

Cheat sheet – key takeaways from the CASE STUDIES – Part 1

FOOD

1. Sadiq Khan's Tooting: a food and drink street tour

Adapted from Isabel Choat, *The Guardian*, 23 Oct 2014

⚠ published when Sadiq Khan was an MP (= Member of Parliament), 2 years before he became Mayor of London.

Tooting was his constituency, and is the area of London where he was born and raised, and where he never stopped living. → **the article makes him appear true to his roots**

From the picture:

- lacks the traditional stage-management of a photo-op : Khan's eyes are closed, and not looking at the camera
- Caught in the moment, having fun with the other patrons ?
→ makes him seem genuinely approachable
- The pint (of lime soda) is echoed in his 2025 statement on the Bloomberg podcast: "I am a proud Brit, a proud Englishman, a proud Londoner and a proud Muslim."
(pints in pubs are a key element of British/English/Londonian identity)
- Wears his signature blue tie-less suit

From the article:

- Referred to as "Sadiq" = only his first name → feeling of proximity
- Note that no price exceeds £10 → affordability / relatability
- Sadiq Khan, the local MP (and, under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the first Muslim to attend cabinet meetings) will be among the thousands celebrating the Hindu Festival of Diwali (he attends most local festivals regardless of the faith).
→ **Khan is a strong advocate of unity in diversity and a fierce defender of multicultural richness.**
- The Wheatsheaf (pub where the picture was taken)
 - **"Now I come here even though I don't drink. There are quizzes on Sunday nights and we hold fundraising events here."**
→ pubs are about their atmosphere, drinking alcohol is not necessary to belong
 - Last year, Sadiq ran a campaign to save the Wheatsheaf from redevelopment, successfully putting a stop to it becoming a Tesco Metro (= a supermarket).
→ **Is involved in local politics**, as he should be
- Pooja
 - hugely popular sweet emporium
→ **knows his neighbourhood well + see the coherence with the "Mars bars addiction" (= "sweet tooth")** mentioned in his article about running the London marathon (in SPORTS)

- **run by a Muslim and a Hindu** → two religions which still fight each other bitterly in India; another proof of **Khan's peaceful, conciliatory approach to religious diversity**
 - Lahore Karahi
 - The busiest restaurant in Tooting → again, shows firsthand knowledge of his constituency and constituents' tastes : is one of them/evreyman
 - Tota
 - Popular brunch spot (brunches WERE popular back in 2014)
 - **Well-sourced ingredients** → **already contemplating becoming a "green mayor"**?
 - a firm local favourite for "team Sadiq" who had their Christmas dinner here last year → confirms everything about his attitude to religion
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2. How Zohran Mamdani Built a Campaign Around Food

Priya Krishna, *The New York Times*, September 30, 2025

From the picture:

- Obviously a photo-op even if Mamdani is not staring at the camera: empty background, food carefully arranged to direct the gaze towards Mamdani in the process of serving himself some rice
- Contrast between western (the suit) and eastern (eating with one's hands) codes: embodying multiculturalism, staying true to himself in front of the camera

From the article:

- A man like any other, hungry at the end of the day → relatability
- But no mayoral candidate's relationship to food has been more scrutinized or showcased than Mr. Mamdani's, often by his own choice.
→ he is **harnessing food as both a campaign tool and a policy plank.**
- **Kabab King :**
 - a 24-hour restaurant in Jackson Heights, Queens, that he's been visiting since high school
→ true to his roots
 - once filmed a music video there under the rap moniker "Mr. Cardamom" (Google it)
→ owns his past "mistakes" + has long been attached to his origins (cardamon is a spice)
- **Food and proposed policies/political platform:**
 - **central message = make the city more affordable**
 - has proposed opening a city-owned grocery store in each of the five boroughs to make ingredients more affordable, → go to YouTube
 - repealing some of the laws and regulations that have curtailed street vending → go to YouTube (Halalflation)
 - **Social media blitz**

- the social-media blitz that has been widely credited for his success often focuses on food
- posts with hundreds of thousands of views
 - the rising price of halal chicken and rice → go to Instagram
 - used Bengali sweets as props to explain ranked-choice voting → go to YouTube
- **Mamdani leverages food in a different, more powerful way: food is part of his language to make his politics really accessible.** It's a background character in his videos, meant to make the setting — and him — feel familiar to voters.

As opposed to the traditional use of food in political campaigns where the actual food is the event, like 'I am eating fried butter or the cheesesteak.'

- Mr. Mamdani's focus on street foods and inexpensive neighborhood restaurants serves a bigger strategy: **portraying himself as a relatable everyman.**
 - **"He uses food in the way that an influencer might"** (a Columbia University professor) versus a Kamala or JD Vance, where it is a little more structured, a little more organized, a little more scripted. He seems more comfortable engaging (with restaurant owners)."

Key criticism: some worry that those (social media/communicator) skills won't translate to political leadership. Governing as an influencer will not work because people need results.

SPORTS

3. Sadiq Khan: why I'm running the London Marathon

Sadiq Khan, *The Guardian*, 12 March 2014

⚠ published when Sadiq Khan was an MP (= Member of Parliament), 2 years before he became Mayor of London.

⚠ written by Khan himself (regular guest writer in *The Guardian*, a left-wing newspaper) → his unfiltered opinion

From the picture:

- Obviously a photo-op: too few people on an otherwise very busy bridge
- Caught in action (mid-air)
- Running from his place of work (Parliament) towards the camera

From the article:

- Mentions his **background as a barrister (defense lawyer)**, a time he wore ties everyday (see CLOTHING)
- Mentions his **personal life**: friend David Cohen + **wife Saadiya (worried about his health)** → **relatability**
- **Personal (excessive) taste for Mars bars (“passion”): sweet tooth and guilt about it** → **relatability (recurring motif in the article)**
- **His motivation: a chance to help a good cause** = the Dispossessed Fund (tackling poverty and deprivation across London). → goodness of his heart
- Admits that he **finds training tough, shares his rookie mistakes** (neglecting warming up and stretching down) → relatability, honesty, candour
- ⚠ **I've found some good tracks, from Jay-Z to Paul Weller** → **not easy to believe for a man of his generation** (trying too hard to connect with younger people), especially since “More than once I've been caught attempting to sing along while running to an 80s classics.” = his generation's music
- **Mo Farah** (Google him) quoted as his olympic hero → is everyone's olympic hero in the UK → relatability
- Advertises directly for his **social media accounts**:
 - Twitter @SadiqKhan and #YesWeKhan → **gain more followers/hashtags**
 - virginmoneygiving.com/SadiqKhan → **raise money for his charity**

In hindsight: showing off one's ability to run marathons can be seen as a political metaphor for the ability to run the city

4. The US love of football is reaching new levels. Just look at Arsenal super-fan Zohran Mamdani

Bryan Armen Graham, *The Guardian*, 1 December 2025

From the picture:

- Obviously a photo-op: is at the center of (too?) perfectly diverse crowd
- What seems authentic: the childish grin on Mamdani's face
- Contrast: his suit (sitting on the grass) / the sports gear of the audience around him
→ he is the politician (and needs to dress like one because of his young age and ethnic background, see CLOTHING)

From the article:

- On a TV show, Ian Wright, the former England and Arsenal striker saluted Mamdani on his election, and urged him to channel that “winning energy” into the job ahead.
→ **Mamdani cheesed guilelessly as it played before finally blurting out: “I love this man.” = any man in front of one of his childhood sport idols (he is described as a “geeked-out Arsenal obsessive”) → authenticity, relatability**
- **The author of the article's analysis:** this was not a politician deploying a sports reference for relatability; **it was a display of genuine allegiance that's planted at the intersection of two different stories about how Americans have come to love the global game.**
→ **Mamdani is representative of his fellow Americans when it comes to football** (see “everyman” in FOOD)
- There's a resonance between Mamdani's politics and his approach to football: his petition against Fifa's dynamic pricing for 2026 World Cup tickets – which he called an “affront to the game” **treats the sport as something that belongs to working-class people and immigrant families, rather than luxury entertainment.**
→ That stance is **both global and deeply local; both socialist and recognisably football-supporter logic.**
- **Football highlights his African diasporic culture:** he was born and raised in Kampala (Uganda) and Cape Town (South Africa) before his family relocated when he was 7 to Morningside Heights in Upper Manhattan..
→ His Arsenal was the Arsenal of Kanu, Lauren, Kolo Touré, Eboué and Song – **a club whose African spine made it beloved across the continent long before it became fashionable in Brooklyn.**
→ **multicultural background, relatability**

The effect is **a US football culture that is finally shared. No longer the province of any one demographic (European expats), but a hybrid of diaspora, youth culture, TikTok, brunch spots and streetwear. = Mamdani's identity**

Cheat sheet – key takeaways from CASE STUDIES – Part 2

CLOTHING

5. Sadiq Khan: The real reason I don't wear ties

Scarlett Russell, *The Times*, 20 April 2025

From the picture:

- Staged photo-op: against a background the colors of which make the iconic green of the suit pop out even more
- A forced smile on Khan's face
- A studiedly casual look (slightly undone at the collar and jacket)

From the interview:

- I actually love ties. I wore them for 11 years as a lawyer and 11 years as a member of parliament, but **when I was running to be mayor [in 2016] I wanted to be authentic and comfortable.**

→ **also, the absence of tie with his suits make him look less formal, and therefore more approachable/relatable**

- **True to his roots: favorite piece of clothing** = a bespoke pearl-coloured sherwani made by his wife's mother for their marriage

→ 30 years on still fits into it (see SPORTS)

- **Brands mentioned from all price ranges :**

- Nike, Adidas or Champion grey jogging bottoms, sweatshirts and a pair of trainers (to take out the bins) → relatability
- Fred Perry → relatability (middle classes)
- Paul Smith, Oliver Spencer → relatability (upper middle classes)
- Admires Tom Ford's James Bond suits → relatability (everyone does)
- + shops on Black Friday like everybody else → relatability

- **About his relationship with his twentysomething daughters:**

- They tease me a lot. What I think is fashionable they call "retro" + When I buy gifts for my daughters I go to Vivienne Westwood – the jewellery is fantastic.

→ **a modern paternal figure, not a patriarch, who dotes on them**

- **About the green linen suit he wore for his third swearing-in ceremony:**

I was in the clothes shop Percival in Soho with my daughters and rang my team at City Hall, saying: "I've got this suit I want to wear. Two things – it's linen and my daughters are advising I buy it in green." Everyone in the office shouted: "No. Stick with black or blue." I went with green – my daughters had seen the campaign close up and knew that I wanted to be the "first green mayor". They thought it was cool, and they were right.

→ **an endearing story of a politician who is a father first, and who will listen to his daughters' advice over his PR team's**

→ a story that shields him from criticism: attacking the suit is attacking his daughters

→ showcasing how his daughters keep him in touch with the younger generation

- **Self-deprecating tone** → appear modest, still down-to-earth
 - In my mind I look cool in leisurewear, like David Beckham. My neighbours probably think I look like David Brent (from The Office UK)
 - I'm a hoarder. I've kept suits for a long time and not counted them.
 - What I think is fashionable they (his daughters) call "retro",
 - **Yet, name-dropping** (in an attempt to appear cool ?)
 - Harris Reed show at Tate Britain. From out of nowhere **Florence Pugh** turned up. A few years ago I went to Molly Goddard and **Adwoa Aboah** just turned up, so that's what I love about Fashion Week, the people who just appear
 - **Bill Nighy** gave him the sartorial advice (rather old British actor, plays the singer in *Love Actually*) that led to his signature look (blue suit, no tie)
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6. What Zohran Mamdani's suit tells us about the man and the way society is changing

Jad Salfiti, *The Guardian*, 2 Jan 2026

About the picture:

- The broad smile and the fact that he is looking straight at the camera indicate that this is a photo-op
- So does the fact that the street is relatively empty
- Traditional political outfit: the suit and tie
- Do your own research
 - about Mamdani's ties
 - about Mamdani's rings
 - about Mamdani wearing other clothes

About the article:

- **one thing on his campaign trail rarely changed: he was almost always in a suit**
- Loosely tailored, modern with soft shoulders, yet conventional and ordinary, his is a **typically middle-class millennial suit**
- **Yet millennials rarely bother wearing suits:** It's basically only worn in the most formal locations: weddings, funerals, to some extent, court appearances
- Mamdani's typical suit is from **Suitsupply, a Dutch label that retails in the £400-£1,200 range = in the mid-market bracket.**

→ his mid-level suit will **resonate with the demographic most likely to support him: people in their 30s and 40s, college graduates making middle-class incomes, often frustrated by the cost of housing.** It's exactly the kind of suit they might wear themselves.

→ relatability

- **A price-range with a message: not cheap but not extravagant, Mamdani's suits arguably don't contradict his proposed policies:**
 - a rent freeze;
 - building 200,000 permanently affordable, union-built, rent-stabilised homes;
 - fare-free public buses;
 - universal early-childhood care.
- **Reasons why Mamdani wears suits: (which are at odds with wanting to appear relatable)**
 - a suit is just **a subtle form of drag, in that it performs**
 - masculinity,
 - authority
 - proximity to power.
 - **Or at least how politicians are expected to look.**
 - a suit is a form of protective armour: **“if you're Brown, you aren't going to get taken as seriously in these white spaces (=politics).”** (says an economic historian at the LSE, London School of Economics) + “As a Muslim child of immigrants of Indian descent and a democratic socialist, he is under pressure to conform to what many American voters look for as a sign of leadership” (clothes historian)
 - The suit becomes **a way of signalling legitimacy, perhaps especially to those who might question said legitimacy.**

It may also be part of his **multicultural background, where code-switching between languages, customs and clothing styles is common.**

PRIVATE LIFE

7. Sadiq Khan on meeting his wife, embarrassing his daughters and the dating advice he gives to single friends

The Evening Standard, 14 February 2024

About the picture:

- Typical photo-op: empty street, both looking at and walking towards the camera
- Note how Saadiya Khan has a broad smile (playing the game of the political wife) yet a big pair of sun glasses (not surrendering everything)
 - About Saadiya Khan:
 - They have been married three decades (they met when they were teenagers)
 - She is a human rights lawyer
 - A fellow Tooting-raised Muslim
 - The child of a bus driver like her husband
- Khan wears his signature blue suit without a tie
- He is the one walking the family dog Luna → check his Instagram for more

About the article:

- **8 years after the first time he was elected Mayor, *The Evening Standard* writer still feels the need to introduce him by mentioning his religion: “the first ever Muslim mayor of a Western capital“**
- the man who set a **new record as our city’s first mayor to secure a historic third term** (in 2024)
- **Sadiq Khan and hugs (he hugs his male friends): against toxic masculinity**
 - “I went from having six brothers and a sister, to having two children who are women... I think that more female environment has changed my behaviour for the better” → also **calls himself a “proud feminist” (against prejudices)**
 - “Now I make a point of giving hugs to my male friends, to my colleagues, to people I haven’t seen in a while. It’s a way of showing love without needing to say ‘I love you’.” → **setting the example**
- Khan takes part in a special Valentine’s episode of *The Evening Standard’s* dating podcast and **appears to be enjoying a rare chance to talk about these softer, fuzzier elements of his day-to-day**, whether:
 - it’s **date nights with his wife Saadiya**, → good husband, trustworthy
 - **visiting his elderly mother every morning before work**, → dutiful son, trustworthy
 - **”I love being an uncle, a husband and a son, but of all the things I am I think my favourite is being a dad“** → good father, good family man trustworthy
 - or the **weekly games of football and tennis he plays with his friends in Tooting, an example of the non-romantic forms of love that the pandemic taught him were just as important for mental wellbeing as the romantic stuff** → (see SPORTS)

8. Gen Z's 'first lady': how Rama Duwaji, Mamdani's wife, is reshaping political fashion

Jess Cartner-Morley, *The Guardian*, November 12, 2025

About the picture:

- Notice the symbolism of how the focus is on her while she is in the background, looking on → she is her own person
- **Duwaji's husband is conspicuously absent from her Instagram page.** Her creative purpose and cool-toned self-possession are in **striking contrast to the docile "tradwife" aesthetic** that has stormed the TikTok algorithms in recent years.
- Duwaji, 28, is arguably the US's first generation Z "first lady"
- **As a visual artist, Duwaji is aware of the power of image-making.** Duwaji is an artist and illustrator of Syrian heritage, whose work explores themes of Arab identity, female experience and social justice. She works in paint, line-drawing, ceramics and animation. → check her Instagram
- Met Mamdani in 2021, married him in February 2025

About the article:

- the most traditional of assets for any ambitious young male politician = a fashionably dressed, beautiful young wife. **But as with everything else about the rise of Zohran Mamdani, his wife, Rama Duwaji, represents a new era of politics which speaks to a new generation of voters.**
- Vogue (the most prestigious fashion magazine) headlines about her:
 - "Zohran Mamdani and Rama Duwaji Are Making Finding Love on Hinge Seem Possible Again"
 - "Fall's Next Cool-Girl Haircut Is Officially the Rama".
- Duwaji's victory-speech look was sober:
 - all-black,
 - with a high neck and calf-length skirt, and silver jewellery
 - Duwaji's velvet and lace Ulla Johnson skirt and silver Eddie Borgo earrings showed support for two independent New York designers drawn from outside the traditional high-status Manhattan names
 - Duwaji's denim top, embellished with laser-etched embroidery, was by the Palestinian-Jordanian designer Zeid Hijazi. **The choice of a Palestinian designer was widely interpreted as a deliberate and political choice by Duwaji, who has expressed clear and vocal support for the plight of Gaza.**

→ But her low-key style did not deflect **a feverish online reaction**

→ The outfit was notable for being consistent with **Duwaji's personal style**, rather than a cut-and-paste political wife style

- **Mamdani and Duwaji blend youthful energy with traditional elements.**
 - **Mamdani maximises his youthful advantage as a digital native and uses social media as a political broadcast channel, but does so while wearing the most traditional of outfits:** a dark suit and tie.

- **Duwaji, likewise, steers clear of the first lady cosplay** of a pastel skirt suit, **but her quirky retro-tinged elegance has a ladylike tone**, albeit one forged in the vintage boutiques of Brooklyn rather than the department stores of Fifth Avenue.
- **Likewise, their love story is both strikingly modern – the two met on Hinge – and solidly traditional in being formalised by marriage.** Wedding photos shared on Mamdani’s Instagram show the couple holding hands on the subway as they travel to city hall → Check his Instagram

Their combination of romcom-worthy New York spirit and down-to-earth, affordability-conscious relatability has charmed the public.