

# *Visual Arts And Sustainable Livelihood Development: Heritage Tourism In KISII County*

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**Abstract – The study analyzed the contribution of visual arts to sustainable livelihoods of people living in Tabaka and Manga areas. The study was guided by sustainable livelihood framework, which is built on the belief that people need assets (natural, social, human, physical and financial) to achieve a positive livelihood outcome. The study utilized explanatory research design where a sample of 207 respondents was used. While two stage cluster sampling was used to select 207 respondents for the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used to analyze the quantitative data collected. The results indicated that sustainable livelihood of the host community was significant influenced by visual arts (56.8%). The null hypothesis (Ho) ( $p= 0.039$ ) was rejected. It was concluded that visual arts significantly contributed towards sustainable livelihoods of communities living in Tabaka and Manga areas.**

**Keywords – Visual art; Sustainable Livelihood; Development; Heritage Tourism**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Art as an element is views as an avenue of conveying feelings, opinions, ideas and innovative determinations (Hagtvedt, Hagtvedt, & Patrick, 2008; MEB, 2007). Hence, visual art is artwork, such as painting, photography, or sculpture that appeals primarily to the visual sense and typically exists in permanent form (MEB, 2007; The Free Dictionary, 2021). It is known that visual art is an artistic incentive that induces an emotive rejoinder (Tan, 2000; Tinio, 2013). The most recent trends of cultural tourism investigate more and more on the topic of visual arts which is classified under creative culture (Akhan, 2014; Csapó, 2012). The nexus between inventiveness and culture is clear and it is also normal that those who are engaged in innovation industries will be in a way or other linked and connected to culture and cultural tourism as well (KEA European Affairs, 2009; MED, 2007). Creative industries' are now being promoted as a vital underpinning for the cultural development of rural and urban areas (Guerreiro, Henriques, & Mendes, 2019; Bonink and Hitters, 2001). As Bonink and Hitters (2001) alludes to creative

activities whether concentrated in rural or urban areas can act as a catalyst not only for economic activity and jobs, but also to revitalize the cultural life of the place. For instance, it is the visual arts that offer Aboriginal Australia its greatest empowerment in efforts to have their culture recognized locally, nationally and internationally (Bonink & Hitters, 2001; Richards, 2001). Presently, Kenya is taking a lead in art market internationally. In fact, collectors are optimistic that Kenyan art will soon become as popular as art from west and South Africa. The Akamba community produces carvings from wood, the Maasai make attractive spears, shields as well as beadwork. Soapstone carving is the predominant visual art in Kisii. Kisii County is home to the best soapstone carvers in the continent. The products of soapstone carvings from Kisii County are prominent in the USA and Europe. Furthermore, Kisii is a favorite transit destination for tourists who have a preference on carvings as souvenirs (Onyambu, 2013; Ogembo, 2015). The Soapstone is a metamorphic rock consisting mostly of the mineral talc. Sometimes known as steatite, it's very soft and frequently used for sculpting. Kenyan soapstone is found only in the Tabaka Hills of Western Kenya, a few kilometers southwest of Kisii town. A soft and easily worked stone, it comes in a variety of colors ranging from cream and lavender to black. Tabaka cooperative is a cooperative group of soapstone carvers from the Kisii tribe in Kenya that was established to eradicate poverty in the area and provide an opportunity for a better quality of life. They believe in empowering their artisans by providing fair wages for their members and marketing opportunities for their products outside Kenya. The Tabaka cooperative provide loans, product design and development assistance, and advanced payment for their orders. The artists are also given protection gear and the chance to possess insurance of health. Additionally, they give elementary teaching for youth who want to acquire knowledge to help them in future (Ondimu, 2002). In this way, the community benefits as the group continues to look for new and innovative ways to make a positive impact. Venture Imports has partnered with Tabaka through selling their uniquely beautiful soapstone craft items. Their purchases ultimately help strengthen the community and help the artisans and their families break the cycle of poverty (Ondimu, 2002). The arts' usually refers to works and activities such as classical music, ballet, plays, opera as well as paintings and sculpture. They are sometimes referred to as 'the high arts'. Visual arts are related with 'improvement' and as well as being more than a normal person can manufacture without expertise and education (Tusa, 1999). Visual arts are imperative and merit survival even though they cannot do so in a commercial manner. Their significance is reflected to lie in their depiction of the greatest of human accomplishment and the capability to improve the excellence of life of individuals who experience them. 'Visual arts are the ultimate end in themselves. However, through involvement and consideration the visual arts we nurture, we study about ourselves... They are not vital to our life but they are fundamental to it' (Eyre, 1998, p.38). 'The arts matter because they embrace, express and define the soul of a civilisation' (Tusa, 1999, p. 2). Visual arts are regarded to be well-meaning of support because of their capability to draw tourists or job creation. The cost implication in endowing visual arts may be regarded as the worthy investment if a better monetary return is gotten elsewhere. In a similar way, the arts may encourage people to live in a particular town and may encourage business people to set up factories or offices there because it is a desirable place to live and work. Visual arts are not esteemed in their own stature but for what they can attain for some resolution. Entertainment and theatre have a responsibility in drawing tourists and consequently it is imperative that they should be accessible (Getz & Page, 2016). The argument is protracted to emphasize that the tourists flow produces income all the way through a destination and thus the cost implication by government makes the investment a worthy effort. The arts are increasingly seen as a product and those who are involved in creating the product are in an industry like any other. This has the effect that the arts are seen as an activity that has no extraordinary distinguishing characteristics. Rather than seen as being worthy in their own right and for their own sake, the arts are regarded as important for the income, employment and

balance of payments effects that are generated. The organization and packaging of the visual arts as a tourist resource is a significant contributor to this process (Hughes, 2000; Bonink & Hitters, 2001).

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted explanatory research design because the focus was on explaining the reasons behind a phenomenon, relationship or event (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Kothari, 2004; Pajo, 2017). In terms of this research, this research design proved most useful to determine whether cultural tourism products would aid in improving livelihoods in rural communities. Two-stage cluster sampling was used to select a sample for the purpose of this study. In this sampling technique, one probabilistically selects a sample of participants from the selected subsets (Altinay, Paraskevas, & Jang, 2015; Spickard, 2017). The research utilized questionnaires which are set of questions that are carefully designed and given in exactly the same form to a group of people in order to gather data about some topic(s) which is of interest to the researcher (McLean, 2006; Salkind, 2017; Devlin, 2018). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics is a method of quantifying the characteristics of a particular set parametric numerical data and includes the simple measures of a distribution's central tendency and variability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Walliman, 2016; Salkind, 2017).

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the study, the researcher distributed 207 questionnaires for data collection. However, 148 questionnaires were retrieved back, which was a response rate of 72% (148/207\*100). The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1, where 46.6% of the respondents were male while 53.4% were female. This meant that most respondent who participated in the study were female. Concerning the age of respondents, 9.5 percent of respondents were aged 18-25 years, 20.3 percent were between 26-35 years, 24.3 percent were between 36-45 years, 22.3 percent were aged between 46-55 years and finally over fifty five years had 23.6 percent (Table 1). With regard to highest level of education, 29.1% respondents had attained primary school level of education, 8.8% had high school level of education, 17.6% had reached diploma level, bachelor's degree had (12.2%) respondents, 1.4% of the respondents had Masters degree and 31.1% of them had no formal education (Table 1). From the findings, it is evident that a majority of the respondents either had no education or at least had primary education. The implication of this is that most of them were not able to comprehend how to harness the cultural tourism products of visual arts, traditional practices and myths and mythical sites.

Table 1 : Demographic information of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	69	46.6
Female	79	53.4
<u>Age of respondents</u>		
18-25 years	14	9.5
26-35 years	30	20.3
36-45 years	36	24.3
46-55 years	33	22.3
Above 55 years	35	23.6

According to Table 2, the respondents were asked on whether visual arts contributed to the sustainable livelihood of the community. 56.76 percent of them indicated that visual arts contributed to the sustainable livelihood of the community. The results are in line with a research by Nyawo and Mubangizi (2015), which indicated that visual art sector is important for rural community development as it seeks to tackle socio-economic challenges that communities experience and leads to tourism development. Moreover, Cox and Bebbington (2010) emphasized that visual arts lead to sustainable development and consequently affected the sustainable livelihood of the local people. Likewise, visual arts contribute to the overall well-being of communities, individual self-esteem and quality of life, thus achieving inclusive and sustainable development (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2013). Visual arts have the potential of transforming the whole society if properly harnessed. Furthermore, it was clear from the findings that the respondents strongly agreed that drawings arts, soapstone, paintings, traditional ceremonies artifacts, traditional beauty and household products are made by the community (see Table 3).

Table 2 : Contribution of visual arts to the sustainable livelihood of the community

<b>Visual arts contribute to the sustainable livelihood of the community</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	84	56.8	56.8	56.8
	No	64	43.2	43.2	100.0
	Total	148	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 3, a majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the following were been practiced and or produced in the community; drawing arts (46.6%, M= 3.41, SD= 1.578), soapstone crafts (47.3%, M= 3.44, SD= 1.634), painting of crafts (45.9 percent, M= 3.41, SD= 1.603), traditional ceremonial artifacts (28.4% , M= 3.22 and SD= 1.497), traditional beauty products (39.2 percent, M= 3.34, SD= 1.585) and household products (34.5%, M= 3.31, SD= 1.413).

Table 3 : Visual arts

<b>Visual arts</b>							
	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD
Drawing arts are made	46.6	3.4	4.1	36.5	9.5	3.41	1.578
Soapstone crafts are made	47.3	6.8	4.1	26.4	15.5	3.44	1.634
Painting is done to beautify the crafts	45.9	6.1	4.1	31.1	12.8	3.41	1.603
Pottery is done in the community	4.1	1.4	13.5	49.3	31.8	1.97	0.936
Traditional ceremonial artifacts are made here	28.4	24.3	4.1	27.7	15.5	3.22	1.497
Traditional beauty products are produced	39.2	14.9	2.7	27.7	15.5	3.34	1.585
Household products are made for example candle stands	34.5	5.4	27.7	21.6	10.8	3.31	1.413

According to Table 4, the predictor variable of problem with sleep had an R of 0.137, R<sup>2</sup> of 0.019, adjusted R squared of 0.012 and standard error of estimate of 0.409. R, the multiple correlation coefficient, is the linear correlation between the observed and model-predicted values of the dependent variable of sustainable livelihood. The small value in the results is a depiction that the relationship is weak.

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.137 <sup>a</sup>	0.019	0.012	0.490
a. Predictors: (Constant), Visual arts				
b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable livelihood				

With regard to ANOVA results where visual arts was the independent variable and sustainable livelihood was the dependent variable, the significance was 0.329 and F calculated was 0.956 (Table 5).

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.673	1	0.673	2.809	0.096 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	35.002	146	0.240		
	Total	35.676	147			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Visual arts						
b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable livelihood						

Based on the coefficient output of collinearity statistics, it is clear that the obtained VIF value is 1.112 and 1.025 (Table 6). This means that the VIF value is between 1 and 10 and thereby depicting that there is no problem of collinearity. Concerning coefficients regarding visual arts, the calculated T value of was -2.083 and p value of 0.039. The p-value, 0.039 is less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ , therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>1</sub>) that states that “Visual arts do not contribute significantly towards achieving sustainable livelihoods of communities living in selected rural areas in Kisii County” is rejected.

Table 6 : Coefficients

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					Collinearity Statistics	
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients				
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.938	0.263		7.366	0.000		
	Visual arts	-0.178	0.085	-0.179	-2.083	0.039	0.900	1.112

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable livelihood

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study showed that visual arts contributes significantly towards achieving sustainable livelihoods of communities living in selected rural areas in Kisii County. The null hypothesis that states that “Visual arts do not contribute significantly towards achieving sustainable livelihoods of communities living in selected rural areas in Kisii County” was rejected. This is an indication that visual arts contributed immensely to the sustainable livelihood of the local people.

On recommendations, the findings of the study indicate that visual arts contributes significantly towards achieving sustainable livelihoods of communities living in selected rural areas in Kisii County. However, this contribution can be enhanced if there is value addition of the visual arts, which would ensure that the local people gain more and hence their livelihood transformed.

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