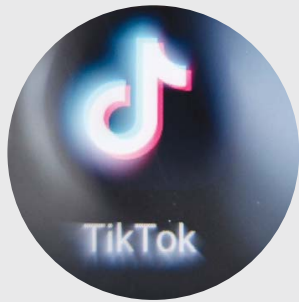


★ TALKING ABOUT...



TikTok blacks out choking challenge

The “choking challenge”, which consists of holding your breath as long as possible until passing out, is going viral on TikTok.

But far from the funny or superficial videos, this challenge is far more dangerous.

Also known as the “blackout challenge”, this practice can cause fainting, brain damage, convulsions, lifelong disabilities and even death.

This kind of “game” has been talked about for decades, under various names, including the “scarf game”.

At least 82 American children and teenagers (from six to 19 years old) died because of it between 1995 and 2007, according to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

One of the latest victims was Milagros Soto, a 12-year-old Argentine girl.

Last year, the Daily Mail reported two British boys, Leon Brown, 14, and Archie Battersbee, 12, lost their lives to the same viral trend. Their parents filed a complaint against TikTok, which they believe is responsible for encouraging the boys to engage in a dangerous practice.

Is the social network responsible?

In 2021, two American families filed a complaint against TikTok after the deaths of their eight and nine-year-old daughters they said were victims of the “blackout challenge”.

In their complaint, reported by The Independent, the parents singled out the ability of the algorithm to present dangerous, harmful, even deadly content for underage users.

By constantly renewing content through algorithms, users could come across inappropriate, even upsetting content.

A TikTok spokesperson told Australia’s 7news the hashtag dedicated to the challenge had been banned from the platform for some time, so “when someone searches for it they are shown a message that links them to our safety centre”.

– AFP

Footloose ... and fancy

MSWENKO FOOTWEAR: TAKING ON THE WORLD ONE STEP AT A TIME

» Founder hopes to grow brand into social enterprise people will love forever.

Hein Kaiser

The entrepreneurial bug already bit Kabelo Selekololo when he was 10 years old. He looked after his aunt’s stock of beers and soft drinks at home, and saw the profit potential of running your own business.

Fast forward to 2022, and he launched a sneaker brand.

In between, Kabelo sold custom wooden wristwatches, graduated from his tertiary studies in multimedia and made pocket money as a photographer.

He also published of an online magazine seven years ago.

It’s almost as if his journey is a bucket list check list.

He is passionate about everything he does, deep dives into every endeavour and success almost seems inevitable.

Mswenko Footwear, a brand only three months old, is his star-turn.

In your own words, tell us about your journey and how your love of footwear came about?

The story of Mswenko dates back to 2014, when I had my first job during my last semester.

I found myself buying new sneakers almost every month, but those particular sneakers were made for specific types of clothes and occasions.

I used to jog in the evenings and wondered if there was a possibility of having an all-in-one type of shoe that one could wear for jogging and for casual wear-ing. That’s where it all started.

Your shoes carry an unmistakable bling signature, where did that come from?

I was born and raised in the North West, in Rustenburg – some call it the Platinum City. That’s where the idea of the “bling” or shiny element comes from. I wanted to add something that would represent where I come from.

The shiny shapes are part of our brand identity. We feature them on our marketing materials like banners and they are also on the shoe box.

Why are sneakers such an important, stock standard wardrobe item?

Sneakers are a fashion statement. The sneaker culture has evolved over the years, and they have become a way for people to express their personality and fashion style.

What would you never pair sneakers with?

It’s a tricky

question because they are versatile and can be worn with anything. But wearing a sneaker with an evening gown is a no-no.

How has business been going and what are your plans for the brand?

It has been three months now and the response has been more than what we expected. More people want to get their feet in a pair of Mswenko sneakers. We have a few celebrities who have endorsed our product.

There is more groundwork to build reputation and awareness for the brand. We do this by engaging and answering every single question that arises on our WhatsApp and social media. We also attend social events.

We also ask for feedback from our customers. They suggested new colours, more sizes and a lay by system.

We are launching a “buy now, pay later” facility on our website, where our customers can own the sneakers before they pay for them. This is to make sure everyone can afford and be proud to wear a brand that gives back.

If your sneakers were a song, what would it be?

The song that comes to mind is Beyoncé’s *I Was Here*. My vision for Mswenko is to grow it as a social enterprise that will live in people’s hearts forever.

It’s not a business focused solely on profit-making, but a brand that will continue to make a social impact for as long as it exists. So, I was here, I lived, I loved ... don’t get me started...

What’s the most challenging part of being a footwear fashion entrepreneur?

Probably the most challenging aspect of the business is discovering new problems and customer challenges every single day.

Customers have different feet and they don’t wear the same sizes for all shoes.

Some wear halves, some want certain colours, some think the price is too high and some say it’s too low and they won’t buy because they don’t know the brand yet. I read these feedbacks in awe and fascination every time. It can be challenging sometimes.



Pictures: Supplied