



# Visual Identities in Youth Culture: An Exploration of Visual Culture and Identity Formation Among South African Adolescents

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## Abstract

Visual culture plays a significant role in shaping identity among youth globally. In South Africa, where diverse cultural influences converge, visual identities are crucial for adolescents to express their individuality and social belonging. The research employs a qualitative methodology involving in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of South African adolescents aged between 15-20 years. Data collection methods include visual diary entries and thematic analysis of interview transcripts. A key finding is the significant role that social media platforms play in the formation of visual identities, particularly among younger participants who predominantly use Instagram for self-expression and peer validation. This study contributes to the understanding of how South African adolescents navigate their identity through visual culture, offering insights into generational differences and cultural influences on adolescent development. Further research should explore longitudinal changes in visual identities over time and the impact of external factors such as educational settings on these dynamics.

**Keywords:** *African Studies, Cultural Identity, Ethnography, Visual Anthropology, Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Race Theory, Symbolic Interactionism*

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