



Visual Culture and Identity Formation Among Youth in South Africa: An Ethnographic Survey Study

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Abstract

Visual culture plays a significant role in shaping identities across different societies, including South Africa where diverse cultural expressions are prominent. An ethnographic survey approach was employed involving semi-structured interviews with a sample of 150 young people across urban and rural areas, focusing on their engagement with various forms of visual media such as social media platforms and street art. A notable theme emerged regarding the influence of Instagram influencers on youth fashion choices, influencing them to adopt more fashionable clothing styles. Additionally, there was a significant proportion (45%) who felt that exposure to traditional African textiles in contemporary designs contributed to their sense of cultural identity. Visual culture significantly impacts how young South Africans perceive and express their identities, with digital media platforms being particularly influential in shaping fashion choices. Educational institutions should incorporate visual literacy programmes that highlight the importance of diverse cultural expressions for fostering inclusive understanding among youth. visual culture, identity formation, youth, South Africa, ethnography

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