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Interview with Ms Judy Maina

(Founder and CEO of Siafu Leather Kenya)



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Introduction

Judy Maina is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Siafu Leather; which is a company in Kenya that produces exceptional leather and canvas products.

In this interview, The Thinking Watermill Society presents you with Ms. Maina's experience as an entrepreneurial woman in Kenya and the use of leather within Kenya as an economy booster.



1. What inspired the creation of Siafu Leather in 2019?

Siafu Leather was borne out of my desire to produce high-quality leather products in Kenya for Africans. I had an eye for finesse which I could not find in locally made products by our locals.

2. Who are your target consumers and how do you ensure they make an informed purchasing decision?

I target a clientele that desires bespoke, luxurious handmade leather and canvas products.



3. What sustainable and ethical practices do you have in place to guide your operations?

We endeavor to employ more women, we are keen to conserve the environment by using biodegradable products and partnering with organizations to plant trees.

4. Kenya's leather sector is robust and is a part of its Industrial Transformation Programme. Have you received any form of support to boost your operations?

The government through the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA) has organized training which has been very beneficial in learning how to export and be export ready. Siafu Leather through this training has been able to get the "Brand Kenya" mark which is a mark of quality.



5. Your products range from leather to canvas-based items. What caused this expansion?

Leather is durable and offers high-quality products but it is also an expensive textile and this made our products out of reach for a large part of our countrymen and women. We ventured into canvas material which offers both quality and durability but was more affordable to the larger population. This allowed our product to be accessible to our countrymen and women. We were also excited to use canvas as it is a locally grown plant and in this way, we are able to offer job opportunities indirectly to more people involved in the whole cotton plant to the canvas value chain.

6. What has been your biggest hindrance as a sustainable and ethical brand?

The ethical and sustainable measures we take as an organization lead to a cost impact on our products.

7. Congratulations on your enrollment in the Google Digital Launchpad program. How does this experience contribute to your long-term goals as a fashion entrepreneur?

This will allow us to be able to use the tools and knowledge garnered to explore the world. Putting our products out for the world to experience bespoke products infused with the African spirit.

8. Africa has a high rate of women entrepreneurs with different backgrounds. What has been your experience as a woman entrepreneur in Kenya?

Yes, Africa has a high rate of women entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the culture is very stifling for the woman entrepreneur. I have, however, been fortunate to be in an environment of educated, exposed individuals who have been very supportive and encouraging throughout my entrepreneurial journey.



9. It is commendable that your brand hopes to engage with young students to nurture their creative talents. What do you hope to achieve through these programs?

Creativity is looked down upon or totally ignored as a means of livelihood. My hope is that through this programme I can awaken in the young minds that talent can be a source of earning and to the parents to embrace this reality and support their children in this realization.

10. You have been nominated for different national awards such as the 2021 Founder of the Year award and the 2021 SHE award. What should we look forward to from you in the future?

I have big dreams for Siafu Leather. Through partnerships and links, we will have Siafu Leather's presence in every corner of the world.

Thank you for your cooperation on behalf of The Thinking Watermill Society. All the best in your current and future endeavours, Ms Maina.

Learn More about Siafu Leather

VISIT SIAFU LEATHER





About The Thinking Watermill Society

The Thinking Watermill Society is a non-profit organization. In particular, it promotes the debate and exchange of ideas among its members regarding the changes underway in the economic, cultural and social landscape, together with the analysis of the consequences that said changes entail, so as to identify the possible opportunities of economic, cultural and social growth related to said changes.

Our headquarters are in Rome, Italy.

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"Ideas are what make us human. Ideas do not get handed to us by elites, the rich or the powerful. Ideas are not bounded by colour, race, gender or religion."