



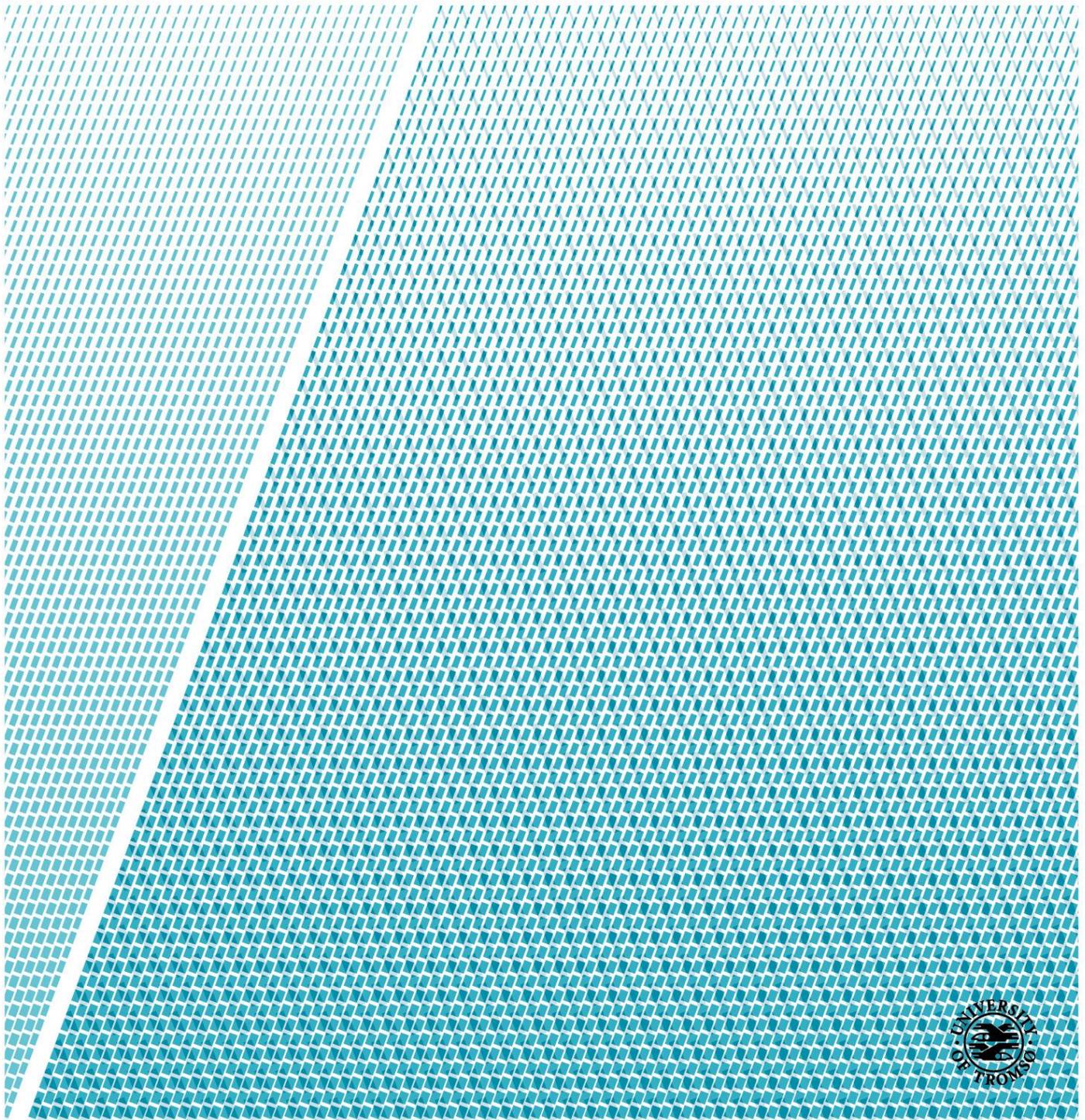
Department of Archaeology and Social Anthropology

To the Heart of the Wood

Strategies of survival among art vendors in Malawi

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Abstract

The thesis is based on a three-month fieldwork done with art vendors in Malawi. The goal of the thesis has been to document the strategies art vendors employ to make a living in the context of tourism. The attention has also been on the production and sale of what is known as *tourist-art*, and topics of taste, aesthetics and authenticity in the production of tourist-art, mainly focusing on woodcarvings. The thesis has focused on two key informants, both of whom are art vendors. Other art vendors and tourist were also used as informants. In this thesis, it has been discovered a distinction between art vendors and their cousin category beachboys. However, this distinction is not always clear to people from the outside. Findings suggest that certain types of behaviour in reference with tourists, are strategies of subsistence. These include: begging, harassment and pushiness. These behaviours are necessary strategies of subsistence in a difficult economic situation for the art vendors. Personal relationship with tourists, are also important strategies. These relationships form the building blocks of bartering between art vendors and tourists. Some relationships also continue after the tourists have left Malawi, maintained through social media. Thus, long-term and short-term subsistence is possible, if the right strategies are used, and the right items are offered, items that appeal to the taste of the tourists.

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Introduction

*“*TAK TAK TAK TAK*, you can hear the hammering of woodcarvers, from early morning to late at night, the only time work stops in Malawi is when it rains heavily. Then the art vendors take time for a cigarette.” (Fieldnotes: 25-26/4/2017)*

The sound of beating the chisel against wood was often heard in the morning during my stay in Malawi. **TAK TAK TAK TAK** was heard as a woodcarver was hammering his chisel with a wooden mallet to create different forms of carvings. I lived with these carvers, and the vendors who sold the art. Initially I focused my fieldwork on considering strategies of survival through the art vending lifestyle in Malawi. Although I was intrigued by the manufacture process of woodcarving, as well as aspects of African art authenticity, my focus became the interaction between art vendors and tourists and their subsistence strategies in relation to tourism. This has resulted in having collected data on several different topics. At times, different topics of the thesis will cross, but the topics will always connect back to the overarching topic of survival and subsistence strategies of the art vendors, as this is the main focus.

In Malawi I saw evidence of a dying trade in areas that had previously been ‘hot-spots’ for art vendors and woodcarvers in Malawi. On my way to the field site I saw vendors sitting with their head in their hands next to the roads waiting for tourists. At the tourist market in the capital Lilongwe, where my travel started, the woodcarving market looked empty and deserted from tourists. So how do the art vendors subsist under such conditions, and what strategies do they use in the context of tourism? It is those strategies I am going to look into in this thesis.

I recollect my main informant telling me: *Write about spirituality, our relationship with God. These things we are selling here are just for business. They do not come from here.* (Fieldnotes: 31/5/17) He emphasized that his life (and the life of the art vendors at the field site) was composed of two main areas; Spirituality and business, both of which relate to survival. I lived over a month and a half with this man at his house at the field site in Malawi. Thus, these areas have become part of the structure of this thesis. My goal is to reach a deeper understanding of what an art vendor is, how he survives, and the means in which he does so. I want to understand the different strategies they employ to subsist in Malawi through the presence of tourists.

One point is how art is related to their strategies of survival, another is how relationships with tourists are also part of their long-term and short-term subsistence goals. I spent three months in Malawi and observed how it is particularly the art vendors who are relying on the presence,

and support of tourists for subsistence in Malawi. Much more than what is common for other working groups in Malawi. I find this fact incredibly fascinating. However, it was clear that individual art vendors used different strategies for different types of tourists. However, my fieldwork focuses on one Location, a place that is simply referred to as (main / primary) ‘Field site’, here tourists and art vendors interacted, and it was this that was the background for my data collection. These topics will be considered in the context of tourism, nevertheless. Art, and relationships as mediums for subsistence are also important topic to this thesis.

The basic structure of the thesis is as such: In Chapter One I describe the background, about Malawi, the focus of the thesis, and about the different categories and what they mean. In Chapter two, Literature & Theoretical perspectives are introduced and discussed. Chapter three is the fieldwork Chapter, where the empirical data from the field site is presented, this is the backbone of the thesis. Chapter four goes deeper into business strategies, and involve analysis of the survival / subsistence of the Art vendors in Malawi. Finally, in Chapter five there is the conclusion.

1 CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

1.1 About Malawi

Malawi has all one could wish for as an anthropological field site. It is a peaceful country. It has many different tribes and ethnic groups. It is also an ideal place to study tourism for anthropologist as it involves interactions between people from “*different cultural backgrounds*” (Stronza, 2001: 264). This was also the main reason why I chose Malawi, as they have interesting interactions between local-people and tourists. These factors made Malawi an ideal country for fieldwork in my case. Especially as I had lived in the Malawi for close to four years previously. Having a sense of how things works there also made me more confident that I could adapt fast during my fieldwork in a 90-day time span. However, I had never previously been at the field site.

Malawi is relatively small landlocked country, of about 118,500 square kilometres, and has around 20 percent of its surface area covered by water. (World atlas, 2018) Malawi is landlocked between Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique, and lays demographically in central Africa. Lake Malawi (previously Lake Nyasa), is one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world, a resource that has blessed Malawi with access to much needed proteins from its large

variety of fish, also being a significant attraction for the tourism industry. It is roughly 18 million in population – and with just under 50 percent of the population are under 15 years old, it remains one of the world’s poorest countries, although doing improvements in several sectors. (NoradDev, 2014) Malawi ranks as the world’s poorest country in terms of average GDP per capita, followed by Burundi. (Statisticimes, 2018) It is estimated that over fifty percent of the population is surviving on under a dollar a day. (NoradDev, 2014) Only about seven percent of the country is over fifty years old. (NoradDev, 2014)

In the context of this study, this last part is especially significant as many of the participants of the study were relatively young males, some off them having lost their parents, often to HIV / AIDS / or Malaria. Thus, they have to adapt to survive. As in much of Africa, the informal work sector is a major contributor for Malawian people’s general income.



Figure 1: “Malawi – Map” (Norwich, 2018)

1.2 Focus of this Thesis

This thesis is essentially an ethnography based on participant observation among Art vendors in Malawi. Initially participant observation was focused on the tourists and how they interacted with the art vendors. The first month at the field site in Malawi, was mainly spent living in a lodge close to Lake Malawi. Inside the lodge, and around the lodge area, art vendors were present. I made daily notes on how they were interacting with tourists, trying to make relationships and sell their work. I also focused on getting to know the Art vendors personally. As the fieldwork lasted for three months in total, I spent the remaining two months (with the exemption of two weeks looking at beach boys in a place I will refer to as ‘the second location’) together with the art vendors, residing at the house of my main-informant, a Rastafarian Art vendor and woodcarver. This thesis is based on the stories, descriptions, and conversations with informants and especially relying on two key-informants, one of them being the individual I lived with for two months. I recorded my notes in the form of a diary.

Art and authenticity were relevant areas of focus of my fieldwork, as they relate to the art vendors survival / subsistence in Malawi. My fieldwork went through different stages, but the underlining purpose of all interviews, and conversations with informants and actors at the fieldsite was to gain a deeper insight into the efforts of art vendors to capitalize on the presence of tourists through selling handmade items usually marketed as art. These efforts were part of their strategies for subsistence. However, from a western standpoint, this is art that falls under the category of tourist-art (I will return to this topic below). Tourist-art is a key-concept in the thesis, tourist-art defined as: “*a form of contemporary art produced locally for consumption by outsiders*” (Jules-Rosette, 1984: 9). This concept will remain important for the thesis, as the production and sale of tourist-art is expected to be one the primary strategies of subsistence for the art vendors.

For these reasons, I will investigate some of the characteristics of what makes something art, as well as considering debates around art authenticity. Art, aesthetics and authenticity was the initial focus of my fieldwork, and remain relevant. During the fieldwork, my focus became and remained on the survival strategies of the art vendors, and the way this was done through making relationships and selling their products. However, I was still curious about the production, manufacturing and design aspects around the art, and what made certain items be sold more often. Consequently, some art vendors appeared more successful than others. What

strategies did they have that the others didn't, and where is the distinction between a successful art vendor and his counterpart?

I expect art vendors who are more social in selling their art, social as in interacting with tourists, and building friendships as a strategy for sales, to be (at least perceivably) more successful compared to the art vendors more focused on the tourist-art production. This postulation can be explained by what I expect the primary strategy art vendors use to make a living for themselves in the presence of tourists. Which is to interact with the tourist and build a bond where bartering is possible and profitable for the art vendor. What are the strategies involved to make a subsistence possible? What types of strategies seem the most successful? Is it the social art vendor who is successful, or is the productive artist? The difference of the two is again, one being focused on building friendships with the tourist, and the other being focused on producing the art for the tourists, this was one of my observations from the field site. *“Some of the vendors are real craftsmen, others are simply sellers. The sellers rely on personal relationships, the vendors rely on making things”* (Fieldnotes: 18/4/17)

These are important questions, as they are different strategies that might have completely different outcomes in the context of the survival. To answer this, it is vital to get deeper insights into how strategies are built around the presence of tourists. I will also discuss how reliable being an art vendor seems to be in Malawi, that is as a subsistence strategy. Tourist presence is seasonal, and often unpredictable. In addition, tourist's types seem to have changed. As plane tickets have become cheaper, there is an influx of young travellers such as backpackers, who might not have as much economic potential for buying art as the art vendors would like. In addition, backpacker tourists have a different aesthetic, and taste when it comes to what type of goods they are willing to buy from the art vendors. These are topics that will be considered.

Another key focus of this thesis, in the context of tourist, and strategies of the art vendors in the field-location, is survival. Survival relates to subsistence, but it is nevertheless useful to contrast my interpretation of 'survival' with 'subsistence', with a dictionary definition. The Oxford dictionary define survival as: *“the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances.”*. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018) Similarly, I define art vendor survival as: Being able to subsist through the production and sale of merchandize to tourists.

Both of these are relevant as the art vendors, from my observations, have a primary goal on a day to day basis. That is to endure their difficult circumstance in poverty, and buy food for

themselves (and in some cases their family) through selling their merchandize in the form of tourist-art to tourists. are trying to gather money, so they can buy food for that day. Their survival, is therefore related to their subsistence. If we contrast the dictionary definition with my definition we find little difference with subsistence and survival: “*The action or fact of maintaining or supporting oneself, especially at a minimal level.*”. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018) This is wort to keep in mind, as subsistence and survival are intersecting terms in this context, as I use subsistence as part of the survival definition. That is being able to subsist and endure through any means possible. Which bring us directly to the strategies of subsistence. That is, the ways in which they make their life continue, and it is this exact problem that is at the core of the thesis. What strategies do art vendors employ to survive through the presence of tourists? It is these strategies that is the primary focus of the thesis.

Based on my fieldwork done with the art vendor group, it became evident that there was a common theme relating to aspects of spirituality as well as business, that points towards the topic of survival and strategies. Although not the primary focus, it still plays a role in the thesis. Long and short-term strategies within the context of art vending is also an area that will be looked at. Looking at the subsistence strategies in a long-term and short-term perspective, can act as a platform that add meaning to the data collected at the fieldsite. Where there is an action, there is a reaction. Thus, I will show some of the strategies tourists use to deal with the art vendors, and how the art vendors might be misinterpreted as for example beachboys (a category I will discuss later in the thesis: Chapter three / section 3.10).

The focus of the thesis is therefore looking at strategies relating to subsistence from tourists, through the perspective of the art vendors. The art vendors make a living from the fact that different types of tourists are visiting the area, but still must use different strategies to make, and sell items they perceive as art.

I will consider the different identities within the art vending group and how these categories intersect and sometimes entangles (with for example the category of beachboys) and how this influences the art vendors, through phenomena such as stereotyping and stigma. Additionally, how this connects to their long-term and short-term goals within the context of tourism. Different categories of tourists should also be considered, but this is secondary to the main objective of analysing the art vendor strategies, and therefore focusing on the art vendors themselves in the context of tourism.

I will show different perspectives of the art vendors, but more importantly I will focus on the different strategies, the methods and tactic they use to be able to subsist in their lifestyle. Often by selling merchandize in the form of “art” (souvenirs) to tourists, but also through other means (such as begging). The relationship building will also be of focus as this relates to both long and short-term strategies of survival for the art vendors.

The literature I have chosen to focus on as my theoretical background includes that related to: tourism, African art and woodcarving, art meaning and aesthetics, stigma and gift exchanges (reciprocity) and transactions. I believe these bodies of literature add a varied perspective of the art vending lifestyle. One example of why art, aesthetics is relevant relates to an observation I made at the field site about how the art vendors discover the “taste” (borrowed from Bourdieu) of the tourists and use this as a foundation for bartering. Lastly, I am not necessarily able to measure the success or failure of the Malawian vendors, but insights into how different strategies might be more reliable than others, is a goal worth shooting for.

1.3 Background of study

I hope to show a glimpse into what it means to survive in one of the world’s poorest countries through the lifestyle of the art vendors. The common theme is long term vs short term strategies for the art vendors in Malawi, through tourism. This is the background for what strategies they employ to make sales to tourists.

Although tourism is the context of the fieldwork, the thesis attempts to see this context through the perspectives of the art vendors. These strategies are mainly based on the skills and labour of producing and selling souvenirs (art) to tourist, and the dynamics, and conflicts that play into such a lifestyle.

The industry of selling goods to tourists is an enormous industry worldwide: *“The travel and tourism industry is one of the world’s largest industries with a global economic contribution (direct, indirect and induced) of over 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016.”* (Facts, G, 2018.)

It is common knowledge that many countries around the world have tourism as one of their most important economic industries. Organizations like UNESCO points to tourism as being one of the fastest growing industries and can be one of the solutions for how LDC’s (lower developed countries) can lift themselves out of poverty. (UNESCO, 2010)

Art vendors in Malawi are one of the groups trying to make a living around the presence of tourists. The vending sites are spread around Malawi, often woodcarvers and vendors cluster around areas visited by tourists. Road junctions, turnoffs, parking lots close to tourist activities, are typical sites where one can find art vendors in Malawi (as well as other African countries).

Two researchers are significant for the thesis: Jules-Rosette and Graburn. Jules-Rosette did significant studies on the topic of woodcarving in Africa in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, looking at the woodcarving trade (mainly in the 70's and 80's), her studies will be referred to in this thesis.

Graburn has also studied woodcarving and art vending phenomena in East-Africa, particularly in the context of African art and tourism, and it is precisely in the context of African art and aesthetics he becomes so important. As some of the findings of the thesis, suggest that art vendors seek out the taste of tourists as a strategy to make sales. Taste is related to aesthetics, and this is hugely important in the context of art vendors and tourist art.

The reasons these two researchers are so significant for this thesis is because they looked at the woodcarving production and sale in central Africa and can add insights into how aspects of this phenomena. I believe it is possible, through the approach of looking at art vending as a subsistence strategy, to add to this body of knowledge surrounding African art and woodcarving culture. Little work has focused on specifically on the vendors selling art, whom are often woodcarvers themselves, but also middlemen. More attention has usually been given to the process of the carving, and the carvers themselves, rather than the ones selling the art. The strategies used to sell art to tourists has been practically ignored in academic circles. Thus, much of the earlier studies have focused primarily on the production side, and not the sale strategies which is my thesis focus.

1.4 Art vendors, who are they?

Some researchers have shrugged off art vendors and their cousin category of beachboys as the same group, which, according to my findings is an error. I will discuss this further in Chapter three, but I can note that there is an important distinction / difference between the way in art vendors and beachboys perceive themselves as members of different groups. Although for westerners visiting Malawi as tourists, they might be stereotyped as the same group of people. One of the distinctions are found in the ability to produce and sell art, and the different types of

goods and services they are offering. Gartner who did fieldwork on tourism and poverty reduction in Malawi in 2008 had this to say in her thesis: “*The first case study site was forewent due to the relentless harassment by beachboys*” (Gartner, 2008: 33). Gartner says that: “*Beachboy is the term used for individuals who derive their income by befriending and establishing relationships with tourists*” (Gartner, 2008: 33). This definition is way too broad according to my research. With such a definition one falls prey to categorizing art vendors and beachboys as the same group, were as they are not. The art vendors emphasized that they distinguish themselves from beachboys although they also *derive their income from establishing relationships with tourists*.

At my field location, the art vendors did not appreciate being called beachboys. *We are not beachboys, we are vendors* they would tell me. This might be due to the stereotypes associated with beachboys. It can be hard for tourists to distinguish between the different categories of Malawian people around tourist sites, and cross stereotypes can be common, and may be applied to the art vendors as well. This is part of the thesis, as it relates to the strategies of the art vendors in relation to tourism, and the way they have to adapt to the tourist expectations. This is significant for this thesis, as art vendors also rely on personal relationships for subsistence, but beachboys in other areas of Malawi and Africa might have ruined the tourist expectations around dealing with local traders, as they are all considered harassing beachboys.

Based on my research, I define beachboys as: An individual who relies on building personal relationships, offering services, and / or selling items to tourists at the beach. Thus, there are four important points that make the beachboys different to the art vendors. 1) The beachboys ‘harass’ tourists, and 2) they often offer questionable (illicit) items or services to tourists. 3) they rarely produce, make art themselves thus acting more as middlemen, 4) they often attempt to transcend friendly transactional relationships with tourists, towards sexual relationships (Westerners might interpret beachboys as male prostitutes). The fourth point might be an explanation to the first point. They are interpreted as harassing (by researchers such as Gartner) as they are trying to establish relationships that are sexual. The tourists build on their past experiences of dealing with local people at tourist sites, often from a negative viewpoint, causing stereotypes to be applied to individuals attempting to befriend tourists. Beachboys become someone who simply *want something* from them. While art vendors deal in a more reciprocal transactional relationship.

Being a beachboy does depend on the circumstances, and personal ascription of identity. If an art vendor primarily hangs around at the beach (or a lodge bar for example) and relies on

offering services and handmade items to tourists, it can become hard for an outsider to distinguish the person between an art vendor and beachboy. However, if you ask the individual, are you a beachboy? A beachboy would proudly proclaim he was. However, if you ask an art vendor the same question, are you a beachboy? He would refuse, and say he was a vendor. This was my experience, and in some sense the difference lies in the production and sale of art (often in the form of woodcarvings) for the art vendors, while the beachboys offer other services (some would say male prostitution, or drug sales).

According to my research, I define an art vendor as: An individual who sells handmade art and other items to tourists in and around tourist's sites, and typically has a shop / shack to display such items, the items are commonly locally produced, handmade, and often come from natural materials such as wood.

Another term I use is *mobile-art vendor*. I define a mobile-art vendor as: An individual who sells art and other items to tourist, often carrying their items in a purse or bag, and often approaching tourists where they reside such as a lodge. A mobile art vendor often takes orders, and like art vendors and beachboys, often relies on personal relationships with tourists as a subsistence strategy.

Little research has been done on the art vending group and beachboys, no research, as far as I have found, has been able to distinguish the two. We might be able to get a clearer view of this distinction through the primary goal of looking at subsistence strategies of the art vendors in the context of tourism and see how the aim of the beachboy might be different than the art vendors. However, it seems the art vendors employ several different tactics from the beachboy style of subsistence, such as relying on personal relationships as subsistence strategies. However, whether they are sexual in nature, does not seem to be the case for art vendors, however for a beachboy based on my observation, it is a primary goal to get into a sexual-relationship with the tourists.

From my observations it was evident that low level income Malawian's often acts as minor entrepreneurs through the trade of vending. A vendor is someone who sells items, in this case, on the streets. In this case, I am looking at the street vending phenomena, and specifically the art vendors. An art vendor. I will sometime specify the art vendors as either roadside-art vendors or mobile-art vendors, these are two distinct styles of the same phenomena being art vending. The difference between being a mobile-art vendor, is as the term implies mobile. They travel in and around tourist sites such as lodges with a backpack of small art items, while a roadside-

art vendor typically sits next to the road often selling bigger items such as woodcarvings. Africa, lodges is the term used for a place where tourist stay in small huts and houses, often around safari-parks /game-parks and other rural locations.

The main style of the roadside art vendors area was to set up shops with simple materials such as wooden beams to enforce a straw roof, to construct a shack next to the road where tourists pass. The male vendors typically sell woodcarvings, and other forms of African handmade items, such as paintings, necklaces, eating utensils etc. The woodcarvers are the production team behind the vendors, making the objects vendors sell, usually the vendors are woodcarvers themselves, but often it is not their own items they are selling.

The general concept of vending is not unique to the art vendors. Vending can also be selling vegetables, clothes, electronics, and many other commodities (see next Chapter). In Africa, and in this case Malawi, you find all sorts of different vendors, all over the country. From my observations, selling fruits and vegetables at the market, is predominantly a female occupation in Malawi. It is worth noting, that selling wooden carvings and other forms of art to tourists in Malawi is significantly male dominant. Thus, the reason for this thesis focusing on males is because art vendors are predominantly male. As I am a male, and almost all the art vendors were male as well, it was natural that the thesis has a focus on the male gender.

The people I spent time with formed a tight knit group consisting of about thirty individual art vendors. Although some had other jobs at the side, most of my informants were full time art vendors. The art vendors in general were often multi-skilled individuals, both as musicians, salespersons, wood-carvers, builders, designers, craftsmen, tour guides and ultimately masters of their crafts as Artisans, and would also take orders from local people, in for example construction (however, this was rare). They were highly adaptable individuals. Being a roadside-art vendor is a result of tourism. Making a living off the tourists in the area, took great skill, especially to make their carvings with such simple tools as rusty wood chisels, and locally made axes that could have the axe head turned diagonally or horizontally to either be used for chopping, or carving wood. One of the findings of this thesis, is that there are different categories of art vendors, as noted above and as I will elaborate on in Chapter 3. The identities of a woodcarver, artist and vendor (as well as beachboy) often intersect with another identity, being the Rastafarian. This is a component that cannot be overlooked in a research perspective of Malawian vendors; this aspect of the vendors' identity is significant, and should be brought to attention.

1.5 Male and female vendors

As mentioned above, almost all the art vendors were male. I did discuss with two female informants, selling jewellery and / or clothes to tourists. These were more informal interviews, however, that I have not used in this thesis. Almost all my remaining data was collected from men. However, I observed the female dominated arenas of vending in the form of food vending on my weekly trips to the local food market, this arena the women dominated. Females also do vending, in fact, the vending sector might indeed have more women than men in total from my observations. As home-grown food sales at the market seemed to be a significant contributor to homestead economies. One could assume this helps empower women in the area, and informants would let me know, that often their wife (or mother) made more money than them vending food items, rather than art.

However, when dealing with tourists, language seemed to be an important characteristic for building relationships. Although Malawi (as a former English colony) has English (next to Chichewa) as one of the national languages, it seemed that the female vendors struggled more with English than the men. Which could mean relying on personal relationship could be hard. The female food vendors, did however on occasion visit the lodges selling for example avocados. And in contrast with the art vendors, the prices for food seemed to be almost identical with what the market price was.

In other words, the female vendors did not seem as prone to try and extract as much value from the tourists, as the art vendors seem to do. An important factor that can explain this, is that the female food vendors sell their items to the local community as well as the tourists, while it's fair to say that the art vendors exclusively market their goods to tourists. This is only an assumption, however could be interested in the way that English is necessary for the male vendors to communicate more with the tourists to make a sale of their art, while the women vendors sell their food, without having to push for it. This is a new thought to me, and not something I will analyse, but still worth mentioning. A factor seeming to support this assumption, is from talking to my informants, they would tell me that while they were struggling to make sales to tourists in the form of art, their wife's who was selling self-grown food such as tomatoes, avocados, nuts, or rice, are making quite good wages comparatively speaking. Additionally, supporting their family with the food they grow themselves. While the women made sales daily, the male vendors would sometimes go weeks without making sales (making the topic on survival and strategies more relevant for the art vendors). The art vendors

thus, often must rely on their mothers and wife's, or other family for survival. As well as even relying on begging from the tourists in some cases.

From my experience the art vendors were often troubled and even ashamed of this fact that they struggled to make a living from their art, and that they often rely on their wife or mother selling food at the market. This might contribute to the somewhat stigmatized view of the art vendors, as lazy and chasing white women. This was also emphasized from some of the public employees to whom I talked to about the vendors. This difficulty in making a living, is relevant to the thesis as for example one vendor told me he had done this style of business, for over twenty years and still couldn't afford a metal roof for his house. Suggesting art vending being a short-term survival strategy for a day to day subsistence. Saving up money, seems exceptionally hard during these circumstances.

1.6 Vendors and tourist categories in Diagrams

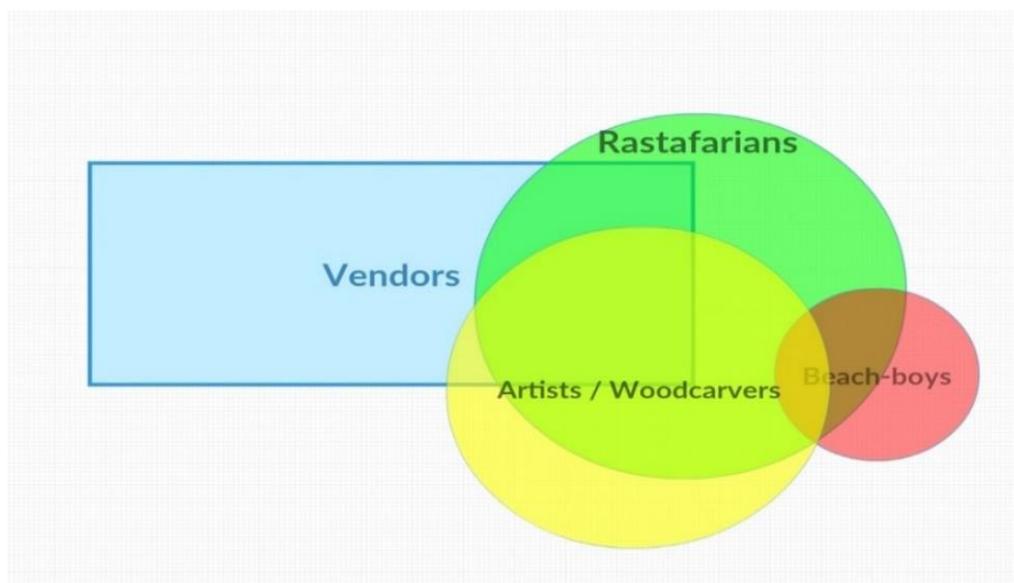


Figure 2: Diagram, showing an approximate intersection between different categories mainly vendors.

This diagram can be used analytically to represent how the category of vendors intersects with other categories. It is worth to remember a work from Richard Jenkins “Social Identity” (2014), that there is a difference between social identity, and personal identity. “*Personal identity*’, which differentiates the unique self from all other selves, is different from ‘*social identity*’, which is the internalisation of, often stereotypical, collective identification.” (Jenkins, 2014:

114) The blue box and the green and yellow sphere are personal identities (and in some cases the red sphere). Categories the vendors themselves recognize themselves as. “*Once relationships between members of a category involve mutual recognition of their categorisation, the first steps towards group identification have been taken*” (Jenkins, 2014: 110). Beachboys is often a social identity towards the art vendors from the tourists.

The blue box, represents the overall vendor groups in Malawi (both male and female vendors), while the yellow sphere represents the artists & woodcarvers. The green sphere, represents the Rastafarians. Notice how the Rastafarian category intersect largely with the vendor category, as well as artists & woodcarvers, and beachboys. This brings us to the last sphere, the beachboys, somewhat outside the vendor trade but still related to mobile-vending, and Rastafarianism and artistry (it’s worth noting that the beachboys often do act as vendors as well, although not represented in the diagram, as this is not their main occupation).

I estimate that perhaps 1/3 of the art vendors are Rastafarians (hence the diagram showing many vendors intersecting with Rastafari-religion), over 50 percent of the beachboys have dreadlocks and identify as Rastafarians as well, a proportion of the vendors are both Rastafarian, as well as an artist woodcarver, while the other half, are simply living off making deals with the tourists.

Both diagram (above and below) are my own interoperations and estimations. They are meant to help the reader, get a visual insight into the categories the thesis focuses on. When I am talking about vendors, beachboys, Rastafarians and artists, it’s important to realize that these groups often intersect with each other, and that different aspects of their identities are brought out in different circumstances. Richard Jenkins writes “*Selfhood and personhood are aspects of individual identification, and in each the internal and the external cohabit in an ongoing process of identification*”. (Jenkins, 2014: 52) The second diagram below, is meant to represent the tourist at the location. They show the overarching tourist where backpackers, volunteers, and missionaries are sub categories of the overall tourist category. Backpackers and volunteers intersect, as I often found backpackers choosing to stay at the location and doing some volunteer work. I also found many missionary tourists, all the considering themselves volunteers. I did not find backpackers acting as missionaries however.

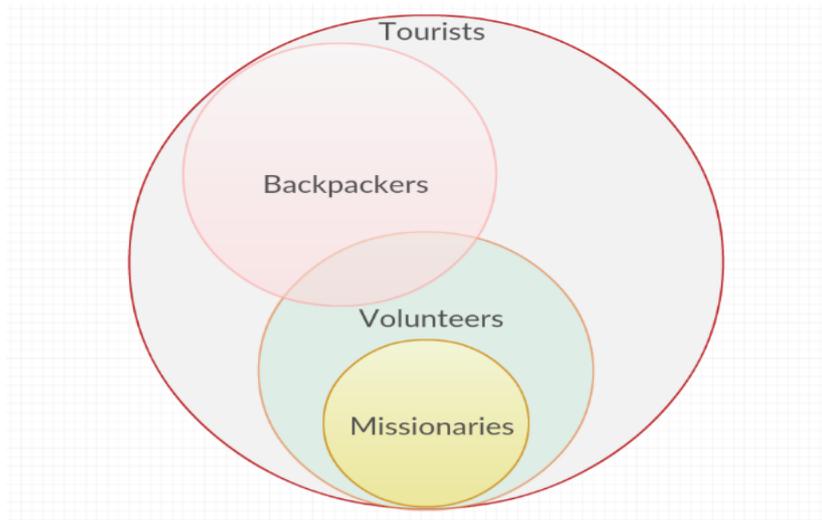


Figure 3: Tourists types.

This thesis, will focus on these categories of tourists, that is Backpackers, Volunteers, and missionaries. They will be referred to interchangeably. Sometimes I simply refer to them as tourists, but it is worth noting, that the tourist's categories at the location, usually fall within the categories seen in the diagram. It is possible to refer to tourists in different categories, such as: *Elite tourists, mass tourists, explorer tourists, alternative tourists*. (UNESCO, 2010) However, these are not categorizations that I find purposeful for this thesis, as I did not know of these categories before after the fieldwork, thus I prefer using the categories seen in figure 3 as these correlate to my fieldwork. Additionally, it is worth to point out that this is not a thesis about tourist categories, mainly, this is a paper about the strategies of subsistence among art vendors in the context of tourism. Thus, describing tourist types have a lower priority than describing the strategies of the art vendors, and therefore the art vendor categories are of more importance in this thesis.

1.7 Ethics and anonymization

It is critical to be aware of one's own role as a researcher in the field. In addition, to convey this role to the people one is staying with. It is also worth mentioning that it is not only the issue of this fieldwork – but anthropology in general that there are challenges (and power) in representing other cultures (Eriksen, 2010).

“Anthropologists, like other social scientists (and scientists), now have not only to behave in an ethical way but also to be seen to be so doing by all parties involved: research subjects, colleagues, students, funders, ethics committees, and the public at large.” (Caplan, 2003:3)

Fieldwork is a complex duality between the researcher and the host (Wax, 1980). The most significant aspect of doing any kind of research involving human-participants is that one should protect once informants. This is an ethical obligation. Research should not be on the expense of the people one is living with. Instead, it is generally accepted that anthropology should ideally benefit the people whom one is researching. Another consideration, with hidden vs open observation has been a topic of debate, according to Eriksen, the guidelines are clear “*It is considered unethical to not explain the informants what one is doing. They must have the opportunity to refuse to participate in the anthropologist analytical project*” (Eriksen, 2010: 37) (My translation). During the fieldwork, my phone was stolen by another tourist (see Chapter 3. Section 3.3), Thus I lost my photos, and ability to take more photos. Thus, I do not use any photography of art vendors in this thesis. This is just as well as the fieldsite and informants are anonymised

There are many discussions and issues in anthropology that includes questions with anonymizing-data, and ethnographic validity. “*The value of scientific research is partially dependent on the ability of individual researchers to demonstrate the credibility of their findings.*” (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982: 31)

Particularly Vike (2001) brings several of the problems surrounding ethnography and anonymity: “*If we have good reasons to prevent that our material is tied to persons, communities, and places it is collected from, ..., vi must either stop our work, or anonymise so thoroughly that the source under no circumstance can be tracked down*” (Vike, 2001: 78) (My translation). In this case, wood is a sensitive topic in Malawi. As Malawi is plagued by deforestation. It is possible that art vendor might be pointed out as part of this problem, as they

deal with woodcarvings. However, the amount of wood being used for such purposes are minuscule compared to for example the process of using charcoal for heating and cooking (charcoal is something most of Malawi's rural population rely on). Thus, due to the sensitive nature of deforestation, and wood overall, I do indeed have good reason to anonymise the location. For the sake of argument, woodcarving and the art vendor is a phenomenon seen all over Malawi and southern-Africa (from my experience). And most of them are legitimately buying their wood from Malawi government licensed location. That is not to say that some art vendors might not get their wood from more illegitimate sources. Wood is a sensitive topic in Malawi, as well as the topic of charcoal. Eriksen says:

“Collection of ethnographic data is cumulative. In addition (,) ethnography and analysis is produced in many of the societies anthropologists study... this involves a necessity of dialog with the studied society in ways that was previously unnecessary. This also means that anthropological studies can affect the local community directly” (Eriksen, 2010: 41) (my translation).

There are always ethical dilemmas involved when dealing with informants, especially when those informants give information that could potentially harm them, or their trade. If this is applied to the context of woodcarvings, it is a serious problem to identify actual individuals by name and location. Especially as wood is a sensitive topic in Malawi, as they are plagued by deforestations. The art vendors, despite only contributing a fraction to deforestation by selling wood compared to for example lumber exports, or the manufacturing of charcoal, might be pointed out as “scape-goats” for declining forest. This is a reason for anonymization of this study.

Doing a study in a third world country, also raises challenges as a researcher, what do the participants get out of the researcher asking questions and gathering information? Potentially nothing. Nevertheless, a study on tourism, consumer taste / aesthetics, and strategies used towards selling items to tourists, can have real world implications, that are positive for the art vendors. One of them, I would argue, is that it can help travellers and tourists understand why they get approached by street sellers and art vendors, and how to deal with them in an appropriate manner. Another, (which many of my informants were particularly keen on) is that writing about art vendors bring attention to a group of people that are really struggling to make a living.

1.8 The people of Malawi

There are nine significant ethnic groups in Malawi. In order of largest to smallest population wise the ethnic groups are *Chewa, Lomwe, Yao, Ngoni, Tumbuka, Nyanja, Sena, Tonga, Ngonde*. (WorldAtlas, 2018) Malawi is rich with different customs, dances and traditions connected with the different ethnic groups, but from what I was told by informant, it's the languages that are the modern times major markers of ethnic groups and affiliations. Chewa being the largest, and Chichewa, greatly spoken by most Malawians is one of the countries two national languages, the other being English. The research was conducted in an area with a significant population of one these ethnic groups, for the sake of anonymization, I will not reveal which ethnic group that was prevalent in the area. It is also worth noting, that while in Malawi, aspects of ethnicity and differences from such, was often downplayed by the art vendor groups.

In addition, it was conveyed on several occasions from members outside (and inside) the art vending group that this style of business had little to do with the actual ethnic group of the area, and their values. Few items were unique to that area. The tribe of the area are not known for their woodcarvings. It was a type of business that *came from the south* and did not come from that area some informants told me.

In general, Malawians consider themselves ultimately as Malawian. This can be traced back to the cultural reformations after Malawi's independence from British colonial rule. Hastings Banda (1898-1997), Malawi's first president (and certainly still to this day one of the country's most popular figures) is known for having reunited Malawi and urging for people to look past their tribal differences and reunite as a country: "*So far as I am concerned, there is no Yao in this country; no Lomwe, no Sena; no Chewa; no Ngoni; no Tonga; no Tumbuka; no Nyakyusa; there are only Malawians, that is all.*" (Mkandawire, 2010: 23). While at the field site, I often heard such statements as: *We are all Malawians here*, or even *we are all children of god and one planet – one love*. These are examples of Banda's viewpoint, still relevant in Malawi and especially by the art vendors. Downplaying the ethnic boundaries was quite common from both locals and tourists alike. This was something I had to adapt to when focusing too much on tribe, or ethnicity in my dialogues. That is, the people I interacted with would rather be viewed as one group of people, defined by their trade, and skills, rather than their tribe or country of origin. In retrospect, this allowed me as an outsider to get closer to them and get a richer understanding of what anthropologist know as "the natives point of view" (Geertz, 1974).

1.9 Location of fieldwork

Due to anonymity of the fieldsite and participants. I cannot describe the location in detail. However, the local people had mainly made their subsistence through agriculture in the past (and the present for that matter). This is a good point to say that I previously lived in Malawi for several years as a teenager. Nevertheless, I had never been at this specific location. This meant that I did not know the individuals personally, however I still knew the general culture of Malawi, and I am also able to speak (extremely) basic Chichewa (The official language of Malawi). I chose the location, partly by coincidence, and additionally I had a hunch that vendors and tourists were interacting there. This assumption was correct. The art vendors had positioned themselves next to the road. This meant that interactions were almost impossible to avoid for the tourists using the road. The vendors would go to the lodges to sell their items. However, this was not always approved off by the lodges, and the lodge owners, thus the vendors were often waiting outside the lodges. In most of the lodges I went to in Malawi, there were tourists in the form of backpackers, volunteers and missionaries, these are the tourists types I identified during fieldwork..

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITTERATURE & THEORETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Introduction to Theoretical perspectives

In this section I will go through some of my main theoretical perspectives and literature connecting the fieldwork I did amongst Malawian woodcarvers and art vendors. Further, I will illustrate using some brief examples from the fieldwork, how topics on strategies, survival and vendor /tourist interactions relate to the problem statement surrounding to the key topics and Chapters of this thesis: art, business, and spirituality within the woodcarving and vending trade. it is appropriate to focus on these areas of literature, and how they relate to the fieldwork, in addition to these areas supporting the collected empirical data from the field site. These areas are: Tourism, woodcarving, African art, and aesthetics, which will be the topic for relevant to the context of the fieldwork and the theoretical perspectives.

In terms of theoretical perspectives relating to this thesis, art in the context of anthropology is a vital avenue for discussing the topic of survival and subsidence for the art vendors, and the

strategies they employ in the context of tourism. It is important to note, that although this is the focus of the thesis, it is also a goal to do a general ethnographic description of the art vendors in Malawi, and in particular from one area of Malawi. Hence the theoretical perspectives, relate to aspects that is relevant in such a context, and although tourism is the context of this thesis. Survival of the vendors through manufacturing and selling art, and dealing with the presence of tourists strategically, is another primary area of focus within that context.

Some studies on tourism like “*Anthropology of tourism*” (Stronza, 2001) suggests that tourism is an ideal setting for anthropological study. The art produced by woodcarvers and sold by art vendors is arguably tourist art, a term relating to art made for the tourist trade, and of no practical or cultural use (other than being used for the tourist art trade). Tourist-art is especially relevant in the context of this thesis. The topics of Aesthetics and African art within the field of anthropology are other areas that deserves attention in the literature review. There is however much more to the topic of vendors and woodcarvers than the production and sales of woodcarvings and other forms of art. The context of art, plays an important role in this thesis, especially as the art the vendors were selling, and the category they identified themselves as, was art vendors, and although they didn’t use the term, they knew they were selling tourist art. Topics such as group identity and ethnicity are not the area of focus of thesis as little of the data from the fieldwork gives sufficient depth about these topics for analysis,

2.2 Tourism as context of the study

Some organisations claim that developing countries have tourism as their most feasible and acceptable solution for poverty reduction. (UNWTO) Tourism is also an area which is particularly understudied. Especially since tourism is one of the largest, and fastest growing industries in the world. (UNWTO) Part of the reason behind anthropology’s scepticism towards tourism had to do with fear. Fear of the possible negative side-effects of tourism, concerning outside influence on isolated cultures, which was prophesized to lead to economic dependence, destruction of isolates-tribes, and/or abruption of indigenous cultures,

This is something that can have influenced the woodcarving trade and the vendors. For although a woodcarver can change his domain from carving wood-carvings to carving canoes or maize pounders or adapt his skills to for example construction and house-building, an art vendor marketing tourist art, is dependent on the buying will of the tourists. That is the distinction between the woodcarver and vendors, the woodcarvers have their skills in terms of hand-work,

knowing how to work with wood, which can be adapted, while art vendors have their skills in being able to sell to tourists. This is important in it of itself but also as there is evidence from the fieldwork pointing back to the previous Chapter, about Bourdieu's 'taste' and that the taste of the tourists seems to have been changing. Ultimately, I believe this is a key factor for while other tactics must be used and relates to the core of this thesis about friendships bond between tourists and vendors, and aspects of reciprocity becoming more significant, that the aesthetics of the art itself.

Tourism in Africa, does relate to the concept of fetishism. Fetishism understood as: "*a concept that embodies the way in which commodities hide the social relations of those that have contributed to the production of that commodity... from the consumer (such as the tourist)*" (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 59) Hiding the way things were produced, was not extremely common at the fieldsite, but art vendors (especially those that didn't produce the art but acted as middlemen) would sometimes pass of art items as their own production. Tourists were not often bothered by this at the field site, often purchasing to support the vendor out of friendship (more about this in later Chapters).

Tourists sometimes seemed to be wanting to experience something extreme, like going to Africa and seeing the world for what it is, buying souvenirs becomes part *commodification*, understood as the ways local environments, property and resources has become part of the capitalistic commodity (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 59), that is, something that can be bought. The tourists might not be aware of this, they might be trying to make a difference by supporting the vendors, but perhaps not always realizing that this is tourist art they are purchasing, and not 'authentic', additionally the tourists are in some ways contributing to deforestation of endangered tree species in by buying commodities such as wooden art. (the environmental focus is not the main focus of the thesis, but worth keeping in mind)

As seen in Chapter three, the concept of donating to support, was like an expectation from the Malawian art vendors, they expected that if tourists had the means to help, they should help. that the tourists should help them as the tourists were perceived as rich, while the vendors perceived themselves as poor (this is something that often were used as strategies for donations, see Chapter 4. Section 4.3).

Recently, some have argued that tourism in Africa, is a way that poor people have been exchanged with animals, locked in a cage, while tourists that have mobility fly by them and take pictures. (Radøy, 2018)

“Slum tourism turns poverty into entertainment, something that can be momentarily experienced and then escaped from. People think they’ve really “seen” something — and then go back to their lives and leave me, my family and my community right where we were before.” (Odede, 2010)

Tourism has been perceived as something that can help bring Africa out of poverty as was mentioned earlier in this Chapter, however, local people in Africa, and specifically in Malawi find in sometime provoking, if the tourists are not involved with the community and just *hiding in the lodges* as the vendors would say. This is part of the atmosphere of the field-location. Some tourists were there to relax, others were there to help, and some were there to do both. However, what’s more important that how the tourists spend their holidays for this fieldwork, is how the vendors deal with the tourist’s presence and try to make a business out of that. From what I learned, business with wooden items, and dealing with tourists, is not what it was in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Where arguably the taste and buying power of tourists were radically different than today and being a vendor was more reliable than it is currently. I will not get into what these changes in tourism have been. However, it is worth nothing that the art vendors (and in some cases beachboys) often rely on bartering western items (More on this in Chapter four. Section 4.6) rather than physical money when interacting with tourists.

The key point is that tourism, especially to exotic regions and third world tourism, is more popular than ever: “*Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.*” (UNWTO, 2017) It is well known that air-flights have become significantly more affordable in the last decade. Opening new territories for new groups of travellers, leading for example younger people to travel more.

Not only is aesthetics related to the art (see section 2.3: Art meaning and aesthetics), but in the context of tourism, aesthetics is also relevant in terms of where the tourists are travelling. Back to the topic of fetishism within tourism, this also relates to commodification of the environment, but also the *aesthetic*: “*the process whereby objects, feeling and experiences are transformed into aesthetic objects and experiences*” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 59). Aesthetics is more aligned to the focus of this thesis, than fetishism and commodification.

“Not only is the consumption of tourism fetishistic, it is also intensely aestheticized. By that is meant the way in which travel and tourism is used to express ‘good taste... and,

significantly, and indication of our social position and ‘belief system’” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 69)

These aspects, also relate to why tourists are willing to for example donate money to art vendors (More on this in Chapter four. 4.4), or buy things, even though they don’t really need or want the item, and even if they recognize it as tourist art (which is not necessarily the case) Thus aesthetics and tourist art relates to aspects of authenticity. “*It is the promotion of primitiveness within which authenticity becomes the principal commodity*” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 74).

In the context of tourist buying art from art vendors in Africa, it doesn’t necessarily matter for the tourist whether it is ‘authentic’ or not, what matters is that they got the piece in Africa, A sign of their taste and travel. This relates to the topics of taste, and fetishism. Based on my interactions with tourists, it is my impression that it appears to have become fashionable, and “cool” to travel in the poorest countries. This is a form of *extreme tourism*. Extreme tourism is exactly what it sounds like. It involves going to places, and meeting people that is not usually considered tourist places, perhaps for the need of the challenges it involves going outside normal tourist destination, as seen previously in this section this relates to the concept of *slum-tourism*. Ironically, most tourists stay in the lodge areas, and don’t get to see the real African villages, but they can still tell their friends that they have been in Africa, and its associations might give some forms of status. A piece of art, therefore become proof of the travels, and as I will show in following sections and Chapters, art vendors know how to use this fact to their advantage, as a strategy for subsistence, and a strategy for survival. They know the tourists want a proof of their travels, therefore, they will sell them something to *remember Malawi and bring as gifts home* as the art vendors often would say.

2.3 Woodcarving in Malawi and African art

Lawore’s description below, of the Malawian woodcarving trade is worth quoting to get an insight into the scale of the woodcarvers and art vendors in Malawi: “*Making and selling curious is a specialist but vibrant small scale industry in Malawi thought to be generating income for over 5000 people (marshal et. Al. 2000) ... Markets are unpredictable and profit margins low.*” (Lawore, 2006: 8). Five-thousand people is not a whole lot when one thinks that Malawi is home to about 13 million people. This seem to suggest that the woodcarving production is a highly specialized trade. When visiting tourist locations, one might get the

feeling that everyone is a vendor, or artists. But this view can be biased as the art vendors and woodcarvers locate themselves where tourists travel.

“These products are transmitted to the consumers via middlemen whose intervention interprets and “sells” the works of art ... The artists may alter the format and content of their artworks based upon their perception of the audience response by its mediation through middlemen and culture brokers” (Jules-Rosette, 1984: 17)

These products are related to the souvenirs tourists buy from art vendors. Woodcarvings, trinkets, art. But who are these ‘culture brokers’? In this case they are the art vendors, selling art and conveying art to tourists as a strategy for survival. This is done through sales of hand-made products, both produced by the vendors themselves (through woodcarving and other art forms) and imported from other places and surrounding countries. Woodcarving is a phenomenon you find across Africa and is a defining aspect of Sub-Saharan Africa. “*The African continent is home of some of the most powerful and vigorous art traditions of the world*” (Graburn, 1976: 299). To Europeans, it has been the West, and Central African art in the form of woodcarvings, masks and other ritualistic tools, that has received the most attention (Graburn, 1976: 299). East-Africa which geographically speaking, Malawi falls into, has not received the same amount of attention in terms of their woodcarvings and mask. “*East Africa is the geographic area of the continent where art traditions have been the least studied and were the most varied*” (Vansina, 1983: 17)

African masks and statues are a worldwide commodity and has been an object of study for anthropology. What is now considered tourist-art would in the past be primitive art. *Primitive art* (1927). was coincidentally the name of Franz Boas’s ethnographic work on different types of ethnic art. He writes “*an examination of the material on which our studies of the artistic value of objects of primitive manufacture are founded shows that in most cases we are dealing with products of an industry in which a high degree of mechanical skill has been attained*” (Boas, (1927) 1955: 17). The fact that “primitive” peoples were shown to have a high degree of artistic and mechanical skill was a turning point in the way the western society dealt with “the other”. Boas suggests that primitive art has begun to rival the Europeans in accuracy, although he in this case talks of Californian Indians woodwork, the description could just have well been of Malawian woodcarvers I observed during my Fieldwork: “*much of the time of the men is spent in woodworking. They are skilled joiners and carvers who through constant practice have acquired virtuosity in the handling of the wood. The exactness of their work rivals that of our very best craftsmen.*” (Boas, (1927) 1955: 18)

What had previously been considered primitive, and unworthy compared to the fine-arts of Europe, had now suddenly become in vogue. Perhaps it was Picasso and other artists interests in African masks and cubism, that opened the European psyche on the artistic quality of what was seen as “primitive art”.

The line between art and products can be challenging to differentiate (Firth, 1992: 17). Objects of mankind are products of culture. This seems obvious. However, we could then ask, can a machine make art? A machine is after all a device made by humans. A tool designed for a purpose. This brings us to a great topic within anthropology, the contrast between the humanistic definition of culture, in terms of artistic production (Schackt, 2009: 159), and the wider definition of culture, everything from thought, behaviour, and communication, (Schackt, 2009: 159). It is useful to keep this in mind in the debate about authenticity, art, and tourist-art, and especially in the context of Aesthetics (more about that later). The elitism within art, and authenticity is certainly part of European history. R. Firth put it this way: “*Art is often depicted as high-minded, non-utilitarian, and so distinguished from craft, which is technical skill applied to useful end.*” (Firth, 1992: 17).

In relation the quote above, I never met an art vendor who, for example, made wooden canoes or wooden maize pounders for the village. That does not mean that they were not capable of making such items, they were as mentioned highly adaptable and skilled woodcarving art vendors. There were art vendors that had never made anything from wood and were purely focused on selling the items. This is yet another argument for the art vendors being specialized towards making tourists items and marketing their items to tourists alone.

In a few examples there would be art objects that were designed to represent the culture of the area (Farming, fishing, paintings of village life for example). This was something that represented local life in Malawi, but also something that by no means were indicative to that specific region as farming and fishing is common across Malawi. I rarely met local Malawians that kept woodcarvings, supporting the argument that this art was made for somebody else other than tourists.

In Malawi, the process of selling arts and woodcarving to tourists, was as with Christianity, something that had been brought from elsewhere. My key informant, whom I will later discuss, for example struggled with the fact that a white man would represent (and possibly misrepresent) him, the area, and the culture. He asked me *why should not Malawians represent themselves?* In response to this, I would like to quote a Malawian anthropologist. Mankhomwa

put it this way: “*there is a need to train more anthropologists to work in both public and private sectors as their knowledge can be of great use in addressing many of the issues facing Malawi*”. (Mankhomwa, 2014)

Some of the first anthropological work on African art was in 1933, thirty years after ‘avant-garde’ artists in Germany and France had begun to recognize African art. But the progress went fast, and by 1945, African art had begun to become a specialized field in Anthropology (Vansina, 1983: 19). However, “*Gell argues that the anthropology of art and the anthropology of aesthetics does not yet exist*” (Coote and Shelton, 1992: 10). The line between art history and anthropology also can become blurred. It is a highly complex field, not only due to the richness and variety of African art, but also due to the constantly changing art scene. African art, had deep influence on not only anthropology, but also the artists of Europe as well, especially in the form of the artistic wave of cubism, enforced by expressionist like Pablo-Picasso, who as massively influenced by the sharp angles of African mask.

During the early 19th century, art and objects of distant cultures would be brought back to Europe as novelty items. Studying the objects, were assumed to be ways of studying the people that made them. Graburn puts it this way, and is worth quoting at length:

“Before this, although they were collected (‘primitive art’), it was only for their curiosity value. They were first seriously and widely appreciated by disaffected western artists, who took them as a form of innovative inspiration without realizing their inherent conservatism. These souvenirs might have been actual examples of the traditional arts of the local peoples ... however, the colonial agents were usually unable to tell whether the items they had bought were truly traditional or whether they were specifically made and modified for the souvenir market” (Graburn, 1976:2)

It is my belief that tourists today are often quite skilled (or view themselves as such) in finding high quality African art. As they have been exposed to different African art in Europe or Amerika, whether at museums or at markets. A tourist from Germany told me close to the end of my fieldwork “*I don’t like the quality of the carvings here, I find it too expensive here, these are things you find anywhere, even in Germany we have African markets.*” (Fieldnotes: 8/7/17). The tourists seemed to be concerned with quality of the art, and presumably enjoy considering themselves experts and connoisseurs of the field. Thus, they might downplay the value of the art and act above it. This was conveyed on several occasions from tourists at the field site, the tourists were displeased with the quality of the items at the location, and the lack of diversity.

This might be a reason for why vendors rely more on relationships as a strategy (more about this Chapter three and four). They really had to struggle to sell their art sometimes. It is worth remembering this fact when describing the tactics and strategies of subsistence of the vendors. A piece of wood must be bought through legal means, from the Malawian forest department. Such an investment will be more than a month's salary for many Malawians. Therefore, they often must borrow wood from someone who has it acquired, for then to pay back once it has been sold. But as will be shown, this can take a long time.

Thompson's ethnography on the Yoruba (Layton, 1991: 17), showed empirical evidence that *precisely carved streaks* within carvings, was a form of symbolism relating to markings in the surrounding ecological environment of the Yoruba, which in turn manifest in the culture of putting markings on their face. Therefore, symbols in culture reflect itself in art, and art reflects itself back into cultures.

Many of the masks and carvings used in societies across Africa for ritual use, no longer can be found in Africa, instead they are found in European and American collections. "*For over half a century, large private collections have been assembled, and have saved many art works from destruction*" (Vansina, 1983: 20). The idea of 'saving art' is a controversial one. Wood is a fragile material, it decomposes quickly. Thus, it is hard for archaeologists and anthropologists to find African masks that are more than a couple centuries old. For European and American art dealers and auction houses appraising art pieces, the idea has therefore been that *the older the better*, since institutions are not interested in tourists' art. "*The greater age of an art object enhances its value and an attribution of date becomes a matter for expertise of authenticity*" (Vansina, 1983: 20) This is an important fact for our later discussion and understanding of the modern woodcarvers and vendors selling art in Malawi today. As mentioned, these sorts of institutional snobbery can make it difficult for vendors to sell off their items as authentic to experienced art buyers, they therefore prefer marketing to tourists, who might simply want a souvenir. A memory. But even this can be challenging, which might result in the art vendors having to adopt the role of a victim, with statements such as *please support us* (see Chapter four. 4.4). In my opinion, this is a detrimental aspect of the artists' self-esteem, shadowed by the fact that the tourist standards have climbed so high. This is part of the strategy and subsistence discussion of this thesis.

From a European perspective (and notably an anthropological perspective) all the art that will be discussed in the context of this thesis, are in fact reproductions. Yes, they are tourist-art, often mass-produced art, polished with shoe-polish to make them appear darker, thus devalued

by the western institutions as practically worthless, as they have not practical or ritual use other than being sold for the tourist market. But they do have a practical use, they are made to survive, they are made to subsist. It is worth to remember that African woodcarving production is considered a billion-dollar industry; *The trade in what has now been called “airport art” has grown to considerable proportions*” (Graburn, 1976: 308). There are environmental aspects surrounding woodcarvings that should concerns both the woodcarvers, art vendors, and tourists, especially as they are selling and buying wood in a country plagued by deforestation. Nevertheless, such an environmental discussion is not part of this thesis. But it is worth remembering that deforestation, is an issue that not only concerns Malawi on the contrary, it’s a global issue. This is also an argument for doing ethnography with the art vendors and woodcarvers, as these are skills that might not be passed on to the next generation due to reasons of deforestation, higher prices of wood, Migrations of woodcarvers (to for example south Africa) and illegalization of certain wood-species. This is an issue with large implications, and many different dynamics.

I challenge the concept that these forms of art do not contain authentic value. *“classification and formal stylistic analysis are important tools for anthropologists working on art, but they are means to an end, not the end itself”* (Coote and Shelton, 1992: 6). Viewed from a social anthropologist perspective the social aspect is the interesting part of the woodcarving trade. It is in this context of the social aspect of the art being sold, that the study has surrounded itself with, looking at the trade from the positions of the art vendors, and the strategies they employ to subsist within tourism.

There is thus no index of the Style of carvings themselves in this paper. *“Classification and formal stylistic analysis are important tools for anthropologists working on art, but they are means to an end, not the end itself”* (Coote and Shelton, 1992: 6)

The aspect of individual creativity, also involve the individual style of selling the artefacts themselves. It is beneficial to view this woodcarving tradition in its socio-cultural-context, in a situation with high unemployment, poverty and a struggle for daily survival, with the opportunity of survival through selling art to tourists.

“What is now known as tourist art was sold as souvenirs by African traders who went from door to door, displaying their wares for sale at European homes, government rest houses, or local markets. Today, with improved accommodations for tourists and increasing travel to Africa, they also sell at hotels and airports.” (Graburn, 1976: 308)

The Malawian vendors had few objects other than their woodcarvings, that could turn into “art by metamorphosis” – that is objects that were ordinary and not intended for ‘art’ per se but in another context, could be hung on a wall as art. The local canoes they build, was a piece of art and craftsmanship, hollowed out from a single tree trunk, and used for fishing in Lake Malawi. This was a true work of art and its functionality was terrific, however, when/if brought to Europe, it could arguably have been placed in a Museum and would have looked outstanding, as it is an object with functional use – and rooted in Malawian culture. Tourist art is another discussion. However, as Silver: “*Tourist arts are neither better nor worse than their traditional counterpart, simply different, and equally careful attention must be paid to the new functions they serve*” (Silver, 1979: 191) Silver also points out, that the African tourist art woodcarvings easily rival their predecessors in quality. “*Tourists arts themselves are often as conceptually sophisticated as more revered traditional works*” (Silver, 1979: 192)

I was told that in the 70s and 80s of Malawi, when the tourism really picked up in Malawi, a few individuals would make up designs of animals and landscapes, that would be carved into chairs. These designs act today as templates for new artists. They are successful art that tourists have proven to like. But over time the designs change, and sometimes, the care and quality get sloppier as new artists take over. Perhaps as old artist go away, Seatersdal points out: “*As old people die, old ideas and symbolic meaning contents die with them*” (Saetersdal, 1999: 132). Investing in new design proves a greater risk, as people might not buy it, and that will be an expensive waste of a valuable piece of wood. In the circumstance that a tourist asks for a specific and unique or original design from the artist. I was stunned to observe the artists, simply use a template that had not been used for a long while, rather than to completely remake something. It is only so many ways you can carve a lion and make it look aesthetic to the tourists. Jules-Rosette says: “*“The ‘perceived’ demand for particular genres and styles pushes the artists to reproduce them*” (Jules-Rosette, 1986: 56). However, it is essential to point out that the carvers themselves are designers, often working on art that has an aesthetic and practical function. The art vendors in Malawi, also sell designs from other countries. Several examples of Makonde art from Mozambique was found in the vendor stalls. I was told by the vendors that these pieces had been imported. Even paintings of Kilimanjaro were present, even though that mountain was in a completely different country, why not pictures of Mt Mulanje, Malawi’s tallest mountain and one of the tallest in Africa? I believe it is because they are aiming towards tourist taste (a topic explored in the following section).

2.4 Art meaning and Aesthetics

My aim in this section is to discuss the main focus of this thesis, through the art the vendors are relating to the tourists, a relation that is a strategy of subsistence, a strategy of survival. Nevertheless, it is worth looking into this relation from a perspective of art and aesthetics, as these are one of the methods, subsistence is made. Selling objects that the tourists find beautiful. In the context of this thesis.

“The universal existence of aesthetic taste and aesthetic impulse have been recognised since the beginnings of anthropology, but it was not until the 1950’s and 1960’s that anthropologists began seriously to study aesthetic in non-western societies.

Understanding ‘aesthetics’ as having to do with standards of beauty” (Coote and Shelton, 1992: 1992: 7)

The meaning and aesthetics of art are se concept that were present at the field-location and are topics that deserves being explored. Especially in the context of tourist art. Especially in the context of tourist art. It is not easy to define what is art? For 12 years the Russian philosopher Tolstoi wrote his book with precisely this question as his title: “what is art?” (Ruckstuhl, 1916: 21). One medium might be dancing, another poetry or painting. Early 20th century conceptions of art and artists could be described as something like:

“There are other men whose greatest joy consists in expressing their emotions, but who are so utterly indifferent to the happiness of others that, to relieve themselves of their own emotional pressure, they will sing, or rhyme, or dance a jig, draw or paint: only to please themselves-just to relieve their own emotions” (Ruckstuhl, 1916: 23)

I do not intend to answer the question of “what is art?” Rather I’m doing an ethnography of the artists, and the people selling the art. In the context of the fieldwork, it is beneficial to embrace that art is recognized as a form of expression through different kinds of mediums.

“The African continent is home of some of the most powerful and vigorous art traditions of the world. Though long collected as curious by the colonizers, the appreciation of African arts for their aesthetic qualities did not come until the end of the nineteenth century.” (Graburn, 1976: 299)

It is challenging to understand what a person intends to convey through art, without asking the artists themselves. It is impossible to have an immediate understanding of another person’s thoughts. However, for the artists, the artwork is the primary method of expression (Layton,

1991: 12). The concept of 'the artist' can be identified cross culturally as a social category of people. In Europe the concept of the artists is stereotypically someone eccentric. To generalize about the artists in our society is not easy, as artists are often recognized, praised and know by the work they have produced, but also their character is relevant in their success or failure in the Art world. Art is both a political, economic, and cultural-institution found in every society. Art is perhaps one of the key ways human have historically separated, and elevated themselves from the animals.

Despite not being able to date the African woodcarving trade precisely, the forming, and shaping of wood is certainly one of humanities oldest activities. However, the process of making woodcarvings as tourist-art dates to the first days of contact between Europeans and Africans (Graburn, 1976: 309).

They try to anticipate what a tourist would like, in order to make exactly that, make something the tourists will find aesthetically pleasing. "*he (the artists) will make his imitations, though he does not know whether a particular subject is good or bad, and he seems likely to imitate what appears beautiful to the ignorant majority*" (Layton 1991: 5). This statement now stands true for the African artisans and woodcarvers as well as they make what seem to appear beautiful/popular to the larger majority.

The taste in naturalism among European travellers seems to have influences the production of certain types of art among African woodcarvers (Graburn 1976: 313). Further, when it comes to the concepts of taste, Bourdieu (1979) writes in his "*Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*" (Bourdieu, (1979) 2015), that aspects of "taste" can be highly relevant in relations to why tourists prefer 'hardwood' to 'softwood' for example – and the ways this influenced what kind of art the art vendors made. Another (reverse) aspect related to taste, was the art vendors taste for western items (see Chapter four: 4.5). Items such as clothes, sunglasses, telephones, clothes, Bible's and other items made it west, were usually considered something desired for trading from the art vendors.

The second, was the trend of *the grotesque* of which Makonde is a good representation (Graburn, 1976: 314). Makonde is the style from Mozambique, a neighbouring country to Malawi, and both authentic Makonde carvings and replicas are found in Malawian vendor markets. Many are part of the 'assembly-line' products and are often made of hard-woods such as ebony. The third trend that has affected the tourism art in Africa is the *gigantism* (Graburn, 1976: 314). That mean bigger is better, big carvings, whether they are of chairs and masks,

means the sellers can charge more from the buyer, they also give a big statement. Carvers also told me that the bigger pieces were much easier to make, but often took longer to sell, as well as requiring a significant investment in the raw material of the wood itself. This might seem obvious. However, it doesn't have to be for the purchasers of such items, being mainly the tourists. It is also looked at as an investment for the tourists as well as they are told by art vendors, *you can bring this back to Europe and it will be worth more money*. Thus, encouraging purchases for investments, although not the focus of the thesis, this can potentially be problematic when tourists are investing in Hardwood species. There were signs on the airport in Lilongwe warning tourists for bringing out 'round-woods' (hardwood), as this was illegal as of recently, most tourists and art vendors are not aware of this fact, some are, and thus offer to post wood instead, as it elevates the risk of technically smuggling hardwoods. It was also elaborated to me that the hardwoods that were bought by Chinese tourists, was not for the art, but for the wood itself. They would bring it back to china and reshape the wood into Chinese art and artefacts. This challenge the concept of art and aesthetics, and looks at something different, something related to buying resources, a discussion I will not get into, but still worth bringing up in this section.

Figurines, i.e. small statues or totems, including bracelets and small figures, seem popular for tourists as they are as art vendors said *easy to carry*. They also require less wood to make, and a backpacker can easily put them in his or her backpack. It goes without saying that a backpacker will find it impossible to keep a 15 kg African mask on their backpack (or at least highly impractical). The vendors have an alternative to this however, offering to *send it by mail* to their country of origin through the post-office services. I saw some tourists using this option, while I also met backpackers carrying a small statue in their backpack, cursing their designs for carrying this chunk of wood around and not just sending it home. Another factor is that exporting hardwoods have now become illegal, and while doing my fieldwork, 35 illegal loggers were jailed for illegal logging (Barbee, 2017) Sending the woodcarving removes responsibilities from the receiver. As I have mentioned earlier, wood is a sensitive topic in Malawi, and getting to the heart of it is by no means easy. Nevertheless, it is conceivable through not focusing on the wood, but rather the real people making and selling such art to the tourists.

Art vendors and middlemen, not necessarily the carvers themselves have since (at least) the 1950's in Africa, made so-called "fake pieces" by burying them in mud, making them appear older (Graburn, 1976: 31). If the concept of art I defined by: real art vs fake art, it is still

important to note, that the very concept of art itself is part of the western view on what defines *material culture*. The material culture could be interpreted as everything that has been shaped, made or worked by humans (Schackt, 2009: 72).

I have personally never observed Malawian art vendors or Carvers try to sell me a ‘fake’ old statue. The statues I found during the fieldwork was sometimes quite old, they had gathered dust and were often hidden behind piles of other statues, forgotten and neglected at times. This shows that it can take years to sell of carvings, making it a sketchy investment, this problem is managed however, by tourists taking orders (an aspect I will discuss in the fieldwork section. When asked, the traders would confirm that this was an old statue, including my main informant, who knew I had no intention to purchase. It is however worth noting that, “*Aesthetics as a universal moral discourse about art has no place in anthropology*” (Coote and Shelton, 1992:8). The concept of aesthetics is related to the field of ‘taste’, that again relates to aspects of morality. As Aristotle once said: The good, the true and the beautiful. However, what can be interesting is *how the objects work?* (Coote and Shelton, 1992: 9), and if this approach is taken in the study of the data it would be useful to get to the heart of the wood. In particular in the way the wood is made as a strategy of survival, a way of subsistence, helping us understand the purpose of the production of tourist-art is simply a tactic for achieving the goal of gathering some money, and making some international contacts within the context of tourism. This brings us the concept of ‘visual representation’ or ‘the anthropology of visual representation’, and the fact that not all representations can be considered as a form of art (Layton, 1991: 6). The key lies in the intention behind the manufacture of the object. A traffic for example, was designed to direct traffic, and so it does in the form of visual cues to the drivers, the traffic light is limited in its purpose, and is thus not considered art.

Regarding taste and aesthetics, Bourdieu made some critical sociological studies on relating the to key term *cultural capital*. In his “Distinction...” (1979) about the concept of taste in the French bourgeoisie, upper class societies in France and compared it with working class. Some of Bourdieu’s findings is that it is *social rooms*, *symbolic capital* and *habitus* that contribute in maintaining and creating power structures among the ruling elites. These are large terms with large implications, but in the context of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the concept of *taste* from Bourdieu.

“Craftsmen and tradesmen specializing in luxury, cultural or artistic items...all those vendors of cultural goods and services...use their ambiguous occupations, in which success depends at least as much on the subtly casual distinction of the salesman as on

the nature and quality of his wares, as a way of obtaining the best return on a cultural capital in which technical competence is less important than familiarity with the culture of the dominant class and a mastery of the signs and emblems of distinction and taste.” (Bourdieu, 1984: 141)

The further away from the mainstream the better. I interviewed a German volunteer and tourist about this topic, and he mentioned that this was art you could find ‘anywhere’ (more about that later in this section) For this and several other reasons I eventually shifted the fieldwork’s theoretical focus from authenticity, to looking at strategies from the art vendors. I became more interested in getting to know the social ties between the tourists and the art vendors, that is, if this was stuff made anywhere, how were they able to sell it? And that is where the sales tactics become relevant. As the data in the fieldwork suggest (Chapter three), this fact of selling items as Genuine-Malawian woodcarvings, became more of a tourist sales point, than something they themselves identified as true art, relating their cultural identity. If we remind ourselves of what my main informant said, *these things do not come from here*, they are object used as a medium for subsistence, a strategy for survival. Some tourists just wanted a souvenir, while others looked for collectibles. Nevertheless, all the art at the location, made by the woodcarvers, and sold by the art vendors (sometimes the same people), was what might be interpreted as tourist art.

“In the case of "tourist" and "folk" art, the concept of aesthetics is generally salvaged by introducing the notion that artistic preferences are culturally relative and are influenced by the conditions under which the particular art form is produced” (Jules-Rosette, 1986: 41)

Sometimes, as tourists had certain expectations of what African art is supposed to look like, the hands of the Africa artists are tied, working out of a pre-set mould, based in a market with its use purely being to market to tourist. Hence the definition that came across earlier, ‘tourist art’. In the context of Malawi, with more than a dozen of different tribal groups, living under the banner of the nation state of Malawi, it was the case of the group and people I spent time with and examined their art, that *“their arts are rarely produced for their own consumption or according to their own unmodified tastes.”* (Graburn, 1976: 1). The art was made for the tourist industry, and as many of my informants told me, especially my main informant, “this is just business!”, they make things according to tourist’s tastes. *“They develop aesthetic and commercial standards for their work that are both triggered by and autonomous of the*

consumer response, thus a process and a logic of art production emerge independently of consumption” (Jules-Rosette, 1984: 5)

It is questionable, whether this really is the role of the artists or not. But in Malawi (as was the case with the art vendors) the fact that their economic situation was absolute poverty made the art less about personal expression and more about designing things that tourists would like, hoping they could fetch a profit. This limited their artistic freedom: *“Whereas the tourists, in concert with art critics and middlemen, devise ideological frameworks to interpret what they buy, the artists continue to make their works independently” (Jules-Rosette, 1984: 9)*

Unfortunately, this lack of originality was noticed by the tourists, which affected the sales. The mass production of certain items, and the similar style of woodcarvings and art became a handicap. They, the art vendors could not say this is an original carving from our tribe, our area. Instead they had to sell things really cheap or be pushy to get the tourists to purchase from them.

In sum, the very concept of art goes back to our interpretation of culture, and in that sense, what classifies itself as art, and what classifies itself as a tool in one context, and art in another is subjective, and contextual. Items without a practical function other than the symbolic ones, is easy to be interpreted as art, even without understanding the message that is conveyed (Schackt, 2009: 72). Thus, the art of the art vendors, are often made with the intention of aesthetics and practicality. Therefore, combining two categories that are often the division between what is art, and what is not. As I will show in the Chapter three and four, the most successful art vendors were often the ones that made practical ornaments, such as pipes, jewellery or chairs. These ornaments have a practical use, but they also have an artistic quality of being handmade, and made to look beautiful. Aesthetic taste is culturally conditioned, and therefore subjective (Schackt, 2009: 72-73). Therefore, they are both decoration, but also items with a practical function, and in this way crossing the boundary of art and its ability to be practical for the tourist. Thus, the practical art is often not judged by their level of cultural authenticity, but on the quality of the material (the wood), the quality of for example the woodcarving (the art) and the ability to be used (its practicality).

2.5 Mauss's 'gift' and Goffman's 'Stigma'

The concept of *potlach* in “The gift...” written by Marcel Mauss (1925) is interesting in the context of the fieldwork observations, which I will soon get into (Chapter three) “the gift” is one of the classic texts in social anthropology and sociology, it has been quotes countless times. Although not the main theoretical perspective, there are still elements and parallels that are worth bringing into the context of the fieldwork. Especially as I see “The gift” as relevant in the context of art vendors and tourist’s interaction in the form of exchanges, reciprocity, and social-debt. Perhaps even more significant is if one transfer obligations between giving and receiving (See Chapter four: section 4.3) is especially significant as it happens between groups, and not only within one particular group.

In ‘The Gift’, there are three main duties that define a potlach culture. The duty of giving, the duty of receiving, and the duty of giving back (Mauss, 1925 (2014): 80). These duties, are at the core of much of the empirical data collected from the primary field location. You as an outsider and tourist were expected to give, especially since the art vendors usually saw themselves as poor and suffering individuals, which in many cases they were. Malawi is not a potlach society, however, there are parallels. A potlach economy requires the wealth and gifts of exchanges to happen in a largely ceremonial setting (Mauss, 1925 (2014): 72). The only time I observed something that is comparable to potlatch, was in the case of so called “bonfire parties”, where exchanges and mingling were happening between tourists, Rastas and art vendors. I witnessed parties being made where large amounts of wood, and food was giving out. The fact that this was a mostly tourists / Rastafarian gathering made it even more interesting. The fact that tourists were included in such redistribution events is important, but also that by their presence they also contributed to the chief by buying items or giving donations, gaining the community as a whole (this will be discussed in Chapter three).

A redistribution of wealth within a group, is quite different comparatively speaking, to redistributions between different groups. When I was in participation and observing this situation (something the Rastafarians told me had never happened before – where tourists and art vendors come together around one bonfire, sharing stories and building bonds), I thought back to when I had read “the gift” by Mauss, there were elements that reminded me of the potlach scenario, especially when I saw the large amounts of goods being spent, or offered to the Rastafarian / art vendor community. This was something that reminded me of potlach. Potlach is a term endemic to the pacific north-west of the Americas, and should not without care

be appropriated to a Malawian setting. However, there were times when events happened, like I said, large amounts of wood (a valuable item) were burnt in a ceremonial Rastafarian setting, as well as food being shared and consumed among tourists and Rastafarian art vendors. This could remind one of a potlach event. Goffman's notion of *stigma* also proves to play a small role in the fieldwork Chapter (Chapter three). Both stigma and gift exchange serve a purpose in my fieldwork. Although they will not be a central comparison in my thesis, the parallels are worth mentioning.

Another significantly important theoretical perspective adopted from Mauss is the power of gifts themselves to create social bonds and reciprocity. Friendships were formed with the volunteers, tourists, backpackers and the art vendors and woodcarvers. Reciprocity and trust was created between the art vendors and tourists, especially through exchanges of items, such as pair of sandals for a handmade necklace for example. The fact that me as a fieldworker would present certain symbolic gifts as well, like buying and sharing a meal with the art-vendor (Chapter three. 3.8) made me in a much greater sense accepted into the community.

It should be clear that there were many categories of different groups interplaying at the field location in Malawi. Some of the categories were also certainly intersecting, and mingling with several different categories of identity, like being an art vendor and a Rastafarian (as well as other categories such as beachboys, fake-Rastas and drunkards,). This is quite important, but their primary identity when asked what are you? Would often be *I am a vendor*, *I am an artist*, and / or *I am a Rasta*. Rasta, art and vending goes hand in hand at the field site (but I will not get into this before the very end of the thesis. Chapter four: 4.7).

These different groups were often mingling, and sharing a common goal. Sharing a common goal, of extracting value from the tourists, by using different strategies (friendship, trust, reciprocity, service-mindedness vs scamming, scheming, heckling, pushing, blackmailing). The contrasting characters, made it a mine field for the tourists at times. Another important point, worth mentioning here, is the fact that tourists were well aware of the different characters hanging out at tourist-sites, looking for tourists. Previous experiences from harassing beachboys and pushy art vendors, could mean that the tourists previous experiences were brought with them from one country, or location to the next, making it challenging for art vendors to building trust and reciprocity, key components in building transactional reciprocity. Interestingly, the identity of a Rastafarian, seems in some instances to some-how make the tourists more attracted to these types of art vendors, and making trust and reciprocity easier. This is only an observation, and not something I can answer easily. In general, the tourists I talked with during

fieldwork often pointed out - *Everyone wants something from you, we are like a walking mini-bank*. To use a quote from Goffman's, iconic work about stigma in this context:

“Stigma management is an offshoot of something basic in society, the stereotyping or ‘profiling’ of our normative expectations regarding conduct and character; Stereotyping is classically reserved for customers, orientals, and motorists, that is, persons who fall into very broad categories and who may be passing strangers to us” (Goffman, 1974: 68)

For the tourists, the art vendors are such strangers, and profiling and stereotyping are prevalent. Stigma is a phenomenon known to anthropologists and sociologists, as being a mark on a person “*Stigma*” (Goffman, 1974). Some of the art vendors had such markings, especially the ones that were not really art vendors, but focusing on scams (see Chapter four.4.7). There were individuals around in the area, posing as art vendors, that had stigmas of being an alcoholic, stigma of being a thief, stigma of being a former prisoner and even... stigma of being a murderer and rapists, people that had done *very bad things, they are possessed by demons* as one informant told me pointing out some individuals for me to be-aware off. There were such individuals around, making the fieldwork thus the more challenging, and at times, frightening. Such individuals were present at the field site the most obvious of which being the drunkards. But the longer I stayed, the more secrets I discovered, things that are hidden from the tourists. For good reasons, however, during my stay, I learned of such markings attached to individuals. being a Rastafarian for example, also added aspects relating to positive things, such as social class, trust and status, it was a symbol Nevertheless.

“the social information conveyed by any particular symbol may merely confirm what other signs tell us about the individual, filling out our image of him in a redundant and unproblematic way... However, the social information conveyed by a symbol can establish a special claim to prestige, honour, or desirable class position, a claim that might not otherwise be presented or, if otherwise presented, then not automatically granted.” (Goffman, 1974: 59)

Rules were enforced at the field site, or rather, social codes. There were certain ways one was supposed to act towards tourists, one should let them look in peace for example. However, these codes were often broken by some categories of art vendors. Goffman says:

“an act that is subject to rules of conduct but does not conform to the is also a communication.... Thus rules of conduct transform both action and inaction into

expression, and whether the individual abides by the rules or breaks them, something significant is likely to be communicated” (Goffman 1974: 51).

Therefore, it is arguable that the drunkards or beachboys, who did not have an art shop to sell their items, but still relied on the presence of tourists. Pretending for example that they were art vendors, and / or Rastas. In fact, they weren't. I will investigate this further in following Chapters. The status of real-Rasta, or art vendor was not easily granted from the local point of view. But could indeed be used to cloak a con-artists intention, as a strategy for survival towards tourists who were not able to tell the people with good intention, and bad intention apart, this was a factor that made stereotyping the whole group of art vendors, and Malawian traders more prevalent among many of the tourists.

“In some cases, as with the individual who is born without a nose, he may continue through life to find that he is the only one of his kind and that all the world is against him. In most cases, however, he will find that there sympathetic others who are ready to adopt his standpoint in the and to share with the feeling that he is human...” (Goffman, 1974: 31)

Lastly, it's also worth pointing out that empathy & sympathy for these stigmatized individuals were demonstrated by the art vendors, even though they kept doing *bad things*. Describing them as demon possessed might be one way to express sympathy. It was not really the drunkards fault was some art vendor perspectives. Other art vendors were not so sympathetic, and felt they were *ruining everything* as they were scaring the customers (tourists), Understandably, poverty, and alcoholism, can drive people do to the most desperate of things. But the art vendors were in a difficult position too. *Here we are all the same*, one of my main informants told me.

3 CHAPTER THREE: FIELDWORK – Methods & Empirical Data

3.1 Introduction to Fieldwork

In 2017, I did my fieldwork in Malawi, where I stayed for three months. Two and a half of these total three months, was spent in a single tourist area / location. The first month was spent living in two different lodges in this area, while daily visiting the art vendors, and also seeing the interactions with tourists. Participant observation was my primary method to gather data from the field site. Participant observation is not only important, but perhaps the quintessential methodology that defines anthropology with its fieldwork as a primary arena for empirical data-gathering.

“Fieldwork is often spoken of as “participant observation.” The participation is significant, not because the fieldworker becomes identical with the host people, but because participation-especially in ceremonial contexts-is a visible and voluntary gesture of commitment-not to an ideological conception of equality or identity-but to the acceptance of social parity with its consequent obligation” (Wax and Wax, 1980: 30)

After the initial month in Malawi I moved out of the lodges, and moved in with my main informant, a Rastafarian art vendor, and woodcarvers. I spent the remaining two months of my fieldwork with him, except for two weeks where I travelled with a travel partner I had met, to investigate and compare beachboy culture in another area of Malawi (More on this in section 3:10). That means, I had around a month and a half, where I spent every day living under the roof of my main informant, learning about strategies, subsistence, business, spirituality and woodcarvings of the art vendors in the area of the field site.

This fieldwork Chapter, is divided into several different sections, I have done this chronologically, so to show examples from my participant observation and informal interviews with the art vendors (see next section 3.2). I try and show events and stories using *thick description*. It is worth quoting Geertz at length:

“in anthropology, or anyway social anthropology, what the practioners do is ethnography... From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is

establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description." (Geertz, 1973: 6)

Through this venture of describing the life and situations of the art vendors, I attempt to give insight into the art vending lifestyle by giving as much empirical data as is relevant, and I do this by putting the stories and event in a format that aims to shed light on the phenomena. This is hugely beneficial to do through *thick-description* (More about this in next section – 3.2), as to reveal the details, and meaning in the actions of the art vendors in relation to the tourists, as means of survival.

Some art vendors would also hold teaching-classes for people that wanted to watch and learn the way they made art, in exchange for money in most instances, I observed this at the field location. The art vendors also accepted so called *donations* (See Chapter four. Section.) and seemed to be an important strategy for subsistence. By me staying and watching the art vendors, talking to them, and doing participant observation, they initially wanted me to *give something* for watching them work. This meant I often bought food that me and the art vendors could eat together in a group setting (More in Section 3.8) hence the breaking bread reference above. This was accepted as a form of reciprocity. I did not have to do this every day, but they really appreciated it when I did. It is worth remembering that the art vendors are not only used to tourists but also live of tourism. Thus, they want to keep you around. *Looking is for free* as they commonly said to the backpackers, missionaries and volunteer tourists at the location.

Several of the stigmatized individuals, often acted as art vendors but had nothing to sell. About two-three individuals were stigmatized as they “scared the tourists away”. Adding to the stigma, was that they were not from that area but *from the South* informants told me, they had migrated to the location, simply for hawking after tourists. It became apparent to me, and most other tourist and locals alike, that the real “harassing” individuals were the alcoholics (I refer to them as *the drunkards* in this thesis – they play an important role in several Chapters (Chapter four. Section 4.7). These drunkards contributed to a stigmatized image of the art vending. As many Malawians I met who were not art vendors, would simply refer to them as *boys* only after

*mzungu*¹ it was for many not considered ‘real work’. I think it had to do with the fact of vendors spending too much time with tourists, and often making little income. This can lead to feelings of wasting their time, and frustrations. Meaning they have to adapt their strategies to survive.

I asked one art vendor if he thought there was any future hope in art vending. He simply answered, *as it is now, no*. This pessimism around art vending was quite sad to observe. It seems that the tourist does not have the economy or means of transportations to buy big carvings, thus relying on small items, making the art vendors forced to act more as beachboys and build relationships and sell things near where the tourists are staying such as the beach, in my opinion, they don’t like this style of business, and prefer the tourist coming to their shops and looking. These are aspects I will show during this thesis, as it relates to strategies, and adapting strategies for subsistence and survival.

The bad economy frustrated the art vendors I met. Malawi is after all, and as previously mentioned, ranked as one of the world’s poorest countries. It is hard to make a living in Malawi, and people really are struggling. They demanded respect, both from tourists and other locals, and asked that people purchase from them to *support* them (Chapter four. Section 4.4). Many of the conflicts I witnessed was a result of lack of respect or poor economy, but also, some individuals *ruining for others* as the art vendors said. Luckily, the conflicts were rarely about me and I was permitted the role of a participant observer. If I was talking to one individual, it was curtesy not to disturb the conversations. Some tourists however greeted the art vendors rudely or just ignored them. Many foreigners told me they had *bad experiences with vendors* from other African countries, this made the vendors even more challenged in building relationships with tourists. This is significant for the thesis, as bad experiences with for example beachboys in another tourist site (a popular one was Zanzibar / Tanzania which is a couple days drive / boat from Malawi), thus the tourist come from such pushy and harassing beachboys, that they immediately stigmatize the art vendors as beachboys, and refuse to have anything to do with them, forcing the art vendors to actually act more like beachboys, travelling to where the tourists live, be pushy, build relationships, which then double enforces that the art vendors are beachboys, when they themselves refuse this.

¹ ‘Mzungu’ is a term used across Africa, particularly east, and central Africa, it is a term that usually refers to western (often pale skinned) people. However, some researchers have argued that the term *mzungu* is a relation to class and not an ethnic description. I do not agree with such an assumption. From my experience, *Mzungu* is used to refer to western individuals.

3.2 Basic methodology

Participant observation and informal-interviews were the core method of my fieldwork.

“One of the seductive aspects of fieldwork is the unwitting process of learning, combined with the omnipresent feeling of ignorance of the psychic processes of the hosts. As field research proceeds, the investigator continually confronts new research puzzles and so tends to minimize what has been learned.” (Wax and Wax, 1980: 32)

I relied heavily on two Key-informants. I guess this is a good time to introduce them. My main key-informant was a Malawian Rastafarian, entrepreneur and an expert woodcarver. I will refer to this man as ‘Lyon’ in this thesis. Lyon was my main informant. People knew this man as a leader figure, a mystic and respected man. It emanated a special atmosphere, and aura around this man, and tourists were largely attracted to him. He was an ideal informant, an ideal key informant, and a wonderful friend. I started living with Lyon after I lost my phone (see next section: 3.3).

I met Turtle on the first day at the field site, He was a consistent informant and participate of this study. That said, I had two (essential) key informants during the fieldwork at the field site, and he was one of those two. However, I kept daily dialogues with several other art vendors at their art shacks / shops nearby. They also played a key role, especially in observing the ways they build relationships with tourists, and try to sell their merchandise.

Turtle was present during the entire fieldwork, both when staying at the lodge, and staying with Lyon. Lyon became more present to me during the last two months of the fieldwork. The other vendors I spoke to, all confirmed that my main informant, Lyon, was one of the first woodcarvers and art vendors in the area. That is, he was one of the first doing woodcarvings and selling art to tourists at the location. He was in fact *the one who had brought this style of business here*. Taking this style of business, is likely to refer to the art vendor / beachboy hybrid, relying on relationships, reputations and trust with tourist (but more about the later). Therefore, being aligned with this man, seemed appropriate and beneficial for the fieldwork, and the key part is that through my knowledge of spirituality I was granted access to live and learn from him after losing my phone.

Through these two key informants, I accessed a special insight into the art vending lifestyle. I found out their struggles, I found evidence of a dying trade, and I was pointed out the snakes in the grass, such as: scammers, beachboys, drunkards and even un-trust worthy vendors. It was

essential that I never talked about what one man had said about another, if it involved a rumour, or something personal, like that of health, or mental illness. I did not need the art vendors to tell me everything however, it was obvious for most tourists who to watch out for, lurking around the lodges for a tourist to befriend, and manipulate, as a strategy for profits. I kept my cards close to the chest, and would only ask confirmation of facts if I had thought about the questions before hand, and asked pretty general thing. I was shown who to watch out for, and who I could trust. Since there was so many hustlers, and people desperate from money, I relied on turtle and Lyon, both Rastafarian art vendors, as trusted friends and informants. It proved to be a wise decision, and was of major importance to the method of my fieldwork, Love many, but trust few.

On another note, Franz Boas highlighted the importance of studying “*cultural change through meticulous ethnographic fieldwork with great attention to detail, before trying to answer larger questions about the long-term development cultures and societies.*” (Sluka and Robben, 2007: 31) For reasons shown in the quote above, I am focused on showing the art vendors strategies through what is known as *thick description*. Trying to give detail perspectives into the life of the art vendors. For Clifford Geertz, ethnography itself “*is thick description*” (Geertz, 1972: 9-10)

This is part of my methodology, by showing the detail of the field site, it is possible to get closer and perhaps by-pass some of the typical ‘insider’ vs ‘outsider’ issues in Anthropology. Thus, get closer to the emic perspective of art vendors, although I as a researcher come from the outside and inherently bound by the etic, the outsider perspective.

“What the ethnographer is in fact faced with... is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.” (Geertz, 1972: 10)

Another reason for using the approach of key-informants, informal-interviews, participant observation, and thick description, is related to how seeing the way local people interact with the foreigners, can tell us much about that specific economy and find the key meeting points between the local and foreigners. But like Geertz points out, the daily lives at the field site is full of different “structures” which are intertwined and bound together. It is my job, as a student of social anthropology, to be able to take these different knots and un-tangle them (such as the intersection of beachboy and art vendors), and this is only done through a rich ethnographic

description from the field site. This approach manifested itself, through living with the art vendors, immersing myself in the culture, and observing and participating in their daily lives. My eyes and ears were my most important tools.

There were many things, I was not supposed to know, or see, and when it became evident that I knew such things, I became known as Rasta Hendrix. For the first month, while getting access to the field site, and getting to know informants and the salutation at the location I was often told by the vendors *you know things, you are a Malawian*. I made it clear that I was not a common tourist, and that I would stay there a while, so they would get to know me, and I get to know them. I had to make it clear from the beginning that I wasn't there to buy things, I was there to gather data for a thesis, a thesis about art vendors in Malawi. This still became one of the most challenging aspects of doing fieldwork with this type of group. They were expert salesmen and tried every tactic to get me to open my pockets for them, this still proved to be beneficial for my fieldwork. As I got to know the strategies they used for the tourists. After the first month, and after excessive declines of purchases, they finally stopped trying to sell me things, but the drunkards were still a challenge begging from me almost every day.

I tried to help the community I found myself in, even with the small amount of money I had, it still fed many mouths (More in section 3:8). This can be seen as part of the method by donating small things to them as community, buying food for them, cooking with them (see Chapter buying a meal with the vendors). For this reason, of sharing food led me sometimes to mistakenly be interpreted as a missionary-tourist. It is a common saying among missionaries I have since found out *feed them first, then preach*. It was hard to shake of this image, especially as I carried a rosary and enjoyed talking about spirituality. Even though I told them I was there for writing a thesis, and doing research about art vending, and needed them to help me by participating. I was still perceived as someone who was there to help them. Additionally, as they believed research was synonymous with charity, as it was going to bring focus on them and their troubles and make people in Europe send money, or come and help them. This is an aspect I found challenging, to deny them hope. What was I to say? No, this work will not help you in any way? It was and still is a challenging dilemma. In retrospect it can be added to the list of strategies for survival, asking for help.

The data was recorded in the form of a diary, in the beginning on my phone (luckily, I had uploaded the notes daily to my 'cloud'), and after it got stolen (See next section), I used a small laptop I had with me. In this data format, I would capture the key points and observations, or what I had learned in the informal interviews. When asked what I was doing there, I would tell

them as it was: I was a student from Norway in social anthropology wanting to write about vendors in Malawi. Moreover, they accepted this and happily took part in interviews and conversation. However, when trying to arrange formal interviews with the vendors, the atmosphere changed, and I was not able to get sufficient data from this method. Scepticism towards researchers is one thing, another is when informants try to groom, or manage the impressions and data about what's going on at the location. Wax puts it this way

“when strangers are identified as researchers, natives make it their business to instruct them, even when the researchers are too ignorant or too courteous to inquire. They bring information which they think is relevant to inquiry or which they consider as meriting recording or exposure” (Wax, 1980: 276)

Often in conversations and interviews, elements of their suffering and struggle for survival would be brought forward. At an empathic level, it can be challenging doing fieldwork during such circumstances. I was rarely treated as a researcher, even though most knew my project. Like I said at earlier, they often thought my writing was going to help bring attention to their challenges, even though I warned them off this. The fact that I stayed longer than most other tourists was appreciated, as I could really get to know them, they treated me as someone who was interested in getting to know them, their culture, their struggles and their techniques for survival. Believing this could help promote the hardships art vendors face daily. This brings us to the topic of induction vs deduction. “*Induction is about getting out in the world, collet information about what people say and do, and so on. Deduction is about elaborating on facts with the help of a general hypothesis or a theoretical framework*” (Eriksen, 2010: 38) (My translation).

Before I went to Malawi, I assumed that conducting surveys (which I never did) and formal interviews (which I attempted) of the vendors would be an approached that would seem too formal for the vendors. This was assumption was correct. I found the informal-interview method as most effective, as they could be themselves.

I later found out that even holding an official interview with the vendors, saying “May I interview you” also brought scepticism, this meant that I had to adapt my fieldwork into making more informal interviews, often in the form of participant observation with in-depth conversations. The times I tried to create a formal interview setting, especially with my main-informant Lyon, the tone and vibe of the participants would completely change, and I soon figured out, that this wasn't going to be the best approach for gathering data. Rather, sitting

around, working with them, talking, and seeing the ways they interacted with the tourists, deemed itself much more fruitful. A part of this may be because the art vendors are an informal group of people, but also because it's a well-known fact, that people act different during formal interview settings, then informal interviews. I therefore focused on participant observation, and informal interviews as my main strategies for data gathering. working in an informal sector. I therefore thought it best to "hang out", and do the interviews in an informal manner. Later in the day, or when I had some spare time during the day, I would go and write notes in the diary format.

About half way into the fieldwork, while staying with Lyon, I saw that the vendors now trusted me, and had stopped trying to push me into buying things. The donations of food, and meals, seemed enough, however there were instances where I was still pressured from them. Pushiness is a strategy used at the fieldsite, and as we will see throughout this thesis, quite an important one.

Staying with Lyon, as he was a respected leader, also had the effect of his status somewhat rubbing off on me. Being associated with him, somehow protected me. I guess this is related to the concept of 'gatekeepers', being someone who you need to secure approval of before getting access to the "*subjects or hosts*" (Wax: 1980:279) This also bring us back to previous Chapter about anonymity, and the problem of doing formal interviews. "*Gatekeepers seem to prefer experimental designs or survey sample research. However, it is also conceivable that fieldwork in these situations appears threatening and likely to lead to reports that are exposés*" (Wax, 1980: 279)

On two occasions I had to help ill members (both with malaria) to get money to go to the hospital (only a few dollars each for a taxi was enough they said). Sometimes they would also plead me to buy lunch for the group (More on this in section 3.8). I knew the setting enough that when they asked, I knew it was serious. This meant that they trusted me as someone who "looked out for them". Trust was therefore a critical foundation for my relationship with the local communities. Sharing food, and giving food, was shown extreme apparition for. I did not want to give too much to individuals, but rather give things to the group. That usually meant, going to town, and buying maze flour, tomatoes, onions, oil and fish, for then to cook together behind their shops.

My method involved getting as close the art vendors as possible, practicing participant observation either while in the first month, being with the tourists, and seeing the strategies of

the vendors within a lodge setting. Like Sluka and Robben point out the importance of ‘*presence*’ and ‘*participant observation*’ as seen below.

“An ethnographer must not be satisfied with describing the structural features of culture but must also have an eye for the ‘imponderabilia of actual life’ discovered through close presence and participation- Malinowski advocates participant observation as a critical, method to obtain such inside perspectives” (Sluka & Robben, 2007: 32)

As seen in the extract above, it is not only the structural features of a society that anthropologists need to be aware of, but particularly the everyday life of the people.

One event that relates particularly well to the method of my fieldwork, is found in a situation right before I lost my phone, and still staying at one of the lodges. One of the art vendors (and in this case a mobile-vendor) was being extremely pushy and really tried intimidating me into buying something from him at the lodge site. He eventually offered to *fix my hair as he said*, suggesting I should get dreadlocks in exchange for a cheap, old cell phone I had brought as a backup from Norway. He continued insisted on making dreadlocks, I agreed, thinking this could be done within a day (I had seen other tourists that had this done, using a so-called crochet-hook). This process, was some of the most physically painful experience I have had in my life, even beating having a tattoo ten folds.

Even more aggravating, was that this process took over several weeks to get done, a little bit at the time here and there, and for each following deadlocking session, he would want something in return, a shirt, a charger, a flashlight, anything that had value (I go more in depth about this in Chapter four. Section 4.6). It comforts me to think of it as a rite of passage, and I soon got another art vendor to help the deadlocking process using his crochet hook. This was, I guess somewhat amusingly, a good methodology for building relationship with the art vendors. Firstly, since having dreadlocks was a spiritual process for them (unless you were a fake Rasta, someone who didn’t believe in god). And secondly, touching another man’s hair, is a pretty sensitive thing to do, surrounding a certain type of intimacy, it’s almost uncomfortable to acknowledge thus. In hindsight, with the second vendor, the fact that he had finished off the poor work of the first vendor, helped us build a strong friendship, this second vendor I will call ‘Turtle’. I call him Turtle because me and him were once were walking around in the hills outside the field site, and we came across a tortoise on the road, Turtle and I removed it away and put it to the side of the road, out of harm’s way. He emphasised that this was a great deed to save a turtle.

“Fieldwork is a process which leads toward the construction of a relationship between field workers and their hosts. In good fieldwork, this relationship is primary (in the sense of ‘primary group’) between the fieldworker and some members of the host group. And, as in the primary relationships of family and friendships, it is jointly created, emergent, and not subject to prior planning.” (Wax, 1980: 281)

Turtle became, along with Lyon, one of the key informants. I found that he told me the truth about things, and I later learned that he had also been an apprentice to Lyon. Lastly the fact that I didn’t cry when they pulled my hair out with a crochet-hook, made them view me as “strong”. A valued trait in the face of hardship. This changed the way the community responded to me as well. They stopped referring to me mockingly as “Mzungu”- (white person) and instead began calling me “Rasta!”. This helped getting the local viewpoints, and the fact that this happened early in the fieldwork made the next month’s provide interesting insights into the vending phenomena, and their interactions and strategies of survival in the context of tourism in Malawi.

The process of ‘otherness’ is an anthropological phenomenon which dates back to the concept of orientalism. A concept captured by E. Said “*as the satirical quote with which Said opens Orientalism encapsulates: ‘they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented’*” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 73). Referring to the tribes, ethnic groups of the world, that had to be represented by the institutions of the west, as they themselves often did not read or write, this also goes back to the concept of capturing what anthropologists call “the natives point of view” the emic perspective, the one of the subject.

The Malawians well might represent themselves, so this brings us to a central predicament of being an anthropologist in Africa as a European. In some ways, it can bring back the haunting ghost of colonialism. And I tried at all cost to avoid that being the case, but sometimes, it got pointed out to me by for example my main informant. This happened when I asked for his permission to write about him, and his culture, he pointed to the fact that if this was done, it should not be brought out that woodcarving and vending are phenomenon that should be attributed to his tribe and culture, and sometimes, he also struggled with the fact that a white man would represent him, and his culture, *Africans should represent themselves* I was told several times by him.

3.3 Beginning of fieldwork, and losing my phone

A typical day the first month at the field site started with waking up at sunrise at the lodge (where I stayed for the first month), some morning exercise, breakfast and then take a walk outside the lodge to me meet the art vendors. Here I would spend the day, observing, chatting, learning how things was made under their self-made shack, for then to make my way down to the market to buy some food. Often having one or two art vendors *escorting* as they would call it, this was a good time to form friendships, and learn new aspects of their trade. Here I would meet other tourists often also escorted by locals, it was usually quite harmonious, a pleasant setting, with busy streets, people selling things at the market, and a lot of things going on around the market area. Then I got back and continued conversations at the art vendors shops / shacks.

I spent ample time sitting down with them, watching what they were making, or simply listening to them telling things about their trade, or stories of their life. For the first month, a lot of time was spent getting to know the art vendors. In this format trust was built, and I became familiar with them on a day to day basis. After that I would walk back to the lodge, usually around mid-day. Lodges are common across Malawi and central Africa. Some are like hostels were tourists can rent a dorm-room or their own huts next to the beach, whilst others are more like small hotels. Many tourists take advantage of living in these lodges, however I also met tourists who tried to get away from these places as they considered them tourists magnets, making it hard to get an insight into the local way of life. In addition to being protected by walls, consumption of alcohol and other lazy activities, such as hanging out at the beach, separated the lodges somewhat from the society and made it hard for the local people to access them unless they work there. Many lodges have signs not to do business with the vendors, this I observed. However, the vendors still found loop-holes, such as buying drinks at the bar, and waiting for the tourists there, they would then, subtly when given the chance, approach tourists such as backpackers, and volunteers, or missionaries with a small backpack that contained handmade items such as bracelets.

Within about a month of the fieldwork, I was not terribly happy with the way the fieldwork was going. I felt I could do much more, and as an anthropology student I felt I should live with the locals, not in a lodge with tourists (although there were locals and art vendors around, and I still met the art vendors most days at their shops / shacks). I got my wish from the universe granted when a tourist from the dorm where I was staying stole my phone and some other items, and

then took off on a bus while I was still sleeping early in the morning. This knocked me over the edge, and I was naturally upset about it, I decided to move out of the lodge that same day.

I did not know where to turn, other than to Lyon, who I at this point only knew very briefly. I knew if I asked to stay with him, there was a good chance he would let me. So, I asked Lyon, the Rastafarian woodcarving, art vendor he was, if I could stay at his place with him? he agreed! How lucky. From here on, my relationships with the locals changed, and it became a totally different fieldwork especially in the way I was granted access and inside information about the art vendor phenomena. Now that I stayed with a local, I was treated with much greater insight into the perceptions of the art vendors.

I recorded my notes on a small laptop which I fortunately still had. While staying with Lyon, I did not even loose a sock for the remaining two months, and I lived much closer with the surrounding community. This was a dream come true.

“In a nutshell, tourists are generally unaware of the conditions of life experienced by the waiters, cooks, tour guides and so on, the people who service their holidays and the other people who form part of their tourist’s gaze.” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 61)

I found it quite ironic that the tourists and backpackers would sometimes complain about the local people hanging around the lodges, selling items, or trying to do business with the tourists, would often get blamed for stealing things, when in my experience it was a foreigner, a tourist who had taken my cell phone (I suspect this from logins used by my phone). In hindsight, I feel losing the cell phone lead my fieldwork in a direction I am appreciative of today as it pushed me out of the lodge environment and into the hands of Lyon.

It became evident, for the remaining two months of the fieldwork, that Lyon offered me a form of protection, especially the drunkards were much more reluctant of trying to hassle me for money. The reason for this protection, I believe was due to his respected status as a well-established wood-carver, a local Malawian from that area, a relatively successful entrepreneur, as well as a spiritual leader and teacher for the other artists.

For the next sections, I will go chronologically through the fieldwork, as I experienced it. “Chapter four: Business strategies” is part analysis, and part fieldwork of the last month at the field site.

3.4 Arts of the art vendors

Where craft is defined by functionality, art is defined by aesthetics, but without any ‘use’ of the art, there is no beauty and feeling (Yanagi 1972: 197). The key lies in predicting what the tourists will find beautiful, and/or functional. Thus, there is a distinction to be made between art and crafts. based on prior sales and experience. It also requires getting to know the tourists to find what their taste is like.

Some, define beauty by use and functionality (Yanagi, 1972: 197) Others define beauty by aesthetics. In the Malawian art market for tourists, items are made to look as beautiful and aesthetic to the tourist’s as possible. Whether or not it carries any form of cultural authenticity is relevant. What matters, is that the tourists like it, find the art pleasing to the eyes (Or a unique piece) and somehow falls in love with it. That is one way art can be sold. Another way can be because the tourists are pressured by the artists to purchase something (more about this in a later section).

Certainly, the art vendors themselves have an idea of what beautiful Malawian art is supposed to look like. Especially in the woodcarving, the art vendors will often judge each other’s skills, or offer tips for improvement. The best pieces are set on display so that tourist’s see them when driving or walking past their shacks. However, once that beautiful art is sold, it is not always easy for the art vendors to reproduce that piece, and make it look exactly the same. Beautiful art to them is something made with technique, and preferably out of the heart of the wood in the tree, the hardwood. Something with a nice polish, and a well-rounded sanding, making the woods natural characteristics such as the grains come out. Nevertheless, they are familiar with the cliché “the customer is always right” and understand that service mindedness, and adhering to the customers wishes, is ultimately what is going to get their art sold.

So, if this was all for money, and had nothing to do with them, then they shouldn’t care when they sold it? Well, not exactly. There was one situation where a tourist found a huge piece of Ebony hardwood sculpture, hidden at the back of Lyon’s shop. The tourist was quick to offer a price for it, and Lyon agreed at the first offer (perhaps a mistake) When the tourist had walked away happily with this beautiful and unique hardwood head bought at a cheap price, Lyon was left a bit sad. It turned out the artist that made that carvings had passed away a long time ago, and that was one of the last pieces from that artist whom had been a mentor to Lyon. He felt he had sold it too cheap, and continued saying *money is worth nothing, God gives us everything we need, I should have kept that one.* That carving, had been there for so many years and now

it was gone, for just a little piece of money. In all honesty, I think it depressed him that day. This goes back the ability or lack of ability to reproduce certain art pieces. Each woodcarver artist has their own style and technique. If this art is successful other will try and copy him, however, it also depends on the type of wood that is used. It is possible, that raw materials the woodcarvers at the field site used in the past was of greater quality than that of the present. It is also possible they had a better access to tool. Today, it seems that the wood is often bad, the tools are old and dull, and the woodcarvers perhaps lack the precision of their elders. This is evident in the way art vendors rely on personal relationships to make sales, instead of letting the wood sell itself.

Looking is for free – I was told. But it can become an issue for the vendors and woodcarvers when too many tourists look without buying. This makes the business unsustainable and insufficient for making an income, increasing the vendor's poverty. Perhaps because the quality of the woodcarvings is lower? One tourist I talked with during the fieldwork repeatedly claimed that they had seen this art before, it was not new or unique, and they were often not interested in art made for tourists. This is a bit of a dilemma. The art vendors only make art for tourists, but most tourists don't want tourist art. Thus, many art vendors try and pass off their tourist-art as authentic art. But this is impossible, as it has never been used, and is purely marketed for tourists and made for the tourist industry.

Based on my observations, it seems as if the more successful vendors are the ones I will define as *productive art vendors*. The productive art vendors are centred around the manufacture of tourist-art and souvenirs. They make things like copper earrings, or rings and jewellery from recycled materials, or small things like jewellery. If it is unique, and made from recycled materials, it seemed that the tourists were much happy to buy this type of handmade products. In addition, jewellery is small, thus easy for the tourist to carry. This relates back to the art vendors trying to find what the tourist's like, and start making new things and ideas from the few materials they have, but often to find what the tourists like, they need what I call: *the social art vendor*. Note that a social art vendor can be social in terms of being self-ascribing to the vendor category as mentioned in Chapter one. However, in this context, social relates to art vendors being social in the sense of being interactive with tourists in terms of building relationships. who speaks good English, and focuses on establishing personal relationship with tourists. I touched upon this distinction in the introduction of this thesis, I predicted the social art vendor to be more successful than the productive art vendors, as the best idea for a vendor,

is to stand out from the crowd, however my observations seem to suggest that to try and make something unique out of ethical materials, that is fitted towards the tourist taste seems a more viable strategy.

IF the aspects of productivity and sociability among the art vendors are combined, the art vendor will usually be successful from my observations. The problem is only, that many art vendors for some reason do not focus on productivity. They become middlemen, and therefore are easier to be interpreted as beachboys from the tourists, as they are not seen producing unique items. They do not produce, either because they do not have the tools, or they lack have the raw materials for the art. In some cases, they also lack the skill of woodcarving, and art production.

Lyon, who was a very successful art vendor, that seemed to combine productivity with sociability. He answered when I asked why these guys (the art vendors) were struggling so much? He told me it was out of laziness... They could make things and sell it if they wanted to, but they just couldn't be bothered. In my opinion, the answer was not quite so simple. Here is why. The three most successful artists I met was at the field site, were all specialized artists. One making pipes, the other making earrings and jewellery from recycled copper, the third making chairs with a unique design. These art vendors, often had tourist's pop into their shop / shack to make a purchase on a daily basis, often several times a day. Thus, they had a viable strategy of subsistence. This is important, as the productive art vendors never went after the tourists, or to the lodge to make a sale there. They sat patiently, always busy making new things to keep their shop stocked with their items. The remaining 20 art vendors, sat outside their shops, with art the tourist had all seen before, or went chasing after tourist's pleading them to buy something to support them, and when none of the tourist's bought something, they had to resort to begging bibles from the missionaries to resell them.

I don't think laziness was the problems. Rather, the lack of direction in their art, and certainly the lack of tools. The most common tools needed for making woodcarving art were sandpaper, shoe polish, hatches, knives, and chisels, as well as a wooden pounder for hitting the chisel. But these tools were in short supply, and one chisel was shared between all the art vendors. Since they did not like sharing their tools, only the best carvers used them, leaving most of the other art vendors to just sit and watch waiting for tourists.

The styles and techniques used by Lyon and other carvers varied. Often, I saw a form of flaking technique, a style of carving flaking out small pieces of wood at the time, making almost fish scale like patterns in the wood with an axe. Criticizing each other's work was done often. When one would carve in the shade of the vendors' stalls by the side of the road, several vendors would sit around the person carving, observing, chatting, and waiting for tourists to come by. There was also a high aspect of performance as they worked in public giving the tourists and missionaries the chance to observe as they walked by. This was also a good strategy for making sales.

When the young boys learn how to carve wooden objects, they usually will start with something small, like a name tag or a toy. However, this does not start until they reach teenagers according to my observation. What was common before, where son learned from father, seems not to be the case of this location. However, it seems more that everyone learns a little from each other, this is a conscious strategy, to learn by observing. However, they rarely have a chance to practice first hand, as wood and tools are so hard and expensive to come by. Many art vendors even sell their tools for short term gains. Then they have nothing left to make their woodcarvings from, and have to ask to borrow their neighbours. But he doesn't want to lend it, as he might be afraid that his tool will be sold too. Many of the youngest carvers had finished secondary school, and without job opportunity or ability for further education, they chose to become vendors and carvers, they had little opportunity to practice, and simply hanged around the art vending shops, looking at things being made, and perhaps trying to sell a few bracelets to tourist's. But, as it was a hierarchy among the art vendors, with the once that had a shop / shack at the top, and once who were mobile-vendors below that, and the drunkards at the bottom, they would often be chased of.

In the past, the carvers' job was possibly to make objects that carried a function in the local society, such as cassava/maize mortars, bowls, cups, bows and arrows, fishing equipment, drums, sticks for walking, and so on. I never saw local people from surrounding villages go to the stalls to ask the carvers to make them something. Strengthening the argument of art made specifically for tourists. It is likely that if such a thing as a canoe, or a maize pounder was needed in the village, they would get a local man or family member with such skills to make it. It seems highly unlikely they would get an art vendor to make such a thing, unless they were family. As all these pieces the art vendors were selling had never before been used, and were purely marketed to tourists, they were non-authentic art or tourist art. Graburn says:

“Anthropologists and art historians have contributed by disparaging individual pieces and not ‘authentic’ if they have not been used. A piece may have been carved many years ago, but if it was never used, perhaps because the customer who commissioned it died unexpectedly, it is not ‘authentic,’” (Graburn, 1976: 316).

Authentic or not, the carvings were still a product of imagination and skill. A master carver would sit and observe his wood for a while, thinking and visualizing designs before any metal touched the wood. Fascinatingly, drawing on the wood, and making markings before carving was rarely seen other than when making tobacco pipes, they liked to draw it out (partly due to working on a small piece of wood when making a pipe). They made objects from memory as the carvers told me and sold them in their shops. In that way many were both artists and woodcarvers. I never met a carver who didn’t sell his art. But I met a lot of sellers who did not carve.

After three months on the location and prying about the manner of cultural authenticity of the objects they were carving. I realized that the details in there was a combination of different artistic techniques and styles. Many of the woodcarving and art they produced represented things one observes in the daily village life of Malawi. Such as fish, or animals, paintings showing women pounding corn into maize flour while carrying a baby on their back. Paintings of farming practices, were men and women were simply black stick-figures. One tourist told me they paint this way, not because the artists themselves see themselves as black stick figures against the surroundings doing village life, but because this is the way tourists see the Malawians. This could be an important observation, as it relates back to the concepts of trying to appeal to the aesthetic taste of the tourist, finding what they like or see things, so they will buy it. One thing became abundantly clear, the artists were making their own works, and cared more for what could be sold, than producing things for themselves, their tribe, or cultural rituals. It had little to do with their tribal group.

One could assume, since this location was next to the lake, that many of the things sold were often related to fishing or agriculture subsistence. Famous Malawian fish from Lake Malawi like the “chambo” or a style of a canoe, or a fisherman, was represented on the art objects. Nevertheless, these are all designs you would find on any wood carving market, and the items do not directly correlate with their way of life. There are images and paintings, who portrays better the way of life. Often painted as stick figures in black doing rural Malawian activities such as farming or fishing. Women, are often represented with a baby tied on their back. Another example could be that of the cassava, or maize, important crops.

It is interesting that this was only revealed to me by two of my key informants, and they felt quite secretive about this aspect. However, as they had told me *none of these things are from here* it was slightly implied during my fieldwork, that this was profit oriented trade. Information in statements made at the location, indicated that items sold have little cultural importance to the people. After talking to a vendor, I was told on multiple occasions that all the art they are selling are mixed from different regions, they are not anything specially attributed to his area.

Later that day I concluded: *“The vendor items are not particular to the region, not at all.”* (Fieldnotes: 21/4/17). This was disappointing for me, as I had hoped to find “the real deal” of African carvers. This insight was tremendously important for my fieldwork and the way it continued. The fact that they it is not from there strengthens the argument that art sold at art markets in Malawi is tourist art. This does make sense. But tourists often get convinced it is authentic and from Malawi, when in reality it is a copy of a copy of a copy, designed perhaps by one carver who simply used his own inspiration. Trying to relate the art to tribes or ethnicity serves little function in the context of Malawian tourist art as it is made simply to be sold. As a strategy for income, a strategy for subsistence, and finally a strategy for survival. But the art itself does the art vendor no good without tourists buying it. It’s the sale the art vendor is looking for.

It is possible to use the example of a bau-game in this idea about authenticity and art. If a tourist went to a Malawian village, found a local bau-game that had been used by the locals, bought it and brought it back home, then the wear and tear, and the fact that the game is now second hand and had been used in a village setting, would classify it as authentic. While a brand new bau-game sold in an art vendor shop would be classified as non-authentic tourist’s art, although the style and manner of the board is just the same. These ideas were completely unfamiliar and foreign to many of the Malawians I met. Rather than trying to come across as authentic, the art vendors and woodcarvers were concerned about making something that tourists regarded as beautiful and would buy. That is what they thought mattered (and perhaps it was). Making something beautiful and special was something Lyon taught me, as I will show in the next section.

3.5 Becoming an apprentice in Woodcarving

At this point, I had been in Malawi for over a month. I had spent a lot of time with art vendors, I had taken plenty of notes, I had gotten to see who were successful and who weren't, what strategies they used to make a living. I was also staying with my informant Lyon, which I was really happy about. The best part was, that tourists would often come visit Lyon's shop, so while with him I could also watch the way he interacted with tourists, and talk to him about it afterwards. I still went regularly to the art vendors, but I now found, that they often came to talk to me, or Lyon, often just sitting down and having a cup of tea, and talking about things, like their struggles. Lyon would be strict with them, and tell them they were lazy, or not praying enough, or being clever enough, and they sat there and listened, hoping to get some inspiration, or a key for success. He was after all one of them, an art vendor.

It was usually Lyon they came to meet, as he was a respected elder whom the art vendor trusted and who had taught them a lot of things about how to survive, and how to do business, nevertheless, I wanted to learn more, something practical, and as I was quite interested in Malawian woodcarvings, and the aesthetics and production behind, I wanted Lyon to teach me. So, I asked him, and once again he said: *Yes! I can teach you, you will be my student, what do you want to make?* And before I knew it I had a chisel in my hand, a hammer in the other, and a piece of wood between my legs, having Lyon tell me how to make this bau-game².

I manage to complete my rough chiselling of the bau-game after about a day's work, carving out 32 holes took a lot of arm strength and technique, especially when you're doing it with a dull chisel. I was confident until I managed to nick my toe with the chisel and cut it quite badly. This was not ideal, especially in the warmest, hottest Africa. I knew it was risking infection as I had pierced the skin. I put some iodine on the wound, and managed to finish carving the 32 holes on the plank. Lyon was proud of me, he saw that I hadn't given up, and managed to complete the task he set me. The next step would be to sand it, to get it smooth after the rough cutting with the chisel, but me and him let this wait as he suddenly got another bau-board ordered from a different tourist. Funny how that happened. I then got to watch him work in the following days, and watched the whole process from start to finish. I was surprised at the lack

² Bau-game is a board game is mostly played by two players. The game is primarily played in eastern Africa. The bau board is usually made of one solid piece of wood (sometimes hardwood like teak or ebony), and is from my experience a popular commodity sold to tourists. The game is made up of 32 holes, with two seeds/stones/beans in each hole at the start of the game. The board is divided in two, so that each player controls 16 holes, with two seeds/stones in each hole. The rules can vary, but the goal is commonly to get the other persons seeds/stones over to your side of the board. (Bayeck, 2017)

of care he put into the chisel sometimes, often damaging the wood, and I started to wonder if he really was the expert carver everyone claimed. He also didn't sand it himself, but got someone else to sand it for him, one of the drunkards who came begging for money was assigned the task, but ran off with the sandpaper.

Eventually, business died down, and as the days kept going, Lyon and I had our discussions. It was at this point, I really got to know Lyon, as the days passed, and I had stayed with him for a week. Me and him had both spent a lot of time talking about woodcarvings, techniques, the taste of the tourists, how designs are made, how things are sold, and where the wood comes from. I learned from Lyon, that the style they were carving, did not come from that area, but was as I recollect him saying: *a mix of different styles, from the south*. Like the style of "Makonde"³ woodcarving, a style of carving related to a people group of Mozambique. They had acquired these ideas through *borrowing-designs* from each other, from other parts of Malawi and neighbouring countries. This aspect of borrowing designs is a general trend in my Fieldnotes.

Now, it might sound like Lyon and I were alone at his place, but this was not the case, we were constantly surrounded by Lyons family that helped him with farming, friends that came to ask advice, and tourists that wanted to buy woodcarvings, or just sit and talk with him over a cup of tea. Through Lyon, I learned the valuable lessons how this wooden-art were made for the tourist's industry. The process was:

- a) Getting the raw material of wood (from the forest department – or other sources), b) Drying the wood, c) Shaping the wood based on a design (often from memory), d) Carving the wood with the tools at hand, e) Sanding the wood, f) Polish the wood (often using shoe polish and a tooth brush for a smooth finish), and finally, g) Presenting the wood in a shop/shack to sell.

Out of all the types of wood, there is particularly the "hard-wood" or "round-wood" such as: Ebony, Teak and Mahogany that are the most endangered, most expensive, and hard to come by types of wooden-art. I discovered through my interviews that the people selling it however, made little compared to what the wood cost, and the time making it. In the end tourists would get a false sense of 'helping' as they paid so much for a hard-wood item, but in fact the art

³ Makonde the name of an ethnic group in East Africa (Northern Mozambique, southern Tanzania) that are renowned for their unique style of woodcarving.

vendors made little as the buyers are accustomed to a culture of haggling, pushing the price far down.

Many tourists wanted to own such a wood, as a hardwood species, as it is relatively cheap in Malawi compared to Europe. In fact, this often became a sales strategy for art vendors at the field site. *You should buy it, it's worth more were you are from, you can sell it there for more.* Is something I often heard the art vendors to encourage them to purchase. Additionally, the beauty and luxury of owning such a wood bring brings us back to the topic of aesthetics.

The aspect of hardwood, had a darker side to it. Many conversations around my main informant's campfire showed extreme frustration, and sadness with the fact that so much of the forests in Malawi was loosed due to deforestation. He told me it was a shame that *Mango trees that feed a whole village are being cut down for making into charcoal.*

The hardwood species were also extremely difficult to carve due to the hardness of the wood and the carvers who dealt with these species were only about three out of a total thirty art vendors. The carvers would borrow and share tools with each other, as they were in high demand, but few were available. Only some art vendors had access to these tools. Lastly, one of my most surprising findings was that business men from for example Asia would buy up the wood (especially hardwood) not for the art, but for the raw material itself, it was then brought to for example Asia or America and chopped into thin pieces for re-manufacture. The art is in other words a cover up for the having the raw material... the wood-itself.

One of the more popular items sold were tobacco pipes, done by one of the more skilled carvers at the field site, and a good friend of my main informant, in fact, they often visited each other to share tools. This friend of Lyon was what I referred to earlier as a productive art vendor, he made many woodcarvings, and was always busy making different forms of art, and woodcarvings. However, he was one of the few art vendors who didn't speak goo English, and relied little on being a social art vendor. He would let the other guys go to the lodges and sell his items for him. This friend of Lyon had taught the other vendors to make tobacco pipes as well, however they would rather him make them, and they sell them, as the social art vendors often lacked the tools and raw materials (as mentioned previously), the production was his specialty, and he proved to be one of the most successful (in terms of having a viable subsistence strategy) art vendors at the field site. This particular vendor sat all day, churning out tobacco pipes with the simple tool of an axe / hatchet, one that could be turned both ways, and a chisel. He would use his bare feet to hold the block of wood, and then draw on with a pencil (although

I saw him do it free hand many times) and then cut them out, all while holding a cigarette in his mouth. Holding the wood with the feet was something I observed Lyon do as well, and the way he had taught me. The tobacco pipes were severely popular, they were small, and something a tourist could put in his or her pocket and bring home as an easy-to-carry souvenir. Neither did it take allot of wood to make, and cost around 2000 Malawi Kwacha (mkw) (about 2 USD) depending on the customer. If he could sell it for 4000 mkw (4 USD) he would be much happier. The tobacco pipes would then be loaded up with for example “bush-tobacco” a type of strong tobacco found in the wild, which could be bought from the food-vendors at the market. The tobacco was rolled up and tied with a string and sold for 20 mkw (0.02USD) at a nearby market. Interestingly many of food vendors were women, but all the woodcarvers and art vendors were men.

Fascinating to me at the time, was that some of my art vendor informants conveyed to me, how much better it was to for example sell avocados, bananas or rice, then it was to sell art, suggesting food vending being a better strategy for subsistence. If this was the case, why didn't they sell food at the market? There were after all many other men doing that. This had everything to do with access to land. Many of the women selling food, are able to sell their food as they grow it themselves. Most of the art vendors were young men, without their own piece of land, in fact some were even orphans, looking for a way to make a living without a family or support network. Unemployment was high, and I speculated that there were deeper reasons behind why they had decided to become art vendors. Was it because of the Rastafarian ideal of self-sufficiency? Surely it has to do with the fact that art vendors are sometimes successful in making subsistence through art vending, if not, this lifestyle would have been impossible to maintain. Perhaps it was about the dream of meeting the right women? In my estimation, several of these factors play in, but I will now try to show aspects that communicate more about the art vendors. Later, I will show what distinguishes them from the beachboys (Section 3.10).

3.6 Learning about woodcarving

When I was staying with Lyon, one project that I was both participating in and observing, was making the so-called “chief chairs”. This was a step up from the bau-game he taught me to make. The chief chairs are common all cross Malawi. They began by cutting the big piece of wood that was going to be the chairs backpiece, cutting out huge chunks of it with his axe (a main tool of the carver). The project took him several days, but he was finally thrilled when

what he perceived as a head figure inside it. *Ah!* - he said suddenly as he was polishing the back seat of the chair under the sun – sitting next to the road so all the tourists passing would see him. *You see that Hendrix?* I came closer and looked at what he was pointing at. It looked to me like a shape the size of a person or a head, in the grains of the wood. I agreed to him that I indeed saw something. He then continued saying something along the lines of: *That's Jesus my friend. He is showing himself to us.* I was somewhat sceptical. I had heard about people finding images of Jesus on their piece of toast in United States, but I would never have imagined that it would happen to us! Jokes aside, the vendor seemed convinced that Jesus had revealed himself in the wood. I remember him saying: *You see Hendrix, we talk all about god and now he shows himself inside this chair! I tell you, it's a great sign.* As I kept looking, I saw that there was a shape of a person sort of intertwined in the chair, but to say it was Jesus felt like a stretch.

Getting out “the grains” in the wood, and then polishing it, was a significant part of making the art aesthetic, beautiful and suit the taste of the tourists. This took, hours and hours of sanding, for then to finish off with a polish. As wood was expensive, only a few trusted individuals were making these wooden things.

He was in a light mood after he felt that the wood had *revealed something* as he said. Taking it as a good omen that I was there, learning from him. He said something like: *you know, you coming here, it was meant to be like that. I knew you even before you came here, and now you are here, it is gods will.* He never showed anyone else the figure in the wood – only me. I assume this was to make me feel somewhat special. A sort of hidden meaning or knowing Lyon and I shared – or at least that's the effect he would like to create. Him and I, had many such conversation – like I have said earlier – however he always insisted that: *what we are talking about – I'll talk to about anyone – anyone who wants to know god can come visit me – and I'll talk. And they do* (Fieldnotes: 19/5/17) After many weeks, of daily lengthy conversations he would also tell me something like: *Hendrix – what we know... People will come to us, and they will want to know from us – what we have is very valuable to other people* (Fieldnotes: 19/5/17). This seems to strengthen an idea of knowledge being valuable, which is something to keep in mind. What this Rastafarian vendor meant, was of course the knowledge of god – which he shared with whom he called his *disciples*. He had many friends who would come visit him, often foreigners, but the closest was family and local friends, the locals would all respect him. One time I saw a woman come in and ask for something, and she knelt in the dust, stretched her hand up, bowed her head, holding the right arm with the left hand on her wrist. He gave her some money, and she was thankful.

The stories surrounding the wood was often many – if a particularly nice chair was around, dark in colour, the stories around it seemed to be given out to the potential buyer so as to ensure a sale. *Yes – this piece of wood my dear was covered long time under water – given it this dark look, It's a very special piece.* (Fieldnotes: 30/5/17) things like this, made the tourists, often intrigued. Getting the grains out, and show the twists and burls hidden in the wood, was a particular skill only some of the older vendors seemed to inhabit, if a younger woodcarver was polishing or sanding, he could get told *you don't know anything* or saying *told you are sloppy* or *you are just sanding like you are smoking and drinking, unmindfully* the fact that he would say this to in English would double enforce the critique.

During the fieldwork, I was repeatedly shown the techniques of carving, mainly from my main informant. The art vendors seemed to have specialized in different areas. Some are specialized in the production aspect (such as producing woodcarvings, jewellery). Others are specialized in marketing, selling and acting as middlemen for the art (social art vendors). This important distinction did not reveal itself immediately of the fieldwork. Other art vendors, helped in one of these two stages, for example in the sanding of woodcarvings was often a job given to people lower down in the hierarchy of the carver. This relates to aspects of hierarchy among productive art vendors. For example, the drunkards were never allowed to borrow or touch the tools of the productive art vendors (a term including the woodcarvers). As they might be tempted to stealing the tools, and say that they lost the tools. Presumably to buy alcohol. This was something that had happened it the past I was told by informant, and although the drunkards might forget they had done it, the art vendors did not forget.

One vendor told me, getting the grains out of the wood was *like magic*, you need a special type of hands to get as much of the natural beauty out of the wood. These grains in the wood, would be showed to tourists passing by the shops. Saying: *Look here, look at the grains.* the tourist would reply: *oh wow – that's wonderful*, and the vendor would continue with something like: *yes, only special type of wood do this* and then try and make a sale with *I'll give you a good price*. These are obvious sales strategies, to make the tourists intrigued by the wood, and *want to buy it*.

Other stories of the quality of wood was to get the customer to not think about price things like: *this is such great quality – your children can use this chair, and your grandchildren even if you leave it outside in the rain, it can not rot.* This might have been true as the hard-wood types are often extremely weather resistant, as well as termite resistant. This is what makes them particularly desirable.

In Europe it is common practice among woodworkers, to use tape measurer or draw out with pencil before doing a carving, or even make a design on paper first. In Malawi, this was not as common as one might expect, sometimes woodcarvers would even laugh when I asked if they ever measured or drew before they made their things. *Ha ha Hendrix. Here we do everything from memory* Lyon told me. Thus, the art also changed with time, as new designs would be made up, and influences brought from elsewhere.

3.7 “Give five to get ten”

In addition to Lyon, I had as mentioned previously another key informant whom I call Turtle. Turtle told me when I asked how he builds relationships with tourists: “*you have to give a five, to get a ten*” (Fieldnotes: 17-18/4/17). When I asked what he meant, he said it was something they said around here. They needed to play it cool, and make friends with the tourists, therefore they gave five (like the high five to tourists) to be friends and then the tourists would give them ten back, at the time I interpreted this as they invest five dollars in an item from the productive art vendors, and then sell it for ten-dollars to make a five-dollar profit. Another interpretation in the context of friendships, and reciprocity, is that the vendors give a high five to a tourist or their children (in the classic hand-slapping sense) and a rapport would start getting built, enabling a form of reciprocity to begin. If the children liked an art vendor, the parents of the child would often buy something from the art vendor, perceivably to please their children. This categorizes as one of the main strategies of art vendors in terms of survival. In terms of building friendships with tourists and their children, this was perhaps the most significant. (it is worth noting that missionaries and backpacker tourists rarely travelled with their children, so this category belongs to the general category of tourists)

At a later stage, it could even allow the vendors to sit and talk with the family and “*do business*” within the lodge settings themselves, despite the policies going against this. At one location where vendors and beachboys would hang around the area, scouting for potential customers. There was a sign hanging saying: “*Please, if you feel bad vibes from a trader, do not hesitate to ask staff for assistance*” (Fieldnotes: 14/5/17). It seemed the vendor would only be shown away if the tourist wanted it so. At another location, were tourist and vendors also interacted in a bar setting. A more explicit sign was more explicit forbidding vendors to be in the area. However, this was simply a policy that was rarely enforced. Often you would here the local vendors tell the bar-keeper: “*I am here to meet my friend*” to get past the staff. If the guest wants

you there, or brings you there, it means you can stay. If the guests are feeling dis-ease by a vendor's presence, perhaps by too much pushiness, or more likely, the vendor being drunk, they will be shown away. The vendors being located next to the road, they have a complete map at all times who is at the lodges, meaning they can send a few guys in and around the lodges to befriend them.

“Other guys come and approach at the beach, harder for strangers to approach if Mzungu is already with a local. Sometimes its ok, but a general rule is "not to get involved in other people's business" seen this happen before in Lilongwe many years ago. If you're walking with a local people will be curious, but they won't befriend you. If you are alone, and especially if you're a young man or girl, you have a 100 percent chance of being befriended while walking, this is first of all to ensure future business, but also future friendships, “(Fieldnotes: 20/4/17)

At a point I was making wooden tobacco pipes, something my main-informant thought me. Then, one day in the presence of my main informant, a tourist wanted to buy some of the pipes I had learned to make. This showed, that I could be as them, and that the quality of what I made, could even pass to the tourist's standards of what was deemed aesthetically pleasing. I recollect the Australian tourists (a typically long haired / hippie backpacker type) continuously asking me: *How much you want to sell those pipes for?* I kept declining, as I frankly didn't fancy selling them. I eventually ended up pointing the tourists down the road to one of the woodcarver vendors, a good friend of my main informant, who had helped teaching me how to make pipes. I told him that since he wanted a pipe so badly, he could go get one there. Astonishingly I recollect the tourist telling me, with a straight face: *Well... I don't want to buy one from them, I want to buy one from you.*

Nevertheless, what I find significant with this situation was that now my main informant, who had taught me woodcarving, saw that what I could make was aesthetically pleasing to the tourist. It could pass their internal quality test of what was real handwork. Perhaps the tourist did not want to bargain with the art vendors, or perhaps he just wanted the pipe there and then, and it seemed easier to buy it from me then from the vendors, but ironically, it wasn't easier to buy from me, because I didn't want to sell it as I was quite proud of it. In all honesty, that made him seem to want to buy it even more. I guess this is what some call “playing hard to get”, a strategy and tactic I often saw employed by the vendors, when they saw that you liked something, the price would naturally go up, but the tourists usually knew this as well so it was

an interesting game to observe of who was the least interested, and downplaying the value of things. I think this is something I subconsciously learned from the vendors, to realize the value of what I had, and to keep my cards close to the chest if I liked something. Many vendors were frustrated over the fact that tourists think they could get things cheap, and had the idea that the vendors were desperate to sell, although they often were, they tried to hide that aspect, somehow this can be viewed as a strategy for sales. They were desperate to sell, but they could not let that show. This is related to the difficult economy in Malawi, as mentioned a few times earlier. The poor economy made the art vendors quite thankful when something was given, like when a meal was shared, as will be shown in this next section below.

3.8 Sharing a meal with the Vendors

One day, I was asked to donate a few dollars to the vendors, so they could have lunch together. I accepted this request, I found it could be a great way to see how the vendors acted together in a group. I expected everybody to join, but as my fieldnotes show “*we were only six people eating together at this time.*” (Fieldnotes: 17/4/20). I used this as an opportunity to follow up on some questions I had about the art vending lifestyle. Many of the art vendors agreed that they had been learning this type of business, that is art vending, from Lyon, but the artists have been copying from each other. I asked the vendors if there were any pieces of their culture represented in the art they were selling to tourists. Was any of this authentic? (this was during a stage where I was trying to look into authenticity of the art, a concept I later abandoned) They replied, which I notes in fieldwork that wooden canoes were authentic to the region, as well as maize pounders (Fieldnotes: 21/4/2017). I don't think they understood the question. But when I inquired further, they agreed together that: “*it is definitely in their interest to preserve their culture, and try to build up specific items, which can be said "yes, this is (from our), culture" not only for the tourists, but also for all the Malawians walking past every day.*” (21/4/2017). The fact that some of the vendors seemed, not only to care about the tourists looking at their art, but also the local Malawians walking past, is something I find quite interesting. I guess in a sense, it brought pride to the area, and showed that the vendors were actually working, and not only chasing *mzungu*, which was a common conception from Malawian people outside the vending sector.

It was also evident as the group and I were eating in this circle behind the vending stalls. They always had some art vendors acting as scouts, constantly on the lookout for tourists driving past, or coming up the road, that some individuals were either not present or had to eat in a separate circle from the rest. I noticed that all the people in the one circle were art vendors with a shop, art vendors who were *real-rastas* and in the second circle was the drunkards and one of the scammers. This thought me a valuable lesson about the hierarchy among the art vendors. The ‘stigmatized’ individuals were either not present, or had to eat in a separate circle from the rest. When I asked why this was, it was apparently uncomfortable that I had noticed such things. This might relate to the egalitarian perspective I had previously been served from the art vendors, that they *we are all the same around here*, and now I pointed out difference. Thus, I had found a paradox in the way they portrayed their social circumstances. There was difference, but they did not want to address that directly, perhaps as tourists would be keener to help the people that seemed the most desperate. But this is only an assumption. What I know, is that they did not want to address this fact directly in each other’s presence.

Often negative stories of the stigmatized individuals would come up, but these individuals still had to make a living, and were in many sense such as poor as the other art vendors. The difference was they spent all their money on drink, and then had to beg from tourists, or even other art vendors, who would then give them something to do, like sand a woodcarving for a tiny percentage. This is what is known as the Capitalistic mode: *“Conversely, people who are denied access to the means of production must come to those who now control the means and bargain for permission to operate them. In return they receive wages that will allow them to pay for what they need to sustain themselves.”* (Wolf. 1982: 77).

Art vendors are driven by their pursuit of subsistence, they need money. An element I have not yet discussed is that their world is now at the mercy of the capitalistic world, and there are many issues relating to poverty in Malawi. Some of them moving outside the bounds of this thesis. However, whereas before, the Malawian people could mostly live of farming and fishing and get their subsistence through such means, now with loss of land, less fish in the lake, less trees, high unemployment, and high-poverty many are forced to do something to make a living, relating to why some try to make a living through the presence of tourists. This should not be overlooked, as it strengthens the argument that the art vending phenomena is born out of a need to survive, a need to subsist in difficult circumstance, especially as opportunities putting food on the table through other means seem further away than it was only a couple decades ago.

Whereas before, art vending might have been a supplementary income for an individual whose primary subsistence was being a fisherman or farmer, it now seems that art vending has become the primary form of subsistence for many young men. They are trying to be small scale entrepreneurs, dealing in micro-business (which being an art vendor /food-vendor can be defined as), in an informal work sector. Promoting small scale industries, and micro business, has been part of the Malawian development agenda for the last twenty years. *“The strategic challenge for enterprise development is to promote micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) to boost economic growth and create employment.”*. (SDNP) However, it is worth questioning how successful this has been, when you see the desperation of many of the art vendors. I have observed success in the food-vending sector, this area seems hopeful as a viable strategy for subsistence, but the art vendor still seems to be struggling. This is a complex issue, which is not the main focus of the thesis, but could help answer why there is such desperation for something to happen, or someone to help them in the art vending sector.

In Malawi *“Entrepreneurial training facilities are inadequate and demand for credit far outstrips supply. This leads to the marginalisation of certain sections or groups in society”*. (SDNP) The lack of raw materials, tools, and skills forces the art vendor to rely on other means to subsist. This damages their small enterprises (SE’s), as they are not able to do the proper investments (in for example woods or tools) to make the art they need. Nor are they able to restock their supply often, and thus have to rely on the charity of tourists in many circumstances. Small scale industries are important part of the work sector in Malawi:

“SEs are distributed across various sectors and industries, such as agriculture, modern services as well as the traditional manufacturing sectors. The largest group, however, engage in petty trade and street vending (about 27%), but a substantial number operate in light-manufacturing sectors (16%) with the most common being textiles and apparel, food and beverages, and wood and forest products (World Bank 2013, pp. 110ff)” (Reeg, 2015)

As the art vendors might go days without sales (or even weeks), they become crippled, weak, and unable to sustain themselves, then they might resort to begging, (or even eating leaves they find in the bush when times are really bad Turtle told me), this frustration, and seeing the tourists come with loads of things and money, and even pushing the prices on things in the area such as

the market. For this reason, they were extremely thankful that I shared a meal with them, telling me, *no tourists ever do this my friend, and thank you so much we will never forget this, and finally you give us things, but you do not ask for something back, that is true Rasta.*

After the meal was over, I went and talked to another informant sitting inside the shack, he had declined eating with us, as he was finishing a chair that had been ordered from America.

However, the art vendors kept some Nsima (Grounded maize into flour) and fish for him. This was an interesting situation, the other art vendors were cleaning up the dishes, and some others went off to see if they could find some tourists, but this vendor kept chiselling and rasping at this chair that had been ordered. Not only do they care about building relationships with the tourists for when they are there. But they want to keep in touch after wards, to continue doing business, or receiving donations. This individual in particular was an expert carver (Perhaps only second to Lyon). He had specialized himself in making ‘Chief chairs’ a foldable type of chair often decorated with African animals like the big five. He continued telling me that the real big business however, was to *get orders* from Europe or Amerika. Which can be added as a strategy for the vendors but is most relevant in the context of friendship (see following section).

The person told me: *“Some of the vendors get orders, from other countries, and then send them”* (21/4/17). He was excited about this concept. He explained that this was done through mobile phones, and applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp. This was as he said to *“help keeping in touch”* (Fieldnotes 21/4/17). I asked if he wanted to teach me how to carve, but then his face went pale, and he kindly refused. I asked why, he took a moment, continued his rasping, and said: *you know, you already have a teacher, a student can’t have two masters.* This statement is worth looking into. When he said it, I knew this was a reference from the Bible *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”* (Mathew: 6:24 ESV). Referring to the Bible under the right circumstances to illustrate a point, was a trait of the Rastafarian art vendors. The Bible was perceived as powerful, and quoting in the right moment, was sacred. This is what he did in that moment. But I also knew I knew he was referring to Lyon as being my master (I was his pupil), and this vendor could not be my teacher if I was being taught by Lyon.

When a Rastafarian answer a question with a quote from the Bible, a quote that hits the receiver, like an arrow, it is no point to speak. The Bible is for them holy, and what is written sacred. Thus, to quarrel is to quarrel with god, relatively speaking. But as the good social anthropology student I am, I continued to ask, although subtle, about why he did not want to teach me? I had understood what he meant, but I wanted him to explain it deeper. I wanted more. I was getting greedy for data. He put down his tools, and looked at me. The birds were chirping, the sun was shining, and the vendors were laughing, telling jokes after their meal, it was a typical mid-day in Malawi. He continued to look at me, as to see if I was testing him, I got a little nervous as if I had overstepped, but then he simply said: *I don't want to get in trouble. It is bad to interfere in other people's business.* I wrote in my fieldnote a couple days later as I pondered on this revelation:

“Vendors don't get involved in other people's business. They will not steal a client from another, they have hierarchy and respect, they are hardworking individuals with integrity. Extremely skilled workers, able to turn a plank into a beautiful piece of art with the most basic tools.” (Fieldnotes: 23/4/17)

The woodcarver did not want to make Lyon angry. This was severely interesting for me, and I would dare call it a revelation, a breakthrough for my fieldwork. It was like a lightbulb went off, and I understood so many different dynamics of the strategies of the art vendors. Teaching tourists was a strategy, and I as a researcher had become part of their strategy. This told me something about my relationship with the people at the field site, they protected me as I was relevant to their subsistence. Even indicating me presence being part of their long-term strategy of survival (they wanted my thesis to help them, something I repeatedly told them was unfortunately unlikely). Keeping friends in other countries to get orders (and donations, section 4.3). was part of the benefits in having a white friend, which is the topic of the next section.

3.9 Status and benefits in a white friend.

As previous Chapter showed, being with tourists and doing art vending, was not a strategy only for selling handicrafts and woodcarvings. It was often portrayed to me as a field-researcher that having a white friend was something that was looked at as positive in the local community.

Many people wanted me to visit their families, or visit their village as they said. Partly because the family didn't believe they had a *white friend*. I was literally told by informant, that people respect you more if you have a friend who is Mzungu. Both at the field site and at the second location.

As shown in the last section, the art vendors who knew woodcarving did not want to teach me, as I already had a master. This is true for teaming up with art vendors in general. If you are their customer, either buying bracelets, or trading some things, you build a form of friendship. If you team up with an art vendor, and give small things, they art vendor will protect you as a resource so that other vendors won't take advantage of you. It is a sort of unspoken rule. They know you're buying potential is only so much, and they know the tourist will completely close their wallet if too many people harass them and ask for things. The same is true for an apprentice, if this woodcarving art vendor would have taken me on as a student, this could have caused a problem for him, as I was already the student of Lyon. I found this critical to investigate further. It finally made sense why after I stayed with Lyon, and was friends with turtle the other Art vendors pretty much left me alone. I had become their property.

Later that day, when I asked Lyon after dinner, how he thought about this art vendor teaching me woodcarvings, he got slightly insulted. He looked at me with quite a serious look and said *Ahh Hendrix... I taught those guys everything they know*. And that was the end of that discussion, it also sealed my confidence that I was indeed his apprentice in this way of life.

As the fieldwork progressed, it became evident that Lyon had the greatest status, but much of the woodcarvings he sold were for other art vendors, giving an illusion of quality. Lyon claimed to be the best, and he was great, but he was not always the judge of skill. The tourists themselves were. In one situation, a tourist had made an order for a bow-game (a local counting game made of wood) she wanted one made of teak. After several weeks of waiting, she finally saw the result, and was disappointed. To *keep the customer happy* as he said, he made one of the other carvers make another piece of wood for her, which in the end satisfied the customer. I thought this hurt his pride a little, so I asked if he was upset about getting negative feedback. But he ensured with a smile, that in the end all that mattered was *god*, pride to him was a dangerous thing.

This suggests that not only are the vendors in the personal relationships with tourists and travellers for the short term, but ideally for the long term economic gains as well. This is therefore a long-term strategy for survival. However, only the art vendors with the economy for

having a smartphone (which several of them had traded from tourists), and ability to make such an impression on the tourists that they would keep in touch had this ability. It was quite rare, only four of the vendors that I knew used this strategy of communication, and selling carvings internationally. But as show from previous Chapters, exporting wood to for example south Africa is an important aspect of the art vendor trade.

Over the time-span of my fieldwork, I found it particularly interesting that so many of these relationships were going on. I even observed a case, were a missionary woman from Amerika in her early twenties, bought one of the more flamboyant vendors a cell phone before she was leaving after a month stay, so that he could keep in touch with her. A month after that again, they were engaged over the cell phone. This man, now had gone from a simple vendor, to potentially being married within a year and going to the United States. These sorts of opportunities were what the vendors dreamed about – it was in some sense, the holy grail of relationships with tourists. Lyon, had successfully gone to Europe on several occasions by foreigners sponsoring his tickets.

This adds to the concept of reciprocity, and long-term strategies of survival, bonds and friendships made between the vendors and tourists, don't only last in the moment the tourists is there. Some of my informants explained to me that some of their greatest business was done after the tourists had gone home, and they could “send them things in the mail” (cite source: Fieldnotes). In return they would get paid for that.

It seems to me, that the vendors are really the ones that are to profit from a friendship maintained over the social media, as they have the intention of continue to make sales to the tourists, or being donating money. These were after all cases of former tourists calling the vendors on their cell phones, from Europe or America, asking how things were going, and then at the end saying something like – *what is your bank-account number again, I want to give you a little gift* (I heard this as his phone was on speaker, even while I was present, this was the point I was living with my main informant) and (in this scenario) would send over a hundred dollars to the vendor. Think that the average salary in Malawi is under a dollar a day, it makes sense that such a relationship is hugely beneficial, to both parts! One gets the gift of giving, the other gets a gift of receiving, but as Mauss would suggest, that debt was created, the conversation, spiritual knowledge, and guidance this Rastafarian man could give to the American man, helped insure there is reciprocity.

This example provides a good illustration of the whole concept of gifts and giving, because who is to say that the individual donating 100 dollars to a vendor in Malawi, doesn't get a personal reward from that. IF this individual is wealthy, 100 dollars is not so much in the grand scope of things, but knowing you have directly helped someone in one of the world's poorest countries for several months with that money, can give you more joy that perhaps that 100dollars would ever be able to provide in Europe and America. Now, this is speculation, as I did not get to interview the individual giving my main informant 100 dollars after a cell phone call, but I did get to talk to Lyon about it. *This man helped me a lot* he told me. In return, he talks, comforts and gives spiritual advice to his friend in America, who happened to be retired. The American pensioner thus maintains a relation, and the physical value of money, seemed to not even matter to Lyon (although it probably does). *Happiness is what matters*, he repeatedly told me, and *knowledge of god*. This is a common trend in my fieldnotes.

Days and days were spent talking about god, and spirituality. When really, I wanted to talk about woodcarving, art vending, and strategies too (which we did). In my opinion, this scenario is something which strengthens question about who the vendors are? They are teachers of knowledge, knowledge in spirituality and knowledge of business – the ways in which they teach however, is much subtler yet complex, then what can be synthesised in a sentence. Who benefits more, is an impossible question to answer, nevertheless, it was evident that they benefit and support each other, and that there are some form of transactions happening here. *“Each place is part of a network that connects places together in a chain, and the links on either side depend for their connection on the one in the middle.”* (Morphy, 1995: 187)

For the tourism experience, the customer satisfaction for a tourist enterprise might be the most key area to a successful business. This is true for large businesses, but in my experience also with the small ones. In Malawi, the Art vendors, heavily rely on word of mouth in their business. I recollect my main informant telling me how he constantly met people who had heard about him from fellow travellers, who had said – you need to visit this person in Malawi. *“They are acting as a family, but are in some ways divided into different groups. Some also don't have a shop, the mobile vendors, but still hang out, trying to befriend the Mzungu, this can severely annoy those who have a shop.”* (Fieldnotes: 21/4/17). I will analyse this aspect in the next Chapter (Chapter fours: Section 4.7).

I thus had to adapt my fieldwork. I stopped caring so much about the wood, and I cared more about the people making it, and why they were making it. Additionally, my focus became towards the relationship they had with each out, and with tourists, and their methods of

substance survival within the context of tourism. This brought new insight into my fieldwork, and I adapted, moving from authenticity and art, to their strategies of befriending tourists, and for what reason, was it just about survival? A way of subsistence? It had already been made clear to me by Lyon however, it was to make a living, and what the art vendors (especially the Rastafarian art vendors) really cared about was god. I still found myself a bit confused.

3.10 A new location and investigating beachboy culture

After having spent a month and a half investigating the arts of the art vendors and also looking into art vendor tourist relationships, and strategies of the art vendors, the idea of focusing more on authenticity was now slowly drifting away. I had learned more in the two weeks with Lyon than I could have dreamed off. I still begun questioning things. What am I really doing here? The art is for tourists, the vendors are struggling to make sales, the tourists just come here to drink at the lodges, and swim in the lake... What the heck is really going on here?

It was at this point, (just like losing my phone and moving in with Lyon two weeks prior) that the universe sent me a little nudge. I met a guy I will refer to as “my German friend”, while sitting with the art vendors, he suddenly popped out of nowhere, and begun hanging out with us at the shacks. He was travelling alone, and was around 20 years old. He asked if there was a place for him to stay around here that I would recommend. I felt happy he asked me – maybe I did look like I knew a thing or two about Malawi after all, with my long dreadlocks, sitting surrounded by ten art vendors laughing and chit-chatting in Chichewa, for a Mzungu, this was very uncommon.

I advised him to stay away from the lodges if he wanted an authentic experience of Malawi, and I recommended he stayed with a local person, renting a room from them, or setting up a tent in their garden for a small fee. Sure, it would be roughing it, but at least he would get to know what Africa was really like. *Ok, do you know of anyone? Where do you stay?* He asked me. I suddenly realized my mistake, maybe this guy was really annoying, would he want to stay with Lyon, maybe he would jeopardize my fieldwork? I brushed of these selfish thoughts, and said he could come talk to Lyon and hear with him. From then on, he became my German friend, and I will refer to him as that.

The German friend only stayed a couple days with Lyon and I, and decided he wanted to see another part of Malawi. In particular he wanted to see a location that I knew was famous for

beachboy culture. As I at this point felt I had seen everything at my current site, and was questioning things, so I felt like it was a good idea to see another place, for comparison and “get some fresh air”. Here’s an extract from my Fieldnotes that day before leaving the field site for some new ideas for my fieldwork:

“Leaving this place for a week, to try and get some new impulses, and some comparative perspective, also have to prepare for other aspects. Interesting elements, of mixing of cultures, making music together, guitar and drums, surrounded with no electricity, I’m wearing long clothes for protection against mosquitos, loads of wooden item around me, he is an expert carver, grew up with tourists his whole life, but still not lost cultural identity, the local heritage, and the language, and the remembrance of "ancestral knowledge" is still very important to him.” (Fieldnotes: 30/04/17)

The German friend and I spent a couple days travelling to the location, as we took a ferry over the lake. That was remarkably slow spending about two days caught on this ferry, filled to the brim with hundreds of Malawians. We were the only outsiders, and caught some curiosity. I could probably write a whole Chapter on the conversations, and things I saw on this ferry, but I will not, as it is little here that relates to the art vendors.

When the German friend and I finally arrived at the second location, we checked into a lodge. Finding a local place was our initial priority, the main objective became wanted to stay where art vendors and / or beachboys would be present, they are usually close to the lodges. But little tourist activity was found, and thus few art vendors and beachboys. However, one individual was present who can be classified as a beachboy – in fact he was the first person I had met who ascribed the label of beachboy to himself. I was curious to see the distinction between beachboys and art vendors, and now at a new site for comparison in another area of Malawi, I hoped I would be able to gather some good data, through interviews and participant observations. However, not all went according to plan as my German friend caught malaria on the ferry, and eventually had to be rushed to a hospital, were I stayed with him for a night, he was terribly ill. It is outside the scope of this thesis to elaborate this experience, but it was an important one – at one point my German friend seemed near death as he had a serious case of Malaria that was caught late. I took notes during the entire trip to the hospital, and in the days of his recovery. First, let’s get back to the what I learned of the beachboys at this second location

It has already been established that a beachboy is different from an art vendor, mainly by his location at the beach, and lack of a shop shack to sell items. The beachboy culture in Malawi is a phenomenon that is related to the context of vendors, artists and woodcarvers as well as tour guides. The beachboy is in some way a hybrid between these categories. Yet, it can be challenging to distinguish the two categories, although for the art vendors, the difference is clear. Let me describe a situation from this second location.

My German friend and I was exploring the village next to the lake to try and look for some woodcarvers. We met a man that was waiting outside the lodge area, he identified himself as a “*tour-guide*” and he kept asking us questions. We found him hanging out at the bar, talking to one of the few tourists, “*The (beachboy) was using physical escalation, touch, to build rapport, comfort and or trust – are these strategies for survival? – Yes, if survival means business built on personal relationships*” (Fieldnotes: 4/5/17)

The next day, there was this same beachboy hanging out outside the lodge area, he was waiting for us (this tactic reminded me of what some of the art vendors did at the field site), he started befriending the German friend and I with questions such as: *where are u from, where do you stay? Do you need anything?* He persisted to show us around town, and I soon realized this was a man that made his living of talking to tourists, selling things, and offering services to them. This was apparent as I discussed with this man at a local restaurant, he soon told us that he provided access to “Chamba” (Cannabis), as well as girls, for the travellers and tourists that visited the area. He also particularly identified himself as a beachboy and a hustler, and emphasized the beachboy aspect. He was extremely friendly, and seemed to have mastered the skills of rapport building. This was different from the other informants I had met, and previously discussed, that identified as vendors or woodcarvers. This man was a beachboy, and proud of it, but also went under the acronym of an informal ‘tour-guide’. Chilembwe mentions tour guides as “the main culprits” (cite Chilembwe) when it comes to offering illegal services to tourists. The same individual explained he was specialized in “fishing for Mzungu”, and that in this particular area there was about 30-40 beachboys, and that they all knew each other, they provide access to things. Strange, because he was the only one encountered at that area. “*My dream is to go to Europe, countries like Germany... usually the women are old and fat, you don't need a mattress, you just sleep on her, ha ha.*” (Fieldnotes: 4/5/17). He explained this to us, to me and my German friends great surprise and shock. Perhaps he was trying to be funny, but neither the German friend or I laughed. Nevertheless, I continued fishing for information,

in a similar manner to how art vendors and beachboys fish for tourists, and explained I was a student doing some research on vendors and tourism. He continued explaining about his trades, one of which involving helping old men get young girls. "*Lightweight girls, easy to carry, young ones*" (Fieldnotes: 4/5/17). His stories also told about a man of about 70 years old from Europe that had arranged for him to visit Europe after he in return had arranged several young Malawian girls for this man. I had heard about sex tourism and prostitution being rampant in tourist areas in Malawi, but to hear someone offering such services up close, and to take this aspect so lightly, was quite a shock, although I played it 'cool' to continue the conversation. We finished our meal at the restaurant, and the local beachboy finished by telling me "*White means money in Malawi, White is good, people like Mzungu very much.*" (Fieldnotes: 4/5/17). I had heard this before (like in section 3.9). He insisted on following us back to our location from the town located next to the lake, but on the way, he stumbled on a volunteer girl, and he let us go to talk to this woman. He had just given us a brief insight into the life of a beachboy, and also showing that he was opportunistic in taking a girl over us guys. Maybe as a strategy for survival, and a hope to get to Europe. Perhaps, I never got the chance to ask him, because the German friend and I decided to go to another location, where there was sure to beachboys and art vendors.

This was not the first time I had been offered a "Malawian girlfriend". And it did not become the last at this second location, both German friend and I were often told again and again by another beachboy *you have to try a Malawian girl* and saying *I will arrange everything*. I refused and brushed the individual off, repeated occurrences of these suggestions from beachboys makes me think these are (however shady) part of the beachboy business, this was something I had never encountered with the art vendors at the first field site. I wrote in my Fieldnotes: "*Many of the guys seem to know how to flirt with women, they all seem to know someone that has moved to Europe. This impress and astonishes, and drives for flirting tactics to be used with extreme effectiveness.*" (Fieldnotes: 5/5/17)

Just before it was discovered that my German friend had malaria, I had him answer some questions in the form of an interview, about what he thought about beachboys. When I asked him what the art vendors as well as beachboys are doing with the tourists. He answered: "*They provide access to everything the tourist need, drugs, women, boat trips, to escort, to guide.*" (Fieldnotes: 9/5/17). The distinction between the vendors, beachboys and tour-guides was much more blurred than what it was at the main location. By this I mean, pretty much all the individuals interacting with foreigners in southern, Malawi comes across as beachboys first and

foremost, often walking bare-chested, taking things cool, and often going for the foreign women in an aggressive manner. While at the main location, it was clear that art vendors, identified themselves as art vendors, and refused to accept being called a beachboy, while in the south, if asking the young men, hanging around the beaches next to the lodge they seemed much more comfortable with the concept of being a beachboy. I will go in greater depth about the specificities of the beachboy in the following Chapter.

The German friend followed up the interview with something I thought was interesting. He said, *“the real artists are only some of them, but some other people they get it and sell it for the artists.”* (Fieldnotes: 9/5/2017). Here he I interpret him as suggesting that the art vendors in the south are mostly middlemen, while at the main location, the art vendors know how to make most things themselves. But the art vendors also often act as middlemen, and the thing beachboys and art vendors really do have in common is that they both rely on personal relationships with tourists as subsistence strategies, both categories are offering a service, and sometimes these services intersect.

Another fact is that an art vendor will be proud of being an artist, and knowing how to carve wood or paint, and he will often tell the tourist, *yes, I will make it for you*, if they want a souvenir. They might not have the capital to invest in the raw material necessary and will therefore have to ask a person, with the raw material for such an order. It therefore important for the art vendor to know how much the tourist is willing to pay, so that the art vendor, can give a price to the woodcarver, and leave a percentage for himself. The German friend told me: *“When I want to buy something, I try to be faster and the first offer for a price and when I can, I buy directly”* (Fieldnotes: 9/5/2017), and when I asked what I usually buys from the art vendors, he said, *“bracelets or souvenirs”* (Fieldnotes: 9/5/2017). These items are easy to transport for the tourists, especially the backpackers. Tourists often do not have the capital of the bigger things such as woodcarvings anymore, therefore they buy small things, but this is not something the vendors can make allot of money on. Standard price is maybe 1000MKW (around 1 dollar). If they sell one bracelet, that’s their money for the day. However, it is also something they can sell quickly and many off, as both vendors, and beachboys almost always carry a type of handmade mucronated bracelet with them.

Once my German friend had healed from his Malaria incident. Me and him hitched a ride with a South-African couple that we met at this second location, they were going the same direction as me and him. On the way, me and the group stopped at a vending shop, comparing this area to my main location had been one of my main reasons for travelling away from it. I wanted to

see how things were going. At this vending area quite far from my Main location, the vendors were desperate. Really desperate. This is important, as it shows, that the vending sites are not all the same. Below is part of our conversation with the vendors at this site. I started by introducing myself as a student doing some research on vendors, and asked him how life was as a vendor here:

“This is very hard - I had to send my son to school, because there is no future in this business. Before there used to be 40-50 shops here, I’ve been doing this for 20 years and now there is only 20 of us left, the rest have left’ he points at a huge piece of (carved) wood, made from hardwood, it is in typical chewa style. You see this here, it’s been here for 4 years, I still haven’t sold it, made from the heart of the tree” (Fieldnotes: 15/5/2017).

The art vendors are Struggling. Like in the case above, an art vendor is perhaps not able to sell something for a long time, thus finding little opportunity in the art vending lifestyle, maybe this can explain why art vendors at the fieldsite have adapted their strategies to that more similar of beachboys? (More on this in chapter four). Just like the hardwood they sell, their lifestyle is hard, looking at these strategies is the way I will get to the heart of the wood, how a

The vendors frustration in the case of not being able to buy metal roof for his house, shows how hard it is to save up money in this lifestyle. Supporting the idea that this is done primarily for its short-term strategy of survival for the art vendors. It did not always use to be like this however, when I asked the same art vendor who could not buy a new roof, why things have changed? He pointed to what I will call: the Indian and Chinese dilemma.

The Indian and Chinese dilemma, is an opinion that many of the art vendors I interviewed and discussed with had. This was that Indians and Chinese are to blame for many of the poor conditions in art vendor locations. In the case of the Chinese, it is said that they are buying wooden art cheaply from the vendors, not for the art, but for the wood itself. Then they bring it back to China, and cut up the wooden carvings to make buttons, or other exclusive things. Lyon, among others repeated this is a fact to me many times during the fieldwork. In the case of the Indians, they were said to have destroyed vending sites, by buying up lodges in different areas, this became clear when talking with the vendor who couldn’t afford a metal roof for his house. The vendor who said he couldn’t buy metal roof for his house, elaborated how it was the Indians that had destroyed the vending site he was working at, as Indian families had bought up all the lodges in the area, making it a dead spot for tourism. He explained that before, it was white

lodge-owners who owned the lodges, and tourists from England, and Amerika, and Europe, would come in great numbers to the lodges, in big cars and buy plenty of stuff from them, and they would buy “*big things! – expensive things!*” (*Fieldnotes :15/5/2017*). Then, something happened, the lodges were perhaps not profitable, but they were sold – many who bought them were Indians. Instead of using them as a lodge, they used them as a holiday home, only visiting occasionally, and having no sympathies for the vendors. Thus, this led to a plummeting of marketability in that area. The vendors were still around, but in a lot smaller numbers, many had found other work (or at least attempted to) – or had migrated to the capital of Lilongwe, to sell their items there. The Indians were also perceived as being rude to the vendors, pushing the price down, and even said to treat them like animals. One could expect this to be a reason of Indians coming from a caste based culture.

The German friend and I finally arrived back at the main location, the field site, and I went to see Lyon, while he slept a night at a lodge for then to continue his travels on his way to Zanzibar in Tanzania. I now had about of a month of fieldwork left, and I will show this month in the next Chapter as the thesis analysis. That is because several of the phenomena I had observed for the first month and a half at the main-location, and the things I saw with the beachboys for two weeks at the second location, re-appeared when I went back to the first location. However, the mood was certainly different the second time at the first location. When I met Turtle as I had gotten back to the main-location, he described the mood as: *like a funereal*. This brings us back to the lesson of the first month, importance of relationships, the difference with art vendors and beach-boys. Further, in the next section I will show some of the darker sides of the strategies of survival among the group, like pushiness, and scams from the drunkards. The next Chapter will also focus on strategies of subsistence of the art vendors in greater depth. their business strategies in relation with the tourists.

3.11 Summary of fieldwork

Prior to my fieldwork, and during the first month, I assumed that by studying the art of the art vendors, I would in some way be studying the people themselves. Well that helps little if the art is not from that area, and just copied from elsewhere. Before I completely accepted this fact, and focused on the strategies of subsistence through tourism (which is my current focus), I had wanted to learn everything I could of what the art the art vendors were selling. I was taking inventory, I was walking down from the house of Lyon to meet the art vendors and going through all their things. But since I had been there for well over a month in Malawi at this time, and had visited their shops regularly, I knew all their things, I knew what they were selling, and it was all tourist-art and some if it quite low-quality. It was the left-overs from the tourists that had passed the shops hundreds of times had not bought yet.

It therefore became painfully evident that the art of the art vendors had little or nothing to do with their culture and tribe. There was one major factor contributing to this and that was that the art, and designs were as the art vendors told me *things that came from outside*. Lyon had made it clear that “they” (the art vendors) only cared about making this art as a way of making a living from the tourist, this was simply a way to survive. They were in fact making tourist-art.

Woodcarving for the art vendors thus relates to aspects of survival, it’s a trade, a business, not a cultural heritage project. The time when tourists went into a village and bought the ceremonial masks handed down from generations are about to be over. Now they are buying copies of copies (and so on) of such masks. Other masks, are simply invented for the tourist market itself, and then designs of masks that prove to appeal to tourists are copied again and again. It all connects back to finding what the tourists like, so that they will purchase their art to find what the tourists finds beautiful, they often need to get to know them. This is both a strategy for sales, but also as strategy for friendships, thus possibility of donations, and support (more about that in the next Chapter). Thus, relying on personal relationships to make sales. However, the art vendors desire to get to know the tourists can make them come across as pushy, thus making them be stereotypes as beachboys from tourists, as beachboys are connected to pushiness while art vendors are less so.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: BUSINESS STRATEGIES

4.1 Pushiness and other strategies.

To sit at the lodge-bars, *chilling* as the art vendors would call it, was a powerful meeting point for art vendors to tourists. This was abundantly clear during my first month at fieldwork, as I lived in the lodge. I noticed some strategies in this setting, a bar within a lodge, next to the lake Malawi.

It was a common pastime for a few of the art vendors to use the bar areas as some of their main arena's for getting to know the tourists. This was where relationships were often built. In another part of Malawi, such activities were like that of a beachboy, but here they were *artists* as they said. However, most of the people hanging out at the bar, were not artists. They dressed flamboyantly, some of them had dreadlocks, some considered themselves Rasta, but really what they were, were middlemen for the other art vendors, and woodcarver. This individual was if not beachboys, what I call mobile-art vendors (carrying small items on them to sell like bracelets). In-fact, they sometimes identified themselves as that as well. This is an important aspect, which was a common theme doing the fieldwork. The aspect of self-identification. For example: *I am a mobile-vendor*, I would hear when I asked certain actors what they did for a living. They didn't have a shop. Thus, they relied on carrying their merchandise on them, often things they had bought in bulk from other (productive) art vendors. However, it was hard to be a productive mobile-art vendor, as they had neither shop nor tools. Thus, their sociability, and acting as middlemen became their primary method of subsistence, and therefore their strategy of survival.

After I came back from my short field trip to the other site with my German friend (looking into beachboy culture). I had a new perspective on the art vendor phenomena as I could compare it with beachboy culture. I felt calmer. I became observant of the fact that real friendships were built here at the bar areas, while during my two weeks in the south, it had felt a lot more superficial.

Interestingly, the bars at the lodges (both at the field site and in the southern location) had signs saying: *Don't buy from vendors*. With big bold capital letters. Some of the art vendors reacted to this. Saying things like: *those people who own those lodges are white people, it is not their country, we have the right be here*. However, visiting lodges was still a practice that was happening, and somewhat tolerated by the owners (depending on the lodge). This was part of

the reason why it was strategic to be friends with a tourist: *“People also buy things through word of mouth, or through friendships, if a vendor is friend with one mzungu, it is easier to be accepted "hanging out" at the lodge, and further business with others can be continued, this is initiated through friendships”* (Fieldnotes: 20/4/2017)

It was only the drunkards who were shunned from the bars. As the drunkards did not have an arena like this to build positive relationships with the tourists, they often had to rely on other strategies. They were not allowed to be there, and I observed quite a few conflicts here at the bar during my last month of fieldwork as well. If I decided to take a break from Lyons place, and went to the lodge to see what was happening, I often observed the drunkards stumbling into the bar, yelling *I have the right to be here*. While the managers pointed a finger to the drunkard with a look that said *Get out!* They had caused troubles in the past.

These sorts of dramas were something most of the tourists were witness to at the lodge site. However, now during the last month of the fieldwork, I focused more on staying with Lyon, and trying to gather my head around what all I had learned and seen from art vendors and beachboys meant. I thought about the fact that the statement *“I have the right to be here”*, refers to a form of loophole many art vendors took advantage of, they would come to the bar, and buy a drink, with this ability, they had access to the bar, as any other customer, and they could not be discriminated against just because they were vendors. If they were known to cause trouble however, they were shunned, and thus had to rely on other strategies, as following the tourists outside the lodges.

Many of the tourists were quite fond of one art vendor, who acted more as a mobile vendor. If a mobile vendor is basically an art vendor without a shop, does that make him a beachboy? This individual was the closest to beachboy I met at the location. Although he denied being a beachboy, he called himself an artist, although I never saw him make, paint or carve anything, he purely acted as a middleman, selling things or getting orders for the other art vendors down the road from the lodges. *I like wearing bright colours* he told me, this could be seen as a type of peacocking (dressing flamboyantly to get attention), he would certainly catch the tourists eye. I wrote this in my field diary in relation to this art-vendor: *“The art vendor says: I want to show you some stuff – and then the rucksack is opened, to reveal an array of different jewellery and paintings, sometimes made by the vendor themselves, or just bought from others, and then resold.”* (Fieldnotes: 20/4/2017)

Not all tourist pays much attention to the art vendors. Like one of the vendors at the location told me *“most of tourists don’t buy anything, they don’t offer a thought.”* (Fieldnotes: 21/4/2017). I think for these reasons they feel forced to use pushiness as a tactic, they also learn that pushiness serves a purpose, and can be a tactic that works. Making the tourist want to buy to get out of the situation, or for the art vendor to leave them alone.

Here’s another extract from my fieldwork dealing with this *“Vendors have been here (at a lodge) all morning trying to continue selling things, like wooden items and ashtrays to 2 South African people that have been travelling around here.”* (Fieldnotes: 20/4/2017).

There are several aspects of how the vendors try to establish rapport building, the friendship, is however mutual, first of all as an act of charity from the Mzungu, but also as an object of friendship. Often (gifts), have been suggested as 'love items', key-rings inscribed with names of loved ones for example, meant to be given as gift once (the tourist) returns home. Like I referred to in other Chapters, this also goes to Marcell Maus’s gift economy, and the aspects of reciprocity. If a vendor is nice to you, and offers something you would like, you want to repay him, and the money they ask for their items, are seriously low compared to what they would cost at an airport or even more so in a shop in Europe or united states. In fact, the prices at the location was one of the lowest in Malawi I was told, as it was far from the capital, and they had forests nearby for the wood. The process for sales as I observed it the field can be seen from my Fieldnotes: *“A) be friendly and try and build rapport B) be pushy to get a quick sale C) Be passive. Friendliness, pushiness, or passiveness are those the three main identified aspects of how the sale goes from one to the next.”* (Fieldnotes: 20/4/2017)

‘B’ and ‘C’ are two conflicting strategies. Presumably, you cannot be pushy, and passive at the same time. This relates to the observation between the productive art vendor tending to be more passive as he was working, and the tourists would see him working and be curious and want to buy. In contrast to this, the social art vendor seemed more inclined to use pushiness as a strategy, as they could not be seen working.

For the social art vendor, friendships are more likely to be made, so that they will know what you like, and what you would want that they can offer. They are extremely service minded people. The friendship process with the foreigners, like ashtrays, mask of hardwood, or the like, is all part of offering the foreigner something he or she will be enchanted by, and something they would like to bring home. *“the customer should be allowed to look in peace, if they are being pushed, they are scared away”* (Fieldnotes: 21/4/17) My Main informant Lyon told me, and the other vendors seemed to agree, that’s why they would get so seriously annoyed at the

drunkards scaring the tourists away as they would say. Therefore, it was possible to be passive, and social at the same time, however this was more uncommon.

As stated, these are tactics for survival, if they don't get money, though a donation, or a sale of art or other handicrafts from their stalls, they might not have food for that day. One of my central observations throughout the fieldwork was the art vendors lived on a day to day basis, looking at short-term goals, but they also had long-term strategies, which I will get more into in Chapter five: spirituality. Befriending is another significant tactic employed by the vendors, as well as the beachboys. Here's another extract from my Fieldnotes that considers this concept.

“(vendors) move from town to the shops, looking for tourists to escort and get some money... others sit patiently, quietly, waiting, while others are hard working. Some are sitting in the shade of the shops, others just outside, when tourists pass in cars, they wave, when they walk, they say ‘hi hi! – how are you, come look’, you have to say hi, if not you are considered rude, if you have and do not share, you are considered stingy. These norms, help regulating the cash flow”. (Fieldnotes: 25-26/4/2017)

What I perceived as ‘norms’ during the fieldwork, I would now consider strategies. A strategy such as pushiness, can become the norm, however strategies such as friendliness can also become the norm, as friendships involves reciprocity, and is thus beneficial for the art vendor (and tourist as she/ he get items they like). This relates back to the literature review, were I pointed to the location in Malawi, and within the culture of the vendors, there being somewhat of a potlach society. You are expected to give, and expected to receive. That also includes if you are only a temporary member of that society in Malawi, in the form of a tourist or missionary. In-fact, possibly even more so as they are from the outside, and have the economic means and resources to travel, they should surely in the vendors view, have some change to spare for them to have a meal. A factor that frustrates the vendors a lot was when bad behaviour was rewarded by tourists giving money or things, just to get out of the situation. That's when the polite vendors start questioning if being kind, and polite to the vendors is even worth it, since they are not managing to survive on that. It might force them to change their strategy – towards a situation which is more dis-pleasurable for tourist, and might be a reason for why there are more and more pushy vendors, beachboys and scammers in Malawi from my observation, than what it seemed to be before. These tactics work, with little risk and great reward.

4.2 The tourist as “prey”

Often in my conversations with the art vendors, metaphors surrounding the tourists as different forms of prey would come up. For example: *I caught a big one yesterday*, could refer to a successful sale. When some of the vendors would walk over to the lodges, they would also refer to that if I asked where they were going as: *I'm going fishing*, or *I am going for a hunt*, some of the art vendors I talked to did, indeed have a background in hunting and fishing, although hunting now had been severely limited due to anti-poaching, many of the art vendors, still told stories, of how they had “hunted in the bush” – and the different animals they had caught.

Finding what the tourists like is part of this service mind set. But also, to make things personal. If you want a personalized name tag, they will make it. If you want a personalized tour in the village, they will take you there, this is an aspect of *we can make anything happen – anything you want*. A service mindset such as this applied more to the social art vendors, the productive one. The productive art vendors were too busy making the souvenirs, and sitting by their shop ready to sell the tourist-art, however the social art vendors, would love to spend time with tourists, both as a purpose of long-term friendship, learning about the tourist taste, and acting as a middleman for the productive art vendors. I wrote in my Fieldnotes: *“I was told this place is like a shark tank, once “the fish” is out of the boundary, the safe zone, they are “free for all” I asked some tourists if they felt the same. They all agreed “so true” It is a real difference between “the laid back” vendor and the “pushy” vendors, that is for sure.* (Fieldnotes: 9/5/17)

It is little surprise that tourist sometimes interprets the social art vendor more as beachboys and hustlers than art vendors, as they are so social. But as already established in previous Chapters, from the art vendor perspective, this is an inaccurate assumption. They identify themselves as artists, whether or not they have the means to make art in that moment is irrelevant for their identity. Below is an extract from my fieldwork diary relating to this, showing how I interpreted the presence of the art vendors. *“Many different individuals with different styles, frustrations, and beliefs, working together in individual parts. There is a market and town square, a meeting point, a trade area. Vendor stalls strategically placed to be able to stretch out like octopus arms.”* (Fieldnotes: 28-19/4/17)

While some of the tourists prefer hanging out with each other, other tourists mingle with the locals with ease. They are sitting in drum circles, listening to music together, having a good time, and sharing a common perspective that all the world need is love. Under one such drum-

session it appears to me that “*The Rastas manoeuvre (strategically) in the room, working to sit side by side with the Mzungu, (ideally) both sharing in a collective perspective of peace, love and unity.*” (Fieldnotes: 23/4/17)

One Informant art vendor told me *Some they scream and run away – saying STOP or GO AWAY.* Here referring to the tourists reacting to the vendors talking to them, following them to the lodges, or offering the items. What might seem like normal rapport building for some, seems like a terrifying experience for others. However, sympathy and showing that they are poor or even starving makes the volunteers want to help. Turtle told me that one of the best strategies for getting someone to give money would be to say “*Madam, madam, help me – support us with something.*” (Fieldnotes: 24/5/2017). When I asked if he didn’t feel guiltily for that, he replied “*It is better to beg than to steal*” (Fieldnotes: 24/5/2017).

Back to my key informant Turtle, who was a good friend of mine, he was there early on in the fieldwork, and was still with me at the end of the fieldwork, although I never lived directly with him, I still saw him about every other day. Turtle the vendor was a Rastafarian, one of the most dedicated at the location, and he was a friend of my Main informant Lyon.

As mentioned in earlier sections, Turtle got his name from when he and I saved a turtle. Something that made this event even more symbolic, is the fact that the day after this situation, Turtle brought me a bandana with tortoises on it, he had swapped it from someone, of maybe found it in the market, he wouldn’t tell me, which was unusual from him, but I guess he enjoyed the secrecy, or maybe wanted me to believe it was new. It was a good quality bandana, and due to the symbolic nature of what he had offered, I purchased it from him for a fair price. He helps me, I helped him, reciprocity is important. Since Turtle and I had our saving tortoise experience with him yesterday, he came the next day with a bandana with tortoises, figuring I would want it to remember about our day.

This is a key element of what a vendor tries to do, they find what you would like, and then make, trade or acquire something like that, so that you would want to buy it. “*the tourists often don’t want to buy - but you have to make them want to buy!*” (Fieldnotes: April 25th, 26th). *Make them* is a point, relating to the strategies of pushiness. Making someone want something, can sound aggressive, but it does not have to be that. It can also relate to the aesthetics of the tourists, making them, doesn’t have to mean forcing them, but making them aware of the beauty of things, and the importance of supporting the vendors for a humanistic and altruistic purpose. It became clear from the fieldwork that making the tourist want to buy is at utmost importance

for the vendors, pushiness is one of such tactics that are employed, but not the only one, I made this observation during the fieldwork as seen in my Fieldnotes: “*The true key lies in not being over pushy, but wanting the tourists to commit, like an act of charity, making them feel like they are just helping out.*” (Fieldnotes: 23/4/17)

Thus, as was confirmed by my informants, the objects that were presented were for the tourist trade and an aspect of making money, and often, had severely little meaning for the people themselves. They tried to make, and do things “tourists liked” and things the tourists would buy, suggesting their items were market oriented. This phenomenon coincides with other anthropologist’s experiences in investigating traders of woodcarvings in East, and central Africa: “*Beatrice Sandelowsky has recorded a revealing statement by an African carver about the very empirical manner in which ‘We try to find out what people want to buy and then we make it’*” (Graburn, 1976: 313). So as shown from the extract above, trying to find the taste of the tourist, finding what the tourists like, is a major strategy of the art vendors.

4.3 Customer satisfaction and seasonal fluctuations

The customer satisfaction was important for the art vendors. Working with the different materials, mainly wood, the customers would often make so called “orders”. Then they make the order. Sometimes certain vendors would get the orders, while others would make it.

Making “orders” from tourists, in the form of personalized woodcarvings was a key factor in the manufacturing process. This included making things out of brass – such as bracelets. Or especially when it came to wood – such as wooden signs, wooden chairs, key-rings (these could be name engraved) or even wooden-tobacco pipes. Some were recognized artists in paintings, that many people knew. Their name was almost like a brand. Rip offs were sometimes made with these, were they would pay the artists to simply put their signature on the painting, or alternatively, pay the original artist to not put a name on at all.

I had been striving to find out if art of Malawian vendors was authentic, but I had as said before, realized that, this was not about authenticity, or culture projects, they were carving wood to survive. And they were using the tourists as means to do so. I recollect Lyon telling me something along these lines during the last weeks of my fieldwork. I did not write this conversation down, I am paraphrasing from Fieldnotes:

You have no idea how many people I meet from Europe, America, Asia, who comes here because their friends have told stories, and then they come and they say ‘hi! – you’re (Mr

so and so) my friend told me about your place – and (he or she) said such great things – so I just had to visit’ and I say ‘oh! How nice! You are very welcome!’” ... and I ask “which friend” – and they say (Mr or Mrs so and so) and then I remember (him or her and) how good times we had, and I say to myself – ‘my god! ... wow! We really had a lot of fun together, and these people, they come to experience same as that! and then we start chatting, and maybe they stay, or maybe they buy some things, and then they become my friend too. (Fieldnotes 30/5/17)

For some art vendors, their reputation and trust with the tourists is one of their most important attributes. As it can ensure future business, and also provide possibilities of donations, and or orders from abroad. Thus, it becomes a long-term strategy for survival. On the flip side, the people that did not have such reputation (drunkards) had to rely on short term gains, that could involve tactics such as tricking and scamming. This is especially clear in the situation we preciously described about the boa-board which the tourist didn’t want, and when I asked my main informant Lyon why he didn’t care about the money. He said that money is worthless, it was just paper, and that the most important thing was for the tourist to feel satisfied, because then they would come back. This is a service mindset which can be part of the strategy of subsistence and survival. Both in long and short term an art vendor is likely to be rewarded for building positive relationship with their customers. This will increase his chances of getting more customers in the future, as this traveller will go everywhere and tell their friend to go to Malawi and visit this person. This is key, as the friendships, good manners, and most importantly service mindfulness in the context of – the customer is always right will increase their probability (at least perceivably) of more customers in the future. Thus, the cycle continues.

The vendors have somehow figured out, (through their culture and spirituality I recon) that if they practice kindness and good reputation, they increase their positive reputation, and increasing their likelihood of long-term survival. Exactly for this reason that it’s the word of mouth and customer satisfaction that really matters to them. The stark contrast is the drunkards, who have lost his reputation, and through the drinking are only focusing on their short-term survival. Rattling, and getting the most out of the tourist their and then while they can. But from what I saw, the successful vendors (although I have no way of measuring that), keep their relationships with the tourists as a precious item.

The seasonal variations in tourism were some of the most difficult aspects of being a vendor, as some months were particularly more filled with tourists than others. *“The slow season is*

apparently now (April/ Mai), but in June / July it picks up. The European summer is when you have the most” (Fieldnotes: 20/4/17). Since it was the slow season, might have been a key reason to why I got to go such backstage with Lyon. During one of our earlier meetings, he told me something I could not believe, here is an extract from that day’s Fieldnotes:

“I was told that he had done it his whole life, he said it is part of the easiest way of getting money, being part of the tourist industry. ‘Everyone copy each other in Malawi, find the same stuff everywhere, but also now new stuff coming out’. The handicrafts skills still popular, but the demand for items has peaked (long ago). It can take years to sell. The skills of crafting are learned through observation and mentorship. You might watch the old. Even injuries can be common. Also it seems that stocking up on merchandise, or being very productive and then “relax later” is part of the game,” (Fieldnotes: 22/4/17)

Although some vendors (Although few) have the ability to stock up on items they are going to sell in their shop, some art vendors do indeed have this privilege, like Lyon. Even having the patience to wait years to sell something, seemed extreme to me. This brings us to a vital question. If there are so few tourists, and so few tourists willing to buy, that the merchandise is able to stock up over a long time, how do the art vendors survive, in other words, how is this form of business even sustainable? In my field diary I noted a long list of different trades, some including: “*People involved in different trades, some are intersectional jobs, like a farmer, and a vendor.*” (Fieldnotes: 28-29/04/17)

It was not un-common for art vendors to have different jobs, but also since many were not able to sell many items, they relied even more on aspects discussed in the previous section of this Chapter (donate to support). Many relied on donations, and charity from tourists. It was quite common that the art vendors, would spend their time cleaning the merchandize at hand, rather than spending time buying new materials for making new items. Often, they would clean up the merchandize, using black or brown shoe polish and a rag, making the wood shine just like new. Interestingly, colouring wood with shoe-polish is a phenomenon not unique to Malawi, but common across the tourist art trade of central Africa. For example, the bini carvers of Lagos, had not previously not used wood like ebony and mahogany prior to the tourist’s demand, however since these woods were more highly priced by westerners, they fetched a higher income for the sellers (Graburn, 1976: 312). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the tourist

demand was what led to the production of hardwood tourist-art, and additionally, polished soft-wood with shoe-polish to make it appear like hardwood.

The use of black shoe polish to make wood look dark like ebony, was done to almost all the woodcarvings. The practices of staining wood with shoe polish to make it look like hardwood like ebony is a common practice. Nevertheless, the practice of using real ebony, mahogany and other rare types of wood, is still present. Thus, the taste of the tourists is partly what has influenced the African art. A challenge for the art vendors is that the tourist feels as if everyone wants something from them, like they are a walking mini-bank. One of the strategies to counter this dilemma, is for the art vendors to discover the personal taste of the tourists, and objects that can be practical and useful for the tourists, so that they will be charmed. But they still need access and dialogue with the tourist to make them an offer, and to get to know their taste. Silver points out in an Ashanti art vendor context, a similar situation that strengthen my argument in relation to taste: *“a successful owner must be adept at anticipating his customers’ tastes.”* (Silver, 1992: 194)

The older art from even just 10 years ago, that sits hidden behind a shelf, dusted down, forgotten and neglected, when pulled out, shows a significant difference in skill and technique compared to statues made today. The explanation for this was often that an individual carver that had made these specific high-quality art items had at this point passed away, or no longer made art. Seeming to point towards individual differences within art quality, this did not seem to affect sales however, as I argue that personal relationships, and other strategies forms a larger role for sales, than the quality of the items at this location.

The aspect of quality deteriorating with business and large orders is also a fact that was observed among the carvers in Malawi. *“Tourist art has been increasingly mass produced and sometimes approaches what Sannes described as ‘conveyor-belt’ production,”* (Graburn, 1976: 312). This feeling of mass production is something easily observed among the vending stalls in Malawi as similar designs can sometimes feel like these items have been created in a mould, despite being completely handmade, usually with basic tools. An interesting aspect is that you still find the aspects of traditional customs relating to the production of woodcarvings, *“Tourists art is usually produced in advance whereas most traditional African sculpture was individually commissioned by the ultimate owner”* (Graburn, 1974: 313). You could still find these traditions of carvers taking ‘orders’ in Malawi, but that required tourists to stay for the while it took to complete that order.

If there was a deadline, the vendors would sometime stay up all night to complete an order, as was the case when two South-African travellers ordered around 20 wooden name tags, and needed them within 24 hours. The vendors stayed up all night to complete the order, and cooperated to complete the task. Nevertheless, for tourists staying a few days, the mass-produced items were usually the ones available unless one was quick to order something, and agreed on a price.

Much of Malawi's woodcarving is done with expert precision. Malawi is renowned for its woodcarvings, and much of it is shipped abroad. This might suggest that the best carvings leave the country, and the ones that stay are the ones that are not fit for the international market. An assumption supported by Lawore for example: "*Some traders undertake bulk trading to south Africa which is a major international market for Malawian carving*" (Lawore, 2006: 8). Due to these factors, it seems that international trade, might be a major contributor to why many of the art vendors rely on strong ties with the tourists, they are hoping they will continue to business when the tourists go home, through services such as Facebook / WhatsApp and emails. The art vendors who are not able to build such connections, are reliant on short term profits, and that can explain why some vendors are using pushiness as a tactic. For these reasons, the art vendor trade can seem unsustainable, which is part of the reasons for art vendors using new strategies such as, pushiness, and relying on donations. Part of this problem is lack of raw materials and tools, forcing the art vendors to rely on other strategies, then their production skill alone, at least this is the case for some of the art vendors, the social art vendors in particular. They are totally reliant of the support and friendships of tourists to be able to sell the goods others (the productive art vendors) have produced. More about this in the following section.

4.4 Donate to support

An older tourist had previously summed up his experience with the art vendors in Malawi: "*there is (usually) a problem with a scorpion bite and a hole in the wall*" (Fieldnotes: 20/4/17). Referring to the fact that art vendors often will share their challenges, and problems with tourists to make them want to support them, either through donations or purchases of art and souvenirs. A German Volunteer (a different individual to the German friend), that had tried to work with the art vendors, and support them at the field site, told me that he had understood a lot about the problems of the art vendors during his stay. He suggested that you should support the artists, but they don't need to be supported in the selling sector, they know how to sell, but they need

to be supported in the production area, “*A better way is to sponsor them, is with new materials for making art*” (Fieldnotes: 11/5/2017). This was counter intuitive to me, as I had observed the productive art vendors being more successful in making and selling art, then the people who did not know how to produce, and were what I refer to as the social art vendors. The social art vendor seemed more prone to build friendships, and rely on tourists to support them. There were projects set up at the fieldsite with the art vendors, that were aimed at helping the local woodcarvers and artists. The German volunteer was part of such a project.

One of the lodge owners I talked to at the field site, told me how these projects often were set up, but then when volunteers left, the project would simply die out. The German volunteer acted as a volunteer at a location and that I got to know quite well. He was trying to breathe life into a project surrounding artists, that in all fairness had died out. He had previously stayed and volunteered at the location, trying to help the artists in the community by selling their art from that house, however, after they left, the house simply remained empty but filled with art, nobody knew existed.

Another fact about this house was that the local drunkards would go the house, and semi permanently live there with the volunteer, eating of his food, and so on. This gave the German volunteer a feeling of helping the drunkards. However, it soon became uncomfortable and troublesome for this poor volunteer. The volunteer told me that he had to tell the drunkards, who was well known at the field site with the art vendors, that they could not come to the house if they were drunk. This led one of the drunks sleeping on the German volunteer’s doorstep until they sobered up.

Often, I would watch the German volunteer – walk around having those drunkards following him around like shadows in the town as I was sitting observing the woodcarvers and vendors. In all honesty, I felt bad for him – but in some selfish way, I was happy they were not following me. I tried to listen to some of the ways tourists’ brush-off the vendors, here’s an extract from the Fieldnotes showing some of the things I notices the tourists telling the art vendors: “*How much are these. I’m just looking – so many choices. I’ve seen these many places. I’ve seen them many places in Malawi, they are very nice*” (Fieldnotes: 16/5/2017)

As a strategy for selling their artwork to tourists who had *seen them many places*, the concept of *donating to support the artists* or *support the community* were factors I heard on several occasions while sitting with the vendors and them wanting to make a sale through to the tourists, for the remaining month at the field site. It served a purpose to ask the tourists to

support, hence why it was used so often. It had become clear to me during the process of the fieldwork, that art vending was challenging. After getting back to the fieldsite from the beachboy are, I asked Lyon if he thought vending was hard, he said: “Vending is hard, especially for people from the outside that come here to sell to tourists, we local people have other things, like farming maize, we have family.” (Fieldnotes: 17/5/2017)

By the tourists giving to the vendors, or *donating* they would perhaps be able to go back to Europe or America, feeling that they had helped the locals with some of the hardships they face.

I also found it particularly interesting during the remaining part of my fieldwork with the vendors, how quickly they were able to reverse to roles from poor to rich, and rich too poor when interacting with the tourists. The next couple of days of my return back to the main location, I had some serious discussion with my main informant Lyon about this. He told me: “*How can Europeans call themselves rich, when they don't have god, they don't have clean food, they just have money, while the Malawian he has god, he has clean food, but he don't have money. Who is really rich here, and who is really poor?*” (Fieldnotes: 20/5/17)

This flip of the roles, is in some ways related to the roles of the trickster, and what I would call, tactics of ‘push – pull’, by saying to contradictory statements, the vendor is able to let the tourist decide what he or she wants to believe, and also pump their emotions. It also depends on the type of customers they are trying to sell things too. If it is a family on holiday for example. I’ve heard them pitch the line “*we are poor*”, as to invoke a form of pity, but they are also stating some form of fact that causes the tourist to feel obligated to support, or “donate”. This can add to a strategy of survival invoked by the vendors. In another situation with backpackers, they would rather be seen and treated as equals so they say, ‘who is poor?’ In my Fieldnotes I wrote: “*Depending on the situation it is sometimes said from the art vendors to the tourists: ‘we are poor my friend, support us!’ other times it is ‘who is poor? We eat organic food, and have no debts. We own our own lands.’*” (Fieldnotes: 20/5/17). In my perspective neither of these versions are lies, they are simply different perspectives that can be employed depending on the situation.

Despite playing with the game of who’s really rich and who’s really poor, it was quite apparent when I came back to the location that many of the vendors were suffering from too little sales, and a slow market. As I had travelled back to the main-location, I was told: “*It is like a funeral down there,*” (Fieldnotes: 30/5/17) Turtle told me, pointing down to the vendors stalls. No sound of the chisels, no *tak* *tak* sounds from the hammering on wood. just quietness. Many

art vendors had simply left to help their family in farming activities, or try and find work elsewhere. It was a slow season before the summer (see section 4.6) Easter was now long gone, and many tourists had gone home, or travelled elsewhere. It is an eerie quietness. This changed the atmosphere at the location. Making hanging out with the vendors, without buying things, a bit harder for them. I find myself isolating myself a bit from them, occasionally strolling down to their shops to hear how they have it. It was usually portrayed to me as them being in a miserable situation of poverty.

My thoughts went back the vendor with no roof for his house, telling me there is no future in this business. I became frightened for them, I felt sympathy even empathy, I knew they were struggling, but did not know how to help. My budget was strained, I'd given away most of my things during the last two months – even my shoes. My main informant Lyon, acted strong in those times, telling the vendors to start pulling their act together. Start making things, start doing more business. But this was hard to do with so few tourists. He had a solution for everything. But the other vendors now felt hopeless. Lyon, kept telling the art vendors words of encouragement, holding Bible classes for them, and continue doing business with the few tourists that were left, including me (I did pay for some things, like woodcarving lessons, it was the right thing to do). Spirituality, and especially the Christian symbolism was important for the art-vendors, hence our next section gives some symbolic insight into this aspect of the art vendor lifestyle.

4.5 Appeals to Christianity

While having a Bible class with my main informant (this was basically obligatory for me to stay with him) I found a passage: *“For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”* (Mathew: 25-29)

The Christian symbolism was often strong in such encounters with the art vending community at the field site, especially for the Rastafarian art vendors. One Rastafarian told me under these circumstances of me giving my clothes and shoes away to the people who had so little as *If someone ask for your pants, give them your shirt as well* a reference to the Bible.

I had made the decision to identify myself as a Christian, since by Norwegian standards I was baptized and confirmed. This led (as mentioned in previous sections) to the fact that I was sometimes perceived as a missionary-tourist, rather than a researcher. This was partly due to a

rosary I wore, and the fact that I enjoyed talking about the spiritual beliefs of the Rastafarian art vendors. When the local vendors and Rastafarians saw this, they attributed me as Christian and a believer, having studied some religious science at university, I also was aware from some quotes of the Bible. Spoken at the right time, they had powerful effect on art vendors, this the art vendor who didn't want to give me lessons in fear of upsetting Lyon had showed me.

The identity as a spiritual anthropologist, had its challenges, as Turtle pointed out to me from the Bible one Sunday - "*Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.*" (Luke: 6-30). After that, he stretched out his hand with a gaze that said – well are you going to give me something? But I laughed it off, and told him: Turtle, you're a clever Rasta. He laughed as well. But there was a form of seriousness within this. I assume this is a profitable strategy towards the missionary tourists. A clever art vendor might point out that the religion they are trying to preach says that they should give away their things. If they don't, then how can they call themselves Christian? It is a classic example of a double bind – a catch 22. This one of the reasons why familiarity of the tourists is so vital, and why questions towards new tourists such as: "*where are you from, how long are you staying, where do you live?*" (Fieldnotes: 18/4/17) Are all elements that can help get information that may eventually lead to some form of transaction taking place within the time span the tourist is present, whether they are a backpacker tourist, or a missionary tourist, knowledge of the individual will give the art vendor different strategies aim towards extracting value from the individual.

The Christian symbolism was often strong in such encounters with the Rastafarian vending community at the location. I happened myself to 'make the mistake' of telling them I was a Christian. I was then expected since 'I was rich' to give what I had to them since they were poor and had nothing, seemed reasonable to them. Ironically, this seemed to be happening over time. Slowly but surely items would be traded, given away, donated, from me to them, everything from chargers, clothes, electronics, would gone. They appreciated this very much, and in return I would get bracelets, or sometimes it was simply a gift from me to them. I did observe other tourist trade some things as well, and many art vendors carried with them fancy shoes, or phones that they had traded with westerners. It was the only way they could get such things at the field site. For example, while staying with Lyon, an American woman came and visited. She said. The illusion of paradise, was often marketed to tourists. Cheap alcohol, a beautiful relaxation location, and loads of friendly Malawian people. But really the tourists did often not realize the incredible hardships of the people living here.

4.6 Trading and desire for western goods

Trying to sell practical things are common in the vending stalls, and as previously mentioned in the Chapter 2.2 (woodcarving in Malawi as art form) the woodcarvers have the advantage of selling hand-made items, made from natural materials. But to be a seller, you need a buyer. Like the concept of identity trade and bartering is bilateral, “it takes two to tango”.

In many societies, especially traditional ones, there are different categories of merchandise. Different categories of goods that are bartered, and circulated within relatively closed spheres. Interestingly these categories are incomparable in value. (Eriksen, 2010: 181). It is also the case, that in most societies, there are rules for what can be bartered and traded with money, and what cannot, for example love, loyalty and friendship. In a money economy, all merchandise and services becomes comparable. (Eriksen, 2010: 180)

Some of the things the art vendors sell has a practical use, such as eating utensil, wooden-bowls for food, items for keeping salt and pepper, as well as drums, tobacco pipes, and pen holders, like I touched upon in Chapter two (section 2.4), a desire for something handmade, artistic, and practical is likely to be a driver factor for tourists to purchase. However, buying items to support (section: 4.4) must also be considered. Thus, this ties into an archaic system of reciprocal behaviour - I give you this, and you give me that. For the tourists I talked too, there seems to be something nostalgic about handmade items, and especially made out of wood (although this taste might have shifted from its former popularity. It is well established that tourists enjoy keeping souvenirs as memories of their travels as well, this was used as a strategy from the art vendors. If they found out you had a boyfriend or girlfriend, the mobile art vendors might show up at the lodge with a bracelet or necklace, saying something along the lines of – *your girlfriend / boyfriend would love this.*

The vendors also had a desire for western goods, it was not only the tourists that had a desire for Malawian ones, thus bringing us back to the aspect of reciprocity. A vendor might be thinking: You have something I want, but the tourists might think: what could you possibly have that I want? My things are much more valuable than yours!

“The very phrase “set” or “fixed” price suggests that the price, before being fixed or set was apt to change. Thus language itself makes it difficult to convey the true state of affairs, namely, that “price” is originally a rigidly fixed quantity, in the absence of which trading cannot start.” (Karl. 1957: 268)

The art vendors were traders, merchants, entrepreneurs and businessmen, but they were also artists. However, being a vendor was their primary identity. Again, and again I was reminded of this. Answers I would hear repeatedly at the field site when I asked them what their job was, would be something like: *I am an Artist*, or *I am a woodcarver*, *I am hustler*, *I am a Rasta*. An underlining element was usually the fact that they were vendors, art vendors. Trading, bartering and selling art, souvenirs, and ornaments to tourists. This was all part of their art vendor lifestyle. Like I have mentioned earlier, the art vendors from the field site hated being referred to as beachboys. It was derogatory. While artist was honourable. I think this need to be recognized as artists relates to pride, which was also apparent in the Rastafarian mindset of many art vendors. For them, there was nothing to be respectful about being a beachboy. An artist however, was usually someone who was poor, and struggling, but one day might become wealthy and successful. A dream I believe most art vendors shared. A Rastafarian was meant to be self-sufficient, and an artist has the ability to do that, as he produced objects, instead of only consuming them. Lyon told me, that survival was key, and everyone should be able to take care of themselves, even without money.

“The substantive meaning of economic derives from man’s dependence for his living upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying him with the means of material satisfaction” (Karl. 1957: 243)

In essence, the art vendor mindset was service based: “*Vendors act as mediators to services.*” (Fieldnotes: 18/ 4/18). *What can I do, or give you in exchange for money, food or clothes?*

Was the mindset I observed. There was nothing dirty about this, it was simply a way for basically unemployed young men in an informal business sector to make a living and subsist through the presence of the tourists, an adaptive strategy in a poor economy. However, going back to the drunkards, as they had come from the outside, the other art vendors looked down on them, as they did not know how to interact with the tourists: “*People on the streets, don’t know mzungu like we do*” (Fieldnotes: 18/4/17). Supporting that the art-vendors are specialized in getting to know the tourists, for then to proceed with sales (at least that’s the case for the social art vendor).

If they got something, whether it was a quality bible, a pair of branded shoes, or even a shirt, or electronics, they would go and sell it to Lyon that same day, and he would often buy it.

Both to support the art vendors, who one can imagine he saw as his family and affinity.

Nevertheless, when I asked him about this, he reminded me: *I like to collect things* with a smile on his face. Did that include me as well? Was I part of his collection of tourists and forefingers he had met? Probably.

The items however included anything western of value; especially technology like smartphones, chargers, slippers, anything with a 'western'-brand was desired and 'traded' with tourists. This style of business was connected to the essence of the of being a vendor, finding what the tourists likes, so they can trade and make a form of economy. E. Wolf says:

“A merchant is a specialist in exchange, buying and selling goods to obtain profit. To increase profits merchants strive to enlarge the sphere of exchange, drawing substance or prestige goods produced within the kin-ordered or tributary mode into the channels of commodity exchange, the market” (Wolf, 1982: 84)

Sometimes the tourist tried to protect themselves from taking part I the local exchange of goods money and services. They wanted to stay at the lodges and ignore the world outside. Tourists 'hiding' at the lodges and enjoying themselves without *supporting the artists*, annoyed the art vendors greatly. *Can't they see we're struggling?* Turtle told me with a mix of fear, anger and frustration in his face, referring to the tourists not supporting them. Tourists types are different, Missionary and volunteer tourists had a great sympathy for art vendors and often supported them emotionally, but they rarely gave money or traded, which is what the art vendors relied upon. The backpackers however seemed to be the meat and bone for the art vendors, however they didn't much care for large pieces of woods, and wanted small practical items, things that could be used and were tasteful and aesthetical to them and their lifestyle.

Often the art vendors were so desperate to make a trade, (often due to seasonal fluctuations see section 4.8), that they would ask the tourist: *please trade something. Please*. But even with that they would often be met with a cold shoulder. Since none of their items had a fixed price, nor in their shops, or when carrying items on them, they were left for the tourists to offer a price, or for them to give an offer. *“Price systems, as they develop over time, may contain layers of equivalencies that historically originated under different forms of integration.”* (Karl. 1957: 269)

Backpackers are often experienced travellers, they usually know around what price things are, and are prepared to haggle, and if they don't get the price they want, they simply walk away, forcing the art vendors to sell in that moment as to not lose the sale. Often resulting in a very low profit margin, just to be able to purchase some maize flour and tomatoes for that day. Also,

it is fair to assume that the backpacker tourists often have been to many locations, probably have limited funds, and are very careful dealing with vendors, as they might be afraid to get tricked or hassled, or also as they seem the art vendors as a beachboy type, which they really don't want to deal with. The fact that the drunkards often hang around the lodges makes the tourists also exhausted with declining the drunkards stalking them when for example going outside the lodge boundaries. Thus, stereotyping everyone that wants something from them, and declining them all.

The items of highest demand that tourists had, that the vendors wanted was everything from cell-phones, clothes, electronics, and particularly Bible's (see next section: 4.5) and other brand clothes. The Bible's are interesting, because these are one of the few items the missionary volunteer types of tourists gave out to vendors, I observed under several circumstances, how 'fake-Rastas' would attain Bible's from missionaries, for then to resell them to Lyon, my main informant. As pointed out earlier, he liked to collect things, and redistribute them. The fake Rasta got something he wanted, money, and the real Rasta got something he wanted a Bible. A fair trade. However, the missionary gave that Bible to the fake Rasta to try and convert him to become a Christian. The fake Rasta might have promised to read the Bible he got every day, oh if only she pretty please would give him a Bible, his soul would be saved from all the bad things he had done. The missionary gives the Bible thinking she has saved a soul, and before the sunsets the Bible is re-sold to a real Rasta. Another effective strategy for survival. When I told the missionaries that I knew this was happening, as I had talked to both people that had sold and bought vendors, they responded with disbelief and frowns upon me. How dare I say such a thing, somebody could never do that. Well, I guess ignorance is bliss. *"The exchange use of money arises out of a need for quantifiable objects for indirect exchange. The "operation" consists in acquiring units of such objects through a further act of exchange."* (Karl. 1957: 265)

Early in the fieldwork, I bought a t-shirt at the local market, I put it on the way up to the lodge I was staying at for the first month of the fieldwork, before I moved inn with Lyon. I met some of the vendors on the way and noticed they immediately wanted to trade the shirt with me, as an experiment I tried to see what they were willing to trade for it, although I had just spent 1000mkw for the shirt, (a football shirt with brazil on it) the art vendors, were willing to trade goods worth at least three times what I had initially paid for the shirt. This perplexed me, and I told them that I had bought the shirt in the market. *It's a good one! it's a good one! My friend, you have good eyes, you find things my friend* I was told. It still confuses me a bit, it seemed almost as a tourist (or mzungu) wearing something, made the value automatically go up. Or

they were just trying to start a bartering transactional relationship with me, so I would trade more in the future (probably this second option seems likelier), this shows the strategic mind of the social art vendor. A surprising finding from the fieldwork that Turtle conveyed to me, relating to this topic, was that in his view, it was a big problem that Europe had sent so much clothes to them from the salvation army and such, this was as it was inflating their own local clothes market. Clothes were cheap, however, they didn't even have food on the table they said. As well as ruining their own industry, since they were making clothes as well sometimes This perplexed me, as I would have assumed sending clothes to Africa would have been a good thing. Just goes to show how complex this globalized and commodified this planet has become.

4.7 Scams & Schemes as important tactics

One official public worker in Malawi asked me once *why does Mzungu trust the rastaman? We know what they do*. Possibly referring to scams (or selling of illicit merchandize). The concept of scamming and scheming is relevant in the context of the fieldwork. As this was one of the tactics used to get money from the tourists. It is important to note, that most vendors are honest hardworking people. But there are definitely some bad apples in the bunch. Some of these bad apples might come in the form of what informants called *fake Rastas*.

The hierarchy I had observed (although not my main area of focus) was also a factor. For example, individuals lower down on the prestige ladder in the art vending sector, often did the rough work of sanding, cutting, or shaping a piece of wood, preparing it for the 'master carver' to do his finishing touches, and add a design, (something you find in other places of Malawi as well.) *"Assistants and apprentices did the initial roughing out, and, if they had time, the master carvers added the finishing touched. With large orders to be filled and, firm delivery to anticipate; the quality of the workmanship deteriorated"* (Graburn, 1976: 312)

It is also the case that at the bottom the ladder of the art vendor group, there were individuals among the art vendors that would often deceit, lie, and *scam* tourists. I personally got "scammed" on a few occasions in my time in Malawi, despite my previous experiences. I also watched tourists get scammed and at least attempted to be scammed. A scam might come in any imaginable format, but it is always dishonest. Usually involving getting the tourist to trust the person, as a vendor, but then when for example he asks for money to go get the art or woodcarving for example the tourists ask for, the person simply doesn't come back. The tourist has now been scammed.

The process of using shoe polish to make white soft wood look like ebony, and sell it tourists as ebony, can, has and is happening all over tourist markets in Malawi. If the art vendor attempts to pass it off as ebony, this is disingenuous, but still a strategy for sale, making the item seem worth more than it is. In general, the art vendors reputation from tourists, is more important than tricking them, and the prices will usually be fair. This shows, how important friendships, and relationships are. Perhaps they can do more transactions in the future (as was hinted at with the case of the t-shirt). However, some individuals like the drunkards, have nothing to lose, and only focus on their short-term goals.

In the context of looking into strategies of the vendors, scamming tourists can be a viable strategy for some, especially if the scammers are in a desperate situation, and sees a tourist that is too trusting or naïve. They will certainly take advantage of this. Many vendors were upset that some people were disingenuous, and meaning that they were from another area of the country, travelling to the location, only to trick people.

I personally got described as *someone who knows things* by the vendors, and since I had contact with the vendors, I knew which one of them were capable of trying to scam me, often through pressuring me, or begging for something. Promising to do a service, like buy me something from the market like food and water, but then wouldn't show up, and would run and buy alcohol instead. The case of getting dreadlocks by the first vendor, could also be interpreted as a scam, as the vendor told me he had done in many times, and that *he was the best*. He also promised he would finish the dreadlocks, but did the job half way, and demanding I pay him for him to continue. Now I will not go as far as call this a scam as he did do a service, but he didn't fulfil our agreement. Whenever I asked him to finish, he said we had done what was agreed upon, and that he needed more money to continue. This can be described as a fraud, but nevertheless as strategy of survival. Back to the fishing metaphor, as the art vendor being a fisherman and the tourist being the fish. It is purposeful to keep the fish on the hook, rather than catch and release.

Now these are all pretty innocent things, but they are still worth mentioning, as they are indeed strategies for survival in the context of tourism. Some people have nothing to sell to the tourist. I witnessed two south African people get scammed, when they agreed for someone to paint a logo on their motorcycles. They had agreed on a price. But when the job was done, the painter demanded a price ten times higher than they had agreed upon. When the south African refused to pay that, the individual went amok, and created a scene, threatening to report them to the police

if they didn't pay him. They didn't end up paying the whole amount, but they paid more than they had agreed upon. This is not only a scam, but also a form of blackmailing.

It is not only tourists that get scammed, I also saw the local people get scammed. But it was easier for them to see who to trust and not to trust. An explanation for why these people, steal, scam and trick tourists are from the Rastafarian viewpoint because of demons (Relating to their spiritual perspective). One drunkard promised to do a job for my informant sanding some boards, he got the sandpaper and the tools. When he came back a few days later, he had lost the sandpapers he said, and needed more. My main informant Lyon scolded him, and schooled him in his dishonesty with words. He knew that the drunkard had taken his sandpaper and sold it, to buy a few small bottles of liquor.

Selling a tourist an item for a ridiculously high price, (perhaps five times more than what they should normally pay) could be interpreted as a scam, but more likely not. However, since none of the items at the market has a fixed price, a vendor will usually offer a price that is high compared to the standard prices, to test the tourists on their knowledge of the prices from for example woodcarvings in the area. IF they sell it for 5 times more than its worth, the vendors in between themselves will not find that disingenuous, but rather lucky for them. And the tourist can be sure to lose some respect as well, for letting himself be tricked into buying something for such a high price.

Scamming and scheming tourists, is considered a strategy for survival. An aspect that relates to pushiness, treating the tourist as prey, as well as the concept of vendors hustling. They will go to any-length to survive, naturally. That means squeezing, or tricking a few tourists, or plead and beg from money. Its ok. The red line is drawn on directly stealing things. As the Bible forbids this, getting the better half of a bargain however, is definitely socially accepted by the vendors. The counter tactic for the tourists when the vendors try and scam them, by offering an outrageous price, is often to walk away saying. *No thank you, goodbye*, the vendor will almost always chase after the tourists saying something like *ok ok, here, I give you the real price*, and then offer the real price, and the tourist will then usually by. This is something I observed countless times. Some might say, the tourists do the walk away tactic to take advantage of the vendors desperation to sell, while others will say it is just part of the game.

Scams are typical of tourist sites, just to take some international examples. In Prague / Czech Republic for example, you should take care when exchanging money on the street as disingenuous people offer exchanging services in front of the legitimate exchange services, but

then they give you an invaluable currency like the Bulgarian Rubel, which is worthless instead of the Czech kr. This is such a big scam, that its organized by something like criminal organizations, were people are working in groups in Prague, to scam tourists with fake currencies. (SmarterTravel, 2018) Another example is in India, especially New Delhi, it is quite common knowledge for experienced travellers that the tourist's office in Delhi, it is actually surrounded by 100's of fraudulent offices, posing as the real one, so that one can trick tourists in there are extract them for money. (TravelScams, 2018)

As many of the tourists in Malawi are backpackers and experienced tourists, they bring with them their experiences from one place to the next. Perhaps this can explain like the tourists told me *I don't want to buy from them*, he seemed afraid the art vendors would scam him. It is likely as he had been tricked before, a common experience among travellers to foreign countries. What this is doing, is in my eyes quite negative for the people trying to survive from art vending. An unfortunate situation, as the vendors can sometimes be perceived as distrustful, partly as they offer a high price, but the experienced tourist knows, that this is just part of the haggling culture:

“The standard, or accounting use of money is the equating of amounts of different kinds of goods for definite purposes. The “situation” is either barter or the storage and management of staples; the “operation” consists in the attaching of numerical tags to the various objects to facilitate the manipulation of those object” (Karl. 1957: 264)

and in some sense, the art vendors look at the tourists own fault if they don't know the price and overpay, this also seemed to be the case in situations where tourists were too easily pressured by the drunkards. It is almost as if the art vendors had read Machiavelli:

“he who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best. But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.” (Constitution, 2018: Chapter XVIII)

One of the reason I think the lodges have signs for tourist not to buy from vendors has to do with this exact problem, that tourists have been tricked by drunkards and beachboys in the past, and then complain and say that a vendor has tricked them. Giving the whole group a bad image, a problem the vendors constantly conveyed to me upset them, that a few people were ruining

everything for all of them. It is also however easy to make the stigmatized individuals the scape goats when anything goes bad, just making the situation even more hopeless.

For this reason, many tourists are extremely sceptical and distrustful of all local people trying to sell them something on the street, which is hurting the vendor group as a whole. However, the food-vendors seem to be somewhat immune to this stereotype. This could be one of the explanation for why they are making so few sales, because tourists know from experience they are Mzungu, and will be ripped off by who they perceive as beachboy, but they trust the women. It is contrasting how the women are doing great business with food vending, as they treat the tourists fairly. Under no circumstance did any data suggest that food-vendors were employing tactics that could be interpreted as pushy, harrasive or scamming. Meaning that Malawian women acting as food vendors, were perceived as friendly, while the men often would be interpreted as pushy. This is evidence, not of maleficence but rather of desperation in making sales for the art vendors. The food-vendors seem quite successful, as they sell their food to both locals and tourists. However, the art vendors only have tourists to sell their items too, and since the market is somewhat saturated for tourist art in my opinion, it forces the art vendors to employ more devious strategies than the female food vendors in order to subsist.

It is all about reputation for the art vendors, and they will do the best for you to be satisfied as a guest and customer in Malawi, however, in certain tourist hotspots, extra caution must be taken. A tactic for the vendors to deal with this, is that they cluster in areas with their shops and stalls, having their items on display, and sitting as neat and orderly as they can be waiting for tourists. It needs to look legitimate and organized. Thirty, forty years ago, I Imagine it would be unthinkable for a Malawian vendor to scam a tourist, today however, there are so many desperate people, who have learned that they can make significant amounts of money from tourists if they can interact with them, and get them to listen to them. So, no wonder many of the tourists prefer to *hide in the lodges*, like Turtle the art vendor told me. I wrote in my Fieldnotes: “*Customers hide within the lodges, within their boundaries they hide. Some drunken alcoholic vendor (one of the drunkards) showed his finger to one of the lodge owners, while yelling ‘fuck them - They don’t let us inn’.*” (Fieldnotes:9/5/17) But he viewed me as a friend, as I had given him my shoes at one point. Gullestad points out: “*there is a problem when others are perceived to be ‘too different’. Then the parties often avoid each other.*” (Gullestad, 2002: 16). I wrote in my Fieldnotes in relation to this:

“the feeling of helplessness, this inability to help can feel a bit dismaying for the tourists. I think the situation is overwhelming. The great NEED is part of the reasons why tourists

avoid the vendor relationship, they are immediately intimidated by it, feeling that they are pressured to give something because this person NEEDs something.” (Fieldnotes: 22/5/17)

This might be part of the reason why tourists hide in the lodges. I wrote in my fieldnotes: “*One tourists, who was on a motorcycle trip through Africa, felt that ‘people are always after me’. Inability to create a real friendship, expectations that this person want something from me. So how could he be your friend?*” (Fieldnotes: 18/4/17). The art vendors are poor, and desperate for a sale, thus they become too different from the tourists, and friendships are rejected. Like Lyon said, *It is hard to be a vendor*, and especially for those young men that do not have a backup plan, family to support them if they do not make a sale. They come from the outside, from the surrounding villages to the field site, in hope of a better future as there is no other work for them. They know the tourists have money, and they need money to subsist, thus they organize their life in a way that can make them get something from tourists. Some through scams and schemes, but most through being either a productive or social art vendor. This is simply a new way of interacting with the tourists.

The art vendors look at tourists as one of their greatest resources, something worth protecting, they will therefore much rather protect, advice, and build friendships with the tourists, as these are both aspects of compassion and strategies of survival, then to *scare the tourists away*. Like Jules-Rosette says: “*Tourist art...have generated new types of economic and symbolic exchanges*” (Jules-Rosette, 1986: 57). A well founded social bond between an art vendor and a tourist can be both a short, and long-term subsistence strategy for the art vendors. This brings us to the final section of this thesis. The conclusion.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the context of art and aesthetics, my findings suggest that many art vendors do not have the economic freedom to produce art. Therefore, they rely more on tourist relationships to sell the art for other art vendors. They become middlemen. As wood is valuable, the risk is too high for artistic experiments with this medium. Consequently, the art vendors often end up peddling the street, walking between the lodges and areas where there are tourists as a strategy for building relationships, that might lead to a sale, or a reciprocal personal relationship.

This is the strategy of beachboys, and drunkards as well. It is not necessarily easy for the tourists to distinguish between the people with good intentions, and bad. Thus, art vendors get lumped together with people of different categories (Such as beachboys), and are ignored, or prevented from building a relationship. The art vendor himself knows he can be trusted and is usually service minded, however he is blocked by other people coming before him to the tourists, and has already made the tourist put his/her guard up. Either on that location, or from another place.

The most successful art vendor are the ones who are able to know the aesthetics of the tourists, and the tourist types. Different people want different things. But use this knowledge over a long-term strategy so that they additionally, are able to set up their business and limited resources in such a way that they can make, produce and specialize in items that aims towards the tourist's taste.

In sum, art vendors are split into two main categories, the ones who are specialised in the production of art, and the one who are specialized in the sale of art. If they build a good relationship with a tourist, and the tourist want something that that specific art vendor has made, the art vendor might lie and say he made it, although it was his friend, another art vendor who made it. He will at the very least say he helped make it. A white lie as a strategy for survival.

First, specializing in a skill is an essential strategy of subsistence for the art vendors. Find what the tourist like and make that, loads of it, so that you can sell it for cheaper and thus get more customer, then send out the charismatic art vendor over to the lodges, to *get orders*. Ideally, they then co-operate in making the items (if there is a large order of items such as the case with the name tags ordered by the south Africans), and split the income. Some doing the woodcutting, others doing the engraving, while a third-party sands, and a fourth polishes. Thus, they have established a production line, which works with the most basic tools. Under every circumstance they had to be act opportunistic, they had to act as a group.

Unfortunately, most art vendors had little to no motivation to come up with new designs and ideas out of materials other than wood. They were relying heavily on the wood as this had been their bread and butter in the past. Malawians are known for their woodcarvings. However, it is my interpretation that both tourist's, and the Malawian government are getting more and more sceptical of woodcarvings, due to environmental concerns. It is also of little practical use to the new tourist's type in Malawi, young backpackers for example, do not want to carry woodcarvings. Perhaps also the taste for wooden artefacts have fallen out of style with some types of tourists. Some individual art vendors have adapted to this, and can read the taste of the tourist's, thus have given up woodcarving overall and focused on selling art with a practical function like copper jewellery, tobacco pipes, and portable chairs. Even food cutlery, wooden bowls for salads, and salt & pepper vessels out of wood are sold, as they carry a function for the tourists. Thus, failure of sales within woodcarving trade could be due to tourist's types having changed, and consequently the change of taste. Backpacker tourists are now more common, and thus also the art vendor strategies towards subsistence must adapt to this.

The existing hierarchy determines the access to raw materials and tools needed for the manufacture, and hence gives unequal ability (and power) to produce and sell. If an art vendor has none of these things, he is either reliant on begging, or acting as middlemen for other producers of art, and taking a small commission, thus being interpreted as a beachboy, although he often identifies himself as an artist. Therefore, those with access to raw material and tools have the greatest power, however they are still reliant on friendly art vendors who can make the sale for them. Thus, they fill in each other's gap, and work together to achieve the goal of gaining enough money for food, rarely did they ask for more.

Having low quality items to sell, as all the high-quality ones have been exported out, or sold away already is part of the problem. As the art vendors have become reliant on personal relationships, their ability to produce high-quality carvings has arguably gone down. This can also be a factor due a lack of tools, and a lack of raw materials (wood). Without the ability to re-produce the quality with the same skill, this could explain why art vendors rely on aspects such as charity and donations, and personal relationships to survive rather than relying on the art itself.

Art vendors protect their friendships in a territorial way. It is a resource. This was also true for me taken up as an apprentice by Lyon. An interesting aspect of this apprenticeship was that once I was appointed, no other art vendor would want to teach me. *A student can only have one master.*

Malawian art vendors are generally poor. The art vendors who had not specialized, and had little inventory in their shops, acted as there was no hope left in the world. Despite being a relatively successful art vendor (in terms of building relationships) Turtle still explained how he sometimes went days without eating, and even had to resort to eating leaves in the forest. I cannot verify whether he ate leaves from the forest or not, perhaps it was a strategy for having my sympathy, but I could tell when they were suffering in contrast to when things were going well. *Can't they see we are suffering?* Statements such as this from Turtle, made it abundantly clear that the art vendors are relying on tourist, and when tourists have no interest in buying, they are doomed to suffer. They believe God shows pity in them and will even go as far as to call themselves lucky as they are poor, while the tourists are doomed since they are rich (this is a biblical notion: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven"). When there are no tourist's around, and they have not managed to save up money, Turtles own words explain it the best: *It is like a funeral.*

Their faith also became a comfort and coping strategy, it helped them making sense of their situation, and hoping for a better future. This can be seen as a long-term strategy of survival. Another is the notion of building friendships with tourist's that can support them long-term, as was the case with Lyon, who managed to get occasional donations from abroad.

I have observed how Christian verses were used strategically to invoke sympathy from the missionary-tourist's, whether it was successful is hard to measure. But receiving bibles and reselling it occurred, although only a short-term strategy. This also relates to how the art vendors feel that tourists have a responsibility to: *give something*. However, there is that adage: "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish, and you feed him for life". Some art vendors were thought how to fish. That is, they were taught to look at tourists as fish (a resource for food) and they were the fishermen, having to find the right bait.

Like Turtle said: *Better to beg than to steal*. It shows the desperateness of the situation of the individuals who had not specialized themselves in a sector. It proves that sometimes, skills are more important than ability to build relationships for the art vendors, as the most successful art vendors were those specialized in producing the merchandise.

I intuitively expected before my departure that social art vendors, were the most successful. It is hard to confirm or debunk this assumption. The data seems to show that the art vendors with the skills to produce what tourists want, also survive the seasonal fluctuations, as they can spend time during off-season producing for stock. The art vendors who are reliant on their social skills

(like Turtle) are severely suffering in-between seasons. Thus, the art vendors without manufacture skills, or resources to produce new items, are completely left out when there are no tourists. They are quite simply barely surviving. It is not easy to survive in an informal sector in one of the world's poorest countries, this is certainly one of my conclusions.

Tourists seem to be attracted to the Rastafarian art vendors, perhaps as they offer a form of coolness, or familiarity the tourist feels comfortable with. It is also possible that a reason for being a Rastafarian art vendor, or an art vendor in general, is to hope to find a western girlfriend and travel to Europe. This was often conveyed as the ultimate achievement of any art vendor but required a more beachboy like attitude towards the tourists which could indeed backfire. In terms of Rastafarian identity among the art vendors it is plausible to conclude that this is also a strategy to be able to bring back their own ethnic pride and autonomy from decades of imperialistic tourism, and previous Malawian colonialism from England. Pride is an aspect that is evident in the art itself but becomes even more significant in the context of Rastafarian lifestyle among art vendors. My informant showed pride in being an artist and/or art vendor, connecting to the ideal of self-sufficiency. It can also be a strategy of attracting the tourists, like a peacock shows his feathers to attract a mate.

The ability to "hook" the tourists, and create leverage through aspects of friendship, as well as the art vendors strategic location, means that the tourists in many senses have 'no choice' in whether they would like to deal with the art vendors or not, and nowhere is this more accurate than with the drunkards. Their strategies of pushiness, intimidation, scams, schemes and blackmailing is certainly un-ethical. However, as a strategy it proved it had some level of success as they were drunk every day and many tourists felt victimized by them. Being pushy makes the tourists not want to buy anything, instead tourists feel forced to buy, to support the suffering art vendors. It is also clear from the fieldwork that the uncertainty is part of their lifestyle, and vulnerability is part of life. Asking for *something*, if you have *nothing* is OK.

In terms of the art vendor who said *there is no future in this business*, I would say there is a future, but the art vendors need to continue adapting their style, and maybe rely more on other services such as tour-guiding, or offering new types of merchandise, art, handcrafts and souvenirs. But more importantly, the art vendors need tools and merchandise to be able to make their art (like the German volunteer suggested). Without this, they have nothing to produce, and thus nothing to sell. As long as there are tourists in Malawi, it is unlikely that the art vending phenomena go away. However, it seems likely that the categories of art vendors and beachboys will continue to intersect until they have crossed over, and completely merged together.

Personal relationships, and selling small items, as well as acting as middlemen for little things like bracelets, and small handmade items, have a higher potential for success, and requires a lower investment for the art vendors. The more art vendors hanging around lodges, the more the boundary between them and the beachboys gets blurred, and they risk the tourists piling them all in the same category as harassing beachboys they want nothing to do with. You will also see a tendency of walls around the lodges becoming higher, and the tourists distancing themselves from the hardships outside the walls, simply as there are too many people who want something from them, and perhaps also as the art vendors and their situation seems to differ.

This thesis has primarily been descriptive, giving insights into the situation and perspectives of the art vendors at an anonymous location in Malawi. I have identified different strategies I observed at the field site. Through this process, it is worth emphasizing that many of the strategies used by art vendors are not always recognized as such by tourist. The art vendor group consists of different individuals. Some are social, others are passive, but all are involved in the tourist art trade in one way or another, either in recruiting buyers (the social art vendor) or producing items the tourists find aesthetic (productive art vendors). They have integrity, and many are involved in the Rastafarian spirituality, with an ideal of self-sufficiency, and find comfort in reading the bible, and rationalizing their circumstance with the belief that there are spiritual rewards in poverty. The business and spirituality therefore fits together to combine a lifestyle. As Malawi is recognized as 'the warm hear of Africa' from my perspective, the art, business and spirituality, combine to the heart of the wood. The true heart lies in the pursuit of subsistence by the art-vendors, and the strategies used to do so.

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