



## Ghanaian values in motion: A content analysis of slogans on commercial vehicles in Accra

Abraham Kenin, Vivian Dzokoto, Annabella Osei-Tutu & Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

To cite this article: Abraham Kenin, Vivian Dzokoto, Annabella Osei-Tutu & Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (10 Jun 2024): Ghanaian values in motion: A content analysis of slogans on commercial vehicles in Accra, Journal for Cultural Research, DOI: [10.1080/14797585.2024.2364636](https://doi.org/10.1080/14797585.2024.2364636)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14797585.2024.2364636>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 10 Jun 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 284




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## Ghanaian values in motion: A content analysis of slogans on commercial vehicles in Accra

Abraham Kenin <sup>a</sup>, Vivian Dzokoto<sup>b</sup>, Annabella Osei-Tutu<sup>c</sup> and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Australia; <sup>b</sup>Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, USA; <sup>c</sup>Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana; <sup>d</sup>Theology, Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana

### ABSTRACT

Slogans on commercial vehicles are a common sight in Ghana. These material artefacts can provide insight into beliefs and values about the sociocultural, spiritual, and political experiences of life in the contemporary Ghanaian context. In this study, we collected and analysed a total of 438 commercial vehicles' slogans from 5 main transportation terminals in the Accra metropolitan area. Our thematic analysis of these slogans shows a major emphasis on religious and spiritual values to the extent that most of the recorded slogans serve as positive affirmations of religious values and sources of spiritual encouragement. The dominance of religious references in such slogans highlights the importance of religiosity as a cultural value in everyday life in Ghana.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 27 March 2024  
Accepted 3 June 2024

### KEYWORDS

Vehicle slogans; values; spirituality; religion; Ghana; Africa

## Introduction

In the West African country of Ghana, public transportation is an important means of getting people and goods from place to place. Since the advent of motorised transport in Ghana in the early twentieth century, public road transport has been largely operated by private entrepreneurs (Stasik, 2017). Beyond their main goal of operating public transport businesses, these private entrepreneurs engage in or exhibit paraphernalia that is of cultural significance (Stasik and Klaeger, 2018). An instance of this larger industrial culture is vehicle slogans which are normally placed on the wind-screens and windows of vehicles. Ordinarily, the texts for these slogans are derived from old proverbs, modern sayings, Christian prayers, the Bible, newspaper report and political events (Kayi, 2016; Powell, 2012). Increasingly, many are also coming from Islamic texts with some even displaying the images of the National Chief Imam alongside these slogans. Slogans on commercial vehicles are ubiquitous in the Ghanaian setting just as other developing countries (Lewis, 1998). These present a dynamic way of learning about cultural representations of society (Guseh, 2008). For instance, value systems could be ascertained by studying the occurrence of these

**CONTACT** Abraham Kenin  a.kenin@ecu.edu.au  School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, WA 6027, Australia

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

popular cultural practices. Content analyses of slogans on vehicles through ethnographic methods and social psychological approaches indicate that vehicle slogans are discursive means of expressing emotions and social status (Chiluwa, 2008). Empirical findings from diverse studies suggest that vehicle slogans constitute effective communication tools within every sociocultural context. They may further engender socio-cultural imperatives that are salient in determining how a group of people interrelate and engage with others.

What ideals do Ghanaians consider important, strive towards, and structure their lives around? What drives Ghanaian-ness and Ghanaian identity at the individual level? The answer to these questions partly lies in identifying, documenting, examining, and understanding Ghanaian values. Studying values in any social context makes it possible to document indigenous representation of knowledge, insights, culture and values domains. In psychology, values are considered enduring, abstract, desirable end-states that people strive towards or aim to uphold (Schwartz, 1992). Gyekye (1997), a prominent Ghanaian philosopher identified the following as Ghanaian Akan as well as African values: religion and respect for ancestors; humanity and brotherhood; extended family and community, chiefship and political values, knowledge, and wisdom, and to varying degrees, money, and human rights. It is believed that values such as communal spirit, hospitality, hard work, generosity, and altruism are part of African values in many respects (Alofun, 2014). This study adopts the bottom-up approach to capture specific culturally shaped nuances present in commercial vehicles' slogans within the Ghanaian context. Previous studies of vehicle slogans have been mainly based on their interesting features and functions as social communication, but not many studies have focused on investigating the underlying cultural values they carry especially in the Ghanaian context.

Indigenous representations of value constructs mostly come in the form of aesthetics and visual culture (Adeyemo and Adebayo, 2017) and are expressed in culturally nuanced ways in different sociocultural settings. For instance, in Ghana and other African settings, salient value constructs are mostly expressed in proverbial sayings. Historically, the significance of Ghanaian cultural artefacts, symbols and images are mostly connected to traditional proverbs and philosophical sayings. These cultural representations play an important role in reminding people about the existence of Divine powers and essential traditional values which are underpinned by ancestral wisdom (Anquandah, 2013). Symbols and signage have also been entrenched means of communicating Ghanaian value systems and philosophy from time immemorial. Indigenous artefacts such as Adinkra communicators do not only provide information about cultural representations but also express timeless values and philosophies (Temple, 2010). It is however important to acknowledge that cultural products continue to evolve with time within collective societies.

The collective conceptions of what constitute good and appropriate behaviours are expressed in diverse ways in different cultures. As a result, the theoretical underpinnings of human values are multifaceted. The theory of radical communitarianism for instance expounds on the concept of community and its associated values. Communal values are perceived to override principles of individual rights and self-expression. Proponents of this theory include popular philosophers such as John Mbiti, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Ifeanyi Menkiti (Ansah & Mensah, 2018). However, Gyekye (1997) presents a counter argument in the form of the theory of communitarianism.

Based on his theory of communitarianism, Gyekye (1997) seeks to encourage the pursuit of duties and responsibilities by the individual that will inure the promotion of the communal good. In instances where there is a moral clash between the rights of the individual and the prescribed communal values, the communal values must be prioritised over the individual rights (Gyekye, 1997). Based on this framework, Gyekye emphasises that the exercise of rights must be within an appropriate social context, hence values must be communally endorsed based on a moral code. As a result, an individual could be denied personhood if he or she does not measure up to the prescribed moral virtues. The natural bond between the individual and the community motivates the individual to live by communal values such as 'responsibility, mutual aid, caring for others, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocal obligation and social harmony' (Gyekye, 2003, p. 35). Both Gyekye and radical communitarians expound on values such as unity, harmony, solidarity, peace, and stability. These values, among others, form the backbone of most cultural expressions within the Ghanaian setting.

### **Religiosity and spirituality in the Ghanaian context**

Spirituality entails attitudes, beliefs and actions that are associated with a group of people and derived mainly from their religious faith (Arrey et al., 2016). Balcomb et al. (2017) have noted that spirituality is influenced and shaped by the circumstances of peoples' lives and societies around them. The concept of spirituality refers to the subjective experience of the sacred and connectedness to God or the Divine. Schwartz (1992) conceptualised spirituality as the demonstration of the basic human need to give meaning to life, with the motivational aim to transcend everyday reality. Carson and Stoll (2008) explain that vertical spiritual connectedness is different from horizontal spiritual connectedness. The vertical aspect refers to a personal relationship with a Higher Being or God, while the horizontal aspect involves human inter-relationship, with others, and with nature, and is influenced by the relationship with the Divine. It has been argued that spirituality and values are similar in many respects because both concepts place emphasis on ideals such as unity with nature, detachment from material cares and personal desires, social action on behalf of the in-group or discovering the true 'self' (Fullop, 2014).

Several indicators show that religion and spirituality are important to Ghanaians. National statistics indicate that 71.2% of Ghana's citizens identify as Christians, 17.6% as Muslims and 5.2% with African Traditional Religion. Statistics from Pew Research Center analysis indicates that at least 89% of Ghanaians say that religion is very important in their lives and are committed to weekly worship attendance. Significantly, members of Christianity and Islam (the two main religious bodies in Ghana) identify themselves with a variety of denominations. For instance, of the 17.6% Muslim population in Ghana, majority of them are adherents of Sunni Islam, with approximately 20% being adherents of the Ahmadiyya movement and approximately 8% belonging to Shia Islam (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). Further evidence indicates that the percentage of Christians that belong to Pentecostal/Charismatic movements in Ghana is 28.3. Protestant Christians form 18.4% of the total number of Christians while Catholics form 13.1%. Other Christian denominations represent 11.4%.

In the last two decades, the Ghanaian religious landscape has been characterised by a lot of Ghanaians joining Pentecostal/Charismatic movements (Benyah, 2018).

Pentecostalism has the most dominant influence, transcending many aspects of national life, including the social, political and popular culture (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004a; Tweneboah, 2015). Most Ghanaian Pentecostal leaders do not only teach about regeneration but also emphasise issues relating to spiritual warfare against the sources of evil represented by the biblical notion of ‘principalities and powers’ that are often perceived to be the underlying causes of poverty, suffering, and other negative life circumstances. Witchcraft tends to be the single most important embodiment of evil in the African religio-cultural worldview (Onyinah, 2012). In this regard, practices that include exorcism/deliverance, prayer, and prophetic negotiation/rituals characterise many Pentecostal prayer services (Quayesi-Amakye, 2015). According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a), Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians in Africa mostly resort to the use of visible objects or religious tangibles for the mediation of religious values. Consequently, the concept of prayer, spirituality and other related Ghanaian values has been communicated through an increasing trend of mass media and audio-visual culture that seeks to propagate the Christian faith in the public sphere.

### Vehicle slogans as a reflection of Ghanaian value landscape

Empirical literature suggests that vehicle slogans reflect aspects of the social structure in which they are produced. For instance, Burke (1996) has argued that ubiquitous mottoes painted on Lorries in Brazil represent one of the many ways of exploring and studying culture. Lawuyi (1988) documents the expressions of social stratification among Yorubas in Southwestern Nigeria. Similarly, Guseh (2008), elaborates on Liberian philosophy, culture, and history through vehicle slogans. El-Nashar (2016) observes that within the Egyptian socio-cultural milieu, vehicle slogans reflect expressions of social values, religious ideologies, and political affiliations which normally present in the form of ‘Invocations graffiti’. A more recent study in Tanzania by Spier (2019) suggests that commercial vehicles’ slogans shed light on the salience of relevant topics in everyday conversations such as bribery and corruption. Commercial vehicles’ slogans are so important and prevalent that in the early 1970s, Ghana’s most celebrated highlife music artiste, Nana Kwame Ampadu I used a large collection of them in one of his musical compositions. van der Geest and van Walraven (2009) explored vehicles slogans in the Ghanaian context based on the earlier work of Lewis (1998). The findings indicated that most of these slogans emphasised religious and traditional philosophy. Van der Geest (2009) have suggested that these ubiquitous slogans and stickers mostly emanate from larger social discourses. As a result, it is empirically appropriate to interpret commercial vehicles’ slogans from the perspective of the prevailing cultural dispositions.

Beyond the Ghanaian context, commercial vehicles’ slogans which include creative religious discourses appear to be popular and thriving in most cultures (Chiluwa, 2008). A significant number of commercial vehicles’ slogans in Africa mirror the prevailing cultural disposition. In Kenya, for example, slogans on *matatus* are means of expressing popular culture among the youth (Kayi, 2016). Klaeger (2009) conceptualises vehicular transport and commercial vehicles as new loci of religious belief and practice and talks of the ‘automobilization’ of religion. In essence, vehicle slogans could present ways of

understanding the trajectory and connection between spiritual and sociocultural expressions.

## **Vehicles slogans as a reflection of Accra's linguistic landscape**

Within the context of major commercial and administrative cities like Accra, Ghana, the visibility and salience of commercial signs and slogans in English and other local languages are ubiquitous and they reflect the Ghanaian linguistic landscape to a large extent. Expounding on the cultural implications of common language representations in societies, Landry and Bourhis (1997) have observed that beyond giving an indication of the cultural dominance within a particular social space, the linguistic landscape of a society also plays an important role in driving the social psychological aspects of values formation and development. Although English language is not an indigenous Ghanaian language, it has been accepted as the national language and it is widely studied and spoken in Ghana making its usage in daily communication very common and in the contemporary era, it has evolved to become part of the Ghanaian national identity (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008; Owiredu, 1964).

## **Objective of the study**

Our study explores representation of salient Ghanaian values in commercial vehicles' slogans within urban Accra. We sought to identify common thematic values that are associated with commercial vehicles' slogans and examine whether there is a significant difference between the proportion of thematic values in English and Ghanaian languages. This is because vehicle slogans are a common social phenomenon in Ghana and may reflect and communicate popular beliefs about the world.

## **Method**

### ***Study design***

According to Morling and Lamoreaux (2008), visible artefacts and tangible products are important cultural indicators in many societies. Rigorous analysis of these cultural products could help in conceptualising these values signatures. In the present study, we used content analysis in analysing commercial vehicles' slogans collected in Accra. Content analysis is a research design used to determine the representation of certain words, themes, or concepts within a given qualitative data which is in the form of text. The research design made it possible to quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of words, themes, or concepts (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

### **Source of data**

Accra, the administrative and commercial capital of Ghana was chosen for this study because of its mass transit population making it a hub for numerous transport terminals and commercial vehicles from all parts of Ghana. These stations serve as terminals for a variety of privately owned commercial vehicles ranging

**Table 1.** Slogans from *tro-tro* stations ( $N = 438$ ).

<i>Location of tro-tro station</i>	<i>Number of slogans recorded</i>
Abeka-Lapaz	83
Kwame Nkrumah circle	89
Kaneshie	85
37 Military Hospital	71
Madina	110

from taxis, and buses of different brands and sizes, locally referred to as *tro-tro*. Official figures from the Greater Accra regional office of the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) indicate that there were approximately 7000 registered commercial vehicles in Accra at the time of the study. Based on sample size calculation at 95% confidence level, we determined that a minimum of 365 vehicles with slogans would be an adequate representation of Accra's commercial vehicles in the study. We sampled vehicles with slogans from five main transport stations within the Greater Accra metropolitan area. These stations are located at Abeka-Lapaz, Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Kaneshie, 37 Military Hospital, and Madina. They were chosen because they serve as the major transit points for intercity travels and inner-city commuting within Accra hence hosts a huge number of commercial vehicles. Table 1 represents the number of slogans from each of the *tro-tro* stations in the study.

### Procedure for data collection

The corresponding author made visits to these stations on different days in June 2019. At each station, slogans on the commercial vehicles present at the time of visit were captured with the aid of a camera. As a sampling strategy, every other slogan on commercial vehicles that was sighted was captured and included in the study. This random selection strategy was to ensure that there was no element of bias in the inclusion of slogans into the study. However, written texts which were for advertisement and publicity purposes were not included because they did not provide information that was central to the aims of the study. All the transport stations were visited after midday, between the hours of 12:00 and 2:00 PM. This time frame was deemed appropriate because it avoided the morning and evening rush hours when most of the commercial vehicles are usually engaged in business on the roads.

### Data analysis

Slogans which were in local languages were translated verbatim into English language before analysis. The data analysis was carried out by a trained research assistant who understands multiple Ghanaian languages under the supervision of a senior member of the research team. In carrying out a comprehensive content analysis of the available data, the corresponding author of the study read through the slogans several times to familiarise himself with the recorded slogans. With research assistance from a postgraduate student, an independent coding process was then initiated. The independent coders developed and assigned preliminary codes to each slogan in the dataset based on an

initial coding frame developed at the familiarisation stage. Next, the coders independently reviewed all the slogans and matched each of them to specific codes as best as possible, while developing new codes for slogans that did not match with the existing codes. At the next stage of the data analysis, all the coded slogans were organised into categories based on the common emerging themes. In the process, two main overarching themes were identified as representing religious values and non-religious values. Religious values were conceptualised as slogans that make either explicit or implicit reference to God or the Divine. In our study, the explicit slogans include slogans such as ‘God is great’, ‘God punish evil doers’ and ‘give thanks to God’. The implicit slogans on the other hand include slogans such as ‘born again’ and ‘heaven gate no bribe’. We conceptualised non-religious values as slogans that make inferences to acceptable behavioural and social norms within the sociocultural milieu of the Ghanaian community.

## Results

The current study was aimed at identifying common thematic representations of cultural values from a cross-section of commercial vehicles’ slogans in Accra’s suburbs. Out of the 438 slogans that were captured in the study, 314 of them representing 71.7% fall under the category of religious values. Under the broad theme of religious values in the current study, sub themes like belief in God, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, steadfastness, and justice were represented. The remaining 124 slogans representing 28.3% of the total number of slogans in the study form the theme of non-religious values with associated sub-themes such as hard work, patience, hope, and perseverance.

### Religious values

Slogans that relate to religious values are those that appeal to faith in God and the importance of prayer and praise (see Table 2). Ghanaians have been identified to fill their lives with God-talk and this is often expressed through songs and prayers (Quayesi-Amakye, 2010a). Notably, these slogans originate from popular religious texts and references such as the Bible and Quran and they go a long way to define the Ghanaian

**Table 2.** Religious Values (N = 314).

Sub-themes	Common examples	Frequency, n (%)
Belief in God	‘God will do it’	79 (25.2)
Grace	‘It is by God’s grace’	50 (16.0)
Prayer	‘Continue praying’	39 (12.4)
Praise	‘God is great’	25 (8.0)
Justice	‘Heaven gate, no bribe’	16 (5.1)
Thanksgiving	‘Give thanks to God’	14 (4.4)
Biblical verses	‘Psalm 23’	13 (4.1)
Mention of Jesus	‘Jesus’ promise’	13 (4.1)
Brotherliness	‘All believers are brothers’	12 (3.8)
Power of God	‘Enemies ar not God’	12 (3.8)
Attributes of God	‘Peace of God’	12 (3.8)
Repentance	‘Born again’	11 (3.5)
Steadfastness	‘Trust and obey’	10 (3.2)
Blessings	‘There is more blessing in giving’	5 (1.6)
Quranic verses	‘Allah is great’	3 (1.0)

conception of spirituality and values within the sociocultural milieu. From the results of our study, we notice that commercial vehicles slogans serve as a medium for people to preach and propagate their religious values, depict their spiritual memberships, worship, and prayers. It is significant to note that this category of slogans constitutes the majority of the entire vehicle slogans in our study.

For instance, Belief in God was communicated in slogans that depicted one's belief in the existence of God, trust in Him and in His ways, His attributes and power, grace inter alia. Examples of such slogans include: *'Vote for God'*, *'Enemies are not God'*, *'God dey'*, *'Trust in the Lord'*, *'Continue praying'* and *'Faith'*. With majority of Ghanaians being religiously inclined, belief in God appears to reflect national identity. Consequently, representations of the Christian faith in commercial vehicles' slogans are very common. In Ghana, not only do quotations which are based on Biblical references engender faith in God but also serve as a persuasive force that directs people to conform to certain value expectations (Dotsey & Kumi, 2019).

Praise to God is largely an aspect of worship, and usually done using the attributes of God. The nature of praise slogans sometimes discloses the vehicle owner's religious affiliation. Examples of slogans in relation to praise identified in the current study include: *'God is Great'*, *'Invisible God'*, *'Merciful God'* and *'Alhamdu Lilah'*.

Slogans relating to prayer are also common among commercial vehicle slogans in Accra. As noted in the current study, these invocations and appeals to God include examples like: *'God punish all evil doers'*, *'More blessing'*, *'Father forgive them'* and *'Lord create in me a new heart'*.

## Non-religious values

The slogans that we categorised under non-religious values are those that did not have explicit reference to God, religious texts and quotations (see Table 3). Collectively, they form part of the enduring values that are upheld within the Ghanaian sociocultural context. We found in our study that slogans under the broad

**Table 3.** Non-religious values ( $N = 124$ ).

Sub-themes	Common examples	Frequency, n (%)
Social mistrust	'Trust no one'	18 (14.5)
Hard work	'No food for lazy man'	15 (12.1)
Patience	'Never rush in life'	15 (12.1)
Hope	'All hope is not lost'	14 (11.3)
Perseverance	'Never give up'	9 (7.3)
Modesty	'Simple living, high thinking'	8 (6.5)
Goodness	'Think good thoughts'	7 (5.6)
Knowledge	'Look and learn'	6 (4.8)
Love	'Love each other'	6 (4.8)
Honesty	'The truth must be told'	5 (4.0)
Good character	'Beauty doesn't take you to marriage'	4 (3.2)
Boldness	'Be bold'	4 (3.2)
Respect	'Respect the police'	3 (2.4)
Contentment	'Envy no man'	3 (2.4)
Generosity	'Givers never lack'	3 (2.4)
Prudence	'Accra stay by plan'	2 (1.6)
Friendship	'Take good friends'	2 (1.6)

theme of non-religious values form part of important markers of social and interpersonal relationships in everyday Ghanaian discourse. We acknowledge that most of the slogans under this category may have religious and spiritual underpinnings. For example, although 'No food for lazy man' relates to hard work, it also speaks the Pauline language of 'He who does not work must not eat' (2 Thessalonians 3:10). As such, these values which are derived from religiously inspired sayings and messages form the foundation of moral behaviour and citizenship within the Ghanaian socio-cultural milieu (Elorm-Donkor, 2011).

For example, love for one another is an important value that underpins communal living. In the current study, slogans such as '*I love you*', '*One love*', and '*Love each other*' were recorded under this sub-theme. This finding is largely corroborated by what Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto, Hanke, et al. (2018) have found that love and community can be described as central to the everyday emotional expressions among Ghanaians. On the other hand, the overwhelming number of slogans depicting social mistrust may be contrary to the widely acknowledged collectivistic values of Ghanaians (LeFebvre & Franke, 2013).

The sub-thematic values such as Patience, Prudence, Contentment, Hope, and Perseverance also emerged in the current study. Collectively, they represent a social communication of acceptable behavioural outcomes and individual-level character expectations in the social framework of existence. For instance, prudence is represented by slogans such as 'Accra stay by plan', perseverance is represented by slogans such as 'Never give up' while contentment can be inferred from slogans such as 'Envy no man'. A significant number of people in Ghana are marginalised by factors such as bad roads and poor social amenities, and these have negative consequences on social and economic outcomes (Abukari, 2018). This existential reality makes the subject matter of resilience an important clarion call in the social space of commercial transportation. The visual presentations of values that are related to resilience in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context are varied in meaning but similar in scope.

### **The language of slogans in the study**

Majority (55.48%) of the commercial vehicles slogans we recorded in this study were inscribed in English language. A possible explanation to this trend is that English Language usage in the study setting, which is the Accra metropolitan area is common.

Given the fact that the Accra metropolitan area is highly urbanised and has a high literacy rate as compared to other parts of the country hence, most commuters and passengers can easily read and comprehend the slogans in English language. Instructively, the slogans which are in English language also appeals to the reasoning of non-Ghanaian commuters who cannot read or understand local Ghanaian languages. Out of the remaining 44.52% of the slogans representing local Ghanaian languages, it is significant to note that 38.12% of them were in the Akan language. This reflects the general Ghanaian linguistic landscape in the sense that the Akan language is widely spoken in most parts of the country, and it binds people from different linguistic backgrounds together than the other local language representations like Ewe and Ga (Chinebuah, 2017). Details of the language distribution of the slogans are represented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Distribution of commercial vehicles slogans by language.

Language	Number	Percentage
English	243	55.48%
Akan	167	38.12%
Hausa	18	4.11%
Ga	8	1.83%
Ewe	2	0.46%
Total	438	100%

### The relationship between the language of slogans and values category in the study

A chi-square test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the proportion of religious and non-religious values in English language and Ghanaian languages. The results indicate that 50.6% of the religious values slogans were in English language, whereas 67.7% of the non-religious values slogans were in Ghanaian languages. This implies that 49.4% of the religious values slogans were in Ghanaian languages, whereas 32.3% of the non-religious values slogans were in Ghanaian languages. The observed difference was statistically significant,  $X^2(1, N = 438) = 10.53, p = .001$ . Comparing observed with expected proportion of values slogans in the language categories suggests that religious values slogans appeared in English less frequently than expected, whereas non-religious values slogans appeared in English more frequently than expected; for the Ghanaian languages it was the other way round [Table 5](#).

Based on the heavy emphasis on religious and spiritual related values in the slogans (across English and Ghanaian languages) in the current study, we consider that it is a general reflection of contemporary Ghanaian spirituality. Considerably, our findings on religious and non-religious values could be underscored by the different aspects of spiritual connectedness as explained by Carson and Stoll (1998, 2008). Vertical spiritual connectedness is represented through themes under the religious values category such as praise, thanksgiving, and prayer because they largely place emphasis on relationship with God at the intrapersonal level. On the other hand, horizontal spiritual connectedness which has to do with social and interpersonal relationships could be inferred from themes such as patience, hope, perseverance and good character.

Representations of horizontal spiritual connectedness could be considered as a salient reflection of the contemporary Ghanaian reality. This is because in contemporary times, misuse and abuse of individual and national properties, political deception and manipulation of innocent people have been identified as some of the injustices in the Ghanaian society (Quayesi-Amakye, 2010a). This makes the clarion call for values that foster good

**Table 5.** Frequencies and Chi-Square results for language of slogans and thematic category of values.

Language	Values categories per languages	
	Religious values	Non-religious values
English language	159 (50.6%)	84 (67.7%)
Ghanaian languages	155 (49.4%)	40 (32.3%)

interpersonal co-existence very relevant. The contribution that commercial vehicles' slogans make in this public advocacy could be far reaching even though the assessment of their impact may remain largely anecdotal.

## General discussion

Commercial vehicles' slogans have been widely studied in relation to their popularity and aesthetic relevance in different cultures. We found in our current study that beyond these, salient themes in connections with religious values are mostly inherent in commercial vehicles' slogans in Accra aside other socially relevant values. This implies that beyond their normal function, commercial vehicles serve as mediums for portraying and communicating religious and non-religious values within the social frame of existence. The majority representation of slogans relating to religious values indicates that most slogans on Accra's commercial vehicles are mediums of communicating faith and spiritual identity. In Ghana, not only do slogans and quotations which are based on Biblical references engender faith in God but also serve as a persuasive force that directs people to conform to certain value expectations (Dotsey & Kumi, 2019). Slogans that stand for religious values in the current study usually find their roots in Biblical and Quranic citations. As a result, we can point out that these slogans constitute the representation of dominant religious worldviews in Ghana. With majority of Ghanaians identifying with either Christianity or Islam, individuals tend to imbibe the associated values and disseminate same within the sociocultural context. From the religious perspective, these slogans may be explained as dynamic forms of social communication of religious ideals and reaffirmation of one's faith. It also implies that within the Ghanaian social context, everyday life experiences have religious underpinnings and significance.

The slogans recorded in the study that relate to non-religious values are important in the Ghanaian sociocultural milieu to a large extent. This is because the Ghanaian indigenous worldview is shaped and moderated by several culturally relevant values that are imbibed from different sources of knowledge acquisition. It is worthwhile to note that aside from the traditional ways of acquiring these set of values, including formal education and oral tradition strategies, commercial vehicles sloganeering serve as additional media of transmitting these values by increasing social awareness.

We found that beyond eliciting discussions around contemporary social issues as indicated by Spier (2019), slogans on commercial vehicles play additional roles of communicating socially endorsed values that promote communal living in the Ghanaian sociocultural milieu. This finding is largely corroborated by Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto, Hanke, et al. (2018) earlier research in Ghana that points out that love and community can be considered as central values to the everyday emotional expressions among Ghanaians.

Within the framework of Gyekye's (1997, 2003) conception of communitarianism, we argue that the slogans on commercial vehicles in Accra's transportation space emanate from a bond that exists between individuals and the community. Consequently, culturally appropriate and relevant values (as discovered in this study) such as hard work, honesty and bravery are expressed through this bond. For instance, based on Ghana's collectivistic cultural outlook, success is mostly conceptualised not by internal markers (such as inner satisfaction) but by external markers which are tangible and endorsable outcomes (Osei-Tutu et al., 2018). Results from the present study reveal that these value inclinations tend to influence aspects of commercial vehicles' slogans within the urban space. In Ghana,

behaviours that do not align with honesty are largely reprehensible across the cultural divide (Dartey-Baah & Arthur, 2017). In essence, there appears to be a national endorsement of honesty as an essential sociocultural value. This is evident in a line within the Ghanaian national anthem that appeals to God to '*Make us cherish fearless honesty*'.

Significantly, there was an association between the language of slogan and the thematic values which indicates that majority of the slogans we recorded (whether they were in Ghanaian or English language) represent religious values more than non-religious values. Lastly, we argue that interrelationship between religious and non-religious values cannot be overlooked although our study conceptualised them separately based on the current findings. This is because, the evolution and use of religious tangibles (including vehicles' slogans) as emphasised by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a) within the Ghanaian commercial space has been mediated by sociocultural values. It is also worth noting that, both values concepts place strong emphasis on existential ideals and imperatives such as harmony, unity, concern for others and detachment from material concerns (Fullop, 2014).

### **Limitation and recommendation for future studies**

The present study did not explore the contextual underpinnings of the slogans from the perspective of the vehicle owners, drivers, and passengers. This ethnographic approach would have probably unearthed salient values, providing additional insights with regard to the motivation, choice and use of slogans. Future studies on values in relation to commercial vehicles' slogans should seek to incorporate the perspectives and explanations of the respective vehicle owners, drivers, and passengers. Additionally, the current study sampled commercial vehicles from only the city of Accra. Future studies could draw regional comparisons of thematic values from commercial vehicles' slogans across different cities in Ghana.

### **Summary and conclusion**

The display of slogans on commercial vehicles is common in Ghana just as many other developing countries. The objective of our study was to investigate values among a cross-section of commercial vehicles' slogans within the Accra metropolitan area of Ghana's capital. In the process, we sampled a total of 438 slogans from 5 main commercial transport terminals. Overall, 314 (71.7%) of the recorded slogans were conceptualised as religious values while 124 (28.3%) were conceptualised as non-religious values. The current findings from our study form part of broad empirical contributions to the existing knowledge on commercial vehicles slogans.

This study has revealed that commercial vehicles in Accra appear to portray values more than their main utilitarian functions. It has been identified that Ghana ranks high on self-expression values and the overall development of civil society (Arno, 2018). Significantly, the African concept of tradition and modernity as explained by Gyekye (1997), ties into the self-expression values in the present study. For instance, the Akan conception of personhood has been identified by Gyekye (1997) to include moral responsibility, judgements about personal identity, and proper relationship both among individuals and between individuals and community. The findings from the current study have provided further evidence in affirming the point that vehicles' slogans are discursive mediums for many socio-cultural beliefs and values. Our study has also revealed that

the concept of ‘values in motion’ in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context is a multifaceted one which is underpinned by religious and non-religious variables. In essence, slogans on commercial vehicles are part of existing value-oriented artefacts in contemporary Ghana that require important recognition.

## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank Ziyaad Shiraz, Giselle Azizafar, and Doron Adu-Gyamfi for their assistance with data analysis.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This study was funded by the African Theological Advance Initiative Grant [#2018-TH470].

## ORCID

Abraham Kenin  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0818-2403>

## References

- Abukari, Z. (2018). “Not giving up”: Ghanaian students’ perspectives on resilience, risk, and academic achievement. *Sage Open*, 8(4), 2158244018820378.
- Adebayo, J. O., & Adebola, A. A. (2017). Documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge by library personnel in selected research institutes in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1628.
- Alofun, G. (2014). African Socialism: A Critique. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(8), 69–71. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19866971>
- Anquandah, J. (2013). The people of Ghana: Their origins and cultures. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 1(15), 1–25. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43855009>
- Ansah, R., & Mensah, M. (2018). Gyekye’s moderate communitarianism: A case of radical communitarianism in disguise. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 19(2), 62–87. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v19i2.4>
- Anyidoho, A., & Dakubu, M. E. K. (2008). Ghana: Indigenous languages, English, and an emerging national identity. In A. Simpson (Ed.), *Language and National Identity in Africa*. Oxford university Press.
- Arno, T. (2018). Africa on the maps of global values. Comparative analyses, based on recent world values survey data. *Paper No. 87966*, posted 18 Jul 2018 19:06 UTC. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/87966/MPRA>
- Arrey, A. E., Bilsen, J., Lacor, P., Deschepper, R., & Harris, F. (2016). Spirituality/religiosity: A cultural and psychological resource among sub-Saharan African migrant women with HIV/AIDS in Belgium. *PLOS ONE*, 11(7), e0159488. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0159488>
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. (2004a). Pentecostal media images and religious globalization in sub-Saharan Africa. In P. Horsfield, M. E. Hess, & A. M. Medrano (Eds.), *Belief in media. cultural perspectives on media and christianity* (pp. 65–80). Ashgate.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. (2005a). *African charismatic: Current developments within independent indigenous pentecostalism in Ghana*. E.J. Brill.

- Balcomb, A., Chirongoma, S., Dah, I. D., Daniel Woldegiorgis, S., Deouyo, P., Gaisie, R. K., & Howell, A. M. (2017). Spirituality and hope in Africa: A study in five countries. *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 41(4), 336–346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2396939317730698>
- Benyah, F. (2018). Commodification of the gospel and the socio-economics of neo-pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Ghana. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 29(2), 116–145. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v29i2.5>
- Burke, P. (1996). The philosophy of the road in Brazil: Lorries and their mottoes. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 30(3), 209–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1996.00209.x>
- Carson, V. B., & Stoll, R. I. (2008). The essence of spirituality. In V. B. Carson (Ed.), & H. G. Koenig (Rev. Ed.), *Spiritual dimensions of nursing practice* (pp. 3–32). Templeton Foundation Press.
- Chiluwa, I. (2008). Religious vehicle stickers in Nigeria: A discourse of identity, faith and social vision. *Discourse & Communication*, 2(4), 371–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481308091909>
- Chinebuah, I. K. (2017). The national language issue in Africa: The case for akan in Ghana. In Isaac K. Chinebuah (Ed.), *African languages/langues Africaines* (pp. 60–77). Routledge.
- Dartey-Baah, K., & Arthur, R. (2017). Leader integrity and Employee Outcomes: Where Do They Collide? In *Advances in Human Factors, Business Management, Training and Education: Proceedings of the AHFE 2016 International Conference on Human Factors, Business Management and Society, July 27-31, 2016, Walt Disney World, Florida, USA* (pp. 93–105). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-42070-7\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-42070-7_10)
- Dotsey, S., & Kumi, E. (2019). Does religious faith matter in development practice? Perspectives from the Savelugu-Nanton district in Northern Ghana. *Forum for Development Studies*, 47(2), 351–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2019.1685591>
- El – Nashar, M. (2016). ‘Discourse on the go’: Thematic analysis of vehicle graffiti on the roads of Egypt. *Advances in Language & Literary Studies*, 7(5), 227–239.
- Elorm-Donkor, L. A. (2011). *Christian morality in Ghanaian pentecostalism: A theological analysis of virtue theory as a framework for integrating Christian and akan moral schemes*. The University of Manchester.
- Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 7(3), 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2017.08.001>
- Fullop, G. (2014). *Spirituality and values: Similarities and differences across three Hungarian communities*. University of Helsinki.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2011). *Annual report*.
- Guseh, J. S. (2008). Slogans and mottos on commercial vehicles: A reflection of Liberian philosophy and culture. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 20(2), 159–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696810802522288>
- Gyekye, K. (1997). *Tradition and modernity*. Oxford University Press.
- Gyekye, K. (2003). Person and community in African thought. In P. H. Coetzee & A. P. J. Roux (Eds.), *The African philosophy reader* (2nd ed., pp. 297–312). Routledge.
- Kayi, C. (2016). Slogans and mottos on matatus: A reflection of Kenyan urban youth and culture. *International Journal of Research in Social Science*, 6(6), 51–58.
- Klaeger, G. (2009). Religion on the road: The spiritual experience of road travel in Ghana. In J.-B. Gewald (Ed.), *The speed of change: Motor vehicles in Africa, 1890–2000* (pp. 212–231). Brill.
- Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1), 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>
- Lawuyi, O. B. (1988). The world of the yoruba taxi driver: An interpretive approach to vehicle slogans. *Journal of International African Institute*, 58(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1159867>
- LeFebvre, R., & Franke, V. (2013). Culture matters: Individualism vs. collectivism in conflict decision-making. *Societies*, 3(1), 128–146. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc3010128>
- Lewis, G. (1998). The philosophy of the street in Ghana: Mammy wagons and their mottos. A research agenda. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 32(1), 165–171. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1998.3201\\_165.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1998.3201_165.x)
- Morling, B., & Lamoreaux, M. (2008). Measuring culture outside the head: A meta-analysis of individualism-collectivism in cultural products. *Personality and Social Psychology Review: An*

- Official Journal of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc*, 12(3), 199–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308318260>
- Onyinah, O. (2012). *Pentecostal exorcism*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004397101>
- Osei-Tutu, A., Dzokoto, V., Hanke, K., Adams, G., & Belgrave, F. Z. (2018). Conceptions of love in Ghana: An exploration among Ghanaian Christians. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 28(2), 83–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2018.1454576>
- Owiredu, P. A. (1964). Proposals for a national language for Ghana. *African Affairs*, 63(251), 142–145. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a095200>
- Powell, J. (2012). *Ghana life: Taxi and trotro mottoes*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ghana-Life-Taxi-andTrotro-Mottoes&id=6916346>
- Quayesi-Amakye, J. (2010a). Ghana shall be saved: A theological reflection on two Ghanaian prayer-songs. *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 29(1), 69–82.
- Quayesi-Amakye, J. (2015). Christ, Evil and suffering in Ghanaian Christian liturgy. *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement*, 14(1), 9–41. Research Center. Retrieved January 20, 2020. [https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/how-religious-commitment-varies-by-country-among-people-of-all-ages/pf-06-13-18\\_religiouscommitment-03-05/](https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/how-religious-commitment-varies-by-country-among-people-of-all-ages/pf-06-13-18_religiouscommitment-03-05/).
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25(C), 1–65.
- Spier, T. E. (2019). Reading into riding culture: Messages and sayings on daladala vehicles in USA river, Tanzania. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(3), 376–389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618820364>
- Stasik, M. (2017). Roadside involution, or how many people do you need to run a lorry park? In *The making of the African road* (pp. 24–57). Brill.
- Stasik, M., & Klaeger, G. (2018). Station waka-waka: The Temporalities and temptations of (not) working in Ghanaian bus stations. *Africa Today*, 65(2), 93–110. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africoday.65.2.07>
- Temple, C. N. (2010). The emergence of sankofa practice in the United States: A modern history. *Journal of Black Studies*, 41(1), 127–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934709332464>
- Tweneboah, S. (2015). Pentecostalism, witchdemonic accusations, and symbolic violence in Ghana. *Pneuma*, 37(3), 375–393. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-03703003>
- van der Geest, S. (2009). In Speed of change. In J.-B. Gewald, (Ed.), *Motor vehicles and people in Africa, 1890–2000* (pp. 253–293). Brill.
- van der Geest, S., & van Walraven, K. (2009). Anyway! Lorry inscriptions in Ghana. In J. Gewald & S. Luning (Eds.), *The speed of change: Motor vehicles and people in Africa, 1890–2000* (pp. 253–293). Brill.