INTRODUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART IN THE KENYAN MATATU GRAFFITI INDUSTRY TO CREATE AN APPRECIATION FOR THE BEAUTY OF AFRICAN CRAFT

By:
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Supervisor:
(Mrs. F. Odundo)

Project paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Art in Design Degree submitted to the school of the Arts and Design, University of Nairobi.

December 18, 2015.
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December 18, 2015.
DECLARATION

I declare that this project paper is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

Signed:………………………………………………..Date:………………………………………

KEMOLI LINDA MIJIDE

B05/53263/2012
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First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the strength and patience he has given me which allowed me to complete this project paper. It was not an easy road but when I look at the final outcome, it was well worth the extensive reading and odd sleeping hours.

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ABSTRACT

For many centuries, graffiti art has been used to express different things from poetry and homosexuality to war and societal issues. Additionally, it has aimed to depict ideas that people are not able to or are afraid of expressing in words. Matatu graffiti should be no different but presently, that is not the case. It instead shows elements of pop culture and sheds light on issues that the audience does not directly relate with such as American musicians and celebrities and in so doing, has diminished the presence of local culture and material in the art produced. This served as the main motivation behind this research and brought about the question: how can contemporary African art be employed in graffiti designs in the Kenyan matatu industry to create a sense of appreciation for African craft in the local people?

The data that counted towards this research was collected through observation, filling of questionnaires and personal interviews but because the target population is far too large (approximately 8,400,000 people), a smaller sample of 43 youths was selected from the School of Arts and Design, University of Nairobi to represent the population at large as well as four matatu staff that served as key informants. The results of this process were then presented in the form of tables, graphs and interviews that were transcribed verbatim and verified.

The results of the research proved that the data subjects indeed prefer international content over local content at 82% to 12% and also prefer International musicians to African ones at 66% to 34%. However, the results also revealed that the subjects would not mind having a bit of African content in graffiti designs where 42% of them admired the colours used in Tingatinga art and another 42% liked the patterns used in the same, but they also made it clear that the graffiti would only look better if it is controlled and done in moderation.
To conclude the research, it was evident that matatu graffiti artists have the artistic skill and talent required for this job but need to put in more effort towards making the audience feel that the art is playing a part in defining and celebrating local culture and society. Therefore, it was deemed necessary for the artists to consider incorporating elements of a contemporary African art form such as Tingatinga art so that Africa can also be represented in art that reaches such a great number of people each and every day.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Matatu** - Privately owned communal taxi in the form of a minibus which is used for both inter- and intra-city travel.

**Social design** – Design that is mindful of the designer’s role and responsibility in society and the use of the design process to bring about social change.

**Target market** – Young adults in the 18-29 age range

**Pop culture** – Cultural activities or commercial products reflecting, suited to, or aimed at the tastes of the general masses of people

**Service provider** – Matatu Sacco owners
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Graffiti art has long been used to represent a vast array of themes and ideas about society in a way that is comprehensible, explicit and uniquely delivered. In spite of this, many still do not acknowledge the power that it holds in regard to changing people’s ideologies and attitudes whilst sending a message of hope and positivity. This may be as a result of the general portrayal of graffiti or its perceived association with criminal activity.

Furthermore, aside from the growing presence of graffiti art in Kenya, it is also evident that international celebrities, music and TV shows have been embraced by the Kenyan people and as a result, have displaced local material and content. Bearing this in mind, this research project aims to change the perception of both graffiti art and African cultural content by showing the aesthetic potential that African art styles hold when combined with existing Internationally-influenced graffiti art so as to build a sense of appreciation for local African content and heritage.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

According to Matwana, an online platform that showcases the art and matatu lifestyle in Kenya, matatus originated in Nairobi, Kenya in the 1950s, and were used mainly by residents of the African residential zones to move people and goods to and from nearby rural areas to their residence in the city. This was because the then existing bus transport system did not cater for
these residential areas. Therefore, the emergence of matatus at the time aimed to fill this transport vacuum.

Matatus then rapidly increased in number after Kenya’s independence in 1963 and continued growing, becoming one of the most popular modes of transport in Nairobi today. The matatu industry is now a major contributor to Kenya’s rapidly growing economy and despite the government classifying the industry as an informal sector, it’s grown to become a multi-billion shilling industry that provides employment for Kenyan youth, including designers and artists. (Matwana, n.d)

Up to the year 2002, matatus all over Nairobi were painted with graffiti art that conveyed messages to the public alluding to Western pop culture in the form of images and accompanying slogans. Because of this, matatus were considered to be more appealing to the younger generation of Kenyans as the graffiti was often supplemented by posters, LED lights and loud music (refer to Figure 1, Appendix 1).

However, when the late Mr. John Michuki, the former Minister of Transport and Communications, took office from the year 2002 to 2005, he banned this art style and introduced the basic white coat and yellow stripe print on public vehicles to create uniformity and instill discipline on the roads (refer to Figure 2, Appendix 1). This was crucial at the time because the number of road crashes occurring on Kenyan roads was rapidly increasing and matatus were considered to be a big contributing factor to these increased figures due to their “rowdy” nature and “careless” driving. Once the rules were set in place, the road carnage fatality numbers began to gradually drop and the new laws (initially met with great opposition and backlash) were
eventually accepted by the Kenyan people and embraced as a part of the Kenyan road culture. These rules became later known as “the Michuki rules.”

However, this changed in the year 2015 when the current president of Kenya, H.E. Mr. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, reintroduced graffiti art on matatus so as to create job opportunities and provide exposure for artists by allowing them to re-design the vehicles and make a living from it. At first, this was regarded as an avenue for artists to exercise their skills and share their talent with the society but it has become apparent that the roots of the Kenyan people have been overshadowed by Western culture, considering the nature of the images and messages found on these vehicles. Western music, celebrities, and connotations have been publicized and popularized by the local media, making the locals embrace it as their own and thus, has led to a displacement of African heritage in the locals (Umeogu, 2013).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Kenyan matatu graffiti artists are drawing the inspiration of their work from Western pop culture and in so doing, have contributed to the diminution of African cultural identity in the work they produce, negatively impacting the role they play as social designers in the country.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

How can contemporary African art be employed in graffiti designs in the Kenyan matatu industry to create a sense of appreciation for African craft in the local people?
1.4 OBJECTIVES

1. Investigate the current graffiti art and slogans on matatus to establish which ones are considered appealing to the target market.

2. Establish what the target market feels about the graffiti and what they like about it in particular e.g the colours, the shapes used, the celebrities etc.

3. Propose ways in which contemporary African art can be incorporated in matatu graffiti concepts so as to include African styles in a unique way, allowing people to appreciate the beauty and vibrancy of their African roots.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE

From a design perspective, this research proves vital to Kenya because it highlights the impact that Western culture has had on locals in the society and in so doing, local graffiti artists can begin to explore and learn more about their own heritage whilst finding ways to incorporate it in the pieces that they create. In addition, the use of contemporary African art in graffiti designs may prove beneficial as it communicates the vibrancy of African culture and so, can have a positive impact on the society and bring people back to their roots through the use of images. Its inclusion may also have a positive effect on the way the locals think about local material and its importance in their lives today.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Before embarking on this research, it was fundamental to read books and articles written by other researchers and professionals in this field of design in order to acquire a deeper understanding of visual communication, its pros and cons as well as the origins of graffiti and contemporary African art. Therefore, this literature review exhibits the ways to effectively utilize visual images as a means of communication as well as highlights the methods of presentation of visual stimuli that need to be used so as to ensure a message conveyed is received without miscommunication taking place. It further illustrates the state of present day graffiti and Contemporary African art and provides direction on how the two can be combined to form a new, unique style of art that pays homage to both Western and African culture as opposed to Western culture alone.

2.2 VISUAL IMAGES AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

The human brain contributes greatly to how we perceive and interpret the images we see. Scientists believe that visual information is processed along two pathways in the brain: one which specializes in coordinating vision with action and a second which identifies objects. The first pathway ties directly into the emotional center of the brain (including the fight or flight response) and is much faster than the second, “such that all visual information is filtered through an affective response before being evaluated cognitive.” In addition, the human brain processes visual information based on a vast array of factors unique to the viewer (including past
experiences, preferences and background) and so, meaning often differs among individuals as a result of these factors. (Bradley, 2009)

### 2.3 VISUAL FRAMEWORKS

There are three frameworks that have been documented in existing literature that illustrate how visual elements are designed in such a way as to facilitate a connection between images and the viewer, whilst encouraging a positive reaction. The first is the visual superiority effect framework which postulates that visual elements are more easily recognized and recalled than words once processed by a viewer. This framework suggests that visual information stimulates viewers’ “affective process,” influencing the formation of “product attribute beliefs” and attitude towards the product.

The second framework is the peripheral processing framework which provides a rationale concerning how “visual images function in arousing affective reactions,” and thereby induces “advertising effects on attitude formation.”

The third and final framework is the rhetorical framework. This framework posits that visuals move through a symbolic system and must be cognitively processed, rather than absorbed peripherally or automatically. It was discovered that visual rhetoric was effective in communicating a key brand attribute by inducing more elaboration, and eventually led to a more favorable attitude toward an advertisement. Results indicated that consumers not only reaffirmed
visual impact on their attitudes, but also generated the deeper meanings and metaphors from visual images of advertising.

It was also established that images are well suited to map connections and interactions of social and economic factors in complex systems. (Boehnert, 2014). An example of this is the images we find in magazines, news, promotional material and advertisements, which are bought cheaply from image banks like Getty Images. They do not represent actual places or events and they do not document or bear witness, but they symbolically represent marketable concepts and moods such as ‘contentment’ and ‘freedom’. (Machin, n.d)

2.4 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN VISUAL IMAGES AND COMMUNICATION

This research pays great attention to visual communication and how it can be used effectively in order to convey a message that will be received and remembered. In one article written by B. Jones, who concurs with researchers like Robert E. Horn, it was revealed that visual language is “composed of tightly integrated textual and visual elements and its emergence is a result of such driving forces as globalization, increasing complexity in commerce and technology, and the convergence of vocabularies from many previously distinct fields” (Jones, 2006).

Most people have made use of this knowledge and have transformed mental ideas into illustrations in order to better depict their thoughts. The term used for such images is ‘conceptual diagram,’ which comes from the Latin word ‘conceptus’ meaning ‘thought’ and the Greek word ‘diagramma’ meaning ‘to mark out by lines.’ Many make use of these diagrams to “clarify thinking…avoid ambiguities and…provide a unique communication interface between images
and the audience.” Based on the idea that a picture can say a thousand words, conceptual diagrams provide visual representations of ideas by communicating concepts and summarizing information (Eppler, 2006). This integration of visual content can boost how much an audience absorbs and remembers information because according to scientific research, our brains not only process visuals faster, but retain and transmit much more information when it is delivered visually. (More, 2014)

Moreover, visual illustrations such as graffiti enable creative expression by giving people ambiguous visual stimuli to work with. Because the messages are ambiguous, “these stimuli can be interpreted in different ways, and can activate different memories and feelings in different people,” according to Elizabeth Sanders. This visual nature liberates people’s creativity from the boundaries of what they can state in words and these tools allow people to explore their creativity, both in expressing their current experiences and ideas and in generating new ideas (Sanders, 2003). An example of a scenario that illustrates the power that visual images hold in the conveyance of messages is one case study of students aged 11 to 21 in the US who evaluated brochures on drug prevention for their effectiveness. They offered sophisticated evaluations of the choices of graphics but found many of the visuals unpersuasive. This was because the images were interpreted as “insulting” or “corny”. Another example is that of a research about the Chinese Zodiac signs, conducted by Fan Jiang. In his research, he identified the ineffectiveness of information about Chinese Zodiac signs which came about as a result of poor design and the use of “rough” images. To solve the problem, he designed a book with symbols and illustrations used to visualize both the function and meaning of the animal signs in the Chinese Zodiac to provide “effective” and “intelligible” information for people who want to understand it. (Jiang 2012)
2.5 VISUAL COMMUNICATION OVER TEXT COMMUNICATION

Although it has been established that visual images can be a powerful tool when it comes to effective communication, one must be mindful not to bombard the audience with too much visual stimuli because the human brain can only process a few at any given time. The very fact that we direct our attention to certain things shows this reality. As we look around, we find focal points, for example, when one walks into a room crowded with people, they do not perceive everything in the room at once or equally. “Instead, they tend to focus on a few items, such as a window, one small knot of people, or a person seated in a chair. In doing so, we ignore much of the other sensory information through a process called filtering. That filtering presumably protects the mind from being swamped with” irrelevant information.”(Hillgoss & Tharon, 2002).

Furthermore, John Berger, a media theorist, once wrote that "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." In support of this statement, a Dr. Lynell Burmark, writer of several books and papers on visual literacy, said, "...unless our words, concepts, ideas are hooked onto an image, they will go in one ear, sail through the brain, and go out the other ear. Words are processed by our short-term memory where we can only retain about 7 bits of information (plus or minus 2)…Images, on the other hand, go directly into long-term memory where they are indelibly etched." Therefore, it is not surprising that it is much easier to show a circle than describe it. An example of a scenario that brings this idea into play is if you come across a sign describing a dog in one way but a visual image describing it in another. Which one would you choose to believe? (Refer to Figure 3, Appendix 1)

Therefore, it can be said that the very same visual elements that we are indelibly drawn to and so quickly absorb not only communicate data more efficiently and effectively but also affect us
emotionally by engaging our imagination and heightening our creative thinking through stimulation of other areas of our brain, leading to a more profound and accurate understanding of presented material. (Parkinson, n.d)

2.6 THE ROOTS OF GRAFFITI ART

Banksy, one of the most popular graffiti artists in the world, stated in his book Wall and Piece, “Graffiti is not the lowest form of art. Despite having to creep about at night and lie to your mum, it’s actually the most honest art form available.”(Banksy, 2005)

The birth of graffiti art can be traced back to prehistoric times with the “use of petroglyphs (dating as far back as 40,000 years) on rock walls to illustrate maps or landmarks, as well as cave paintings used for communication.” Artist, Fiona McDonald writes, “. . . it illuminates what appears to be a timeless obsession throughout mankind…drawing and painting on stone and making one’s presence known through images.” The Roman Empire was also known for its use of graffiti to cover a range of topics from politics and gladiators, to homosexuality and poetry. Despite its origins that date back hundreds of centuries, the word “graffiti” only came to light in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries to describe the etchings found on the walls in Pompeii that addressed topics ranging from love poems to homosexuality, its etymology emanating from the Italian word “graffiare,” meaning “to scratch.

In the years that followed, there was an emergence of graffiti in the subways of New York that coincided with the arrival of hip-hop. In fact, the spray-can art that took over New York’s subway system facilitated the birth of hip-hop and breakdancing, whose aim was to “capture the
raw essence of the urban fabric in ethnic neighborhoods,” bringing to the fore the issues plaguing the inner city youth. Today, the influence of graffiti has reached far and wide to the point where European spray paint colors have been named after the original New York artists from the years before.

What is more, in neighborhoods where more renowned artists are still carrying out uncommissioned pieces, the property values are actually on a steady incline. Banksy “once published an email he received, where the sender kindly asked him to start painting elsewhere: “. . . these days so many yuppies and students are moving here [we can’t] afford to buy a house where we grew up. Your graffities (sic) are undoubtedly (sic) part of what makes these wankers think our area is cool.””(Banksy, 2006) Nonetheless, graffiti still disrupts the public visual sphere and so, graffiti artists themselves remain largely unseen to create a sense of intrigue as well as avoid legal prosecution for defacing public property. (Truman, 2010)

Other than the legal aspect, another problematic element of graffiti is the issue of impermanence. The question that many people ask themselves is “how can something hold value as cultural heritage if its lifespan is indefinite?” But to the artists, this ephemeral quality is one of the essentials of this movement, and part of what makes it so enchanting. “An artist never truly knows how long a piece remains on display, and this uncertainty holds much allure for both the artist and viewer alike.” Furthermore, Schiller, an artist himself, reinforces this by noting that “it is the act of creation, not possession, which many artists are captivated by. Impermanence is beneficial to graffiti…because it allows for an array of inspiration and creative adaptability.” (Bates, 2014)

Additionally, graffiti artists feel that the art of graffiti writing (whether with a pen or spray can), and seeing the image take shape on the surface is one of the most powerful experiences one can
have. Many assume that the main motivational pleasure for the artists is the sight of the effects of their work and/or the knowledge of the annoyance it brings to part of its audience but the real pleasure resides in “seeing the can in the hand, seeing the words take shape, feeling a connection between…control of the implement and the writing as it appears on the surface.” (Halsey, 2006) This feeling of pleasure has been enhanced by the increasing reliance on the internet by graffiti writers in order to communicate with other like-minded individuals from around the world and increase the popularity of their work. Nevertheless, the artists must use these digital platforms with caution because in some cases, online distribution of street art and graffiti has superseded the art on the wall. (Rushmore, 2013)

2.7 EXEMPLAR

During my research, there was one individual who really stood out for me and displayed the power that graffiti can have on a society when it is utilized effectively. The power to make people think and make people question what they are most times forced to accept. This individual is Boniface Mwangi, an “award-winning Kenyan photojournalist making a name for his social-political activism.”

Boniface Mwangi initiated a campaign that was termed as Vulture Graffiti and it aimed to use graffiti art to “satirize political figures and bring political issues to the streets of Nairobi, Kenya.” It also focused on reproaching Kenya’s political class on “issues of governance, ongoing corruption and exploitation of power” and “sending a message to Kenya’s citizenry to stand up for their rights.”

The vulture portrayed in many of his graffiti murals “references Kevin Carter’s Pulitzer Prize-winning 1993 image of a vulture stalking a famine-stricken Sudanese child” and Boniface uses
this image as a central metaphor of “the conflict between Kenya’s governed and governors.” As a result, his work has elicited a national debate that has provoked Kenyans into thinking more critically about their current leadership. His main strategy in making his murals more impactful was painting them overnight so that Kenyans could see the images in the morning on their way to work. The reactions to these anonymous, public statements were immediate and widespread and eventually led to coverage of the campaign in international media outlets including Vice, CNN and Al Jazeera (for images of his work, see Figures 4 and 5, Appendix 1).

2.8 AFRICAN ART

Colonialism played a big role in defining the styles of African artists today as it “forced a restructuring of existing artistic practices,” but did not do away with them. However, “modernism/modernity” which followed this colonial period has been described as “a mixed bag containing both good things (education, medical care, consumer goods) and bad things (culture deterioration, greed, warping of social fibres, corruption and excess power) to undermine traditional values.” So in order for artists to pass this modernization phase, they had to drop the mentality of the colonial era. According to Cole (1990), there are “…icons in the pre-colonial which keep on recurring in the art of Africa today” (“icons” is “a collective reference to the images which are significant in the visual expression of a particular culture or belief”). Some of the icons which keep on recurring are, “woman and child…the perpetuation of society.” (Kangai, 2013) Unfortunately, “in embracing western ideologies by African pioneers of modern civilization, the process involved shrewd suppression of major aspects of Africa’s uniquely established indigenous systems.” But all hope is not lost. African art styles can still be revived
through a clever repackaging and dissemination (i.e. preserving, promoting and projecting) of Africa’s rich cultural heritage. (Azi, 2012; Owen, 2005)

2.9 TINGATINGA ART

Contemporary African art is a term that describes a collection of creative, artistic styles of the African continent that span from the year 1970 to the present day and there are many different techniques and works that are indigenous to different countries within Africa but the most captivating one that has been incorporated in this research is Tingatinga art. The reason why it has been included is because “its unique characteristics distinguish it from all other African art” and “its style reflects Tanzanian culture, depicting scenes from people's lives, and many aspects of Tanzanian society.”

Moreover, it has a long, rich history, using one painting to tell many stories. It has long been known that Africa has suffered through many hardships including war, hunger and societal problems and Tingatinga artists are using their creations to depict this because it reflects their own personal life experiences as well. “Everything that African artists experience is shown through art, and this is what makes African art different from other artistic traditions. Art from other cultures may reflect different things, but Africans show the reality of daily life in Africa in their art.”

Lastly, Tingatinga art has a distinctive style and content that has kept it unique while “honoring its origins and staying true to its traditions. It has never been influenced by any other tradition or
culture, as is the case with Western art. Africa has a very rich culture, and does not need outside influence to create art.” (n.a, 2012)

Tingatinga art originated from Tanzania and was formed by the talented Edward S. Tingatinga, who was a very successful painter and artist (see Figure 6, Appendix 1). He was born in Tanzania and during the 1960s, he established an art form that became associated with his homeland and today, "Tingatinga" is also known in Kenya, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. It includes brightly coloured paintings of birds, animals, urban and village scenes and has been popularized by the demand for it among tourists. The heart of Tingatinga art is “centered on coastal east African design, where the decorative vines and patterns of the Swahili culture cover delineated spaces that are never allowed to remain completely empty.” (Refer to Figures 7 and 8, Appendix 1). Bicycle paint, which is used for this type of artwork, “is a good medium to work in when making clear, vibrant colored paintings that contain sharp contrasts, and still it allows for the ability to work with surfaces of harmonizing shades.” Since the paint does not dry very fast, it requires that the artist first paints the background, letting the paint dry before working on the actual motif. This technique is what makes Tingatinga paintings so easy to interpret, since they display contours and clearly separated color surfaces.

Edward Tingatinga continued to make a vast array of beautiful paintings until 1972 when he entered a restricted area near a harbor and chose to run when ordered to stop. He was then shot to death. Until his demise, he taught 6 students the craft who later taught other painters and today, the style and craft he created continues to amaze audiences and even decades after his death, his work remains a great example of the power of visuals in the appreciation of culture (n.a, n.d). His work also shows that there is not much of a difference between African art then and African
art now because they both manifest the same idea about the purpose of art: that it is functional and its content remains of prime importance to the artists as well as their people (Kawaguchi, 2005) and as the author, Paul Messaris, said, “there are certain images…which one might want to instruct younger generations because of the role which they have played as a reference point in the public life of older generations.” (Felten, 2008)

2.10 CONCLUSION

This literature review has revealed quite a bit of information pertaining to the power of visual language and the potential that its incorporation in a project has to change a society’s thinking. It has accomplished this by expounding on how the brain interprets visual cues and the 3 visual frameworks that come into play to assist in the processing of these cues.

Moreover, it has highlighted the ways in which visual language boosts how much information an audience absorbs and recalls, allowing data to be processed faster than if it were in textual form. In addition, this review has shown that visual stimuli enables creative expression, allows the information collected to be stored in the brain’s long-term memory bank and affects audiences both emotionally and cognitively, boosting the ability of a visual image to make an impact in the lives of those who see it.

Lastly, this literature review has shed light on graffiti art as well as Tingatinga art. It has elaborated on the history of graffiti from the petroglyphs written on walls hundreds of centuries ago to the subway art in New York City and elucidated the enchanting reality of its ephemeral quality. It has also brought to the fore the roots of Tingatinga art and how it began as well as its
cultural weight and power. This review revealed the reality that African identity in the arts has been affected by occurrences like the colonial rule and the modern period that followed it, along with its repercussions. Recognizing this, this research aims to revive the presence of African art styles in matatu graffiti art by tying it together with existing Western culture that many enjoy so as to allow audiences to appreciate African culture and craft.
CHAPTER 3

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a participatory action research in nature, designed to address a design problem and provide a solution that can solve it with participation from myself as the researcher in the data collection process. In this particular research, the problem is that the graffiti art on matatus in Kenya popularize foreign, Western culture and do not display enough local, African content. The proposed solution to this problem is the inclusion of elements of Tingatinga art to give the existing graffiti an African touch.

3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population for this research is the youth of Kenya whose age lies between 18 and 29 years however, it was not possible to get a response from each and every one of them (according to the Kenya Demographics Profile 2014, the population for this age bracket is approximately 8,400,400 people) (Factbook, 2015). Therefore, a smaller sample was drawn from the School of Arts and Design, University of Nairobi to represent the population at large. The University of Nairobi has a total of approximately 50,000 students and using a cluster sampling method, only a small portion of students from the School of Arts and Design were selected to participate in the data collection process for this research. The reason why I chose to use University of Nairobi students is because the students fall under the aforementioned age bracket and a large percentage of the students do not own their own cars so their main mode of transport is public transportation.
(including matatus), which means that they form a large percentage of the passengers found in public vehicles.

With a population of approximately 8,400,000, the sample size that was used for the data collection process was calculated using the Yamane formula below:

\[ n_y = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \]

Where \( N \) = known population and \( e \) = error level or alpha level. Assuming an 83% confidence level (0.16 alpha level), this means:

\[ n_y = \frac{8,400,000}{1 + 8,400,000(0.17)^2} \]

\[ n_y = 8,400,000 / (1 + 8,400,000(0.0289)) \]

\[ n_y = 8,400,000 / (1 + 242,760) \]

\[ n_y = 8,400,000 / 242,760 \]

\[ n_y = 34.6019 \]

Once the calculation was carried out where the population is 8,400,000, the confidence level is 83% and the alpha level is 0.17, the sample size came to 35. This figure worked once I factored in the probability of students refusing to participate in the questionnaire/interview and the time constraints of writing this research paper.

In addition, there was also the use of eleven key informants in this research in order to get a deeper understanding of what the target market thinks and to acquire first-hand information.
3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The data for this research was collected through interviews, questionnaires and observation as it was both a quantitative and qualitative data collection process. This has allowed me as the researcher to understand what it is that the target market likes about the current graffiti designs and was achieved by asking them for their opinion of existing artwork while presenting them with a series of artistic images for their evaluation and selection, allowing them to expound on the basis for their choices. In addition, I have also been able to find out the correlation that matatu conductors may have noticed when it comes to the number of young adult passengers that board their vehicles and the type of graffiti designs present on the vehicles (refer to Appendix 2).

One of the issues that I expected to face and ended up confronting whilst gathering the data for the study was the lack of cooperation and reluctance from some of the data subjects to participate in the data collection process so this led to it taking a longer time to collect the information.

Moreover, I had to conduct the data collection during the weekdays when the university students are attending classes so as to improve my chances of finding data subjects that were ready and willing to take part.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews was analyzed using a deductive approach that involved using a structured, predetermined framework to analyze the data. This approach was useful because I as the researcher was already aware of probable participant responses. However, I was also aware that while this approach was relatively quick and easy, it could have been inflexible and potentially biased the analysis process which could have ended up limiting the
theme and theory development so I remained mindful of this. The process involved identifying categories that ‘emerged from the data’, discovering themes in the interview transcripts and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories. In order to do this, once the interviews were transcribed verbatim, I read each transcript and made notes of words, theories or short phrases that summarized what was being said in the text (open coding). The exception to this was when the respondent had clearly gone off track and begun to move away from the topic under discussion. Such deviations were then “uncoded”.

The information was then verified and validated. Although it is believed that this process is more rigorous, I chose to use it because it reduces the element bias. The methods of validation that I used are respondent validation (returning to the study participants and asking them to validate analyses) and peer review (whereby another qualitative researcher analyses the data independently) (Burnard, 2008).

Lastly, the quantitative data collected was presented using tables, graphs and pie charts. The titles used are informative and the rows and columns of tables and axes of graphs have been clearly labeled to make them easier to understand. Pie charts demonstrate the trends in the data and have allowed me to make comparisons between different groups. Additionally, different types of graphs were also used to efficiently and effectively present the different types of findings.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 FINDINGS

4.0.1 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Three types of interviews were conducted towards this research project. The first was with design students at the School of Arts and Design, University of Nairobi, who served as key informants for the students who use matatus. They use matatus from different platforms several times a day to go to the gym, travel to and from their homes, to go shopping and to meet friends at different locations. The individuals were very cooperative but for this particular interview, they all preferred to remain anonymous so instead, they provided their initials. Four ladies were interviewed with the initials: RWM; NK; MC; and EK and four gentlemen with the initials: MK; TM; and AG (for the full interview, see Appendix 3).

The second interview that was conducted was with a matatu conductor at a platform along Oloitoktok road, Nairobi, Kenya but it eventually became a five-way interview because he was later joined by three other matatu assistants who gave their own responses as well. They were very pleasant, honest and open to being interviewed but also preferred not to disclose their identity so throughout the interview, the conductor have been referred to as MC and the matatu assistants have been referred to as MA1, MA2 and MA3 (for the full interview, see Appendix 3).

The last interview for this research was conducted by the Nairobi Design week team and it was deemed necessary to include it in this research as it explores the Kenyan matatu graffiti art industry and its journey. The interviewees were Brian Graff Jr. and Kreative Kip, the founders of Matwana, “Kenya’s favourite online matatu community” and they have been labelled as “M” and the interviewer as “I” (whose identity was not disclosed) (for the full interview, see Appendix 3).
4.0.2 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The following quantitative results are based on the questionnaire that the data subjects were given (see Appendix 2) and have been arranged in chronological order:

**Figure 9**: Number of data subjects against their respective age brackets

**Figure 10**: Data subjects that use matatus against those that do not
3. The table below contain the number of votes that each musician received from the subjects.

Each subject had a maximum of three choices per category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AKON</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WANGECHI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. SQUARE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>AVRIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’BANJ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHIDINMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIZKID</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>D’JA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANKY W</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>ELANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RABBIT</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>JULIANA KANYOMOZI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACKLEMORE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>RIHANNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTIN BIEBER</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>ADELE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>TAYLOR SWIFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KANYE WEST</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>KATY PERRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAKE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>BEYONCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USHER</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>MILEY CYRUS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: Votes for preferred International and African musicians in Male and Female categories
**Figure 11:** Data subjects’ combined International and African musician selection

**Figure 12:** Data subjects’ basis when selecting a preferred musician
Figure 13: Data subjects’ content of choice

Figure 14: Distribution of what data subjects liked best about Tingatinga art
Figure 15: Data subjects’ opinion on matatu graffiti art
CHAPTER 5

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0.1 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative data was collected using a sound recorder, the information was transcribed verbatim and then verified by the interviewees and myself.

Quite a bit of information was gathered from the first interview with the seven university students. During the interview, it was discovered that most of the students do not really take a liking towards the current matatu graffiti because they consider it distractive or still having room for improvement. Moreover, they believe that matatu graffiti has great potential but is not really being expressed effectively when the artists paint content that has no real meaning such as American celebrities and nude or provocative images.

The interviewees were then shown a Tingatinga painting of a zebra in order to get their opinions of what elements of the artwork may be appealing enough to include in a matatu graffiti design. When presented with the painting, most of them found it favourable and particularly liked the line work, the interesting placement of colours and the patterns in the painting.

In conclusion, the interviewees felt the messages the matatu graffiti may send are more personal to the artists and so, may not really shared by the audience. In their opinion, to change the face of graffiti art in Kenya, the artists need to include content that is relatable and understandable whilst embracing and including elements of African culture to create an African identity.

The second interview with the matatu conductor MC and the three assistants MA1, MA2 and MA3 was just as informative as that with university students. They believed that it is okay to
draw graffiti on matatus but the artists need to be less childish in the art they create.
Additionally, they said that passengers love the designs (especially the youth from the “ghetto”) and today, the number of passengers that board the matatus with graffiti on them is steadily rising but the artists should take advantage of this opportunity to promote themselves and their art. This is owing to the fact that the sitting head of state, H.E Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, may be the only president that will permit having graffiti art on public vehicles.

Towards the end of the interview, MC and the three matatu assistants revealed that they think it would be good to include local artists in graffiti designs as a way to promote them but they also gave a word of caution. It was mentioned that when the artists are creating the graffiti, they should control the amount of it that they place on a vehicle. They should not put too much of it on one matatu because it becomes distracting and may end up sending customers away.

5.0.2 QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The quantitative data collection process was just as successful since I was able to receive filled questionnaires from a total of 36 data subjects. From the results gathered, it was evident that majority of the students selected were between the ages of 22 and 25 (67%) and that a larger percentage of the subjects use matatus (86%).

Moreover, when the subjects were provided with a list of male and female artists consisting of both African and International artists, 66% of them selected International artists so it is evident that young people (especially students) like international content and are more likely to select it over African material. It was important to acquire this information so as to support the statement made in the problem statement regarding the diminishing presence of African culture and the
need to incorporate it more in art and society as a whole. Furthermore, the response regarding local versus international material was further emphasized by the results of the question regarding the content the subjects prefer to watch or listen to as a whole, which was International content. 82% of the data subjects that filled the questionnaire selected this which proves that International/Western culture has indeed had an impact on youth in Kenya.

In addition, aside from the music, most people are drawn in by the message that a song carries (54%) and then the fashion sense/style of the artist (22%). This means that for the data subjects selected, the best way to catch their attention is with a captivating message followed by a signature style.

The next questions that followed were directed towards the art and graffiti aspect and getting the data subjects’ opinions. When the subjects were presented with the Tingatinga print figure (see Appendix 2), what most of them liked best about it was the patterns and the colours used (42% each). This information allowed me to establish what aspects of Tingatinga art the subjects like so that when new designs are made, they shall contain African content that people will actually like and warm up to.

Lastly, the final question posed to the data subjects investigated their opinions of the graffiti art that is there currently. The highest percentage of the group felt it is too busy (38%) and for it to look more impressive, it needs to be toned down a bit by reducing the number of drawings present or selecting colours that are not too loud. Despite this, an almost equal percentage of subjects (36%) thought the graffiti is impressive and makes a statement about Kenya and is part of its culture.
5.1 CONCLUSION

This research began by addressing a research problem which was the diminishing presence of local African content in matatu graffiti art due to artists drawing their inspiration from Western pop culture. This brought about the question: How can contemporary African art be employed in graffiti designs in the Kenyan matatu industry to create a sense of appreciation for African craft in the local people?

A path for the research was then created when its three objectives were formulated. The first was to investigate the current graffiti art and slogans on matatus to establish which ones were considered appealing to the target market. After gathering data through interviews and questionnaires, it was established that the main theme of graffiti on matatus is Western celebrities and that the target market has a great love for Western content (music, TV shows, actors etc.) as compared to local, African material.

The second objective was to establish what the target market felt about matatu graffiti and what they liked about it in particular. Most of the participants felt that the graffiti is too busy and needs to be toned down a bit to appear more appealing to the eye. However, an almost equal percentage of the data subjects believed that the graffiti is impressive and is representative of Kenyan culture.

The final objective of this research was to propose ways in which contemporary African art can be incorporated in matatu graffiti concepts so as to include African styles in a unique way that would allow people to appreciate the beauty and vibrancy of their African roots. During the course of the data collection process, it was revealed that the target market appreciates African
art but not in very large doses and that they appeared to take a great liking towards elements like the colours and line work patterns incorporated in Tingatinga paintings.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

After analyzing all the data gathered from the literature review and the data collection process, I came up with a solution that addresses the aforementioned design problem. It is now evident that Western art is greatly embraced by Kenyans so removing it entirely and replacing it with African art would not be wise owing to the fact that it is engrained in the society and is a part of the people. This means that the best way to solve this problem is by utilizing a “best of both worlds” approach by combining Western content with the African elements that stood out most for the data subjects, which were the colours and the patterns. Furthermore, the lyrics from songs can also be incorporated because this is what people found most impactful about a musician other than their musical arrangement. Using this as a guideline, two sample designs were created where the first is Rihanna (an American musician and celebrity) with an Africa twist, and the second is a graffiti print of the lyrics from the song *Daima Kenya*, written by the Kenyan singer and songwriter Eric Wainaina (see Figures 16 and 17, Appendix 1).

Despite the great depth and significance of this research, there is still more that can be done regarding the creation of socially-conscious graffiti that imparts a positive change in the world we live in. There can be graffiti that enforces the importance of equality and human rights, environmental awareness and harmonious living for all people, just to name a few. But before we get there, there are small steps we can make every day that will lead us towards the world that we all dream of having and that is what this research paper hopes to have achieved.
REFERENCES


- Halsey, Mark, and Alison Young. "Our desires are ungovernable 'Writing graffiti in urban space." *Theoretical criminology* 10, no. 3 (2006): 275-306.


Millar, Carolyn L. *Re-specting graffiti: Transgression at play in art, language, and ritual.* Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2010: 38-49.


APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

Figure 1: A matatu with graffiti and LED lights (https://cult.is/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/matatu3.jpg)

Figure 2: A green coat matatu with yellow stripe (http://www.oddsockadventures.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/matatu1.jpg)
Figure 3: Dog image versus text ([http://billiondollargraphics.com/infographics.html](http://billiondollargraphics.com/infographics.html))

Figure 4: Flier with vulture motif from the Vulture Graffitti campaign ([https://jusiilove.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/juli ani3.jpg?w=580&h=320](https://jusiilove.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/juli ani3.jpg?w=580&h=320))
Figure 5: Boniface Mwangi standing beside one of his graffiti murals
(http://kenyanpoet.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Boniface.jpg)

Figure 6: A photograph of the late Edward S. Tingatinga
Figure 7: Tingatinga zebra art design:  
(http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_art/tinga_blaisser_zebra.jpg)

Figure 8: Tingatinga leopard art (http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_art/szyd_leopard1.jpg)

Figure 16: Sample graffiti design 1

Figure 17: Sample graffiti design 2
APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1. What age group do you fall under?

18 – 21 □ 22 – 25 □ 26 – 29 □

2. Do you use matatus?

Yes □ No □

3. From the given list, which artist is your preferred choice? You have a maximum of three choices per category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wangechi, The Rapper</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avril</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chidinma</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di’Ja</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elani</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliana Kanyomozi</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Katy Perry □  Kanye West □
Beyonce □  Drake □
Miley Cyrus □  Usher □


4. Aside from music, what did you base your choice on?
Physical appearance □  their fashion (style) □  Popularity □

5. Which artists, musicians or TV shows do you most or prefer?
Local □  Western (International) □

6. Look at the prints provided below. What do you like best about them?

Colours □   Patterns □   Shapes □

7. What do you think of matatu graffiti art? Do you feel it is:

Impressive □   too busy □   not enough □   terrible □   Neutral □?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI KEY INFORMANT

1. How often do you select a matatu with graffiti art on it instead of one without?

2. What do you think about the kind of graffiti you have come across? Does it look nice? Why?

3. When you look at the graffiti, do you understand it? Do you feel it carries a message?

4. What do you feel appeals most to people in your age group?

5. Look at the image below. What about it appeals most to you? The colours, the prints, the drawing style…?

6. In your opinion, how do you think matatu graffiti art in Kenya can be improved?

7. Do you think there is enough African content in matatu art? Why?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE MATATU KEY INFORMANT

1. How long have you been working as a matatu conductor?

2. What is your opinion of the artwork on the vehicles? Why do you feel they appeal to young audiences?

3. Have you seen an increase in the number of young passengers that enter branded PSVs? By how much (e.g. doubled, tripled)?

4. Do you feel there should be African content in matatu graffiti art? Is it necessary?

5. Do you feel there is a lot of Western art in matatu graffiti? Why do you think so?
APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW WITH SEVEN STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND DESIGN, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

Me: How often do you select a matatu with graffiti art on it instead of one without?

RWM: Almost barely because I tend to think that matatus with graffiti are usually noisier and more distractive. Yeah.

TM: Rarely. Our route does not have a lot of matatus with graffiti and all that.

AG: Rarely.

EK: I don’t because the route I use doesn’t have those ones.

MK: Rarely.

MC: Quite often.

NK: Almost daily.

Me: What do you think of the kind of graffiti you have come across? Does it look nice?

RWM: So far, I think that there are some really talented people out there who, I’m guessing, have not really gone to school but are really good at [art] but I also feel the graffiti art on most matatus have no meaning, literally. Celebrities that are either from America or something of that sort, they don’t have so much meaning. They are just really random. In my opinion, a few times they do try to bring out a message but I find that the message is not shared by everyone. It’s just more personal to themselves and more about them.

TM: I think it really displays…well, it depends on the kind of message. Some of them can be informative and inspirational. I think it is good and I like how everybody likes to spice up what they have and make it look more attractive and appealing so I like it.
AG: It is okay. There is room for improvement, that’s for sure.

EK: Most of the ones I have seen usually have these celebrities and stuff, which is usually overwhelming, especially inside where they usually have football posters on top of the seats and stuff and people. It’s intense.

MK: I think it looks…it looks interesting but they are more or less the same. There is nothing actually new.

MC: It’s not cool, it’s basic. Just artists put on the wall. Nothing really interesting about them.

NK: I think some of it is interesting. I’ve noticed some with bible verses and stuff.

Me: What do you feel appeals to most people in your age group?

RWM: Honestly, I think that it’s different because I feel different people in my age group have different needs and to conclude that certain people in my age group would like a certain thing would be a bit biased on my part. But personally, for myself, I think what would be appealing to me is to see graffiti that has feeling and moves you. Not just seeing a woman with her physical features out there but to let it tell a story that is real.

TM: Wow! Well, that’s a very interesting question. I don’t think people at this age are very focused on graffiti on matatus and buses so I wouldn’t be inclined to say something like “oh yeah, if they did something like...” But I would say in terms of music, I think I would say rap and hip hop, at this point in this century, is less about rhythm and poetry and is more about rhyming and it’s not anything that makes sense. But I think of people like Lupe Fiasco, people like Logic, people like…even gospel music. People like Kirk Franklin have really nice music. I think that’s what I would say. I would say those people really hit the spot when it comes to inspiring people.
and making music that is a bit relevant to everyday experiences and people of different backgrounds.

**AG:** What I think is…well, let me talk about the next group of guys that are in high school. Modern hip hop culture is what seems to work for those guys and that’s on a very general point of view. That’s what I’ve seen.

**EK:** Some motivating words like “don’t give up” because you know the way going with buses is not motivating most of the time. Maybe something encouraging people to enjoy the ride. That would be cool!

**MK:** I don’t think I really listen to their type of music much but I think they listen to hip hop and rap for example, Young Thug… I think…yeah. That’s pretty much all I know.

**MC:** Something that makes me glued to the graffiti.

**NK:** Music-wise, I’d say it is a mix between rap and also pop music.

**Me:** Look at the image below. What do you find most appealing about it? The colours, the prints, the drawing style…?

RWM: What I find appealing is the almost diagonal lines at points and the birds’ wings and feathers that are on the image. I also found the fact that the zebra’s eye had a red circle was quite mysterious and on its leg, it had protrusions that are normally there but were extended and it is quite interesting.

NK: I like the vibrant colours and repetitive patterns.

TM: The picture is impressive.

MK: I feel the top competes with the bottom for attention, especially because the details are different with some small and some large.

EK: The patterns and the colours are attractive.

AG: I would say colour, pattern and shapes but if you need one, patterns.

Me: In your opinion, how do you think matatu graffiti art in Kenya can be improved?

RWM: I would suggest that [the artists] internalize feelings and concepts around them and use that to make the art more understandable, not just influenced by what society is saying, especially outside society. Like if the concept is all “hey, nude women,” they shouldn’t just do that. They should look at the implications of their art, what it is saying and not just put anything out there.

TM: If it has more character because I hate how most times when you get in, it is so dark and only has LED lights so if it had a bit of vibrancy, and not in terms of photos of Bob Marley and stuff, I think I’d prefer that. Just some nice paint because it’s a bit busy when you get in and there is Bob Marley on the right and the Pope.
AG: Matatu graffiti is too busy. I’d think about being semantic. Meaning, if we are talking about rock and roll, let’s say they take on just Elvis, work that out in a minimalistic kind of way where it doesn’t buy out from the intended design, leaving the clients confused with dollar signs all around and Elvis behind them then in front of Elvis…you know.

EK: It can be improved by having a standard way of putting things like maybe three artists and then maybe focus on one. Also, having Kenyan artists since we are in Kenya. We can have something not too intense that doesn’t even have to be someone’s face. Even lyrics to someone’s song can work. Something different.

MK: I’d say the design would really count a lot. I think, personally, something that is colourful and unique and also distinct because if it stands out…

MC: Maybe if it is related to current events and what is happening, then it would make more sense regarding why it is there in the first place.

NK: Well I for one love the mixture of colours and what if we added some political content? Is that weird? Political content or maybe some cultural content because I feel that most of it is pictures of musicians. Maybe if it became a lot more cultural. Let’s say, matatus with some political message. That would be interesting.

Me: Do you think there is enough African content in matatu art?

RWM: I don’t think there is. It is highly Westernized and highly influenced by Western culture so very little (almost none) of the content is African. I would say that it is because the truth is, Western culture is really part of us and we can’t really fight that because it’s where we are today.
so I’d say because of that and our whole colonial history, we have lost a lot of our African values and our African heritage. So African heritage needs to be defined by something else that can be traced to change what there is right now.

**TM:** No. The ones that I have been to, no…not really. There is no picture of our society. Mostly, it is just rich people. People who are celebrities really. So I haven’t seen anything that is pro-African culture or promoting it.

**AG:** No. You’d rarely find any African content It is probably because us guys don’t exactly listen to African music as much to an extent that would warrant me to be excited by seeing and African matatu. I think the whole Westernized kind of thinking we’ve bought into has pulled us out of that, where we would rather associate ourselves with stuff that’s Western rather than stuff that’s local.

**EK:** No. I think we are just obsessed with what is happening abroad and someone like me, I don’t really listen to Kenyan songs. Today, people mostly identify with people abroad than they do with the people we have here.

**MK:** Absolutely not. No. No. I think it is because the youth currently are attracted to more Western culture so if you look at the design, it is based on gang life and whatever. African content is rare.

**MC:** No. No. There is no African content. It is mostly international things that they like sticking unless they play the music. But it’s mostly international.

**NK:** No I don’t. It is very westernized. Especially graffiti itself, it is also very Western itself so if it is a bit more African and a bit more Kenyan, that would be interesting.
INTERVIEW WITH FOUR MATATU KEY INFORMANTS

Me: How long have you been working as a matatu conductor?

MC: I have been working as a matatu conductor for 2 years.

MA1: I work daily from morning to evening.

MA3: I would not consider myself as just a conductor. I am more of a businessman.

Me: Great. And what is your opinion of the artwork on the vehicles? Why do you feel they appeal to young audiences?

MA1: Well you know, the matatus are mostly associated with crime because a lot of con artists and thieves find it easier to enter such vehicles. And when people see how much graffiti the vehicle has and how it has been drawn…aiii!

MA2: Even the bass that goes BOOM BOOM BOOM, it’s like a moving disco!

MA1: But it’s okay to draw on the cars but those who are given a chance to draw are very childish. The artists should take advantage of this opportunity now because we don’t know if there will be another president that will allow this to be done on matatus again.

Me: Have you seen an increase in the number of young passengers that enter branded PSVs? By how much (e.g. doubled, tripled)?
MC: Young people “die” for those vehicles, those young people. They normally wait for such, and not just the young ones. Even ladies like them of late. Come tomorrow and we will show you!

MA3: But they prefer the ones with air circulation.

MA1: But it also depends on the background of the passengers because people from the ghetto like them more. Even if they are conned in one today, they will still board it tomorrow (laughs).

MA2: The numbers had reduced though but now, they have started rising again. But you know, it is the owner of the matatu who gains from the graffiti because it gets him more customers.

Me: Do you feel there should be African content in matatu graffiti art? Is it necessary?

MC: Yes, that would be good because you are boosting the local artists. Those artists out there are already popular so if they put more local artists, it will help the local artists become just as popular.

MA2: Yes. It can help good musicians like Rabbit and others because nobody is putting them out there like they are the foreign ones.

Me: Do you feel there is a lot of Western art in matatu graffiti? Why do you think so?

MC: International artists are drawn more at the moment but I say we should put more local material.
INTERVIEW WITH THE FOUNDERS OF MATWANA

I: Where did the idea behind Matwana come from and why?

M: Both of us attended the same high school and loved matatu art. Matwana Matatu Culture was founded to promote the local matatu artists and fabricators as well as promoting road safety through a campaign known as Buckle Up. The main aim of Buckle Up is to help save lives through encouraging use of safety belt. Matwana has grown to be Kenya’s most popular matatu news and culture community through advertising new matatus and creating job opportunities for the youth. We also offer services such as graphic and web design, consulting, social media marketing and matatu tours.

I: How has the matatu design scene changed over the years and where is it heading?

M: The matatu industry has really transformed itself. Not so long ago, overloaded vans and pickups would be used as public service vehicles. Nowadays, matatus consist of minibuses with comfortable seats, neon lights, outstanding matatu art and graffiti, CCTV cameras, well-fitted seatbelts and televisions.

I: Is there a matatu from the past that stands out to you as iconic and is remembered within the community?
M: Brian Child was a famous matatu from 2007 to 2011, featuring a 42 inch screen on the rear window, fibre glass speaker housings, LED strip lights, aeroplane seats, state of the art audio system and even a fridge. It has been the most iconic matatu to date and all matatus nowadays try to catch up to what was done by this pacesetter. It certainly holds its place in matatu history. It was also the first matatu ever to be voted for as the best by the public back in 2010. (NDW, 2015)