

An Evaluation of Paints Determinants among the Informal Fine Artists in Kisumu City

Dr. Wagah, Mical Ongachi

Department of Art and Design, Maseno University

Abstract: *One of the important viewpoints which is criticized and reviewed in Art, are the styles and techniques used in paintings. Reviewed literature confirms that the motives of choice of paints used are relegated secondary positions in artistic creativity. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate paints determinants among the art painters in Kisumu city. Specifically, the study examined how the artists settle on the paints they use in painting art works in Kisumu City. Descriptive research design guided the study. Qualitative method was used to analyze data in the study. Area of study was Kisumu City. The target population was informal artists found in Kisumu. Snow ball sampling was used to get 15 artists. The study relied on in - depth oral interview and secondary data collected from various journal articles, books, and major publications. The study found out that artist in Kisumu City prefer painting in acrylic paints because they are easily available, dry faster and are cheap to purchase. Surface to paint on and the cost of paints determined the paints to be used by artists. The study recommended that dealers in such paints should scale up their stock because of the demand for acrylic paints and artist should explore many surfaces for painting to meet customer satisfaction.*

Keywords: art, paints, motives, choices

1. Introduction

Archaeological evidence indicates that modern humans have been making portable art, and painting the walls of caves for at least the last 35, 000 years (Milbrath, McPherson and Osborne, 2015). Art is the ultimate expression of human creativity (Higor, Mattjaz and Haroldo, 2018). The different artistic styles have a distinct average degree of entropy and complexity, thus allowing a hierarchical organization and clustering of styles according to these metrics. Painting is part of Art and Elkins, (2000) points out that a painting is made of paint—of fluids and stone—and paint has its own logic, and its own meanings even before it is shaped into the head of a madonna. To an artist, a picture is both a sum of ideas and a blurry memory of “pushing paint, ” breathing fumes, dripping oils and wiping brushes, smearing and diluting and mixing. Forsythe, Williams, and Reilly (2017) in their research pointed out that when artists paint, they instill within their work their own pattern of unique fractal behavior. Elkins (2000) further alludes that the act of painting, and the kinds of thought that are taken to be embedded in paint itself are key but he does not mention how paints are chosen by artists.

Osuanyi and Kwabena (2016) from the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana observes that in Africa the art movements have gained popular attention in the contemporary times though none specifically looked at what determined choice of paints in painting artworks. Studies done in Kenya as Wagah, Indoshi and Agak (2009) observes that they concentrate on factors affecting the attitude of teachers and students towards Art in relation to other subjects offered in secondary schools hence this is general which calls for a study on what determines choices of Paints used by artists in Kisumu city. Specifically, the study examines how the artists settle on the paints they use in painting art works and this study was carried out in Kisumu city due to its cosmopolitan nature. The main objective of this research was to evaluate paints determinants among the art painters in Kisumu city. Specifically, the study examined

how the artists settle on the paints they use in painting art works in Kisumu City

This study was guided by Vrooms Expectancy Theory of (1964). Expectancy theory is a motivation theory first proposed by Victor Vroom of the Yale School of Management in 1964. Motivation is a state - of - mind, filled with energy and enthusiasm, which drives a person to work in a certain way to achieve desired goals. The expectancy theory says that individuals have different sets of goals and can be motivated if they have certain expectations. This makes the researcher curious to establish what determines choices of paints used by artists in Kisumu city. This theory is about choice; it explains the processes that an individual undergoes to make choices. The process of making choice on whether to use water colors, oil paints or acrylic, or tempera colors is a matter of choices to an artist. Motivation, according to Vroom, boils down to the decision of how much effort to apply in a specific task situation. This choice is based on a two - stage sequence of expectations (effort leads to performance and performance leads to a specific outcome/reward). First, motivation is affected by an individual's expectation that a certain level of effort will produce the intended performance goal. For example, if you do not believe increasing the amount of time you spend painting with oil paints on canvas will significantly raise your bargaining power with a client interested in the finished art piece, you probably will not consider using the oil paints. Motivation also is influenced by the artists perceived chances of getting various outcomes as a result of accomplishing his or her performance goal. Finally, individuals are motivated to the extent that they value the outcomes (i.e. rewards) received. Indeed, the artists painting outcome leads to outcome which is the finished painting.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Paints Selection among the Art Painters

Elkins (2000) points out that paint records the most delicate gesture and it tells whether the painter sat or stood or crouched in front of the canvas although does not say what makes an artist choose a particular paint. According to Elkins (2000) paint is a cast made of the painter's movements, a portrait of the painter's body and thoughts. The muddy moods of oil paints are the painter's muddy humors, and its brilliant transformations are the painter's unexpected discoveries. Painting is an unspoken and largely unrecognized dialogue, where paint speaks silently in masses and colors and the artist responds in moods. All those meanings are intact in the paintings that hang in museums: they preserve the memory of the tired bodies that made them, the quick jabs, the exhausted truces, the careful nourishing gestures. Artists can sense those motions in the paint even before they notice what the paintings are about. These reviewed literature concentrates on what paints reveal but not what triggered the choice of paints used in an artwork. The question that arises is, which paints do artists in Kisumu City use and what is the motive behind the choice of paints they use.

In keeping with these theoretical accounts and empirical findings, Stamkou, Van Kleef and Homan (2018) propose that artists who deviate from their contemporaries' styles (i. e., interpersonal artistic deviance is perceived as more impactful than artists who follow their contemporaries' styles, because their decision to deviate indicates that their choice of style is dictated by their own will rather than by external influences. Specifically, the artist was considered more influential when his portfolio included artworks of mixed styles than when his portfolio included artworks of a single style. The above study looked at Art influences in relation to style while the current study looked at what determines the artists on the paints to use.

Pennisi (2005) alludes that Pablo Picasso was renowned as an innovative, artistic genius. His infinite creativity produced hundreds of works of art, many of which shocked and provoked, but subsequently transformed Modern art. From a young age, Picasso understood that in order to achieve greatness and to transcend the masters of the past he had to break from the formalities of classical painting and create new forms of expression. Picasso's desire for greatness compelled him to leave his home of Barcelona, Spain in 1901 and to move to Paris, the art capital of Europe. In Paris, Picasso was introduced to traditional African Art. African Art so profoundly affected Picasso that it provided the creative impetus he needed to create works that shed all conventions and enabled him to surpass his artistic rivals. Picasso was by no means the first to be influenced by non-western art, but he was the first to form a symbiotic relationship with the concepts of African Art and to create a new aesthetic language. The study of Pennise does not tell us what determined choice of paints Picasso used hence the need for this study.

3. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. A descriptive research design is a process of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject under study (Gay, 1983). Descriptive research determines and reports the way things are (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). This type of survey was appropriate for this study because it enabled quick collection of rich data from the population of informal artists who do painting from Kisumu City. The city was ideal for this study because it is a cosmopolitan city in the lake region hence representing the face of Kenya. Kisumu City is the third largest City in Kenya and covers an area of 417 square Kilometers and is located 310 kilometers Northwest of Nairobi (Samba, Orua and Mungatu, 2017). The city is found within Kisumu County and is surrounded by the second largest freshwater lake in the World - Lake Victoria. The population is estimated at 1, 224, 531 persons as at the start of the plan period 2018. The county's urbanization revolves around the City of Kisumu and the satellite high population areas that are scattered in different parts of the county. Kisumu City is the major high density and high population urban area in the county. The city covers Kisumu Central, Kisumu East, and parts of Kisumu West constituencies/Sub - Counties. The proportion of those residing in urban areas within the county account for 50.30 percent of the total population, 40 percent of these urban dwellers reside in the informal settlements within the city including: Nyalenda "A" and "B"; Manyatta "A" and "B" and Obunga. Other high density informal settlements include Okore, Argwings Kodhek, Arina, Lumumba, Ondiek, Mosque, Kibuye, Pembe Tatu, Kaloleni and Nubian. The City of Kisumu is the commercial center and headquarters of Kisumu County. Kisumu, officially known as Kisumu City, (and formerly Port Florence), is a Kenyan inland port city on Lake Victoria and the capital city of Kisumu County, Kenya. It is at an elevation of 1, 131m above the mean sea level (3, 711 ft). It is the third largest city in Kenya after the capital, Nairobi, and the coastal city of Mombasa. It is the largest city in Western Kenya and the second most important city after Kampala in the greater Lake Victoria basin. The main sources of income in the city are wage employment, informal trading, urban livestock and agriculture and public transport, especially 'bodaboda' (bicycle taxis). Economic challenges of Kisumu City include - Poorly developed markets - Hawkers blocking roads and shopfronts - Hawkers not sufficiently provided with operating spaces - More tourism facilities are needed along the lake front to attract leisure and tourism where artists can leverage on sell of paintings.

3.1 Population

Population of this study entailed 15 informal artists practicing the skill of painting within Kisumu City.

3.2 Sampling

Artists in Kisumu operate informally in temporary structures along the roadside or streets in the informal settlements which have since been demolished in the tenure of the second governor Professor Nyong'o therefore the study adopted snow ball sampling method. Naderifar, Goli, and

Ghaljaei (2017) confirms that Snowball sampling is applied when samples with the target characteristics are not easily accessible. Unstructured interviews were used on the first artists who was located through information given at the Kisumu Museum, a place that displays artworks that include paintings. The first artist was therefore located at Dunga estate who later referred the researcher to the next one through a phone call.

4. Results and Discussion

The study examined how the artists settle on the paints they use in painting art works in Kisumu City. One of the respondents said the following:

I learnt painting in water color through a friend. Oil paints are expensive and Kisumu people have not appreciated art so even if you use expensive paints it will not make sense. I only use oil paints on portrait when I have an order from a client, otherwise the easily sourced paints are acrylics.

When asked why he did not use water color paints on portraits the artist confirmed that water color does not produce quality portrait finishing. This is supported by Mecklenburg (2020) who points out that, paintings experience chemical, mechanical and biological damage over time. A deeper insight into the interaction between pigment and medium as well as between the different layers is crucial to interpret the damage found into the painted surface but also to take more informed conservation decision to ensure painting stability over time. Mecklenburg further takes note that failure mechanism in Picasso's paintings topical collection in the journal SN Applied Sciences brings together a series of papers aimed to understand the relationship between the composition of the painting materials and mechanical damage. The findings in this paper agrees on the fact that when one is looking of quality then he has to change the medium of expression. Mecklenburg (2020) finishes by suggest that slight modification introduced by the artist in his works can induce different vulnerabilities, whose effects can be seen over time.

Another informal painter argued as follows;

When asked what determines the choice of paint to use on supports he said that it depends on clients. There are clients who know what they want. We have those who know the quality of canvas from 'MITUMBA' Second hand cloth as a support. The artist confirmed that he uses acrylics most of the time. He also uses vinyl paints bought from hardware shops because they are permanent. He further confirmed that Kisumu People do not value Art but even if it takes so long for his painting to sell he still just paints.

An artist from Argwings Kothek respondent:

I like painting in emulsion and acrylics because they are cheap to buy them. I buy emulsion from hardware shops and I can paint 1 - 2 paintings in a day. The surface influences the choice of paint. I use water color paints for illustration and when going for field work for sketching purposes.

Other artists based at Argwings Kothek were found painting in their shops. the shops that also act as studio for painting. They all confirmed that they paint in Acrylics because of the

low cost when purchasing them, they dry faster causing them to do 1 to 2 paintings in a day when commissioned by a client. Expectancy theory by Victor Vroom (1964) is in line with the findings on what determines choice of paints varies as reveled in this paper. This is because motivation is a state - of - mind, filled with energy and enthusiasm, which drives a person to work in a certain way to achieve desired goals. The goals for this case is a finished painting with the most affordable paintings that dries faster. The expectancy theory says that individuals have different sets of goals and can be motivated if they have certain expectations.

5. Conclusion

The study evaluated the paints determinants among artist in Kisumu City. The findings revealed that the motives for painting varies, the surfaces determine and even the cost of the paints determines the choice.

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