

Ritualised Talk of English Premier League Football among Informal Market Vendors in Eldoret, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on an ethnographic study of a market vendors' community in Eldoret. It examines their use of English Premier League (EPL) football as a resource to perform identities. It argues that the subject of EPL football is preferred among the participants because public demonstration of knowledge about this topic is perceived as a symbol of social prestige. This is a result of context-specific experiences with media technology. EPL football was introduced in Kenya through satellite television, which at the time belonged to the category of commodities of conspicuous consumption. These circumstances have since changed, and EPL football has been absorbed into popular culture. In this article, the focus is on how market vendors use football talk as social currency in the context of everyday life and also to perform identities during ritualistic sessions. The researcher utilised interviews as well as participant and non-participant observation. Data were collected through audio recording, note taking, and photography. Data interpreting was done using performance theories of social identity with analytical emphasis on the perceived role of football talk on the negotiated experience of performing identities. It is concluded that the market vendors' EPL football talk is a signification practice constituted in the process of local re-interpretation of global football consumption.

Keywords: football fandom, liminality, market vendors, social dramas, social identities, ritualistic sessions