

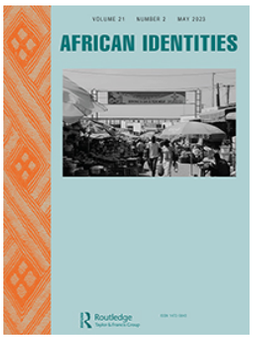
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European football televisual spectatorship and social identity in Eldoret, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In the recent times, European football has become popular in the Sub Saharan world. Most studies have explored what is perceived as the European cultural influence on local societies and cultures and attributed this to the improved global media technology. Some studies have also explored what is described as new and innovative socio-cultural patterns of fandom. This article examines one particular social trend: the construction and performance of elite social identity. It examines the interplay between local processes of performing social identity and European football televisual spectatorship (EFTS). The argument has been made that in Eldoret, EFTS has been appropriated in a local process of social identification. This is part of a long-term ethnographic study but which narrows down to EFTS experience in one place, Sunjeel Restaurant, and examines the experience of a social group that developed in the context EFTS experiences here. The article uses aspects of Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space and Bourdieu's concept of cultural fields to describe the social contexts in which this group emerges and how it adapts EFTS to its larger project of performing the identity as members of an elite social category.

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Introduction

This study is based on a social practice that has developed in the context of communal televisual spectatorship of European football, in Eldoret. European Football Televisual Spectatorship, from here on referred to as EFTS, has been common place in many parts of Sub Saharan Africa and documented in many studies. These studies have, in different ways, explored the practice in terms of how it has played into, but also helped re-define and reshape, local trend of society and culture. In this study, particular focus is made on the role of EFTS in the performance of locally perceived elite social identity. This was particularly popular as from the turn of the New Millennium and was contingent on a set of context-specific realities that were not necessarily related to football. It was a time that witnessed a general rapid social transformation in leisure and entertainment, especially in fast developing urban spaces such as Eldoret. There was the emergence of a clique of young and youthful residents in town that performed their social identity through public consumption of leisure. They did this in a sort of loose social club whose members considered themselves as occupying the local positions of social privilege. They met

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regularly in the locally perceived high-end entertainment places in town. It happened that in Eldoret, such entertainment places were some of the earliest locations of EFTS, not necessarily because the extant patrons were ardent fans of European football but rather, because these places already featured in their social construction of identities. In one sense, become spaces in the Lefebvre's sense of the term, as products of human agency, and that reflects on their sense of their own world (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 68).

In this light, this study is guided by two questions that are structured around the concept of identity. Firstly, there is the apparent parallel between the relatively homogenized space of televisual football spectacle, in which viewers share an identity as fans of a global cultural form, and the space that is produced around the said spectacle by local currents of social identity that goes beyond the football spectacle. In this sense, the study examines how a (local) space is constructed in the context of another (global) space. In this way, an arena that is presumably set up for the performance of global cultural identities is also used for the performance of local social identities. In one sense, this question has been partially addressed in a relatively long-term study of EFTS and social identities in Eldoret. Some of the preliminary findings have been documented in Solomon Waliaula (2015, 2018, 2020). These studies explore perceived patterns of society and culture that have developed in Eldoret in the context of EFTS, particularly in the low-income neighbourhoods. The first one focuses on EPLFT as a 'social practice that feeds into the local realities of everyday life, in particular the infusion of a playful element into this broader process' (Waliaula & Okong'o, 2020, p. 153). The second study examines the EFTS as having been inserted in the very joints of everyday life, such that it is a helpful tool in the daily operations of the local service industry in the sense that it helps in mobilizing the sociality needed for such entrepreneurial ventures to flourish. Most significant to this study though is the view that EFTS helps to create 'a sort of fantasy world of bluff' that helps to momentarily mask the rather miserable geographies of the local service industry and 'paradoxically also makes their working environment tolerable and even enjoyable' (Waliaula & Okong'o, 2020, p. 8).

Overall, the studies present the image of segments of the Eldoret society whose everyday life is on the rough edges but that have used EFTS, among other strategies, to forge ludic personalities that help them cope with the reality of their lives. The second question of this study is related to what one could term as the contours of social dynamics within groups locally constituted around their identity with EFTS. There are not many studies in this domain, although Adebayo et al. (2019) and Fletcher (2014) studies fit in this category. The former focuses on the social disruption caused by the mixing of different age categories in the EFTS experience in viewing centres in Nigeria and the latter is about the replication social/racial difference in EFTS/Stadium football fandom in Johannesburg. Significantly though, in the analytical frame of some the aforementioned studies, such as Koma Koma and Onyebueke, there is a hint of the social tensions that accompany EFTS, especially in regard to gender identity. One could argue that the current study is in terms of scope, methodology and theoretical framing well suited to address the two aforementioned questions.

Related literature

It is arguable that one way to map extant literature on EFTS and identity in Sub Saharan Africa is to peg them on one of the dominant themes that seem to inform most of these studies, namely cultural identity. Studies, such as Akindes (2014) have observed that it is

'African fans continue to follow European teams because of radio and satellite television coverage' and that 'European teams have a sophisticated global brand-identity strategy, and this strategy matches up well with the strong team-identification feelings of African football fans' (Akindes, 2014, p. 214). Akindes' point here is that global sport media has created a packaged European football as appealing popular culture and. Commenting on this phenomenon, Samuel Akpan has observed thus, 'Maybe, what informs this huge interest are the thrills, the drills and the dribbling displayed by the players. It could also be the dazzling and attractive style of media montage, reportage and display of football actions by television program producers' (2020, p. 35). But perhaps it is Olomuyiwa Omobowale's study that makes a more incisive examination in the Nigerian context, when he observes:

> As the Nigerian soccer audience is exposed to global trends in the world of soccer, they are momentarily brought to the fore of western culture which is apparently seen as superior. As this culture becomes dominant, virtually every other aspect of it is also appreciated. Hence, as then Nigerian audience view European soccer on the screen, it derives meanings that make it superior to the Nigerian one.

This strand of scholarship is based on the media imperialism assumption and considers EFTS as yet another manifestation of Europe's cultural domination over Sub Saharan Africa, in the light of which the identities that are produced are arguably extensions of a European society and culture. It has informed other studies, such as Tsaioor (2014) and Siundu (2010). But as has been observed in forementioned Eldoret-based studies, EFTS has arguably been appropriated in the local streams of society and culture, and to this extent, an exploration of the processes of social identification occasioned by and/or extending from EFTS should not be necessarily tied to cultural imperialism and interpellated identities. It could also be read as one of the factors in the negotiation of socio-cultural identities. Perhaps one of the most vivid observations of this has been made by Richard Vokes in relation to Bugamba, a rural district in Western Uganda:

> When moving around the various shops and bars that constitute the main hub of social activity in these parts, one today hears not only the more usual talk of crop yields, school fees and the like, but also conversations about the past week's EPL results, movements in its transfer markets and its various teams' chances over the months ahead . . . (Vokes, 2010, p. 10)

Vokes' argument here seems to be that European football has been seamlessly appropriated into the local ebb and flow of life in Bugamba. Other studies, such as 2017, Waliaula (2015, 2017a, 2017b); Onyebueke (2015); Fletcher (2014); Olaoluwa and Adejayan (2010); Komakoma (2005) have in different ways explored the socio-cultural contexts that produce, and that are also produced by the engagement in local fandom of European football. The studies have shown how in certain localities, EFTS is domesticated and used to address local realities. The studies highlight the potential of the so-called mass audiences to draw on local cultural resources in processes that adapt the otherwise global experience to its immediate socio-cultural context. In this sense, the global and the local are blended in a way that, arguably, produces new socio-cultural patterns. It is against this background that this study focuses on one social group that formed out of the experience of football and alcohol consumption at a specific bar in Eldoret called Sunjeel. I argue that the social significance of this group feeds on two context-specific narratives revolving around the tensions of race and status identity in Eldoret town. Significantly,

Marc Fetcher's study of Manchester United supporters in Johannesburg has also explored the use of European sports fandom to perform social/racial class division. He observes:

> The United supporters would meet to watch United games at a sports bar in the affluent suburb of Dowerglen . . . many live and work in the wealthier northern suburbs . . . Located in a predominantly white, middle-class suburb; the vast majority of the bar's clientele are white. The high walls and electric fences of the surrounding gated housing complexes are reminders of the affluence of the area. (2014, p.140).

While the Eldoret group in this study is not directly comparable to more visible race-defined social identification Johannesburg context, it still provides a useful template against which I explore the appropriation of EFTS to mark social identities in contexts of global/mass media consumption.

Social and physical context

Sunjeel buddies is a social group of about 25 members that regularly meet at Sunjeel Bar. The actual demographics of the group are relatively fluid because of the nature of the social forces that bring them together. They meet to drink alcohol and watch football, although as we argue in this study, the alcohol and football are a mere medium that they use to address their need to mark and perform desired social identity. This is a group that had a tacit threshold for entry. Members had to be beneficiaries of a college education and preferably in the locally defined as elite careers of medicine, architecture, and engineering, a teaching/administrative job at the local universities or a successful business career. People who had spent some time abroad were also considered as qualified, as well as those who hailed from locally perceived prominent families. Most of them were men, but a few women were included too, though, significantly, not necessarily coming in as companions of the men. Basically, this was a group that marked off itself as the local elite and socially privileged. The 25 could be described as the core group, but there are a few others that got in and left after a while, or became infrequent. This was due to a variety of factors, the most obvious of which is failure to cope with the relatively expensive lifestyle, both in terms of finance and time. The group came together gradually and informally over time from around 2012. By October 2015, there were relatively formal set of structures of group membership, complete with a leadership structure and calendar of social activities. Significantly, the group marked its identity by the – Indian – name of the bar and restaurant, which happened to be their preferred social joint at the time. Nevertheless, the social profile of Sunjeel as an exotic Indian owned social joint may have played into the hands of this group, whose need to project an elitist identity converged with the local social profile of Sunjeel.

It is also important to observe that the Kenya-Indian ethnic community in Eldoret, as in many other parts of the country, has always adopted a sort of separatist attitude in the everyday experience of life. There is a tacit but very real racial hierarchy that has them above 'black' Kenyan ethnicities. Whereas this ethnic group is mostly associated with department store business, where they interact closely with other Kenyans, there is always a sustained social distance. Their preferred residential places are geographically isolated from the rest of the local community. It is noteworthy that in the past decade, one of the local members of the national assembly from the Eldoret region has been a Kenyan of

Indian ethnicity. On the face of it, this could be perceived as 'popularity' with the common people but when seen in the context of Kenyan politics, this is far from the truth. The political class is socially elite and only nominally connected to the people they represent. It is against this background that the case of Sunjeel was unique, as we shall demonstrate, played into the identity project arguably due to a locally unusual convergence of factors.

The bar under study was at the time of research for this article owned by a Kenyan of Indian ethnic identity. It was initially a restaurant specializing in Indian cuisine exclusively reserved for Indian patrons. It opened out its doors to the general public in 2009. One distinction about the bar was that, much as it is ensconced between other business premises in downtown Eldoret, its entrance had always been guarded all through, way before the enforcement of enhanced security due to global terrorism. Food and drinks were relatively more expensive here than in the other restaurants in the immediate neighbourhood. It was associated with a particular clique of clientele. This fed into local patterns of social identity; the view that certain career professions bestowed higher status upon the holders and that this created a hierarchy of social interaction in public spaces. Individuals that belong – or are close enough – to these professional groups tend to be drawn to each other in the daily experience of social life. I argue that it is thus possible for such individuals to develop an imaginary sense of community and sense of belonging tied around what they consider as similar values and perspective to life, and seek out venues to perform their status. Moreover, this group feels different from other people around, and aspires to reach out to other fitting worlds, to which they feel momentarily connected to, especially when they meet together in places that they assigned meanings of transcendence.

In the case of Sunjeel in Eldoret, as data shall demonstrate, EFTS is introduced into a space that is already marked as socially elevated above its immediate neighbourhood, and when it does, it coincidentally pans out in a manner similar to Marc Fletcher's study of the English Premier League football in Johannesburg at the turn of the Millennium. Fletcher describes the psycho-social role of Manchester United on a group of mainly white affluent Johannesburg residents whom he describes as using physical and social boundaries in which they watch Manchester United games to detach themselves from their immediate African physical and social environment and identify with Europe (2014, pp.140–141). This case is rather logical, presenting a group of white males that – naturally – identify with a European cultural form and simultaneously distance themselves from their immediate (black) neighbourhood. The Sunjeel case is a lot more complicated. A clique of locals identifies with a European cultural form that they connect within an Indian-esque space.

Research methodology

Field research for this article sits somewhere between native and formal ethnography. The researcher's field also doubles as home. Inside knowledge of everyday patterns of social interaction and performance of group identity informs the study. I have interacted with some of the members of the group under study in my long-term everyday experience of life in Eldoret. I thus mainly used purposive sampling to identify the group. It is the only social group I know from both my everyday life and fieldwork experience that, in my view, performs (part) of their perceived elite status identity in the context of a combination of alcohol and football consumption. Data is collected mainly through participant and

nonparticipant observation and semi-structured interviews. Research for this article benefits from a long-term ethnographic study of the patterns of social identity performed in the context of electronic audience reception of global media (See also, Waliaula, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2018).

Sunjeel Buddies is not necessarily a unique social group since elective social identification is arguably a normal pattern in most societies. Nevertheless, I consider the use of group audience reception of European football to perform elective identity as a fairly extra-ordinary socio-cultural pattern in Eldoret. This is because shared access to satellite television is largely characteristic of the lower income neighbourhoods, as has been explored in Waliaula (2015) and Vokes (2010); or those urban neighbourhoods dominated by youthful, mostly college students and generally unemployed and/or low-income earners, as has been explored in Onyebueke (2015) and Omotosho (2012). Individuals from perceived privileged social classes tend to have wider options to choose from and are thus not necessarily been bound to the same places and with the same groups, as has been observed in Komakoma (2005).

Participant observation was used to investigate the group's live performance of beer and football consumption as well as audio-recording the proceedings and photography, mainly during the reception of live matches. The – restaurant owner and proprietor and members of the group were also interviewed on several occasions both in and outside the restaurant. In these contexts, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were used and data were recorded in the form of oral testimony and narrative reflection of the social experiences in which the reception of football matches is framed. It is important to note that this was done with the knowledge and consent of participants and/or informants. Formal permission to conduct fieldwork was also obtained from the relevant authorities at the County Government and National Government levels. To address the issue of positionality in the fieldwork experience, critical distance was cultivated between the researcher as a participant and colleague to some members through a gradual process of self-reflexivity and keen/dispassionate attention to detail.

The cultural field of Sunjeel buddies

One could use aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural fields to describe the membership of Sunjeel Buddies and the social forces that bring them together. Almost without exception, membership into this group was pegged on perceived cultural capital. They considered themselves as occupying a common social topography. They saw their identity as depended on mutual social approval; they were each other's model and audience simultaneously and consider EFTS as one of the templates upon which to perform this identity. One could argue that these moments of communal spectatorship tied in with psycho-social concept of identity performance as 'the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviours related to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity' (Klein et al., 2007, p. 3). The everyday experience of life in Eldoret did not offer many opportunities for those who perceive themselves as elite and socially privileged to come together and perform this identity. It is against this background that a clique of youthful professionals came together to form a loosely defined social club whose main activity was to meet after work to cut a drink. Initially it consisted of medical

doctors but then opened out to include other locally perceived elite professionals. Nevertheless, new members had to get the traction of the core members. In an interview with one of them, a university lecturer at a local university, he observed:

> I joined the Sunjeel group in 2011. That is after I had been employed. Before then I was a student and could not afford to go to Sunjeel … someone introduced me to this place, a colleague who used to drink there … he is no longer an active member though … when I went to Sunjeel I met a lot of people. Some are medical doctors at the Eldoret Referral Hospital; some are lecturers at medical school, lawyers, bankers; a lot of people that are actually in good professions. I really would have a very good and constructive conversation. With minds that are above board. It is not somewhere you go and people are making noise, or shouting at each other people are fighting, or somebody is going there, they don't have money to drink. No people who go to Sunjeel have money and can afford to buy alcohol. If someone offers you a beer, fine; if not, fine. You have your own money (field notes).

In this submission, one can observe a perception of a privileged social identity that one acquires when they join this group, one that comes at a financial cost but with many social privileges. The group identifies with certain values and distances itself from the other less privileged group that apparently lacks in their shared privileges of higher education and perceived elite careers, financial resources to afford public display of consumption and a perceived refinement of manners in public places. As it has already been observed, the choice of this particular bar as an ideal place for this group overlapped with another local hierarchy of race identification; the perception that Kenyans of Indian ethnic identity is distinct from and socially higher than the ordinary (black) Kenyans. Let us consider this extract from an interview with the owner of the bar:

> Sunjeel has been here since the year 2000 … I came to Kenya in 2006, and my uncle in-law was running this place. He intended to pass it on to me. He was moving abroad with his family … I requested him for a period of 6 months to orient myself to the business and also study the market. But this took longer and I took up the business in 2009. The main business here was serving an Indian special cuisine. It was difficult to prepare the food and also its target clientele was very small, only Indians. I decided to retain the restaurant section, serving local food and make an extension to accommodate a bar section in the same establishment … I targeted *Africans*. I figured out that this made more business sense, since the previous restaurant was only operational on weekends, public holidays and Indian religious holidays. At the beginning I only attracted mainly local professionals but gradually they attracted others, especially when I introduced satellite television and showing of English Premier League football. (Field Notes, emphasis mine)

In one sense, it is arguable that the proprietor takes advantage of a pre-existent social hierarchy based on race to start a business that is overtly open for all but is essence exclusive of all except patrons of guaranteed and sustainable consumption potential. Note that he says, he targeted 'Africans'. In making this rather innocently racist comment, he was clear in his mind that his ethnic identity as Indian was socially distinct from, and above, the other 'African Kenyans'. In this context, it is all about the physical mark of Indian race identity that he believes (and it is socially accepted in Eldoret) puts him above the ordinary Kenyan. This perception is very important to the main argument in this study; it both feeds into the methodology and basic theoretical frame of this study. Sunjeel was an ordinary restaurant like any other yet, the EFTS experience here was somewhat different. This study seeks to demonstrate that, in Lefebvrean terms, Sunjeel is a locally

produced social space that offers the opportunity for the performance of an elite social identity. It is for this reason that we needed to further examine the production of Sunjeel as a social space.

The owner observed that before setting up the business, he undertook a three years' informal feasibility study of the local patterns of leisure and noted that a clique of local professionals had established a consumption culture that was good for business not only in the sense of guaranteed demand but also as an effective marketing strategy. But European football had by then become part of the local popular culture and actually associated with the everyday experience of life, down to the low-income neighbourhoods of Eldoret (Cf. Waliaula, 2018, 2020). He thus needed to re-brand it such that it was presented in a 'cultural package' that appealed to his target clientele. It happened that his business interests matched with the social identity needs of an emergent elite community in Eldoret. It is against this background that he gradually established a socially marked business enterprise that offered both leisure and entertainment goods for consumption and also served as an arena for the symbolic performance of a particular kind of desirable social identity.

Perhaps, another signal that the EFTS at Sunjeel was more of symbolic that actual televisual football fandom was in the rather contradictory spectatorship trend here; only the English Premier League football was shown here. It would have been expected that the elite group, armed with deeper cultural capital, could be open to a variety of football from the top European leagues, such as the Spanish, German, Italian and French top divisions. But as the running argument of this study shows, the EFTS here was just a frame narrative that brought to play other stories that resonated with immediate social needs of the group and this will be illustrated in a later section. One could argue that since the English Premier League gained popularity much faster, in the context of a number of postcolonial related factors (Cf. Sidnam, 2015) it was much easier for this League to be lodged in the local imaginary and, in that way, to provide a surface area upon which locals could mount their 'identity projects'.

It was also established that the apparent purely status identification paradigm of elective identification in this group had also generated other social conflicts based on the apparently enduring patterns of gender identification in Eldoret, as in many other parts of the Sub Saharan world. The group was dominantly male but with a few vocal females in their ranks. I observed that the performance of status was sometimes undermined by the social perceptions about gender. It created a complex social experience in which both masculinities and femininities were contested and negotiated on the same plane, as is shown in the following testimony by one of the female members of the group:

> It has not been easy sailing though. There are people *that stopped drinking at Sunjeel* because of differences … differences like when *I talked badly* to a member of the county assembly, a supporter of Manchester United, and then *he said women are not supposed to talk in front of men*. He came right to my face like he wanted to hit me but others intervened. There was a physical confrontation that was only resolved after security personnel was involved. (Emphasis mine, Solomon Waliaula, Field Notes)

As is shown in this case, the perceived status identity with presumed shared values was more of an ideal aspired to than a given reality in the performance of group identity. This experience echoes theoretical debate on the nature and practice of performed social identification, which is in part based on group categorization. In such scenarios, while differences between

categories are accentuated, the differences between members within the same category are underestimated and/or restrained (Trepte, 2006, p. 257). In spite of the fact that the Sunjeel Buddies saw themselves as 'equal', there were obvious differences between them that when coupled with inevitable unpredictable circumstantial factors would lead to social friction. Nevertheless, these moments of heightened conflict, particularly provoked by the emotive identification with and support of rival football teams, are useful in the larger scheme of social identification; they provide a ventilation mechanism and also enable participants to raise and thrash out their differences. Altogether, the typical EFTS at Sunjeel was a unique experience that we turn to in the next section.

Ritualized EFTS at Sunjeel bar

This section has examined EFTS experience at Sunjeel as also the performance of social identity through a number of social rituals modelled around the otherwise ordinary activity of communal televisual football spectatorship. Some of these are imitations of global sports bar experiences and others are local inventions that correspond with the spectatorship experience. Like most enthusiasts of European football in Sub Saharan Africa, the Sunjeel buddies identified with and supported specific clubs, and indeed considered themselves as fans of those football clubs. The motivation to join the fandoms was varied, but as has been observed in (Waliaula, 2018) it is part of the socialization process in these parts. It is actually common in these parts to find a 'fan' move allegiance from one club to another, and in some cases, migrating across a host of clubs, in tandem with the changing patterns of the social experience of life. For instance, the most popular EPL clubs in Eldoret at the turn of the Millennium were Arsenal and Manchester United. Over time, with changing fortunes of the clubs, and the rise of Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester City, many local fans shifted their loyalties to these clubs. However, Sunjeel Buddies tended to have more stable fan identities, and on average, they were split between Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United. They also purchased replica jerseys and other club merchandise, which they proudly adorned on match days. Like is the case in the conventional sports bar experience, Sunjeel Buddies got to the venue well in advance and engaged in drinking and chatting as they geared up for the spectacle. This was not usual practice with the typical Eldoret fans, who mostly turned up just in time for the matches so that they do not needlessly spend money on drinks. But for the Sunjeel Buddies, the match day was an excuse to party, and in particular, to purchase rounds of drinks, some of which were 'stock piled' for later consumption. In Sunjeel, furniture was not shifted around to create an in-the-stadium experience, as was the case in many other viewing places. Neither was The TV volume turned up to let in the stadium noises and television commentary. The buddies had their favourite seats reserved for them, as well as preferred neighbours. This created an easy and ordinary feel around the spectatorship experience, in which the actual televisual spectacle did not dominate the space but rather fitted in the existent choreography and social patterns.

Watching football here was a highly intense experience of social interaction, and some of the elements here actually contradicted the general aura of Sunjeel as a gentrified space. Stories were told and jokes cracked, most of which were only remotely related to, or even totally different from, the football match underway. Their language was carnivalesque, heavily laden with sexual innuendo. On most days, there were no females but on other days there were a few. Yet, there was no difference in the language used here in all cases and, significantly,

the females in the performance were not only comfortable with this but actually also used such misogynist expressions as *acha umama* – literally meaning 'stop acting like a woman'. One could argue that this carnival behaviour works as a useful safety valve, and is socially sanctioned in such spaces. It is actually a logical extension of the alcohol drinking and general revelry that starts long before the match and extends well beyond it. This performance can be understood in the light of Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical perspective to social interaction. The experience of sport and beer consumption becomes a stage in which individuals perform identities that present themselves to the public in preferred ways. Social values, assumptions and attitudes about perceived high status careers – which cannot be openly performed in the everyday local life experiences – were performed here in the safety of viewing football. For instance, a local celebrity architect presented himself as an arrogant Manchester United fan, a medical doctor presented himself as a Casanova, and a female lawyer presented herself as 'undoable'. This could be interpreted as a deep play of perceptions of their status identity. The female members did not take any exception to apparent misogynist jokes and language because the deeper narrative that informed this performance was presumably not about gender identity but social status identity. The highly ribald language use and teasing games played may seem out of sync with the status identity the group aimed to perform but, arguably, a strategy to heighten the moment of viewing by creating a spectacle that drew attention to the audience and thus made this experience stand out of the everyday consumption of sport and beer.

There is also the ludic self-projection into and defense of the supported football club, the manager and players, in a process that could be described as a reverse of the BIRGing theory of fandom. The Sunjeel Buddies inserted the club they supported into their own personality, taking it upon themselves to explain away the performance of the club and even the off-field actions of the players and managers. In this light, certain personas modelled on specific incidences were developed, appropriated and playfully used in the process of performing fandom identities; yet it was perhaps the performance of desired social identity. For instance, Manchester United was associated with wealth, class and aristocracy, a persona that its fans in Sunjeel took up and projected, sometimes literally through conspicuous consumption. Arsenal was profiled as an emergent force aimed at upsetting the establishment through youthful talent and adventure. The fans adopted a loud and disruptive persona. Chelsea fans latched on one specific incident involving the team captain allegedly having had a secret romantic affair with the ex-wife of his team-mate, which was played up in the media in the light of moral ineptitude but among the Sunjeel Buddies was celebrated as a mark of machismo and desired performance of aggressive masculine identity. Colourful Metaphors were fashioned out of these locally build personas of the said football clubs, which were then used as part of the language of EFTS by the Sunjeel Buddies. Significantly, this tendency to appropriate EFTS in the local production and use of metaphors has also been observed in Olaoluwa and Adejayan's study, in which they have argued that in such case, 'what is at display is not just the arbitrariness of fandom'; it is also what we have termed the 'audacity of fandom' (2010, p. 81).

Conclusion

This study examined the social experience of European football televisual spectatorship in a small social group called Sunjeel Buddies. Their spectatorship experience was analyzed in

the context of the discourse of European football fandom as a global cultural form that homogenously diffuses to places such as Eldoret for an equally standard spectatorship experience. The study explored a set of extant literature on this subject and fits them in the broad media/cultural theme, in which the practice of EFTS is interpreted along the lines of the global flows of sport media to the Sub-Saharan world and the cultural impact of it. In one sense, these studies have taken a wide-angle approach that affords them a general view of the social impact of this media/cultural practice. This study took this perspective to a much more nuanced level by examining EFTS as it pans out in a specific place among a small social group. The study used Lefebvre's theory of the production of social space and strands of Bourdieu's theory of cultural field to explore the play between local patterns of social experience and the EFTS at Sunjeel and examine the impact of this on the performance of local elite identities. The study established that at around the turn of the Millennium, Eldoret town experienced an articulation of social forces that culminated in the emergence of a restaurant that attracted a clique of patrons that considered themselves as members of the local elite class, by virtue of their perceived superior careers and cultural capital and who elected to perform this identity in the restaurant. When EFTS was introduced in this restaurant, it was adapted in a process that was ongoing; the simultaneous production of a social space and performance of elite identity. It was established that EFTS offered a set of new resources with which the Sunjeel Buddies could perform their identities, which were inserted in the social experience in the form of social rituals self-presentation, consumption and interaction. One could argue that, on the basis of this and other similar contextualized studies of global sport reception, perceptions of global cultural flows and their impact will be increasingly more sensitive to the local ways in which they play out.

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