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Morsiani, B.**

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Transcultural body spaces: re-inventing and performing headwrap practice among young Congolese women in London

Benedetta Morsiani *Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of
Westminster, London, UK.*

This article examines embodied representation of race, ethnicity, and gender, questioning ideas of cultural appropriation. Using the London-based Congolese transnational fashion brand *Kiyana Wraps* as a case study, the article addresses how young Congolese designers re-invent their cultural heritage to conceive the label stylisation and construct meanings of Blackness/Africanness. The article also explores the brand's social spaces, where the headwrap ritual is used by different actors to perform hybrid identities. In addition, wearing the headwrap reveals symbolic metaphors of empowerment, through which intertwined 'feminist' and 'feminine' identities are evoked. The paper examines how Congolese women are creatively taking inspiration from the environment of London to produce innovative fashion trajectories as lived socio-cultural experiences. It argues how the headwrap ritual signifies an aesthetic and material process through which specific racial and ethnic boundaries are transcended, fabricating transcultural body spaces which encompass individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Congolese diaspora; transnational fashion; hybrid identities; cultural appropriation; UK; DRC.

Introduction

The concept of cultural appropriation is generally used to describe the act through which specificities of a given culture (e.g. symbols, artefacts, genres, rituals, or technologies) are used by members of a different culture. In the postmodern, postcolonial, and globalized world, where cultures are constantly in contact with other cultures, cultural appropriation represents an inevitable process, related to cultural politics. Often, it encompasses the assimilation, exploitation, survival and resistance of socially marginalized cultures from more dominant, mainstream cultures (Rogers 2006). This also happens within the western fashion industry, which has often drawn and benefited from non-western or minority cultures. However, cultural appropriation can be reconceptualized through the category of "transculturation" which questions the very idea of culture as static (Rogers 2006; Slimbach 2005), becoming a more useful theoretical tool to frame the case study that this article discusses. Transculturation assumes that culture itself may be constituted by acts of appropriation from and by multiple cultures, with hybridity as its essential feature. Culture becomes a relational phenomenon (Rogers 2006), an ongoing, evolutionary process (Cuccioletta 2002) of absorption and transformation rather than being a pure essence composed by fixed practices (Rogers 2006). In this sense, the so-called 'creative borrowing' process in producing fashion stylisation may be

understood as a transcultural ‘act of appropriation’ which is never unilateral but rather developed through the interaction between Western and non-Western dynamics.

By investigating a London-based Congolese fashion brand, *Kiyana Wraps*[®], this article examines Congolese young women’s diasporic geographies in relation to the commodity culture of headdress fashion. It uses a multi-sited ethnography¹ which traces “a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity” (Marcus 1995). The case study focuses on how a fundamental head garment of Congolese/African/Black diaspora evokes the construction of a sense of Africanness/Blackness, but simultaneously exceeds specific racial and ethnic boundaries. In addition, it discusses how the headwrap ritual is used to embody gender configurations, where ‘feminist’ and ‘feminine’ identities are intertwined, representing a symbolic hybrid marker able to unite women of disparate ethnic identities.

In this regard, I will start with a brief introduction of the brand and continue with a historical look at the African headwrap’s cultural heritage and its diasporic value. I will then discuss the *Kiyana Wraps* fashion stylisation. Finally, I will then investigate the performance of gender identities related to this practice.

Race, ethnicity, and fashion aesthetics

Introducing Kiyana Wraps

Kiyana Wraps is a Congolese/London-based fashion brand which specializes in women’s accessories, especially hand-stitched turban hats, ready-made headwrap models, fabrics for headwraps and, occasionally, handmade jewellery such as necklaces and bracelets. The brand was established in 2011 and today it operates in a small atelier in Croydon, South London, by three young Congolese women, between 29 and 40 years of age. The fashion designer and creative director Madeleine Laini who, driven by her natural ability for sewing and her passion for stylistic expression, became a milliner after training at the Kensington and Chelsea College. Her younger sister Christelle Laini, mostly focuses on the commercial organization of the company and on the promotion of the brand, and a third business partner, Josette Matomby, who is also a Congolese fashion stylist.

The fashion production company, which is both cultural and commercial, represents a significant example of cultural head dressing re-elaboration and hybrid invention. Its symbolic stylizations illustrate an important dimension of “imaginary” transnationality (Dwyer 2004), intending to transmit an African cultural heritage infused with an international, contemporary taste. On the company website, the team members highlight their use of “authentic African

methods of head wrapping” learned from their mothers, “combined with a blend of contemporary aesthetic” and, therefore, they are “able to create something new, something innovative whereby each piece is a unique celebration of artistry and ancestry”.² As Madeleine explained in an interview:

“what I really planned to do from the very beginning was to merge the traditional African wrapping and the traditional European ways of making a hat...in this way women don’t need to wrap their head, but they can just have a beautiful headwrap at home ready and wear it whenever they feel like...”.

The African headwrap cultural heritage and its diasporic value

Traditional African wrapping, which Madeleine refers to, has strong roots in the African continent and can be traced back to the European invasion into the West African region and the Transatlantic slave trade period, between the fifteenth to the nineteenth century (Griebel 1995b). Toward the end of the fifteenth century, when the European-produced fabrics (not yet wax-prints) entered the African market through the West African textile trade, they became an exchange currency in the gold, ivory and slave trades, together with firearms and alcohol (Sylvanus 2007). Between the seventeenth and nineteenth century, the African wax-print market expanded across the African continent and the fabrics became accessible to a larger population (Lynch and Strauss 2014). This was mainly due to the introduction of “Javanese” wax-prints by Dutch (from the Dutch Indonesian colonization of the city of Java in Indonesia) and other European companies (Nielsen 1979; Akinwumi 2008). It is important to underline that the wax fabric’s arrival in Africa from Europe through Asia underwent an important process of localization and cultural assimilation within African consumption systems, mostly through the fundamental role played by African market women. The fabric acquired an “authentic African character”, gaining a high social value (Sylvanus 2007) and holding significant cultural meanings about African individuals and groups, e.g. ethnic origin, social standing, age, and marital status (Strübel 2012). African wax prints currently represent the most worn and valorized fabric on the African continent (Sylvanus 2007), essential to the formation of a stronger sense of African identity (Farber 2010).

This explains why headwraps made out of African wax-prints turned into a widespread accessory among West African women, rapidly developing all over the African continent (Griebel 1995b). From its origins, the African headwrap is described as a rectangular piece of cloth wrapped from the back of the head and tied or tucked around the head (Lynch and Strauss 2014; Griebel 1995b). Historically, the headwrap has been used in Africa for practical reasons, protecting the wearer from environmental elements, and also to convey powerful socio-cultural

meanings such as indicating individuals' ethnic affiliations, as well as to express aesthetic and fashion preferences, enhancing the wearer's face (Arnoldi and Kreamer 1995; Lynch and Strauss 2014). Overall, the strong significance of the headwrap remains well-established in African cultures within and outside the continent (Griebel 1995a; Farber 2010). This is indeed the case of Congolese women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who continue to complement their traditional vibrant and colourful dresses with a headwrap (Foster 2002).

The abovementioned historical background shows how the use of headwraps enables young Congolese women of the diaspora to maintain ties with their African cultural heritage, indicating a strong desire to celebrate African influences and aiming to strengthen both their cultural identities and feelings of belonging to their specific ethnic group (Arnoldi and Kreamer 1995; Farber 2010). The *Kiyana Wraps* team has, indeed, been consciously re-appropriating and re-formulating the African headwrap as an embodied form of "symbolically transnational" connection and "emotional identification" to their place of origin, which they had left at a very young age (Boateng 2004; Strübel 2012; Garbin and Godin 2013). This is mostly materialized through a careful selection of authentic African wax-print fabrics, directly supplied from the DRC as well as from Nigerian and Togolese markets, which represent an emblematic memory of an imagined homeland as well as an "authentic" way of successfully promoting the business. A "Congolese story" is, in addition, symbolically expressed by the careful selection of authentic Congolese Swahili names, often suggested by Madeleine and Christelle's mother and aunts. The brand name *Kiyana*, which means beautiful, as well as the entire collection of turban hat models and headwrap fabrics, is sometimes inspired by Congolese towns and villages. Occasionally, French-inspired names, evoking a Belgian colonial past, and English names inspired by London areas are also used.

Re-inventing heritage styles to conceive bespoke designs

Kiyana Wraps fashion stylization has a clear intention to transmit a metaphorical "Congolese journey identity", to evoke strong cultural diasporic memories, to construct a sense of Africanness/Blackness. In addition, it incorporates multicultural tastes and imaginaries, whereby African and British cultures are fused and thus, traditional and Western aesthetics are combined (Dwyer 2004).

The case study represents a powerful lens through which examine transnational and multicultural spaces as lived social fields (Dwyer 2004), strongly influenced by the global city of London. The representation of diasporic memories and the connections with a real and imagined homeland in the DRC and with other Black-African transnational diasporic

individuals shows the *Kiyana Wraps* “sociological engagement with the multicultural” (Dwyer and Crang 2002). The socio-material space of the label extends, indeed, beyond the specific, ethnically, and spatially boundaries which define transnational Congolese/Black communities. The company fabricates a more encompassing notion of transnationality, including different individuals who are not members of these ethnic communities. The “aesthetic engagement with the multicultural” (Dwyer and Crang 2002) is mostly manifested in the way Madeleine elaborates, produces and presents her designs. Finally, “the commercial engagement with the multicultural” is expressed in terms of *Kiyana Wraps* relations with expanded “imagined markets” (Dwyer and Crang 2002): from a predominantly Congolese and other African consumers to a broader and diverse range of clientele.

Drawing upon de Certeau’s notion of the everyday life, the utilization of headwrap should be considered as an everyday life practice (De Certeau 2011) which can be transformed and re-invented by both the brand team and its users. Michel de Certeau theorizes about the importance of examining the ways in which active individuals (users) operate through everyday practices, “ways of operating” or doing things, such as walking, reading, talking, speaking, dwelling etc. (De Certeau 2011). According to de Certeau, there are countless ways of “making do” (De Certeau 2011). He highlights the significance of tracing “the interlacings of a concrete sense of everyday life, to allow them to appear within the space of a memory” (De Certeau 1998). This is indeed the case of *Kiyana Wraps*. By their “art of being in-between” (De Certeau 2011), the brand team has gotten unexpected cultural and business results from their diasporic enterprise. They have created for themselves a space in which they can find *ways of using* the socio-cultural order of the place of London, establishing within the place “a degree of *plurality* and creativity” (De Certeau 2011). Starting from de Certeau’s theoretical discussion, Buckley and Clark assert that the ways individuals dress should also be seen as a creative everyday life practice: “Characteristic of self-fashioning and re-fashioning, this articulation of the everyday also recognizes the possibility of reinvention and resistance as the fashion system is refused, re-cycled and re-defined from within the realm of the everyday” (Buckley and Clark 2017). In this sense, for many African women, dressing the head represents an important aspect of ordinary life since it involves an ongoing repetition of routine gestures that are ordinarily calculated and are embedded in users’ daily lives (Buckley and Clark 2017). Wearing the headwrap can therefore be seen as an everyday ritual (De Certeau 2011) through which a creative fashion and cultural identity is produced.

In addition, the headwrap often signify a status symbol which indicates power, wealth, and social prestige both inside and outside the community. This practice finds its roots in the

African continent as well as other African diasporas (Nielsen 1979; Arnoldi and Kreamer 1995). The *Kiyana Wraps* team described their formal models as “luxury accessories which should be regarded as status symbols” (Interview: 17 December 2016). According to Madeleine and Christelle, wearing a headwrap would provide the young African women with the possibility to be perceived as elegant, chic, and luxurious; to be noticed, admired, and stand out from the crowd, meanwhile embracing and maintaining a strong cultural heritage. At the same time, headwraps represent an important tool of empowerment able to unify diverse women of the African diaspora.

Embodying memories, embodying transculturation

The strong re-appropriation and re-formulation of the African/Congolese headwrap cultural heritage ensures the consumption of the brand models by numerous young women from the Black African diasporas, such as Congolese, Burundian, Ugandan, Afro-Caribbean, etc., turning therefore the Black body into a space of cultural encounter (Fila-Bakabadio 2015). However, *Kiyana Wraps* fashion production attracts a much wider range of clientele, including young Arab and Muslim women, White Europeans (e.g. from French-speaking EU countries such as Belgium and/or France), women with alopecia or cancer as well as women who have experienced head injuries (Interview: 17 December 2016). This is mainly due to Madeleine’s ability to style headwraps through a culturally hybrid process, which is regularly performed during a series of workshops organized by the team to show-case the brand across London and, particularly, to teach the headwrap craft to the public.

Teaching the headwrap practice

During an event, “Unveil-the-workshop”³, the brand’s creative director performed the headwrap ritual on the heads of some attendees, demonstrating the brand stylization process, using an African traditional approach (Griebel 1995a) with some creative adjustments. Following the African tradition (Griebel 1995a), Madeleine started with folding the fabric and positioned it on the crown of client’s heads. In some styles, she pulled the fabric and completely covered the hair of the guest, in some others, she left hair partially uncovered. She always left the forehead and the neck exposed, leaving the face visually open to enhance all the facial features. She tied the ends of the fabric into knots, either on the top of the head or on the side, and occasionally creating a traditional headwrap shape, tucking the ends of the fabric into the wrap. However, she often modified the Congolese tradition, leaving the edges of the fabric

free, exposed over the head, and creating abstract forms, which could be either softly curved or vertically adjusted. Those asymmetrical shapes were held and emphasized using numerous pins. As a young African woman explained, “the use of pins is not traditional...[it] is something that has never been used by our mums or aunties” (Interview: 17 December 2016). In fact, the introduction of pins has helped to produce elaborately shaped headwraps. At the same time, other “more modern” elements from the urban/popular Western clothing style were also incorporated including feathers or a Swarovski-style necklace around the knot of the headwrap.

A culturally hybrid stylization process was especially emphasized by the combination of different materials. For each woman in the room, Madeleine selected specific fabric colors and patterns, getting inspired by personal tastes. She created unique shapes following each guest’s preferences and requests. This way of creating headwraps visibly differed from the traditional way of older generations. Generally, African women used to wear just a piece of simple cloth, twisting/plaiting it vertically and tying/folding it in a very simple way. In addition, they wore (and still do) headwraps which fully matched everything else. Its colors, patterns and shape always corresponded to the dress, hair, shoes, etc. On the contrary, Madeleine did not follow those matching rules but rather visibly broke “the traditional perceptions of what a wrap is or should be” (Interview: 17 December 2016) and modified/reinvented modern headwraps which would reflect a blended style of different cultures: African/Black/Congolese/British and more.

As Bourdieu suggests, social origin deeply determines the development of aesthetic dispositions. The acquisition of cultural attitudes often derives from familiar performances; they are accepted and inherited definitions that elder individuals within the family offer to the younger (Bourdieu 1984). This is salient for Madeleine, who has surely been influenced from an early age by the cultural attitude of her mother and aunts to wear headwraps on a daily base. However, those familiar aesthetic dispositions, at the same time, have been transformed by Madeleine, driven by her own sense of taste influenced by the city of London. Taste itself is what Bourdieu refers to as “the sense of social orientation”, a “social sense of one’s place”, which is a “practical way of experiencing and expressing one’s own sense of social value” (Bourdieu 1984).

During the workshop, Madeleine played an important role as taste facilitator and intermediary between the guests. She had the position of a “taste-maker” (Bourdieu 1984), given her power to influence people’s tastes in how to create headwraps through a range of personalized styles. She was aware of the power to shape certain aspects of taste of young women within that specific social space. Madeleine was occupying a distinct, distinctive

position; she was asserting difference compared to previous generations, getting herself known and recognized, making a name for herself and her company, by attempting to express new ways of thoughts and expressions (Bourdieu 1984). She was “taking the liberty” of standing outside traditional rules, putting herself forward as a marker of different rules, as *arbiter elegantium*, announcing a new fashion, a new mode of expression and ritual action (Bourdieu 1984).

In this sense, the guests often highly regarded Madeleine’s role and *Kiyana Wraps* work for its “creativity” and, most of all, its “modernity” and “innovation” (Interview, 17 December 2016). *Kiyana Wraps* team has created a diasporic commodity culture of elaboration which embodies and mobilizes diverse “multicultural imaginaries” (Kahn 1995; Cook, Crang, and Thorpe 1999). During the event, the headwrap cultural practice became a fundamental process through which diasporic hybrid identities and multiple be-longings were constructed and sustained. Through the act of sharing the traditional ritual, young African women could fortify an “authentically” Congolese/African identity, and a strong sense of belonging to the Black diaspora, symbolically maintaining ties with “recreated or imagined homeland[s]” (Anderson 2001). At the same time, they could perform “broader alternative identities” (Anderson 2001), through the engagement with young women with a different heritage, combined with a collective desire to be part of a multicultural Britain. The process through which the every headwrap was created evoked a cosmopolitan ability of young African women to simultaneously embrace multiple cultures and places, instead of being attached only to one culture or place (Tanniou 2015).

In this sense, the label fashion production challenges binary transnational attachments of “here” and “there”, fusing instead traditional notions of diasporic identities and belongings based on collective memory, nationality, or ethnicity (Abdelhady 2011), with several cultural/stylistic inputs coming from a network of consumers with different origins. As Jigna Desai suggests, it is necessary to investigate under which conditions diasporic identities and belongings are produced and narrated, instead of assuming them as something natural and *a priori* (Desai 2004). In the contextual circumstance of the workshop, the act of performing multiple identities and “doing belonging” (Skrbiš, Baldassar, and Poynting 2007) was particularly explicitly exhibited by Madeleine, Christelle and Josette who visibly emphasized their African/Congolese heritage as well as global belongings with the aim to sell their cultural and business productions. Through the development of a hybrid socio-cultural approach, the *Kiyana Wraps* team could involve everyone in the room and, probably, could reinforce brand loyalty among old friends as well as establish new long-term consumers.

The workshop event confirmed the idea that the formation of identities and be-longings should be considered as dynamic processes formed through social relations, something which is socially constructed and performed rather than a fixed, primordial, and essential characteristic that people have (Probyn 1996; Bell 1999; Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004; Kumsa 2005; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Kofman 2005; Anthias 2006). The hotel room represented a temporary construction of a hybrid, multilocal “Third Space”, a social space that extended national/cultural borders (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006), produced by the encounter between young women coming from different diasporic cultures. “Unveil-the-workshop” became a way of “being in place”, revealing how diasporic female identities and sense of multiple belongings were transformed and enacted in relation to the socio-cultural and commercial context of the event.

Headwraps as symbolic metaphors of empowerment

Following the African tradition, the cultural practice of head wrapping not only represents a beautifying process of women’s head, simply concerned with boldly asserting African aesthetics, but also mainly communicates prosperity, social position and, most of all, represent a symbol of empowerment (Arnoldi and Kreamer 1995; Griebel 1995b). The material commodity culture of the headwrap expresses, in this sense, a collective “symbolic ethnicity” (Gans 1979; Naujoks 2010) understood as a “nostalgic allegiance (...) to the old country, a love for and pride in” (Gans 1979) an African tradition. These characteristics are confirmed by young African diasporic women, who define headwraps as an important fashion accessory for everyday life, a powerful sign of social distinction in a multi-ethnic environment of London. Wearing *Kiyana Wraps* signifies maintaining their custom and confidently present it with a modern fresh young twist as well as asserting their membership in the African Black diaspora with pride and self-esteem. At the same time, the company production is not specifically limited to one precise group of women but “open to everyone” (Interview: 17/12/2016). The headwrap practice is, for this reason, also experienced as a powerful means to unify women from different cultural backgrounds, as a young African woman expressed it: “a tool of sisterhood!” (Interview: 17 December 2016) showing a strong desire to use the tradition as a cosmopolitan process of engagement with other cultural trajectories. The commodity culture of headwrap therefore should be seen as a process through which ethnicities are reproduced but, at the same time, a process in which “ethnicised” individuals actively engage with broader discourses (Dwyer and Crang 2002).

Together with performing ethnicities, the ritual of “putting on and wearing” (Kotthoff and Wodak 1997) *Kiyana Wraps* headwraps could also be interpreted as an act used by Black young women to perform their gender identities. Adorning the head with a wrap becomes a way of doing a new kind of Black/African “femininity” (Kotthoff and Wodak 1997), with the intent to look “beautiful” and “attractive” (Interview: 17 December 2016), as well as expressing a strong “feminist consciousness” (Lazar 2013). In this sense, young women “feminist” and “feminine” identities are intertwined, blended together instead of being polarized. The headwrap ritual becomes a beauty practice which can be reclaimed as enjoyable, self-chosen and skilled feminine pursuit and can, in addition, be considered as a practice of feminine “self-aestheticization” (Lazar 2013). The headwrap represents, therefore, a material form of self-confidence, empowering young African women in everyday life to express their cultural/transnational history and claim control over their identities.

Conclusion

The *Kiyana Wraps* case study shows how the African headwrap cultural “re-appropriation” and “re-formulation” produce socio-cultural and symbolic meanings which are essential for the construction and performance of racial, ethnic and gender identities. Through the materiality of the headwrap, young diasporic women maintain a strong connection with past experiences; tracing and enhancing a “Congolese/African/Black story”, which is embedded into collective homeland memories, often affected by a nostalgic, idealized idea of the DRC and the African motherland (Tulloch 2004). However, the *Kiyana Wraps* fashion production has been deeply affected by direct multicultural influences from the city of London. It challenges strictly defined cultural boundaries and transcends the binary of the “imagined” transnational attachments, blending ethnic tastes with several cultural/stylistic inputs coming from a network of consumers with heterogeneous cultural backgrounds.

Young women of a Congolese “minority culture” are, indeed, actively influenced by the global environment of London and creatively “appropriating” and “borrowing” styles from culturally diverse individuals to produce innovative transcultural fashion. Each turban hat model and headwrap represents a “strong cultural fusion”, which should not be put in a “Congolese box but open to everyone” (Interview: 17 December 2016). In doing so, the socio-material space of *Kiyana Wraps* becomes multiply inhabited (Dwyer 2004) by various consumers from different cultural origins who are not necessarily members of the same racial/ethnic groups. While the commodity culture of headwrap is also transformed into a

multi-dimensional (Dwyer 2004) fashion geography involving many elements: a cultural and economically driven social practice; a form of African heritage and memory; a synthesis of hybrid discourses and aesthetics; the symbolic stylisation of the everyday and of social distinction; the representation of multiple/hybrid diasporic identities and sense of belongings; the embodiment of social relations between producers and consumers and, most importantly, a symbol of gender empowerment and unity.

An analysis of the stylization and ritual of “hybrid” *Kiyana Wraps* fashion production, which simultaneously evokes a “Congolese/African/Black authenticity” combined with “non-traditional” elements, demonstrates how ideas of “cultural appropriation” can be examined. *Kiyana Wraps* represents the material and symbolic embodiment of the notion of transculturation. Its transcultural stylization, involving ongoing, synthesis of elements between multiple cultures, is capable of bridging different fashion preferences. The headwrap cultural “authenticity”, certainly perceived as “real” and often used by the team for the marketing of each product, paves the way for young women to recreate themselves from the remains of their “original” (precolonial/colonial) cultures. However, the globalized environment of London, which involves a constant flow of people, discourses, and cultural forms, encourages the same postcolonial subjects to “appropriate” aspects of other, often dominating, cultures (Rogers 2006). In this sense, transculturation involves the cultural elements created through appropriations from and by multiple cultures. It considers hybridity as constitutive of culture and, consequently, challenges the existence of a pure, essential, single originating culture. The constitution of culture (and any related cultural/commercial productions) may therefore be understood as a dialogic, relational phenomenon; as a constant process of absorption and alteration rather than passive configurations of practices (Rogers 2006).

This case study shows how, despite the idea of an authentic” Congolese/African/Black culture is being deeply “believed” and re-evoked by diasporic actors and “used” to sell their products, the same idea of an original “authenticity” is clearly transformed by the contact with other cultural elements. The *Kiyana Wraps* stylization manifests, indeed, the capacity and willingness of young diasporic women to be actively inspired by different cultural backgrounds, make them “their own” and, dynamically, reach out to a broader range of clientele. The ongoing process of cultural transformation produces, therefore, a transcultural fashion brand, which appeals to not only Congolese women but others as well.

Notes

1. The article is part of a more in-depth case study analysis of *Kiyana Wraps* which covers all aspects of the multi-sited ethnography, which follows people (young migrant women); things (headwraps) as well as metaphors (signs, symbols, and images), stories (memories and everyday life narratives), lives and biographies, and conflicts related to the commodity culture of headwrap (Marcus 1995).
2. *Kiyana Wraps* website <http://www.kiyanawraps.com/> Accessed on 13/01/2017.
3. “Unveil-the-workshop” event was held at the St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

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Appendix

Interviewee non-anonymised profiles:

Interview 1: Madeleine Laini, creative director of *Kiyana Wraps* brand, thirty-two-year-old Black female, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo. Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interview 2: Christelle Laini, *Kiyana Wraps* brand collaborator, twenty-nine-year-old Black female, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo. Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interview 3: Josette Matomby, *Kiyana Wraps* brand collaborator and stylist at Kitoko brand, between thirty-five to forty-year-old Black female, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo. Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interviewee anonymised profiles:

Interview 4: Designer, between twenty-five to thirty-year-old Black female, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo. [alias Celia] Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interview 5: Professional model, between twenty-five to thirty-year-old Black female, originally from Uganda. [alias Kizza] Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

6. Interview 6: University student, between twenty-five to thirty-year-old Black female, originally from Burundi. [alias Yvette] Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interview 7: Professional model, between twenty-five to thirty-year-old White female, originally from Russia. [alias Alina] Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.

Interview 8: University student, between twenty-five to thirty-year-old White female, originally from Belgium. [alias Julie] Interview conducted at St. James Hotel and Club, Green Park; 17 December 2016.