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Popular Culture and the Women Fandom of English Premier League Football in Eldoret, Kenya

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Introduction
In the recent past, global sport media has become one of the vibrant frontiers in the development of popular culture. This chapter focuses on a locally unique cultural trend that developed in the context of televsional mediation of English Premier League football – from here on referred to as EPLF – and examines the intersection between the cultural practice of televsional football fandom and the social practice of gender identification. Underlying this is the assumption that global sport media has transformed football fandom from its profile as a gendered activity reserved for the performance and affirmation of masculine identities to an ‘open popular cultural form’. Among other consequences this cultural form has impacted on local perceptions of gender identity, an observation that echoes Spencer et al’s view – in another context – that gender identification is shaped by popular cultural productions which retain a keen pulse on the everyday (my emphasis, 2018, p. 3). Throughout this chapter, the main point developed is that EPLF fandom is a global cultural trend that has been appropriated in the local stream of social identification, and that in this process it also helped in the development of local popular cultures. These range from nuances of communal life as has been explored in Kudus O. Adebayor et al. (2017) and Richard Vokes (2010) to broader themes of social life which has been explored in Marc Fletcher (2014), James Tsaaior (2014), Gerard Akindes (2014) and Olomuyiwa Omobowale (2009).

It is significant that these aforementioned studies, among others, have explored the development of the EPLF fandom cultural form in Sub-Saharan Africa in a manner that has left a thought-provoking lacuna: the studies have paid scant attention to the female fans’ experience. This is an intriguing omission since some of the earliest studies of the EPLF fandom cultural trend, such as Leah Koma Koma (2005), reveal the active participation of women in the cultural practice. It is against this background that this study focuses on the participation of women in EPLF fandom in Eldoret. Using the Eldoret experience to explore this cultural phenomenon affords the study a methodological, theoretical and geographical springboard. Methodologically, this study is part of a long-term ethnography. Theoretically, the selection of Eldoret as the study...
area affords us a relatively accurate lens with which to examine the urban context of EPLF, given that Eldoret is a relatively small town with a mappable social world. The location of one of the major Kenyan public universities near this town also helped to position this town as one of the frontiers in the transforming geographies of gender identity, considering the fact that in Kenya, universities have been the melting pots in the continuously transforming definition and performance of gender. Dina Ligaga – in a different context – has observed that the Kenyan universities’ social space has acted as the provenance of the good time girl, that she describes as seemingly as “young, educated, beautiful, fun loving, wild, likes to ‘party’, is ‘up for anything’ and is willing to trade her body for money” (2014, p. 250).

The above-mentioned imagery of the good time girl is also important to this study because our perception of the EPLF fandom is perceived as part of leisure. Conservative perceptions of female football fandom have profiled the cultural practice as a transgression into an otherwise masculine culture, as have been explored in such studies as Nuhrat Yagmur (2017) and Manase Chiweshe (2014). In this study, female football fandom is seen in its position within the everyday social construction of women’s leisure in public spaces, an experience that is distinct from the actual football stadium scenario. Significantly, in Eldoret, EPLF was initially associated with patrons of elite entertainment places which screened live football on television and was thus initially one more leisure commodity whose consumption signified social privilege. A considerable number of locals unable to patronize these leisure spaces followed European football trends on BBC Radio and the international sports news coverage on local electronic and print media. A field informant that was part of the initial fans in the late 90s described this as having been ‘high-end consumption’ that played into the existing leisure practice of the well-to-do in Eldoret, and into which the ordinary fans squeezed but were ill at ease all through.

With time, other entertainment places screened live European football, two of the earliest being The Clique Hotel and White Castle Motel. Because the trend was catching on, these establishments accommodated patrons who came only to watch football but compelled them to spend a fixed amount of money on drinks. Effectively, consumption became ingrained in the viewing experience. Watching live European football thus acquired a certain profile and became one of the resources with which to perform a trendy modern social identity. With time, affluent individuals installed Satellite Television hardware in their homes and dutifully paid up the then relatively exorbitant monthly subscription fees. College campuses also installed the facility in common rooms and social halls to cater for the growing demand from resident students. By 2006, this cultural form had become so popular that entrepreneurs set up communal viewing centres that were closely related to the already popular video-shows in low-income neighbourhoods of Eldoret and other towns. These were informal and miniature cinema halls that thrived from the 1980s and became a popular mode of leisure a well as part of the geography of the low-income neighbourhoods across Kenya (Ambler, 2002). Therefore, when satellite television was introduced in these spaces, it liberated the practice from its gentrified frame and made it accessible to a wider spectrum of spectators in social conditions that they were used to. In this way, a cultural trend of European football spectatorship developed in a pattern that was particular to the nuances of local geography and society. This scenario produced a unique social experience in relation to local patterns of gender identification. There emerged a community of young women that defined themselves as European football fans and that considered this as an important part of their overall social identity. By exploring the actual circumstances that informed this social process, I hope to not only account for their identification as fans but also interrogate the role of this experience in their everyday efforts to negotiate their social identities as women and also acknowledge their contribution to the development of popular culture.
Eldoret town is located in the North Rift region of the country that is in the Western region of the country. It one of the fast-growing urban areas in post-independent Kenya. With an approximate population of about 400,000 people, it is the fifth largest urban space after Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. It is a town that arguably benefitted in the 24-year President Moi stint at the realm of power, with the rapid growth of fairly well-off individuals in the region that made their money from farming, agri-business but also the privileges of political patronage. One could argue that from the early 1980s to the turn of the millennium, there was an informal but very strong wave of building an alternative centre of the country in Eldoret. We could highlight a few infrastructural developments in the region, which later had a bearing on the development of popular culture. A number of industries were built, mainly in the textile and agricultural sectors, that attracted a fairly large population to the town. Kenya’s second public university, Moi University, was established here as well, and it became another focal point of cultural production. The country’s second international airport was also built a few kilometres to the South of the town. A military barracks was established here as well, a few kilometres to the Northeast of town. There also developed a vibrant service industry, and by the time the country fully opened up to media liberalization in the mid-1990s, there existed a fairly big population in Eldoret that has gravitated to a habitus of global cultural consciousness and only lacked a reliable media with which to plug themselves in, in a variety of ways that suited their immediate circumstances.

This general social transformation had a bearing on the performance of gender identities. The increased population of youthful women that had bought into the emerging trends of global culture were now using various strategies to negotiate social identities that accommodated elements of modernity in their otherwise patriarchy-governed social lives. There was an emergent community of young women that was relatively more open-minded than the ordinary Eldoret woman. They were either in college, in early career white-collar jobs, or in business. Having been exposed to global media trends of gender identification, they felt a relative sense of freedom from the conservative ideals of how women should perform their social identities. Bodil Folke Frederiksen, using the example of women’s uptake and appropriation of American Soap Opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* in the Nairobi slums, has also observed that “Global media provide powerful narratives that are used by people in local settings as sounding boards for reflections on how to conduct everyday life and human relations” (2000, p. 209). This could be read as an echo of Arjun Appadurai’s concept of mediascapes, aspects of which have resonance with the current study, particularly is his view that the impact of the global flows of culture is unpredictable (1990, p. 298). In this context, while the telenovela, soaps and other related experiences have been generally marked as feminine, and are thus a relatively untested terrain where women could inscribe and express their identities, the case of women getting attracted to televisual male sport packaged as leisure is different. It combines two cultural forms that have been marked as masculine: male football fandom and outdoor leisure.

Patriarchal trends of popular culture have tended to profile leisure in public spaces as a preserve for men, and women that get to these spaces will be male companions or servants (Cf. Wearing, 1998). When women venture into these spaces they tend to be perceived as social deviants, and in general the geography of leisure prescribes for women home-based leisure, which is seen as in keeping with socially acceptable but discriminatory definitions of womanhood. The women set out to be actively and visibly involved in public leisure spaces have tended to be lumped together in the category of the good time girl. In the aforementioned Ligaga’s
study of the Kenyan good time girl, a social phenomenon that became popular in Kenya at around the turn of the millennium, she uses this scenario to explore “emerging moral anxieties around young women’s sexualities in Kenya”. The perceived paragon of the good time girl is described as, “young, educated, beautiful, fun loving, wild, likes to ‘party’, is ‘up for anything’ and is willing to trade her body for money” (2014, p. 250–252).

Discourses on sexual morality per se are beyond the scope of this study and have been arguably part of literature on the urban experience dating back to the colonial Kenya, as is evident in studies such as Luise White (1986), yet they offer a useful background against which to conceptualize the actual experience of the female fans of EPLF that essentially presented itself as a public leisure commodity. Moreover, this rather unexpected turn in local public leisure culture could be understood as an echo of Karin Barber’s view on popular culture as, “given to extra-ordinary bursts of activity and rapid transformation” (2018, p. 13). This chapter locates the provenance of the cultural form among the barmaids, socialites and good time women of Eldoret. It also trace its play within campus cultures and the reality checks and adaptations in the urban space. Finally, It also focuses on the social rituals into which it culminated. I consider this as a significant contribution to the development of popular culture in these parts.

The Cultural Circuit of Women EPLF Fandom

In Eldoret, like in any other place in these parts, women were introduced to EPLF fandom in many different ways, and it is not possible within the confines of this study to map out all of them. Nevertheless, we have singled out one that we consider to be significant not only because it was the most obvious but also because it thrived in and also helped to reinforced other circuits of gender relations; this is the perspective of EPLF as a commodity to be consumed in a wider package of leisure available at high-end bars and restaurants in the evenings. There was a perceived targeted community; a small clique of local socialites that were not necessarily interested in the football per se but that performed their identities through gregarious consumption of leisure. In taking this approach, I adapt but also problematize aspects of Paul Du Gay et al’s concept of the circuit of culture; in particular, the view that cultural artefacts are represented in certain ways appeal to certain categories of social identification and that this affects the ways in which they are consumed in the public spaces (1997, pp. 3–4). In this light, I consider EPLF as a cultural artefact that is ‘processed’ in certain social realities.

In profiling EPLF as a leisure commodity available in high-end entertainment spaces, the women that fell into this bracket presented themselves as members of the local elite class that patronized these spaces in their own right, or as companions of those that socially belonged here. However, this was also the niche of some women, particularly those that worked in the care givers in the leisure industry such as waitresses, barmaids, sex workers, cooks and cleaners. The former category of women almost seamlessly merged into the early EPLF fandom arguably because this was a cultural trend that had been absorbed in, and made to express, local socio-economic class identity that, in a sense, superseded gender identification. The aforementioned Leah Koma Koma’s study on Premier League football fandom in Lusaka Zambia (2005) has explored the experience of some of these women. Her study actually yokes together women with their male colleagues within the popular culture consumer class of Lusaka, whose membership consisted of local professionals such as architects, lawyers, engineers, accountants and university dons. Indeed, in her sample of the fans, she observes that the only relatively timid woman also happens to have been the youngest member, a university student. The said young woman’s apparent self-effacing personality in this social encounter was most probably not because of her gender identity but because she considered herself as not quite part of the group
because she was yet to join the clique of local elite professionals. In Eldoret, the women fans of this category joined their male counterparts in conspicuous consumption and self-branding.

It is arguable that when women took their place in the public spectatorship of football in sports bars, they also got the chance to appropriate the space and perform both the fandom identities and modern gender identities. Like their male counterparts, they wore football replica jerseys of their favourite teams. But they still retained a handle on their hairstyle, make-up and the rest of what was perceived as trendy fashion sense, just as the other young women that considered themselves modern. This is a trend that predictably solidified in the local campus cultures where, as we shall show in the next section, easy access to satellite television and fluid gender relations not only helped to cultivate a sizeable number of female fans of EPL football but also developed some loud, cocky and assertive fandom characteristics in some of the women. This would later cause some gender-related strife and tension in the emergent popular cultures around EPL fandom, especially in the public spaces.

The pioneer women fans took advantage of their access to televisual EPL football to orient themselves to details of the names and profiles of players, managers, trends in the player transfer market and lots of other nuanced information about this football. It was a departure from conventional stadium-based football fandom cultures. Indeed, in the early days, many local male fans of EPL did not have access to satellite television. This has been observed by Marc Fletcher in his study of the Johannesburg experience, where he compares the local fandom of Manchester United and Kaizer Chiefs, a local football club. Commenting on the fans of the latter, he says "the black, working-class Chiefs’ supporters were often located in areas marked by urban decay. While claiming to follow European football, they were often restricted due to lack of access to money, satellite television, and internet", (2014, 133, emphasis mine). It is important to note that at the outset, EPL football was actually locally profiled as high culture. It became part of the popular imaginary, and some of the enthusiasts that did not have actual access to the football – and in this category were many men – claimed to be fans. This meant that many men knew much less about EPL football than some women, which as shall be demonstrated in the next section, caused gender-based conflicts later when EPLF fandom had become much more accessible and got to the level of a full-blown popular cultural form in Eldoret.

But if the entry point of the ‘classy women’ to EPLF fandom was facilitated by their material advantage, many other women found themselves in the fandom because they were looking for a means of basic survival. For these women, televisual EPL football played out in their places of work as caregivers in entertainment spots. The barmaids and sex workers in particular got a lot more exposure to the football because the live matches were broadcast late in the evenings when the most active space was the bar, giving them the chance to access a leisure experience that would have been ordinarily beyond their reach. Moreover, the football spectacle added a new dimension to the nature of social interaction between these women and their conventional patrons. It created an ambivalent scenario where, on the one hand, the men could see the women as fellow fans but on the other hand also see them as an extension of the package of leisure at their disposal. Some of the women took advantage of this to endear themselves to the men, and as is demonstrated in the next section, it had consequences on the perception of the real motivation of women fans of EPLF in Eldoret and became a challenge to women fans.

Emerging Popular Culture in Campus and Pub Spectatorship

It is arguable that the surge of EPLF fandom in Eldoret was, in part, due to campus cultures at the nearby Moi University where satellite television was one of the social amenities available in hostel common rooms. As a result, well before EPL Football had established itself as part of the
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televisual entertainment regime, students patronized the common room to catch up on news and, for some female students, to watch soaps and telenovelas. It was also a space for recreation, particularly in the evenings. One could argue that these social conditions were ideal for the germination of a vibrant form of EPLF fandom that also involved women. In this study it has been understood in the light of the concept of articulation, which in the words of Paul Du Gay et al, is “the process of connecting disparate elements together to form a temporary unity . . . a linkage which is not necessarily determined, or absolute and essential for all time; rather it is a linkage whose conditions of existence or emerging need to be located in the contingencies or circumstances” (1997, p. 3). One could argue that the development of a robust female EPLF fandom in the context of an academic institution was an articulated popular culture. The fieldwork experience for this study established that many women that considered themselves as EPLF fans traced this identity to their campus common room and associated it to the wider social experience of leisure in their university life. A few of them had been exposed to this football before joining campus but most of them had not. In the common room they had unlimited access to football in easy social conditions. Two of the informants for this study recalled this experience as ‘beautiful moments of social interaction’ when males and females participated in teasing games and verbal jousting, a cultural form that also manifested in other verbal games such as mchongoano. These were a characteristically urban and peri-urban forms of oral expression that was part of children’s play and games, but which also had significant social reference to everyday life (Patrick Kihara, 2015).

Both informants claimed that it was during these ‘common room banter’ moments that they reconnected with their ‘trues selves’, because in real life, as kids they had always preferred the company of boys and played what were socially marked as masculine games. Nevertheless, there were other informants in the study who confessed that they joined the fandom as part of the campus dating rituals that involved the ‘performance of love’ in such routines as couples hanging out together in the common room to watch a late-night movie. Some of the women caught on to the general ‘masculine mannerisms’ of fandom like shouting, cursing swearing and use of expletives. In the process, there emerged a distinct fandom culture in which women fans engaged in the experience assertively and considered this as one of the spaces where they not only performed fandom identity but also expressed themselves as ‘campus citizens’, an identity that, momentarily, superseded the ordinary limitations of gender identification in this part of the world. This argument is echoed in Ligaga’s study whose focus is on what she defines as the campus girl’s use of her sexuality to express “resistance, defiance, and refusal to fit in with existing public frames” (2014, p. 250).

In this perspective, the engagement of campus women in EPLF fandom could be seen as not necessarily an integration of women into a masculine leisure form but a platform that women used to push the boundaries of their social identity as they innovatively introduced new rituals from popular culture in the expression of fandom identity, which is explored in the next section of this chapter. It is also worth noting that the assertive roles taken by some women in the EPLF fandom experience was, then, perhaps only possible in the campus common room. This is arguably because the social experience here was such that patriarchy-informed tension and conflict were superseded by many other points of social convergence in campus life. However, this scenario changed as soon as some of these women moved out of the campus common room, and two of these fans vividly recalled their fandom experiences in the pub:

He walked up to me and wagged his finger straight in my face, threatened to beat me up because I had talked badly about Chelsea and corrected him when he made an uninformed comment about Arsenal. Had it not been for the other men in the room
that knew me very well and stood up for me, he could have assaulted me. I stopped going to that pub because I was no longer safe there.

Another informant also recalled how a nasty experience in the pub,

My experience was horrible, right from the moment I walked in. The bouncer at the entrance, mistaking me for a hooker, politely told me that women like me could not be let in. I was furious. I told him I was here to watch a football match. He reluctantly let me in and I found myself a seat. As I adjusted to the noise and lighting inside, I heard a woman’s voice from a table behind me say ‘they have started coming early today’. I looked back at her in shock and anger, she was in the company of another woman and a man. She too had profiled me as a hooker because I had walked into a pub at night alone. Imagine a fellow woman saying this. It threw me into a strong tantrum that I walked up to them, formally introduced myself and told them I was here to watch football and did not take kindly to the comment she had made. She of course denied having made any such comment. I was determined to prove my point. I moved to a vacant seat near them. I followed the game and made informed comments throughout, and even realized that the man on their table was not as informed as I was about Manchester United.

Another informant, afraid of such experiences, depended on the ‘protection’ of her boyfriend. She observed that she was only able to enjoy the experience when she had a kind of shield from the rough edges. She wondered why some men could not just sit down and enjoy watching the game and why they had to adopt an antagonistic attitude. Why they seemed to suddenly lose their cool when they sat down before a television to watch European football. She observed,

I had to miss watching some of those late-night matches when my boyfriend was not around. Men say nasty things and even body shame us. They keep saying abominable things and look in your direction as if it is meant for you. They curse underperforming players using gendered imagery; for instance, a lazy player is described as a woman and when a goal is scored it is described in sexual terms . . . but I also pitied some females. Can you imagine a female spectator stuck in a pub after 11 p.m. allegedly watching a football match when in real sense she is just here to protect her boyfriend from other women? Well, some of them could end up becoming genuine football fans but I still found this ridiculous.

She fantasized about a scenario where women would have their own spaces to watch European football, where they could be gentle and friendly to each other. But she also found this untenable, since in her view, part of the fun in the spectatorship experience for women was its ‘cinemasesque feel’. She recalled the campus experience when many love relationships thrived in the context of the hostel common room spectatorship experience. In her view, the regularity of the matches and intimacy of the spectatorship experience helped to nurture strong emotional ties between lovers and even friends. Incidentally, this is what eventually happened and is explored in the next section.

Emergence of Feminized Fandom Cultures

By around 2010, what had begun as campus fad around the televisual spectatorship of EPLF in the common room, and later extended to pubs and other social spaces in town, had morphed
into a unique fandom culture with women at the centre. It was evident from the very basic forms of their modes of self-presentation in the public spectacles of fandom. As earlier mentioned, the young women present themselves in ways that echo a stylish femininity arguably most suited to their Instagram accounts but that also sits pretty in the football fandom space. Clad in football replica jerseys, they heightened their feminine charm even as they hailed their respective English clubs. They actually attracted attention to themselves as women and used this space to flaunt and celebrate their beauty, on their own terms. This echoes the earlier mentioned Kim Toffoletti’s observation on the ‘sexy fans of stadium football’. She argues that whereas this had always been the media approach to the representation of women in sport fandom, there was a new trend in which media texts of foreground the appearance and maintenance of a sexy body as a desirable marker of contemporary female sport fan identity (2017). It is indeed arguable that the Eldoret women fans in question also modelled their fandom on such images of ‘sexy football fans’ that they watched on television. But it is also important to observe that the feminized female fandom of Eldoret was not happenstance but an articulation of a specific set of circumstances. First, there was the extension of the campus experience to the outside world. This was characterized by a continuity of some of the nodes and ties of social networks, a phenomenon that was arguably facilitated by many factors, but which this study established that was also included EPLF fandom. Secondly, the challenges that the campus women faced when they tried to squeeze themselves into the existent fandoms in town made some of them to reconnect with their campus community. An informant revealed that she had to actively look around for her campus friends because she realized that even her close female friends in town were not interested in football. She observed:

You can imagine even my close female friends here in town were not keen on football. They were more alive to television drama series and soaps. My dad had purchased satellite television and followed his beloved Arsenal Football Club, but he frequently welcomed his male friends to enjoy the experience with him. I was not able to fit in, frequently my mother called me to the kitchen to warn me from shouting and bandying words with men of my father’s age. She believed that I had to totally efface myself in a corner of the living room and watch the football like a woman. This could not work for me. I had gotten used to the active and boisterous style, I needed to express myself, to respond to the experience.

(Field notes, November, 2018)

But there was a third and perhaps more compelling force in the feminization of the EPLF fandom; it consisted in the adaption of football fandom to a mercurial imagination that had a feminine touch about it. Women fans found certain aspects of the popular trends of fandom congruent with their preferred modes of performing modern gender identity. There was an increasing trend of adding a touch of ceremony and colour to the spectator experience. In the process, the football experience became mere tessera in the mosaic of a larger performance.

In Eldoret for instance, there emerged a fan group that homogenously identified as Arsenal football fans. This was a group that consisted of campus mates and their close friends. Their coming together is not necessarily because of EPLF fandom but merely strengthened by it. They regularly wat congregated to watch football matches involving Arsenal, mostly within Eldoret town but sometimes they travelled to far-flung resorts. Fittingly clad in customized replica jerseys, they foregrounded their own identities in the spaces where they watched the matches. Significantly, majority of the group members were females, and they are in charge of the choreography and performance of the social rituals that accompanied the spectatorship of the
televisual football. This serendipitously played into the commercial interests of the sports bars, restaurants and resorts because not only was the actual consumption of food and drinks good for business but the sharing of the pictures taken here was also a marketing bonus. Indeed, there developed a symbiotic relationship between business entrepreneurship and football fandom that was facilitated by the production of new cultures of fandom involving mega consumption, at least in the local sense of the term. This was characterized by a blend of leisure travel, picnics and parties framed within the practice of football fandom. Fans of mainly Arsenal, Manchester United and Chelsea organized travel parties on the fly to neighbourhood, and sometimes distant towns as far as Kisumu, Nakuru and Kitale, to link up with their former campus buddies and watch the big football matches together.

In these scenarios, football fandom was mere background against which more immediate social interaction took place. Significantly, such events were organized by the women fans and arguably re-defined the concept of English Premier League football fandom in Eldoret. Because football fandom became much more than following a televisual cultural form, it gave rise to, and thrived in, another set of social rituals. These were significantly performative and engaged the fans perhaps much more than the football matches did. They imitated the actual rituals of football fandom in Europe, but in the local scenario it also became an opportunity for the performance of local versions of socio-economic privilege. In the purchase of replica club merchandise such as jerseys, shawls, armbands, expensive food and drinks in the pubs, and actual means to move around from one point to another, these fans displayed exhibitionist consumption that called attention to the fans themselves much more than it did signal their identification with the English football clubs they supported. In one sense, this is a trend that fits within the consumption trends of social identification, in the post-colonial world, as has been observed – in another context – by Sasha Newell’s (2012, p. 1). It is important that, in Eldoret, the female fans were the fulcrum around which these fandom/modern identity performances played out.

Conclusion

This study has described the development of a popular culture that sprouted from female fandom of English Premier League football. As a sport, football and the cultures around it were always associated with men, especially in Eldoret and other parts of the East African region. But as we have established in this study, the addition of televisual football spectatorship to the repertoire of leisure and popular culture in Eldoret enabled the emergence of a community of women that identified themselves as fans of European football and performed this identity in actual spectatorship experiences. In doing so they joined the predominantly male communities of fans, developing a fairly new trend of local popular culture. The ethnographic approach adopted in this study has engaged with the fandom experience of the women in the context of their everyday life that intersects with my own everyday life. In this vein, the study has explored the social contexts that (in)form not just the women’s fandom experiences but also the wide gamut of their everyday life. The apparent agency these women cultivated in the process of performing their fandom identities was reinforced in specific social contexts within bars and public houses and university campus life.

In these social structures, I have sought to demonstrate how perceived patriarchal formations also include within them opportunities for women to experiment with their gender identities and actually push the boundaries. I believe that this chapter contributes to the general discourse of popular culture in Kenya. Set on the template of the global flows of popular culture, one of which is EPLF, the study explores how this cultural form is vividly processed in its immediate social milieu in Eldoret in the first decade of the New Millennium. This is perceived in the light
of the social transformations that take place around this time due to the rapid advances in media technology and the impact of this on society and culture in Eldoret. The argument has been made that the adoption of global football fandom cultures was accompanied by the appropriation of elements of this cultural form in the local politics of gender identity. It has been argued that this worked in the context of other social processes, mainly the changing terrain of public leisure and the impact of campus cultures on the social life of women, the net effect of which was the development of a ‘feminine streak of EPLF fandom in Eldoret’.

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