

Exploration of Malaysian Public Awareness Towards Visual on Street Art Mural as a Medium of Communication

Norfadilah Kamaruddin^{1*}, Nik Nor Azidah Nik Aziz²

¹Creative Visual Exchange Group, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam, 42300, Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

Email: dilagiant@gmail.com

²Creative Visual Exchange Group, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam, 42300, Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

Email: nikazidah@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

CORRESPONDING

AUTHOR (*):

Norfadilah Kamaruddin
(dilagiant@gmail.com)

KEYWORDS:

Street art mural
Vandalism
Visual communication

CITATION:

Norfadilah Kamaruddin & Nik Nor Azidah
Nik Aziz. (2022). Exploration of Malaysian
Public Awareness Towards Visual on Street
Art Mural as a Medium of Communication.
*Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and
Humanities (MJSSH)*, 7(7), e001595.
<https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i7.1595>

Street Art Mural defined as an artwork that is placed externally in public areas and mostly accessible for public appreciation and viewing purposes. Therefore some people feel this street art mural as a vandalism that occurs which involves destruction or damage to public or private property. this study aim to investigate public awareness towards visual on street art mural as a medium of communication. There were two methods used in this research which were an observation on the visual used on street art mural and online survey questionnaires that provided more in -depth information relevant to this study. The outcome of this paper is hoped to provide a better understanding of visual on street art mural for better quality of public realm.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature in the area of street arts but it still needs further study either on its functional or artistic aspect; because there is still a risk that street art can cause another form of irritation especially when it is located in inappropriate places and/or with poor artistic quality.

1. Introduction

Street art mural is referred to any work of art painted directly to a wall, ceiling, or other permanent surfaces. It is also known as the artwork of the streets that can be drawn on the inside of the building or outside for public display (DeNotto, 2014). Some are drawn to represent the area of the mural itself or even to convey meaning to the public. Similarly, Street art mural is a well -known type of painting material or work of art painted by the artist on a surface such as a wall (Chang, 2008; Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2008). The result of this work is often considered to be able to attract the attention of the public and this can also generally make an area as one of the tourism attractions.

In Malaysia, there are several places where mural art can be found (Mohd Fabian, 2010). According to Tan (2014) the mural on the aforementioned building was painted with visual elements intended to remind its audience (in example local citizens of Kuala Lumpur and nearby areas) of their hometown. Similarly, mural art in the city of Johor Bahru (southern Malaysia) has also used visual elements of various ethnic groups in Malaysia in promoting patriotism (Yee, 2015; Mohd Fabian, 2010; Tahir, 2005). Beside historical and ethnic elements, iconic figures in Malaysia are also common subjects for mural art.

The street art mural commonly produced by the artist with a message that is conveyed by the artist to the public through painting to make it more interesting (Nicole Martinze, 2020). Therefore, some people argued that these street art mural is acts of vandalism (Isabelle Brajer, 2019; World Travel Guide, 2019). This perception needs to be changed because street art murals are a normal art that existed in the city as a tourist attraction. Thus, this research aim to investigate public awareness towards visual on street art mural as a medium of communication. In addition, by conducting this research it also can give an encouragement to the artists to continue their work and understood by the community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Street Art Mural: An overview

Street art is an original type of art that we can find only in the streets. Many people don't recognize this artwork like art and sometimes people relate this art with vandalism. Nowadays, many still consider the production of murals or visual street art as a way for a place to be the focus of the public. However, the production of the mural itself is to convey a message to the public or to show appreciation to certain parties through painting. Things like this will often only be the focus of the art group that has a foundation in art education. Some people who do not really know what street art means will consider the act to be an act of vandalism. This is because they are unable to understand the message being tried to convey through the painting itself.

By the end of the 20th century, street art has evolved into complex interdisciplinary forms of artistic expression from graffiti, stencils, murals and prints, through large scale projects and paintings of various artistic collaborations to street interventions and installations, as well as video and performative art (DeNotto, 2014). Towards these, there are few basic types and forms of street art including:

- i. Stencil : this type includes a homemade stencil, usually a paper or cardboard cut-out, in order to create an image that can be reproduced in an easy way.
- ii. Graffiti : painting on the surface of private or public property, visible to the public, commonly with a roll-on paint or with a can of spray and covering a surface with a mural painting.
- iii. Video projection : digitally projecting a computer-manipulated image onto surface via light and projection system.
- iv. Street installation : use 3-D objects and space to interfere with the urban settings; it is non permission based and once the sculpture or the object is installed it is left there by the artist.

2.2. Street Art Mural: Message Through Visual

Generally, the street art mural produced have their own meaning and sometimes symbolized the place itself in the urban community and its surrounding. Indeed, there are some street art murals be produced for the purpose of providing information or for marketing purposes and has its rationale towards improving the quality of the living environment. It also has been established that street art mural plays important roles in the following manner (Hilary, 2021; Hamilton City Council, 2010; Jasmi & Mohamad, 2016), namely: (i) Reflecting and expressing city's identity, (ii) Celebrating of significant people and places, (iii) Telling the stories and histories of a place, and (iv) Contributing to a sense of pride and belonging to the community.

3. Methodology

This descriptive study is dividing into two parts of study. The first part of study is a visual analysis of street art mural using photographic documentation. A simple random sampling was used in selecting the street art mural to representing the large population of street art mural in selected area within Kuala Lumpur. This method was used to identifying the most common visual images used at the selected street art mural.

The second part of study is to ascertaining a public knowledge and understanding of visual on street art mural. The data was gathered through online survey questionnaire which was distributed online over a period of 2 months. The questionnaires were divided into three sections, which consists of demographic characteristics, the knowledge and perception of local people in Malaysia toward mural art as well as understanding of the mural art in Malaysia.

The final part of study is to analyzed a public awareness towards visual on street art mural as a medium of communication. Both the data collected from part one and two been compared and triangulated before the findings establish.

4. Result

There are a few outcomes revealed from the study based on the data gathered through visual analysis and online survey questionnaires. Below are the outcomes revealed from both methods.

4.1. The Visual Used on Street Art Mural

Researchers have discovered, labelled and categorised themes based on mural art's location in Kuala Lumpur. Several themes were identified which were based on visual used and content analysis as summarised in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Mural Art Themes

Mural Art's Name	Visual Used	Themes
Lemang Time	Food, People	Heritage
Kopi 'O'	Coffee	Heritage
Bas Sekolah	Bus, Children	Local Symbol and Children
Sampan Boy	Local Sampan, Children	Children
The little boy	Children	Local Symbol

Malay Dance	People, Bunga Raya	Heritage
Mom's Love	People	Togetherness
Friendships Forever	Children	Togetherness
Durian Time	Children, Food	Local Symbol and Children
Animal	Orang Utan	Local Symbol
Old Man with Coffee	People,	Local Symbol
The Ceremony	People	Heritage
Bubble Balloon	Balloon	Children
Paper Plane	Children	Local Symbol and Children
Girl	People, Food	Local Symbol

Based on the observation, there are more than 100 beautiful street art mural that can be seen in Kuala Lumpur. Those masterpieces are created by talented local artists and foreigners. Referring to the [Figure 1](#) in example, all the mural art are by Ernest Zacharevic's, a foreigner artist. Those mural art named *Bas Sekolah* in Jalan Sultan, the little boy blowing bubbles in Jalan Alor, and the *Sampan* Boy in Jalan Gereja.

Figure 1: The visual used in Mural Art by Ernest Zacharevic



Within 100 street art murals been studying, it was established most of the mural art are using local cultural content and current issues that familiar by the local visitor. It was included visual of local transport such as bus, *sampan* and *beca*. Observation also discovered that most of the street art mural delivered the cultural and political message in Malaysia. Moreover a few mural art existed surrounding Kuala Lumpur are using a quit similar visual images such as human and animal ([Figure 2](#)). Therefore, there were also determined within this street art mural which the idea was complicated to be translate and explain. To conclude, the street art mural in Kuala Lumpur can be appreciated more in term of aesthetic value rather than cultural value. This consideration will make the street art mural can be more appreciation by the people.

Figure 2: The visual images used in Mural Art surrounding Kuala Lumpur



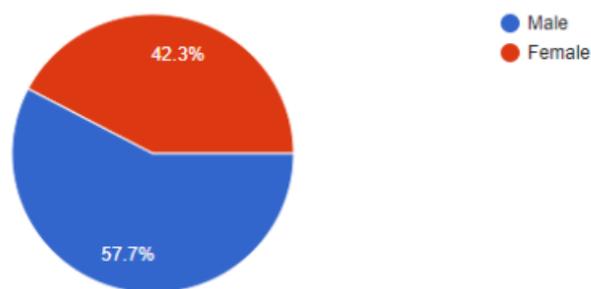
The main findings derived from the analysis of observation data established that the entire street art mural is located in the visible space and freely accessed by the public,

where people can directly interact with it. The analysis also shows that visual used on street art mural have functional value in order to cater the community understanding. Thus, this situation supposedly provides a better opportunity for the community to appreciate the art more rather than claimed the street art mural as a vandalism.

4.2. Respondents Demographics

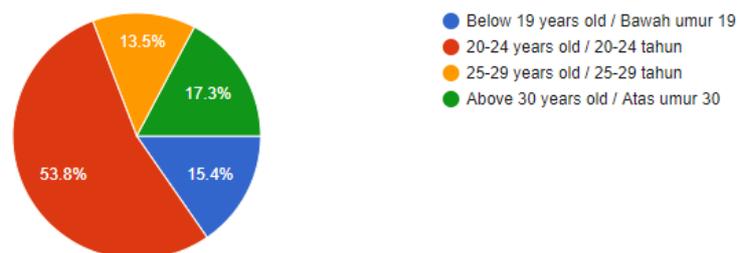
The online survey was investigated a public awareness towards visual on street art mural as a medium of communication in Malaysia. There were 352 respondents who participated in the survey. As refer to the [Figure 3](#), the findings reveal that 42.3% of the survey respondents are female, and 57.7% are male.

Figure 3: Respondents Demographic



As can be seen in the [Figure 4](#) below, it show the age differences of the respondents that participated in the survey. The majority respondents are aged from 20 to 24 years (53.8% of respondents) and followed by 17.3% aged 30 years and above. For respondents aged 19 years and below is 15.4% while the percentage for respondents aged 25 to 29 is 13.5%.

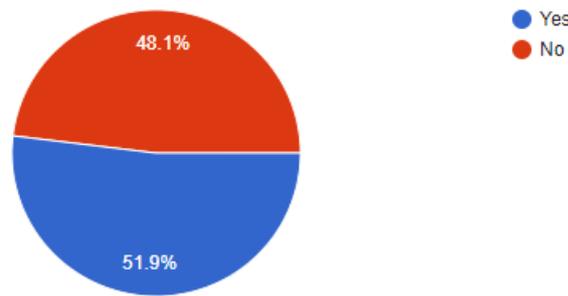
Figure 4: The age differences of the respondents



4.3. General Knowledge of Visual Street Art

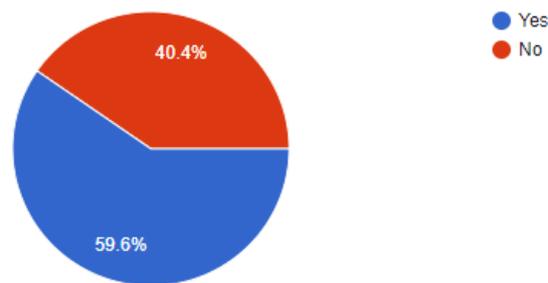
The online survey also determine the basic knowledge of the Malaysian public towards street art mural. [Figure 5](#) shows the respondents' basic knowledge of visual on street art mural. The difference between the two is not so much because the percentage of respondents who know what is visual meant is 51.9% while the percentage for respondents who do not know it is 48.1%. This shows that the percentage of the respondents that acknowledge about visual is the highest.

Figure 5: Respondents Knowledge of Visual on Mural Street Art



Meanwhile, the findings for basic knowledge of visual on street art mural within local community was also determined through this survey. Results showed that, overall 40.4% respondents have a no basic knowledge in art as refer to Figure 6. Meanwhile, The result can be seen in Figure 6 when 51.9% of them had a basic knowledge in art. This confirmed that majority of them knew that visual as an element of communication as they had a basic knowledge on visual in art.

Figure 6: Respondents Basic Knowledge in Art



4.4. The Level of Understanding and Awareness

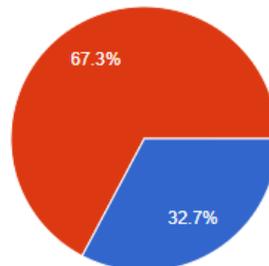
The survey result also illustrated there is a lack awareness and low understanding about the purpose and meaning of the visual used in street art mural in Malaysia. This clearly expressed in Figure 7 which half of the respondents choose NO on the survey and 26.9% claimed MAYBE. Indeed, it was clearly established that visual on street art mural could considered as an act of vandalism to them.

Figure 7: Respondents' understanding towards visual on street art mural



In responding to the question on what the public get from the street art mural, majority of the respondents (67.3%) claimed that most street art mural was produced with no message through the visual (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Respondents' responses towards visual on street art mural produced with no message



Based on the literature review, it is found that street art mural attributes to generate a better quality of life for the urban community. Besides as an attractiveness of an area, street art mural supposedly should reflect the city's identity and showcase the uniqueness of the local culture. For instance, street art mural also should enhance the knowledge among the urban community and encourage their participation in the public art making. However, from the data summarized, most public are still less knowledgeable and understanding towards street art mural. Thus, further study should cover in-depth about the street art mural and increasing the public awareness and understanding that street art mural is not vandalism. It needs to consider the diversity of people residing in Malaysia, which respect the local street art mural by promoting harmony and a sharing of understanding the communities and cultures through the arts.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigate public awareness towards visual on street art mural as a medium of communication. Through two methods used in this research, which were an observation on the visual used on selected street art mural and online survey questionnaires, an extensive information was established and relevant to this study. To conclude, there was almost local people had a low perception towards street art mural as they think the street art mural is more to vandalism. In the other hand, a quarter of the public appreciated the street art mural as it makes the place is safer even though most of them lack of knowledge in street art mural. The appreciation of street art mural among public was defined as a potential research study to look into in the future study as it creates a good visual quality.

The outcome of this paper is hoped to provide a better understanding of visual on street art mural for better quality of public realm.

Acknowledgement

We thank everyone who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research.

Funding

This study received no funding from whatever bodies.

Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

References

- Chang, T. C. (2008). Art and soul: Powerful and powerless art in Singapore. *Environmental and Planning*, 40(8), 1921 - 1943.
- DeNotto, M. (2014). Street Art and Graffiti Resources for Online Study. *College & Research Libraries News*, 75, 208-211.
- Hamilton City Council (2015). Public Art Plan and Development Guide. *Hamilton City Council*.
https://www.hamilton.govt.nz/ourcity/artsandculture/Documents/Public_Art_Development_Guide_FINAL.pdf
- Hilary, A. T. C. (2021). Public Art and the Impact it has on the Society. *Journal of Contemporary Indonesian Art*, 7(2), 98-104.
- Irish Museum of Modern Art. (2008). What is public art?. *Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA)*.
- Isabelle Brajer, (2019). The Problem of Vandalism on Contemporary Outdoor Murals and Street Art. *CeROArt Online*. <http://journals.openedition.org/ceroart/5761>
- Jasmi, M. F., & Mohamad, N. H. N. (2016). Roles of Public Art in Malaysian Urban Landscape towards Improving Quality of Life: Between Aesthetic and Functional Value. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 222, 872–880.
- Mohd Fabian, H. (2010). Towards integrating public art in Malaysian urban landscape. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.*, 251 – 264.
- Nicole Martinze (2020, Disember 1). Street Art or Vandalism?. *Art Law Journal Online*. <https://alj.artpreneur.com/street-art-or-vandalism/>
- Tahir, O. M. (2005). *Urban landscape management in Malaysia: in search of a sustainable management system*. [Doctoral thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne]. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/urban-landscape-management-in-malaysia-in-search-of-a-sustainable-management-system/oclc/62593482>
- Tan, C. (2014, 24 May). Giant Village Mural in KL. *The Star Online*. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/community/2014/05/24/giant-village-mural-in-the-city-painting-onwisma-allianz-building-the-biggest-by-lithuanianarti/>
- World Travel Guide (2019, August 7). From vandalism to masterpiece: Malaysia's street art revolution. *World Travel Guide*. <https://www.worldtravelguide.net/features/feature/from-vandalism-to-masterpiece-malaysias-street-art-revolution-2/>
- Yee, X. Y. (2015, 24 August). JB Merdeka murals reflect Malaysian life. *The Star Online*. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/08/24/jb-merdeka-murals-reflect-malaysian-life/>