



How South African brands in mainstream media portray the lived experiences of queer bodies.

By

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ABSTRACT

This research report examines how South African brands in mainstream media portray the lived experiences of queer bodies. Queer representation is impacted by debilitating tropes and beliefs that encourage damaging ideas regarding the LGBTQIA+ community. The purpose of this research study is to provide insight into how harmful and stereotypical queer representation can be damaging to queer people within society. The South African media fails to provide inclusive queer representation that validates the queer community.

The objective is to describe the way the South African media portrays the lived experiences of queer bodies, this will allow marketers and other media personnel to understand the ramification of negative queer representation. The paper identifies and analyses different strategies used when portraying queer people. The intention of this paper is to build on previous research regarding queer representation, specifically within a South African perspective.

The research report uses a qualitative approach, within an Interpretivist paradigm. The study is exploratory and makes use of a semiotic-visual content analysis using artefacts from lifestyle brands within the country. The research study revealed that the strategies commonly used to portray queer bodies and lived experiences, is based on a patriarchal perspective, where heterosexuality is placed above the queer community. This perspective perpetuates the use of sexualisation, objectification and the use of stereotypes that place the queer community and their experiences as a form of deviance. The focus of this study is one lifestyle brands, rather than all types of brands, which has proven to be a limitation within this study. The lack of a large array of artefacts to analyse contributes towards the limitations. This research report can prove to be beneficial to lifestyle brands in South Africa, by highlighting the strategies used to portray queer bodies that can be harmful, to avoid future advertising messages that are damaging towards the queer community.

Keywords: *Queer representation, lifestyle brands, male gaze, patriarchy.*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the **research report** submitted for the **BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication** to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.

Atlegang Hlabane Date: 5 December 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualisation

The aim of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of how South African brands in mainstream media portray the lived experiences of queer bodies. South African brands have begun targeting consumers within the LGBTQIA+ community through advertising messages in the media (Ivory, 2019). The way queer people are portrayed and represented is often overshadowed by using gendered stereotypes derived from hegemonic masculinity (O'Shaughnessy, 2016), which reduce queer people to certain traits and behaviours. This perpetuates harm towards queer consumers and the queer community at large. The aim of the study is to analyse and unpack different structures of power that enable and perpetuate negative portrayals of queer people in South African mainstream media. The study will provide the media and the advertising industry with insight on regarding how to portray queer people within an inclusive and validating manner. The study unpacks how the Male Gaze by Mulvey (1989), hegemonic masculinity (O'Shaughnessy, 2016) influences the way that queer people are portrayed and represented. Additional literature such as Intersectionality by Crenshaw (1989), Hall's theory of Representation (Hall, 2020), which will help unpack how systems of power overlap to make room for the stereotyping of the queer community. The results of the study will serve as a guide for inclusive means for portraying the lived experiences of queer bodies. The study will highlight harmful strategies, ideas and beliefs perpetuated by inaccurate and generalised portrayals of the queer community in the media. The research will provide an answer for the cultural associations that are formed based on how queer people are portrayed in the media. The research will shed light on the kinds of representation that paints a negative representation of the queer community.

1.2 Rationale

The research study will be beneficial towards lifestyle brands in South African mainstream media, the findings of the study can be used to create better queer inclusive representation for their queer consumers. The information produced is relevant for the media, marketing, and advertising industry. It can be used to curate advertising messages that ensure that there are no gendered stereotypes, or depictions that are harmful and reductive towards the queer

community. Studying the way lifestyle brands and the South African media portray queer bodies, can lead to identifying and correcting ignorant and/or harmful patterns and behaviours. The research produced can demonstrate how queer bodies have been commonly portrayed by lifestyle brands in South Africa. Identifying, acknowledging, and correcting the harm done towards the queer community through media, allows lifestyle brands to find better ways to communicate advertising messages towards their queer consumers. This can be done without reductive, harmful, or disparaging methods that are informed by oppressive systems of power. The research can be used to add onto data regarding queer representation in the media, for South Africa.

As a young queer individual, myself, I am highly interested in the portrayal of queer bodies in South African mainstream media. I have seen how poor queer representation can lead to unwarranted beliefs and assumptions regarding the queer community, as well as how that can lead to the mistreatment of queer bodies. I have experienced first-hand what poor portrayals can do for the general public's beliefs and attitudes towards queer bodies, it can become a platform for homophobia and violence towards the queer community. I am highly interested in understanding the way that brands portray queer people, because it has an impact on the lives of many South African queer individuals and community at large.

1.3 Problem Statement

To gain an in-depth understanding on how brands in the South African mainstream media portray queer bodies. Queer representation is often influenced by harmful tropes and stereotypes, that perpetuate harmful ideas regarding sexuality and the queer community. Brands and the South African media fail to provide inclusive representation that validates the experiences of the queer community and by doing so create room for ignorant beliefs and ideas regarding the queer community.

Francis and Msibi (2011) states that South Africa's society positions heterosexuality at a higher regard above all the other sexualities which encourages the erasure, discrimination, and oppression of the queer community. Additionally, a study ran by Hosken (2017) illustrates that many South Africans know of or are associated with a queer individual that has been attacked, murdered, or sexually assaulted due to their sexuality. The South African media's portrayal of the queer community has ramifications on the lives of queer bodies in society.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research study is to understand the way that the South African mainstream media depicts the experiences of queer bodies. The results and findings from the study can allow important key players within the media, marketing, and advertising industry to understand how poor queer representation can cause harm towards the queer community in South Africa. This is done with the intention that these key players can create better representation for members of the LGBTIA+ community. The study is to be executed using a semiotic-visual content analysis, under an Interpretivist paradigm.

1.5 Research Question

Main question:

- How does the South African media portray queer people.

Sub-questions

- What cultural associations are aligned with queer people when portraying them in South African mainstream media
- What common strategies do lifestyle brands use when portraying queer people in South African media

1.6 Research Objectives

- To understand, what pre-existing cultural associations in the South African mainstream media has when portraying the lived experiences of queer bodies, to allow marketers to understand the ramifications of stereotypes
- To describe how the South African media portrays the lived experiences of queer bodies in South Africa, to allow marketers to understand the ramifications of stereotypes
- To understand, what strategies South African media employs when depicting queer bodies lived experiences to ensure that future brand content is not harmful towards the marginalized group

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter 2 deals with the conceptualisation, the theoretical foundation, and the literature review for this research study. A literature review is a research process where the researcher undertakes reading, comprehension and forming a conclusion about theories and published research on a particular research topic (Maree, 2016). A literature review provides context and information regarding what previous research has been conducted on a topic and emphasises the significance of a new study. The aim of the literature review is to analyse different structures of power that perpetuate negative portrayals of queer people using the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989). The review unpacks alternative structures that aim to dismantle and challenge patriarchal structures such as Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). The review allows the researcher to understand how our social construction and understanding of identity. The review unpacks published readings that discuss queer representation, especially within a South African context such as our understanding of masculinity.

2.2 Conceptualisation

- **Patriarchy (O' Shaunessy, 2016)**

Patriarchy can be considered a system that socially places masculinity and men above women and other marginalized groups of people. Under patriarchy men and masculine power dominates social, economic, and political structures in order empower men and masculine power.

- **Queer (Raymond, 2003)**

Queer was once used to subjugate and marginalise people who belong within the LGBTQIA+ community, however now the term has been reclaimed and used to validate the fluidity of sexuality. Through the proposed study this will be used to refer to people that belong within the LGBTQIA+ community without directly discriminating the sexuality they fall under.

- **Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)**

Intersectionality can be considered as a lens used to analyse how various forms of structures that endorse and enable inequality are often interacting and overlapping with one another. Through the proposed study intersection will be used to describe

when there is an overlap between various structures that perpetuate harm towards queer people such as homophobia and misogyny.

- **Gender (Lucy, 2020)**

Gender is a socially constructed state of being, that allows people to be categorised socially. Gender is often assigned to individuals at birth according to the physiological traits that are medically affiliated with males that carry sperm and females that carry a uterus. Within the proposed study the focus is on the expression of gender and its depiction rather than what gender is.

- **Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989)**

The Male gaze is a technical lens that is used to portray women in a manner that objectifies them for the pleasure of the cis-heterosexual male. This is how viewers engage with media (Mulvey, 1989), that aims to empower men by reducing women to objectifying tropes such as their body parts (zooming in on their lips or legs). The gaze negates the lived experiences and the perspectives that not aligned with the identity of the cis-heterosexual male. Within the proposed study the male gaze will refer to certain tactics and strategies used to portray queer people from the lens of the cis-heterosexual male.

- **Representation (Hall, 2020)**

Representation can be considered the way that meaning is created using a system of signs and codes. The mainstream media utilises media messages to represent social categories, people, concepts, and objects that have been attached with meaning. These media messages influence the way people in society attach meaning to their identities, culture as well as the world around them. Queer representation within the media has been attached with various meanings using codes and stereotypes to portray a narrative about queer people. This influences the way queer people view their experiences, as well as how other people in society view and think of queer people.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1 The Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989)

The male gaze is a tactic used under a hegemonic masculine lens that portrays women as the object, of men's desires and empowerment. The gaze objectifies the behaviours, mannerisms

and traits women possess, for the visual pleasure of the cis-heterosexual man (Mulvey, 1989). The male gazes erase the narratives and experiences of people who do not identify as cis-heterosexual men, men are placed as the superior gender and gender expression. The male gaze can be used to analyse the way in which brands depict queer experiences in South African mainstream media. The lens can be used to unpack how hegemonic masculinity erases, reduces, and misrepresents the experiences of queer people, because they do not align with hegemonic masculinity.

2.2.2 Intersectionality

A tool used to assess how systems of inequality and oppression can overlap and aggravate one another (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality challenges the way various forms of structures can be used to perpetuate inequality such as race or gender. The black queer man cannot separate their construction of their identity, they are black, and they are queer. Facing two different systems of oppression: racism and homophobia (Crenshaw, 1989). The proposed study requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the experiences of queer people in South Africa, thus many people who happen to be queer will be black. Intersectionality enables the researcher to assess how racism and homophobia, intersect and can impact queer individuals.

2.2.3 Representation

Representation can be considered the creation of meaning through language, where language is considered as a system of signs (Hall, 2020). Representation allows people who consume media, to live their lives through social interactions with others. The media uses mass messages to represent that reality of people within society. This allows the media to influence the way people who consume these messages to make sense of their reality. The media influences the way social categories such as gender and sexuality are seen and depicted (Hall, 2020). Meaning can influence social norms and conventions. Representation within the proposed study focuses on the symbolic function of certain visual representations of queer bodies within South African mainstream media. It allows the researcher to unpack the way representation plays out when queer people are being portrayed.

2.4 Literature Review

2.3.1 Gender Identity

The term queer was once used to subjugate and marginalise people who belong within the LGBTQ community, however now the term has been reclaimed and used to validate the fluidity

of sexuality (Raymond, 2003). According to (Spurlin, 1999) a sexual identity is not formed in isolation, it is always contrasted with other axes such as race, gender, and sexuality. Gender is a socially constructed state of being, that allows people to be categorised socially (Lucy, 2020). Gender is often assigned to individuals at birth according to the physiological traits that are medically affiliated with males that carry sperm and females that carry a uterus. Gender is constructed according to what is considered as appropriate behaviour for a men or women. The way an individual's gender is constructed initiates when they are assigned a sex at birth. Gender status is often communicated through what is known as gender markers (Lucy, 2020), an example of a gender marker would be associating the colour royal blue with baby boys, whilst girls the pink. Gender norms and expectations are often imparted to an individual throughout childhood, and this is reinforced when parents often use gendered methods to raise their children (Sumano, 2018). Different expectations are placed on boys versus girls. Boys are expected to be masculine, strong, and brave whilst girls are expected to be delicate, gentle, and nurturing (Sumano, 2018). Various institutions reinforce gender norms and expectations such as school, the mainstream media and often family dynamics. Masculinity and sexuality are often interrelated due to principles created by hegemonic masculinity, that only consider heterosexual men as the acceptable norm within society (Davids & Mathebeni, 2017). The LGBTQ community is a representation of gender expression, patriarchy has had a large impact on how sex and gender are presented and what society considers a norm. Queer people challenge the norms that patriarchy aims to perpetuate, by validating how fluid their lived experiences are (Zevallos, 2020).

2.3.2 Patriarchy

Masculinity is rewarded and looked up on whilst femininity is considered inferior (O'Shaughnessy, 2016). This is a result of institutions that perpetuate inequalities such as patriarchy, Patriarchy can be considered a system that socially places masculinity and men above women and other marginalized groups of people. Under patriarchy men and masculine power dominates social, economic, and political structures in order empower men and masculine power. Under patriarchy the mainstream media depicts stereotypes that are gendered, enabling gender inequality (O'Shaughnessy, 2016). The stereotypes limit certain attributes and behaviours shared by many people, thus perpetuating negative systems of inequality amongst all various genders. The mainstream media enables systems like patriarchy through tools and tactics such as the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989). The Male gaze is a technical lens that is used to portray women in a manner that objectifies them for the pleasure of the cis-heterosexual male. This is how viewers engage with media (Mulvey, 1989), that aims to empower men by reducing women to objectifying tropes such as their body parts (zooming in on their breasts or legs). The gaze negates the experiences and the perspectives

that not aligned with the identity of the cis-heterosexual male. Heterosexuality is dominant social institution that sets expectations, norms, and beliefs/attitudes on what is considered normal behaviour within society for men and women. This viewpoint can contribute towards perpetuating homophobia by considering anything that doesn't align with heterosexuality as a form of social deviance (Spurlin, 2006). Mainstream media content that utilizes the Male Gaze is often derived from systems of oppression that encourage and perpetuate hegemonic masculinity (Mulvey, 1989). Patriarchy plays a role in how queer people within society are negated, their perspectives reduced to stereotypes that are not constructive towards society's understanding of gender (Zevallos, 2020).

2.3.3 Masculinity in Africa

Hegemonic masculinity under an African lens is a heterosexual male that dominates by portraying physical strength, virility, many wives and or bravado (Davids and Mathebeni, 2017). The cis-heterosexual African man consider themselves to be real men in contrast to queer African men, this due to the power dynamics between heterosexual people and queer people. Under hegemonic African masculinity, queer black men are often framed to be inferior, feminine, and subjugated against for not performing masculinity according to the societal norms set in place by hegemonic masculinity (O'Shaughnessy, 2016). Performing masculinity according to heterosexual norms requires queer African men to micromanage their sexual identities to remain from being degraded and discriminated against. Queer African men often need to conceal themselves to avoid any violence from the hegemonic expectations and norms of society (Davids and Mathebeni, 2017).

2.3.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be considered as a lens used to analyse how various forms of structures that endorse and enable inequality are often interacting and overlapping with one another (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality challenges the one- dimensional perspective on oppression, inequality, and discrimination. Individuals who exist at an intersection, in terms of their identity such as black women or black queer men, who cannot separate various aspects of their identities under structures of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989).

2.3.5 Representation

Representation can be considered the creation of meaning through a system of signs which can be interpreted as a language of signs. Meaning and shared associations are created and disseminated by using visual and social language (Hall, 2020). Representation can also be considered the process of creating symbolic meaning. The way things are represented through the media is not a reflection of society but rather a representation of society. Hall (2020)

believes that there is a relation between concepts and signs that are guided by codes to creating meaning. Hall (2020) considers meaning to be a dialogue between two parties, where meaning is partially understood. According to Hall (2020) signs represent concepts, thoughts and feelings which are often communicated through sounds, objects, and other visual stimuli to carry meaning. Under representation theory there are 3 approaches that can be applied towards representation, the most suitable for the purpose of the proposed study is the constructionist approach (Hall, 2020). The constructionist approach to representation dictates that meaning is not fixed, however, it is socially constructed using representational codes and signs. This means that meaning is attached toward the symbolic function of a sign. This provides a gap in how the proposed study focuses on the symbolic function of certain visual representations of queer bodies within the South African mainstream media. Constructionists consider the material world to be separate from systems of signs that represent concepts and ideas (Hall, 2020). Constructionists consider signs to be arbitrary, as there is no direct relationship between the sign or what it represents. Codes are what fix meaning, not the object, image or people being represented. According to (O' Shaughnessy, 2016) codes dictate how signs and concepts are being interpreted. Codes are a result of social conventions when meaning changes, so do the codes we use to analyse and interpret meaning. The constructionist approach restates that the effects of represented concepts and signs are felt within the material and social world (Hall, 2020).

Representation is used by the media to attach meaning to certain concepts and ideas, how certain people are seen within society is often due to the influence of the media and the way the media portray them (Hall, 2020). Hegemonic ideologies within the media generate limited portrayals of certain occurrences and social categories, which can lead to exclusionary practices. This speaks on how the media uses stereotypes, stereotypes are created from limited representation, as what is being depicted and represented is from a stance of hegemony (O'Shaughnessy, 2016). The media often uses stereotypes to represent social groups within certain behaviours or traits, which provide negative representation for the group. Hall (2020) argues that media producers attach meaning on the content they produce and share, thus the way certain groups of people are represented is dependent on what symbolic function the content communicates.

Stereotyping as a form of representation is reductive and limits groups of people to certain traits and behaviours that may or may not be true. Hall (2020) states that stereotyping occurs in media when there is an oppressive structure that sustains itself through inequalities in power. Stereotyping in media can lead to those in power excluding marginalised groups of people, this is seen in how queer people are misrepresented or excluded from mainstream media content and narratives. Hall (1980) states that when there are imbalances within

societal spaces, certain categories of people are usually over or under misrepresented. Stereotyping sees subjugated groups being represented using reductive and harmful tactics and strategies. Representation is always aligned with power (Hall, 2020), it is a useful means for those in power to categorise many groups of people. It is imperative that marginalised groups begin to question media messages, their intent and what they symbolise. The media (Hall, 2020), represents groups of people according to the dominant ideology influencing the media. In accordance with the proposed study, the research being undertaken would explore the influence of hegemonic masculinity, in the depiction of queer bodies within the media. This theory allows the researcher to unpack the way queer people are being depicted in South African mainstream media.

2.3.6 South African Queer Representation in Mainstream Media

South African brands have noted that LGBTQ consumers are an essential part of the market sector and that LGBTQ consumers are more inclined to buy products when the advertisement is directed towards them (Madinga, 2020). More brands are beginning to create advertising content that contains LGBTQ representation for mainstream consumption. Brands that feature queer people within their advertising messages do so implicitly and explicitly, through references and messaging that contains characters that identify as queer (Berisha and Sjogreen, 2016). Advertising campaigns that are targeted towards the queer community can be used to avoid brands from alienating their queer consumers whilst creating messages regarding queer representation that do not polarize heterosexual consumers (Raymond, 2003).

Additionally, South African brands have found it lucrative to target LGBTQ consumers (Ivory, 2019), however brands face challenges with interacting with queer consumers through mainstream media without alienating their heterosexual target segment. This highlights the importance attached towards appeasing the heterosexual target market, at the expense of concealing queer representation in the media. This type of rhetoric can spoil the way that South African engages with queer representation and queer individuals that they may come across. Treating them as though they are less than the heterosexual community.

According to Francis and Msibi (2011) South African society places heterosexuality above other sexualities which can lead to the erasure, discrimination, and the oppression of the LGBTQ community. A study conducted by (Hosken, 2017) concluded that 50% of the participants in the study knew someone queer who had been attacked, abused, sexually assaulted, or murdered for their sexuality. This highlights the dangers of erasure, discrimination and placing the lives and lived experiences of heterosexual people above those

of queer people. The ramifications for placing heterosexual individuals above queer people by perpetuating harmful systems such as homophobia has a very detrimental impact on the South African queer community.

Thus, for the purpose of this literature review, it is imperative to consider how gendered stereotypes and other various tactics that fall within the depiction of queer people in the South African mainstream media by brands can be considered harmful and reductive (Madinga, 2020). By understanding how various systems of inequality limit the experiences of queer people, only then can the researcher understand how to address the way brands depict lived queer experiences.

2.3.7 Conclusion

The way that meaning is constructed into our identities within society does not occur within isolation, it requires different facets of our identities to intersect such as our race, gender, and sexuality (Lucy, 2020). The way that gender and sexuality has been structured, favours heterosexual experiences and places queer experiences as inferior according to Francis and Msibi (2011). This view perpetuates stereotypes and harmful tropes utilized by systems of inequality and oppression when portraying the lived experiences of queer people. The South African mainstream understands the importance of including queer portrayals within the advertising messages due to how lucrative it has proven (Ivory, 2019). The literature review has highlighted how tools such as intersectionality can be used within a South African context to understand how to address the challenges that are brought on by systems of oppression such as patriarchy and homophobia (O' Shaughnessy, 2016). The way forward requires the research to utilize intersectionality in order find a way to addresses the portrayal of queer people within the South African mainstream media by brands

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a description regarding the research process used; it contains information regarding the method used to conduct research as well as the justification for using the method. This chapter discusses the steps used, including the selection of artefacts, the data collection, and data analysis process. The chapter indicates the role of the researcher and concludes with a discussion of validity and reliability within qualitative research, it unpacks how these two requirements are met within this research study.

The research explores the portrayal of queer bodies in South African mainstream media. The engagement between the researcher and the artefacts being studied consists of a thematic semiotic-visual analysis to explore and describe the phenomena. This was done within an interpretivist paradigm.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The selected paradigm for the proposed study falls under Interpretivism, to explore the subjective experiences surrounding a social phenomenon (du Plooy- Cilliers, Bezuidenhout & Davis, 2016). Under interpretivism there is no discriminate contrast between the researcher and the social phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2016). The researcher is encouraged to provide their own interpretation and understanding of the occurring social phenomenon. The epistemological stance within this paradigm for the proposed study, considers knowledge by the researcher/participant who have first count knowledge on the phenomenon. The queer theory being analysed will provide insight towards what knowledge should be considered crucial to the study or not. The researcher will aid in this process by ensuring there is adequate substantiation for the content included within the study. The ontological stance for the proposed study, considers meaning to be a socially constructed experience, that reality is shaped and influenced by social interactions (Maree, 2016). The way queer people are portrayed in South African mainstream media influences the way society interacts with and treats queer people. In turn this, shapes and influences the way queer people experience reality and how they see the world. The axiological stance for the proposed study, considers various viewpoints regarding the same phenomenon, by creating a distinction between all the artefacts and participants that experience and fall within a social phenomenon. The proposed study requires the researcher to expound on queer theory and the way they construct value to experiences such as the way the mainstream media portrays queer people.

3.3 Research Design/ Approach

The research approach selected for the proposed study is qualitative in nature, the study focuses on the feelings, thoughts, and opinions of queer bodies regarding the way South African mainstream media portrays queer people. The study is exploratory (Maree, 2016), focusing on gaining an understanding more than making a prediction. The proposed approach allows the researcher to be flexible and adapt their research according to changes made to the data or new findings. The study is cross-sectional, taking place within a 12-month period to ensure the researcher finishes in a timely fashion. The research being conducted will be done autographically through a semiotic-visual content analysis (Muratovski, 2016). The researcher can immerse themselves within the content being studied and engaged. The researcher undertakes this by sharing opinions, experiences and thoughts that provide a subjective understanding on how queer bodies are being portrayed within South African mainstream media. The researcher for the proposed study will be working inductively (Muratovski, 2016), where in the themes and categories required for the coding manual are identified from the data generated through careful and thorough examination.

3.4 Population

To this research study the content being analysed and unpacked using a semiotic-visual content analysis (Muratovski, 2016), will be artefacts in the form of branded advertising messages. A total amount of 6 artefacts were found, 3 images and 3 videos, from 5 lifestyle brands. The population parameters for this study, were South African lifestyle brands. This is suitable for a study that aims to explore how queer bodies' lived experiences are portrayed within the mainstream South African media. The accessible population (Maree, 2016) for the research study happens to be all lifestyle brands that have advertising messages that represent and include queer people. The data was sourced through browsing over articles that had to do with the portrayal of queer people in South Africa in relation to brand messages.

According to Harvey (2018) lifestyle brands can be understood as brands that have amassed respect and trust from their customers by providing them access to an aspirational lifestyle, using their products and services. The products and services offered are used to help facilitate an emotional relationship between the brand and how the customers see themselves when engaging with the brand. This is due to how consumers want to align with a brand that allows them to connect with an 'idea self' (Harvey, 2018). Lifestyle brands are highly social, they provide their brand experiences to their target audience often using social media (Masterclass, 2022). Lifestyle brands embody their targeted audience's aspirational values, by aligning their services and products with certain attributes (Harvey, 2018). This makes lifestyle brands a suitable population parameter, as it allows the researcher to uncover how lifestyle brands portray the lived experiences of queer people. Lifestyle brands align themselves with what their audience thinks, believes, and wants (Harvey, 2018). Additionally, Masterclass (2022)

states that lifestyle brands offer a particular lifestyle image, the individuals portrayed and depicted making use of the brand, are the ideal customer the brand wants to align with. The way South African lifestyle brands portray queer people towards the South African average consumer, may tailor harmful bias against queer people. By examining these types of brands, the researcher can gain an understanding of the perception created about queer people as well as the various strategies used to portray them.

3.5 Sampling

For this research study non-probability sampling was undertaken, in line with the qualitative nature of the study (Maree, 2016). Purposive sampling is used to select the artefacts being analysed within the semiotic-visual content analysis. It is used to determine the criteria for the brands, for the purpose of this study South African lifestyle brands are selected. Purposive sampling encourages the researcher to pick, what items they feel best suitable for the aims of the study (Maree, 2016). Purposive sampling is used to select the type of brand that would be selected for analysis. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to narrow down the type of content to being video and image-based advertising messages, all sourced online. Convenience sampling (Kobus, 2011) allows the researcher to use the information most convenient to them in pursuits of answering their research aims and objectives. The advertisements created by lifestyle brands were selected out of convenience to the researcher.

The artefacts chosen to fulfil the following criteria:

- a) Operate in the South African mainstream media
- b) Classified as a lifestyle brand
- c) Depict/portray queer people within the advertising message.

6 artefacts are selected through online browsing, 5 lifestyle brands are selected: Stimorol, Flora, WebAfrica, WeTheBrave and Find New Words

3.6 Data Collection

The use of a visual content analysis is the most suitable data collection method for the purposes of this research study. A semiotic-visual content analysis (Muratovski, 2016) allows the researcher to submerge themselves within observing and analysing culture as well as society using material and visual objects such as images and videos. The interpretivist approach enables the researcher to identify patterns and bias in how certain concepts are being communicated. The researcher can infer the consequences of the concepts and bias being communicated (Muratovski, 2016). The aim of this research study is to find common strategies used to portray queer people within the South African mainstream media and to describe how queer people are being portrayed within the South African mainstream media.

A semiotic-visual content analysis enables the researcher to produce rich descriptive information regarding the portrayal of queer people based on the selected artefacts.

to source the artefacts, the researcher plans to analyse within the study the researcher used Mamba Online. Mamba Online is a South Africa queer news platform (MambaOnline, 2022), that provides entertainment and lifestyle content regarding queer people within the country. The platform includes articles regarding queer representation by brands within the media. The researcher optimised their search by looking for lifestyle brands that had received an infamous reception for their portrayal of queer people in their branded messaging to the public.

3.7 Data Analysis

A thematic semiotic-visual content analysis was undertaken, the method encourages the researcher to explore and gain insight into the meaning behind literal and symbolic messages (Muratovski, 2016) within advertising messages within the South African mainstream media. Conducting a thematic semiotic-visual content analysis requires a laborious process, to get from your raw data into your themes/concepts (Kumar, 2011).

The first step: This type of semiotic visual content analysis requires the researcher to establish solid research questions/hypothesis (Kumar, 2011). The research questions for this study are as follows:

- What cultural associations are being formed based on how queer people are portrayed within the South African mainstream media.
- How does the South African media portray queer people.
- What common strategies are used when portrayed queer people in South African media.

The second step: This requires the researcher to read widely on the topic of queer representation within the South African mainstream media. By getting an understanding of the topic the researcher aims to explore, better understanding of the theory within that field will be attained (Kobus, 2011). The themes found within the literature review are as follows: Stereotyping, patriarchy, identity, the male gaze and intersectionality.

The third step: This requires the researcher to define the object of analysis (Muratovski, 2016). In the case of this research study the unit of analysis are the artefacts being analysed, videos and images sourced online. The videos and images included are from lifestyle brands and their portrayal of queer people.

The fourth step: The research being conducted by the researcher is qualitative which requires the use of a thematic semiotic-visual content analysis. A content analysis enables the

subjective understanding and interpretation of the content through identifying and classifying certain patterns and themes. This is suitable for a study that requires the researcher to dissect visual material (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016). This step has to do with the actual data collection, finding the images and videos online. The research is inclined to ensure that all artefacts gathered belong to lifestyle brands who promote their advertising messages within the mainstream media.

The fifth step: This step has to do with the preparation of the data being analysed (Maree, 2016). The images and videos selected as artefacts, are transcribed into descriptions with the use of semiotics to find the covert and overt meanings behind the artefacts. The artefacts are broken down into the signifier and the signified (Hall, 2020), to establish the meaning behind the sign and what it communicates. This process was conducted for each of the artefacts utilised within this study. Subsequently, transcribing the data allows the researcher to familiarise themselves with the information. The researcher is prompted to make observational notes based on the first round of coding (Kumar, 2011). For the purpose of this analysis observational notes, comments were created within the Microsoft Word document as well as additional handwritten notes.

The sixth step: An imperative part of this process is using phrases and sentences as coding units for the data. Coding allows the researcher to break down the data set into various chunks under certain themes. Microsoft Word is predominantly used to thematically conduct a semiotic-visual analysis of the data.

The researcher makes use of open coding to process the data being analysed. The researcher uses latent coding, which focuses on the concepts and ideas that a data set is communicating (Maree, 2016), rather than the manifest which is the direct information being depicted. The researcher is prompted to create a coding sheet (Kumar, 2011). A coding manual is created, this includes the characteristics of the data being coded, the themes and/or subthemes based on the data presented to the researcher. An inductive coding process is utilized to allow the themes and/or subthemes from the dataset to emerge through the coding process (Maree, 2016). The coding manual allows the researcher to identify the differences within the categories under certain identified themes (Maree, 2016). The coding manual ensures that there is consistency when undertaking the coding process. The coding manual consists of category names, their meaning for application and an example from the data set. To keep the data exhaustive (Maree, 2016) the researcher ensures that there are enough categories for the data collected. The researcher ensures mutually exclusive coding through ensuring that the themes and categories that have been identified are clear, with no overlapping coding units. The researcher ensures that the categories and themes identified are very easy to discern and allow for easy comprehension from unbiased spectators (Maree, 2016). This

process is iterative, requiring the researcher to continuously read through all of the information present, go over the codes and potentially make new ones based on their discretion in line with the research questions. This step requires the most frequency, as the researcher is required to go over the data repetitively (Kumar, 2011).

The seventh step: This requires the researcher to make summaries on their findings based on the research (Maree, 2016). This includes assessing any themes found with the literature review sources, to see if they contradict or support the data found.

4 RESULTS/FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter deals with the findings from the conducted thematic semiotic-visual content analysis, beginning with themes such as patriarchy, the male gaze, gender stereotypes and queer deviance. Additionally, sub-themes such as sexualisation, objectification, femininity, microaggression, coming out and kissing boyfriend are introduced and unpacked through the data analysis process. The findings are unpacked, per the researcher's interpretation of the artefacts. This chapter is focused on providing the researcher's subjective interpretation regarding the portrayal of queer bodies by lifestyle brands, in an attempt to answer research questions.

4.2 Codes/Categories

The codes are developed based on the concepts established during the literature review in Chapter 2, the codes are guided by the researcher's observations and interaction with the visual materials. The researcher uses latent coding, to derive the underlying subtext behind the visuals being analysed. The aim is to detail the hidden sentiments that are not made apparent when casually glossing over the artefacts. Latent coding is useful for identifying euphemised narratives gauge the profound context. The themes are derived from the literature review, additional themes are incorporated based on their emergence during the coding process.

Emotions related to queerness	Feminine	Sexualising	Objectification	Queer Deviance
Shame	Pink hair	Adult store	Solicitation	Kissing boyfriend
Fear	Crop top	Nudity	Homophobic slur	Disrupting dinner
Cheeky(amusing)	Sequin coat	Using sex toy		Defying parents
Shock	Wearing makeup			

Heartbreak	Flamboyant pose	Implied sexual activity		Coming out
	Belly piercing	Provocative humour		
	Porcelain heart			
	Delicate			
	Red nails			
	Lingerie			
	Feathers			
	Blonde wig			
	Yellow shirt			
	Soft imagery			

Table 4.2 1 Codes/Categories

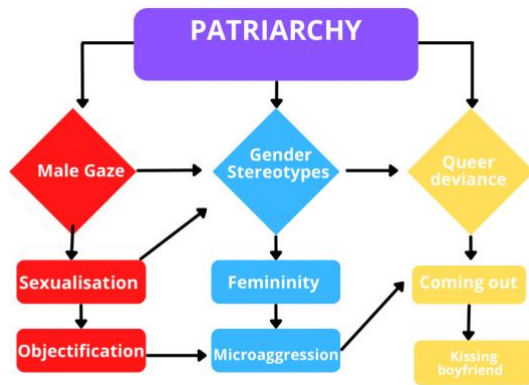


Figure 4. 2 Thematic map of concepts

Table 4.2 1 Codes/Categories Table 4.2 1 Codes/Categories consists of codes and categories that have been developed into themes within Figure 1: “Thematic map of concepts” All the coded data that fell under the categories of sexualisation and objectification, are placed within the Male Gaze theme. Whilst the Gender Stereotypes theme contains the categories of femininity as well as microaggressions. The remaining theme, Queer deviance contains the categories pertaining to data that is coded as emotions associated with queerness and queer deviance.

4.2.1 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system wherein which masculinity is rewarded and considered to be superior to femininity (O’Shaunessy, 2016). Within the system of patriarchy, the way queer people are portrayed is revealed through the 3 identified themes, The male gaze, stereotyping and queer deviance. Each theme illustrates the way in which certain strategies are used to depict the lived experiences of queer people. The research problem indicates that the researcher aims to explore how queer people are portrayed within the South African mainstream media. Patriarchy is enabled and perpetuated using the male gaze, stereotyping and queer deviance.

4.2.2 The Male Gaze

The male gaze is a term coined by Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1989), it refers to a technical term used to objectify the traits and behaviours of women to appease the cis-heterosexual male. The lens alienates individuals and groups of people who do not align with a patriarchal understanding of society (O’Shaunessy, 2016). The male gaze employs two tactics when it is used to portray the lived experiences of queer people, objectification and sexualisation. The findings within this theme support the theory of the male gaze by Mulvey (1989). The lens and use of it opens queer people up to discriminatory communicated messages. It is important to note that there is a relationship between the male gaze and the way patriarchy classifies and represents queer people

4.2.2.1 Objectification

This refers to coded data that reflects dehumanizing beliefs and practices, where objectification can be considered the act of treating an individual or a group of people as though they are objects. Objectification is communicated by using slurs, hate speech and derogatory humour.



Figure 4.2.2. 1 "Racy internet pleasure"

The signifier:

The advertisement depicts a man is dressed in lingerie and a corset, with painted nails and a blonde wig as he holds up a Wi-Fi router. The text reads out: 'For a good time call: 0860009555 and get racy-fast LTE at home'. The background is a bright yellow, whilst the foreground is the man and the featured text, has the tagline: "Get racy fast". The message includes a pun about not getting tied down. The advertisement includes the use of a stylized neon text in the form of a heart shape.

The signified:

The advertisement for internet service provider WebAfrica makes use of stereotypical tropes that have been associated with transgender women. The advertisement implies that

transgender women are just men dressed up as women instead of acknowledging and respecting them as women. The image depicts a man offering his “services”. This implies that the character within the image is more inclined to being considered as promiscuous by implying that they are open to solicitation for sexual activity. The stylized heart shaped text is reminiscent of places such as strip clubs or a brothel which are establishments that are infamously considered as sordid and places of ill repute.

The ad focuses on the man’s attire, primarily the corset, the skin showing which is used to create imagery that communicates the objectification of transgender women. The ad suggests that transgender women are there to offer pleasure, in the manner that a Wi-Fi router would. This depiction of transgender women limits the way that the viewer thinks of transgender women. The woman is reduced to being a means for pleasure. According to De Greef (2019) patriarchy encourages acts of objectifying queer people, by portraying queer people in a manner that diminishes their gender identity and expression. This particular depiction of the woman suggests that transgender women are seen as men in wigs, which perpetuates the objectification of transgender women. Objectification in South African mainstream media ignores the many aspects that make up gender identity and expression.

4.2.2.2 Sexualisation

This refers to coded data that reflects the reduction of queer people’s gender identity and expression by associating it with promiscuity. Sexualisation occurs when there is a suggestion that queer people are engaging in promiscuous behaviour due to their gender identity and gender expression

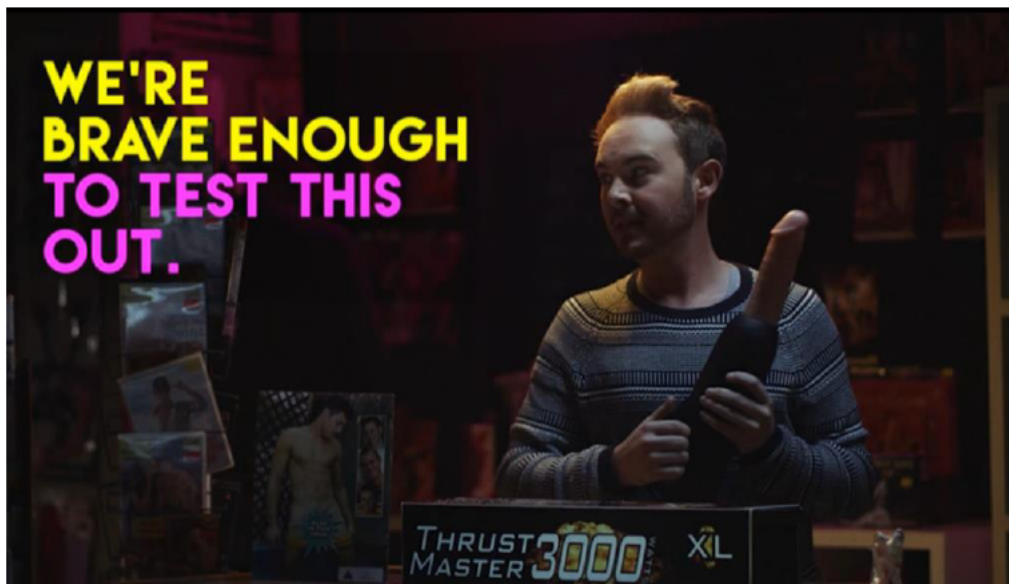


Figure 4.2.2. 2 "Dildo ad"



Figure 4.2.2. 3 "Dildo ad"

The signifier:

The video depicts a gay man, standing near a counter in what appears to be an adult store. The man is inspecting various sex toys, the man begins to test one out in a playful manner. A text appears: "We're brave enough to test this" which makes the man appear more shameful as he slightly hides the toy from view. The scene cuts into a man getting an HIV test and another text emerges on the screen: "So we're definitely brave enough to get tested for HIV".

The signified:

The advertising message seems to imply that gay men are more likely to be found in an adult store than in a centre getting tested for HIV. This looks down on the gay man who appears to be exploring his own personal sexual expression, by conflating it with a lack of concern for

testing. This is a harmful rhetoric that implies that gay men care more about their sexual exploits than their health. *The advertisement includes no dialogue*

The way the queer man is portrayed conflates his gender expression and identity with sexual behaviour. The man is depicted having more concern with his sexual exploits and activities than with verifying his health. The ad includes various markers that indicate that the content of the advertising message contains sexual imagery.

This tactic depends on sexualising the way queer people are portrayed on screen. The tactic addresses the research question 'what common strategies are used when portraying queer people', by sexualising their lived experiences, or associating their sexual activities with their gender identity and expression.

Additionally, Spurlin (2006) indicates that being queer is often reduced to being a lifestyle, one that is associated with certain commodities. This is reflected in *Figure 6*, where the queer man is associated with sexual items, within a sexual setting rather than depicting a form of self-expression or identity free of creating biased representation that call the livelihood of queer people into a negative light.

4.2.3 Stereotyping

Stereotyping refers to oversimplified ideas about a group of people. Within the media, stereotypes are used within representation (Hall, 2020) however, they are limiting forms of representation regarding a group of people being depicted in the media.

4.2.3.1 Femininity:

This refers to the coded data that reveals the use of gender stereotyping when depicting queer people. This is illustrated in depictions of queer people that see the media applying stereotyped ideas regarding behaviours that are associated with gender identity and gender expression.



Figure 4.2.3. 1. "Homophobic washing powder ad"

The signifier:

The video (00:05- 00:09) begins with a woman holding up a yellow and white pin-striped shirt, as she proceeds to show her neighbour, she remarks that the shirt is so colourful, she says that even a gay man would wear it. "Colourful, even a istabane would wear it". The women both laugh and high five each other and the advertisement ends.

The signified:

The message conveyed by the video was the lady remarking to their neighbour that the washing soap was effective, enough to make the shirt so colourful that even a queer person would wear it. The sentiment used was a derogatory Zulu slur for queer men. The advertisement shames queer men by using humour and stereotypes.

The use of a slur indicates that the expression used to describe gay men diminishes the gender expression of the man being referenced in the advertisement. The advertisement subjects the portrayal of queer people in South African media to objectification with the use of humour that relies on derogatory terminology. According to Matebeni, Monro and Reddy (2018) queer men in Africa are not considered to be 'real men' instead they are frowned upon as inferior to standards set by patriarchy. The media representation of queer men within this ad, indicates that a derogatory belief is associated with queer men.

Figure 3 is an advertisement that associates the use of a yellow shirt with an item that a gay man would wear, the use of this stereotype armed with an objectifying slur, summarises the depiction of queer men under a society where stereotyping is used. Femininity is associated with a clothing choice, though if you consider it further the advertisement conflates a gay man's gender expression with a femininity as a means on looking down on it. This kind of inference

aligns with Matebeni, Monro and Reddy (2018) where queer men are discriminated against under patriarchy, due to how they have been associated as feminine. Under patriarchy cis-heterosexual men are thought of as masculine whilst, queer men are ruled out as feminine and therefore inferior. Subsequently, according to Spurlin (2006) the usage of stereotyping within the media reduces and limits the representation of queer identity and expression towards fashion, specifically feminine fashion. The finding suggests that a very common form of queer representation has to do with the use of gendered stereotyping. Certain objects, colours and behaviours are aligned with stereotyped beliefs of queer people. In terms of the representation of queer people in the media these stereotypes reinforce beliefs and ideas regarding the way gender is constructed within society.

4.2.3.2 *Microaggressions*

A gendered microaggression refers to intentional and non-intentional, verbal, behavioural and non-verbal indignities that communicate negative connotations about a particular gender identity and expression. Gendered microaggressions often voice notions that stereotype people in accordance with their gender, which is a common patriarchal practice.

Microaggressions are one of the common strategies that have been employed by the media for the purpose of queer representations within the selected advertisement messages. This advertisement stereotypes gay men in South Africa as individuals that dress flamboyantly and more inclined to wear apparel designed for women, particularly if it is colorful. Additionally, another layered stereotype relates to certain gender markers in relation to clothing. The stereotype is based on the belief/idea that certain colored clothing items and patterns are allocated to men and others towards women. The gay man within this advertisement is stereotyped as crossing the binary boundary, when it is implied that they would prefer the yellow top.

This depiction enables the direct use of stereotypes to make gendered stereotypes about the queer community, a form of representation.



Figure 4.2.3. 2 "The new Stimorol ad"

The signifier:

The individual appears to be opening a pack of gum, based on the flavour selected their clothing, demeanour, and behaviour change. The individual appears dressed in a white tank top with pink hair, posing with the grape flavour. The second flavour packet appears in their hands and their clothing changes, the individual changes into a bright orange tie-dye denim monochromatic outfit. The individual points directly into the camera before the next flavour is introduced and they appear wearing a sequin clad coat, with black pants and a crop top.

The signified:

The advertisement portrays a queer individual, showcasing their personal expression and what it means to be young in South Africa. The individual appears to change their demeanour with the change of the gum flavour, which appears to communicate that their personal expression is influenced by whichever Stimorol gum flavour they are consuming. It is interpreted as gender expression being as flexible as a piece of gum and its various flavour offerings. The queer character's uniqueness is linked to the several flavours of Stimorol.

The ad is interpreted as one that displays microaggressions based on how a queer individual appears as well as behaves. The ad depicts the queer individual changing their appearance within the image, to different types of apparel that are feminine markers (Lucy, 2020) such as wearing a crop top, the sequin clad coat and apparel designed for women on a queer boy. The feminine markers can be interpreted as a microaggression based on gender expression. The message communicated through the ad is interpreted as a comparison with the queer spectrum to that of different bubble-gum flavours. It is as though the individual in the ad

changes their gender expression according to whatever flavour they are ingesting as such their appearance and behaviour changes.

4.2.4 Queer deviance

Queer deviance to the way queer people is categorised and constructed within the media. Queer representations subvert the ideas and beliefs of hegemonic masculinity (O'Shaunessy, 2016). This is based on the idea that queer people are diverting from a sexuality like heterosexuality which is thought of to be a 'norm'.

4.2.4.1 Coming out

A term used to categorise the data set that reflects the act of queer people coming out. The notion of coming out, refers to when queer people disclose their gender identity, gender expression and sexuality to people when they were assumed to be heterosexual.



Figure 4.2.4. 1 "Flora homophobic ad"

<i>The signifier:</i>
The image juxtaposes a pastel pink background against text in the shape of a bullet. The text reads: "Uhh dad I'm gay" bolting towards a realistic human heart replica made of fine China. The image includes a tagline: "You need a strong heart today" next to the brand's logo. The foreground and focal point for the image is the blue and white human heart replica.
<i>The signified:</i>

The message implies that by coming out to your father as gay, you are effectively killing him. Those words are shaped into a bullet implying that, that is what would shatter his heart. The colour pink is commonly stereotyped as being a girl's colour, associated with fragility, softness, and femininity.

The advertisement suggests that a gay son coming out to his heterosexual father would be a death sentence, for the father. The underlying message within this is that fathers would not be able to be accepting of their son's sexuality if it does not align with the dominant sexuality, under patriarchy that would be heterosexuality. The ad may also communicate to gay son's that they should not come out of the closet as it may endanger their father's health. This representation encourages queer men to remain in the closet, to ensure the safety of their father's. This encourages queer people to conceal their identity, not for their own safety, but for that of their parent who may not respond to the news positively. Shame is imposed onto queer men for not aligning with the ideals of a man that have been fashioned directly from a patriarchal society Matebeni, Monro and Reddy (2018).

4.2.4.2 *Kissing boyfriend*



Figure 4.2.4. 2 "Gay kiss commercial"



Figure 4.2.4. 3 "Gay kiss commercial"

The signifier:

The advertisement features an interracial couple, consisting of an Indian and Caucasian man having dinner with what appears to be the Indian man's parents. The mother is in the background of the video working in the kitchen, whilst in the foreground the father sits amongst the couple. The father appears to be giving his son a stern talking to, when the son starts staring at his partner both simultaneously stand up and kiss. The father has a very surprised face filled with shock, whilst the mother in the background covers her mouth in shock as well. A text appears upon the screen that reads: "We're brave enough to come out". The son appears to be relieved with his chest emphasised before the scene changes, to him opening a condom. As the condom is being opened another text comes across the screen: "So we're definitely brave enough to cover up". The video contains no dialogue. The video contains no dialogue. The video contains no dialogue.

The signified:

The message behind the advertisement seems to be that coming out requires a lot of bravery, thus wearing a condom during should be easy". This trivialises the experiences queer people face about coming out to their parents and reduces that to emphasise that condoms can be easily worn. The ad reduces being gay and coming out to, a part of an intimate and sexual activity. (*Leans into conflating sexuality with sexual activity*). It is implied through subtext that the men depicted kissing, do not engage in safe sex practices, and are thus encouraged to do so.

Figure 4.2.4. 1 "Flora homophobic ad" depicts a man having dinner with his family and his boyfriend (who hasn't disclosed the nature of their relationship), the father appears to be talking to his son. The son discloses his sexuality by kissing his boyfriend in front of his parents

who react with what appears to be a deep sense of shock. The advertisement within this context manages to reflect a deep discomfort within the man's parents, as though they are at a loss due to their son's revealed sexuality by kissing his boyfriend at the dinner table. The message behind the advertisement can also be interpreted as, same sex couples find it easier to practice unsafe sex than they do sharing their sexuality with members of their family.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Validity and reliability of qualitative research

Under an interpretivist qualitative study credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are considered to ensure that a study remains valid, reliable and is trustworthy (Maree, 2016).

Credibility

This has to do with how believable a study is towards anyone reading it (Maree, 2016). The researcher can undertake certain measures to help improve how credible a study is by consulting their peers, having debriefing sessions with their proposed study supervisor as well as including transcripts and notes that are reflective and offer insight into the researcher's interpretation. Within this research study the researcher conducted several debriefing sessions with their supervisor for guidance and increasing the study's credibility (Maree, 2016).

Transferability

This has to do with how the researcher's hypothesis can be applied to a different context or setting (Maree, 2016). To ensure the transferability within a study the researcher is advised to create dense descriptions that contain decadent details. By doing so, this allows the reader to transfer the phenomenon being studied to another context. Within this research study, the researcher uses extensive descriptions regarding the artefacts being analysed.

Dependability

In a qualitative study, dependability is illustrated through the research design as well as the conduct of the proposed study. Due to the data collection and analysis process, new sources of information, techniques and strategies are integrated to increase the dependability of the proposed study. The researcher has kept a separate documentation containing decisions made throughout the research process. Documenting decisions and observations made is valuable and allows a reader to comprehend why certain choices were made and it provides a context for the researcher's interpretation of the data (Maree, 2016).

Confirmability

The confirmability deals with the extent of which the results generated from the proposed study are influenced by a researcher's bias (Maree, 2016). To reduce bias, the researcher articulates their stance on the social phenomena before conducting the data collection and

analysis process. Due to the autographic nature of this research study, it is imperative that the researcher constantly has an objective figure debrief with them to highlight any bias from the researcher. Noting any bias within the researcher notes helps reduce the applied bias (Maree, 2016). The research supervisor has been debriefed regarding the bias of the researcher, contact sessions were used to discuss the data collection, and analysis process.

5.2 Implication of findings for future research

The study builds on queer inclusive knowledge regarding the representation of the queer community within South African branding messages in the mainstream media. The research is intended to assist casting directors, directors, copywriters, and media executives with creating queer validating and honest content for mainstream media consumption. The research will aide media personnel, by equipping them with information regarding the practices used by lifestyle brands that are harmful towards the queer community, this can allow the media personnel to steer clear from disparaging content aimed at the queer community. The research conducted will aid in creating organic and meaningful queer representation for all types of brands in the South African mainstream media. Queer consumers and the community alike, should feel better represented within marketing messages created by brands. The branded advertisements that reflect the lived experiences of queer bodies, should dissuade the public from using harmful language in relation to the queer community.

The research study has been able to determine the kinds of strategies lifestyle brands use to depict the lived experiences of queer bodies in South African mainstream media. The study has been able to reveal that the way queer people are represented is based on a heterosexual viewpoint, where other sexualities are not considered of significance and are inferior (O'Shaughnessy, 2016). It has been successful in revealing that negative associations are aligned with queer people when portraying them, especially by lifestyle brands in South Africa.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

Recommendations regarding future research would be to attempt this study on a larger scale, by increasing the sample size, it would provide a more robust analysis on the way lifestyle brands create queer representation when targeting queer consumers. The research study should be run under a quantitative approach, to provide findings that can be generalised for the South African queer representation in the media. I recommend that this study follow a quantitative approach to determine the relationship between how queer people feel about the

way in which they are represented in the media. It could prove to be significant to change the data collection process, to one that follows a close interview with a consenting participant.

5.4 Ethical implications

No participants are being engaged with instead a content analysis will be conducted. Due to the form of method used, there will be no need for confidentiality and or privacy within the study. No participants are being questioned within the study instead content and visual media will be dissected. The interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to provide input within the process via transcripts and notes. Avoiding plagiarism by ensuring that all data reviewed is paraphrased or referenced correctly. A coding manual consisting of the themes and categories used as well as their meaning will be constantly updated throughout the research process. To reduce bias, the coding manual is monitored during debriefing sessions with the researcher's supervisor.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this research study are related to the study being qualitative. Although the study manages to provide an in-depth description behind the way in which the South African mainstream media portrays queer people, the study and the outcomes cannot be generalised and applied in a much broader context. The study conducted, was focused on lifestyle brands within a South African context, whereas this study may prove to be significant to explore within a different context. The types of brands being explored are limited to lifestyle brands.

5.6 Conclusion

Based on data analysis and findings, the themes uncovered have revealed the common strategies employed to depict queer individuals, the cultural associations that aligned with the queer community and their representation. The strategies lifestyle brands use within South Africa to portray queer people are based on a patriarchal viewpoint. This viewpoint perpetuates the use of sexualisation to depict queer people, in a manner that harms the queer community through poor representation. Objectification is communicated by using slurs, hate speech and derogatory humour that targets the queer community. The way queer people are depicted relies on gendered stereotypes that communicate implicit and explicit harmful notions regarding queer individuals. The queer representation offered by the selected lifestyle brands, suggest that the idea of being queer is a social deviance, this can be seen in how ideas are expressed about coming out, or sharing affection between queer people. The study was able to provide clarity and understanding on the way lifestyle brands in South African mainstream media portray queer people

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Annexures

Annexure A



Date: 13 June 2022

Student name: Atlegang Hlabane

Student number: [REDACTED] **Campus:** Pretoria

Re: Approval of RESE8419/RMET8429 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS/PGDip ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

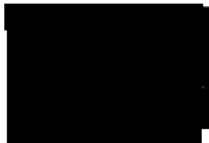
Supervisor name: *Courtney Jade de Villiers*

Signature:



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: *Courtney Jade de Villiers*

Signature:



– Research Report Summary Document Table

<u>Project details</u>		
Your Name: Atlegang Hlabane	Student Number: [REDACTED]	
Supervisor: Courtney de Villiers	Date: 5 December 5, 2022	Version: 6

<u>Proposed Title</u>
Title: How South African brands in mainstream media portray the lived experiences of queer bodies

<u>Research details</u>	
Problem statement	To gain an in-depth understanding of how the South African media portrays the lived experiences of queer bodies in South Africa. Queer representation is often influenced by negative stereotypes and portrays that dehumanise queer experiences. South African brands often fail to portray queer experiences in a manner that is not detrimental towards queer bodies who are impacted by the portrayals
Purpose statement	The purpose of the study is to understand the way that the South African media industry depicts the experiences of queer bodies. The results found from the study can allow marketers to understand how to tailor make content that represents queer people without the use of stereotyping or other harmful behaviours. The study proposed will be done using a semiotic-visual content analysis under the interpretivist paradigm.
Research question/s	• What cultural associations are aligned with queer people when portraying them in the South African media • How does the South African media portray queer people?

	• What common strategies are used when portraying queer people in South African media?
Hypotheses/ Objectives	• To understand, what pre-existing cultural associations in the South African mainstream media has when portraying the lived experiences of queer bodies in South Africa, to create meaningful and non-harmful representation of queer people. • To describe, how the South African media portrays the lived experiences of queer bodies in South Africa, to allow marketers to understand the ramifications of stereotypes • To understand, what strategies South African media employs when depicting queer bodies' lived experiences to ensure that future brand content is not harmful to the marginalised group
Research rationale	The research study proposed is beneficial towards marketers as well as scholars. The data generated as well as the results can be used to gain insights that can be used to create campaigns that are inclusive of queer representations and educate people on the social ills that come with portraying queer people negatively. By creating better representation brands and marketers will be able to engage better with queer consumers.

<u>Literature overview</u>	
Key theories	Queer Theory Queer Representation in Media
Seminal authors/ sources	Crenshaw, K. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Mulvey, L., 1989. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In <i>Visual and other pleasures</i> (pp. 14-26). Palgrave Macmillan, London. Raymond, D., 2003. Popular culture and queer representation. A Critical Perspective, pp.98-110.

Literature review themes	<u>Theme 1</u> Stereotyping	<u>Theme 2</u> Patriarchy	<u>Theme 3</u> Identity	<u>Theme 4</u> Male gaze	<u>Theme 5</u> Intersectionality	<u>Theme 6</u>
Sources	(Stated in reference list below)					
Key concepts	Gender identity Male gaze Patriarchy Intersectionality Representation					

<u>Provisional Research Approach</u>				
	<u>Paradigm</u>	<u>Epistemology</u>	<u>Ontology</u>	<u>Axiology</u>
Paradigm	Interpretivism	Under interpretivism the information generated can only be considered knowledge by the participants who have a first-hand account on the phenomenon. The queer content analysed will provide insight on what knowledge will be considered crucial toward the study. The deciding factor for what will be	Under interpretivism meaning is socially constructed, the way people experience reality is a subjective experience shaped by social interactions and nuances. The queer bodies impacted have a different experience of South Africa in comparison to heterosexual people.	Under interpretivism, the axiological position enables and encourages distinction among participants falling under the same context or phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016). Due to the paradigm differences are valued and appreciated, as it allows room for more perspectives

		included within the study lies with the researcher due to the content analysis being proposed.	The way the media represents queer people dictates how they experience the material and social world.	regarding the same context or phenomenon. Various perspectives are welcomed with this axiology, the researcher is encouraged to provide dense descriptions (Maree, 2016).
Approach/ design	The research approach chosen is qualitative in nature. The study will focus on the emotions, thoughts, and feelings of queer bodies regarding their depiction in the South African media. The study will be cross-sectional to ensure it is completed in a timely fashion. This approach was chosen as it allows the research process to be flexible and allows for changes and improvements. A semiotic-visual content analysis will be used to describe and categorise words, images, and social artefacts under a qualitative approach (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016). The research will be autographic, allowing the researcher to immerse themselves into the lived experiences of participants, the researcher takes part within the process, in a reflective manner, sharing their opinions, experiences and thoughts to provide a subjective understanding from their perspective (Maree, 2016)			

<u>Provisional Research Plan</u>	
Population	The content being dissected (social artefacts, magazines, advertisements, and films) will be derived strictly from the Southern African media. Beauty and lifestyle brands will be the focus of the population as well as the content that they generate, which will be decided based on various touchpoints. The

	accessible population will be South African lifestyle brands. A selection of 5 lifestyle brands have been selected for the purposes of this research study.
Sampling	The sampling for the lifestyle brand selection used will be non-probability sampling due to the study being qualitative, it is not required to be able to generalise the findings. Purposive sampling is utilised to select a specific characteristic that provides the scope of the sample, in this case, it is limited to beauty and lifestyle brands within South Africa (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016). Convenience sampling is used to select the type of content analysed within the chosen beauty brand. The type of content being analysed will be images (3) and videos (3)
Data collection method(s)	The research being undertaken is qualitative in nature, the method used is content analysis. Content analysis allows for subjective comprehension of the content through identifying and classifying patterns and themes. The method is applicable in this study as it enables the researcher to dissect visual media (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016). This method allows the researcher to analyse, describe and provide meaning to the SA beauty brand's advertising campaigns that depict queer bodies and their lived experiences.
Data analysis method(s)	The research being undertaken is qualitative in nature, the method used is content analysis. The data being analysed will be put into codes, themes and categories that allows the researcher to identify themes and patterns within the data. The content analysis allows the researcher to analyse the meaning behind certain visual messages and concepts (Muratovski, 2016). The content analysis is being conducted thematically (Maree, 2016).

<u>Ethical considerations and limitations</u>	
Ethics	• No participants are being engaged with instead a content analysis will be conducted • Due to the form of method used, there will be no need for confidentiality and or privacy within the study. • No participants are being questioned within the study instead content and visual media will be dissected

	• The interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to provide input within the process via transcripts and notes • Avoiding plagiarism by ensuring that all data reviewed is paraphrased or referenced correctly. • A coding manual consisting of the themes and categories used as well as their meaning will be constantly updated throughout the research process. To reduce bias, the coding manual will be checked during debriefing sessions with the researcher's supervisor.
Limitations	• A beauty and lifestyle brand has not yet been identified and neither has the content required to conduct and analysis. • A limit of 5 beauty and lifestyle brands are selected to draw a direct comparison

<u>Reference List</u>

