

As the 'Albino' Takes on the Fashion World

by

Bandile Moiloa

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Abstract

This study is a completely explorative investigation that revolves around how Shaun Ross who is a male model with albinism has been represented in both Vogue and Zink Magazine, and to further gain an understanding into people's perceptions surrounding persons with albinism and whether these perceptions have influenced the way in which they perceive persons with albinism in fashion photography as opposed to when encountering them in everyday society.

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Introduction

The aim of this research study is to investigate the representation of Shaun Ross in Vogue and Zink Magazine as well as consumer perceptions towards persons with albinism and their increased visibility within fashion photography as a whole.

In answering the research problem, I have broken the study into various research questions that will in turn present the research objectives I aim to achieve. These research questions are as follows:

- What people's perceptions are towards albinism and persons who live with the condition?
- What people's perceptions are towards persons with albinism within everyday society and fashion photography?
- What people's perceptions are towards fashion brands that utilise models with albinism

- How has Shaun Ross been portrayed in Vogue and Zink magazine, and does his representation link to the misconceptions and prejudice beliefs surrounding persons with albinism that already exist in society?

Background information on Shaun Ross

Shaun Ross is a homosexual male fashion model with albinism, born and raised in New York City (models.com, 2015). He is considered to be the first certified male model with albinism to penetrate the fashion industry. Shaun Ross has appeared in various editorial fashion spreads, many of which include both Zink and Vogue magazine, which are both fashion and lifestyle magazines that have utilised him (models.com, 2015). Thus in analysing how he has been represented in both these magazines, I aim to understand whether or not both magazine brands have capitalised on the stigma that is attached to persons with albinism, and if so in what way (models.com, 2015).

What is albinism?

Albinism refers to a collection of genetic disorders that are characterised by little or no production of melanin (mayoclinic.org, 2015). The type and quantity of melanin ones body produces determines the colour of their skin, hair and eyes (mayoclinic.org, 2015). Although there is no cure for albinism, people with this disorder can take precautions that will enable them to protect their skin and maximize their eye vision as the pigmentation disorder is said to affect both these organs quite prominently (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

Signs and symptoms of albinism are generally, but not always evident in a person's skin, hair and eye colour. However, all people with this disorder experience impaired vision (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

Skin:

Although the most obvious form of albinism is characetrised by white or yellow hair, and white or pinkish skin. Pigmentation can also be brown and may be similar to that of parent or siblings without albinism (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

For some individuals with albinism, melanin production may begin or increase during childhood, resulting in slight changes in pigmentation (mayoclinic.org, 2015). With exposure to excessive sun, some individuals may develop: Freckles, moles (with or without pigment) and large freckle-like spots (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

Hair:

Hair colour can range from very white to brown. People with African or Asian descent who have albinism may have hair colour that is reddish, brown or yellow (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

Vision:

Signs of albinism related to vision include:

- The inability of both eyes to stay directed at one point or to move in unison (mayoclinic.org, 2015).
- Extreme nearsightedness or farsightedness (mayoclinic.org, 2015).
- Sensitivity to light (mayoclinic.org, 2015).
- Rapid involuntary back and forth movement of eyes (mayoclinic.org, 2015).

Difficulties persons with albinism face

For many years, persons with albinism (particularly those of the black race) have been victims of discrimination, one of the main forms of this being colourism. Which is defined a type of discrimination that is based around skin tone and operates both outside and within racial groups. Skin colour carries a symbolic meaning, in that the colour of our skin leads to differential treatment, hence why colourism is a system based on a hierarchy that is structured around the lightness and the darkness behind someone's skin tone (Burke, 2014). With regards to the stereotypes around different racial groups (as a result of colourism), 'whiteness' has been and is still often associated with elements of 'fairness and 'purity' while 'blackness' leans towards the notions of 'evil and 'dirt' (Mswela, 2013). These societal and cultural associations

linked to skin colour do not only remain within the black and white spheres of race, but also extend into the realms of persons living with albinism whose unique skin tone (often described as 'fair tanned') has lead to many social inferences, not only within their communities, but within society as a whole (Mswela, 2013). According to Jean Francois Staszak (2008), this discrimination towards persons with albinism is due to the fact that they are perceived of as 'the other' or foreign to the rest of society.

Given the fact that persons with albinism have constantly undergone mistreatment and rejection for many years, the fashion industry has seemingly begun to take them in, and portray this group of people in a public light that they have never been exposed to in their entire history. When looking back at the fashion industry over ten years, persons living with albinism where never used to represent fashion brands to any extent. However recently, there happens to be an increased visibility of persons with albinism representing and modeling fashion brands. Aside from the fact that individuals who still fit the traditional sense of what a 'model' is are still utilised in abundance within the fashion fashion photography, persons with albinism have become quite 'fashionable' to use. Thus in identifying this new 'fashion trend', one can bring forth ethical questions as to whether fashion brands (particularly Zink and Vogue magazine) are capitalising or exploiting the 'uncommonness' or 'otherness' associated with the physical appearance of persons with albinism, if so, this could be hazardous to persons with albinism amongst society, especially when taking into consideration the hardships they face on a day to day basis.

Literature review

In addressing the research problem which revolves around investigating the representation of Shaun Ross in Vogue and Zink Magazine as well as consumer perceptions towards persons with albinism and their increased visibility within fashion photography as a whole.

I will be researching different theoretical areas relevant to the research problem in order to assist me in gaining a deeper understanding of persons with albinism and how they are perceived within different cultures and whether these pre-constructed beliefs affect how they view persons with albinism in fashion photography, the position of persons with albinism in society as a minority group, and further more, whether the fashion industry has embraced them or instead capitalised on the stigma and discrimination associated with persons with albinism.

Thus the theories I have chosen to look into are as follows:

- The idea of 'beauty' and what it means to be beautiful and how the media uses this idea of beauty to sell products
- The politics around 'ugliness', in other words, what deems a person or object 'ugly'
- Colourism as a form of discrimination, and thus how are persons with albinism are victims of this form of discrimination
- 'Otherness'/ 'the other'
- Exoticism
- The representation of masculinity and homosexuality in visual culture, as a way to obtain an understanding of how Shaun Ross has been represented as a male queer with albinism (in both Zink and Vogue magazine) in comparison to other how other male queers have been represented in and visual culture as a whole.

- Alternative marketing, and whether Zink and Vogue magazine have perhaps utilised Shaun Ross as a form of alternative marketing in order to stand out.
- The representation of blackness (as a minority group) within colonial art: Given that Zink and Vogue magazine are both Western magazines, understanding whether they have portrayed Shaun Ross from the perspective of the Westerner's gaze as an individual who forms apart of a minority to group will form a crucial part in establishing the intentions behind both magazines in how they have portrayed Shaun Ross.

According to Bissel and Conlin (2014), the media shapes societies attitudes and beliefs towards what is deemed beautiful (particularly amongst females). Thus in the media's ability to have this influential power over societies' perceptions of what beauty is, this then feeds into the media's ability to change these perceptions through constantly exposing the public to various images of the ideal beauty that is in, during that particular period. This aptitude to influence societies' perceptions and beliefs is called framing, and it refers to the media's ability to construct the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of consumers through the emphasis and the selection of specific attributes of media messages (bissel & Conlin, 2014), these various beauty ideals however are not a realistic representation of human reality as not all individuals are able to live up to the various beauty ideals that are portrayed within the media.

Given that fashion photography is a media platform through which fashion brands communicate their products, Perhaps it could be that Zink and Vogue magazine are creating a beauty ideal through the utilisation of Shaun Ross given that his skin pigmentation is different and therefore eye catching, as he does not form apart of the conventional models that society is used to seeing in fashion photography. Given that Shaun Ross may perhaps be perceived as exotic due to the blatant difference in his skin pigment, it is however how he is exoticised within Zink and Vogue magazine that will help positively reshape

their target audience's pre constructed beliefs and ideologies surrounding persons with albinism, and in turn expanding on what has been traditionally regarded as beautiful for many years, ultimately forcing their target audience to expand on their own ideas of beauty by reframing their perceptions beyond the generic images that have been conveyed to them over the years.

There have been many myths and misconceptions surrounding persons with albinism that have spread over the years within many African communities (Thuku, 2011). These myths have been derived from the mere misunderstanding (amongst many African people) of what albinism is, and how the disease is obtained (Thuku, 2011).

Some of these myths include:

Myth 1: Albinism is a curse or punishment from ancestral spirits due to wrong doings that have been committed within the family.

Myth 2: Body parts of persons living with albinism make powerful charms that can make people wealthy and successful.

Myth 3: Drinking the blood of a person with albinism allows one to have extra magical powers.

Myth 4: People with albinism are sterile

Myth 5: A person who has albinism cannot have children with regular pigmentation

Myth 6: People with albinism are mentally impaired and not intelligent.

Myth 7: People with albinism cannot see during the day, however their sense of vision becomes well equipped at night.

Myth 8: People with albinism do not pass on. They simply vanish.

Myth 9: Albinism occurs in persons who fail to eat salt.

Myth 10: Having sexual intercourse with a person who has albinism can cure HIV/AIDS.

Myth 11: Albinism is a contagious disease.

Myth 12: Persons with albinism are only present within people of black race.

These various misconceptions have resulted in societies' negative perceptions towards persons with albinism, which in turn has led to them

becoming an out-cast from society as a whole (particularly within black communities). Thuku (2011) expresses that this discrimination against persons with albinism affects their entire living experience as their rights (as a people) are continuously abused and disregarded.

With regards to how Shaun Ross has been represented in Zink and Vogue magazine, it would be interesting to observe whether both these magazines have portrayed Shaun Ross to represent the various cultural beliefs and misconceptions surrounding persons with albinism that have been mentioned by Thuku (2011), and in turn, to further compare and understand whether persons with albinism are perceived in the same prejudice manner by the public when representing fashion as opposed to when encountered in 'everyday life'. If this is the case, this would then mean that people are more comfortable with persons with albinism when they do not form a part of reality but rather when experienced on a platform that separates them from society.

The discrimination of persons with albinism feeds into Burke Jean's (2015) definition of colourism as a term that ultimately refers to discrimination in terms of skin colour. Jean (2015) further describes how skin colour and race are both ideas that overlap, however they each serve as their own phenomenon and thus should be looked at differently. Jean (2015) uses skin bleaching amongst black woman as an example of the extreme effects of colourism, in that the idea of white or fair skin is what is deemed as beautiful amongst black society, which I particularly found quite interesting regarding the fact that if 'whiteness' is seen to be the most desirable skin tone, then why is it that persons with albinism are generally not considered to be the most aesthetically pleasing as a group of people?

Jean (2015) expresses that people associate certain connotations with different skin tones (in other words, skin colour has symbolic meaning), in that 'whiteness' is broadly associated with purity, innocence and goodness, while 'blackness' is associated with evil, fear and dirt, yet with regards to albinism, the concept of white is completely different (within African black communities) as white in the instance of albinism is associated with, witchcraft and evil.

Therefore it is the skin colour of people with albinism that is the cause of their abuse and objectification derived from the various myths and misconceptions surrounding the absence of their pigmentation (Jean, 2015).

Jean (2015) further raises an interesting point in mentioning Barkenburg's argument on how persons with albinism cross the boundary between black and white. Thus because persons with albinism defy the boundaries of racial skin colour or classification, this could in fact be a possible reason to why they are discriminated against. Therefore according to barkenburg one can raise the question as to whether society perceives persons with albinism as human or as foreign creatures almost, as though they form a part of another species.

With regards to Vogue and Zink Magazine utilising Shaun Ross, it is important to analyse whether the idea of colourism has been brought forth in the way in which Shaun Ross has been portrayed, in terms of establishing whether the associations built by society surrounding persons with albinism (as a result of their skin colour) are conveyed through Shaun Ross' photographs in both these magazines.

In terms of the issue regarding colourism combined with the apparent discrimination against persons with albinism in black African communities, understanding whether Zink and Vogue Magazine have capitalised on Shaun Ross' 'uncommonness' is significant in knowing the intentions behind both brands as to whether they have aimed to redefine society's preconceived notions regarding persons with albinism, and thus communicating that their 'uncommonness' can and should indeed be admired as opposed to being persecuted, or are instead utilising their 'difference' (through Shaun Ross) as a selling point and an alternative way to market themselves.

Martinsson and Semenescu (2012) define alternative marketing (alternatively known as guerilla marketing) as a marketing strategy that encompasses a large variety of innovative advertising elements. The Guerilla tactic was first developed in Cuba as a strategy of warfare, built on invasion and ambush attacks. In later years, the tactic obtained wider global attention due to the rapid decline in the efficiency of traditional advertising Martinsson and Semenescu, 2012. This is mainly because the average consumer was (and

still is) bombarded with large amounts of advertisements on a daily basis, thus due to the continuous attempts of persuasion coming from various brands, people felt limited in their ability to make independent decisions. In combating this, Guerilla advertising was and still is the solution in breaking through the congested clutter of brands which are constantly trying to communicate to consumers as it uses unconventional ways of communicating to consumers through creating the element of shock or surprise in order to grasp the attention of consumers and thus 'sabotaging' competition (Martinsson and Semenescu, 2012).

Sheppard (no date) defines exoticism as a form of representation in which, places, people and cultural practices are portrayed as foreign from the perspective of the composer and/intended audience. The usage of the term exoticism has changed over time, but most recently exoticism has been understood to have an imaginative act of portraying, perceiving and classifying on the part of the beholder (Sheppard, no date).

Mnisi (2014) further argues that exoticism has been used by the fashion industry towards persons with albinism (using model Thando Hopa who is a model with albinism as an example for his argument) as a way to take the human element away from them through the use of fashion photography. Mnisi (2014) argues that models with albinism are exoticised as they are represented in a manner that capitalises on their differences (the most obvious being their strikingly blatant skin pigmentation disorder) in order to create hype and attention and in turn make money from this hype. Minisi (2014) further delves into how this use of exoticism as a 'fashion trend' is irresponsible, especially given the many difficulties people with albinism face in their everyday lives.

In terms of the representation of Shaun Ross in Vogue and Zink Magazine, the theory of exoticism serves as a valid perspective to take into consideration when critically analysing how Shaun Ross has been portrayed. Given that persons with albinism (apart from Shaun Ross) have recently penetrated the fashion industry, perhaps to some degree they are exoticised, as they do

appear to be 'different' in that their skin pigmentation does not adhere to what is traditionally perceived to represent what a fashion model should look like. As a result of this, they can therefore be regarded as 'exotic' or 'foreign' to the fashion industry. However it is how they are exoticised that should be the question to raise. In other words, have the magazines; Vogue and Zink, served as a platform for persons with albinism to embrace their exotic skin colour through utilising Shaun Ross as a representative of the albinism community, and therefore forced the public to question their ideologies surrounding persons with albinism as well as the idea of beauty as a whole. If this is the case, then it can be said that the Vogue and Zink Magazine have served as a public stage on which persons with albinism can protest and express through visuals, that they can indeed be appealing aesthetically and should be included into society despite their physical appearance. Contrary to this, could Vogue and Zink Magazine be reinforcing the 'otherness' surrounding persons with albinism visually and, therefore validating the misconceptions and discrimination against persons with albinism in a way that brings attention to them as fashion brands perhaps as a form of alternative marketing? If this is the case, this could be hazardous towards persons with albinism as a minority group as it reinforces the inferiority that persons with albinism already possess and experience within black African communities as well as Western society.

Kwan and Traunter (no date) express how physical attractiveness is associated with various positive outcomes, these being: employment benefits such as hiring, promotions and wages. People who are deemed 'beautiful' are perceived in a positive light. For example, 'beautiful' people are thought to live happier successful lives, they are also associated with being talented. With further regards to the work environment, 'Beautiful' people generally get away with a lot, due to the positive perceptions associated with their physical appearance and thus do not have to work as hard, or need prove themselves as much as persons who are considered socially 'unattractive'. Therefore, it can be said that beauty is linked to status and thus serves as an important status characteristic that shapes social expectations (Kwan and Taunter, no date). Kwan and Traunter (no date) further describe physical attractiveness to

correlate with both social and personal rewards such as positive perceptions conveyed by others, higher self esteem as well as work satisfaction. Thus, due to the high positive associations linked to being physically attractive, many people perform various forms of beauty work in order to meet the status quo of what being physically attractive is (Kwan and Taunter, no date). As a result, it can be said that being 'beautiful' matters, as attractive people are seen to be more socially accepted as opposed to individuals who are deemed less physically attractive. This treatment is derived from the fact that persons deemed aesthetically pleasing tend to be more memorable, looked upon and smiled at (Kwan and Taunter, no date). Therefore, indicating that there is a sense of persuasiveness that comes with being socially 'beautiful' (Kwan and Taunter, no date).

Given the fact that people associated with being 'beautiful' are generally treated better by society, understanding society's perspective on whether albinism affects one's ability to be aesthetically pleasing is important in establishing whether persons with albinism are discriminated against due to the fact that they might be deemed 'unattractive'. In turn, if this is the case, have Vogue and Zink magazine portrayed Shaun Ross in a manner that forces society to re-establish their preconceived notions of beauty by using a model with albinism as a platform in doing so. Furthermore, it is important to establish whether both these magazines have represented Shaun Ross in a manner that intends to embrace his 'difference' as one that is 'beautiful', or whether the sense of 'ugliness' or unattractiveness regarding persons with albinism is reinforced through various symbols and visual tactics that accompany the way Shaun Ross has been portrayed in both magazines.

Morris and Nichols (2013) refer to beauty as a concept used in advertisements that assists brands in selling products. The use of physical attractive individuals within advertisements is said to be a successful method in selling products as the positive associations given to people deemed 'beautiful' (according to society) are carried through to the brands that use them (Morris and Nichols, 2013). Advertisements are about selling products, thus individuals deemed aesthetically pleasing are seen to be more

persuasive than those who aren't, thus this method again proves to be effective with regards to sales.

Morris and Nichols further express what they have seen to be characteristic trends with regards to what is deemed social 'beautiful' or attractive. (Morris and Nichols, 2013). These characteristics include: youthful attributes, big eyes, full lips, flawless skin, and high cheekbones (Morris and Nichols, 2013). However, with regards to weight, the beauty seen in various body types is culture specific.

Persons with albinism may already be deemed socially unattractive as a result of their skin condition. However, in analysing the way in which Shaun Ross has been portrayed, it would be interesting to establish whether Zink and Vogue magazine have 'beautified' him using various elements of beauty work such as, make up, digital editing and fashionable clothing, and to what extent. In other words has the beauty work that has been applied to Shaun Ross in these magazines embraced him as a person with albinism or exploited him in exaggerating his features to place emphasis on his 'otherness' and thus reinforce his difference ('ugliness'), which is in actual fact deemed socially unattractive as opposed to 'beautiful'. The skin pigmentation of persons with albinism does in fact make them aesthetically different purely because they form a minority, however their 'otherness' should not serve as a platform for their exploitation as a way to market and make fashion brands (particularly Vogue and Zink Magazine) stand out.

Jean Francois Staszak (2008) defines otherness as the result of a process by which a dominant 'in-group' ('us', the self) constructs one or more dominated 'out-groups' ('them', other) by disgracing a difference (one of which can be real or imagined) presented as a negation of identity and thus an intention for potential discrimination.

The creation of otherness revolves around applying a principle that allows individuals to be categorised into two hierarchical groups: them and us where the other becomes a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity. This lack of identity is based on stereotypes that are highly

stigmatising (Staszak, 2008). The in-group constructs one or more others (out-groups) thus setting itself apart and in turn giving itself an identity. The imbalance of power that leans towards the in-group is central to the construction of otherness. Only the dominant group is in the position to impose the value of its identity and to devalue the particularity of the 'out-group' (the other) while simultaneously imposing corresponding discriminatory measures upon the out-group. Therefore the dominated out groups are Others simply because they are subject to the labels, categories and practices of the dominant in-group and because they are unable to impose their own norms (Staszak, 2008).

With regards to persons living with albinism, it is clear that they form apart of the other as they are evidently 'different', as a result of their lack of pigmentation. This lack of pigmentation thus feeds into the fact that they cannot necessarily be given an 'identity' according to the norms of the dominant in-group, who in comparison, do not have albinism and adhere to the boundaries of racial skin colour. Therefore, due to being categorised as 'the other', persons with albinism have therefore been prone to stigmatisation as well as discrimination quite evidently as their condition is ultimately misunderstood, particularly within black African communities and should therefore not exist (according to what is considered to be normal with regards to race and skin pigmentation).

When looking at how Shaun Ross has been portrayed in both Vogue and Zink Magazine, it is important to question whether these magazines intend to 'normalise' his sense of 'otherness' by adding to him, the possible label of 'beauty' or attractiveness (which of course is a label that can only be owned by the dominating in-group) and therefore forcing viewers to look at him in the same light they would any other model who forms apart of the in-group. Thus, in the broader spectrum concerning persons with albinism, allowing them to be 'included' and perceived as 'normal' as opposed to being set apart. However, in the same breath, it might be evident that Vogue and Zink magazine have utilised Shaun Ross (who serves as a representative of the minority group of persons with albinism) as an object of exoticism by

capitalising on his 'otherness' through using his lack of identity (as a person with albinism) as a way to construct and impose their own identity for persons with albinism as a whole using various visual symbols (pertaining to clothing, make up, digital editing etc) that perhaps reinforce the various misconceptions that already exist within society surrounding them as a group of people. Thus, the constructed identity being that they are in actual fact 'the other'.

Theo Sonnekus analyses the visual representation of colonial representations of black people or 'blackness'; gay colonial representations as well as contemporary representations of homo-masculinity in advertisements.

Sonnekus argues that masculinity is a construct and is therefore created to possess specific attributes such as sexual prowess and physical strength. These are elements, which are perceived as categorically 'male'. Sonnekus expresses that the fundamental function of hegemonic masculinity is to project these elements as a collective, thus creating a homogenous, singular and restricting social group without acknowledging the differences that exist between men. Thus, that which is dominantly thought of as 'masculine' is patriarchal to Western culture and often leans towards a homophobic ideal. In the same way the ideology of mainstream masculinity aims to uphold certain standards of what it means to be a 'man', both queer and black masculinities also encompass their own boundaries. Sonnekus mentions that in homo masculinity and black masculinity, both race and homosexuality are seemingly denied. In other words one aspect of black queer identity must constantly take priority of another in order to justify either 'blackness' or gayness. However white queers do not face the same dilemma, as their racial identities are invisible and therefore irrelevant and thus 'whiteness' does not pose as threatening or abnormal.

Sonnekus expresses that 'otherness' is a significant part of postcolonial theory and manifests in various texts about white supremacy and the objectification of black people. In other words black people (particularly black men in this instance) are not exempt from the 'othering' gaze of Westerners and are therefore imagined as possessing an other 'masculinity'. Black men are portrayed as hypersexual in white gay discourses and art, and are

objectified to such an extent that the traditional white concepts of white superiority are rearticulated, and therefore the concept of 'otherness' in terms of black men suggest that they are different in terms of race (with regards to 'whiteness'). As a result, the dishonor of always having to be compared to the white superior male has led to the exaggeration of black masculinity, to the extent that any suggestions of 'queerness' or effeminacy tend to be received with denial and hostility.

In analysing how black men have been portrayed in both colonial artworks and contemporary media, Sonnekus explains that one should realise that stereotypes concerning 'blackness' have not fallen away completely from the social imagination of Westerners, but instead feature quite prominently in today's popular visual culture, despite having undergone vast modifications. Thus one should view contemporary representations of 'blackness' as having origins that mimic the emphasis of white superiority portrayed in colonial art.

Sonnekus mentions that when looking at the representation of black men in colonial visual culture, the very existence of the white man seems to depend heavily on constructing the black man as 'lacking': which represents negative end on the scale of masculinity. Black men are not just the 'other', but in fact serve as an essential element in the colonial mission of establishing and maintaining supremacy. Therefore it was important for Westerners to emphasise the differences between 'whiteness' and 'blackness' to highlight the superiority of the (West) and convince (colonists) that the Other played no part in the Self and that the coloniser was in fact different from, and superior to 'the other'. Therefore in placing emphasis on white superiority, white men were always positioned as the exclusive agents of masculinity, culture and civilisation, while black men were positioned as passive, sinister, irrational and powerless, these were attributes that were considered to be feminine. Thus, in portraying black men in this manner, this was done strategically to emasculate the black man by undermining his 'manliness'.

While referring to the gay culture of the 1970s and 1980s (also known as the gay clone era), Sonnekus states that gay men adopted the hyper masculine

style of dress and demeanour which was based on a working class aesthetic of ruggedness in order to oppose the stereotypical depiction of homosexual men as flamboyantly feminine. Thus gay men within the Western culture were typically portrayed as cowboys, construction workers and soldiers in order for them to still embody the appeal of masculinity. Sonnekus expresses that the gay clone era and the contemporary images of hypermasculine aesthetic seen in today's visual culture seemingly result from the fact that gay men are still expected to behave like men and perform masculinity despite the stereotypes and homophobia amongst society that state that they are not men. Therefore in representing a masculine demeanour associated with heterosexuality, they are able to do away with the stigma that carries the over-the-top femininity of queers, as society knows them to be. Homosexual men do not conform to the conventional expectations with regards to sex roles and thus are subject to being the 'other' with regards to the expected boundaries of gender, therefore, by passing as 'straight' their homosexuality becomes accepted as they impersonate or play the role of heterosexual citizenry.

Sonnekus states that there is a blatant difference in which white gay men and black gay men were represented during the gay clone era which is still evident in contemporary visual culture. While white gay men were portrayed in a manner that represented masculinity and were thus perceived with a heterosexual appeal in order to not carry the stigma associated with queers being feminine, black gay men appeared solely as fetishised objects for the pleasure of white gay men. The manner in which gay black men are portrayed differently to gay white men shows evidence that there is a racial hierarchy present in gay culture. An example of this according to Sonnekus is that in print pornography white gay men are shown full-frontal whilst black gay men are shown from the back. This illustrates that it is the white gay man's penis (manhood) that is desirable as opposed to that of the black man's, whose most desirable feature is his behind (womanhood). Thus this shows that the white gay man typically epitomises homo masculinity by showing off his sexual prowess as active and dominant as opposed to the gay black man's feminine and passive demeanour (further representing the other: minority within a minority).

In analysing the representation of Shaun Ross in both Vogue and Zink Magazine, particularly as a male black model with albinism, Sonnekus' argument with regards to the representation of black men in colonial visual art would be relevant in establishing whether Shaun Ross has in fact been portrayed in a manner that mimics the colonial depiction of 'the other'. In other words, Have Vogue and Zink Magazine used Shaun Ross' lack or difference in pigmentation to emphasise within a broader spectrum, the sense of inferiority an otherness experienced by persons with albinism within society as a whole? If this is the case, then it would mean that Vogue and Zink Magazine have aimed to ridicule persons with albinism (as Shaun Ross in this instance serves as a single representative of them as a minority group) on a greater platform by insinuating and emphasising that they are in fact anything but normal, and thus 'lacking' in contrast to the rest of society: those who have no skin pigmentation disorder. One can further argue that because persons with albinism are a minority group within society, male models with albinism are thus portrayed in a way that strips them of their 'manliness' to again emphasise their inferiority to the rest of society as persons with albinism, in the same way the colonists stripped black men (who formed the minority of black culture) of their 'manliness' so to rearticulate supremacy amongst 'whiteness' in colonial visual culture.

According to Aiden and Ross (2005), in the past, being 'manly' was candidly defined as not being a woman, thus this meant that with regards to fashion, men's fashion revolved around a set of denials which blatantly articulated that men dress for fit and comfort, not for style. Up to the early 1980s male's conformity to the non-style conscious mode was a symbol of what it meant to be a man authentically, as the sense to express oneself through one's appearance was considered a sign of weakness. In other words, men accepting fashion as being the norm would mean them losing power over women, as they would be considered the same as women who typically are perceived to be overtly concerned about their physical appearance (Aiden and Ross, 2005). Therefore, the idea here is that the objective of women's and

gay fashion is to promote the admiration of the body from others, as opposed to heterosexual men who aim to maintain their active male roles whilst seeking secreted admiration from other heterosexual men (Aiden and Ross, 2005).

Aiden and Ross (2005) state that gay men have been found to strongly value aspects of physical appearance, namely: body build, grooming, attractiveness and dress. Appearance is a significant factor within the gay culture, both in terms of attraction and communication. Thus, the gay man actively creates and looks after his appearance according to the cultural standards of attractiveness within gay socialisation as he compares himself to other members of this sub culture. Therefore, as a result of the gay man's high concern in relation to physical appearance, Aiden and Ross express that citizens of the gay community thus perceive fashion as an object of attention to communicate a sense of identity and developing a definition of style amongst their gays peers.

Considering Shaun Ross' openness with regards to being a homosexual male, one should take this into consideration when analysing how he has been portrayed in Zink and Vogue Magazine, however it is to what extent is his queerness conveyed and whether the magazines have exaggerated it, to take away from his identity as a male, given that one's sexuality does not necessarily take away from his or her sex (unless the individual is a transgender which is a completely different domain from homosexuality).

Ela Przybylo (no date) describes ugliness as anything that does not quite fit and that ugliness has served as the marker of mundane reality, the irrational, evil, irregularity, excess, deformity and the marginal (ie: the other) subordinate. Ela Przybylo (no date) further emphasises that binaries such as beauty/ugliness can never stand independent from each other as they represent a hierarchy and an order of subordination (an order of privilege). Thus beauty/ugliness never operate in isolation but instead map on to: class, race and gender forming a network through which we can discriminate, incriminate and therefore render ugly (Przybylo, no date).

Some of the particular binaries that most evidently interlock with beauty/ugliness include: self/other, man/woman, human/animal, organisms/machine, real/fake, white/black, rich/poor, clean/dirty, able/disabled, whole/fractured, young/old, healthy/ill, thin/fat, tall/short, smooth/rough, regular/irregular, pure/mixed and imperfect/perfect/ (Przybylo, no date). Ela Przybylo (no date) describes that binaries serve as formulas that allow for domination and that they are systemic to the logics and practices of domination.

Ugliness can be occupied by anyone who does not adhere to the prescribed 'norms' of appearance and behaviour. Thus whenever the label ugly is applied, we can be sure that it is referring to whatever is 'other' in our culture. So, while there are no essential features that all ugly bodies share, they do share territories (characteristics) external to dominance and privilege (Przybylo, no date).

In order for a subject to be regarded as beautiful it has to go through a repetition of certain practices. This repetition of beauty practices is driven by the fear of the unmodified, unaltered feminine body as well as the fear of being 'ugly'. Even the most perfectly controlled and modified body will be exposed as flawed, imperfect, plain or ugly at some point between repetitions. In these moments that fall between repetitions, even the most modified feminine body is exposed to 'ugly'. Either her make up is not applied correctly, or is momentarily removed, or she has neglected her exercise routines, or her hair is un-styled or untreated, or blemishes have begun to appear (Przybylo, no date). A body that is less modified is seen to be jarring at times (unshaved legs), sloppy at times (bra-less breasts), and in general just dull or plain (an unmade up face). In contrast, bodies which extensively repeat beauty ideals are given better prospects for success, whilst ugly bodies are seen to be worthless. All bodies are in need of modification to avoid ugliness, but some bodies are seen as in need of more modification-as they are 'uglier' in raw (Przybylo, no date). For example, most people with deficiencies or disabilities are unable to make their bodies fit the physical aspect of what is deemed

culturally beautiful, and thus they have to struggle harder than non-disabled people in achieving beauty (Przybylo, no date).

Przybylo (no date) emphasises that the unaltered body is not ugly because of inborn flaws, but because it is a politically disobedient entity. This is true in two ways. One being: the unaltered body challenges practices of consumption thus upsetting the economy. And secondly, the unaltered body disrupts performances of beauty and femininity (Przybylo, no date). This is all because the unaltered body reminds us that consumerism and femininity are a performance and even a deception while the 'ugly' body reveals the needlessness of modification (Przybylo, no date). Thus the 'feminist' is ugly because she does not adhere to the rules of beauty (she does not adequately perform her femininity) as she does not wear make up, shave her legs or armpits and is therefore seen as the enemy of 'beauty' because she is a figure that upsets neat gender division and performs incorrectly (Przybylo, no date).

Ugly specimen; the monstrous body

Przybylo (no date) describes monstrous as anything that is ambiguous or horrifying. Monstrosity can be seen or characterised by excess or absence. The monstrous is culturally dependant, and reflects cultural fears, anxieties and fascinations. It is a category of confusion, both horrible and wonderful, an object of both aberration and adoration, thus monsters contradict standing cultural concepts.

One historic example that clearly demonstrates the application of 'monstrosity' and 'ugliness' is the case of Saartjie Baartman (anglicised as Sarah Bartman). She was the 'Hottentot venus' who originated from The Cape in South Africa and was brought to London in 1810 to be publically displayed on the account of her extraordinarily large buttocks (Przybylo, no date). The popularity of the

shows which featured Baartman both in London and Paris were a result of her being portrayed as a 'freak'. Baartman was considered emblematic of black women in general, which ultimately came to signify the 'ugliness' of her race. Thus Baartman's perceived monstrosity (ugliness) played a part in the larger mechanisms of colonisation and racism (Przybylo, no date).

Other bodies which are perceived to be monstrously ugly include those that are disfigured by illness or circumstance. They are deemed ugly not because they are seen to be 'aesthetically displeasing' but because they are jarring and unsettle hierarchical binaries through falling into the ambiguous spaces in between (Przybylo, no date). Therefore monstrous ugliness is the most disturbing ugliness as it has the greatest power of shock. It reminds us of our inability to remain beautiful permanently, and the actuality of the impossibility to conform to the ideal beauty (Przybylo, no date).

According to Przybylo's (no date) definition of ugly or ugliness, one can easily place persons with albinism into this category, as they fall under the many sub categories that define ugliness, these being: evil (as persons with albinism are associated with witch craft in black African communities); irregular, (as their lack of pigmentation is regarded 'abnormal') and perhaps even ill. Therefore, due to their irregularity or abnormality they are deemed 'ugly' as they do not fit the 'norms' of society with regards to racial classification and thus represent 'the other'. According to Przybylo (no date) persons with albinism can be said to specifically embody the monstrous other, as they are generally seen to be horrifying, as they embody an absence, particularly with regards to pigmentation. Furthermore their monstrosity is characterised by cultural fears and anxieties (particularly of Black African communities) of their association with witch craft and the supernatural. Therefore when taking the example of Saartjie Baartman into consideration, one can not help but question whether Zink and Vogue Magazine have portrayed Shaun Ross in a manner that conveys him as a 'freak' by merely focusing on his identity, or lack thereof, as a citizen of the minority group (in-group) pertaining to persons with albinism in order to draw attention to their brands as a form of alternative or strategic marketing.

Gbadamosi (2013) expresses how both Western and traditional African medicine, impose their own perceptions on the body with albinism, assuming that the body can be understood from the outside in.

There are various fixated conditions associated with albinism that are not necessarily completely true, these include: skin cancer; that persons with albinism are born of the neglect and ignorance that result from poverty; complications and assumptions regarding eyesight as well as communal normalcy, thus as a result of the above ideologies mentioned, persons with albinism are inevitably perceived by society as a body that is unwell, subject to manipulation and accordingly a subject of the medical industry (Gbadamosi, 2013).

Gbadamosi (2013) expresses how myths (amongst black African communities) surrounding persons with albinism include: the mother being infected with albinism through seeing or touching an albino (thus albinism is seen to be a contagious 'disease'), the mother sleeping with the 'wrong person' or a tokoloshe (which is a term used amongst black South Africans to describe a mischievous an evil spirit which is usually sent by a witch), making fun of a person with albinism, or the child simply being a result of a curse (which was imposed by a witch, in other words supernatural punishment) (Gbadamosi, 2013).

Therefore, in order to prevent this contamination or curse, pregnant mothers spit on the ground, as this spitting is believed to eliminate the contagion.

Once born, the children with albinism are often seen as a burden and considered to have supernatural powers, resulting in their hair and body parts being sold, as it is believed that their body parts will bring wealth to their purchaser or through contract (between the consumer and his or her witch doctor) (Gbadamosi, 2013).

Throughout life, persons with albinism are treated as evil, viral, ghostlike, and are even believed to not die, but instead simply disappear (Gbadamosi, 2013).

Gbadamosi (2013) expresses that it is important that a paradigm shift takes place with regards to how persons with albinism are both portrayed and perceived in order for humanity to be restored. This will therefore mean eliminating the process of analysing albinism from the outside in, and actually looking at them as human beings.

With regards to how Shaun Ross has been represented, it is important to critically analyse whether both Vogue and Zink Magazine have portrayed him in a manner that mimics the outside in approach to how society perceives persons with albinism as a group, as opposed to understanding them as individual people with different identities apart from their pigmentation disorder. Thus in doing this, one must look out for intentional symbols that have been put in place within each of the chosen images, in order to establish if both magazine brands reinforce the various stereotypes surrounding persons with albinism which in turn give birth to their stigmatisation, or whether they aim to break free from the various stereotypes by not placing emphasis on Shaun Ross' otherness' and thus taking away from his humanness. But instead, communicating that he is in fact human, and should thus be represented and in turn perceived as such.

Research methodology

There will be two levels of research with regards to answering the research problem of this study which revolves around investigating the representation of Shaun Ross in Vogue and Zink Magazine as well as consumer perceptions towards persons with albinism and their increased visibility within fashion photography as a whole.

Level 1

To present clear-cut research objectives, research questions must exist. Thus the purpose of the primary research is to explore the following research questions:

- What people's perceptions are towards albinism and persons who live with the condition?
- What people's perceptions are towards persons with albinism within everyday society and fashion photography?
- What people's perceptions are towards fashion brands that utilise models with albinism?

The research design

To answer part of the research problem, and objectives mentioned above, a qualitative explorative research study is practiced.

Qualitative research is designed to make known a target audience's range of behaviour and perceptions that drive it with reference to specific issues or topics (QRCAA, no date). Thus, a qualitative explorative design is required as there is only a small fraction of existing knowledge with regards to people's perceptions on persons with albinism and their increased visibility within fashion photography and the fashion industry as a whole. Therefore it can be said that the research area of exploring how people see and feel about models with albinism can be said to be fairly new, in which case many possible unknown variables may exist.

Although the secondary research conducted in the literature review has portrayed a rich source of information with regards to people's perceptions towards persons with albinism, particularly within black African communities. There is however very little information with regards to how other races from other demographics perceive persons with albinism and whether these perceptions are possibly carried forth when viewing persons with albinism on a different platform outside of everyday society, in this instance being fashion

photography. Therefore, the process of inductive reasoning is bound to be incomplete if not supported by primary qualitative exploratory research, especially given that this particular topic of research is new, and thus requires in depth understanding.

The primary qualitative explorative research will be in the form of focus groups which apply self reports to obtain information Kinnear and Taylor (1996:305, cited in Enslin, 2003) explain that focus groups are loosely structured interactive discussions designed by a moderator among a small group of respondents. The moderator allows for various subjects to be explored during discussion and ensures that respondents stimulate one another in the process. The aim with focus group is to draw themes or ideas and to write a narrative that reports these ideas. The emphasis is therefore not on how many people said what, but rather what was said.

Derived from the literature review are themes that helped formulate the categories against which the research will be collected and analysed in order to obtain a better understanding of the research questions mentioned above. The categories are namely:

The concept of otherness

The concept of beauty and ugliness

The concept of albinism as a marketing strategy

Sampling:

Four focus groups will be conducted, of which each group will comprise of 10 individuals, thus, resulting in a total of 40 individuals. The participants for each of the focus groups will be everyday citizens of both genders and different races between the ages 20 and 40 who are general consumers of clothing and fashion, as persons between this age group purchase their own clothing items and are thus exposed to fashion photography on a daily basis whether it is in store, within catalogues, magazines, through social media or any other media platforms that communicate fashion clothing using models to represent those items. Focus group participants will reside within the Johannesburg

area (given time and transport constraints). In sampling the participants for the focus groups to be conducted a non-probability method was used which consists of purposive sampling as It has been acknowledged that the sample chosen is subjective in me specifically choosing individuals who are fashion consumers.

The questions that will be asked within each of the four focus groups are as follows:

1. What are your perceptions of people with albinism?
2. How common do you think albinism is in the population
3. What is the first thought that pops into your head when you encounter someone living with albinism?
4. How do you think albinism
affects a person's experience or social interaction? (Do you think it differs in any way from your own, and why do you think this?)
5. Do you think albinism affects a person's level of attractiveness?
6. What physical characteristics do you feel a fashion model should possess?

7. How do you feel about fashion models with albinism? Is this a positive or negative development? Why do you think this?
8. How would a model with albinism effect your perceptions of the brand they were modeling for?

Members of each of the focus groups will be required comment on four images extracted from both Zink and Vogue magazine in order for me to gain an understanding with regards to how Shaun Ross as been represented by these two particular fashion brands and whether there are any similarities between their perceptions and the themes discussed in the literature review.

When a model is represented in a fashion spread, the look and feel of the shoot is based on one theme and thus the images are bound to share similarities with regards to how the model has been portrayed and the

overall look and feel. Therefore given this fact, two images from Zink and Vogue Magazine have been extracted for the purposes of gaining insight into people's perceptions towards the way in which Shaun Ross has been depicted in both magazines

Vogue Italia images to be shown to focus group members



Zink Magazine images to be shown to focus group members



identifying and responding to themes that emerged from the pattern conveyed by the response of the participants.

To ensure validity of the information obtained and analysed, I will have recorded the focus group discussions in order to ensure all information has been grasped and thoroughly rearticulated into my various findings.

Level 2

Level two of the research methodology will pertain to understanding how Shaun Ross has been represented in fashion photography.

Thus, in understanding the representation of Shaun Ross, an analysis on four images extracted from both magazines will be conducted using semiotics, which refers to the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behaviour; the analysis of systems of communication as language gestures or clothing (dictionary.com, 2015).

The themes I will be analysing Shaun Ross' representation against will be the following:

- The concept of otherness
- The concept of exoticism
- The representation of black queerness in Western visual culture
- The representation of blackness in Western visual culture

The images that will be visually analysed are the same images that are to be shown to the participants of each of the focus groups in order to explore the similarities or differences conveyed by people's perceptions on how Shaun Ross has been represented against the various symbols I will be identifying based on the themes (theories) mentioned above. The symbolic elements that will be used to analyse the representation of Shaun Ross against the chose themes will be: clothing or lack of clothing, gestures (poses) and colour.

Ethics situated around looking at the representation of persons with albinism within fashion photography could include the fact that because these individuals are highly stigmatized and discriminated against, a great deal of sensitivity with regards to how I approach my questions should be taken into consideration to avoid possibly offending any of the participants that will be apart of my research collection process.

A possible limitation that may occur during the collection of my data is the inability for participants to pitch, ways I may be able combat this is through giving myself enough time to reschedule meetings or with regards to personal interviews, and thus conducting these interviews over the phone.

Focus group Findings

In my objective to obtain the answers to the following research questions:

- What people's perceptions are towards albinism and persons who live with the condition?
- What people's perceptions are towards persons with albinism within everyday society and fashion photography?
- What people's perceptions are towards the idea of fashion photography taking in models with albinism?

The research answers I obtained are as follows:

1. What are your perceptions of people with albinism?	The older and generation from township areas perceive and speak about persons with albinism to be a foreign species, as they even refer to them as 'nkau' (which means monkey when translated in English) The younger generation who live in suburban areas merely perceive persons with albinism as human beings with a skin disorder of some sort (however are not sure what the disorder completely entails and believe it affects their mental ability) Black individuals from the township shared some of the same misconceptions surrounding persons with albinism mentioned my literature review Namely: they don't die, they are a curse by the ancestors, and that they are bad luck.
2. How common do you think albinism is in the population?	Participants acknowledged that persons with albinism are a minority group and are thus not common in everyday society.
3. What is the first thought that pops into your head when you encounter someone living with albinism?	When encountering a person albinism, the black participants mentioned that they experience an element of shock as they rarely come about persons with albinism and they also see them as extremely and unattractive and odd looking. The words that were most prominent when describing persons with albinism include: <i>"Ugly, disgusting, their skin looks contagious; and therefore I wouldn't want one near me"</i> Those of the white and coloured race mentioned that notice that they look different, however are indifferent about their physical appearance, as it does not affect them in any way.
4. How do you think albinism affects a person's experience or social interaction? (Do you think it differs in any way from your own, and why do you think this?)	Participant of the older generation (between 35 and 40) expressed how persons with albinism were at times deprived an education within the townships they grew up in and even forced to remain indoors as a way for their parent to protect them against possibly getting beaten up or even killed by the community. Participants also mentioned that due to the inferiority they experience within society, they are in turn lack self confidence and are highly self conscious thus making it very difficult to be productive within society as they are not perceived as 'normal'

ZINK



MAY ISSUE

DESIGN ISSUE FEATURING
SHAUN ROSS

BUNKER Z
ALENA AKHMADULLINA
INAISCE

PLUS
SOULFUL SOUNDS
OF QUADRON
LUXE ART DECO
GETAWAYS

ZINKMAGAZINE.COM

Focus group finding in terms of depiction of Shaun Ross in Zink and Vogue Magazine

Image 1:

When shown this image most participants showed signs of shock and disbelief, they further stated that they felt a sense of evil conveyed by the image almost as though the model is somewhat linked to the devil.



Image 2:

When shown this image participants expressed how there was a clear emphasis on the models skin colour, which was deliberately made to stand out by the model's black clothing. Participants further mentioned that they would have felt better about the image had the model worn different colour clothing as he would have been portrayed in a more natural manner as opposed to having his skin pigmentation highlighted.



Image 3

When shown this image, participants portrayed a sense of shock, and were even confused as to whether the model was male or female. When advised that he was male, they expressed that he has been demeaned as a male figure, emasculated severely, and even showed signs of disapproval in the way he has been represented. The participants further mentioned that his identity has been stripped away from him as a male individual by the capitlisation of his difference and otherness. However they also acknowledge to express that contemorary fashion photography these days capitalises on the otherness of individuals, but with regards to this particular image, they believed that the model's otherness has been represented distatefully.



Image 4:

When shown this image, participants expressed that the model is being objectified in a sexual manner and again emasculated and demeaned as a male figure.



Focus Group Analysis

The following analysis will be done according to the categories derived from the literature review conducted. These categories include:

The concept of otherness

The concept of 'beauty' and 'ugliness'

The concept of alternative marketing.

Otherness

According to Staszak's (2008) definition of otherness as the result of a dominant in-group (us, self) constructing one or more dominant out-groups (them, other) by disgracing a difference presented as a negation of identity and thus an intention for potential discrimination. It can be said that people (particularly black fashion consumers from township areas) do in fact regard persons with albinism as 'the other'. This is evident in the stigma they attribute to them as a minority group, which is conveyed by the way in which they degrade and dehumanise persons with albinism into animals (monkeys) or creatures of the supernatural realm. This further reveals evidence of discrimination caused by disgracing and placing negative emphasis on the difference between them (the in-group) and persons with albinism (the out-group). By dehumanising persons with albinism, they have further conveyed evidence of setting themselves apart from them, and in turn devalued their identity as human beings who possess their own individual, personal identities, which are separate from their pigmentation disorder.

Even though the younger generation seemed more accepting of persons with albinism and mentioned to perceive them as human beings with a mere skin condition. They however conveyed signs of othering persons with albinism by referring to them as 'not normal', this further illustrates that although some individuals might perceive themselves as more accepting of persons with albinism, there still happens to be an element of stigma that they attribute to them which could perhaps derive from their inability to view albinism as a condition that affects an individual or their inability to separate albinism from

the individual and thus the condition becomes the person, causing people to lose conscious of the fact that persons with albinism are not merely just their pigmentation disorder, but individuals with personal identities beyond their condition.

With regards to how Shaun Ross has been represented in both Vogue and Zink Magazine, Participants showed signs of disapproval towards the way he has been depicted in both magazines, as they conveyed a clear acknowledgement of how the photographer as 'othered' Shaun Ross by placing emphasis on his distinct difference and stripping him of his identity as a male individual. This illustrates how people are unable to acknowledge their own prejudice actions and behaviours towards persons with albinism, yet are able to quickly pick up when others are showing signs of stigma, this further indicates that people's prejudice actions against persons with albinism have become so rooted in their way of thinking and behaving, that mistreating persons with albinism has become such a norm that it does not even play on their conscience. However, this prejudice only becomes visible when viewed from the perspective of the third party looking from the outside in.

Beauty and ugliness

Participants expressed that they experience a sense of shock when coming into contact with a persons who have albinism as they regard them unattractive and strange looking, yet also mentioned that they believed persons with albinism would be more interesting and appealing to look at when representing fashion as they are eye catching. This shows a clear relation towards Pyzblo's theory of the monstrous body (which is a sub heading that feeds into his definition of ugliness). Pzyblo defines the monstrous body as anything that is ambiguous or horrifying and is thus typically characterised by excess or absence. Pyzblo further states that the monstrous body, form a category of confusion ie: an object of both abnormality and adoration.

Therefore given that the participants are more accepting and admiring of persons with albinism when represented in fashion verses when interacting

with them in everyday society, this conveys the clear split between persons with albinism as being both objects of admiration and abnormality (which is driven by the absence of pigmentation) amongst society, and thus serve as a blatant representation of the monstrous body when perceived by society.

This difference amongst the participants in relation to how they view persons with albinism in everyday society as compared to when represented in fashion photography could be said to derive from the fact that because the participants acknowledge that the fashion industry is one that changes its beauty ideals, and that these beauty ideals are not a realistic representation of human reality, persons with albinism thus fit the concept of non realism, given that they form apart of the other (not human). Therefore, it can be said that people perceive fashion photography as a platform for persons with albinism to be looked at, however in a manner that separates 'them' (out-group) from the rest of society (in-group), thus making it a lot more interesting and comfortable for people to accept and look at them (as opposed to encountering them within everyday society). In turn, persons with albinism become foreign objects of adoration and are thus seen as aesthetically pleasing or 'beautiful', however only when operating within the spheres of fashion photography.

Alternative marketing

Participants believe that the use of models with albinism in fashion photography has purely become a trend, thus, it can be said that because the fashion industry has made excessive use of persons with albinism, people have become indifferent about their increased visibility as the use of models with albinism has become the norm and is no longer as disruptive and as unconventional as before.

Visual analysis of Zink and Vogue Magazine images of Shaun Ross



Image: 1

Model: Shaun Ross

Magazine: Vogue Italia

Issue: December 2013

Photographer: Danny Roche

This image taken by Danny Roche, is of a profile shot of Shaun Ross who is a homosexual model with albinism. The image taken portrays the use of chiaroscuro emphasising the model's lack of pigmentation. On the model's head is a snake positioned with its mouth open above the model's ear almost as though it is whispering to the model, portraying a sense of cunningness and seductiveness towards the model. The pigmentation of the snake and the model are tonally similar, suggesting kinship between the two figures. Thus the snake almost acts as an extension of the model. This portrayal between the model and the snake gives reference to the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the chapter of Genesis, mimicking the serpent's ability to seduce Eve to commit the first sin. Thus articulating that the model is a representation of Eve, as the perpetrator of sin.

Given the colonisation of Africa by Western culture, Western Christianity has been highly saturated within many African cultures, thus one cannot help but argue that the image gives notions of evil or devilish associations portrayed by Christian religion through the symbolism of the serpent (the devil). It is important to acknowledge that although African black society comprises of its own sub-cultural beliefs, Christianity forms an over layer that plays a pivotal role within the various belief systems of African black society and in many cases to the extent such that, in certain families and communities, Christianity serves as the most prominent belief system. However given that African black cultural beliefs are in a sense combined or diluted with those of Western Christianity, it can be said that the image places emphasis on African black traditional beliefs regarding persons with albinism in terms of their associations with evil that have been attributed to them, these associations include beliefs that persons with albinism are a curse to families who have given birth to a child with albinism, as they are said to evoke misfortune; the association of persons with albinism with witchcraft, in that drinking the blood of a person with albinism will give one supernatural powers. Regarding this particular belief, it is important to acknowledge that according to Christianity, witchcraft is the act of awakening

evil spirits, thus, in one having supernatural powers, this in fact conveys an individual being under the possession of evil spirits. The act of drinking the blood of any living organism (according to Christianity) is said to be a satanic ritual or sacrifice that conveys the act of one making a pact with the devil. Thus in suggesting that the blood of persons with albinism holds supernatural powers, this suggests a relation between persons with albinism and the devil, almost as though their blood is the gateway in luring people towards Satan and his possession over the lives. Thus, given the biblical symbolism conveyed by this image, one can not help but argue that through the utilisation and portrayal of various cultural beliefs (derived from African black culture as well as Western Christianity), the photographer is therefore strengthening and confirming African black society's existing notions surrounding persons with albinism and their association with evil.

In the image, the model further conveys a pose that suggests a sense of passiveness, this is conveyed by the softness of his pose as well as his inability to look towards or confront the viewer. The model has makeup applied to both his eyes and mouth, again emphasising the femininity that is conveyed by the model. Given the feminine depiction of model, Shaun Ross, who is a black male with albinism photographed by European or Western photographer, Danny Roche, according to Sonnekus (2008), it is important to acknowledge that although we live in a contemporary world and the media thus portrays visual images in a manner that is contemporary, one should acknowledge and realise that the stereotypes regarding the depiction of 'blackness' and the otherness of 'blackness' in terms of white supremacy have not fallen away entirely from the social imagination of Westerners, but instead show immense influence in today's visual culture (Sonnekus, 2008).

Therefore, in terms of the way in which Shaun Ross has been feminised in this image, one can argue that the photographer has rearticulated the representation of how black men (as a minority group) were depicted within colonial visual culture, as according to Sonnekus (2011), black men were portrayed as passive and feminine in order to convey 'otherness' from the perspective of the Westerner's gaze in order to emphasise the separation between the colonists

('us', in-group) and the natives ('them', out-group). This otherness served as a symbol that represented the minority and powerlessness of 'blackness' within a colonised society of white supremacy. Thus, in the colonists portraying black men in a feminine manner, this was an attempt to emasculate black men by undermining their masculinity and emphasising their inferiority against 'whiteness' by positioning them as feminine, passive, soft and powerless (see colonial representation of black men in figure 1). As a result of the blatant manner in which Shan Ross has been conveyed as feminine, one cannot help but conclude that through this image the photographer has placed emphasis on the inferiority of persons with albinism within society (using Shaun Ross as a representative of them) by depicting the model as passive, thus highlighting his sense of powerlessness with regards to persons with albinism and how African communities as well as other cultures position them as 'the other' and inferior to them, as further conveyed by the participants of the focus groups which were conducted during my primary research. The model's masculinity being stripped away from him, further rearticulates his inferiority as compared to 'normal looking men' (those who do not have albinism) due to the colour of his skin and further more his race respectively, as he plays the role of the minority (from the perspective of black Africans), within a minority (from the perspective of Westerners).



Image: 2

Model: Shaun Ross

Magazine: Vogue Italia

Issue: December 2013

Photographer: Danny Roche

In this image, the model's black clothing, contrasts against the paleness of his skin, thus emphasising the model's lack of pigmentation. This portrays a clear relation to Sheppard's (no date), definition of exoticism as a form of representation in which, places, people and cultural practices are portrayed as foreign from the perspective of the composer and/intended audience. Given the obvious prominence of the model's skin colour portrayed in this image, one can argue that the photographer as aimed to exoticise the model by placing emphasis on the model's 'foreignness' with regards to the difference his skin colour as a person with albinism whose pigmentation is blatantly different to those who don not have albinism. In this particular instance, the act of 'othering' the model rearticulates Przybło's (no date) theory of the monstrous body, which he defines as anything that is ambiguous or horrifying and can therefore be characterised by excess or absence, thus applying to the model, given the absence of his skin pigmentation which is made prominent, as it appears to be the focal point of the composition. This emphasis on the model's skin difference further highlights the ambiguity surrounding persons with albinism as a group of people whose skin pigmentation, or lack there of, is one that fails to stick to the boundaries of racial skin colour and classification.

The photographer has again portrayed the model with a feminine pose (as in image 1), as his hands are placed facing inwards on his waist with his hips slanted towards one side. The model also has make up applied to both his eyelids and lips, which further emphasises the femininity conveyed by his demine. Even though we are able to see the model's face in full (in this particular image), he is still not confrontational with his eyes as they appear to be closed or looking downward, suggesting a sense of passiveness (as in image 1). Thus, regarding the feminine depiction of the model, just as in the first image extracted from Vogue Magazine, it can be said that the photographer's intention has again been to rearticulate the colonial representation of 'blackness' (as the minority) by portraying the model as 'the other' and emasculating him in order to stress his inferiority within society as a whole due to both his physical appearance and cultural background, given that he forms a part of a minority group (from the perspective of both the Western and African black communities) in terms of both his race and pigmentation disorder. Therefore, by the photographer stripping

Shaun Ross of his manliness, one cannot help but argue that he is intentionally placing emphasis of the social position of persons with albinism as an inferior minority in relation to both African back communities as well as Western communities.

Question	Answers
5. Do you think albinism affects a person's level of attractiveness?	There was some hesitation amongst participants when answering this question, however in answering this questions all participants mentioned that they would not have a romantic relationship with a person who has albinism.
6. What physical characteristics do you feel a fashion model should possess?	Participants acknowledged that the fashion industry is one that is always on the look out for a different 'look' and therefore requires one to look a certain way. However participants mentions that fashion models typically look: slim, have good skin (no cellulite, even tone) and have a symmetrical facial feature
7. How do you feel about fashion models with albinism? Is this a positive or negative development? Why do you think this?	Participants were two sided about the idea of persons with albinism penetrating the fashion industry: On the one hand: Participants had positive feelings towards the idea as they believed that this shows that the industry is trying to be more diverse and inclusive given that it is an industry that uses various beauty ideals that are not necessarily representative of the population at large. Participants also mentioned that persons with albinism are eye catching and would therefore be interesting and appealing to look at when representing fashion. On the other hand: Participants felt as though this could be an alternative way in which the fashion brands are trying to stand out, and is thus a passing trend that will phase out once the fashion industry finds a new aesthetic fetish which they can capitalise on that is just as eye catching.
8. How would a model with albinism effect your perceptions of the brand they were modeling for?	Participants mentioned that fashion brands utilising models with albinism are merely on trend and want to stand out by using what is unconventional and out the norm.

Magazine: Zink

Model: Shaun Ross

Issue: May 2013

Photographer: Paco Peregrin

Just as in image one and two, of the photographs extracted and analysed from Vogue Magazine, the model is again portrayed in a feminine manner. This is evident in the bold make up applied to his eyes, cheek bones and lips, the womanly clothing that is being worn by the model and lastly the softness in the model's pose portrayed by his posture (which is similar to the pose of the men in figure 1). The model's flamboyantly feminine clothing further illustrates a close relation between contemporary visual culture and colonial visual culture with regards to the Westerners gaze, as the black male placed in the centre of the image in figure 1 appears to be wearing a dress like garment. The model does not confront the viewer with his eyes (just as in both images 1 and 2 of Vogue Magazine) again suggesting passiveness, which further articulates a characteristic of femininity according to Sonnekus (2008). These various suggestions of femininity have emasculated the model completely as this is evident in the fact that when shown this image, members of the focus groups conducted during my primary research were confused as to what gender the model is. This emasculation of the model can again be said to resemble The Westerners gaze within colonial visual culture upon black men as a minority group, and thus can be said to serve as a metaphor in articulating that in the same way the black minority were perceived as inferior within colonial society, so too are persons with albinism as a minority group within both black African and Western society, using model, Shaun Ross as a representative of this. The image thus be said to further illustrate the powerlessness of the model within a broader spectrum pertaining to his position in society as a black male individual with albinism and thus the 'other' according to his inferiority amongst black African communities (those without albinism) as well as the white or Western culture (because they are not black).

The black outfit worn by the model places emphasis on the paleness of the model's skin pigmentation, or lack thereof, by creating a sense of contrast between the black (the clothing) and white (the model's skin), just as in image 2 of Vogue Magazine. As a result, one can argue that the model is again being

exoticised by being objectified in a manner that makes a spectacle of him, as his skin colour is emphasised to be different from that of normal people (those with no albinism) hence why it is conveyed as one of the most prominent features within the composition (apart from his clothing). This is done in order stress to the viewer, that the model does not represent the 'standard' features of racial skin colour. As a contrast to the abnormality that the model conveys, he simultaneously somewhat seems to represent an object that is forced to be admired and looked, as he conveys an element of shock and ambiguity (as witnessed during the focus group discussions when participants were shown this particular image) not only through the 'abnormality' of his skin colour but also in the way that he has been completely feminised which is clearly illustrated by his pose and the feminine clothing that adorns his body. The model in this instance can therefore be said to represent pzybło's (no date) theory of the monstrous body as he is depicted as a body of abnormality as well as admiration. Abnormal, in the sense that, his pigmentation disorder is made a spectacle of, thus representing the aberration of persons with albinism within society as a whole. The 'othering' of the model in this particular image can further be said to mimic the manner in which Sarah Baartman was ridiculed and made a spectacle of as a monstrous body due to her 'otherness', which comprised of her 'abnormal' physical appearance in relation to that of the Westerners, being her large buttocks and peculiar facial features (see figure 2).

Given that the model is a homosexual male, one should take into consideration that perhaps the admiration that he exudes illustrates Aiden and Ross' (2005) argument regarding how homosexual men value elements of physical appearance regarding attractiveness and fashion, as physical appearance is seen to be an important factor within the gay sub culture both in terms of attraction as well as communication, thus to be admired on the mere basis of what they physically look like (Aiden and Ross). Therefore taking into consideration the model's possible intent to be admired in this particular image, the clothing he is wearing could be said to serve as an object for attention in being appreciated and looked at, and therefore contrasting against how heterosexual men in fashion are typically portrayed to still maintain their active male roles however in manner

that still seeks hidden admirations from other heterosexual men (as opposed to the blatant manner in which homosexual men seek admiration surrounding their physical appearance).

However, given the fact that sexuality does not dictate one's gender but can still be used as a form of self-expression regarding one's identity. The extreme and blatant femininity portrayed by the model through the clothing worn by him (which is further supported by his highly feminised pose) still remains questionable to some extent, as there is a lack of evidence regarding the model's perspective on how he has been portrayed in this particular image as his representation appears demeaning to him as a male figure, and to some extent misleading to the viewer, in terms of the model's gender (as expressed by members of the focus groups conducted after having shown them this particular photograph).



Magazine: Zink

Model: Shaun Ross

Issue: May 2013

Photographer: Paco Peregrin

In this image, the model is depicted completely nude from behind, portraying an exact replica of both images in figures 3 and 4 which were executed during a period called the gay clone era (1970s and 80s). During this Era, Sonnekus (2008) expresses how there was a clear difference in the racial depiction of gay men, where white gay men were portrayed to perform a sense of masculinity in

order to oppose the feminine associations that were attached to homosexuality (see figure 5), as opposed to black gay men, who were depicted to embody femininity as they were the 'other' according to white supremacy and thus were seen to fit the unconventional system of homosexuality (in relation to heterosexuality). White gay men were typically shown from the front (in print pornography) to ensure that their most desirable feature, being their penis, was exposed in order clearly illustrate manhood by showing off their sexual prowess as seen in figure 6. Whilst gay black men were typically portrayed from behind, exposing their most desirable feature being their buttocks, illustrating womanhood. By depicting gay black men in this manner, not only were they feminised and portrayed as passive but they were also presented as sexual objects to be fetishised or sexually conquered by white gay men, further placing emphasis on their racial inferiority.

Therefore, given the clear similarity with regards the depiction of the model in this image towards Sonnekus' (2008) argument in terms of the racial depiction of gay men, it is safe to say that although this particular photograph extracted from Zink magazine represents contemporary visual culture, the photographer has clearly shown influence from the gay clone era of the 1970s and 1980s, in the same way the photographer of figure 6 (although not extracted from Zink magazine) has shown influence of the same era by depicting the white gay man as masculine, showing off his sexual prowess. This clearly shows that the Westerners gaze upon 'blackness' has not vanished, but instead still conveys itself in contemporary visual culture given that both photographers come from a western cultural background. Therefore, it can be said that the way the model has been represented in this image conveys the photographers intent to communicate the model's otherness as a homosexual male with albinism and in turn the inferiority persons with albinism experience in relation to the supremacy of persons within society who do not form apart of the 'other' as they have 'normal' pigmented skin. The model's depiction from behind can further be said to symbolise his powerlessness within the broader spectrum of society, as a person with albinism who is prone to being harassed by those (within society) who are superior to him; persons without albinism.

Conclusion

There is a clear alignment between the primary and secondary research, as people showed evidence of discrimination against persons with albinism (particularly those of the black culture) derived from a lack of understanding with regards to the disorder, and thus placed persons with albinism in a category that deems them a foreign species to that of human society. Although most people have a vague understanding of what the condition might entail, they fail to perceive the condition as a mere pigmentation disorder (in the same way they would view other illnesses) but rather as an abnormality which leads to them separating themselves from persons with albinism and thus forming two distinctive categories namely: them (persons with albinism who form a minority) and us ('normal' people), of which the minority is prone to discrimination. Therefore during the act of separation, the dominant group imposes its supremacy by stripping away the identities of citizens who belong to the inferior group and dehumanising them by making albinism what they are, instead of a part of who they are.

Although people are blatantly discriminatory towards persons with albinism in everyday society, the fashion industry allows for people to be more accepting of persons with albinism when representing fashion as the fashion industry further adds to the process of separating the minority group (persons with albinism) from the dominant group (persons without albinism) as it is notorious for taking in the 'other' and almost creates a society for individuals who are deemed 'foreign' in society. Therefore, by separating persons with albinism from society, the fashion industry creates a platform that allows for society to look at persons with albinism from a perspective of admiration as opposed to aberration.

With regards to the representation of Shaun Ross in Zink and Vogue Magazine, both magazines depict him in a similar manner that is emasculating, thus reiterating his inferiority and powerlessness within the broader spectrum of society. Both magazines exoticise him by placing emphasis on his skin pigmentation and thus is otherness, and to some extent even reinforce the evil

associations black African society has attributed to persons with albinism (particularly in image 1). Therefore, it can be said that Zink and Vogue magazine have depicted Shaun Ross in a way that is demeaning to him as a male man and dehumanizing to him as a person with albinism. In doing this, Vogue and Zink magazine have rearticulated Shaun Ross' inferiority as a person with albinism and thus depicted him as the other, further reinforcing society's views of persons with albinism. This can therefore be said to be an unethical and distasteful approach in the representation of Shaun Ross given the hardships and stigmatisation persons with albinism already experience on a day to day basis.

With regards to the visual representation of Shaun Ross, it is important to acknowledge that this study was purely based on how he has been portrayed in Zink and Vogue Magazine, thus, it is not to say that other fashion brands have depicted Shaun Ross or any other models with albinism in a manner that is undermining and unethical to him.

Given that Shaun Ross was the first model with albinism to be used in both magazines, it can be said that selecting Shaun Ross was a form of alternative marketing for both magazines given Martinsson and Semenescu's, (2012) definition of alternative marketing as the use of unconventional advertising strategies. Unconventional in this case meaning, advertising strategies that brands competing in the same industry have not made use of or exploited thus, the form of communication is still regarded relatively new as both magazines used Shaun Ross in the same year (2013) for the first time. However now that we are in 2015 people perceive the use of models with albinism as a trend rather than a form of alternative marketing as they have become used regularly within the fashion industry. Thus, given that trends phase in and out of fashion, models with albinism are likely to phase out or become less popular to use once fashion photography finds its new fetish.

Recommendations

More research should be done with regards to the representation of persons with albinism in fashion photography, as this is an area of study that has not

been looked into extensively and thus there are many unattended variables to be answered, in order to establish the over all position of persons with albinism in the fashion industry as a whole and the effects this has on society at large.

Fashion brands should be cautious with regards to how they represent models with albinism. Given the current position of persons with albinism in society, it is important that fashion brands do not serve as a platform that reinforces society's notions and prejudice beliefs surrounding them as a minority group, as this may fuel their discrimination and exclusion from society. Thus it is advisable that fashion brands portray persons with albinism in a way that opposes the misconceptions surrounding them as a group of people. In doing this, fashion brands are able to serve as a voice for persons with albinism in protesting against their discrimination.

Given the stigma attached to persons with albinism, fashion brands should use their influential power to educate the masses about albinism through campaign work and possibly through fashion shows and fashion spreads that are purely dedicated towards creating awareness about the condition as opposed to just utilising persons with albinism for their own strategic purposes and benefits. Thus, by educating people about albinism, people will be able to therefore see it for what it is as opposed to exaggerating the disorder, which will ultimately decrease the stigma attached to albinism in the long run.

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Appendix B

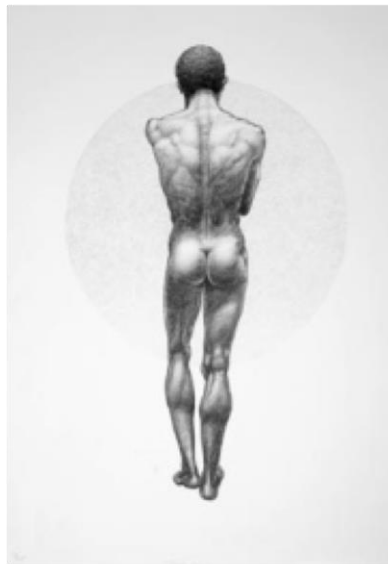


Figure 3: Black male, 1991
Delmas Howe
lithograph 55,8cm x 40,6cm

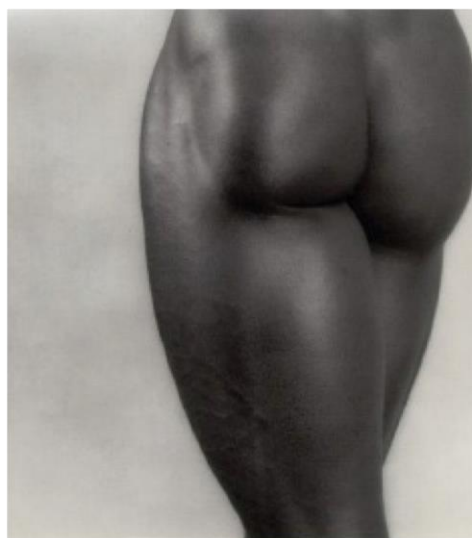


Figure 4: Robert Mapplethorpe, Derrick Cross, 1983
black and white photograph
Doy(2000: 170, cited by Sonnekus, 2008)

