



# Visual Culture and Identity Formation among South African Youth: A Survey Study

Gqawana Matheba<sup>1</sup>, Tlhobalinga Ramatsizi<sup>1,2</sup>, Kgotha Mokgatlo<sup>3,4</sup>, Mthethwa Dlamini<sup>5,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Research, University of Limpopo

<sup>2</sup> University of Pretoria

<sup>3</sup> Department of Research, University of Fort Hare

<sup>4</sup> Department of Research, University of Pretoria

<sup>5</sup> Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

<sup>6</sup> University of Limpopo

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**Correspondence:** [gmatheba@aol.com](mailto:gmatheba@aol.com)

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## Author notes

*Gqawana Matheba is affiliated with Department of Research, University of Limpopo and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa.*

*Tlhobalinga Ramatsizi is affiliated with University of Pretoria and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa. Kgotha Mokgatlo is affiliated with Department of Research, University of Fort Hare and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa.*

*Mthethwa Dlamini is affiliated with Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa.*

## Abstract

Visual culture plays a significant role in shaping identities across different societies, including South Africa's diverse youth population. This study aims to explore how visual representations influence identity formation among young people. The study employed a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data from a sample of 200 South African youth aged between 18 and 24. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify common themes related to visual culture and identity formation. Results revealed that popular media, particularly certain TV shows and social media influencers, significantly influence the self-perception of young people. Themes such as gender roles, body image, and cultural heritage emerged prominently in participants' responses. The findings suggest a strong correlation between visual culture consumption and identity formation among South African youth, emphasising the need for nuanced approaches to address these issues within educational and media contexts. Educators should incorporate discussions on media literacy into curricula to help students critically engage with visual representations. Media companies and influencers are encouraged to promote content that fosters positive self-image and cultural appreciation.

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

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