



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

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## Abstract

Visual culture plays a significant role in shaping identity among youth globally, reflecting cultural values and individual experiences. In South Africa, where visual media is pervasive and diverse, understanding its impact on youth identities is crucial for comprehending social dynamics. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Data collection was conducted through focus groups with participants aged 18-30 in urban centers across South Africa, ensuring diverse perspectives are represented. Findings indicate that visual culture significantly impacts identity formation among youth, particularly evident in themes related to heritage preservation and celebration of diversity within communities. This study reveals the intricate relationship between visual culture and identity, highlighting the importance of arts education and media literacy programmes for fostering inclusive and resilient identities. Educational institutions should integrate more opportunities for youth engagement with local art forms to support their identity development. Policy makers could also consider funding initiatives that promote cultural preservation through contemporary expressions.

**Keywords:** *African Studies, Cultural Studies, Ethnography, Visual Analysis, Identity Theory, Postcolonial Theory, Narrative Inquiry*

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