

**Durban Millennials' Reception Analysis of
GreenPeaceAfrica's 2020 Blog Post about Single Use
Plastic during Covid-19: A Descriptive Qualitative Online
Questionnaire.**

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SUMMATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education institution for degree purposes.

Signature: _____

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ABSTRACT

Plastic pollution has been an important global issue, several countries have made an effort to reduce environmental impact. However, COVID-19 has led to a pause in the fight against plastic pollution. There has been an increased number of plastic usage and pollution during COVID-19. Therefore, this study investigated South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post and the contrast or similarity of these interpretations to their own perceived plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study contributes to the Media Studies field utilizing a Media Studies theory. Namely Audience Reception theory, to determine the dominant, negotiated and oppositional positions taken in the interpretations of the blog post. The data collection method consisted of a qualitative online questionnaire, which allowed the researcher to gain in-depth information from the six participants in the study. Deductive thematic analysis had been used to analyse the data, finding that South African Millennials' interpreted the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post in a Dominant way. However, their interpretation of the blog post is mainly in contrast with their own perceived plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Dominant position, Negotiated position, Oppositional position, Single-use plastic consumption, Blog post

TITLE

Durban Millennials' Reception Analysis of *GreenPeaceAfrica's* 2020 Blog Post about Single-Use Plastic during Covid-19: A Descriptive Qualitative Online Questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, 'Reusables can be used safely: Over 125 health experts fire back at the plastic industry' (Schrank, 2020). Whether their interpretation

of the blog post was similar or in contrast to their own plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study consists of an introduction to the study, the literature review, research design and methodology, findings and interpretations of findings and finally the conclusion of the study.

Contextualization

This study investigated South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post as Millennials' have been found to be more environmentally conscious as opposed to Baby Boomers¹ (Majerova, et al., 2020). Audience Reception theory was utilized for an in-depth understanding and described whether the South African Millennials' interpreted the blog post in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way (Hall, 1993, p. 101). The researcher compared these interpretations to the South African Millennials' plastic consumption during the Coronavirus pandemic. The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a global pandemic that can lead to severe health issues such as, respiratory issues or death (Department of Health, 2020). COVID-19 is known to have caused panic in society (Baggio, 2020), which was relevant to the blog post. The blog post also stated that 125 scientists and doctors signed a statement assuring that it is safe to use reusable products (Schrack, 2020).

Rationale and Relevance

The environmental impact single-use plastic has is well known, this is evident by days such as, '*World Ocean Day*' which is globally celebrated on the eighth of July on this day ocean clean-ups are setup (Recycle Coach, 2020). The international public is aware of the negative impact single-use plastic has on the environment and wildlife (Smith, 2018). However, due to COVID-19, it seems society no longer concerned about the environmental impact single-use plastic has (Sukumaran, 2020). Schrank (2020) mentions in the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post that coffee shops refused to use reusable cups and plastic and there was a banned in certain

¹ Baby Boomers include individuals born between the years 1946 to 1964 (Yang, 2008).

States in the United States of America of reusable shopping bags thus encouraging the use of single-use plastic bags (Schrack, 2020). This topic was of great interest to the researcher and the rationale of this study as it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of why society could easily use single-use plastic even in the context of COVID-19 as most individuals may have been aware of the negative impact. The researcher used Audience Reception theory to establish the dominant, negotiated and oppositional positions (Hall, 1993, p. 101) taken in the interpretations of the blog post. The researcher gained insight into the South African Millennials' perceived use of single-use plastic during COVID-19.

The significance of the study included the investigation of the role that media and communication played in informing the public that reusable products do not increase the risk of individuals being infected with COVID-19. Which had been done by the analysis of the interpretations of the African blog post by South African Millennials' (Schrack, 2020), thus studied from a South African perspective. The study contributed to the Media Field by making use of a Media Studies theory namely Audience Reception theory, which determined the dominant, negotiated and oppositional positions (Hall, 1993, p. 101) taken in the interpretations of the blog post. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of how this form of media was interpreted and what their use of single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19 was like.

Problem Statement

There has been an increased number of plastic pollution usage and pollution during COVID-19 (Konyn, 2020). The issue is even though scientists have made this information available, the public continues to use single-use plastic during the pandemic and the news media attribute this to possibly being because they think plastic is more hygienic or safer (Euripidou, 2020). This research aimed to investigate Millennials' interpretations of the blog post which determined if this once-off example of the type of messaging in the media had a role in their perception of plastic consumption during this pandemic. Did they interpret the article in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way? Furthermore, Millennials have been

researched because they are considered to be more environmentally conscious than Baby Boomers (Haaland, 2020). For this reason, the researcher wants to understand if an already classified cultural group considered environmentally conscious had changed their plastic consumption during this COVID-19 pandemic or not.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this cross-sectional and qualitative study was to gain an in-depth understanding of South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. Which focuses on single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19 using an online qualitative questionnaire. Audience Reception theory was used in this descriptive study in order to determine whether the South African Millennials' interpreted the blog post in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way (Hall, 1993, p. 101). As well as how these interpretations compared to their own perceived plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study been analyzed using deductive thematic analysis.

Research Question

1. How do South African Millennials' interpret the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post?
2. How are these South African Millennials interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post similar or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa?

By answering these research questions, it could determine if this once-off example of the type of messaging in the media had a role in their perception of plastic usage during this pandemic. It also may inform the researcher whether the South African Millennials' have interpreted the article in the dominant, negotiated or oppositional way.

Research Objective

The first objective of this study was to describe South African Millennials' interpretations of *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post.

The second objective of this study was to understand whether South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post are similar or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This section included the theoretical foundation of Audience Reception theory, followed by a thematic literature review in which past literature was linked to the research problem and critically reviewed to the relevance of the study. Followed by the conceptualisation.

Theoretical Foundation

Audience Reception theory had been used to establish the foundation of this study, as the meta-theoretical position of this interpretivist study was taken into account that each participant may experience a different reality when interpreting the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, because each individual has a different way of life and that may contribute to the how they interpret the blog post (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2006). Audience Reception theory is known as the encoding and decoding communication model, developed by a Jamaican born British sociologist Stuart Hall in 1973 (Sender & Dechrney, 2016). The theory originates from the United Kingdom and has been applied in research worldwide (Sender & Dechrney, 2016) which allowed it to be translated into a South African context for this study. Audience Reception theory is an expansion of the German academic Hans-Robert Jauss's Reception theory developed in 1969 (Rockhill, 1996). This theory comes from the field of Cultural Studies and is within the sociocultural tradition as society, culture and systems are analysed in this theory (Moy, 2013). In this theory, there is a sender who encodes a message which is then decoded by the receiver (Hall, 1993).

The relevance the theory contributed to this study was that there had been multiple participants' who decoded the messages from the blog post. These participants may each have a different interpretation of the article as their values and ideals may be different as well as taking into account the participants' social context. There are various positions which the participants who are the decoders of the message which will be the blog post in this study take, this includes the oppositional position, negotiated position and the dominant-hegemonic position (Hall, 1993, p. 101) These positions are key concepts in this study which have been defined in the conceptualization sub-section of this summative research report. Audience Reception theory is relevant to Media Studies as this theory can be utilized to analyse audience interpretations of media rather than the media itself, the media has encoded messages and the audience who are the decoders of these media messages (Pertiwi, Putri & Christin, 2016).

Audience Reception theory is appropriate in this study investigating South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, which focuses on single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19. The researcher utilized Audience Reception theory to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants interpretations of the blog post. Which they have decoded and have established whether the participants have each taken an oppositional position, negotiated position or a dominant-hegemonic position (Hall, 1993).

The strength of utilizing this theory in this proposed study was that it established a foundation of how the researcher gained a deeper understanding of each audience members interpretation of the blog post. Specifically looking the positions, the participants' have taken this Media Studies theory which allowed for researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the blog post, contributing to the Media Studies Field. The theory allowed the researcher to investigate the how the participants perception of the blog post was similar or in contrast to their own plastic usage during COVID-19.

The limitation of Audience Reception theory being utilized in this study was that it did not consider the audience may be aware of the intention of the message which may have an influenced their interpretation of the blog post. The researcher may have

overcome this limitation by framing the questions in a neutral way, allowing for the participants' to interpret how they want to answer the question without any bias from the message influencing their responses. Another limitation includes the participants in this study may all interpret the blog post in a certain way taking on a position in the theory which is timebound (Liebes & Curran, 1998). As the researcher is only interested in participants' interpretations at this particular point in time, and it is not within the scope of this study to track changes in interpretations over time.

Literature Review

Introduction

This thematic literature review consists of synthesis and critical analysis of previous research conducted, which is relevant to this study investigating the interpretations of South African Millennials' interpretations on the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. Allowing the researcher to create a more in-depth understanding by working within the interpretivist paradigm, aiming to provide information to the research problem. The themes that are discussed in this literature review are; plastic pollution's environmental impact, media and plastic pollution, COVID-19 impact on plastic pollution and Audience Reception theory.

Linking research problem to the literature

Several countries have put regulations in place in attempts to reduce plastic pollutions impact on the environment (Xanthos & Walker, 2017). Plastic pollution's environmental impact is the first theme of this study critically analysed. Past studies in this theme inform the researcher on the environmental impact plastic pollution has had before COVID-19. The issue of plastic pollution has received significant attention throughout the past few years (Brighty, Jones & Ruxton, 2017), a factor contributing to the awareness of this issue in South Africa specifically is created by media (Van Rensburg, Nkomo & Dube, 2020). Media and plastic pollution are the second theme, the past studies critically analysed in theme focuses on the role media has in creating public awareness of plastic pollution. In this theme the researcher may gain an understanding of the role media has specifically the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, contributing to the Media Studies field. This theme allows the researcher to investigate the role media has with regard to plastic consumption.

Plastic pollution has been an important global issue where several countries were making efforts to reduce the impact of this issue however, COVID-19 has led to a pause in the fight against plastic pollution (Silva, et al., 2020). This includes certain organizations using COVID-19 to their advantage by encouraging the purchasing of single-use plastic items thus, effecting plastic pollution according (Zambrano-Moserrate, et al., 2020). COVID-19 impact on plastic pollution is the third theme critically analysed in this literature review, past literature in this theme focus on the environmental effects of COVID-19. Informing the researcher whether COVID-19 has influenced plastic consumption. Stuart Halls' Audience Reception theory is the final theme in this literature review. This allows the researcher to identify whether the South African Millennials' in this study have interpreted the blog post in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way.

Plastic pollution's environmental impact

Past literature in this theme focuses on the environmental impact plastic pollution has had. As well as the regulations put in place with the attempt of reducing this issue's impact globally and specifically in South Africa will be critically analysed. This theme is relevant to the study as these previous studies build the foundation of where the issue of plastic pollution stood before the impact COVID-19, which is important to consider when understanding the South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post and provides insight for the researcher to consider factors such as the South African Millennials' personal behaviour regarding the usage of plastic.

A study written in Rhode Island, by Kristin L McDermott in 2016 focusing on "throwaway culture" referring to the norm of the continuous use of single-use plastic which is thrown away after one use. Stating that 80% of the annual 8 million tons of plastic going into the ocean is single-use plastic which destroys ecosystems (McDermott, 2016, p. 6). Suggesting that it is too late to recycle or reuse single-use plastic society that needs to stop making use of plastic products and stop the mass production of plastic as the issue of plastic pollution is too dire (McDermott, 2016). This study is relevant to the research as it establishes the urgency of the issue of

plastic pollution and provides information on why society continues using single-use plastic despite knowing the impact it has on the environment.

The urgency of the need to stop making use of plastic products (McDermott, 2016) highlighted in the previous study is relevant to a study written by Drik Xanthos and Tony R. Walker, conducted in 2017 in Canada. This study discusses policies put in place to reduce plastic pollution, this study specifically focuses on single-use plastic and as a large contributor to plastic pollution (Xanthos & Walker, 2017). Thirty-three countries had put plastic bag policies in place including South Africa, in 2003 a fee was placed when acquiring a plastic bag. The study states this policy was effective as there had been a reduction in the majority of the plastic bags used in each country (Xanthos & Walker, 2017). This is relevant to the current study as it informs the researcher how the issue of plastic pollution had been previously handled by several countries before COVID-19.

The strengths of these studies in this theme to the current research is that both are similar in their views of single-use plastic as both studies see this product as a harming factor to the environment (McDermott, 2016; Xanthos & Walker, 2017). This may provide the researcher with insight when investigating the South African Millennials' interpretations of the blog post that has a similar view of single-use plastic. However, the limitation of both studies in this theme is that they are conducted before COVID-19. The researcher will overcome this limitation by comparing the findings of these studies to past studies that account for COVID-19, informing the researcher how the plastic usage has changed from before COVID-19 to after the pandemic. However, in this study the environmental impact not only needs to be considered, past studies investigating the role media has in the representation of plastic pollutions effects on the environment need to be critically analysed.

Media and plastic pollution

The media has created awareness to the issue of plastic pollution by sharing images of the effects plastic pollution has on the wildlife or informing individuals on social media platforms (University of Surrey, 2020). The focus in this theme will be previous studies which focus on the media's relation to plastic pollution and the representation

of this issue in the media. This theme is relevant to the research as the researcher is investigating the South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, which is a form of media. Therefore, these previous studies may provide the researcher with an in-depth the media has to this issue.

In 2020 a South African study done by Van Rensburg, Nkomo and Dube, aimed to understand the perceptions of single-use plastic by citizens of Durban beachgoers. This study found the percentage of Durban beachgoers are made aware of plastic pollution due to the media. The findings included are; 27% created by social media, 16% created by newspapers, 10% created by television and 8% created by radio (Van Rensburg, et al., 2020). This is relevant to this research as it highlights that most people receive their information through social media, making the choice to analyse the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post relevant.

Similarly, to the previous study focusing on the use of media to create awareness of plastic pollution (Van Rensburg, et al., 2020). A 2020 study, done by Lesley Henderson and Christopher Green in London, identifies the power the media has in order to create awareness about plastic pollution in the ocean. Stating media storytelling is of great importance in order to shape the issue, the audiences social issues, values and knowledge also have an effect on how the issue is viewed (Henderson & Green, 2020). Which provides the researcher with an in-dept understanding of the role media has in creating awareness on plastic pollution. The relevance of this study to the research is that the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post is a form of media that may create awareness to this issue when interpreted by the South African Millennials'.

The media can be used to have the adverse effects in promoting the use of single-use plastic by controlling how the use of single-use plastic is represented. Which is what the plastic industry attempted to do, by promoting the use of single-use plastic items at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Schrack, 2020). A 2018 study by Carolin Volker, Johanna Kramm and Martin Wagner in Germany identified how an issue is framed in the media as an important influencer in the way the public may react to this issue of microplastic and plastic pollution (Völker, et al., 2018). Another study similar to this conducted by Savannah Geary in 2019 in Miami, focusing on the

representation of plastic pollution in the various forms of media. Suggesting that advertisements and campaigns that make individuals feel that plastic pollution is their fault tend to be more proactive against this issue. Making the recommendation to improve the representation of this issue in the media like; knowing your audience and appealing to the aspect of human health affected by plastic pollution (Geary, 2019). These studies are relevant to this research as they identify the representation of the issue of plastic pollution influence on the plastic consumption. Providing understanding that South African Millennials' interpretations may be influenced by the representation of the issue of plastic pollution in the blog post.

The strengths of the studies in this theme included the study by Van Rensburg, Nkomo and Dube was applied in the South African context (Van Rensburg, et al., 2020) which is the context of this research therefore the findings of the study is valid in this research. As well as taking into account the role has media in creating awareness of plastic pollution (Van Rensburg, et al., 2020; Henderson & Green, 2020), these findings are a strength for the researcher as they provide a more in-depth understanding that the blog post is a form of media that may create awareness of this issue when interpreted by the South African Millennials'. The limitation of these studies is the focus is only on the role media has in creating awareness and not the role media plays in the promotion of items like single-use plastic which contribute to the issue of plastic pollution. Such as advertisements from companies such as Coca-Cola, that promote single-use plastic items with the use of the media (Sweeney, 2018). The researcher will overcome this limitation by gaining an understanding of the South African Millennials' view on the issue of plastic pollution before interpreting the blog post. As well as taking into consideration that the interpretations may be influenced by the representation of the issue of plastic pollution. Therefore, influencing how these South African Millennials' decode the blog post and whether they take a dominant, negotiated or opposition position.

COVID-19 impact on plastic pollution

COVID-19 has changed the way the world lives and how society conducts their day to day lives (Carr, 2020). This theme will critically analyse previous studies focusing on COVID-19 such as the panic brought on by COVID19, the environmental effects of COVID-19. These topics are relevant to the research as they may contribute an

understanding of how COVID-19 has changed how society views plastic consumption in this context.

A 2020 study conducted by King Costa in South Africa focusing on the panic caused by COVID-19. Suggesting the panic was due to the lack of communication about the virus between the South African government and their citizens and the incorrect information from social media sources (Costa, 2020). This is relevant to the research as it may factor in the actions of plastic usage during virus. Another study done in 2020, suggests social media created panic and misinformation about the virus, resulting in the World Health Organization having to setup a website to correct false information released on social media (Journal Travel of Medicine, 2020). The relevance these studies contribute to the research is to establish an understanding of the reaction this virus caused amongst society, which is relevant as it may influence how South African Millennials interpret the blog post and their plastic usage actions during this pandemic. The strengths of these studies are that the study conducted by Costa (2020) is applied in the South African context. The limitation of these studies is that it does not take into account that not every individual will believe the information posted on social media. This will be overcome by the researcher asking question on how COVID-19 has the blog post influenced their views plastic consumption going forward.

This question related to a 2020 study conducted by Marc Kalina and Elizabeth Tilley in South Africa and Malawi, suggests COVID-19 has resulted in an increase of single-use products and waste (Kalina & Tilley, 2020). The 2020 study conducted by Manuel A. Zambrano-Monserrate, Maria Alejandra Ruano and Luis Sanchez-Alcalde, done in Mexico; suggests that the environmental impact caused by COVID-19 include a reduction in recycling due to the fear that the virus will spread in the recycling centers and industries promoting the use of single-use plastic items instead of reusable items to avoid the spread of the virus (Zambrano-Monserrate, et al., 2020). A 2020 study developed in Spain by Ana L. Patricio Silva, Joana C. Prata and Tony R. Walker, suggests COVID-19 has caused an increased in plastic waste. The studies recommendations included; the implementation of stronger policies dealing with sustainable plastics and more reusable alternative and (Silva, et al., 2020). The strengths of these studies are that they identify the shared link that COVID-19 has

impacted plastic pollution, which informs the researcher about a view that may be shared by the South African Millennials in this study. The limitation includes that these studies are not all applied in the South African context, which the researcher will overcome by applying the comparing the international studies to the local study conducted.

In contrast to the above studies in this theme a study focused on the environmental impact of COVID-19 done in 2020 by, Jiri Jaromir Klemes, Yee Van Fan, Raymond R. Tan and Peng Jiang in Singapore, Philippines and Czech Republic. Suggesting that using paper bags instead of plastic bags may not make that much of an environmental impact. This study states that there rise in plastic waste due to protection from the virus and health services (Klemes, et al., 2020). The strength of this study is the fact that it provides an oppositional view about the environmental impact cause by COVID-19 when compared to the studies mentioned previously. This view may be shared by South African Millennials' when interpreting the blog post in this study. This study was is not in a South African Context, which is a limitation. This will be overcome as this researcher aims to contribute more to the findings from a South African context.

Audience Reception theory

Audience Reception theory is used as a guide in order to understand the interpretations the South African Millennials have of *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post.

These interpretations will be decoded, which a 2016 study done by Alive Putri Pertiwi, Berlian Primadani Satria Putri and Maylanny Christin in Indonesia gives an in-depth description on the encoding and decoding processes (Pertiwi, et al., 2016). This is relevant to the research as the encoded process has been completed in the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post by Nina Schrank. The decoded process will be completed by the South African Millennials when interpreting the blog in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way (Hall, 1993).

These positions are discussed in a 1993 study which will be used in this literature reviews as direct source by Stuart Hall, developer of the theory. Which states that

there are three positions which the participant could take the first position is dominant-hegemonic position, second is the negotiated position and finally the oppositional position included in the 1983 study by Justin Wren-Lewis (Hall, 1993; Wren-Lewis, 1983). These positions will be defined in the conceptualisation section, may provide the researcher with insight how these positions influence the interpretations. As well as provide insight of perceived plastic usage in the context COVID-19 is influenced by these positions which is a strength of this theme.

Conclusion

The previous studies critically analysed in this thematic literature review provide the researcher with an in-depth understanding of these studies can contribute to the research. Specifically focusing on the strengths and how the researcher plans to overcome the limitations within each theme.

Conceptualisation

The conceptualisation in this qualitative study consisted of six key concepts that had been most relevant to the study.

Dominant-hegemonic position is a concept of Audience reception theory.

Individuals who take this position have similar beliefs as well as assumptions such as similar beliefs as the sender of the message, therefore there is very little miscommunication created allowing for the message to be understood from the point of view which is dominant (Hall, 1993, p. 101). In this study, a participant who had taken the dominant-hegemonic position, shares the view of the blog post which was COVID-19 caused an increase in plastic pollution and reusable items are safe to use.

Negotiated position is an alternative position, in this position the majority of the intended message is understood by the audience. Due to the audience's own values and beliefs, this can slightly change the meaning of the intended message (Hall, 1993, p. 102). In this study participants who had taken the negotiated position would possibly interpret the blog post's message, as it is safe to make use of reusable products during COVID-19, but their shops did not agree. Therefore, they will have to

continue making use of single-use plastics an example of this was when USA *Starbucks* refused to accept reusable cups in their stores (Laville, 2020).

An alternative position is the **oppositional position**, the audience makes sense of the intended message however rejects the message and adds their own meaning to the message (Hall, 1993, p. 101). In this study participants that had taken this position understood that the message of the blog post stated that it was safe to make use of reusable products during COVID-19 (Schrack, 2020), but they did not believe this and would continue to use single-use products.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. This disease began in 2019 and originated from Wuhan China however it has now affected several countries (WHO, 2020). COVID-19 is relevant to this study a blog post which discussed single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19 (Schrack, 2020). Therefore, the researcher was required to have an in-depth understanding of COVID-19, as this was the context of this study. This context is very important to subjective interpretations, and therefore the context of this study must be acknowledged and emphasised. Specifically, how the participants' have interpreted this media regarding plastic pollution within the context of COVID-19. This may have been different to how they have interpreted media regarding plastic pollution in a different timeframe before COVID-19 was a priority.

Single-use plastic are items constructed with chemicals that contain fossil-fuels and are only meant to be used once then disposed (Pearson, 2019). In this study, the researcher analysed the South African Millennials' interpretations of the blog post which discussed single-use plastics and the participants' perceived single-use plastic usage. The researcher needed to have a good understanding of this concept, because they needed to be able to ask participants what their own understanding of single-use plastic was as well.

Millennials are a key concept mentioned several times in this study. Millennials consist are individuals who are born between the years 1980 and 2000 (Smith & Nichols, 2015). Past studies found that millennials have been more environmentally conscious as opposed to Baby Boomers (Majerova, et al., 2020)

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section included; the research paradigm, the research design, population, sampling, data collection method, data analysis method and trustworthiness of the study.

Research Paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm takes into account that many individuals interpret the same item differently (Thompson, 2015). This approach suited the research as it aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the South African Millennials' interpretation of *the GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, which has been interpreted differently by the participants in this study. This study investigated the correlation between the South African Millennials' interpretations of the blog post and their own perceived plastic consumption, which was also considered in this approach of understanding why individuals act the way that they do (Thompson, 2015).

The interpretivist paradigm was more appropriate compared to the positivist paradigm as this study was qualitative, whereas the positivist paradigm is used for quantitative studies that research relationships (Thompson, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm will be analysed in the epistemological, axiological, ontological, meta-theoretical and methodological positions (Thompson, 2015).

The epistemological position in the interpretivist paradigm focuses on what feels right and common sense is the source of knowledge (Rehman, 2016), in this study the epistemological position was the South African Millennials' common knowledge of plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19. The next position is the axiological position in the interpretivist paradigm, where uniqueness is valued (Rehman, 2016). Thus, the South African Millennials' unique realities needed to be considered as it would differ between participants when interpreting the blog post. The third position is the ontological position in the interpretivist paradigm, which views human interaction as the creator of reality and views this reality as fluid (Rehman, 2016). The ontological position was the interaction South African Millennials' had with plastic pollution and their own use of single-use plastic during the COVID-19

pandemic. This creates the reality they had on plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19.

The meta-theoretical position in this paradigm states that an in-depth understanding of other people's realities is created by the theory of the study (Rehman, 2016). Audience Reception theory was the theory that had been utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of the South African Millennials' realities which could be identified in their interpretations they make of the blog post. The blog post may be interpreted in a dominant, negotiated or oppositional way (Hall, 1993, p. 101). The methodological position which is the data collection method used in the study, one that is subjective, qualitative methods (Rehman, 2016). An online qualitative questionnaire was the data collection method in this study, which aligns with the interpretivist paradigm because it involved collecting in-depth responses from the South African Millennials'. In which the participants had more time to respond and elaborate on their answers allowing for more in-depth responses due to the flexibility that the online setting allows (Rice, et al., 2017).

Research Design

The approach of this study is a qualitative descriptive study that aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. As well as to gain an in-depth understanding of the similarity or contrast of the interpretations of the blog post and the participants' own perceived plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was cross-sectional as it was analysed data from a certain point in time, this was the chosen timeframe of this study as the researcher wished to conduct descriptive research. As several characteristics had been analysed at once such as (Cherry, 2019); the South African Millennials' interpretations, are these interpretations dominant, negotiated or oppositional and the plastic consumption of these participants during COVID-19. The reasoning of the study was a deductive approach, in which a statement including key concepts such as; the dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings from the Audience Reception Theory was applied to the specific participant responses. In order to understand their unique

perceptions of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. As well as if these perceptions affirm or contradict their own perceived single-use plastic consumption. An online qualitative questionnaire was used to collect the data from the participants, these responses have been interpreted by the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding thus, the researcher design was interactive (Maree, 2020).

Population

Population consists of the objects, set of elements, or people that encompass the specifications which the researcher has chosen to study (Bless & Higgons-Smith, 2000). The nature of population research had been people because the researcher aimed to investigate South African Millennials' interpretations. The target population consisted of a specific group of individuals who were researched and contributed to the findings of the research conducted as they meet the population characteristics (Barnsbee, et al., 2018). The target population of this study included South African Millennials', as this study was conducted in a South African context. Millennials were selected based on past studies which found that millennials have been more environmentally conscious (Majerova, et al., 2020). The accessible population consists of individuals who are a part of the target population and are able to participate in the study (Asiamah, et al., 2017). The accessible population included South African Millennials' that responded to the *Facebook* post, posted by the researcher (Appendix D p.56).

The unique characteristics of the population of this study included South Africans, as the researcher conducted the study in South Africa, as past studies analysed in the literature review tend to be from out of the South African context (McDermott, 2016; Henderson & Green, 2020). This study hoped to contribute to the topic of plastic pollution within a South African context. The second unique characteristic is millennials, which included individuals that fall between the ages of 22 to 38 years old (Smith & Nichols, 2015). The *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post, was a social media article, thus another characteristic of this study was that the participants need to have access to social media. Past studies have found that this may have influenced the participant's knowledge of plastic pollution (Abreo, et al., 2019). Other characteristics that the researcher ensured to include in this study were participants

from both genders as well as various races in order to accurately represent the diversity in South Africa. As the country consists of 80.9% Coloured individuals, 7.9% percent White individuals and 2.5% Indian/Asian individuals (Diversity Abroad, 2020).

Sampling

To ensure all the unique characteristics identified in the population have been fulfilled by the participants in this study, non-probability sampling has been used as the sampling method (Trochim, 2020). Sampling decreases the cases needed to investigate in a study as the researcher will not be able to investigate the entire population (Taherdoost, 2016). The unit of analysis relates to the research problem, once the researcher is able to identify the research problem this is followed by identifying the unit of analysis (Kumar, 2018). In this study, the unit of analysis was the responses to the online qualitative questionnaire of the South African Millennials' after interpretation of the blog post.

The type of non-probability sampling that has been used in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a selective method where the researcher selects individuals with specific characteristics (Trochim, 2020). This sampling type allowed the researcher in this study to specifically select the participants who are South African Millennials'. As well as ensuring there was diverse amongst the participants in terms of race as well as gender. The specific racial demographics included in this study were Black, Coloured, Indian/Asian in order to accurately represent the diversity of the races in South Africa (Diversity Abroad, 2020). The gender characteristics included in this study was inclusive of both male and female. The researcher selected the social media platform *Facebook*, to request for the participants in this study which ensures that the participants utilize social media, which is a strength of this sampling method.

If the researcher had made use of snowballing sampling, in which one individual is identified and asked for possible participants who they know that can participate in this study, this may have led to individuals that may not be social media users which (Trochim, 2020). Thus, not having one of the unique characteristics of the population

needed in this study. Another strength of purposive sampling was that this sampling type was time efficient, in this study the researcher posted the request for South African Millennials' to be participants in this study by the end of the day there were six responses to this request. (Jawale, 2012). However the limitations of purposive sampling included a high level of bias as well as a low level of reliability (Ames, et al., 2019), the researcher overcame the limitation of bias by ensuring the selection of participants was based on who responded first in decreasing order from one to six to the *Facebook* post.

The sample size of the accessible population in this study was six participants following the *IIE Honours* guidelines for a qualitative research study. Six participants were an appropriate sample size, as the adequate number for participants for a qualitative questionnaire range between 5 to 25. This allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participants responses, which allowed for a variety of responses due to the number of participants (Dworkin, 2012). The participants in this study have interpreted the blog post in their own way, which could have similarities to fellow participants responses in the online qualitative questionnaire. Allowing the researcher to identify and compare the responses, which allowed for in-depth understanding.

Data Collection Method and Application

An online qualitative questionnaire is a self-reported data collection method used in order to obtain beliefs, feelings, opinions as well as in-depth information via online platforms. Online qualitative questionnaires consist of open-ended questions which allow participants to elaborate and describe what they think and feel (McLeod, 2018). The online questionnaire in this study allowed collected beliefs and feelings on the issue of plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19 (Appendix C p.54). This was most suitable for this study as it allowed the researcher to describe the interpretations that the South African Millennials' had of the blog post. As well as understand the South African Millennials' own perceived single-use plastic consumption and describe whether it was in contrast with their interpretations of the blog post during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

The strengths of an online qualitative questionnaire include time efficiency when compared to individual face-to-face interviews (Wright, 2005), in this study the researcher emailed the online questionnaire to the participants of the study with a deadline date allowing the participants to complete the questions in their own time. If the researcher had chosen to conduct face-to-face interviews both the researcher and each participant of the study would have had to schedule a time. Another strength of online qualitative questionnaires was the participants could complete the questionnaire from wherever they chose to be and email it back to the researcher (Wright, 2005). Especially in this study, during the time of COVID-19 where social distancing was encouraged by the South African Department of Health (BusinessTech, 2020). The limitation experienced in this study was the limited sampling as not all South African Millennials' had access to the internet (Wright, 2005). Therefore, the diversity of responses to the online questionnaire would not give an accurate representation of the diversity of South African Millennials'.

The researcher first pretested the online qualitative questionnaire, as pretesting is a necessary improving validity technique. Pretesting involves the use of the data collection method on a small scale of the accessible population in order to pinpoint issues that may occur with regards to the data collection instrument (Morse, et al., 2002). The online questionnaire was emailed to an individual who the researcher selected, ensuring that this individual had the unique characteristics of the target population and was not a part of the sample used in this study. Once the individual completed the questionnaire and emailed it back to the researcher. The researcher changed the order of four questions which were based on establishing the participants feelings on the issue of plastic pollution. The four question would now come before the participants read the blog post in order to avoid the participant's interpretation of the blog post being influenced.

The researcher then made contact with participants through the *Facebook* post requesting for participants for the study (Appendix D p.56). The researcher decided to select the first six individuals who responded to the *Facebook* post, this effected the representation of race and gender in this study which is a limitation of the selected sampling method conducted in this study. The researcher then requested the participants email addresses to email forms requested by the *IIE*. Which

included the *Explanatory Information Sheet* (Appendix G p.85) and *Consent Form* (Appendix H p.88). Both forms had to be signed and then emailed to the researcher who then emailed the online qualitative questionnaire to these participants.

The online qualitative questionnaire started off with a brief introduction, which thanked the participant explained the aims of the study (Appendix C p.54). The first discussion followed the brief introduction which consisted of four questions. After question 3.2, the questionnaire went into the second group of questions that began with the participants needing to read the blog post, by clicking on the hyper-link. This was followed by a link to the blog post and five questions. The online qualitative questionnaire was designed on Microsoft Word, as majority of computer users have this software, thus it was more accessible (Brown , 2018).

The online qualitative questionnaire had been used as it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions, thus providing in-depth answers on their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour with regards to single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19. Allowing the researcher to describe the interpretations that the participants had of the blog post and identify whether the participants had taken a dominant, negotiated, or oppositional position when interpreting the blog post in the data analysis process in this research study.

Data Analysis Method and Application

The data collected in the online qualitative questionnaire in this study was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, referring to the identification of themes, meaning patterns and ideas which come up frequently in a transcript (Caulfield , 2019). This study has utilized deductive thematic analysis, as it was theory-driven and there had been a preconstruction of themes (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Audience Reception theory was used to build the theoretical foundation of this study and the preconstruction of the first group of themes. This included; Dominant Reading, Negotiated Reading, Oppositional Reading (Appendix E p.57). The second group of preconstructed themes focused on the second research question which focused on the participant single-use plastic behaviour. These themes included; High Single-use Plastic Consumption, Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption and Low Single-use Plastic Consumption (Appendix E p.57).

The researcher identified both groups of themes in the participant's responses in the qualitative questionnaire. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to describe whether the South African Millennials' interpretations were similar to or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. This was done by identifying a correlation between the two groups of themes been identified in the participant's responses.

The strengths of using deductive thematic analysis was the flexibility it allows with regards to having various different theories being able to be applied to it (Javadi & Zarea, 2016), in this study Audience Reception theory has been applied for the preconstruction of themes. The limitation of thematic analysis was the concern of reliability as data can be interpreted in many ways (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). However, the researcher overcame this by utilizing Audience Reception theory and past literature, in order to guide how the researcher has interpreted the participant's responses to which themes were assigned.

The data was analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis, the first step was the familiarisation, in which the data was transcribed, revised over and concepts established (Szedlak, et al., 2015). In this study, the transcription was simple as the researcher copy and pasted the questions and responses from Microsoft Word. Each question from the online questionnaire was put in their own table which included all the participant's responses to the question. This made it easier for the researcher to revise over the data collected as well as the concepts in the data.

The second step is the production of initial codes which the key points of the data was systematically organized to identify the codes (Szedlak, et al., 2015) (Appendix E p.57). The third step was the generating themes in which codes were combined into one theme (Szedlak, et al., 2015), this included the two overarching themes of this study which was; Readings and Plastic Usage. The fourth step is the reviewing of themes in which the researcher compared the data to the themes ensuring that the themes are present in the data and no key points are missing (Szedlak, et al., 2015). The researcher completed this step by reviewing each theme against the responses of each questionnaire ensuring that no key concepts were left out. The fifth step involved defining the themes, which was stating the exact meaning of the

theme and assigning a concise and easy to comprehend name (Szedlak, et al., 2015). Which had been done beforehand in this deductive study. These steps have been applied to analysing the data in this study in the data analysis application section of the report. The sixth step is the writing up of the analysis of the data which includes the data presentation and interpretation (Szedlak, et al., 2015).

FINDINGS AND INTERPREATIONS OF FINDINGS

This section includes the presentation of findings in a tabulated format and interpretation of these findings.

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

In the presentation of this study's data, each question from the online qualitative questionnaire used to collect data from six participants had been presented in a table. The presentation of findings corresponded to the order of the research questions. The responses of the participants have been copied from the online qualitative questionnaire to the table in this study without any changes, which ensured confirmability (Nowell, et al., 2017). However, due to the limited word count only a part of the participants' responses was presented in this section, the full responses (Appendix F p.58). As deductive thematic analysis had been utilised to interpret the responses, the themes identified in this study; Negotiated reading and Oppositional reading High single-use plastic consumption, Moderate single-use plastic consumption and Low single-use plastic consumption. (Appendix E p.57)

Dominant, Negotiated and Oppositional Reading

These themes focus on the first research question, the questions from the online questionnaire that are relevant to these themes included question 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (Appendix C p.54). The highlighter colours assigned to these themes include; Dominant Reading was yellow; Negotiated Reading was blue and Oppositional Reading was green.

Question 1 of the online qualitative questionnaire focused on investigating the participants' understanding of plastic pollution effect on the environment before they

had interpreted the blog post (Table A). After analysing the response, the researcher identified that all the participants responses to this question associated plastic pollution with being a harm to the environment or to wildlife. Past studies that have related to this view on plastic pollution state that it has harmed the environment and was responsible for damaging ecosystems (McDermott, 2016). However, the response had been different from past literature as it was in the context of COVID-19. This was an important implication to the study as this study was investigating the interpretation of the blog post and plastic usage within the context of COVID-19, which allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19.

After analysing the responses, the researcher identified the Dominant Reading in all six participants' responses (Table A p.29). These sections had indicated that the participants' attitudes and beliefs towards plastic pollution aligned with the blog post before reading the blog post. Thus, falling into the Dominant Reading theme, as the media message and audience responses share the same attitudes and assumptions (Hall, 1993). Contributing to the study as the researcher was able to gain an understanding on the participants' views of plastic pollution before interpreting the blog post, which had allowed the researcher to identify the influence their views had on the interpretation of the blog post.

Table A: Question 1 and Responses

Question	Participants	Responses	Theme
Discuss your understanding of the effect of plastic pollution on	A	"... <i>causes harm to animals that get entangled...</i> "	Dominant Reading
	B	"... <i>deadly to the environment...</i> "	Dominant Reading
	C	" <i>Plastic pollution is one of the biggest contributors to animals in the wild losing their lives...</i> "	Dominant Reading

the environment.	D	<i>“...harm to many different animals.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>“...negative impact on the environment...”</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>“...most serious issues...”</i>	Dominant Reading

Question 2 of the online qualitative questionnaire focused on gaining sight in the participants feelings towards plastic pollution before reading the blog post (Table B p.31). The researcher found five of the six participants only associated negative feelings towards plastic pollution and one participant identified the advantages plastic usage provided. Past studies found that millennials' had been environmentally conscious, thus led to association of negative feelings towards plastic pollution (Majerova, et al., 2020). These studies stated that millennials take more pro-environmental action. The negative feelings the participants' associated with plastic pollution align with the attitudes and assumptions of the blog post, thus these five participants have related to the Dominant Reading (Hall, 1993). However, Participant B stated, *“...the negative impacts outweighs its advantages...”*, even though the participant related negative feelings towards plastic pollution. Unlike the other participants, Participant B identified that there was advantages when plastic had been utilized, relating to the Negotiated Reading. Due to Participant B's own beliefs their attitudes and assumptions did not completely align with the blog posts message. Which the researcher identified with the use of Audience Reception theory which ensured credibility (Hall, 1993). These findings contributed to this study as it informed the researcher on the participants' attitudes towards plastic pollution before reading the blog post. Which allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding after these attitudes have been compared to the participants' interpretations of the blog post.

Table B: Question 2 and Responses

Questions	Participants	Responses	Theme
Explain how plastic pollution makes you feel?	A	"... <i>feel sad that ecosystems will be destroyed...</i> "	Dominant Reading
	B	"... <i>the negative impacts outweigh its advantages.</i> " "... <i>frankly frightening that a massive amount of it exists without being capable of easily being destroyed...</i> "	Negotiated Reading
	C	" <i>Plastic pollution makes me angry and disgusted...</i> "	Dominant Reading
	D	"... <i>saddens me as it is harmful towards animals.</i> "	Dominant Reading
	E	" <i>I'm enraged with anger by plastic pollution...</i> "	Dominant Reading
	F	"... <i>I feel disappointed...</i> "	Dominant Reading

Question 4 was the first question which the participants answered after reading the blog post. Which aimed to investigate the participants' thoughts on the blog post. After analysing the responses, the researcher found that six participants' responses related to the Dominant Reading (Table C p.32). The Dominant Reading meant that participants understood the intended message of the blog post, which was it is safe to utilize reusable products during COVID-19. The plastic industry had taken advantage of this pandemic to promote single-use plastics to be purchased again. Past research which was similar to the analysed responses stated that COVID-19 had led to a reduction of reusable items being used due to the fear of spreading the virus (Zambrano-Monserrate, et al., 2020).

In this blog post, a statement had been signed by doctors that confirmed it was safe to utilize reusable items as opposed to single-use plastic during the pandemic (Schrack, 2020). The commonalities identified throughout these responses are the mention of listening to medical professionals and it was safe to use reusable products as opposed to single-use plastic during the pandemic. These commonalities informed the reader that the participants' interpreted the blog post in a Dominant Reading, as this was the intended message of the blog post. However, the difference between these responses and past literature is that these responses were in a South African context. Which contributed to the study by the gained in-depth information on the message they received from reading the blog post. The gained in-depth understating the participants interpretation of the blog post contributed to the dependability of the study (Nowell, et al., 2017).

Table C: Question 4 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
Describe what you think GreenPeaceAfrica wants to achieve with this blog post.	A	"... <i>promote the use of reusable objects</i> ..."	Dominant Reading
	B	"To <i>encourage us to listen to science</i> as opposed to industry lobbyists. To <i>bring awareness</i> about the <i>harmful effects of single – use plastics</i> ..."	Dominant Reading
	C	"... <i>inform</i> and reassure the public that <i>using reusable products</i> during Covid19 is as safe..."	Dominant Reading
	D	"... <i>tricked</i> into believing that <i>we should purchase</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>more plastic, as opposed to reusing it – when in actual fact, there is no harm in doing this as it is unlikely for covid to spread that way.”</i>	
	E	<i>“... stressing the importance of readers and society to act consciously with respect to their plastic consumption despite the focus being on COVID-19.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>“...listen to the science and the advice of medical professionals...”</i>	Dominant Reading

Question 5 aimed to gain an understanding of whether the participants agreed or disagreed with the blog post. After analysing the responses, the researcher found six participants related to the Dominant Reading (Table D p.34). The meaning of a Dominant Reading in this question meant that the participants agreed with the views and attitudes of the blog post (Hall, 1993). Past literature related to these responses, specifically looked at the role media played in creating awareness to the issue of plastic pollution representation of the issue of plastic pollution in the media (Völker, et al., 2018; Geary, 2019). These responses added to past literature by demonstrating how the media had been used to create plastic pollution awareness and specifically in this study how the blog post was a media message that had created plastic pollution awareness. These responses had also contributed to research on plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19.

Table D: Question 5 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
Explain if you agree or disagree with the message in this <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post. Give examples.	A	"...I agree that we should make use of more reusable items..."	
	B	"...People in general are influenced by what the media feeds them..."	Dominant Reading
	C	"...I agree that the plastic industry is trying to take over once again, by releasing false information..."	Dominant Reading
	D	"I do agree with this message..."	Dominant Reading
	E	"...I agree with the examples given by <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> ..."	Dominant Reading
	F	"I do agree..."	Dominant Reading

Question 6 focused on the participants feelings towards the increased plastic usage during the pandemic. The researcher found six participants responses related to the Dominant Reading theme (Table E p.35). These responses showed negative feelings and their attitudes towards plastic pollution during the pandemic which was the same as the intended message of the blog post. These responses related to past literature which stated media created awareness on the issue of plastic pollution (Völker, et al., 2018). Specifically, Participants E's response as the participant admits that before they had read the blog post, they did not share the same view on plastic usage during the pandemic. However, this previous focused on the framing of the issue of plastic pollution and did not consider the interpretation of the media with the use of Audience Reception theory, which is what had been done in this study (Völker, et al., 2018). Which contributed to the study as it gave the research an in-

depth understanding which showed that their interpretations are took a dominant position.

Table E: Question 6 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How does this GreenPeaceAfrica blog post make you feel about the problem presented about the increased use of plastic during Covid-19?	A	<i>"...This makes me feel disappointed in the ever-growing plastic war..."</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>"It makes me aware that there are alternatives to single – use plastics and ways in which we are able to reduce plastic pollution..."</i>	Dominant Reading
	C	<i>"...plastic industry chose to rather contribute to the problems."</i>	Dominant Reading
	D	<i>"It saddens me to think of all the animals that are going to suffer as a result of this..."</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>"I now feel guilty as this post made me realize that our perception of the use of plastic is incorrect."</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>"I feel upset over the idea of manufacturers taking advantage the situation..."</i>	Dominant Reading

Question 7 focused on the influence the blog post had on the participants' plastic usage during the pandemic. The researcher found six participants' related to the Dominant Theme (Table F p.36). These responses created a link between past

literature focussing on media creating awareness on plastic pollution and COVID-19's impact on plastic pollution. However, this previous study was in a European context whereas this study was conducted in a South African context (Völker, et al., 2018; Silva, et al., 2020). Which was important to consider as the study had to be applied to South African Millennials' who had stated that the blog post have made them more conscious and that COVID-19 has led to an increase in plastic pollution even though it was safe to use reusable items during the pandemic. These responses contributed to the study as it provided the researcher with better insight of the participants understanding of the blog post and it gave the an indication of their single-use plastic consumption after they have read the blog post.

Table F: Question 7 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How does this GreenPeaceAfrica blog post make you want to stop using single use plastic during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.	A	<i>"It has made me more conscious about the decisions that I will make in the future regarding single use plastics."</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>"...urging me to reduce my contribution to plastic pollution."</i>	Dominant Reading
	C	<i>"...encourages me to want to not use single use plastic as much as I can..."</i>	Dominant Reading
	D	<i>"...beneficial for me to use the material bags as opposed to</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>purchasing plastic bags ...</i>	
	E	<i>“...educated me...”</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>“...doesn’t like plastic so avoiding it isn’t really hard...”</i>	Dominant Reading

Question 8 focused was the final question that focused on the first research question. The main focus of this question was the influence that the blog post had on the participants future plastic consumption during COVID-19. The researcher found that five participants responses related to the Dominant Reading (Table G p.38). These responses aligned with the intended message of the media which was to encourage individuals to use reusable products than single-use plastics, meaning that these participants interpreted the blog post in the dominant position (Hall, 1993).

However, Participant B response related to Negotiated Reading as they stated, *“...I would not necessarily rush to use reusable cups...”*, which is not the intention that the blog post wanted its audience to take away. However, the participant did state, *“... using my own reusable mug or cup suffices..”*, this part of the response shows that that the intended message of the blog post was understood. However, due to the participants own beliefs and attitudes they have changed the meaning of the blog post, meaning that the blog post was interpreted in negotiated position (Hall, 1993). The researcher made use of Audience Reception theory to identify the negotiated position, which ensured credibility of the study. These responses contributed to the study as the participants stated the actions of their plastic usage in the future.

Table G: Question 8 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
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How does this <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post make you want to use reusable products during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.	A	“...encouraged me to make use of more reusable products...”	Dominant Reading
	B	“Although I would not necessarily rush to use reusable cups...” “...the alternative of using my own reusable mug or cup suffices...”	Negotiated Reading
	C	“The blog post makes me want to use reusable products even more...”	Dominant Reading
	D	“...inspired me to make more of an effort to incorporate more reusable plastic products...”	Dominant Reading
	E	“This blog does not want me to use as much plastic as I was using during Covid -19...”	Dominant Reading
	F	“...finding ways to avoid plastic or at least single use plastic...”	Dominant Reading

High Single-use Plastic Consumption, Moderate Single -use Plastic Consumption and Low Single-use Plastic Consumption

These themes focused on the second research question, the questions from the online questionnaire that were relevant to these themes include question 3.1 and 3.2 (Appendix F). Question 3.1 and 3.2 were asked before the participants’ interpreted

the blog post, to gain an accurate understanding of the participants' perceived single-use plastic consumption. The highlighter colours assigned to these themes include; High Single-use Plastic Consumption was red; Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption was purple and Low Single-use Plastic Consumption was dark blue.

Question 3.1 investigated the participants plastic consumption during COVID-19 and whether the pandemic has influence on this. The researcher found that three participants related to the Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption theme (Table H). Meaning that the participants consumption of reusable products and single-use plastic was equal. Although there has been a decrease in these participants plastic consumption, they have not completely stopped their use of plastic, thus related to the Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption and not the Low Single-use Plastic Consumption (Appendix E p.57). However, three other participants related to the High Single-use Plastic Consumption, meaning that there was an increase of single-use plastic consumption. Past literature which were related to these responses stated that the pandemic has increased plastic usage, however these studies did not take into account that individuals plastic consumption may have not been influenced by the pandemic such as the participants responses which related to the Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption (Silva, et al., 2020). These findings contributed to the study as it provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceived plastic consumption. Which assisted in answering the second research question of the similarity or contrast the participants' interpretation of the blog post and their perceived plastic consumption.

Table H: Question 3.1 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How has this Covid-19 pandemic influenced	A	<i>"I've started to use less single use plastics..."</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	B	<i>"...increased purchasing of take – outs in takeaway"</i>	High Single-use Plastic Consumption

your use of single use plastic or not? Discuss using examples.		containers (single – use plastics)…”	
	C	“Covid19 has significantly reduced my use of single use plastic…”	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	D	“...my personal plastic usage has decreased significantly since Covid-19...”	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	E	“Covid – 19 has negatively influenced my use of single use plastic...”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	F	“... which people only use once and then throw away...”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption

Question 3.2 had gained further insight on whether COVID-19 had influenced on their use of reusable products, during the pandemic. The researcher found three participants related to Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption theme (Table I p.41). These responses informed the researcher that these participants' plastic consumption was not influenced by COVID-19 and they had continued making use of the reusable items which they had previous used prior to the pandemic. However, the researcher found that the other participants related to the High-Single Plastic Usage (Table I p.41). These responses informed the researcher that the pandemic has increased their plastic consumption. Past literature related to these responses stated that plastic pollution has increased due to COVID-19. This study did not consider that certain individuals plastic consumption may have changed during the pandemic, thus the researcher contributed to the findings of this study (Zambrano-Monserrate, et al., 2020). These responses contributed to the study as it allowed the researcher to understand the participants perceived plastic consumption which was compared to their interpretation of the blog post.

Table I: Question 3.2 and Responses

Question	Participant	Responses	Theme
If you make use of reusable items (for example reusable shopping bags and/or beverage cups and/or cutlery), how has this Covid-19 pandemic influenced your use of reusable items or not? Discuss using examples.	A	“...I didn't use as many reusable items besides my shopping bag. I wouldn't say that Covid-19 has been an influencer of my use of plastics...”	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	B	“Yes, - mass shopping with the need to purchase plastic bags...” “...throwing the bags away after using it once.”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	C	“we've actually used it alot more than we ever have before.”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	D	“Covid 19 has not affected this. I have always reused plastic grocery bags...”	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	E	“Covid- 19 has again negatively impacted on my use of reusable plastic...”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	F	“The pandemic hasn't changed a lot when it comes to the items that I do reuse...”	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption

CONCLUSION

In this section the research question, objectives and problem was addressed.

Followed by the implications for future research, ethical considerations, limitations and the final conclusion.

Research Questions, Objectives and Problem Addressed

The first research question was addressed as, the researcher found that the overall interpretation of the blog post was taken in a dominant way. The intended message of the blog post had been interpreted, meaning that the participants beliefs, attitudes and assumptions about plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19 were aligned with the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. This study addressed the research objective in which the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the participants interpretation of the blog post with the use of audience reception theory. The participants' understood the blog post in the dominant position meaning the participants' understood reusable products are safe to use during COVID-19, and the plastic industry took advantage of the pandemic to promote the consumption of single-use plastic.

The second research question was addressed as the researcher found that the participants' perceived single-use plastic consumption in the context of COVID-19, had been more in contrast than similar to their interpretation of blog position which had been interpreted in a dominant position. A none of the participants responses related to the theme of Low-use Plastic Consumption. This study addressed this research objective of that the participants plastic consumption contrasted their interpretation of the blog post.

The research problem investigated the increased number in plastic pollution usage and pollution during COVID-19 (Konyn, 2020), this was a problem besides plastic causing harm to the environment, the scientists made a statement stating that it is safe to use reusable products during COVID-19 (Schrack, 2020). This study found that the majority of the participants interpreted the blog post in a dominant way, with a few participants taking a negotiated interpretation however, none of the participants had taken an oppositional interpretation.

Recommendations

This study investigated South African Millennials' interpretations of the *GreenPeacAfrica* 2020 blog post as a once of study, other examinations may choose to utilize methodology in this study and apply it alternative forms of media.

Ethical Considerations

Participants

All participants in this study had been respected in terms of their confidentiality of their information. Information collected from participants was protected on a password protected device (Maree, 2020, p. 146). The researcher followed COVID-19 regulations with regards to the data collection which had been conducted online (Government of South Africa, 2020). The study did not contain or explore any topics viewed as high risk in the IIE Post-Graduate Research Policy (IIE, 2020).

Researcher

The IIE Post-Graduate Research Policy was followed by the researcher in terms of the researcher was held liable for any misuse of information (IIE, 2020). The researcher ensured that the study was backed up on a personal hard which was protected with a strong password (Maree, 2020, p. 146). The researcher adhered to the safety and healthy provisions, thus conducting an online qualitative questionnaire due to the restrictions brought on by COVID-19 (Government of South Africa, 2020).

Limitations

The limitation included in this study was diversity of responses to the online questionnaire may have not given an accurate representation of the diversity of South African Millennials'. The researcher did not overcome this limitation but ensured to keep the participants of this study as diverse as possible by selecting participants from both genders as well as different races. Another limitation that of this study was that the researcher would have not known whether the participants' read the blog post.

Final Conclusion

It can be concluded South African Millennials' interpreted the intended message of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* 2020 blog post. The use Audience Reception theory to maintain the heuristic value of the study, identified that the blog post had been interpreted in a majority dominant way. However, the participants' perceived single-use plastic consumption was majority in contrast with the dominant reading of the blog post as the participants' made use of single-use plastic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the participants were influenced by the blog post with regards to their future plastic consumption behaviour.

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APPENDIX A: SafeAssign Screenshot of Originality Report

Blackboard

SafeAssign Originality Report

RESE8419_VCDW1 • Safe Assign Plagiarism Practice

[View Originality Report - Old Design](#)

Tenielle Nair

Total Score:

Medium risk
30 %

Submission UUID: 3f2e5abd-a8d9-3daf-ca90-f80d810ee21b

Total Number ...	Highest Match	Average Match	Submitted on	Average Word ...
1	30 % 16007301_Tenielle...	30 %	28/10/20 19:15 GMT+2	21,410 Highest: 16007301...

Attachment 1
30 %

Word Count: 21,410
16007301_Tenielle Nair_RESE8419_Final Research Report .pdf

Institutional database (11)
30 %

① My paper
⑤ My paper
⑦ My paper
① Student paper
6

② My paper
③ Student paper
① Student paper
0
① Student paper
3

① Student paper
1
④ Student paper
① Student paper
5

Global database (4)
0 %

⑥ Student paper
⑨ Student paper
① Student paper
4
① Student paper
2

Internet (1)
0 %

⑧ cochrane

Top sources (3)

① My paper
② My paper
① Student paper
1

Excluded sources (0)

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Title: Durban Millennials' Reception Analysis of *GreenPeaceAfrica's* 2020 Blog Post about Single-Use Plastic during Covid-19: A Descriptive Qualitative Online Questionnaire.

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
To describe South African Millennials' interpretations of <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post.	How do South African Millennials interpret the <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post?	The international public is aware of the negative impact single-use plastic has on the environment and wildlife (Smith, 2018). However, due to COVID-19 it seems society no longer concerned about the environmental impact single-use plastic has (Sukumaran, 2020). This topic was of great interest to the researcher and the rationale of this study as it allowed the research to gain an in-depth understanding of why society could easily use single-use plastic even in the context of COVID-19 as most individuals may have been aware of the negative impact. The researcher used Audience Reception theory to establish the dominant, negotiated and oppositional positions (Hall, 1993, p. 101) taken in the interpretations of the blog post. The researcher gained insight into the South African Millennials' perceived use of single-use plastic during COVID-19.	(Hall, 1993) (Wren-Lewis, 1983) (Rockhill, 1996)	List themes <i>Theme 1: Plastic Pollution s Environmental Impact</i> <i>Theme 2: Media and Plastic pollution</i> <i>Theme 3: COVID-19 Impact on Plastic Pollution</i> <i>Theme 4: Audience Reception Theory</i>	Paradigm Interpretivist Paradigm Epistemology South African's common knowledge on plastic pollution in the context of COVID-19 Ontology The interaction South African Millennials' had with plastic pollution and their own use of single-use plastic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Axiology The South African Millennials' unique realities needed to be considered as it would differ between participants when interpreting the blog post.	Qualitative descriptive cross-sectional study Population Population Parameters South African Millennials Social Media users	Online qualitative questionnaire	Participants All participants in this study had been respected in terms of their confidentiality of their information. Any and all harm of the participants was avoided in this study. Researcher The IIE Post-Graduate Research Policy was followed by the researcher in terms of the researcher was held liable for any misuse of information (IIE, 2020). The researcher ensured that the study was backed up on a personal hard which was protected with a strong password (Maree, 2020, p. 146). The researcher adhered to the safety and healthy provisions, thus conducting an online qualitative questionnaire due to the restrictions brought on by COVID-19 (Government of South Africa, 2020).	South African Millennials' interpreted the <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post in a Dominant way. However, their interpretation of the blog post is mainly in contrast with their own perceived plastic consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic.	This study investigated South African Millennials' interpretations of the <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post as a once of study, other examinations may choose to utilize methodology in this study and apply it alternative forms of media.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/Hypotheses/Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	
There has been an increased number in plastic pollution usage and pollution during COVID-19 (Konyin, 2020), this is a problem as besides plastic causing harm to the environment. The issue is even though scientists have made this information available, the public continue to use single-use plastic during the pandemic and the news media attribute this to possibly being because they think plastic is more hygienic or safer (Euripidou, 2020).	How are these South African Millennials interpretations of the <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post similar or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa? To understand whether South African Millennials' interpretations of the <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> 2020 blog post are similar or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.	Dominant position Negotiated position Oppositional position COVID-19 Single-use plastic Millennials	Audience Reception Theory			Probability or non-probability sampling Non-probability sampling Sampling method Purposive sampling Sample size: 6	Unit of Analysis Deductive Data Analysis Method(s) hematic data analysis	The limitation included in this study was diversity of responses to the online questionnaire may have not given an accurate representation of the diversity of South African Millennials'. The researcher did not overcome this limitation but ensured to keep the participants of this study as diverse as possible by selecting participants from both genders as well as different races. Another limitation that of this study was that the researcher would have not known whether the participants' read the blog post.	The contribution to the Media Field is application of audience reception theory in a South African context, contributing more research from a South African perspective. As well as within the context of single-use plastic perceptions and usage within the context of Covid-19 in South Africa from a Millennials' perspective. Millennials are understood as being more environmentally friendly (Naderi & Van Stenberg, 2018), and therefore it is interesting to examine their perceptions and single use plastic during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand if this pandemic played a role in their interpretations and behaviours or not.	

APPENDIX C: Online Qualitative Questionnaire

Qualitative Online Questionnaire

Thank you so much for participating in this study which will take about an hour of your time. This study aims to gain an understanding in whether South African Millennials interpretations of the *2020 GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post are similar or in contrast to their own perceived single-use plastic consumption behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. There are a few questions which you will need to answer before reading the *2020 GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post, once you have completed answering those questions you will find a link to the blog post followed by a few more questions. This online questionnaire will take approximately 1 hour to answer. Thank you so much for your participation in this study. Please email your completed questionnaire back to me at **Tenielle Nair** and [REDACTED] on or before **12 September**. Please ensure to fill out the Explanatory information sheet as well as the consent form before completing the questionnaire.

Discussion one: single-use plastic in the context of COVID-19

- 1. Discuss your understanding of the effect of plastic pollution on the environment.**
- 2. Explain how plastic pollution makes you feel?**
- 3. In South Africa and worldwide, we are currently experiencing a Covid-19 pandemic.**
 - 3.1 How has this Covid-19 pandemic influenced your use of single use plastic or not? Discuss using examples.**
 - 3.2 If you make use of reusable items (for example reusable shopping bags and/or beverage cups and/or cutlery), how has this Covid-19**

pandemic influenced your use of reusable items or not? Discuss using examples.

Discussion two: South African Millennials interpreting the 2020 *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post

Read the: [2020 *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post 'Reusables can be used safely: Over 125 health experts fire back at the plastic industry'](#).

4. Describe what you think *GreenPeaceAfrica* wants to achieve with this blog post.
5. Explain if you agree or disagree with the message in this *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post. Give examples.
6. How does this *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post make you feel about the problem presented about the increased use of plastic during Covid-19?
7. How does this *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post make you want to stop using single use plastic during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.
8. How does this *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post make you want to use reusable products during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.

APPENDIX D: Facebook Post

“Hi all, I hope you’re well. I am currently studying my Honours in Communication and I need participants to complete an online questionnaire that have the following characteristics: You are South African and are between the ages of 22 to 38 years old. If you do have both of these characteristics and are able to complete a questionnaire please send me a direct message.”

APPENDIX E: THEMES AND THEME DESCRIPTIONS

Themes	Theme Descriptions
Dominant Reading	The media's message and the audience member have similar beliefs as well as assumptions, therefore there is very little miscommunication created allowing for the message to be understood in the point of view which is dominant (Stuart, 1993, p. 101)
Negotiated Reading	The media's message is understood within the context of dominant societal and cultural beliefs by the audience. Due to the audience's own values and beliefs this can slightly change the meaning of the intended message (Hall, 1993, p. 102).
Oppositional Reading	The audience makes sense of the intended message however rejects the message and add their own meaning to the message (Hall, 1993, p. 101).
High Single-Use Plastic Consumption	Single-plastic products are more frequently used such as plastic bags, plastic cutlery and plastic straws.
Moderate Single-Use Plastic Consumption	Equal use of reusable products and single-use plastic products.
Low Single-Use Plastic Consumption	Reusable products are used more often than plastic items.

APPENDIX F : Online Qualitative Questionnaire Data Presentation

Table A : Question 1 and Responses

Question	Participants	Responses	Theme
Discuss your understanding of the effect of plastic pollution on the environment.	A	<i>“Due to landfill sites – there can be leeching into the ground. Plastic that gets washed into gutters then goes into the oceans and rivers which causes harm to animals that get entangled in them or that eat the plastic. To get rid of certain plastics they do incinerate them and this causes increased carbon production which worsens the ever increasing climate.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>“Despite the fact that plastics have transformed our lives tremendously, it has created an environmental catastrophe and is not just ugly but remains deadly to the environment – for example, killing our sea animals who mistake plastic objects for food and choke on it. Due to the the world’s population rising so too</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>does the growth of our waste products. Plastic pollution, due to the amount of plastic collected, negatively impacts the natural environment – causing issues for its inhabitants.”</i>	
	C	<i>“Plastic pollution is one of the biggest contributors to animals in the wild losing their lives by ingesting plastic that has been dumped in their environment. It destroys nature and the wildlife. These poor animals either consume the plastic or get tangled in it and cannot escape. Plastic pollution can so easily be prevented by humans and save so many animals.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	D	<i>“I am aware that plastic is a very difficult material to break down and hence it can cause harm to many different animals.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>“I understand that plastic pollution has a negative impact on the environment, including humans, plants</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>and animals. This negative effect and toxins released from the plastic can take a lengthy duration of hundreds and thousands of years to breakdown. Millions of animals are harmed by plastic pollution that flows through rivers, lakes and the ocean which ultimately impacts on the entire eco chain and system.”</i>	
	F	<i>“It is one of the most serious issues involving both animal and human habitats and the environment as a whole. The effects are detrimental due to the amount of time needed to break plastic down. As well as reasons such as the means of disposal being little to none in various places. The oceans and animals take a lot of damage with plastic being polluted into their homes, various species ranging from plankton all the way up to whales are affected by this whether through becoming</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>entangled in plastic waste or just by consuming it and because of doing so, their urge to eat becomes reduced and they die of starvation.”</i>	
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Table B: Question 2 and Responses

Questions	Participants	Responses	Theme
Explain how plastic pollution makes you feel?	A	<i>“I like the environment and would love for the environment to be sustained rather than destroyed. So seeing all of the junk laying around in gutters that then goes into the seas makes me feel sad that ecosystems will be destroyed and future generations wont get to see as much diversity as people my age and before me have. It also annoys me that people are so negligent and self-centred.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>“Although plastic is extremely convenient and well suited for modern day life due to its versatile uses, the negative impacts</i>	Negotiated Reading

		<i>outweigh its advantages.</i> <i>Being toxic in nature, its harmful to our environment and quite frankly frightening that a massive amount of it exists without being capable of easily being destroyed."</i>	
C	<i>"Plastic pollution makes me angry and disgusted at the human race. It's something that humans have caused and it's taking the lives of wildlife. It can so easily be prevented but due to the careless, lazy behavior of humans it has caused innocent, vulnerable animals to suffer and pay with their lives."</i>	Dominant Reading	
D	<i>"It is something that saddens me as it is harmful towards animals."</i>	Dominant Reading	
E	<i>"I'm enraged with anger by plastic pollution because it boils down to the mere and simple fact that humans are irresponsible, lazy and selfish."</i>	Dominant Reading	

	F	<i>"I asked someone close to me this exact question, they say if you want to learn the meaning of life or learn about life, ask either the very young or the very old. This was the response I got, "I feel dead inside because of it, just like the turtles that were killed with plastic waste"</i> <i>But with my feelings- I feel disappointed mainly because being in the time that we are, makes us much more knowledgeable and capable of doing so much more, yet we don't always do so. We ignore the situation because we feel if it isn't affecting us directly, it isn't cause for alarm. But the environment and all animals, who are unable to speak for themselves do feel this problem directly. I work as close as possible and as often as possible with all sorts of</i>	Dominant Reading
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		<i>animal and environmental groups, but even with projects such as clean up drives, it only literally touches the surface. Once plastic breaks down into microplastics, they become close to impossible to recover and this sometimes causes a lot more damage than we care to realise.”</i>	
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Table C: Question 4 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
Describe what you think <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> wants to achieve with this blog post.	A	<i>“Theyre trying to promote the use of reusable objects. It also aims to exclaim to the public that its important to not base their opinions of largescale companies but rather research based personal who have the best interest of people’s wellbeing instead of the profit of their company. The article seeks to open up the information that may not be known to many people, I for one</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>have learnt quite a lot from this article.”</i>	
	B	<i>“To encourage us to listen to science as opposed to industry lobbyists. To bring awareness about the harmful effects of single – use plastics with respect to the planet as a whole. The article emphasises ‘reduce and reuse’ – urging towards a cleaner, healthier and safer planet for all – that there are alternatives to single – use plastics. The article brings cognizance to the fact that plastics are a great concern to the environment and encourages us to appease the effects of plastic pollution on the environment – despite being indirectly promoted by large corporations during COVID -19. That decisions during this pandemic should be made by health experts and not lobbyists.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	C	<i>“I think GreenPeaceAfrica wants to educate, inform</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>and reassure the public that using reusable products during Covid19 is as safe as using plastic products, with an advantage in that it does not harm the environment.”</i>	
D	<i>“Greenpeace is trying to show people that single-use plastic is not the way to go during the covid pandemic and that, in the long run, it is detrimental to the environment. They are trying to show people that we are being exploited by oil and plastic companies by being tricked into believing that we should purchase more plastic, as opposed to reusing it – when in actual fact, there is no harm in doing this as it is unlikely for covid to spread that way.”</i>	Dominant Reading	
E	<i>“GreenPeaceAfrica, through this blog strives to relay the message to its readers that even though we are currently</i>	Dominant Reading	

		<i>experiencing a pandemic plastic is not as hygienic as we perceive it to be. They are trying to make readers understand that hygiene practices include washing consumables such as fruits and vegetables correctly even if they are being stored in plastic package.</i> <i>GreenPeaceAfrica is stressing the importance of readers and society to act consciously with respect to their plastic consumption despite the focus being on COVID-19.”</i>	
	F	<i>“I would say they’d like to urge people not to follow the word of industry lobbyists such as Petrochemical, Oil and Plastic manufacturers as they advocate now more than ever for single use plastic items, which is exploiting something as serious as this pandemic and the fear people have of it. Rather to listen to the science and the advice of</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>medical professionals who are trying to ease the situations without making them worse than they are. They argued with the facts of how reusable items are safe to use, with or without this pandemic but obviously because of it, to apply the necessary processes with regards to hygiene. They try to highlight how single use plastics will do more harm to a situation which is already so dire.”</i>	
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Table D: Question 5 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
Explain if you agree or disagree with the message in this <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post. Give examples.	A	<i>“I do agree, I agree that we should make use of more reusable items in our daily lives.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>“Large corporations namely oil companies and the manufacturing industry are notorious for exploiting the markets in order to generate larger profits. It cannot be disputed that at a time when the world’s economy came</i>	Dominant Reading

		crashing down, such corporations grabbed the opportunity to benefit from the crisis. People in general are influenced by what the media feeds them, without researching for ourselves many of us formulate a decision based on whats put in front of us – the fact that many of the plastic industry promoted their single use products during this pandemic is an example of this.”	
	C	“I completely agree with the message in the blog post as it's true. Covid19 is spread mostly through human contact, not by using reusable items. I agree that the plastic industry is trying to take over once again, by releasing false information that by everything being wrapped properly in plastic it ensures your safety and wellbeing. Your safety and wellbeing from the virus is ensured through sanitizing your hands and washing fresh produce before you consume it. Plastic plays no role in helping protect people from the virus besides ofcourse the facial shields and	Dominant Reading

		<i>epidemic equipment as stated by GreenPeace.”</i>	
	D	<i>“I do agree with this message. If it is true that it is unlikely for Covid-19 to spread in the ways mentioned, plastic should be reused and the long-term effects on the environment should still be considered during this pandemic.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>“Yes I agree with the examples given by GreenPeaceAfrica in their blog.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>“I do agree. It feels like just because we make our health a priority now, we forget that there are other priorities that require just as much attention. Because we use more, there is more dirt and I’ve learnt that people then to pollute an already polluted area out of habit and this isn’t good for any living organism. So we need to try and break those habits by making things that do good trend. The example comes to mind of banning plastic straws to save the turtles, it was something good that trended and it did good work. So the same approach should be</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>followed with this problem too and any solutions that come up. Burning the items isn't always the best solution either as that alone is a huge hazard- health wise and environmentally."</i>	
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Table E: Question 6 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How does this <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post make you feel about the problem presented about the increased use of plastic during Covid-19?	A	<i>"Considering the state of global warming prior to the pandemic, the increased use now will deepen the crisis and make it even harder for us to recover from it. This makes me feel disappointed in the ever-growing plastic war 😞. I'm a healthcare professional and we usually dispose of our masks and other PPE into a bin which will be taken away as hazardous waste, but I think about the public who don't have these designated bins to throw their masks into and I know that this will have a big impact on the oceans.."</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>"It makes me aware that there are alternatives to single – use plastics and ways in which we</i>	Dominant Reading

		are able to reduce plastic pollution . It urges me to look beyond what's being marketed, still trying to stay safe."	
	C	"The blog post has definitely provided me with alot of information regarding Covid19 and the increase use of plastic during the pandemic . It's very upsetting that the plastic industry has used the pandemic to create a bigger market for themselves by spreading false information. It's a shame that instead of helping the planet and environment during this detrimental period, the plastic industry chose to rather contribute to the problems ".	Dominant Reading
	D	"It saddens me to think of all the animals that are going to suffer as a result of this . While I personally have reduced my plastic usage, the blog post has opened my eyes to something I had never considered, prior to this questionnaire."	Dominant Reading
	E	"I now feel guilty as this post made me realize that our	Dominant Reading

		<i>perception of the use of plastic is incorrect."</i>	
	F	<i>"I feel upset over the idea of manufacturers taking advantage of the situation and state it's caused people to be in. People lose sight of the bigger picture because of everything happening now with this pandemic. Although it is a serious matter, it doesn't mean that plastic pollution isn't. That problem has been here for a long time and will be here even after the pandemic. People fail to acknowledge that there will be consequences to all the actions now. We are ignoring the future impact because of our current needs. Applying the necessary measures in making use of reusable items and keeping it all as hygienic as possible isn't going to make the problem go away, but it most certainly won't make it worse."</i>	Dominant Reading

Table F: Question 7 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How does this <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post make you want to stop using single use plastic during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.	A	<i>"It has made me more conscious about the decisions that I will make in the future regarding single use plastics."</i>	Dominant Reading
	B	<i>"Understanding that a single use plastic item would most likely be on Earth longer than me, adding to climate change and destroying many habitats and inhabitants of these habitats is dismaying – urging me to reduce my contribution to plastic pollution."</i>	Dominant Reading
	C	<i>"The world is already at a critical stage now with Covid19, and this blog post just encourages me to want to not use single use plastic as much as I can during and even after the epidemic. There's already so many people contributing to</i>	Dominant Reading

		<i>destroying the environment, I do not wish to be one of them.</i> “	
	D	<i>“When grocery shopping, it would be beneficial for me to use the material bags as opposed to purchasing plastic bags each time. When purchasing coffee, I will leave out the plastic lid when it is unnecessary.</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>This blog has educated me and made me realize that I need to put my old habits of using less plastic into practise. I will now return to using my own reusable grocery bag. I will purchase less fruits and vegetables that have been pre-packaged.”</i>	Dominant Reading
	F	<i>“I come from a household that really doesn’t like plastic so avoiding it isn’t really hard. There are times when we’d get take out</i>	Dominant Reading

		but opt out of receiving the plastic cutlery as they're usually single use. It's the little changes that go a long way in making changes."	
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Table G: Question 8 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
How does this GreenPeaceAfrica blog post make you want to use reusable products during Covid-19 or not? Elaborate.	A	"It has encouraged me to make use of more reusable products to prolong the earth we have 😊"	Dominant Reading
	B	"Although I would not necessarily rush to use reusable cups provided by coffee houses , the alternative of using my own reusable mug or cup suffices – during the pandemic and even after."	Negotiated Reading
	C	"The blog post makes me want to use reusable products even more and promote the usage of these products for the wellbeing and safety of	Dominant Reading

		<i>the environment.</i> <i>Reusable products are a better, safer and durable option. In some cases like the reusable shopping bags as opposed to plastic bags, the reusable products are even much more stronger & appealing!"</i>	
	D	<i>"The blog post has opened my eyes to how severe the plastic crisis actually is, and has inspired me to make more of an effort to incorporate more reusable plastic products than I normally would."</i>	Dominant Reading
	E	<i>"This blog does not want me to use as much plastic as I was using during Covid -19. The blog has enabled me to realized that we shouldn't be using plastic as a protection tool but rather all ensure that our personal hygiene is more stressed on even when Covid – 19 passes."</i>	Dominant Reading

	F	<i>"The article has reinforced the ideas I had in terms of reusing being better than single use. From a work point of view, I can say that when the money is available, the money is used to purchase recyclable items instead of single use. It makes me want to find more ways to help, whether by finding ways to reuse things or just finding ways to avoid plastic or atleast single use plastic- things like maybe cooking from raw ingredients instead of getting things already packaged (in single use plastic)."</i>	Dominant Reading
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Table H: Question 3.1 and Responses

Question	Participant	Responses	Theme
How has this Covid-19 pandemic	A	<i>"It's been relatively the same as I didn't use as many reusable items besides my shopping bag. I wouldn't say that Covid-19 has been an</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption

influenced your use of reusable items or not? Discuss using examples.		influencer of my use of plastics..”	
	B	“Yes, - mass shopping with the need to purchase plastic bags to be able to contain the items and then wipe down before placing into cupboards and then throwing the bags away after using it once. increased purchasing of take – outs in takeaway containers (single – use plastics) as opposed to sit-ins as the fear of eating in a restaurant continues to exist.”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	C	“Surprisingly, my personal plastic usage has decreased significantly since Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, I eat out much less than usual and hence do not use as many plastic straws as I would normally. (I usually use paper straws where I can, but not all restaurants have those.) I also shop much less due to pay cuts at work, as well as in an attempt to avoid unnecessary (potential) exposure to the virus. As a result, I have cut down on the number of plastic shopping bags I would normally use monthly. Also due to pay cuts at work, I order	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption

		<i>much less takeout than I would pre- Covid-19, again reducing the number of plastic/ Styrofoam containers that I would normally use.”</i>	
	D	<i>“Covid 19 has not affected this. I have always reused plastic grocery bags for other purposes and still do at the same rate. (eg as lining for rubbish bins & to hold/transport other items)”</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	E	<i>“Covid – 19 has negatively influenced my use of single use plastic. Prior to this I would try and be more conscious of my use of single use plastic. However now due to Covid – 19 and the fast spread of the virus I started utilizing plastic in order to protect myself. Eg. I now only purchase majority of my fruits and vegetables that have been pre – packaged. (eg bananas that have been pre-packaged) Eg. If there is a fruit or vegetable that I require and is not pre – packaged I use a plastic packet to touch the item.”</i>	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
	F	<i>“The pandemic we’re facing, although it is a serious issue in its own right. It has honestly</i>	High Single-use Plastic Consumption

		made a situation which was in a bad state, even worse. Now with the use of PPE's, were you'd have rubber gloves which aren't easily disposable or even with items such as masks etc. which people only use once and then throw away makes this situation so much worse. With regards to food, to avoid going out, food is brought to us, but in plastic ware with plastic cutlery which was to be thrown out after one use."	
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Table I: Question 3.2 and Responses

Question	Participant	Response	Theme
If you make use of reusable items (for example reusable shopping bags and/or beverage	A	<i>"It's been relatively the same as I didn't use as many reusable items besides my shopping bag. I wouldn't say that Covid-19 has been an influencer of my use of plastics.."</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	B	<i>"Please see above."</i> <i>"Yes, - mass shopping with the need to purchase plastic bags to be able to contain the</i>	High Single-use Plastic Consumption

cups and/or cutlery), how has this Covid-19 pandemic influenced your use of reusable items or not?		<i>items and then wipe down before placing into cupboards and then throwing the bags away after using it once.</i> <i>increased purchasing of take – outs in takeaway containers (single – use plastics) as opposed to sit-ins as the fear of eating in a restaurant continues to exist.”</i>	
Discuss using examples.	C	<i>“Covid 19 has not affected this. I have always reused plastic grocery bags for other purposes and still do at the same rate. (eg as lining for rubbish bins & to hold/transport other items)”</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption
	D	<i>“Surprisingly, my personal plastic usage has decreased significantly since Covid-19.</i> <i>Due to the pandemic, I eat out much less than usual and hence do not use as many plastic straws as I would normally. (I usually use paper straws where I can, but not all restaurants have those.)</i> <i>I also shop much less due to pay cuts at work, as well as in an attempt to avoid</i>	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption

	unnecessary (potential) exposure to the virus. As a result, I have cut down on the number of plastic shopping bags I would normally use monthly. Also due to pay cuts at work, I order much less takeout than I would pre- Covid-19, again reducing the number of plastic/ Styrofoam containers that I would normally use.”	
E	“Covid- 19 has again negatively impacted on my use of reusable plastic. Eg. I now purchase a packet when I’m purchasing a product from any store, prior to this I would use my own cotton grocery bag that was recyclable. Eg. I utilize straws now more that I used to. Eg. When purchasing fast food from KFC I don’t reuse the spoon I throw it away now and often don’t even use the spoon and it goes to waste.”	High Single-use Plastic Consumption
F	“The pandemic hasn’t changed a lot when it comes to the items that I do reuse but I think to be safe, I’m a little more thorough with the	Moderate Single-use Plastic Consumption

		<i>processes I take. For example, I've always made use of recyclable bags for groceries or shopping but I'd always rinse them out after every use. But now I'd do so and maybe hang it in direct sunlight to help the process. Due to the pandemic, most people resorted to single use masks where as I opted for a reusable one and treat it the same way as I would for a grocery bag. Instead of making use of gloves, I choose to wash my hands more frequently, sometimes with sanitizer but mainly with just soap."</i>	
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APPENDIX G: Explanatory Information Sheet



EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET

Explanatory Information Sheet

To whom it may concern,

My name is Tenielle Nair and I am a student at IIE Varsity College Westville Campus. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Natalie Emslie about Durban Millennials' Reception Analysis of *GreenPeaceAfrica's* 2020 Blog Post about Single Use Plastic during Covid-19: A Descriptive Qualitative Online Questionnaire. This research aims to investigate Millennials' interpretations of the 2020 *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post to determine if this once-off example of the type of messaging in the media has a role in their perception of plastic use during this pandemic. Do they interpret the article in the dominant, negotiated or oppositional way. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the contribution to the field of media is applying the audience reception theory in a SA context, contributing more research from a South African perspective.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit the unique characteristics of the participants and will help contribute to this study. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to email the participants of the study the *GreenPeaceAfrica's* 2020 Blog Post and the Qualitative Online Questionnaire which they will answer after reading the blog post.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your plastic usage during COVID-19 and interpretation of the *GreenPeaceAfrica* blog post. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my **BA Honours in Communication**. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Tenielle Nair



The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Dr. Natalie Emslie.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX H: Consent Form

1. CONSENT FORM

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Tanielle Nair about Durban Millennials' Reception Analysis of <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i>'s 2020 Blog Post about Single Use Plastic during Covid-19: A Descriptive Qualitative Online Questionnaire. This research aims to investigate Millennials' interpretations of the 2020 <i>GreenPeaceAfrica</i> blog post to determine if this once-off example of the type of messaging in the media has a role in their perception of plastic use during this pandemic. Do they interpret the article in the dominant, negotiated or oppositional way. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • I agree to be interviewed for this research. • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. • I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. • I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

APPENDIX I: Ethical Clearance Letter



11 August 2020



Student name: Tenielle Lucinda Nair

Student number: 16007301

Campus: The IIE's Varsity College, Westville Campus



Re: Approval of The IIE Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Proposal and Ethical Clearance



HONOURS 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.

There are some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. You will need to **address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor before you may proceed. Please note your data collection may only proceed once you address the following issues:**

1. Rewrite title (too convoluted).
2. Problem statement needs to be refined.
3. Refine research questions and objectives using supervisor's recommendations.
4. Explanatory Information Sheet missing.
5. Consent form and consent form for audio recording included but not adapted to own study.
6. Not researching IIE staff and students so request form not applicable in this study.
7. Data collection tool (*Whatsapp* focus group questions) to be revised as follows: no leading questions, all questions to be changed to be qualitative, and reduce the number of questions. *Your supervisor needs to sign off your final data collection tool.* Please resubmit.

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!

ADVTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens
54 Wierda Rd West
Wierda Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369
Randburg 2125



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch*, MD Aitken*, FJ Coughlan* (*Non-executive)

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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.



Dr Natalie Le Roux
Supervisor



Dr Natalie Le Roux
The IIE Honours in Communication
Campus Post-Graduate Coordinator
(CPC)