Such a California name for a van.

It was not a van – it was one of those safari Land Cruisers where one can sit on the rooftop to spot wanayama better, with my two lady cousins already making ready notes on 'vichwa kubwa', the Big

I've decided to quit kunywaing, or at least keep it to just moderate wine drinking on occasion, in the year 2025.

Mike Safara



Five of lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo.

Josh and I sneaked a leftover bottle of Scotch from our previous night's talks, sat on the rooftop, surreptitiously passing it to sip between us as his sisters spoke below in excited tones as we saw dik diks, elephants and heard a lion roar.

Then as I stood up with binoculars on the Cruiser top, Josh shouted 'leopard' as I saw some shade move in a tree very near me, and on reflex, I leaped off the car;

There was a crackling sound as I landed on a branch, before a lightning bolt of pure pain shot up my

leg, spine, and all the way to my head, before I passed out.

When I awoke, it was in a hospital bed.

Turns out, when I jumped from the Cruiser, I had fractured my ankle and dislocated my knee. I read a message on my cast scrawled in thick marker pen:

"Sorry cuzo! Thought twas a leopard, but twas just a monkey, Josh."

That man-key Josh was the chap who came to discharge me in my wheelchair on Monday morning, and would come religiously at 8 am, 1 pm, 4pm and 7pm to wheel me out for meals with his sisters, who went for game drives, hikes, safari walks and even one hot air balloon safari like regular tourists...

As there was no TV in the Mara Conservancy, I found myself reading all day for leisure for the first time in my life, a short story crime collection by Nesbo (Margie's) and an Alice Munro anthology (Angie's), and made a New Year's resolution to order books from Nuria Bookstore upon my return to Nairobi.

Being on medication and unable to drink, I've also decided to quit kunywaing, or at least keep it to just moderate wine drinking on occasion, in the year 2025.

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MyNetWork Cover Story



What they DON'T tell you about being a CONTENT CREATOR

The constant pressure to produce engaging content, gain followers, and stay relevant, leads to stress, burnout, and even feelings of inadequacy.

BY GEORGE D. MWENDWA

In the age of digital transformation, social media influencers have emerged as some of the most prominent and impactful personalities. They fill our feeds with seemingly perfect lives, stunning aesthetics, and aspirational lifestyles. To Gen Z, this career path often seems like the ultimate dream—a gateway to fame, free products, and lucrative brand deals, all while doing what you love. But behind the polished posts and viral videos lies a complex, demanding, and often misunderstood profession that isn't all glitz and glamour.

For many young people, the allure of becoming a social media influencer is undeniable. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are rife with individuals who have turned their passions—whether it's fashion, gaming, fitness, or even comedy—into full-blown careers. The concept of monetising creativity while connecting with a global audience feels like a win-win. It's a far cry from traditional 9-to-5 jobs, making it an especially attractive prospect for Gen Z, who value flexibility, autonomy, and self-expression.

Yet, while the success stories of influencers with millions of followers dominate the headlines, the reality is far more nuanced. For starters, content creation is no

longer just about posting pretty pictures or funny videos; it's a highly competitive industry requiring relentless dedication, strategic thinking, and often, a significant financial investment. From sourcing professional-grade equipment to editing software, building an online presence requires more than a smartphone and a creative idea.

Moreover, influencers face the pressure of maintaining a curated image while consistently engaging their audience. The constant demand for fresh, relatable, and engaging content can lead to burnout, particularly when combined with the pressure of algorithms that prioritise visibility. A single dip in engagement or a misstep in content can result in the loss of followers—and with them, potential income.

Additionally, the financial stability of influencing as a career is far from guaranteed. For every influencer who signs a six-figure brand deal, there are countless others hustling to earn a livable income. Many rely on multiple income streams—sponsorships, merchandise, affiliate marketing, and even crowdfunding—to sustain their careers. This reality is often obscured by the glamorous veneer of success portrayed online.

Then there's the question of authenticity. As influencers navigate the fine line

between personal expression and paid partnerships, many grapple with maintaining their credibility while promoting products or services. This tightrope walk is further complicated by the scrutiny of an ever-vigilant audience that values transparency.

The mental toll of being constantly online and in the public eye is another facet often overlooked. Influencers deal with trolling, cyberbullying, and the weight of maintaining their relevance in an ever-changing digital landscape. Unlike traditional jobs, there's little separation between their personal and professional lives, as every moment can become content.

We dive deeper into the realities of life as a social media influencer—the struggles, sacrifices, and the grit that often goes unnoticed. We shed light on the duality of a career that, while fulfilling for some, comes with its own unique challenges.

For those considering stepping into this world, understanding the full picture is crucial. Behind the glamour lies an industry that demands as much hustle and resilience as any other.

Welcome to the unfiltered truth behind the glossy façade of social media influencing.

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Always stay grounded, be a constant learner, and surround yourself with people who have overcome failures. If I could start over, I'd prioritise learning and invest in the right tools.

Diana Daisy



Diana Daisy, Content creator, travel and lifestyle

My journey as a content creator began in 2019 after attending the Churchill Show, where I realised my passion for the stage and storytelling.

Initially, I focused on comedy, portraying a tough woman character, but I have since transitioned to travel content. My current niche involves exploring global cultures and traditions, having visited 15 countries so far.

This has allowed me to showcase unique practices like labia elongation and cultural norms in places like Malawi and Malaysia. A breakthrough moment came when I collaborated with Cartoon Comedian, which introduced me to a wider audience.

My subsequent travels expanded my reach to international audiences. However, the journey hasn't been without challenges. The competitive nature of Kenyan content creation demands constant innovation and skill refinement.

To stay relevant, I embrace change and trends while remaining authentic. Sacrifices, like postponing investments or time with family, have been necessary to pursue my dreams.

Burnout is an occasional hurdle, but I manage it by resting adequately without overindulging.

Monetising content has been another challenge. At the moment YouTube is my primary income source. For aspiring influencers, I advise combining content creation with other ventures for stability.

Remaining authentic while collaborating with brands is essential. One should align with those that match their values to ensure genuine partnerships.

Criticism, including personal attacks and misconceptions about influencers, has taught me resilience.

My advice: always stay grounded, be a constant learner, and surround yourself with people who have overcome failures. If I could start over, I'd prioritise learning and investing in the right tools.

Content creation is an evolving field, and success requires passion, humility, and adaptability. For those pursuing it, remember: remain authentic, embrace change, and never stop learning."

Behind every post is dedication, hard work, and a relentless drive to connect with my audience

Githuamani



Githuamani (Isaac Waweru), Content creator Lifestyle and humour

I started my journey fueled by a passion for storytelling and connecting with people. My goal was to create relatable content that inspires and entertains. I began small, posting videos on TikTok and Facebook. Positive feedback motivated me to take it seriously. My breakthrough came when a simple TikTok video about daily Kenyan struggles went viral, which showed the potential of my content.

The biggest challenge is staying consistent and innovative in a competitive space. Balancing engagement with authenticity is tough, especially when battling burnout. I've sacrificed financial stability at the start, personal time, and privacy. To manage burnout, I take intentional breaks, delegate tasks, and prioritise offline time with loved ones.

Initially, I monetised my work by collaborating with small brands for free to build

a portfolio. This led to partnerships with brands like Betfalme and Fantom Group. While my income is now sustainable, it requires constant effort. For anyone pursuing this career, I recommend saving, diversifying income streams, and investing in growth through better equipment and training.

I work only with brands I genuinely believe in and ensure the content feels natural. Criticism and trolling come with the territory, but I focus on constructive feedback and ignore negativity.

This career isn't as easy or glamorous as it seems. It demands strategy, consistency, and resilience. Essential qualities include creativity, authenticity, and adaptability.

If I could start over, I'd prioritise networking and invest in quality content early. Behind every post is dedication, hard work, and a relentless drive to connect with my audience authentically."





Being constantly online hasn't negatively affected me, but I recognise the risk of social media addiction. Balance is crucial; I prioritise time in the real world.

Henry Newton

The biggest challenge has been monetisation. In Kenya, relying solely on TikTok for income is tough.

Eliking Trendz

We remain true to our values, only collaborating with brands aligned with our faith and morals. Criticism is part of the territory.

Elizabeth Ocampo



Henry Newton, Content creator, Comedy

"I never imagined I would be pursuing comedy professionally. It started after spending time with Flaqo (Henry's comedian brother), who had become a sensation online. Inspired, I decided to give it a try in 2020. Over time, I discovered my knack for it, and the rest is history.

My comedy is unique—it captivates people instantly because it's different. My first viral skit, "Why You Should Never Pick Up a Lady with Kids from a Club," hit in 2022. Although I wished it had gone mega-viral, it marked a memorable milestone.

Fear of poverty is my greatest motivator. Having experienced it, I push myself daily to create. Challenges along the way? I see them as opportunities in disguise. They've shaped me into who I am today.

Sometimes I experience creativity blocks, but I take them in stride. Burnout is more common and when it strikes, I take a break, rest, and recharge.

I've learned to avoid the pressure of pleasing audiences—I focus on creating content that I love, confident my audience will too.

Initially, monetising content was tough. I shifted my focus to quality, and sustainable income followed naturally. To aspiring creators, I say: focus on the craft, not the money.

Authenticity is key. With brand collaborations, I ensure my values align with theirs.

Being constantly online hasn't negatively affected me, but I recognise the risk of social media addiction. Balance is crucial; I prioritise time in the real world.

The misconceptions about influencers? Many people think we're walking ATMs. Financial requests can be overwhelming, even when we don't have much.

Success in this field requires consistency and unique creativity. This journey has been challenging but immensely rewarding. Comedy is my all-in-all, and I have no regrets."



The Ocampos (@weareocampo), Content creators, family and faith driven lifestyle

"The pandemic was the turning point for us as a family. In June 2020, we finally started vlogging, something we had long desired but kept postponing. As a family and faith-driven lifestyle duo, our content reflects our lives as young pastors with four children. We share everyday experiences to inspire others and serve as a living example, extending our ministry beyond the pulpit.

Our major breakthrough came when media attention highlighted our unique arranged marriage story. Meeting as strangers on our wedding day sparked curiosity, leading to TV interviews that significantly boosted our subscribers and followers.

Balancing content creation with enjoying life's simple pleasures has been a challenge. Everything feels like potential content, making it hard to be fully present. The biggest sacrifice is the loss of privacy—our lives, including intimate moments like a birth vlog, are shared online.

In 2023, we vlogged daily for a year, which led to burnout. Slowing down in 2024 taught us the value of breaks and exploring interests outside content creation.

Monetisation came quickly—within two months of launching our channel. Sustainable income followed through YouTube and brand partnerships, allowing us to start a business. The influence of our network has been invaluable—proving that "your network is your net worth."

We remain true to our values, only collaborating with brands aligned with our faith and morals. Criticism is part of the territory, but we stay focused on our principles, knowing it's impossible to please everyone.

Content creation is not a one-size-fits-all formula. The digital space is vast and the possibilities are endless.

Success in this field requires hard work, discipline, and perseverance. Finding your niche is key—once you do, execution and consistency will follow.

Our journey, with its challenges and triumphs, has been a testament to growth and grace."

Elizabeth Ocampo.

Eliking Trendz (Elijah Maina), Content creator, blogger and news content creator

"I've always loved art. Back in high school, I was in the drama club (dance), which fueled my passion for creativity. I started creating content alone in my bedsitter in 2019, uploading videos on YouTube. Later, I ventured into TikTok, which eventually became my breakthrough platform.



My niche is blogging and news content creation. The inspiration came from conversations with friends who often said they don't watch the news due to lack of time. Recognising the problem, I created a solution, and my first news video hit 100k views in less than 24 hours—it was a significant milestone that confirmed I was on the right path.

The biggest challenge has been monetisation. In Kenya, relying solely on TikTok for income is tough, so I sought alternatives like working with corporate brands and monetising my Telegram

channel. To aspiring influencers, I recommend having a fallback plan to sustain yourself until your content becomes profitable.

Staying relevant is about community. I don't just see my followers as numbers; they're like family. This connection keeps me grounded and engaged. However, I've made sacrifices, like leaving my life in Eldoret to pursue content creation in Nairobi.

Burnout was a challenge when I used to create content daily. To protect my mental health, I now take weekends off to spend with family and friends.

I also balance authenticity with brand collaborations by thoroughly vetting companies before partnering with them.

Criticism? I've faced it, especially in the beginning. My approach is simple: ignore it. For mental health, I take regular breaks to avoid the stress of being constantly online.

Misconceptions about influencers abound—many think we're all wealthy, but the reality is different. Success requires skills like video editing, lighting and storytelling. If I could start over, I'd prioritise my mental health from the beginning."

Focus How one Kenyan athlete is pioneering pickleball and inspiring a new generation.

Brian Omwando: Serving big dreams on Kenya's Pickleball court

Q&A

BY GEOFFREY ANENE

What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a popular paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis. It is played both indoors and outdoors on a badminton-sized court with a slightly modified tennis net. Players use a paddle and a plastic ball with holes, similar to a whiffle ball. The game can be played as singles or doubles, and it involves volleys, serves, and groundstrokes.

Pickleball is slowly gaining popularity in Kenya. Tell us how your dream to play it started. My dream to become a pickleball player began during the coronavirus pandemic. I left tennis because I found more success in pickleball, which has opened many doors for me. I started playing a few years after the sport was introduced in Kenya in 2018 by Japan-based professional pickleball player Daniel Moore at Jim Davies Tennis Academy in Nairobi. Daniel grew up in Kenya and brought the sport he had learned abroad back home.

Who has nurtured your talent to the level you are at today?

I would say an amazing team, friends, and family have supported me. They've helped me reach where I am today. I live by my favourite slogan: Attitude is everything.

Tell us more about your slogan.

I was raised in Kibera slums from 2000 to 2017. There is a perception that Kibera is all about drugs and crime and that nothing good can come out of it. I love the slogan because it reflects my upbringing. Despite the challenges, peer pressure, and stereotypes, I grew up decently. How you react determines what you become and how you handle your day-to-day activities. Playing tennis and focusing on academics kept me away from drugs and crime. Sports have always been my comfort and safe zone.

Have you ticked everything off your pickleball bucket list?

I haven't achieved everything on my bucket list yet. However, I celebrate every win, embrace every loss, and practice daily to improve. My biggest dream is to play in the Professional Pickleball Association (PPA) Tour. I also dream of seeing Kenyan pickleball players dominate on big stages.

What has hindered you from achieving everything on your bucket list?

Most pickleball competitions are held outside Kenya, and travelling is expensive. Getting visas for different countries is also challenging.

What other challenges have you faced in your pickleball journey?

Gaining support is a significant challenge since the sport is still new in Kenya.

What have you achieved as a pickleball player?

I've won numerous accolades, including:
2023 Uganda Open: Gold in men's singles, bronze in men's doubles.
2023 Nairobi Open: Gold in singles, bronze in men's and mixed doubles.
2023 Uganda Tour: Gold in men's singles, silver in men's doubles.
2024

Tanzania Open: Silver in men's singles, gold in mixed doubles, bronze in men's doubles.

13th African Games in Ghana: Silver in men's singles, gold in men's doubles, bronze in mixed doubles.

2024 Nairobi Open: Bronze in men's doubles.

What does it take to earn such a basketful of accolades?

It takes a lot of dedication and passion. Most of the expenses are covered through self-sponsorship or with the help of friends and family.

What is your best and worst moment in pickleball so far?

My best moment was hosting the first Nairobi Open in August 2023, just months

after starting the Nairobi Pickleball Club.

We hosted 60 players from six countries during the inaugural edition. Winning a medal at the African Games and setting the pace for the Kenyan team was also a high moment for me.

My worst moment was losing in the mixed doubles semi-finals at the Tanzania Open this year, where we were the defending champions.

Is pickleball an expensive sport to play?

The equipment costs between Sh9,000 and Sh30,000 and can last for a year. With more people picking up the sport, my mission is to increase access to equipment, especially since most high-quality gear currently comes from the USA.

Who is your role model in pickleball?

Federico Staksrud from Argentina, the world's top-ranked pickleballer. I admire his style of play and his composure, even under pressure.

How do you balance pickleball with other sports?

I dedicate one day a week to other sports and the rest of the week to pickleball, depending on my schedule. On average, I train for five hours a day.

What life lessons have you learned from pickleball?

I've learned to approach every endeavour with patience and proper planning. Never be afraid to try something new.

Apart from pickleball, what else do you do?

I enjoy reading books on self-improvement, finance, and personal development. I also play tennis and squash with friends to stay active. Coaching pickleball at the Nairobi Pickleball Club is another passion of mine.

Speaking of loved ones, how do they feel about you playing pickleball?

My mum has been my biggest supporter since my tennis days.

She travelled with me to tournaments and has always encouraged me to keep pushing.

Lastly, what does a typical day in pickleball look like for you?

My day starts with a morning warm-up focusing on footwork. I practise dinks, resets, and groundstroke drills on both forehand and backhand. This routine helps keep my skills sharp.

In Brief

A Pickleball pioneer in Kenya

- Brian Omwando is recognised as one of Kenya's leading pickleball athletes.

- Pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis and is among the world's fastest-growing sports.

Early life

- Born in 1996, Brian attended Joseph Kang'ethe and Lang'ata Primary Schools and St Charles Mute-go Secondary School in Nairobi.
- Raised by a single mother, he is the firstborn in a family of two children.

Journey to Pickleball

- Played tennis competitively from 2007 to 2022 before transitioning to pickleball.

- Despite limited success in tennis, he has achieved significant milestones in pickleball, winning numerous medals across Africa.

Upcoming competition

- Brian is set to compete at the Egypt Open in 2025, representing Kenya on an international stage.

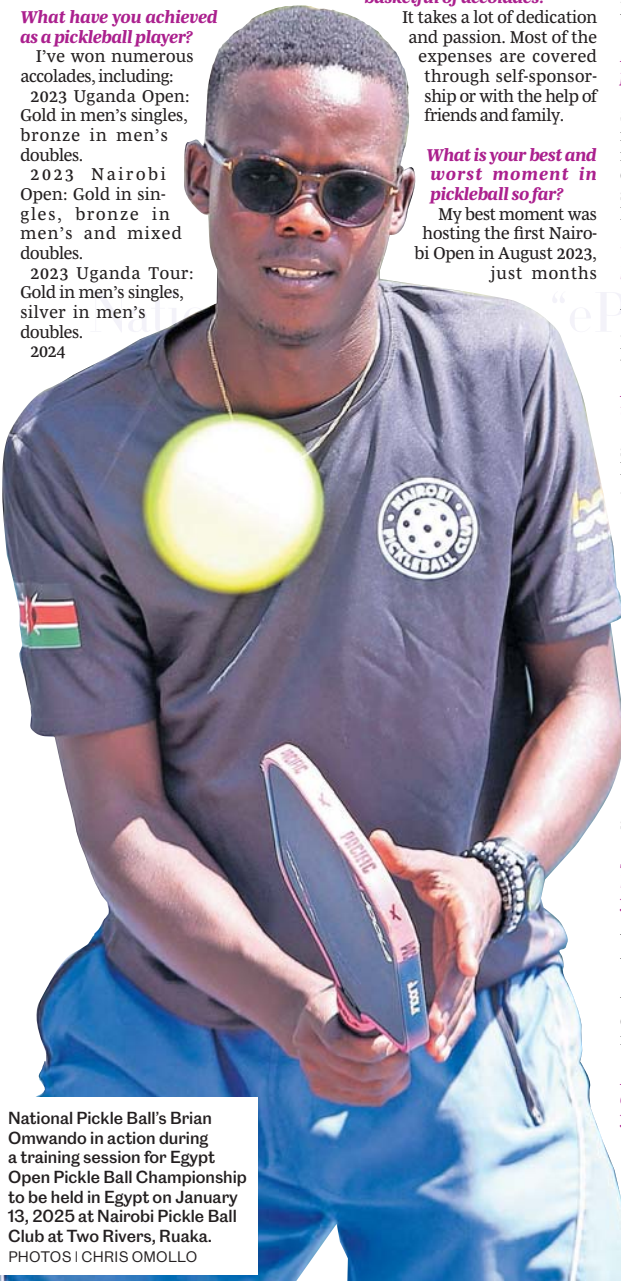
Founder and advocate

- Established the Nairobi Pickleball Club, where he serves as head coach, mentoring new players and promoting the sport locally.

- Founded BOK Equipment, Africa's first pickleball equipment brand, to address the scarcity of locally available gear, most of which currently comes from the USA.

Legacy

- Brian is dedicated to growing pickleball in Kenya and across Africa, inspiring others through his achievements and commitment to accessibility.



National Pickle Ball's Brian Omwando in action during a training session for Egypt Open Pickle Ball Championship to be held in Egypt on January 13, 2025 at Nairobi Pickle Ball Club at Two Rivers, Ruaka.
PHOTOS | CHRIS OMOLLO



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