

Instagram intuition by Mpumelelo Macu

Bizcommunity recently launched a month-long competition inviting readers to post pictures of their daily dose of coffee on Instagram. The competition brought about coffee posts from all over the country as people shared their morning habit with us in a bid to win a brand-new iPad mini.

We sat down with winner Mpumelelo Macu from Basement Pixels to chat about his thoughts on Instagram, how to create a visual archive and being an urban explorer.



Bizcommunity's Megan Holt with Mpumelelo Macu

■ ***Congratulations on winning the competition - your picture is incredibly stark and edgy, when you're capturing a picture do you go through quite a hefty process or is it instantaneous?***

Mpumelelo Macu: Thanks a lot, this came as a surprise to me. This is really awesome. I would say that I just take photos of all the things that I see. When it comes to my Instagram photos, there is no specific process. I just try and document as much as I can.

■ ***You were recently featured on Between10and5 and given access to their Instagram for the day - how did you go about curating the pictures?***

Mpumelelo: I started off with a long walk around the city, taking photos of some of the things that I found. I love doing that once in a while, just taking my camera and my phone on a mission to find some interesting things to shoot. Then my friends and I went on a little "adventure", scouting for locations for a shoot I was doing. Most of the photos are just candid moments of the whole experience.

■ ***How did you manage to attract so many followers? Did it happen gradually or was it a flurry of followers?***

Mpumelelo: It all happened gradually... I never really like sharing photos on Instagram and if you go through some of my earliest photos, you'll see that they didn't really say anything. Then when I lost my camera, I started taking a lot of photos

with my phone. It's funny cause when I started doing photography I was using my cellphone, then I got a chunky camera and forgot about mobile photography. I guess losing my camera was a blessing in disguise. I got to take more photos on my phone; practising all the things that I had learnt about photography, (composition, lighting and all that jazz), so there was a bit of interest generated by that. People started liking the stuff I was shooting and sharing on Instagram. Also getting the likes of Between 10and5 and Creative Nestlings asking me to take over their Instagram accounts.



❏ ***Instagram is all about cats and coffee - what would you like to see on Instagram?***

Mpumelelo: I think that Instagram is not all about that. There so many interesting and inspiring people/accounts to follow. With that said, I think it's all about following the people that post things that interest you. I really enjoy all the things I see right now and wouldn't change that.

❏ ***Do you think there is a difference between standard photography and taking pictures on Instagram?***

Mpumelelo: There is no difference really, you use the same principles. You are just shooting with two different tools. Your phone/your camera. Some people use the photos they take off their cameras and share them on Instagram, so it's all the same really. I just think that using a phone to produce the kind of photo you would produce with your camera takes some skill and that's something I'm working on everyday.

❏ ***Do you have any suggestions for editing apps?***

Mpumelelo: I have a pretty smile set up, I use, shoot and edit my photos with VSCOcam. It's a really powerful app and it's free. The standard preset/filters are cool but you can purchase more if you like. Look out for the collaboration packs. Those are really cool and also free for a limited amount of time. If you have a few Rands to spare, you can also check out an app called "Afterlight", it comes with a wide range of filters and you can pretty much edit everything on it.

❏ ***Some Instagrammers have been able to make a living out of the pictures they've taken by selling them as stock images - what are your thoughts on using social media photography for commercial purposes?***

Mpumelelo: I think this is amazing... it allows people to use their photography and get paid to do what they love. I'm all for that as long as it's your own work... go ahead and make that paper.

■ ***Instagram has evidently helped you further your interests and career as a Digital Designer; do you have any advice for young professionals in the industry wanting to use social media platforms as a means to propel their careers?***

Mpumelelo:Someone once told me that the things that you do say a lot about the kind of person you are... if you are a creative, use every platform to showcase that. Use Instagram to show people how you view the world, use Twitter to speak your mind on topics relevant to your career. Someone out there is watching and will attract the right kind of attention.

With the rise of many social media apps making it easier for local creatives to become a social phenomenon in their industry and cultivate their creativity via selfies, coffee and wanderlust travels - it's safe to say that with the right filter, dedication and keen eye for detail, virtually anyone can make a name for themselves as a notable photographer and visual archivist. In a world where instant gratification isn't fast enough for the digital age, we can often look to the simplest fleeting moments coupled with voluminous framing and ethereal lighting to create a graphic journal of what could become our careers, aspirations and social ladders.

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