

The Chinese entrepreneur who made Kampala home

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BY PATRICK SSENTONGO

Before the name "Handsome Jimmy" began trending across Ugandan screens, he was simply Wu Yiming, a software entrepreneur quietly building systems in Kampala. Today, that same man switches between client meetings and television appearances with surprising ease, his story straddling business, culture and an unexpected kind of fame.

He came to Uganda to build a software business. Fifteen years later, he speaks conversational Luganda, eats Rolex on busy mornings, and has become one of the most recognisable foreign faces on Kampala television.

Wu Yiming, popularly known online as Handsome Jimmy has in recent weeks drawn renewed public attention following his appearance on the dating reality programme *Hello Mr Right*, where viewers watched an unscripted connection unfold between him and one of the contestants.

But it was not just the romance that caught attention, it was the ease with which a Chinese national navigated a deeply local social space, speaking, joking and relating in ways that felt unexpectedly familiar.

The episode, aired in March this year, sparked wide discussion on social media and introduced many viewers to a man they had already seen before, but never fully understood. Yet beyond the television spotlight lies a longer story of migration, entrepreneurship, cultural adaptation and belonging in a city that has gradually claimed him as one of its own.

A business trip that became a life stay

Wu arrived in Kampala to pursue business opportunities in Uganda's growing technology sector. At the time, he says he was simply planning to establish operations, build clients and expand his business. Fame was nowhere in the picture.

Today, he runs IGoid Software, a Kampala-based enterprise that provides point-of-sale systems, stock management software and digital solutions to supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants and wholesale traders.

"It was a growing market with many opportunities," Wu says. "Businesses were changing fast and needed better systems."



Friends and colleagues describe him as methodical, reserved and deeply consistent, traits that helped him quietly build a customer base in a competitive sector.

But like many foreign entrepreneurs, the early years required more than business acumen.

Navigating a new culture, unfamiliar systems and social distance often comes with quiet challenges, moments of misunderstanding, adjustment and patience.

Somewhere between software installations, client meetings and navigating city traffic, Wu began learning how to live in Kampala, not just work in it.

He picked up Luganda in fragments at first with greetings, directions and expressions of thanks.

"*Webele nnyo*," meaning thank you very much, was among the earliest

MANAGING FAME

Those close to him say little has changed in his daily routine. He continues to oversee software operations, attend client meetings and pursue music as a personal passion rather than a commercial pursuit.

His songs, including playful tracks such as *Asiliza* and *Bemulete*, have circulated online, while a collaboration with Ugandan artiste Kalifah AgaNaga introduced him further to entertainment audiences. He enjoys creating. But business remains the foundation.

phrases he learned.

What began as convenience gradually became connection. Today, his Luganda remains accented but confident enough to surprise strangers and amuse customers.

"He greets people in Luganda before they realise who he is," says Dalasi Ssebunime, a crew member of the reality TV show *That* immediately breaks the barrier.

Food followed the language. Matooke and groundnut sauce became regular meals. The Rolex, Uganda's iconic street snack, became part of his daily routine.

"These are the habits of someone who has settled," says urban sociologist Joyce Nabhosa. "Integration is often seen in the small, repeated choices people make every day."

Wu puts it more simply. "I love Uganda because the people are kind and welcoming," he says. "There is openness in how people relate."

Handsome Jimmy is born

The name Handsome Jimmy did not emerge from branding strategy or calculated image-making. It grew organically online.

Friends began using it casually in videos and public appearances. Social media users picked it up, attaching it to clips of his Luganda-speaking skits, music snippets and humorous interactions. Soon, the nickname became more recognisable than his real name.

In an era where many chase virality through exaggeration, Jimmy's appeal has followed a quieter path, built on curiosity, consistency and an unforced embrace of local culture.

By the time he appeared on *Hello Mr Right*, he already had a modest but growing following.

Television simply widened the audience. The dating programme, hosted by Henry Arinaitwe alias Mr Henrie, has built a loyal Sunday evening following by leaning into spontaneity rather than scripted drama.

That format proved pivotal. It not only introduced Jimmy, it revealed him.

During the March episode, viewers watched as he connected with a contestant identified as Shamim, while reactions from fellow contestants and family members played out in real time. Clips from the episode circulated widely online, fuelling curiosity not just about the relationship, but about the man himself.

"People respond when something feels genuine," says media analyst Monday Akol Amazima. "Audiences are used to performance. Authenticity stands out."

Beyond the cameras

That balance, entrepreneur by profession, entertainer by circumstance, may explain his unusual public appeal. In a city where visibility is often aggressively pursued, Jimmy appears comfortable letting it find him.

"It is important to slow down and enjoy moments as they come," he says.

Uganda has long attracted foreign investors, traders and professionals. Many arrive for opportunity. Some leave. Others stay.

What makes Wu Yiming's story resonate is not just that he stayed, but how he stayed. Not through spectacle, but through participation. Not by standing out, but by gradually blending in.

Wu Yiming's appeared on the dating reality programme *Hello Mr. Right*, and made connection with one of the contestants. PHOTOS/ PATRICK SSENTONGO.

