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The Commodification of the Female Body in the Akamba Pop Music

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25 October 2022 This paper interrogates the objectified and commodified images of women constructed in the Akamba pop songs, especially those selected for this study. It

Keywords: analyses how these construed femininities offer a gender imbalance between men and women. From this standpoint, the paper discusses the various representations of gender and the significance attached to the gendered implication. The paper interrogates the images of women and their underlying meanings. The key goal is to examine how pop artists use imagery as a linguistic resource to foreground representations of gender while using the female body as the point of reference. Guiding the discussion is Luce Irigaray's postulation on the male gaze and how it psychologically oppresses women using language. The article uses qualitative methodology whereby Ten Akamba pop songs are purposively sampled and sourced from YouTube. Sampled songs were transcribed, translated, and analysed for language use. The songs were interpreted using intersectionality and Luce Irigaray's postulation on gendered language. The paper's premise is to map out areas of women's marginalisation in Akamba pop songs. The article, therefore, examines how gendered inscription delineates women as sexual objects and commodities of male power.

*Akamba,
Pop Music,
Gender,
Luce Irigaray,
Language.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Akamba pop song genre is indeed a repository of a culture where we can trace the community’s power relations from the locus of gender. This paper examines how the musical lore delineates the female body by interrogating how pop artists present different sexualised constructs of women in the Akamba realm. Pop music from the Kamba has emerged as a leading opinion shaper of how key subjects like gender are addressed in the modern epoch. Mutono et al. (2018, p.1) in “Social and Cultural antecedents of Kalambya Boys and Sisters Kamba Popular Band”, report that the pop artist’s new experiences reflect the modern environment different from the traditional scene. The authors argue that popular music has changed from the communal perspective and refocused on the “time and space” that stems from real-life scenarios similar to oral poetry. They declare that contemporary songs’ functionary significance is born out of the meanings and interpretations advanced in them (Mutono et al., 2018, p.1). Therefore, the paper investigates the emerging subject of the representation of gender by analysing the female body as presented in the songs under study.

THE FEMALE BODY IN AKAMBA MUSIC

Kamba music is lewd with explicit messages that touch on gender. Many songs employ imagery as a

strategic way of sending out messages, and many of them help entrench negative stereotypes meant to dent womanhood. In these seamlessly “beautiful” lyrics, we trace the instances of the sexualised female body. The representation of women in popular culture displays how patriarchy exerts its gendered ideology through the power to define its female subject. Margret Marshement, in “The Picture is Political: Representation of Women in Contemporary Popular Culture”, notes, “In a patriarchal culture, women are defined by those who subordinate them” (Marshement, 1993, p.125). Marshement observation reveals how male masculinities construct gender and the power politics embedded in the gendered meanings. In this view, the paper fronts the sexualised image of a woman as depicted by male masculinity in contemporary Akamba pop music. The central argument is that by mapping the femininities, we locate instances where the female body is objectified, thus provoking female dignity.

Women As Sexual Objects

In the song, *Miss Musembi*, Ken wa Maria describes his experiences with a particular female teacher in his neighbourhood. The song begins with Wa Maria revealing his sexual fantasies towards his secret admirer. Then, in a series of sexual charades coated with sugary and attractive beauty, Miss Musembi is given a “plaything” presentation. The song proceeds.

*Ve mwalimu umwe jirani nimwendaa
nimwonaa avutukite ngewa itomo*

When I see her I feel pumped with desire
I always ask myself, “Miss Musembi, when
will I have you”?

*Nikulasya miss musembi ngumya nakuWe mwalimu
muthenya waku noukavika
Ngukunngie na ngikutesa niwe muyo
Ni ready yu nike mathambi ngaekewa
Ngwivithile kala kasila wisilaa
nikwithiwa mwiitu wa musembi gwenda muno*

One day madam, I will get you.
I will prowl and snatch you, so I get
pleasured
I am ready to commit the sinful act
Will trail you in the path
For I lust over you, Miss Musembi

The above song describes *Miss Musembi* as a “beast of prey” being pursued by a male hunter who hopes to win her. The man’s lack of persuasive skills leads him to employ force when he declares he will “prowl and snatch his secret admirer. The artist’s avowal to forcefully have her as a lover is an affront to *Miss Musembi*’s womanhood. *Miss Musembi* as a teacher, entails a maternal portrait that engulfs her as the giver of education and a caregiver. Conversely, the artist presents how male expectations are the driving forces that mutilate *Miss Musembi*’s professional status, which is evident when the pop artist describes his feelings towards her. Ken wa Maria characterises *Miss Musembi* as an object that can be grasped, touched, and manipulated by the male hand without a prior will by the female. Her tranquillity is tempered with when the artist vows to employ force in his effort to win her; he says, “One day, madam, I will get you”. The man’s thirsty eyes prowl on *Miss Musembi* with an ulterior motive. Further, the line “when I see her, I feel pumped with desire” indicates infatuation, a common thread used to justify sexualising women in society. Additionally, the artist evokes a series of images that relegate *Miss Musembi* as an object of pleasure in the song.

While the artist is keen on labelling *Miss Musembi* as a “prostitute”, on the other hand, he silences the noble image of a teacher. His tactical approach to his female subject is a potent one. For instance, he vows to stealthily go after the teacher and accomplish his sexual desires while disintegrating a key member of society. *Miss Musembi*’s objectification stems from how male hegemony overrides her professional nobility by labelling her a mere “body” caressed by the male hand. Additionally, the feminist shove locates the othering of an unmarried woman targeted due to her status. The artist seems to endorse that an unmarried female is unwelcome in patriarchy, which welcomes contemptuous treatment. The feminine template constructed here is that marriage as a patriarchal inscription defines a woman’s cultural identity as a noble member of society. Although *Miss Musembi* is a teacher, her noble profession does not exonerate her. She is imagined through the lens of her body; thus, she is

bound by the feminisation inscribed by the patriarchal order.

In “Women of Color in Hip Hop: The Pornographic Gaze”, *Race, Gender & Class*, Margaret Hunter and Kathleen Soto observe that images in rap music verses are not just sexist but also pass on a specific sexual orientation and racial philosophy. The intermixing of sex, race externalisation, and savagery in contemporary standard hip-pop has largely brought about a pornification of the class by extending sexual entertainment into youth culture (Hunter & Soto, 2009).

According to Hunter and Soto, pop music lyrics aim to diminish women’s value by labelling them as mere “bodies”. For instance, the song *Miss Musembi* offers a misogynistic depiction of a woman (Hunter & Soto, 2009). The artist charges against celebrating women’s social representation by being against the junction of female liberation and gendered beliefs. Therefore, the male’s masculinity here confines a woman to discrimination based on the gendered belief that an unmarried woman is sexually available.

Underneath the artist’s theme of sexuality lies a gendered atrocity inscribed by the male artist’s contemptuous attitude. Therefore, by devaluing *Miss Musembi*, the pop artist espouses a sexualised image of the female body, which reduces her to an object of pleasure. The pop artist portrays *Miss Musembi* as a covetable thing he can prey on to satisfy his sexual thirst. *Miss Musembi* is a victim of sexism since her pursuer fantasises about having sex to fulfil his desires, as observed in these lines; “I will trail you in your path” and “will pounce on you and feast on you”. Ken wa Maria constructs a forceful entry into the feminine world, contrary to another artist *Nick Kisomo* in *Kindu ni Mwitilye*, who posits that moderation is vital when seducing a lady. The artist gives tips on how to woo a woman. He begins by saying that courting a woman is an arduous task that calls for strategy. *Nick Kisomo* details how a woman’s body is centred on the sex organs, specifically the vagina. The song proceeds as follows,

kindu ni mwitilye avai
kindu ni mwitilye ana waema
metho muvenclye wavinya
uvenasya nesa wendo usu umilaa makai mengi
it matters how you ask for it

you receive according to your borrowing prowess
 eyes attract according to how they blink
 you blink with eyes full of love that attracts many
 men

The song loosely translates to “the language of seduction”, where Kisomo begins with a diplomatic call to men to respect women’s sexual choices but takes a twist when the singer questions women’s character in repetitive reference to their female organs. The song describes the coitus activity as the epitome of men’s pleasure and pride. To explore women’s thighs, men must employ all tricks and trinkets to land their women of choice. The artist focuses on the female genitalia by using the word “it”. Typically, he isolates the female genitalia as the sole representative symbol of women creating a singular definition of femininity. By employing the derogative word, “it” signifies the death of a holistic description of women. The male narrative entrenched in this song dismembers women as “Vaginas”, a strategy of mutilating female poise.

According to Eve Ensler in her soliloquy *the vaginal Monologue*, by appraising the female genitalia, women can liberate themselves from the masculine order that robs them of pleasure and sexual liberty. Two of her powerful scenes in the play include the “Floods” and “My village was my vagina”. In these scenes, Ensler envisions women’s painful experiences flooded with deep and troublesome emotions that echo their past tribulations. For Ensler, celebrating the vagina radiates women’s hope and resilience and is a naughty way to bash women’s oppressors (Ensler, 2007). Thus, her work surmises that if the symbol of men’s power is the penis, then women’s power should be centred on their vaginas. Following Ensler’s assertion, Kisomo seems to exonerate men’s devaluation of women by acknowledging their womanhood as a precious component of their sexuality. However, his symbolic definition of women as “vaginas” registers an attack from the male perspective. Kisomo’s composition gratifies the male’s expectation of occupying the female body through the act of sex. Admittedly, his definition of the female subject is embedded in the phallogocentric discourse, which excludes a female-centred description of a woman’s body.

In the essay *Laugh of Medusa*, Hellen Cixous argues that the feminine voice is trapped in the masculine discourse, entangling women’s efforts to break away from the phallogocentric realm. She also opposes the masculine banter that uses language to create sexual effigies of women (Cixous, et al., 1976, p.p. 875). For instance, Kisomo documents the pleasure of having a woman in the “romanced description” that masks a hidden misogynistic agenda by saying, “it matters the way you ask for it”. In this statement, the male expectation overpowers the woman’s choice and freedom to engage in a coital activity. Kisomo’s sentiments represent the hyperreal male narrative that impedes women’s liberation and sexual liberty. Additionally, Kisomo’s intimate description of sex and desire in the song bluntly points to the commodification of the women he purports to celebrate.

From the two songs, the study locates the instances where women are demeaned in contemporary pop music because they are only praised for their sexy and rotund appearances, which reinforce the male gaze. Lois Tyson posits, “In patriarchy, women are merely tokens, merely objects to be seen and commodities” (Tyson, 2014, p.102). Describing women on their physical appearances like their necks, legs, faces, and other body parts appreciates women only for their sexuality. In “Changing Representations of work in popular culture”, Guy Ketts notes that women in popular culture continue to be displayed in a sexist way in that their representations are based on the feminine touch that revolves around beauty, sex appeal, and the pop trends associated with women decorations (Ketts, 2008 p.1). Ketts underscores that even though the feminine traits are markers of gender differentiations, they are also used to bolster a disgraced perception of women because they are employed in a way that objectifies women.

In this view, women are celebrated not for their intellectual abilities but their attractive looks. For example, in Ken wa Maria’s song *Ngemi* line 2 indicates the way patriarchy endorses the value of

women based on their beautiful attractiveness as the pop artist posits:

*“Namisisya metho nyie newie kweli ve vata”.
Mbaitu nyie ningwendea Ngemi, na nunduaka
moombiwe nundu wa aume nyie nina right ya
kwendana nina ngemi*

When I looked at her eyes, I was filled with desire

My relatives, I am in love with Ngemi, and now that women were created for men, I have a right to demand love from Ngemi) (last line)

Ngemi in this song, represents female fragility. “Ngemi” translates to a sparking light, indicating that Ngemi is a beautiful, well-endowed woman. Wa maria declares his “love” and intimate fantasies towards Ngemi. He expresses his lively interest through a series of promises by vowing to sell his cars to acquire the money that will skew Ngemi into falling into his infatuation fantasies. For instance, in the last line, Ken denotes that he is rightfully entitled to coerce Ngemi into his love schemes, leaving her (Ngemi) with no option or free volition.

Additionally, as Ken ends his pop song, he denotes that women were created for men. Again, this pronouncement indicates male contempt for women’s freedom. Their male counterparts’ dictation limits their free will and instead sentences them into a desperate cocoon, caging their decision-making and reasoning. The impression of femininity attached to the sexual appeal denotes their novice nature. Therefore, the artist’s remarks highlight how feminine qualities, such as sex appeal, reinforce a prejudiced view of women. Through this construed view, the representation of women is still under the male gaze because a woman is valued through the prism of the sexual undertones associated with the female body. This is also evident in the next song, *Kwi aka na iveti* by *Kyuso pain*.

Syindu mbanake mutwe nginya uyaai
“Beautiful things from toe to head”.

The pop artist’s description alerts us to how women are perceived as commodities or “things” looked at by the male eye. The description constructs a feminine identity undervalued in that prominence is given to the causal qualities centred on the external features, as the pop artist elaborates in the above example: “from toe to head”. This also conveys the power relations that take the south-to-north dichotomy, pointing out how women are placed in the lower strata. The only significance attached to

the sexualised body of a woman is the demeaning aspect since objectification does not celebrate being a woman.

Objectification in Akamba pop music has attracted attention in social commentaries. For instance, Austin Bukenya, in “*My Machakos is doing things with words, including tragic pregnancies*”, surmises that a language is a potent tool that plays a significant role in enabling vile acts in society. The scholar links pop music as a factor that has encouraged or motivated the astronomical rise in teenage pregnancies. He states that 4,000 girls got impregnated in Machakos County in four months, a disturbing statistic. He proceeds as follows

“Our prophetic brother, Dr. Ezekiel Mutua of the Kenya Film Certification Board, suggested this tragedy (teenage pregnancies) was traceable to contemporary Kikamba pop music, which he says is full of vulgarities and obscenities. Such music objectifies women and girls, reducing them to sex “things” (Bukenya, 2020, p.33)

This article takes cognizant of the above allegation since, judging from the artists, it is attestable that the images foregrounded in sampled Kikamba songs help send messages that seem to advocate obscene depictions of women and the pregnancy epidemic. To a more significant extent, pop music plays a critical role in influencing the social etiquette of young people. In this line of thought, Bukenya epitomises his argument: “Constant exposure to vulgarity, obscenity, and pornography, including linguistic crudity, fundamentally affects the thought and behaviour patterns of people, especially young people” (Bukenya, 2020, p.33). However, pop music also helps raise public awareness about vices. The study also acknowledges that pop music also educates on the thorny issue of the victimisation of women. The paper analyses Ken wa Maria’s song *Kasusu ni Muito* to solidify this claim.

<i>kasusu tyuu ni muto, kasusu tyuu eka kwiw'a woo ithea kasusu eka kwiw'a woo ni mwanafunzi we kasusu Muthetheni secondary school (line 3) na ena ivu we kasusu nati kiko kiseo na alungw'a ku sukulu na alungwa</i>	This is kasusu, and she is pregnant (line 1) her father is irritated and annoyed (line 2) she is pregnant, which is an embarrassment (line 4) She was expelled from school (line 5)
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In the said song, the artist sings about how a young girl's dream to advance in education is thwarted when she is impregnated. This condemns the poor child to abandonment since her father rejects her throwing her destiny in a spin. The song presents how young girls are victims of sexual atrocities perpetuated by rogue men. The sexual violation of the young girl offers the uneven ground that women have to endure in society. The song's contents also seem to paint the blame on the victim rather than the perpetrator. Judging from the way the artist explains that the young girl should have considered the

sacrifices her parents made for her to attend school. Bukenya advocates for music that raises awareness against the gory representation of the female body.

Heightened prejudice against women is also exemplified in the following song, "Kutomba by Katombi", as the song's name suggests, women have been targeted in this popular genre as objects for sexual glorification. Katombi points out that women get "galvanised" by the tune of his solo guitar. The song goes:

<i>syana no kutomba aka no kutomba aume no kutomba kwi kisinga utuku Wona namikolya kituo mumanyae aka no kutomba na kisinga utuku</i>	Girl's whine, women whine, and men whine it is going down tonight Mbasu am the burning log of fire come and see the master soloist who plays the guitar skilfully at night.
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The name "kutomba" translates to whining, a sexual dance, but its connotative meaning is sexing. It demonstrates how phallic power yokes women into submission. The act of sex is a means to subdue women as the singer posits, "Mbasu am the burning log of fire come and see the master soloist who plays the guitar skilfully". The words "burning log of fire" and "master soloist" allude to the phallic power of the man. The two images evoke undertones of male dominance. The first one, "burning log of fire", depicts a man who boasts of his sexual prowess.

The singer creates a false impression of men by amplifying their sexual capabilities hiding their weaknesses. To build on this point, the study considers Baudrillard's *simucralum* who notes "the truth that hides that there is none" (Baudrillard, 1994, p 1). According to Jean Baudrillard in *Simucrala and simulation*, "the factual representation is immediately recognisable by the evidence" (Baudrillard, 1994 p 1). Having that in mind, the "burning log of fire" means men harbour an immense desire to sleep with multiple women, but the blame is pointed at women for being loose.

The man desires to deploy his phallus to show his sexual virility. He bolsters his tough masculine power amongst his female lovers through such antics. The second one, "master soloist", illustrates how the man has several mistresses whom he occasionally beds. Katombi's representation connotes men as robust studs who bed multiple women. Using the word "master soloist", the singer indicates how women underestimate men's sexual power, but it is a strategy to cover a poor performance between the sheets. Katombi addresses his female subjects by revering them to appreciate his sexual exploits.

The sexual dance "whining" is an attractive strategy that draws women into men's traps, and the stage is then set for the travesty of women's rights. The artist's reference to the guitar further draws our attention to the phallic symbolic order. The guitar's physical appearance strikes a resemblance to the male organ, which in this context is intruding into the female world as the following line says, "When I get hold of my guitar, women just know it's going down tonight". Undeniably, this is a declaration of the male power privilege over the female gender.

A similar scenario is in the song *Mukorea* by Ken wa Maria, where phallic imagery amplifies sexual subjugation. Ken wa Maria confesses his desire to have sex with a foreign national from Korea. In a coded way, the artist declares a love rout on the

*inya ni mukorea na ithe ni mumasai enda
nivande itumo na indembesya Korea
nakwa nota ngukia Karata vujo sya kimasai
amina uvanda itumo*

woman in which he threatens to use love charms solicited from Kitui County. His sole mission is to conquer the woman's vineyard and enjoy the forbidden fruit. The song goes as follows:

Her mother is Korean, and her father is a Maasai. I want to strike my spear, then we tour Korea I fear her war skills and the Maasai rage after I strike my spear, I will first visit Kitui to get charms to make her docile as I pound my spear

The song details the experiences of a man who cannot make love to a woman, so he uses love charms to make the woman docile. His quest to make love to a Korean woman attempts to revisit the primary maternal bond detached when the umbilical cord was cut. Additionally, using love charms symbolises that his manhood cannot operate optimally and needs special assistance, indicating a "severed erection". The artist, in this case, offers a colonised male fantasy aimed at suppressing the female body. His conceptualisation of the "Korean woman" is a reworking of gendered ties that universalise the masculine order by extending his boundaries of female negation. In "Masculine Subjects: Notes on the Thought of Luce Irigaray", Ovidiu Anemtoicei (2012) says,

In the Beginning, She Was, Irigaray returns to the Heideggerian concept of the 'path,' in relation to her critique of Western male culture as one of estrangement and exteriority 'rushing forward to build a world which eventually substitutes itself for us'. lation to her critique of Western male culture as one of estrangement and exteriority 'rushing forward to build a world which eventually substitutes itself for us' (Anemtoicei, 2014 n.p).

Anemtoicei argues that for Luce Irigaray, the male morphology reimagines a female world anchored on the primary reproductive roles such as sexuality, which is a controlling strategy. The dominating phallic order reconstructs the male body as the unattached self to the maternal world in this contained space. Irigaray further indicates that the

severing of the umbilical cord leaves men with an identity crisis, which they try to rediscover through following the "concept of the path". In *mukorea* artist's allusion to going to Korea signifies a symbolic return to self-discovery. Using the sexuality difference, male masculinity annihilates the woman's body to show dominance. The artist further proceeds to describe his female subject using a hegemonic language. This is evident in the substitution process of the severed phallic erection "I will strike my spear", which attempts to replicate the maternal umbilical cord, the signifier of life. By mutilating the female body, the artist represents the male quest that attempts to remap the shattered link to the maternal world.

In "Representations of women in male-produced "Urban grooves" music in Zimbabwe", Tendai Chari posits that "women are annihilated, mutilated and reduced to severed body parts such as breasts, necks, thighs, and "buttocks" (Chari, 2008, p. 94). Of noteworthy is that these descriptive images of women centre on the sexual difference. Men visualise the breast and buttocks as sites of pleasures, while for women they are key organs that support life through the maternal role that women play. Therefore, the construed male representation nods on the sexualised women's portrayal. This infuriates and irks feminist critics who seek to salvage the undignified portrayal of women in pop culture. The study locates these instances of such crude composition in the following piece by the Pop artist Nick Kisomo, who makes his submission as follows,

Uvenasya muno wendo usu umilaa Makai maingi

Your eyes blink nicely; that love intoxicates men.

Again, in this case we consider the Baudrillard *Simuclarum* on the representation of reality. In this

line, the artist notes that the woman's sexy eyes are the driving force that makes men hypnotic. The

artist believes that the woman's sexual eyes have led her to entertaining several men, which means she is loose. However, the reality is that the beauty admiration statement masks a hyperreal gaze meant to berate a woman who has rejected a man's advances. Kisomo's *simuclarum*, therefore, signifies the dejection aftermath that befalls him. He results in offering a battering opinion regarding the woman's image by implicitly calling her a harlot. The sickening gesture stems from how beauty is idolised to separate the body and the mind, a male masculine way of harassing the female gender. Feminist critics have since time immemorial being greatly irked by such baseless allegations that denote women as the body while men as the mind. The definition of a woman envisioned by the pop artist (Nick Kisomo) is leaning towards the inferior aspects of the body. A woman is constructed as a creature that is incontinent. The artist's lustful eyes accentuate how women's looks are important rather than other critical aspects such as morals and beliefs. The mentioning of eyes and the body "undertones" illicit strong views on how society has stifled women's endeavour to acquire equal privileges as their male counterparts. According to the male gaze, the sexist prism highlights succulent elements such as eyes, backsides, and breasts, which paints a scattered female gender, rendering women non-full individuals. This results in the discourteous

representation of women, which aids foster a non-egalitarian society.

Women As Commodities

Reflecting on some of the songs under study, we trace the commercialised depiction of women as "walking goods" in the social market. The female body thus is explainable through the lens of economics. Women as commodities relate to how women are the products and workers in the economic model. Men control the factors of production labour, capital, and land, while women have no determined value of their own since the market economy is out of their control. The male order determines the exchange value of women by controlling the means of production. In this relationship, gender is dichotomised into Bourgeoisie (men) vs Proletarians (women) (Boxer, M. J. (2007 p. 132). Capitalism changed the way we perceive the world. Material culture has altered the human dynamics of real experiences, feelings, and conscious desires. "Ngemi by Ken wa Maria" delineates how gendered materialism is mirrored in pop music. The artist epitomises the commodified allegation by describing his feelings and plans to dedicate huge chunks of money to acquire his "prized beauty". Quoting line 5:

Kethwa no mbesa nithoosya ngali syi itatu "If its money I will have to sell my three vehicles
Nissan, Wanzanze, na Starlet nundu wa Ngemi namely Nissan, Wanzanze and Starlet because of you
 Ngemi".

"Ngemi", as described in the song, is a victim of declared conquest of love. His admirer will stop at nothing before the girl accepts his advances, thereby sanctioning the hopeless girl. Ken wa Maria thus recreates the exchange value of women where their bodies act as commercialised beauty entities. The artist compares Ngemi's identity based on her corresponding material value. Through this, Ngemi is monetised by the male order while her character and desires are shelved. Commercialised beauty creates a capitalistic gaze that removes reality from the female body by redefining the relations between men and women to that of a merchant and his goods. Therefore, as part of media culture, pop music entrenches the loss of distinction of women's real use-value. Women are slaves of their bodies. In the process, they lose their selfhood.

For instance, Ngemi's use value attached to either of the following; as a girl, mother, woman, and female, is swapped by the exchange value of the money the singer pledges to spend on her. She is no longer identifiable by her feminine markers, but she is a "walking car". She ceases to be an abstract being by relating her to monetary worthiness but a commodity owned by her merchant (the male admirer). Another case is evident when the singer sings, "*Ngoo ya mundu yo yenda kindu vo vaitei Kusema kweli yo*" which translates to when someone loves something there is no mercy. Calling women "things" is another flashpoint for commodification as demonstrated in the song "Fundamentals" by Ken wa Maria.

Things are the things x2

Things are your things x2

These are the fundamentols x2

The artist describes women as “essential goods”, as the title of the song suggests. The male is transfixed on the physical attributes of the female as the song repeatedly uses the word “Things” to describe women. The song represents a feminine identity that is worthless, contrary to the title of the song

“Fundamentals”. Women are essential and critical in men’s lives when he terms them as fundamentals. An English word described in the oxford learners dictionary as a “leading or primary principle, rule, law or article, which serves as the groundwork of a system (an essential part” (2020). Owing to the term fundamentals, the artist evokes a sense of essentialism that men cannot survive without women. A similar instance is in the song *Syindu sya Mutongoi* by *Ken wa Maria*. The song goes as follows:

<i>Ndanu lika ngalini oinu ya mutongoi</i>	Ndanu, you the best quality for the chairman
<i>Wiamba uvondethya raha iwe ni mutongoi</i>	The chairman will spoil you
<i>Mbesa itwingwa shida iwe kwa mutongoi</i>	Money is not a problem to the chairman
<i>Karibu kwa mutongoi tyu uu x2</i>	Welcome to the Chairman

In the song, the artist fantasises about hanging out with a beautiful girl. He proclaims he is moneyed and willing to spoil her; in return, the girl should yield her “goodies” to him. Here, the man seems to exploit the naïve and fragile traits associated with females. The promises of free rides and hangouts present a woman in a restricted role, such as a clandestine lover been chaperoned by a rich man.

willing to spend big. In this song, this study alleges that the constructed view of women is equated to commercial goods placed on shelves in a supermarket. Another song that captures the theme of “possessiveness” is “Slay Queen by Katombi. The song gives the picturesque of how women have inflated their value to attract much premium. The artist carries forward the demanding nature of women than men must yield to be accorded an opportunity to become acquaintances. The song goes as follow:

Therefore, reflects the commodified nature of women. In this view, this study locates women’s demanding nature, which is only matched by those

<i>Mbevi slay queen karembo highend kana slay queen na kena ngalama</i>	Baby slay queen high-end beauty baby slay queen you too expensive
<i>Syindu ila ke kwenda nasyo ni highend nako ni highend I kilasi ki juu</i>	Highend salon baby Westlands and the clothing brands are Versace and Gucci.
<i>Salon high-end mbevi west lands na syo ngua ni Versace na Gucci</i>	The things you want are much high-end and you also high-end your class is too high

The artist describes women using symbols of a capitalistic economy. He begins by decrying how the postmodern view of beauty is attached to the high-end luxurious items like iPhones, cars, and designer clothes like Gucci. Such models of postmodernism have altered the way we perceive the world as Baudrillard argues, “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—that engenders the territory” (Baudrillard, 1994, p 1).

mirage. Illusions, artifices, and imitations have replaced ideals on the nature of life. It is almost impossible to recognise the actual individual one is dealing with. Katombi surmises that women have modelled themselves to appear attractive and sexy to the eyes of their beholder. His point mirrors women as artificial “goods” that are counterfeited to inflate femininity. The territory is no longer recognisable by looking at the map, which in this case, the female body has been inscribed with modernity, merging representation with the reality of gender. The influx of flashy trends has redefined women’s beauty. A woman’s image has been proliferated, thereby distorting its reality.

According to Baudrillard’s argument espoused above, in the postmodern world, the reality is a

Furthermore, the associative nature of sparkling products such as high-end cars, phones, and luxurious services like salons and spa further invokes the warped view that women are goods and services that men can use at their advantage, a claim that buttresses marginalisation. The connecting relationship between a man and a woman takes the dependency trajectory, a disturbing analogy that does not inspire confidence in females. In “*Gender roles in pop lyrics, A discourse analysis of Lady Gaga*”, Brigitta Abrahamson analyses Lady Gaga music by championing against women as decorations or commodities in pop music. The author argues that a narrow gender role exists under the thematic of beauty. She further points out that cosmeticised beauty is a fetish way to commercialise the female body (Abrahamson, 2011 p 11-12). Our analysis of the music above posits that women are associated with sparkling products such as high-end cars, phones, and luxurious services like salons and spas. By cosmetizing the female body, the artist invokes a warped view that women are goods and services for men.

CONCLUSION

The article has discussed the commodified images of femininity as constructed in the songs selected for this study. It has interrogated representation of gender by using the female body as the point of departure in understanding men and women in the Kamba realm. Images identified include women as sexual objects and women as commodities. Its central argument underpinned that women are sexually subdued while men are acquitted of sexual atrocities. The paper concludes that the male gaze constructs the female body as the sexual difference in the shadow of male power. The objectification of women is disrespectful to their position as mothers and professionals.

Further, women's agency has been diminished in favour of glorifying sex. Women's voices are silenced and marginalised when portrayed as objects, prey animals, commodities, or malevolent people. The paper concludes that masculinities in Akamba pop songs construct prevalent images of women to entrench dominance.

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