



Visual Culture and Identity Formation Among Youth in South Africa: A Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

Visual culture plays a crucial role in shaping identities among youth globally, with South Africa being no exception. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of visual representations in cultural and personal identity formation. Qualitative methods were employed through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of youth from various regions in South Africa. Visual materials collected during fieldwork provided supplementary insights into participants' cultural narratives. Participants frequently referenced contemporary artworks and digital media as sources for self-expression, reflecting the impact of globalization on local identity formation. Themes emerged around traditional art forms and their revival within urban settings. This study underscores the dynamic interplay between visual culture and identity in South African youth, offering insights into how cultural heritage is reinterpreted and embraced within contemporary contexts. Future research could further investigate the impact of digital media on traditional art forms and explore the effectiveness of community-based initiatives in preserving local visual cultures.

Keywords: *African Studies, Ethnography, Visual Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Theory, Semiotics, Discourse Analysis*

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