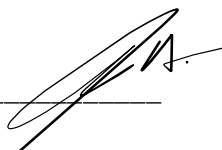# CENTRE FOR FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

FULL NAME:          Anelisa Mzimela
STUDENT NUMBER:  MZMANE006
CONTACT NUMBER: 0817680996
COURSE CODE:      FAM2017S
TOPIC:              Profile Final
DUE DATE:          4 September 2024, 11:55 pm
SEMINAR LEADER:   Aaisha Dadi-Patel

## Plagiarism Declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.

2. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work(s) of other people has been acknowledged through citation cited and referenced.

3. This essay is my own work.

4. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

5. I have done the word processing and formatting of this assignment myself.

6. I have used a spell and grammar check with a UK language setting before submitting the essay.

7. I have double-checked all proper names and references.

Signature: _____

Date:__4 September 2024_____

# TikTok to Tech-Start Up: The Rise of Thando Mzimela-Ntuli

By: Anelisa Mzimela



*Thando Mzimela-Ntuli TikTok Content Creator and Co-founder of UniMark photographed in September 2024.*
*(Credits: Anelisa Mzimela)*

In 2022, a young charismatic man quickly became a viral sensation on TikTok in a world dominated by fleeting trends and viral moments. Thando Mzimela-Ntuli is a trailblazer, the first Black Head Boy of Westville Boys' High School and a second-year Information Systems student at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He co-founded tech startup, UniMark, which aims to revolutionise how students connect with local goods and services.

The moment that catapulted Thando into the social media spotlight was the infamous "Word of the Day" video. The challenge was a simple question where participants were

asked to share an inspiring or interesting word. Thando, known for his articulate nature, took the challenge in stride. When a fellow student asked him for the Word of the Day, he responded with "pulchritudinous," a term that refers to something of indescribable beauty. The dense and obscure word caught the internet's attention, and the video quickly went viral. Reflecting on that moment, Thando laughs. "It's funny because I had no idea what TikTok even was at the time. But there I was, trying to be helpful, and suddenly people were calling me 'Mr. Pulchritudinous.'" He shares, "It's like I became this character online, and that was just the beginning."

What truly set Thando apart was his ability to evolve beyond this initial viral moment. After his viral debut, Thando made a conscious decision to pivot his content toward something more meaningful. Recognising the platform he had gained, he began to share aspects of his culture and the pride he holds in it. "I realised that people are interested in who I am and what I stand for," he explains. "So, I used my platform to introduce them to something that I hold very dear—my Zulu heritage."



*A dynamic snapshot of Thando showcasing the vibrant Zulu traditional dance of Ukusina. (Credit: Anelisa Mzimela)*

TikTok became more than just a social media platform for Thando – it became a place for storytelling. His passion for cinema, filming, and editing found a perfect outlet in [TikTok videos](#) that celebrated his cultural identity. Despite the pressures that come with being labelled an "influencer," Thando remained true to his roots, refusing to be boxed in by expectations. "Sometimes art needs to be spontaneous, not scheduled. I try to run away from this idea of me being an influencer as much as possible," he stated. For Thando, creating content is an art form, a way to tell stories that resonate deeply with his audience.

As Thando's following grew, so did his desire to create something impactful. Alongside his co-founder, Rorisang Mathabe, Thando launched UniMark. UniMark isn't your typical startup—it's a platform designed by students, for students, to connect university students to local goods and services offered by their peers. The idea for UniMark was born out of a shared frustration that Thando and Rorisang experienced during their time at UCT. Rorisang, unable to find a local barber, and Thando, an introvert struggling to navigate a new city, recognised a gap in the market: there was no central platform where students could easily access trusted service providers.

UniMark was their solution—a digital marketplace which Thando describes as an "online supermarket" where students could easily find and book services provided by fellow students and local entrepreneurs. "UniMark really is a story of student entrepreneurs connecting with each other," Thando explained. At its core, UniMark is more than just a business – it is a mission to create a space where student entrepreneurs to thrive.

What sets UniMark apart from other startups is its core philosophy: impact over revenue. "I'm not in the business of making money – I'm in the business of making lives better," Thando emphasised.  Thando's eyes light up as he talks about the impact UniMark has had. "We've had businesses tell us that their sales have skyrocketed since

they started using UniMark. And that's what it's all about – giving these young entrepreneurs and local businesses the tools they need to succeed." Thando has big plans for the platform, which is already in the process of onboarding student businesses. It is already gaining traction at UCT, but Thando and his co-founder Rorisang have their sights set on expanding to other universities across South Africa.

For Thando, UniMark is not just a business venture, but a beacon of hope for other young Black students who might be unsure of their place in the entrepreneurial world. "The challenge isn't just about starting a business," Thando reflects. "It's about doing something you don't often see people who look like you doing." He emphasizes the rarity of Black tech startups, adding, "It becomes hard to strive for something you've never seen before." This, he believes, highlights the need for more representation—to demonstrate that success is possible and to inspire others to take that leap.



*Thando proudly wears the Knitwear set from the Iqhugwane S24 Collection by Refuse Clothing; a South African menswear brand inspired by Zulu heritage. (Credits: Anelisa Mzimela)*

When asked what advice he would give to other students aspiring to turn their ideas into reality, Thando's answer is as insightful as it is straightforward. "Stop leaving things as just ideas," he advises. " The only thing that holds young people back is fear—fear of failure, fear of the unknown. But here's the thing: it's okay to fail. It's part of the process." Thando emphasizes the importance of perseverance, saying, "You have to believe in what you're doing." He goes on to explain, "It's okay to stumble along the way. If you truly believe in your idea, it's harder to be shaken from making it work." His journey with UniMark is a testament to his belief in collaboration and community. "That's how you make it work—by working together, by building something as a team." This principle, he asserts, applies not only to business but to life as well.

Thando Mzimela-Ntuli is a remarkable example of how passion, cultural pride, and a commitment to impact can come together to create something truly special. From his accidental rise to fame on TikTok to his purposeful transition into tech entrepreneurship, Thando's journey is one of inspiration and empowerment. As Thando continues to grow both as a content creator and an entrepreneur, one thing is certain: that his impact on the UCT community and beyond is just beginning.

Word count: 1012

## AGREEMENT BETWEEN INTERVIEWEE AND STUDENT

**STUDENT NAME:** Anelisa Mzimela
**COURSE CODE:** FAM2017S
**TUTOR/LECTURER:** Aaisha Dadi-Patel
**ASSIGNMENT TITLE:** Profile Draft

### Note for student

This form is to be discussed and signed before interviewing.

No student is permitted to interview or photograph a child (here defined as a person under the age of 18 at the time of the interview) without the parent or guardian's consent, and even then they should consult with a permanent member of staff before proceeding with the assignment. No student may interview a child in state care at any point. Students wishing to interview victims of any kind of abuse or discrimination should consult a permanent member of staff before doing so. Students who want to interview persons suffering from any kind of mental illness should consult with a permanent member of staff before doing so.

### Notes for interviewee

The assignment for which you are agreeing to be interviewed or photographed is for a University of Cape Town journalism course. It will be read by the student's instructor and an external examiner, as well as the student's fellow learners. This means that your agreement to participate is mainly in the interest of helping the student with an assignment, so that he/she can practise reporting and writing and/or research skills.

The question of publication is uncertain, however. The student cannot promise that the research will be published, but there is a chance that, if the research is good enough, he/she will be urged to publish it in an academic journal.

Interviewee's Full Name: Thando Mzimela-Ntuli

Interviewee's Contact Phone Number: 069 118 3566

**To be filled in by interviewee:**

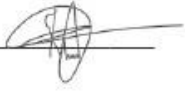I agree to be interviewed for a student reseearch assignment: Y ✓ N____

I agree to have the interview recorded: Y ✓ N____

I agree for the student to take notes during the interview: Y ✓ N____

I agree to have my name used in the piece: Y ✓ N____

Student's signature: A.N.M          Date: 27/08/2024

Interviewee's signature: _____          Date: 27/08/2024