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Photography, storytelling, writing and Research

Kibera Fashion Week

Fashion, Community, identity

An Ethnography Research of Fashion, Identity and Community in Motion

By Anwar Sadat Swaka

This work would not have been possible without the generosity, openness, and creative force of the people behind **[Kibera Fashion Week](#)**. I came into this project as an observer—curious, cautious, and deeply aware that I was stepping into a space that was not mine to own, but to witness with care.

To the designers, models, stylists, tailors, and make-up artist—thank you for letting me in.

I listened as you spoke of fashion not as trend, but as testimony. I followed your process with a camera, a notebook, and an open heart—always aware that what I was witnessing was something sacred: a reclamation of identity on your own terms.

Your work carried the weight of identity, joy, resistance, and reinvention.

The entire **[Kibera Fashion Week](#)** community, who reminded me that storytelling is not just about telling—it's about staying, observing, and honoring the lives that shape the story. I was an outsider, but you made me feel like I belonged just enough to see clearly—and I carry that responsibility with deep respect.

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Research Manuscript

Anwar Sadat Swaka

★★★★

Report

I. Title Page

Title: *Kibera Fashion Week - A celebration of Fashion, community, and Identity*

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Date: 16 Nov 22

II. Abstract

This paper explores *Kibera Fashion Week (KFW)* as a transformative platform that redefines narratives of identity, community, and creativity in Kibera—one of Africa's most misunderstood and misrepresented urban spaces. Through visual storytelling, ethnographic observation, and in-depth interviews with models, designers, and community members, the research reveals how fashion is used as a tool of resistance, pride, and innovation. Findings highlight the movement's commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, and cultural reclamation. The significance of this work lies in its contribution to reframing Kibera not as a place of lack, but as a thriving epicenter of style, self-expression, and artistic agency.

III. Introduction

Contextual overview of Kibera (history, stigma, creativity).

Genesis and purpose of Kibera Fashion Week.

Research questions: What does fashion mean in the context of Kibera?

- 1. How is KFW reshaping identity and perception?
- 2. Objectives and significance of the study.
- 3. Brief description of structure.

IV. Literature Review

> Fashion as a form of cultural resistance.

> Community, fashion and Celebration.

> Global vs. local fashion narratives.

> Representation of informal settlements in media/fashion.

> Gaps in current literature on African fashion weeks in grassroots communities.

V. Methodology

> Qualitative + visual storytelling approach.

> Data collection: In-depth interviews with designers, models, organizers, and community members.

> Participant observation during events.

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- > Photography as a research method.
- > Ethical considerations (consent and co-authorship of stories).

VI. Findings and Discussion

1: Fashion as Reclamation

How residents use fashion to reclaim their narrative and space.

Quotes from participants on pride, identity, and purpose.

2: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Representation of body types, abilities, genders, and age.

Inclusion of marginalized voices.

3: Innovation and Sustainability

Use of recycled materials and handmade designs.

Creative economy within Kibera.

4: Challenges and Resistance

Barriers: Funding, logistics, external perception.

How KFW mitigate and subverts these challenges.

E. Visual Narratives

Curated images with captions and context.

Symbolic analysis of fashion pieces, culture, locations.

VII. Case Profiles

- > Mini stories and photo essays with designers.
- > A community model with al backstory
- > Models who learned through self-taught practice
- > Fashion Industry Leaders
- > The German Cultural Institute in Nairobi
- > Nairobi Design (Week)
- >Festival | Agency | Community

VIII. Conclusion

> Summarize key insights.

> Reflect on the importance of grassroots fashion events in reimagining African creative futures.

> Call for more inclusive platforms, policy support, and documentation.

IX. References

News articles and social media posts (with proper citation)

X. Appendices

Interview transcripts

Visual portfolios

About the Author of the Report

[**Anwar Sadat Swaka**](#) is a Kenyan visual storyteller, social researcher, and documentary photographer whose work explores the everyday lives, creative expressions, and quiet revolutions of communities often left at the margins of mainstream narratives. He uses photography, writing, and collaborative storytelling to document

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spaces like Kibera—not just as sites of struggle, but of authenticity, culture, and Identity. All this to reveal structure, to interrogate space and to honor how people live.

This paper grew out of his quiet observations of [**Kibera Fashion Week**](#)—where he began not as an insider, but as a guest and a friend. Through time, trust, and shared purpose, he slowly a curiosity fashion in Kibera not just as design, but as resistance, storytelling, and community-making.

Sadat is the voice behind sadat-photo-stories.com/ a photography portfolio as well as an archive for storytelling and social research. His current work focuses on the intersection of age, identity, care, dignity and belonging at @kiberadaycarecenterfortheelderly.

Acknowledgements

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To those who made this journey possible, I am especially grateful to you: This is for you.

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