



Cape Peninsula
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VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR A YOUTH MARKET: AN EXPLORATION OF VISUAL MEANING THROUGH CO-DESIGN

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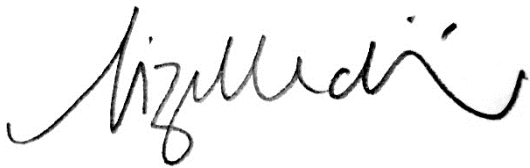
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i. DECLARATION

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lizelle de Villiers', written in a cursive style.

Signed

Date: 2018-11-12

ii. ABSTRACT

The youth faces unique challenges due to constant movement within the global economic and technological contexts. A digitally oversaturated world with constant access to globalised, mass information makes it challenging for communication designers to reach this audience on important matters. The South African context further complicates matters as youth unemployment is at an all-time high, a lack of quality schooling continues to feed poverty and inequality, exposure to gangs, violence, trauma and sexual abuse contribute to antisocial behaviour and drug and alcohol abuse increase risky sexual behaviour. It is therefore important to connect with the youth on these matters. The need to explore the mechanisms and content which will successfully connect with a South African youth audience was identified. In response to this, this study explored what the youth considers to be meaningful communication. The main objective of this research was to explore what types of visual communication have meaning for the youth to enable communication designers to connect with the South African youth market.

The study used case study methodology and data was collected qualitatively through a questionnaire and participatory methods, including two co-design workshops (with 20 participants, aged 20-27) and a small group discussion (with 5 participants). The study featured a co-design approach, which focused on collaborative meaning-making through the visualisation of communication pieces. The study identified several interconnected themes which relate to a bigger category of association. Three major categories of understanding were identified: perception (how the youth see their world); engagement (how the youth experience their world); and relevance (how the youth relate to their world). These themes provide visual communication designers with valuable insights relating to the youth audience.

Keywords: Youth, Visual Communication, Meaning, Co-Creation, South Africa

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iv. GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	CLARIFICATION OR DEFINITION	SOURCE
Youth:	Individuals between the ages of 15 – 35 years of age.	(UNESCO, 2018)
Post-authentic:	The tendency to show your best, edited self (the ‘social me’ in place of the ‘real me’) in order to measure up to people’s expectations, especially with regard to social media platforms.	(Collins, 2016)
Swipe culture:	Smartphone/mobile devices are central to media experience, a culture known to ‘swipe before they can read’.	(Simonwalker.org, 2018; WARC, 2016)
Digital natives:	Grew up in an environment dominated by social media, Internet and smartphones.	(Southgate, 2017; Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:2,3)
Behavioural targeting:	Use of tracking methods to establish online behaviour and interests. The data gathered on the digital user’s demographic, purchase, social and search behaviours is used to target audiences specifically.	(Bluefountainmedia, 2018)
Stereotype:	An oversimplified representation of a particular demographic used in communication to deliver messages to a target audience.	(Sheehan, 2017:75)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Visual communication is not simply dependent on the power of thought. It is a process of making – of transforming ideas into tangible expressions. Thinking and making are not alternatives to each other. They are forces of reciprocal power within the design process. One cannot take place without the other.”

- Andrew Howard. 'A manifesto for higher learning', *Design Observer*, 2013.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is rooted in participatory methodology to explore what young South African individuals perceive to be meaningful visual communication¹ through the co-design of visual designs. The exploration involved a qualitative framework supported by an interpretivist approach to establish a particular group's perception and feelings with regard to visual communication. The findings allowed for valuable insights pertaining to a specific case, but the co-design approach has the ability to be duplicated to gain insights into a wider audience.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

The current youth generation (aged 15-35) grew up in a digital, visually oversaturated, mass media orientated world at a critical point in time where the economic and technological context that surrounds them plays a very important part in shaping this particular group. Advanced technology mixed with uncertain economic and social structure changes globally has meant that the youth do not have instant access to jobs, are financially worse off than older generations and spend on average more time 'figuring it out', resulting in the onset of latent adulthood (Duffy, Shrimpton and Clemence, 2017:10-11; WARC, 2016). The youth are the biggest generation globally (36% of adults globally and 49% of African adults are

¹ Visual communication in this instance refers to a form of visualised communication design (or Graphic design) that has a "purpose or objective, created with the intention of reaching to a predefined 'audience' or 'user'" (Tam, 2008). Visual communication in practice therefore refers to, for example, integrated campaigns, corporate identities, print and digital media advertisements and awareness campaigns.

millennials) and issues surrounding them cannot be ignored (Duffy et al, 2017:27). The world might be moving at an ever-changing, unstable pace but the need for relevant information around health, employment, education and societal matters is ever present.

The Y (born 1988-1994) and Z (born 1995-2012) generations' life-long relationship with globalised information, social media and digital editing software contributes to a general lack of trust in communication messages (Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:2). These digital natives are furthermore constantly occupied with visual platforms, exploration of authenticity and representation of self and other by means of constantly shifting mobile technology.

Communication might be hindered as there is no easy or single way to reach this audience. Millions of channels, videos and influencers are all fighting for the same space at the same time every day and if you want to engage with the youth you need to convince them on a daily basis (Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:2; Precourt, 2015). The communication industry is not adapting well to the quick-changing, high-tech world and continues to favour traditional communication strategies and techniques to connect with target audiences (Pallini, Vergaeghe and Van den Berg, 2015). Most of the commentary concerns itself with data segmentation, demographics and stereotypical cohorts, and is still trying to establish a "one size fits all", mass media approach. The youth do not connect with such a typecast approach and disregards any form of labelling in favour of personalised, independent-minded, emotionally engaging content. According to a 2016 study by BuzzFeed, 76% of Gen Y and Z consider "radical" as the "new normal" and refuse to accept the status quo of demographic segmentation and its stereotypes (Connors, 2017).

The rejection of stereotypical imagery in favour of realistic portrayals of target audiences indicates a real understanding of their reality, of their own experience, and should be considered in order to connect responsibly (Whiteside, 2017). The focus on the individual and inclusivity is more important than defining individuals based on demographic expectation (Connors, 2017).

Visual communication designers therefore need to re-examine methodologies which favour the bombardment of unrelatable messages and stereotypical imagery in order to connect with this fluid target audience. The goal of this research project is to explore what types of visual communication have meaning beyond the use of stereotypes in order to connect with the South African youth market. In order to establish authenticity, this exploration was a collaborative one, with youth participants sharing their perceptions and driving the process of visualisation.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIMS AND QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Research Problem

Establishing a sincere connection with the youth market in today's post-authentic 'swipe' culture is challenging to visual communication designers. The constant bombardment of visual, saturated imagery, behavioural-targeting and mass media makes it extremely difficult to connect with the youth on important issues such as violent extremism on social media, competition for jobs, unemployment, social exclusion, teen parenting, poor quality education, substance abuse, mental health, sexual abuse, gender equality, cyberbullying and HIV (UNESCO, 2018; Cortina, Taran and Raphael, 2014; Patton, Eschmann and Butler, 2013:54-59). It is therefore essential to develop visual communication that connects with the youth.

It is challenging for visual communication designers to develop a communication campaign that will relate to all individuals quickly and simultaneously. Mass media approaches have often relied on stereotypical imagery to communicate a target message to a target audience as it quickly conveys an associated idea (Sheehan, 2013:77).

Stereotypes tend to rely on generalised physical attributes, behaviour, and gender, racial and social orientations which results in a misrepresentation of the individual as these assumptions are not necessarily based on truth, but rather on perception or social schemas. Ignoring the complexities of the individual by focusing on or typecasting an attribute of a group as truth, creates and reinforces assumptions that influence how society relates to or sees certain groups and/or individuals perceived to be part of such a group (Pounders and Mabry-Flynn, 2016:426; Bailey, Steeves,

Burkell and Regan, 2013:94, 95,106). A recent study conducted by Unilever indicates that 70% of respondents believe the exposure to stereotypes in media is affecting today's children negatively, and 90% believe women are portrayed as sex symbols (WARC, 2017; Whiteside, 2016). Stereotypical portrayals of girls as "sexualised objects seeking male attention are commonly found in social media" as this type of self-exposure by girls may act as "markers of social success and popularity" (Bailey et al, 2013:91).

The use of such conflicting imagery further complicates the position of meaningful connection on topics such as gender equality, substance abuse, social exclusion, bullying and sexual health and abuse. The exploration of imagery and visual meaning co-created with the youth could assist designers when designing visual communication aimed at this audience.

1.3.2 Research objectives

The main objective of this research was to explore what types of visual communication has meaning in order to enable communication designers to connect with the South African youth market.

1.3.2.1 Subsidiary objectives

- To gather information about the youth's perception with regard to visual communication aimed at them.
- To examine co-designed visual examples through thematic analysis in order to investigate visual meaning constructs
- To promote relevant research findings to assist with understanding the South African youth market better
- To stimulate further research to seek relevant ways to connect with target audiences

1.3.3 Research questions

Given the lack of research on current visual communication strategies that the youth market find meaningful and appealing, this study aimed to produce a body of visual examples which were co-created with the youth. Insights that might assist with

creating a meaningful narrative were explored and will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. With this in mind, the following research questions were proposed:

1.3.3.1 Main research question

What does meaningful visual communication look like to the South African youth market?

1.3.3.2 Subsidiary research questions

- What is the group's current relationship with visual communication and what type of visual communication is of interest?
- When youth are actively included in the creative process, are there any recurring themes present in the resulting body of work?
- How does the youth market define meaningful visual communication?
- How does co-design provide visual communicators with youth market insights?

1.4 ONTOLOGICAL FRAMING

The way something is understood or interpreted through the senses informs our understanding of our reality (Sternberg, 2009:75). The investigation and understanding of a person's knowledge constructs through the social perception of reality focuses on the interpretation of meaning of their social world (Kvale, 1996:41).

The word 'meaning', according to Leontiev (2007:1) transcends the linguistic context as it "... corresponds to objective, subjective, and intersubjective or 'conversational' reality; and, it relates to consciousness, the unconscious, behaviour, personality, as well as interpersonal processes." It is therefore important for authors to describe and discuss meaning on various levels (Carlsen, 1988; Kreitler and Kreitler, 1972). The context of meaning in this study looks to the field of psychology for assistance. Leontiev (2007:4) argues that as humans "We find meaning first of all through our mind" as "we perceive, imagine, or recollect things not as exact projections, but as having some personal meaning for us, a meaning that manifests itself through image transformations." He further mentions that one cannot exclude the outer world from meaning and that inner 'meanings' only take shape if they transcend into 'personal-world relationships' (Leontiev, 2007:4). In order to therefore "discover the meaning of

an action, an object, or an event for any person (including ourselves), we must investigate the person's lifeworld, disclosing the links between the given action, object or event, and everything that is important for him/her in the world" (Leontiev, 2007:5). The exploration of visual and meaning within the youth therefore finds most value when 'reality' and meaning is viewed and considered through the participants' own life lens.

The study is therefore rooted in the interpretivist approach where the researcher aimed to discover shared meaning constructs of individuals through interactive participation and cooperation (Delpont, De Vos, Strydom and Fouche, 2011:309).

The study addressed researcher bias by co-developing visual communication with participants. These were analysed to establish shared patterns of meaning noted in the co-developed designs. It is important to note, however, that an element of researcher subjectivity was unavoidable due to the examination and interpretation of another's visualisation of meaning concepts (Mehra, 2002:1-19). In order to reflect on the impact of the researcher's own individual biases and values, emerging patterns were discussed with the project's supervisors, and where needed, with the original group of youth participants to gain further insights.

It is hoped that the knowledge gained from the interpretation of the sample group's visualisation designs through thematic analysis will inform valuable insights into meaning constructs with regard to visual communication within this particular South African youth group.

1.4.1 The role of the design researcher: Approach and practice

To design means 'to plan something for a specific role or purpose' and centres on the ways in which a designer "addresses practical and theoretical problems through a broad range of media, materials and processes" (Noble and Bestly, 2016:10). The design thinking approach is iterative in nature and encompasses rigorous models of exploration, reflection and testing that inform all aspects of the designer's role. (Noble and Bestly, 2016:10, 21)

The design researcher has skills grounded in design thinking practices aimed at problem-solving (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:14, Bennet, 2006:18) which have the potential to assist the design researcher when informing or designing research practices. The context of the designer has also broadened to include, social, cultural and economic responsibilities and, together with the development of meaning in visual and verbal languages, increased the need for exploration and expanded the scope of research in design (Noble and Bestly, 2016:18). It is important for the design researcher to broaden their own scope and look to a variety of methodologies to inform research practices.

Noble and Bestly (2016:61) mention that the designer typically uses 3 areas to interrogate:

- The context of the project (field of study)
- The focus of the project (research question)
- Research methodology

This study employed a similar strategy. The context of the youth was found to have most value when viewed through their own lens. A co-design methodology was used to inquire into issues surrounding the youth and visual communication design. The focus of the research: 'What does meaningful visual communication look like to the South African youth audience', aimed to establish meaning-making constructs and therefore found value in qualitative, participatory methodologies.

The approach adopted by the design researcher was to make use of collaborative methods such as a 'design inquiry' tool where the audience becomes a "partner in the design of new knowledge" (Bennet, 2006:18) and which involve the analysis of designed artefacts to determine a range of meanings.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study contributes to visual communication design by enabling designers to understand and connect with the South African youth audience more meaningfully in an oversaturated visual culture. It does so by exploring what types of visual have meaning through a co-design process. Patterns detected through the thematic

analysis provide valuable insights regarding visual connection and meaning and have the potential to enable designers to connect with the South African youth audience.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Co-design: Collaborative meaning making

The co-design approach enables the participant to become a part of the meaning-making process as it “involves the people who are likely to be impacted by or will benefit from the process and/or the outcome, either directly or indirectly” (NCOSS, 2017:2). By actively including the audience under investigation in the research process, the researcher aimed to address researcher bias and enhance understanding through establishing shared patterns of meaning in the visual designs. The relevance, implication and methodology of the co-design process in this study will be discussed further in Chapter 2: Literature review and Chapter 3: Research methodology.

1.6.2 Case study method: An introduction

It is not always possible to include a broad audience to participate in one study, especially when the research is qualitative by nature and concerned with a detailed understanding of insights and perceptions of individuals. Employing a case study methodology allows a researcher to complete an in-depth exploration of a singular situation and can therefore be done on a more manageable, smaller scale (Delport et al, 2011:320; Rule and Vaughn, 2011:3).

The data collection via case study is qualitative and focuses on understanding an example rather than making general assumptions of a sample based on surveys (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006:93). A case study does not claim to have the complete answer to the question, but it has the ability to provide insights into a specific phenomenon and can be used as the foundation for further investigation and study thereby contributing to the greater body of knowledge (Explorable, 2018). The characteristics of a case study spoke directly to the aims and objectives of this research project. This study therefore utilised a case study methodology to investigate meaning constructs within a singular social unit.

The example consisted of graduate year students in Creative Brand Communication and Graphic Design at two design colleges in Cape Town who form part of the youth demographic between 18-24 years. This example allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand information and look for patterns in the participants' designs and social schemas (Delpont et al, 2011:320).

This case study examined meaning constructs within a group of graduate visual communication students in order to answer the research question: 'What does meaningful visual communication look like to the South African youth audience'. The case study did so by asking participants to partake in a co-design process which produced data that was analysed in order to construct patterns and insights.

1.6.3 Delineation of the research

The research was limited to the South African context as the sample group were South African youths. The sample group was limited to 18-24 year old tertiary education students in Creative Brand Communication and Graphic Design from Cape Town surrounds due to time and resources. The researcher acknowledges that each district in South Africa has its own unique challenges that might impact the study. It is therefore important to note that generalisations regarding South African youth will not be made.

Although this study was limited to the investigation of visual meaning constructs within the South African youth audience, it acknowledges the relevance and potential of co-design practices as a means to inform and gather insights across all generational and global audiences.

1.7 ETHICS IN DESIGN RESEARCH: AN INTRODUCTION

Ethics within a research context can be defined as "a method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues" as it "prohibits against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data to promote the truth and minimise error" (ESRC, 2018; Resnick, 2015). Resnick (2015)

furthermore emphasises the importance of adhering to an ethical code when researching as;

- “ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness;
- norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth and avoidance of error;
- ethics ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public;
- ethical norms in research also help to build public support for research;
- ethics promote a variety of other important moral and social values;
- such as social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law and public health and safety”.

The practical implications of the above-mentioned ethical code will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.8 THESIS STRUCTURE

The summary of the study:

- Chapter 1 introduces the research study and outlines the research problem, questions and methodology as well as the significance and limitations of the research
- Chapter 2 reviews existing literature relating to the youth audience and visual communication
- Chapter 3 describes the research process and procedures
- Chapter 4 documents the data collection process and findings
- Chapter 5 discusses the emerging themes and insights
- Chapter 6 revisits the research questions to establish if the research objectives have been accomplished

1.9 SUMMARY

It is challenging for communication designers to develop visual communication that will resonate with the mobile-connected, youth audience due to constant access (desired and undesired) of visual and communication messages.

A case study, grounded in collaborative methodology, focused on shared meaning constructs within a South African youth group and was examined through an interpretivist approach to establish what meaningful visual communication looks like to the South African youth audience. The youth group consisted of tertiary students who were residing in Cape Town, 18 - 27 years of age and specialising in visual communication. Data was gathered through the implementation of two phases: The first phase allowed for data to be collected through a collaborative, visualisation process (co-design) from two separate workshops. These design pieces were analysed through thematic analysis to establish patterns and themes. The second phase allowed the researcher to discuss the patterns and themes with a small group which assisted the researcher with further insights and perceptions.

The research aimed to assist designers by investigating the youth group's relationship with visual meaning. To understand what has meaning to a particular youth group and how that meaning is visualised, will allow for deeper insight into what has potential to connect visually. Patterns detected provided valuable insights regarding imagery and meaning-making and these will act as potential aids to communication designers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The research topic involved various fields of research which were integrated to address the research question: 'What does meaningful visual communication look like to the South African youth market?' Topics explored included; demographic and psychological factors and challenges facing the youth as well as youth interaction with social media platforms, visual communication and meaning constructs. This was done by looking to the conceptual framework of co-creation as a method of meaning-making.

2.2 GENERATIONAL ATTRIBUTES: GEN Y&Z

2.2.1 The context of the youth

Nearly half of African adults and 36% of all adults globally are between the ages of 20-34 (Duffy et al, 2017:27). These statistics, combined with the challenges surrounding this group, have led to an abundance of research in recent years to determine and understand the characteristics, behaviour and motivation of generations Y and Z.

The youth generation have grown up in a visually excessive, digitally orientated context where the economic and technological factors that surround them play a very important part in shaping this particular group (Duffy et al, 2017:10; Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:2).

Constant technological movement as well as unstable economic and societal changes globally have contributed to the youth having difficulty accessing jobs and having financial challenges not faced by previous generations which result in the youth spending on average more time 'figuring it out' thereby prompting delayed adulthood (Duffy et al, 2017:11; Collins, 2016; McCann, 2016).

Globalisation stimulates intercultural exchange through the "multidirectional

flow of goods, people, and ideas" across vast distances which allows non-related cultures to adopt practices and values of other cultures, while still retaining their own inherit culture (Cole, 2018; Jensen, Arnett, and McKenzie, 2011:285). This process is known as remote acculturation (Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012, 2015; Arnett and McKenzie, 2011:285). Research on the effects of remote acculturation on the South African youth points out that the youth audience is particularly sensitive to acculturation which can lead to fantasy identity construction with regard to identity development in youth (Ferguson and Adams, 2015:2; Schlegel, 2001:77). Access to the internet, technology-mediated communication forms and global popular culture have had a profound impact on multilingual identities in South Africa as they redefine the role and status of multilingualism, identities and practices within the globalised new economy (Williams, 2016; Heller, 2011). Easy access to global media, dissolving cultural borders and product imports inform self-exploration and introduce new possibilities which could impact negatively if ideals are not attainable locally (Klaer and Gruhn, 2016). It is important to ensure that visual communication aligns with expectation so as not to add to the 'instability' experienced during this challenging time of self-discovery.

2.2.2 An introduction to the youth of South Africa

The South African context is shaped by a unique set of cultural, economic, historical and social challenges that constantly influence family functioning, community attributes and youth development (Goodrum, Armistead, Tully, Cook and Skinner, 2017). In 2017, unemployment was reported at 27.7% and economic performance was 5% below average with the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) placed at 0.7% (StatsSA, 2017). High unemployment rates and poor economic performance meant that in 2014, 20.2% or approximately 23 million people of the South African population lived under the poverty line (StatsSA, 2014). South Africa is falling behind in terms of socio-economic development and transformation and this is impacting the youth directly with 3.2 million unemployed youths between the ages of 15 to 35. These statistics are quite unsettling considering that the youth group accounts for 72% of all unemployed and approximately 7.5 million young people are not in any form of employment, education or training (Masipa 2018:4; Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2017:1). The high drop-out rate from formal schooling is another concern

as a combination of poverty and lack of educational accomplishment play an important role with regard to economic inequality (Chetty, 2015:55).

The school system is failing the youth (especially in rural areas) as poor-quality public education systems do not prepare them properly for higher education. Poor-quality teaching, overcrowding and extremely “low levels of teacher motivation and dedication” are contributing to the youth’s lack of empowerment (Chetty, 2014:96). Of the 532 860 learners who wrote the National Senior Certificate in 2014, only 28.3% qualified for entry into a bachelor’s degree (Department of Basic Education, 2016:22). In Cape Town, some learners even join local gangs simply to pass safely through the school gates (Pinnock, 2016:209).

The youth are constantly navigating their way within communities, and community support and structure, or lack thereof, plays a role in shaping the youth (Pinnock, 2016:151; Wolynn, 2016:6). Youth in South Africa have a higher exposure to trauma and violence than in many other countries and children account for 40% of sexual assault victims (Du Plessis, Kaminer, Hardy and Benjamin, 2015; Botha, 2014:140). A recent study on urban youth in South Africa revealed that a lack of safety at home and in their communities is a daily stressor for the youth and the perceived inability of law enforcement agencies to keep the community safe is not reassuring (Mosavel, Ahmed, Ports and Simon, 2015:249).

The role of poverty, family environment and exposure to violence and crime contributes to a culture of antisocial and aggressive behaviour among adolescents in South Africa (Waller, Gardner and Cluver, 2014; Ramsoomar and Morojele, 2012). High substance use among South African youth is also an increasing concern. The Soul City Institute literature review on drug abuse in South Africa shows that youth drug usage is twice as high as the global norm (Soulcity, 2018:4; World Health Organisation, 2014). The review further states that the “...average age of drug dependency in South Africa is 12 years and decreasing” (2018:8). The abuse of drugs is harmful, medically and socially, and denies young people “... full participation in socio-economic development of the country” as it is linked to depression, crime and violent behaviour (Soulcity, 2018:4, 8; Carney, Myers, Louw,

Lombard, and Flisher, 2013). Such socio-economic conditions foster crime and gang-related activities (Pinnock, 2016:4).

Research on youth in the Western Cape estimates that 15% of school learners live in homes where someone is a member of a gang, and 33.2% (88 731) of the national drug-related crime was recorded in this province (Western Cape Government, 2014:4; Department of Community Safety, 2015:28). The highest level of violence in schools nationally occurs in the Western Cape (Pinnock, 2016:212). For many South African youth, exposure to high levels of daily stressors increases the likelihood of alcohol and drug use and of partaking in unprotected sex (Mosavel et al., 2015:249). South Africa has a very high prevalence of HIV and binge drinking amongst the youth. Risky behaviour makes the youth extremely vulnerable to HIV infection and sexual violence (UNAIDS, 2014; Shisana, Rehle, Simbayi, Zuma, Jooste and Zungu, 2014). A recent study on alcohol availability and sexual health risk and violence indicated that the youth have easy access to alcohol in their communities due to the high density of alcohol outlets, close proximity of such shops to schools and unrestricted entry to alcohol-serving places which contributes to premature exposure and unsafe drinking (Letsela, Weiner, Gafos and Fritz, 2018).

A study on sexual health communication between parents and youth in South Africa noted that many youths are reluctant to discuss matters regarding sex with their caregivers due to a fear of anger or violent reactions (Chappell, 2015; Soon, Kaida, Nkala, Dietrich, Cescon, Gray and Miller, 2013). Initiating a discussion surrounding sexual education is not an easy process for many South African parents who see this kind of discussion as a violation of cultural traditions and norms (Goodnight, Salama, Grim, Anthony, Armistead, Cook, Skinner and Toefy, 2014). Another hindrance for open discussion points to the belief of some parents that these messages only promote sexual behaviour in young people (Chappell, 2015). The role that communication messages can play within this context is therefore of the utmost importance.

The great majority of the South African youth have access to electronic media and communication channels via smartphones and make frequent use of social

networking applications and the internet (Potgieter, 2015; Statista, 2015; The South African Mobile Report, 2014). The examination of meaningful visual communication in a complex, multicultural context such as South Africa should therefore prove valuable for future research, and would assist when communicating crucial information to the youth market.

2.2.3 The characteristics of the youth

'Impatient', 'easily bored', 'distracted', 'fear of missing out' are some buzzwords characterising the youth audience (Pallini et al, 2015). This is not surprising for a generation which has constant access to global information, is always up to date, is negative about online interruption and prefers short visual communication executions (Southgate, 2017; Dawson and Caulkin, 2016). Previous research on youth engagement by VIMN, Sharethrough and Verve, respectively, supports this view by indicating that this generation enjoys media on its own terms and does not have boundaries for time and place as smartphone technology enables the youth to pursue their interests whenever and wherever (Carruthers, 2017; Barley, 2016; Van de Bergh, Alders, Boullart and Van Bijnen, 2014; Letizia and Drew, 2013).

The youth generation is more concerned with 'personal freedoms that lead to broader equality' than collective freedoms (Collins, 2016). The youth furthermore dream of a better world and feel that traditional roles and labelling 'does not make sense' (Pallini et al, 2015). Maintaining the status quo of demographic segmentation and its related stereotypes is seen as irrelevant to the youth who reject normative social strategies in favour of the individual. The youth therefore do not connect with a typecast approach and disregard any form of labelling in favour of personalised, independent-minded and emotionally engaging content (Connors, 2017; Pounders and Mabry-Flynn, 2016:107; Bailey et al, 2013:107).

Due to the youth's intimate understanding of their own reality and experiences, stereotypes are rejected in favour of realistic portrayals of target audiences (Whiteside, 2017). The portrayal of an audience should focus on individuality and inclusivity rather than defining individuals based on demographic expectation. The youth audience seek to be engaged and involved with data in a meaningful manner

and that the communication should be genuine (Klaer and Gruhn, 2017; Inskip, 2016). 'Targeting' and 'segmentation' should therefore make way for the individual by sincerely trying to understand the consumer and focus the communication with authenticity and genuine purpose (Collins, 2017).

The main issue with stereotypes and labels is the generic framing of individuals by feeding cognitive associations for certain groups. Individuals are ignored and categorised into groups to maintain normative expectations of society (Sheehan, 2013:75; Fiske, 2000:299). Stereotypes fail to connect visually and emotionally with reality and the continued use of such imagery in media suggests that the field of visual communication struggles to find alternatives (WARC, 2017; Whiteside, 2017). The examination of meaning constructs and emotion related to visual communication could provide a longer lasting connection with the audience that is not as dependent on technological trends or outdated views on visual strategies, such as stereotypes, in order to engage the youth market.

2.3 THE ROLE AND IMPLICATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE YOUTH

The development of technology has seen the rise of social media as an integrated part of the youth's daily discourse and themes concerning the youth's relationship with media have long been examined in research. Credibility on social media, erotic content, cyberbullying, stereotypes, substance abuse, constant distraction as well as social and gender issues are a few issues that could hinder positive youth engagement on social media platforms (Charteris, Gregory and Masters, 2018:205; Wee, 2017; Chan, 2017:69,117,155; Dobbison, Volkov and Wakefield, 2015:20-28; Nikolayenko, 2015:257; Yaakop, Anuar and Omar, 2013:154; Reichert and Lambiase, 2012:3-6).

Body image concerns in young adult women suggest that the interactive format and visual content exchange features of social media, negative social comparisons, sharing, and peer influenced relations can influence young women's perception of body image (Puglia, 2017:3; Perloff, 2014). Half of the respondents in a study by Credos mentioned that airbrushing to alter a model's looks makes the message unbelievable and reinforces the cycle of 'thin ideals' of feminine beauty portrayed by

media and that they respond more positively to realistic portrayals and are more trusting of brands who do not make use of excessive airbrushing (Fraser and Taylor, 2012). Recent research on the influence of altered, unrealistic, images found that beauty ideals are so deeply rooted in cultural aspiration and construction of self that the labelling of images as altered could increase the desire to attain such ideals (MacCullum and Widdows, 2018). This indicates that the pre-occupation with appearance and body related issues in the media has a negative impact on self-worth, especially in young women (Bryson and Bunker, 2015:355).

Social networking sites also provide ample opportunities for social comparison. Research on self-esteem related to social media shows a correlation between frequent Facebook use and compromised self-esteem, especially concerning upward social comparisons (Gallagher, 2017; Schufreider, 2015; Vogel, Rose, Roberts, and Eckles, 2014:206). Appearance-related comparisons on Instagram mediate the relationship between social media use and body concerns (Hendrickse, 2016). Engagement with social media profiles that are focussed on positive content, such as health and fitness, was associated with 'poorer state self-esteem and relative self-evaluations' and research indicated that users should be mindful of the implications when using these sites (Vogel et al, 2014:206). A further impact of social media on self-esteem is the prevalence of cyberbullying. A study on youths in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, indicated that cyberbullying had strong links to alcohol and drugs abuse, low self-esteem, high levels of absenteeism, poor grades, depression and suicidal thoughts (Ncube and Dube, 2016:313). Another study regarding self-esteem indicated that sites which reference 'the self', such as Facebook, could have a bigger impact on social comparison than sites that reference organisations and public figures, like Twitter (Panger, 2014:2100). The impact of such imagery, content and commentary on an individual's self-esteem could affect the authenticity and transparency of a user's own profile on social media sites.

A recent study by Harris Poll indicated that 69% of the respondents felt that the minority of their peers were 'being themselves' on social media and 57% wished for more authenticity on these platforms and expressed a desire for private spaces where they could express themselves more openly and honestly (WARC, 2016).

Social media sites are often viewed as curated platforms that utilise data to “continuously assemble identities, cultural practices and social spaces in relation to one another” and that the platforms depend on the “curatorial capacities of smartphone users who observe everyday life and register it online” (Carah, 2014). Social media content is therefore dependent on the users and how they make sense of their world. The existence of ‘Finstagram’, a hidden, private Instagram account, where users can be their ‘real selves’ - giving access to only a privileged few - has recently caught media attention (The Guardian, 2017; Connors, 2017). These secret accounts demonstrate the need to showcase and engage more naturally on social media without the pressure to deliver beautifully curated content (Han, 2018; The Guardian, 2017). A recent study on the authenticity claims of social network sites indicates that all social network sites claim to be platforms for authenticity yet these platforms are vulnerable as authenticity is marked by consistency, stability and uniformity, i.e. when a user’s online reality matches their real-world reality (Salisbury and Pooley, 2017:4).

Consumer responses to authentic, branded social media content are not yet well understood and this suggests further research is needed to establish what produces an authentic social media presence (Coker, Howie, Syrdal, Vanmeter and Woodroof, 2018). The congruency between a brand’s personality and the personality of its branded social media content means that brands need to be consistent and true to themselves on all platforms to promote authenticity and transparency through their visual communication (Coker et al, 2018; Moulard, Raggio and Folse, 2016:421).

A recent study on social media photography mentions that establishing interpersonal meaning in social media images is dependent on the subjective nature of the image as well as the relationship between the subject, photographer and viewer that are represented in social media photographs (Zappavigna, 2016). The transmission of such digital images enables a social flexibility that has a significant impact on youth subjectivities where ever-shifting relational identities are negotiated through an online world (Charteris, et al, 2018:205). The relevance of these images to the viewer is therefore crucial when considering meaningful interaction.

2.4 VISUAL COMMUNICATION AIMED AT THE YOUTH

Most prior research on the youth's relationship with visual communication concerns itself with understanding this audience based on demographics, characteristics, behaviour and motivation (Duffy et al, 2017:7). Brands such as Mondelez and Taco Bell place emphasis on understanding media habits and communication style (WARC, 2016), while AB-inBev commissioned research to understand social trends, expectations and brand opinion in order to facilitate consumer/brand dialogues (Klaer and Gruhn, 2016). Microsoft's research found that growing visual platforms and a constant shift in mobile technology assists with the decline in attention in this group (Precourt, 2015).

Kantar Millward Brown (2017:2), in *AdReaction, Gen X, Y and Z*, found that the overwhelming number of channels, videos and influencers hinders communication as they all fight for attention at the same time in the same space which increases distraction. The study also focused on media behaviour, attitudes and responses to advertising in order to establish how to engage this audience. Marketers are constantly challenged by the continued fragmentation of media channels as the vast number of media options available and the fast shift in mobile and video formats creates challenges for creative communication. These new forms of media have increased the focus on online visual and video communication (Morris, 2016:44; Beard and Yang, 2011). The human eye is naturally biased towards visual communication due to the processing speed with which the eye translates visual information (Potter, Wyble, Haggmann and McCourt, 2013). It can thus be hypothesised that posts with images on social media receive more interaction than text-based communication (Ewer, 2017). The Internet has furthermore become a viable alternative to other media channels and for the youth audience, online is the main source of information (Moraru, 2017:1).

The Y and Z generations' relationship with globalised information, social media and digital editing applications contributes to a lack of trust in communication aimed at them (Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:3). The privacy principles and application of social media platforms further allow users to hide behind an online persona which allows for ownership of communication to be nullified (Majewski, 2015).

The youth are constantly connected to visual platforms, exploring authenticity and representation of self and other (Russett and Waldron, 2017:2; Yang and Brown 2016:402). The online and media behaviour of the youth audience is important, but the constant shift in technology makes it nearly impossible to keep up with trends (King, 2018; Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:3). The rapid changes in technology present various creative and strategic challenges for communication designers and a major concern in visual communication is how to engage with the youth generation in a meaningful manner (Goransson and Fagerholm, 2018:46; Connors, 2017; Inskip, 2016).

The integrated approach, proposed by this study, seeks assistance to meet these challenges by looking to co-design to provide a conceptual framework by which to search for meaning in visual communication. This would assist communication designers when designing communication aimed at this distracted audience.

2.5 CO-DESIGN AS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The marketing industry still relies on traditional research approaches as only 44% of qualitative research projects use a creative approach (Schillewaert and Pallini, 2014). Researchers need to implement a variety of creative methods when undertaking research as the context surrounding us is ever-changing and people feeding the change-context are all, in turn, influenced by their own historical and social context (Cross and Warwick-Booth, 2016:8; Winton, 2016:428; Biggs, 2014:1, Buur and Larsen, 2010). The constant shift in context implies that researchers could look to more creative solutions.

Designers could start their research by immersing themselves in the lives of the people with whom they are aiming to connect (Wragg and Barnes, 2016:29; Brown and Wyatt, 2010:31). The experience and engagement of the audience is central to the success of communication design and, even though participants are not considered experts in research or communication design, they are experts with regard to their own understanding and meaning-making and have a very important role to play in the research process (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:11).

Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki (2003) mention that, “Empathic design approaches can initiate thinking processes within individuals in which they try to relate their own experiences in order to understand other people”. The participants of such participatory activities become engaged both personally and emotionally by “reflecting on who they are and who the people are that they are designing for and with” (Mattelmäki, Brandt and Vaajakallio, 2011:79; Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser 2009). Mattelmäki et al (2011:80) further describe such a process as allowing one to: “... to immerse without judging, to make connections through reflecting on users’ experiences in relation to one’s own, and to detach in order to use the increased understanding for design”.

The participatory or co-design approach (see figure 2) speaks of the involvement of the actual target audience in the process as the person who will engage with the design that is developed is an expert in his/her experience (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:12), social circumstances, habits and behaviour, attitudes to risk, values and preferences (Cottam and Leadbeater, 2004). The researcher supports this participatory ‘expert’ by providing tools for ideation in order to generate insights and the design researcher plays a critical role in giving form to these ideas (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:12). Co-design practice furthermore recognises the experiences of the participants as central to the research process (Steen, Manschot and De Koning, 2011).

The co-design process



Figure 2. A diagram of the co-design process as outlined by NCOSS, 2017:2.

The co-design process has predominantly been used in product and service design to inform and guide researchers (Teichmann, Scholl-Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2016; Carlton, 2013; Vernet and Hamdi-Kidar, 2013; Urbick, 2012; Melles, de Vere and Misic, 2011; Ramaswamy and Gouillart 2010). The use of co-design methodology in visual communication strategies aimed at the youth lacks investigation and seeks further research.

2.6 SUMMARY

The economic and technological factors that surround the youth contribute to a variety of challenges not faced by previous generations. Lack of jobs and constant movement globally, technologically and socially result in the youth taking longer to move into adulthood. The access to technology and globalised information has influenced the social and personal dynamic of the youth. Social media still informs the majority of the youth's online experience and expectations around authenticity and realness are central to the youth's experience with communication. The challenging socio-economic context of the South African youth further accentuates the importance of connecting with this audience on crucial topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health, safety and education.

These various contexts surrounding the youth make it very difficult for communication designers to keep up with trends and design communication that will engage the ever-changing youth audience. Communication designers should look for inclusive, creative methodologies when investigating the youth audience as the youth want to be involved in meaningful dialogues concerning them. This will allow for value creation between the youth audience and communication designers/brands/services.

The co-design approach has predominantly been used to inform and shape product design, but the potential of co-design to inform and shape visual communication design needs further investigation.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It was not possible for the entire youth audience of South Africa to participate in one single qualitative study, especially when concerned with an in-depth understanding of meaning constructs in individuals. Once again, it is important to note that the reference to 'meaning' is not implied as a defined context through which the researcher analyses emerging data. Instead each participant was encouraged to share what they felt was meaningful, and their perceptions were observed and documented. The employment of case study methodology allowed the researcher to complete an in-depth exploration of a singular example and could therefore be done on a smaller, more manageable scale.

The qualitative focus of data collection highlighted an understanding of the sample rather than noting general assumptions of a sample based on surveys. The characteristics of case study spoke directly to the aims and objectives of this research project. This study therefore utilised a case study methodology in order to investigate meaning constructs within a singular social unit. The case did so by asking participants to partake in a co-design process which produced data that was analysed in order to construct patterns and insights.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Ontological framing: influence on research practice

It was important for the researcher to explore visual and meaning constructs within the youth by investigating 'reality' and meaning through the participants' own life lens. The researcher aimed to discover shared meaning constructs of individuals by using an interpretive approach rooted in interactive participation and cooperation.

As the study is grounded in gathering the perceptions of the youth, it was critical to review the role of the researcher and any bias which may have influenced the data analysis. It is not possible to remove the researcher from the process so it is difficult to ensure no bias influenced the examination and interpretation of the emerging

visualisations. In order therefore to reflect on the impact of the researcher's own individual biases and values, emerging patterns were discussed with the project's supervisors, and with a small group comprising of volunteers from the original group of youth participants to gain further insights and clarify meaning concepts. Through this reflective process, the emerging themes and discussion could be evaluated by members of the youth community.

3.2.2 Co-design as a tool for exploration

The term co-design seems to be modern, but the concept of participatory practices in research dates back to the 1970's (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:7). Scandinavian countries used the Collective Resource Approach whereby workers were included in developing new systems for the workplace – the workers' own experiences were used as insights for designers and researchers to assist when developing new systems. (Bødker, 1996) In addition, the Research Society in Manchester held a conference in 1971 where papers concerning design participation were discussed (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:7). Since then, co-design or participatory methods have been a familiar face in (especially product) research (Emmanouil, 2015, Steen, Manschot and De Koning, 2011; Melles, et al, 2011; Von Hippel, 2005; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Tseng and Pillar, 2003).

The interactive, participatory approach of co-design was used to develop visual communication pieces designed by the youth, for the youth. The co-design practice finds value in the idea of a target audience as the expert of their own experience (Sleeswijk Visser, Stappers, van der Lugt and Sanders, 2005) and participants should be supplied with appropriate tools to express themselves. According to Sanders and Stappers (2008:14), the researcher takes on the role of facilitator by offering a relevant experience which will facilitate creativity.

Participation of this nature was chosen as the researcher believed in the conceptual framework of co-design and wanted to establish if the co-design process was in fact able to produce relevant data in relation to this particular audience. These co-designed artefacts produced important data which was analysed to establish shared patterns of meaning.

3.2.3 Case study: Introduction to visual communication students

Given the difficulty the communication industry faces to develop communication for the youth audience, the initial focus was to discuss visual communication issues with current visual communication students. These students will be required to develop a variety of communication strategies as they enter the industry in the coming year and it was important to discuss these challenges with the communicators of the future. To understand the challenges within the field, the researcher looked to individuals who carry insight into the industry as well as the audience in question. These design students are exposed to numerous communication challenges and critical thinking in order to aid design when developing communication. The participants therefore have the knowledge and skills to visualise designs required for data collection. The social unit consisted of graduate year Creative Brand Communication and Graphic Design students at two tertiary design institutions in Cape Town. All participants formed part of the youth demographic between 18-27 years. To have the students design for themselves, by themselves, allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand information and look for patterns in the participants' designs and social schemas (Delpont et al, 2011:320).

This case study examined meaning constructs in two phases of participation (see figure 3) in an effort to:

- gather information regarding the youth's perception of visual communication and messages aimed at them;
- explore the types of visual communication which have meaning to the youth;
- examine visual examples produced by the students through thematic analysis.

In addition to the examining of self-produced visual communication, the study also explored if a co-design methodology is able to provide visual communicators with youth market insights.

Case study: Exploration of visual meaning through co-design

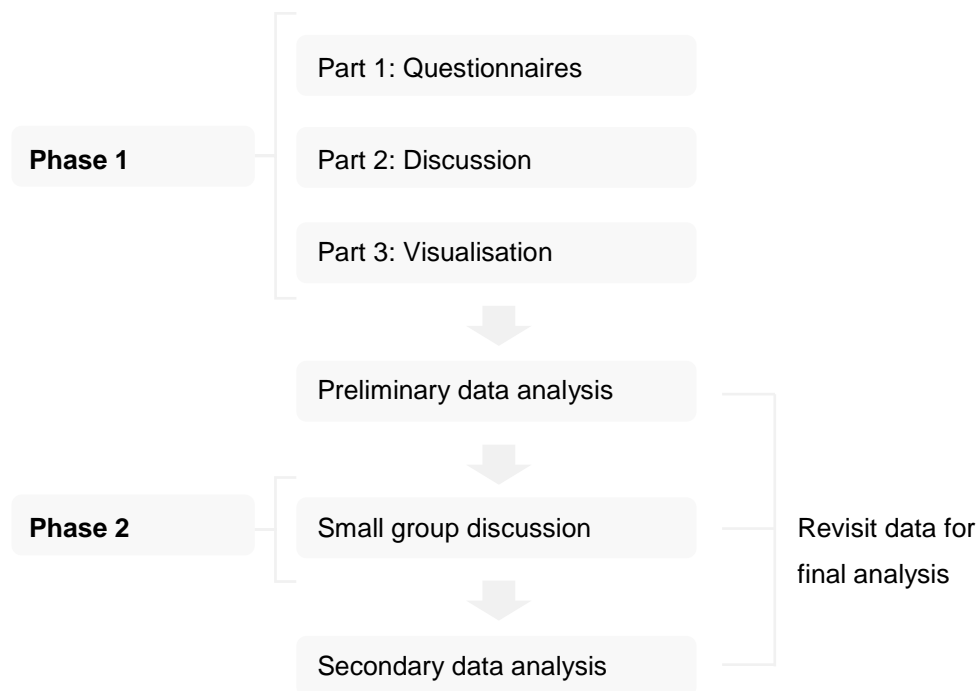


Figure 3. Basic outline of the case study: Exploration of visual meaning through co-design

The multi-cultural co-design research team consisted of a visual communication lecturer (researcher) and 20 visual communication students all residing in Cape Town, South Africa. The researcher recognises that this particular case does not represent all youths in South Africa, and that this study could be replicated with a variety of groups not studying visual communication as all individuals are faced with visual communication every day. The researcher engaged with visual communication students in order to establish a foundational case. In order to investigate a more generalised view on the perception of visual communication, as experienced by youth, it is proposed that the study is conducted with various youth groups in future.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher embarked on a two-phased data collection effort to gather information on the youth's perception of visual communication and visual meaning (see table 3 below).

Table 3. Basic outline of the data capturing methodology

Phase 1	Activity	Participant action	Environment	Time	Researcher's action
	Part1: Questionnaires	Group complete questionnaires	Group	40 min	Observation. Transcribing notes and data will be mapped to gain overall understanding of the individuals and the group.
	Part 2: Discussion	Group discusses a topic of concern to use in their visualisation session	Group	30 min	
	Part 3: Visualisation	Each individual in the group designs a communication piece based on the topic decided on in part 2 for themselves by themselves (co-design)	Group	1 hr	
Phase 2	Small group discussion	The group discusses the emerging topics to clarify and inform	Small group	2 hrs	Transcribing recording and data will be visually mapped to gain overall understanding of the feedback of the group.

3.3.1 Phase 1: Co-design workshops

Phase 1 focused on exploring the youth's feelings and perception of visual communication by asking the following research questions:

- RQ1: What is the group's current relationship with visual communication and what type of visual communication is of interest?
- RQ3: When youth are actively included in the creative process, are there any recurring themes present in the resulting body of work?

The data was obtained through qualitative methods from two separate workshops: Workshop 1 (hosted with 10, number of students) and Workshop 2 (hosted with 11, number of students) at the students' educational studios at their respective campuses. The classroom studios allowed for a relaxed, familiar environment and students could choose their own workstations. Students were welcomed and the

researcher introduced the group to the study. The research background, aim and process of the participation session were explained. Students were also informed that they were free to participate and free to end participation at any given time during the session. The researcher allowed for informal questions throughout the entire process.

Each participant was given a consent form, attached to the questionnaire. The consent form further explained the participant's role within the co-design process and stressed their rights as voluntary participants. Informed consent was not considered as a mere administrative requirement - the process of obtaining informed consent focused on a discussion surrounding the study by ensuring that all participants had a clear understanding of the task and how the emerging data would be used.

The co-design workshops took place over 2 hours and consisted of three distinct parts to gain a deeper understanding of Generation Y and Z's feelings and opinions on visual communication by establishing:

- How they feel about visual communication;
- How they use media;
- What they consider to be positive and negative aspects of visual communication;
- What experiences they have had with imagery.

Part 1: Questionnaires. Duration 40min

A questionnaire was given to each participant in the group to gain information about the participant and their views on visual communication aimed at the youth market. This allowed the participants to become familiar with the topic and researcher. The questionnaire allowed the researcher to map demographics and collect data based on a set of pre-determined questions relating to visual communication. The questionnaires also provided insights to inform and guide the small group discussion in phase 2. The questionnaires were collected and the session progressed to part 2.

Part 2: Discussion session. Duration 30min

The background to the research problem in Chapter 1 mentioned that the youth are faced with unique challenges and communication designers need to be able to communicate to the youth audience on such matters. The researcher focused on getting a deeper understanding of this youth group's challenges by establishing:

- What social issues currently affect them in South Africa?

It was important for the researcher to understand the context of this particular case as it allowed for a communication topic to emerge which was used in the visualisation session. The topics were highlighted solely by the students and the researcher did not prime the students on or suggest any existing topics. The topics were written on a white board and discussed in the group. The group chose the one topic they felt strongest about: 'The demands of social media'. The students were required to design a communication piece that expressed their feelings on the chosen topic.

Part 3: Visualisation. Duration 1 hour

The researcher focused on the active involvement of the youth in the creative process in order to establish:

- If there were any recurring themes present in the resulting body of work.

The students were given A3 sized paper, pencils, pens, erasers and sharpeners to assist with the creation of designs. Digitised designs were not necessary as the researcher was not concerned with the craft of the design, but the underlying meaning of the visual itself. As mentioned in part 2, the students were required to visualise a communication message by designing a poster/print by themselves, for themselves, on the topic of 'The demands of social media'. Students who felt unsure about their drawing technique were put at ease by the researcher emphasising that it was the message and concept that was important, not the quality of the visualisation. The students had +/- 1 hour to complete their designs. The designs were collected and

placed in a folder and the students were thanked for their time and participation.

A preliminary analysis of the questionnaires and designs revealed additional questions that needed clarification. A small group discussion was proposed to assist with this.

3.3.2 Phase 2: Small group discussion

Phase 2 focused on getting a deeper understanding of the data generated by the questionnaires and designs by trying to establish:

- How they felt about the emerging topics;
- How they interpreted the emerging topics;
- How they felt about themselves as an audience;
- How they define meaningful visual communication (RQ 2).

An informal, in-depth group discussion took place with 5 participants after the preliminary thematic analysis in order to clarify and discuss some emerging themes from the questionnaires and designs. An open invitation, to recruit roughly 5 students, was given to the students who participated in the co-design session to meet the researcher to discuss questions and emerging themes. The purpose of the discussion session was explained in detail and the students were informed that they were free to exit the session at any given time. The session lasted for 2 hours and 14 minutes and was recorded (the recordings were stored on a password protected device). Set questions compiled from the preliminary data analysis were discussed and, in the spirit of qualitative research, the researcher also allowed for the group members to discuss the topics freely among themselves (Delpont et al, 2011:322). Some answers led to additional questions and insights. The students were thanked for their time and participation. The discussion was transcribed by the researcher and the audio clip and transcription are kept on a password protected computer.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This study aimed to establish a better understanding of what types of visuals have meaning for a youth audience. The gathered visual material has the potential to

represent complex layers of personal meaning and the data analysis process most suited was thematic analysis, which is an established method of analysis for qualitative data.

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

The main concern of thematic analysis was to identify patterns, connections and important themes relating to the research questions in data that had not been predetermined in advance. The analysis made use of the analytical process proposed by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003:2-8) and included a critical exploration of data, through predefined steps. These steps include:

1) Understanding the context

The incorporation of the co-design approach allowed the researcher to gain insights through the participation and cooperation of the participants.

2) Understanding the data

To make sense of the data, the researcher immersed herself in the data by revisiting the visual designs several times. To further understand the data, a small group discussion was held to clarify some topics and discuss emerging themes. The small group discussion was transcribed and the data revisited several times again.

3) Focus of analysis

Several approaches were combined to assist with the focus of the analysis. Firstly, topics were noted on each individual's data (Questionnaire and design). These topics were then reviewed within the context of each group and lastly in the case as a whole. The questionnaire analysis focused on how each individual and group responded to each question and was documented by topic. The design piece analysis focused on emerging topics found in each piece and overlapping topics were noted and documented. The topics were then examined in the context of 'meaningful' visual communication (see key goals below). The discussion group's analysis focused on clarifying various

topics from the questionnaires and designs, and assisted with establishing a deeper understanding.

The relevance of the topics was measured against the main research question. Five key goals supporting the research questions and aims were identified to direct the focus of the analysis:

- Understand the group's current relationship with visual communication
 - Data from the questionnaires and small group discussion informed how the participants felt about visual communication aimed at them.
- Understand what type of visual communication is of interest to this group
 - Data from the questionnaires, designs and small group discussion revealed what types of visual communication is of interest to this group.
- Understand how members of this group define themselves as an audience
 - Data from the questionnaires, designs and small group discussion informed the researcher of various themes surrounding this audience.
- Understand the group's definition of meaningful visual communication
 - Data from the designs and small group discussion revealed insights relating to meaningful visual communication.
- Understand what meaningful visual communication looks like to this youth group
 - Data from the designs and small group discussion revealed several themes surrounding meaningful communication.

The combination of approaches allowed the researcher to explore and identify themes from various angles while keeping the purpose of meaningful communication at the centre of exploration.

4) Categorise information

The data was categorised by workshop, individual and topic. Each category was coded as follows:

- Workshop (W1 – Workshop 1)
- Individual (example: W101, W202)
- Topic (example: RE – Realness; AU - Authentic)

The themes were coded and mapped to establish interconnected themes which informed the research questions. These interconnected themes served as subcategories within a broader theme. The goals directing the focus of the analysis also assisted with the categorisation of the themes. The iterative process allowed for initial themes and categories to evolve and adjust and for new categories to emerge throughout the data analysis process.

5) Identify patterns and connections

The coded themes revealed interconnected themes through a mapping process and the data was assembled in three distinct categories of understanding with various foundational topics.

6) Interpretation

The interpretation explained the findings through highlighting the important themes and connections.

3.4.2 Bias and limitations

Researcher bias was addressed by utilising the co-design methodology as the main method of data sourcing. Enabling the target audience to be directly involved in the data generation processes gave the researcher first-hand insights. The researcher also encouraged the participants to discuss and choose their own topic to use when developing communication designs, in part 3 of the process, as they were the ones directly affected by the issues. The communication design pieces were open for interpretation by the participants – the researcher did not want to be influenced or distracted by beautifully crafted layouts and designs and requested that the students

use simple tools such as paper, pencils and pens to express the content visually. This allowed the researcher to focus on the actual content and not, as mentioned, on the craft.

The preliminary analysis revealed emerging themes on which the researcher needed more clarity and understanding. An open invitation was sent to the participants of Phase 1 to join a small group discussion to assist the researcher with understanding further. This also allowed the researcher to get deeper insights from the participants directly and not to rely solely on the researcher's interpretation.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This research examined meaning constructs within a group of graduate Creative Brand Communication and Graphic Design students. The participants were required to take part in a co-design process and design a communication piece that was analysed to establish patterns and gain insight. The research project adhered to all ethical norms and was fundamentally non-threatening and aimed to be transparent throughout the entire process (Babbie, 2007:27). The researcher practised and addressed the following standards according to Resnick (2015):

- “ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness;
- norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth and avoidance of error;
- ethics ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public;
- ethical norms in research also help to build public support for research;
- ethics promote a variety of other important moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights, ... compliance with the law and public health and safety”, as follows:

The research involved young adult participation through questionnaires, discussions and the physical creation of a communication piece. Young adulthood is a time recognised by exploration and frequent change. This could have had some impact on the participants as they are in a state of constant fluctuation due to the sense of exploration that accompanies this youth bracket (age 18-27). This age group does,

however, have the ability to think about themselves, others and their surroundings critically, grasp abstract ideas, think hypothetically and consider various points of view (AMCHP, 2018). The researcher believed that this allowed the participants to be critical and yet open to the research process with the ability to discern whether they felt comfortable to continue with the process or withdraw.

The researcher took the responsibility to be respectful and transparent at all times and explained the research and the co-design process to the participants in detail during both phases and workshops.

The workshop sessions were held in the students' classrooms and they could choose their own workstation. The researcher believes the familiar environment assisted in making the participants feel comfortable and with the redistribution of potential researcher-participant imbalances. Each participant was given an information sheet outlining the purpose and methodology of the study. Contact details of the researcher and supervisor were listed on the sheet should the participant have required additional information or wished to disengage from the study. Research participation was voluntary and the participant was free to withdraw at any time during the study (Rubin and Babbie 2005: 71). The document also contained an individual consent form² required from each participant as well as authorisation³ from each institution which allowed the study to commence on campus (Delpont et al, 2011:117). The researcher applied for ethics clearance⁴ to the Faculty Ethics Committee prior to presenting the study to the University Faculty Research Committee.

A questionnaire⁵ was given to each participant to gain further insight into the participant and their context with regard to visual communication - this provided the researcher with a base for exploration during the study and enabled the researcher to be more considerate with regard to background, context, culture and language (Delpont et al, 2011:186). The participants were not under any obligation to answer

² See appendix 3 for individual consent form

³ See appendix 2 for consent in principle

⁴ See appendix 4 signed ethics certificate

⁵ See appendix 1 for questionnaire

any questions with which they did not feel comfortable.

The discussion session during the process provided necessary insights into which topics proved more considerate to the participants to use for the co-design activity. The researcher acknowledges that, due to the aspect of visual meaning, some sensitive topics might have arisen during the co-design process and could have affected the participants in a negative manner, especially if they themselves had an experience with visual exploitation or exposure. The participants were free to exit the study, without judgement, if they felt too exposed or found the study too distressing. (Delpont et al, 2011:115; Babbie, 2007:27).

The researcher was available during the entire process if any participant had the need to discuss or question the research or process.

All students had access to pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners and paper for their design pieces as the researcher wanted to equip each student fairly so they all had equal opportunity when developing their design pieces. Students who felt unsure about their drawing skills were put at ease by the researcher emphasising that it was the content of the piece that was of interest, not the quality of the visualisation. The researcher believes this allowed them more freedom with the expression of their ideas.

The researcher furthermore respects each designed visual and acknowledges it to be the intellectual property of each individual participant. It was not, and will not be used for promotional or commercial purposes and the original designs will be returned to each participant, if they choose, on completion of the study (Denzin and Giardina, 2016). Each design was documented visually and the documentation of the designed visuals was (and still remains) securely stored on a password protected computer. Participants were informed of the storage practices surrounding their designs. Permission to use studio facilities and recruit participants was obtained from the required institutions and organisations.

The researcher asked the participants, via email, for 5 volunteers to take part in a small, informal group discussion to clarify themes that emerged from the co-design session. The session was held in an office at their college and all participants sat around a table. Again, the researcher believes the familiar, secure environment assisted in making the participants feel comfortable and redistributed potential researcher-participant imbalances. To enhance trust, the researcher explained:

- the purpose and methodology of the discussion session;
- that the participants were free to exit from the discussion at any time;
- the process of the transcription; and
- how the data would be used.

Each student was given a code (D1, D2, D3, D4 and D5) to which they referred when answering a question or giving feedback. This protected the anonymity of the participants and gave the researcher insight into which participant was speaking for data transcription purposes.

The session was recorded on a password protected cell phone and transferred to a password protected computer. The students were welcome to discuss the topics as they saw fit, and the existing relationships they have with each other allowed for them to have an open conversation. The students were never forced to answer questions and they always answered voluntarily. The session lasted 2 hours and 15 minutes due to its free-flowing, conversational nature. The data was transcribed and stored on a password protected computer.

The participants' right to privacy, as mentioned by Silverman (2000:201), was (and is) of utmost importance to the researcher and the study and was therefore addressed as follows:

- Privacy rights were explained on the information sheet as well as during the participation process;
- It was made very clear to the participants that they did not have to answer questions with which they felt uncomfortable;
- Identities of the participants were not included in any transcripts or stored data;
- Each participant was represented by a code to safeguard anonymity; and

- All data was stored on a personal, password protected computer.

The thesis containing all the research will be made available to all the participants to promote accountability and transparency on the part of the researcher.

3.6 SUMMARY

In trying to answer the research question, the researcher employed case study methodology to focus the research on one specific group within the broader South African context. This methodology allowed the researcher to explore a single case in a more manageable manner. The qualitative nature of this case study allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants and their meaning constructs. The implementation of the co-design process gave the researcher the opportunity to engage directly with the students' meaning-making process and to gather insights through viewing meaning through the participants' own lenses. Data collection commenced over two phases. The first phase of data-collection allowed the researcher to gather data through questionnaires and co-designs from two separate workshops which were coded by individual and topic respectively, and analysed to establish patterns and themes. The second phase of the data-collection process allowed the researcher to address researcher bias by clarifying and discussing the patterns and themes with a small group which assisted the researcher with further insights and perceptions of participants.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study reports on the insights and perceptions of participants, regarding what they consider to be meaningful visual communication. Research activities included questionnaires, co-design workshops as well as small group discussion following the workshops. This chapter documents the data gathered through these research engagements. An analysis of the data, and discussion of emerging categories, is presented in Chapter 5.

4.2 PHASE 1: DATA EMERGING FROM WORKSHOPS

The data from two co-design workshops (Figure 4a and 4b) was documented over three steps: Step 1 required the students to complete individual questionnaires, Step 2 consisted of a discussion regarding issues affecting the youth and Step 3 asked the students to visualise communication based on the topic chosen in Step 2. A code/reference number was given to each student. The prefixes W1 and W2 were used to distinguish the workshops and the numbers 01-12 were added randomly to indicate each individual participant. An individual code, for example, is therefore displayed as W101. The coding protocol (Figure 4c) was established after the workshops to refer to each subject and their related data consistently during the data documentation and analysis processes.



Figure 4a. Students completing workshops tasks. Workshop 1. 2018.



Figure 4b. Students completing workshop tasks. Workshop 2. 2018.



**Figure 4c. Coding and sorting process of questionnaires and designs
Workshop 1. Questionnaire. 2018.**

4.2.1 Part 1: Questionnaires

A questionnaire was given to compile demographics (Section 1: All about you) and establish the group’s current thoughts and views on visual communication (Section 2: You and visual).⁶

4.2.1.1 Demographics and personal information

As seen in Table 4a, 9 of the 10 (80%) students in Workshop 1⁷ were English-speaking females between the ages of 20 and 23. In comparison, 7 of 11 students (64%) in Workshop 2⁸ (Table 4b) were English-speaking males between the ages of 21 and 27. Twenty of the 21 students, at the time in question, owned smartphones and all had access to computers and the internet during class time. The students were all active on social media with preferences for Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube.

Table 4a. Demographics. Workshop 1

	Black	1	White	9	Coloured	0	Asian	0	Indian	0		
Sex	Male	1	Female	9	Other	0						
Language	English	10	IsiXhosa	0	Ndebele	0	Afrikaans	5	Shona	0	Undisclosed	0
Age	20	2	21	3	22	3	23	1	24	0	Undisclosed	1
Smartphone	Yes	10	No	0								
Computer	Yes	10	No	0								
Students	After class	10	In class	10								
Social Media	None	0	Facebook	7	Instagram	9	YouTube	4	WhatsApp	10	Other	0

Questionnaire. 2018.

⁶ See appendix 1

⁷ Workshop 1 to be referred to as W1 in the rest of the chapter

⁸ Workshop 2 to be referred to as W2 in the rest of the chapter

Table 4b. Demographics. Workshop 2.

Students	Black	4	White	4	Coloured	4	Asian	0	Indian	0		
Sex	Male	7	Female	4	Other	0						
Language	English	11	IsiXhosa	3	Ndebele	1	Afrikaans	5	Shona	1	Undisclosed	1
Age	21	1	22	3	23	4	24	1	27	2	Undisclosed	1
Smartphone	Yes	10	No	1								
Computer	Yes	11	No	0								
Internet access	After class	8	In class	11								
Social Media	None	1	Facebook	7	Instagram	7	YouTube	4	WhatsApp	8	Other	0

Questionnaire. 2018.

4.2.1.2 Visual communication questions

The questions in this section aimed to establish the personal opinions of each student with regard to visual communication.

Question 1 asked the groups to describe the term ‘visual communication’. Both groups agreed that visual communication was “the communication of a message or idea through images or visuals”. Some students in W2 (202, 203, 204, 205, 209, W212) added, “... and includes typography, colour, images and graphics” to the definition to explain what is meant by visuals.

Students from both groups added additional explanations of visual communication by saying that visual communication:

- “Is created for a specific purpose” (W101)
- “Does not require explanation” (W102)
- “With the intent to stimulate thought” (W105)
- “Communicates an abstract thought clearly in a visual” (W106)
- “Expand people’s minds” (W110)
- “Minimal text and maximized visuals” (W204)
- “Communicating through imagery faster than average reading. Sending a

message quickly using very little text” (W208)

- “Makes information more presentable and understandable” (W212)

When asked how they feel about visual communication the response from participants from both groups was overwhelmingly positive with regard to general visual communication, but less positive about communication aimed at young adults. Seven of the ten students from W1 and half of the students from W2 rated their feelings on visual communication as being ‘very positive’. Three students from W1 and half of students from W2 selected ‘positive.’ In contrast to this, when referring to communication aimed at young adults, 14 of the 21 students in total (70%) indicated that they felt ‘somewhat positive’.

Questions 2 and 3 asked the students to name or describe a positive and negative aspect of visual communication. The tables below summarise the answers given and include direct quotes taken from the students’ submissions. The positive aspects of visual communication, as seen in tables 4g and 4h, vary and misinterpretation is the biggest concern for most students. As many as 13 out of 21 students clearly mentioned the words “misinterpretation or misunderstanding” in their answers.

Table 4c. Positive and negative characteristics of Visual Communication W1

Positive aspect of Visual Communication		Negative aspect of Visual Communication
W101	“It’s a platform for communication on important topics, issues”	“It can be intrusive, offensive and disrespectful at times”
W102	“You can express yourself and use expression to help others”	“An overload of bad content can have a negative look on design”
W103	“It can make people change their behaviour”	“It can be patronising”
W104	“It can be universal, words can’t be.”	“It can be misinterpreted and mean something different to everyone”
W105	“It creates literal or lateral perspectives”	“Context is important to lessen the chance for miscommunication”
W106	“It has the power to convince”	“It has the power to convince”

W107	“It’s a more fun way of communicating (example: beautiful, creative, exciting)”	“It can be misleading and give false hope”
W108	“It’s a great way to get ideas across in a way that gets people interested and emotionally invested”	“When done badly could convey wrong message and upset people. Bombardment leads to immunity and people won’t notice it”
W109	“An image shows feelings more than words”	“People might get the communication and/or visuals wrong”
W110	“It opens you up to think more deeply”	“It can be overwhelming to be aware of everything (background, intentions, purpose, struggle)”

Table 4d. Positive and negative characteristics of Visual Communication W2

Positive aspect of Visual Communication		Negative aspect of Visual Communication
W202	“It can convey many messages with one visual and very few words”	“It can easily be misinterpreted”
W203	“It allows us to communicate with ease”	“It can be misleading”
W204	“It is a faster way to receive information and it’s more memorable”	“If not done well it can be unclear and in turn not serve its purpose”
W205	“The simplification of information through visuals”	“If the communication design is not smart enough to portray the proper message which leads to misunderstanding”
W206	“It is easier to relate to people”	“It could mislead audience or be confusing if visual treatment is not done properly”
W207	“Sometimes things are lost in words, visually it will be represented instead of heard”	“People perceive things differently, so it might not be honest or truthful”
W208	“It gets message through faster, eye catching and sets a tone that cannot be set through normal boring text”	“It can be confusing and misinterpreted and misunderstood”
W209	“It can impact people emotionally and get people to do the right thing (motivation)”	“Sometimes when the message is unclear or people would take the message the wrong way”
W210	“It communicates faster than a body of text”	“Misinterpretations, not everyone will interpret an image the same way”

W211	“It is easily noticed and remembered. It gives instruction to people who may not understand the language”	“It is easy to body shame and insult a person through visual communication”
W212	“It created more understanding and presence in a mass context”	“Sometimes it misleads people, creates confusion”

Workshop 2. Questionnaire. 2018.

The questionnaire further revealed that both groups have similar ideas about the type of visual communication that has a direct impact on them. This included:

- “The cover girls of Sports Illustrated. There’s new focus on fitness, positive and negative as visuals are motivating but also stereotypical and portray unrealistic standards of perfection” (W104)
- “Some communication tries to relate - millennials like authentic, give us something that is not surface value” (W105)
- “Nedbank’s video ad targeted at millennials, it tries too hard to be ‘woke” (W106)
- “Stereotypes of millennials: always on phone, posing for selfies. There’s a lack of segmentation” (W108)
- “Posed, photoshopped, unrealistic lifestyle visuals - we strive for it, yet it is unattainable, false sense of reality - leads to unhappiness. (We aren’t happy)” (W110)
- “Unattainable ideals that create a false sense of reality” (W108)
- “Health or fitness, showing the perfect image” (W207)
- “Visuals that cause me to compare myself to the perfect models displayed (fashion advertising)” (W210)
- “A South African celebrity whose photos were edited to add curves when in fact she does not have curves - this impacted me negatively” (W211)

Negative experiences that resonated with the participants regarding visual communication included:

- “Abusive shares on social media” (W101)

- “Racist and offensive visuals” (W103)
- “Fake shallow posts on Instagram” (W107)
- “Using sex to get attention or sell and bad stereotypes or generalisations” (W108)
- “Explicit posts on Instagram” (W109)
- “Sexualising women” (W110)
- “Any visual/movie with murder or abuse” (W204)
- “Clinical posters illustrating graphic imagery of ill people” (W205)
- “Abusive videos on FB makes me feel awful” (W207)
- “Some visuals sexualise/objectify women too much. Discriminative visuals. Videos where animals are harmed, hurts my heart” (W208)
- “Sad and devastating videos and visuals on FB of animals who are not taken care of - breaks my heart” (W209)
- “High end brands that make people look down on their own bodies by showcasing perfect, photoshopped bodies. Objectifying of women (Burger King ad woman biting into a burger stating it will be mind-blowing)” (W210)

Positive experiences with visual communication include:

- “Videos and visuals that have emotion - emotional wow or have made me laugh. Inspiring visuals” (W103)
- “Visuals that can change your mood in a few seconds” (W104)
- “Something with a narrative that tells a story that makes me think and feel” (W105)
- “Before and After images on Instagram are inspiring” (W107)
- “If a visual makes me feel something” (W108)
- “Images with old people smiling - it is hopeful and inspiring” (W110)
- “Movies that encourage me to do and be better” (W204)
- “Visual for smoking, was an image of a cigarette burning, but within it showed lives, houses, communities burning down, this influenced me to stop” (W206)
- “Some visuals generally make you feel happy. Memes make me laugh. Cat and kitten videos tend to be funny” (W208)
- “Motivational visuals inspire me to do what I want to do (art and travel)” (W209)

- “Oreo and Earth hour ads because they make me feel giddy and happy” (W210)
- “Love life’ campaign where they educate young adults about behaviour and self-respect - very educational and interesting” (W212)

When asked what type of visuals catch their attention the students responded:

- “Animation because I like drawing and photographs because I find them easiest to relate to.” (W104)
- “Video, simple, clean cut images.” (W106)
- “I love images that are aesthetically pleasing.” (W108)
- “Sweet-looking, bubblegum images. Childlike things” (W109)
- “Cartoons, comics, art - I love illustrations and digital art” (W202)
- “Well designed ones” (W203)
- “Photography - candid, tells stories without words and doesn’t limit the viewer on how to perceive the visual. Inspires a mood. Movies that encourage me to be and do better” (W204)
- “Conceptual visuals” (W205)
- “Visuals that relate to problems and issues draw my attention because it is useful design, not just random design. It’s about creating awareness. Social change” (W206)
- “Photographs which tell a story - rich and raw - I like to see what people say in photos without actually speaking. Outdoors, landscape - it’s a feeling of escape or being somewhat hopeful for the future” (W207)
- “Cute kittens - I like cats. Cars - I work on cars in my spare time. Visuals that make you feel happy (laugh, funny) (W208)
- “Illustrative mostly. Artsy visuals, eye-catching wordplay and extravagant images - they are highly unusual and it’s interesting to find the meaning behind them. Motivational visuals that inspire me (art and travel)” (W209)
- “Animated things. That make me feel giddy and happy” (W210)
- “Alcohol ads like Johnny Walker where they make people feel like buying or tasting the product. When I don’t understand the words I look at the visual to try and understand what it is” (W211)

- “Creative illustrations. Photography and typography because they make sense and present something creatively to the masses” (W212)

4.2.2 Part 2: Discussion session

To retain the voice of the young adult participants, it was decided to agree on a communication topic collectively during a discussion session. The discussion session aimed to identify issues the group struggled with and related to. Various issues were raised by participants and these were listed on a whiteboard (Figure 4d). Some issues of concern identified during the session included: lack of empathy, public transport, social life, economic pressure, social media and mental health. Once the topics were noted and discussed, participants were asked to identify the one topic they felt was most relevant to them.

As a result, the students chose the topic: “The Demands of Social Media” as the theme for their visual designs. They noted that they feel very strongly about the demands and impact of social media on their lives and psychology. The same topic was used during Workshop 2 to establish a coherent departure point for the data analysis from both workshops. A quick discussion on the demands of social media was held with the students from W2. The students from W2 had very strong opinions on the topic and agreed with W1 that social media has a major impact on the youth today.

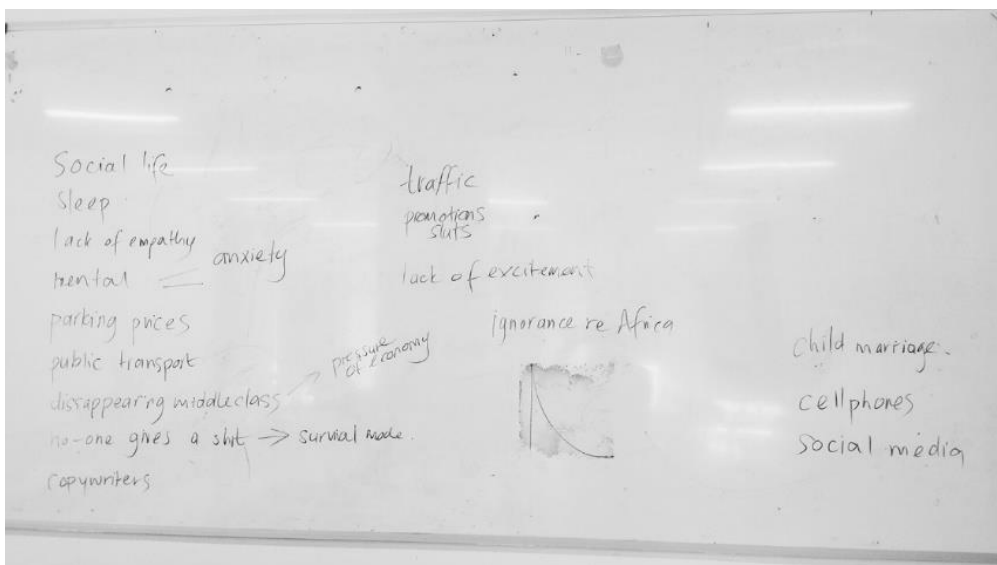


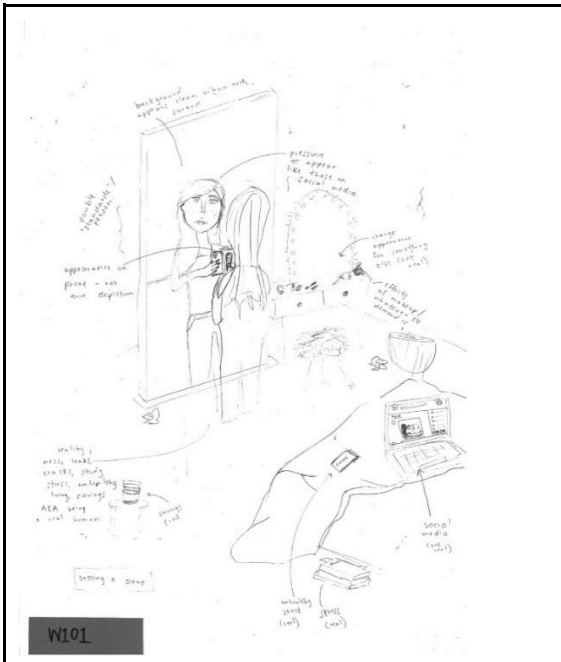
Figure 4d. Photo of whiteboard listing issues of concern to the youth taken on the day of Workshop 1. Workshop 1. Phase 2: Discussion. 2018.

4.2.3 Part 3: Visualisation of the communication message

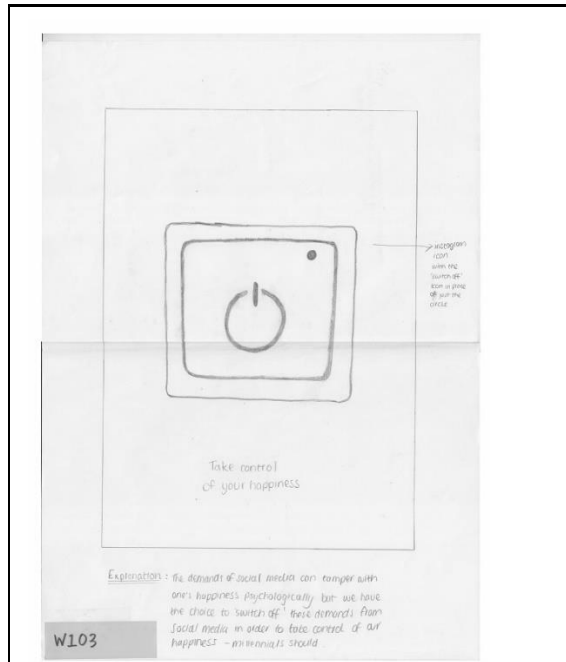
The student task was to visualise a personal piece of communication with the focus on 'The Demands of Social Media'. Each visualisation piece from Workshop 1 and 2 is documented below and accompanied by a written description of the visual.

Participants W211 and W212 did not submit a visualisation piece due to the limited time available.

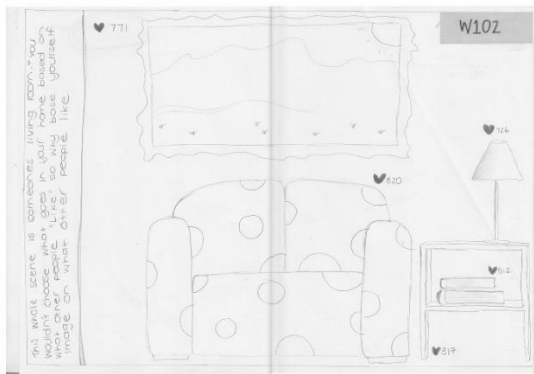
Design pieces and descriptions from workshops 1 and 2



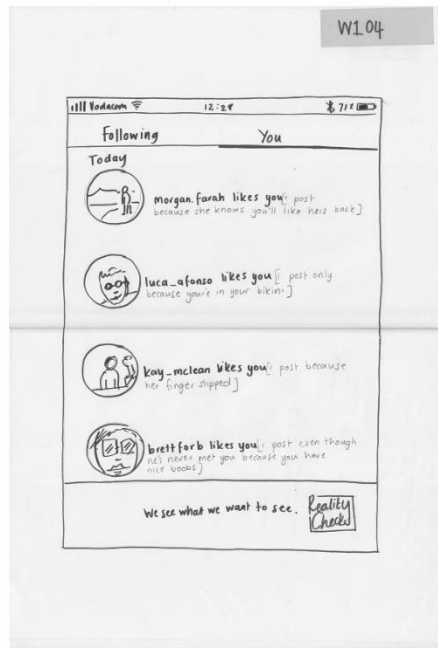
W101 design and description: The student sketched a scene titled: 'Setting a scene'. She filled the A3 page with the accent being the girl in the middle staring at her image in a mirror while holding her phone. The flash on the phone indicates that she is taking photos of herself in the mirror. The image on the phone is supported by the descriptor: "Appearance on phone - not true depiction". In the background is her 'messy' room, filled with trash, an empty savings jar, a chocolate bar (with a descriptor: unhealthy snack), cracks in the wall, water drop dripping into a bucket, an unmade bed with an open laptop with a social media page on the screen and a dressing table with lots of makeup. Descriptors surround the image explaining the context of the chosen elements.



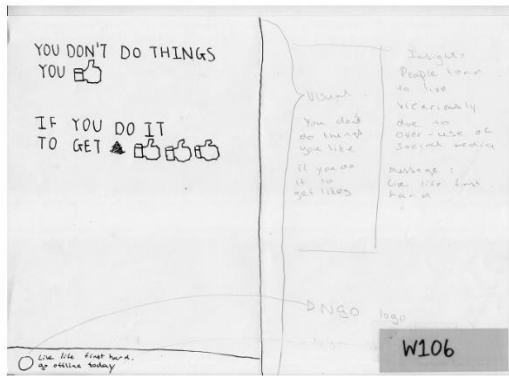
W103 design and description: The student designed an A4 visual on an A3 page. In the centre of the A3 page is an icon of the Instagram App logo, with the photo lens replaced by an on/off switch (digital power button). Two lines of copy below the icon read: "Take control of your happiness". Supporting explanation below A4 mentions: "the demands of social media can tamper with one's happiness psychologically but we have the choice to switch off these demands from social media in order to take control of our happiness - millennials should."



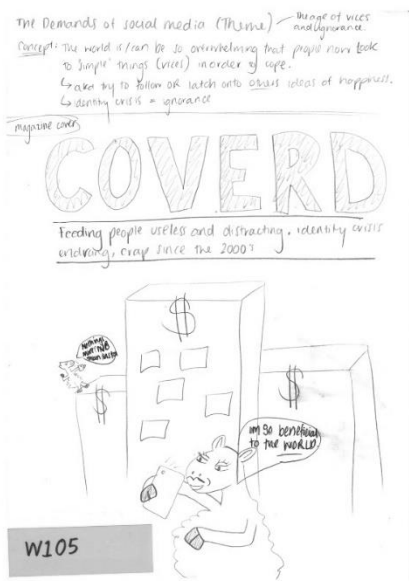
W102 design and description: The student sketched a scene of a living room. The room has a framed painting of a nature scene on the wall. Next to the painting is a social media heart icon (771 hearts). A polka-dotted couch with 820 heart icons sits under the painting. Next to the couch is a side table, 317 loves. The side table hosts two books (512 hearts) and a lamp (726 hearts). The description next to the image reads: "This whole scene is someone's living room. You wouldn't choose what goes in your home based on what other people 'like', so why base yourself (sic) image on what other people like"



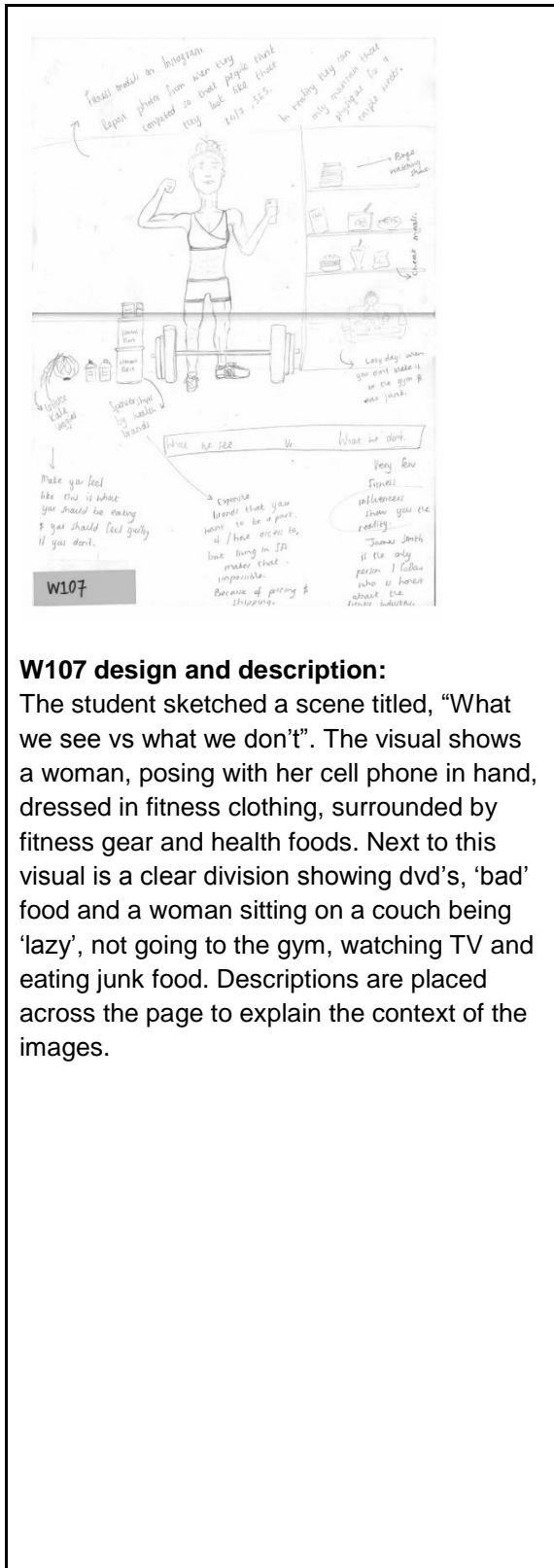
W104 design and description: The student designed a print ad format piece with headline and logo treatment at the bottom. A4 sized visual on an A3 page. The visual is the screen of a smartphone - in the top bar of the screen is a Vodacom carrier logo, wi-fi and carrier connection icons. The middle displays the time and the right hand side shows a Bluetooth and battery icon with 71%. The visual on the screen is that of a social media page feed indicating the communicator is on the "you" page of the app. The title of the feed states: 'Today' and is followed by 4 posts by friends all stating that they 'Like you'. Next to each post written in pencil is the communicator's own intimate thought commenting on each of the 'like you' posts. On the bottom of the page is a bar that separates the smartphone screen from the rest of the visual. Copy reads: "We see what we want to see" and the words "Reality Check" is designed into a type of logo on the right.



W106 design and description: The student 'designed' a print-ad styled piece with logo indication (arrow pointing: NGO logo) and a campaign line and call to action stating: "Live life first hand. Go offline today". The visual is mostly type driven with Facebook icons. It reads: "You don't do things you (insert FB thumbs up icon) if you do it to get (insert three FB thumbs up icons next to each other)". The design fills A5 of an A4 page. The remainder of the page hosts a verbal description of the visual as well as insight description: "People tend to live vicariously due to the overuse of social media" and message: "Live life first hand".

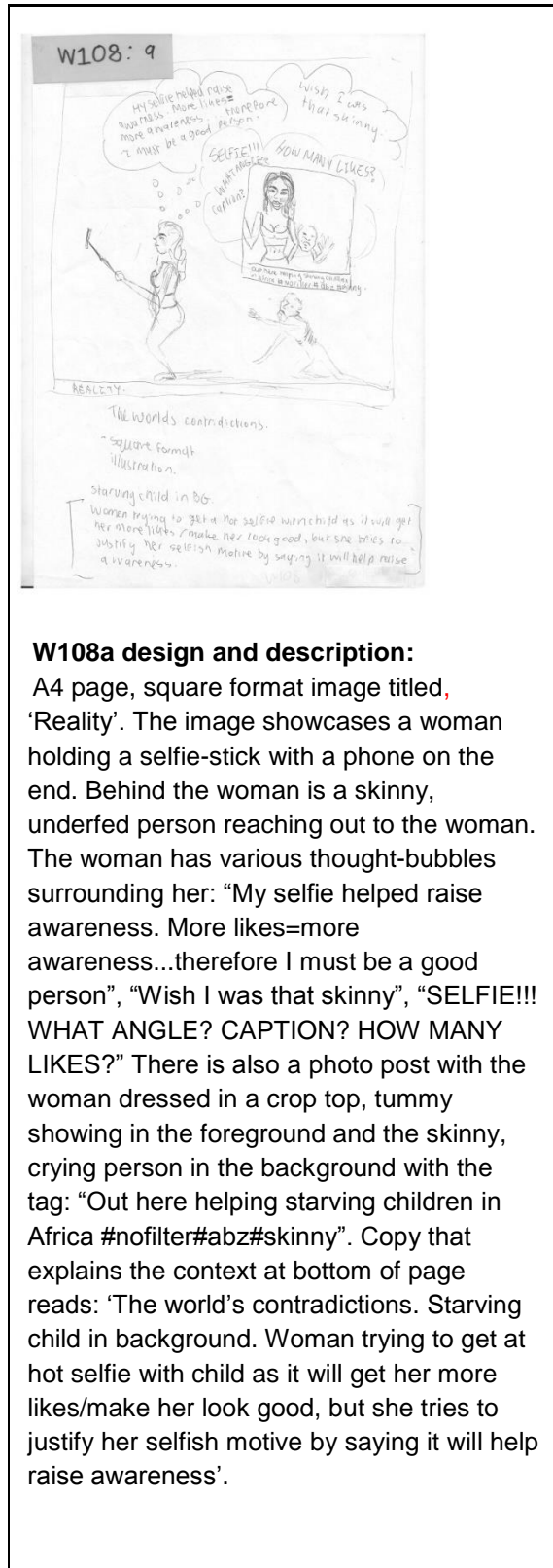


W105 design and description: The student designed a magazine cover. The word *COVERD* is the title/masthead of the magazine cover and the descriptor reads: "Feeding people useless and distracting, identity crisis enduring crap since the 2000's". The cover image has big buildings with dollar signs on them. Two sheep with cell phones are present. Sheep 1 seems to be female (based on lips and mascara eyes), and is looking at the phone with a slight grin - speech bubble reads: "I'm so beneficial to the world". Sheep 2 is in the background on top of a building, smiling looking at the phone in his hands - speech bubble reads: "Nothings more NB than Insta"



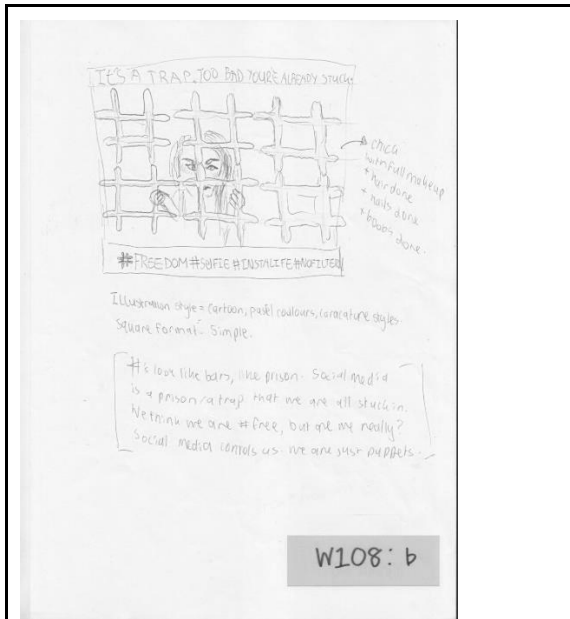
W107 design and description:

The student sketched a scene titled, "What we see vs what we don't". The visual shows a woman, posing with her cell phone in hand, dressed in fitness clothing, surrounded by fitness gear and health foods. Next to this visual is a clear division showing dvd's, 'bad' food and a woman sitting on a couch being 'lazy', not going to the gym, watching TV and eating junk food. Descriptions are placed across the page to explain the context of the images.

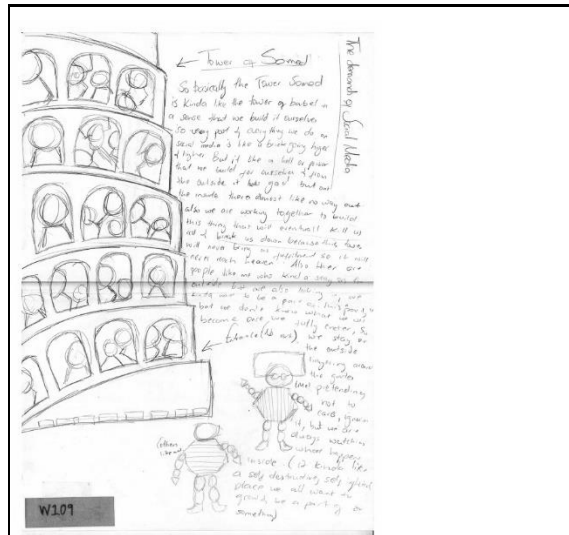


W108a design and description:

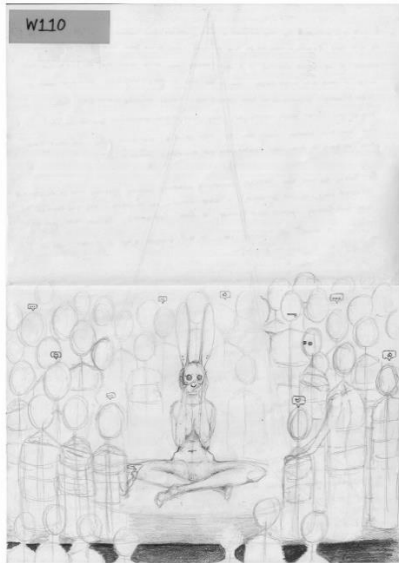
A4 page, square format image titled, 'Reality'. The image showcases a woman holding a selfie-stick with a phone on the end. Behind the woman is a skinny, underfed person reaching out to the woman. The woman has various thought-bubbles surrounding her: "My selfie helped raise awareness. More likes=more awareness...therefore I must be a good person", "Wish I was that skinny", "SELFIE!!! WHAT ANGLE? CAPTION? HOW MANY LIKES?" There is also a photo post with the woman dressed in a crop top, tummy showing in the foreground and the skinny, crying person in the background with the tag: "Out here helping starving children in Africa #nofilter#abz#skinny". Copy that explains the context at bottom of page reads: 'The world's contradictions. Starving child in background. Woman trying to get at hot selfie with child as it will get her more likes/make her look good, but she tries to justify her selfish motive by saying it will help raise awareness'.



W108b design and description: Student sketched a 'square format' (own words) image of a woman behind hashtag bars. Heading reads: "It's a trap. Too bad you're already stuck" Copy at the bottom of jail reads: "#FREEDOM #SELFIE #INSTALIFE #NOFILTER". Description of woman on right reads: "Chica with full make-up + hair done + nails done + boobs done". Description to explain context at bottom of page reads: "Hashtag's look like bars, like prison. Social media is a prison trap that we are all stuck in. we think we are hashtag free, but are we really? Social media controls us. We are just puppets".

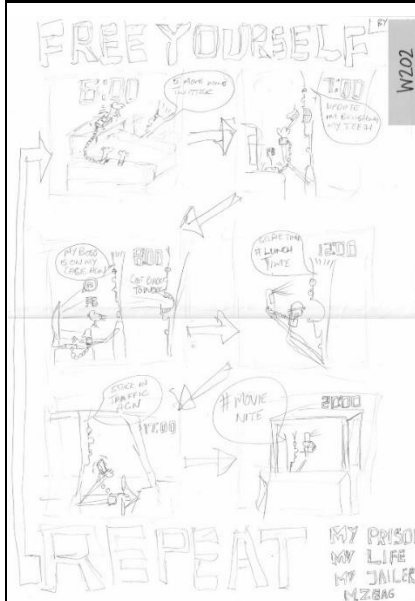


W109 design and description: The student sketched a big tower on the left side of the page with the title: 'Tower of Samed'. The tower hosts lots of people on various levels. An arrow pointing to the bottom right of the tower states: "Entrance (no exit)". Next to the tower are two geometrically shaped individuals. The one titled 'me' is pointing at the tower. The other individual has a descriptor that reads: 'others like me'. On the right hand side of the tower is a lengthy description of the context of the visual. "So basically the Tower of Samed (Social Media) is kinda like the Tower of Babel in a sense that we build it ourselves so every post & everything we do on social media is like a brick going higher and higher. But it like a hell or prison that we build ourselves & from the outside it looks good but on the inside there is almost like no way out. Also we are working together to build this thing that will eventually kill us all & break us down because this tower will never bring us fulfillment so it will never reach heaven. Also there are people like me who kinda stay on the outside but also looking in, we kinda want to be part of this 'party' but we don't know what we will become once we fully enter, so we stay on the outside lingering around the gate pretending not to care, ignoring it, but we are always watching what happens inside. (It's kinda like a self-destructive, self-inflicted place we all want to grow and be a part of or something)" [sic].



W110 design and description: The student designed the piece on an A3 page but only used the bottom half for the image. The top half of the image shows a spotlight shining downwards onto the bottom half of the page which highlights a naked woman sitting on a stage holding a rabbit-like mask onto her face. The woman is surrounded by spectators who are commenting via social media icons hovering above their heads. No copy is on the image. The student wrote an explanation on the back:

“Consider the purpose of social media: Employers, family, friends, strangers, lecturers, acquaintances, superiors, inferiors, authorities, perverts and essentially the world, see you. How can you be yourself in-front of everyone, EVERYONE at once. If you aren’t conforming in an individually interesting way, you don’t exist to god. But god is your family, your employer, friends, everyone. Social media doesn’t love you. It’s indifferent. No one will hear you cry because you do it alone. So smile.” (After note: “I don’t talk about how I feel about this because it is always negatively received. Please don’t see me as an angry angsty miserable atheist because I am really trying”)



W202 design and description:

The student sketched a scene titled: ‘Free yourself’. The student filled the A3 page with various scenes throughout the day. The ‘day’ starts at 6.00 with a person lying in a bed with their phoned chained to their ankle - copy reads: “5 more minutes Twitter”. Arrow points to a new block 7.00 of the person brushing their teeth, cell phone chained to their wrist with ‘FB’ floating above the phone - copy reads: “Update me brushing my teeth”. Arrow points down to a new time, 8.00: with the person sitting in front of a computer, chained to the computer with various social media icons floating in front of the screen. Another person is yelling behind the person ‘get back to work’. Copy reads: “My boss is on my case again”. Arrow points to a new time, 12.00. The person is eating a burger, cell phone chained to wrist - copy reads: “Selfie time hashtag lunchtime. Arrow points down to 17.00. The person is behind a steering wheel, cell phone chained to wrist - copy reads: “Stuck in traffic”. Arrow points to 20.00, the person is busy on the phone, chained to wrist - copy reads: “hashtag movie nite”. Below all visuals is the word: REPEAT in capital letters with an arrow directing to 6.00. In the right hand corner: “My prison. My life. My jailer.”

The demands of Social Media...

Social Media is one of the largest factors in life today. It influences the way we think, the way we do and the way we see. Persons of the millennial generation often feel incomplete without access to social media, it is our way to connect and communicate. As a result of being constantly behind a screen when communicating, the millennial generation often lacks the soft skill of people skills and face-to-face communication. They often lack development in self-confidence and the ability to speak in public - due to a fear of being teased for making mistakes. Although social media provides a slight emotional disconnection due to the physical distance between what is said and what is read, it also creates an opportunity for persons to be something they are not in person.

The world of social media is a digital realm where persons feel they are protected from reactions due to what they say or do... as it is not the real world. People often use these platforms to verbally attack other people in a public setting.

I, myself, have experienced bullying through social media. It occurred in high school when a student from my class commented on one of my Facebook posts. Insults such as; stupid, gay, fat, etc. were thrown in my direction, not only from this fellow student, but by other members of the class who joined in.

In the world of the LGBTI+ community, there is a large emphasis on the importance of social media. Often on LGBTI+ dating sites, if you cannot or do not want to point persons in the direction of your social media accounts they get the opinion that you are not a real person and are a 'catfish'. In LGBTI+ community you sell yourself through your social media accounts.

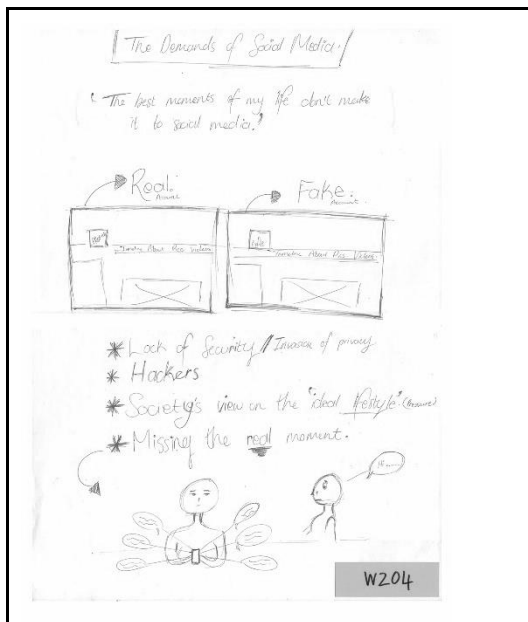
The Chameleon

W203

W203 design and description:

The student chose to use writing to express their thoughts on the topic instead of creating a typical visual. The (visual) writing consists of 4 paragraphs, a line and the words 'The Chameleon' under the line.

Paragraph 1: "Social media is one of the largest factors in life today, it influences the way the way we think, the way we do and the way we see. Persons of the millennial generation often feel incomplete without access to social media, it is our way to connect and communicate. As a result of being constantly behind a screen when communication (sic), the millennial generation often lacks the soft skill of people skills and face-to-face communication. They often lack development in self-confidence and the ability to speak in public - due to a fear of being teased for making mistakes. Although social media provides a slight emotional disconnection due to the physical distance between what is said and what is read, it also creates an opportunity for persons to be something they are not in person." Paragraph 2: "The world of social media is a digital realm where person feel they are protected from reactions due to what they say or do... as it is not the real world. People often use these platforms to verbally attack other people in a public setting". Paragraph 3: "I, myself, have experienced bullying through social media. It occurred in high school when a student from my class commented on one of my Facebook posts. Insults such as; stupid, gay, fat, etc. were thrown in my direction, not only from this fellow student, but by other members of the class who joined in." Paragraph 4: "In the world of the LGBTI+ community, there is a large emphasis on the importance of social media. Often on LGBTI+ dating sites, if you cannot or do not want to point persons in the direction of your social media accounts they get the opinion that you are not a real person and are a 'catfish'. In LGBTI+ community you sell yourself through your social media posts." Space after last paragraph with a line and under the line, "The Chameleon".



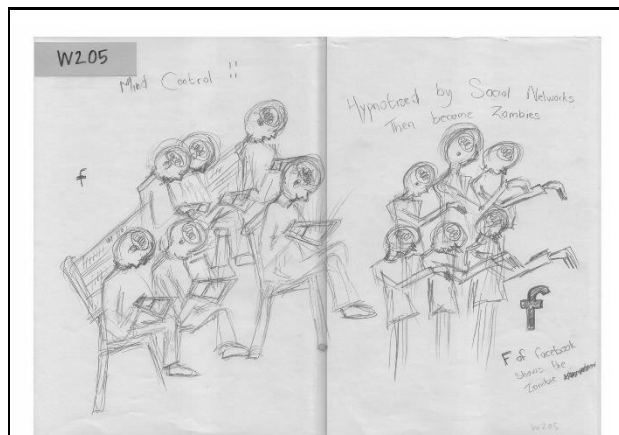
W204 design and description:

The student divided the page into 5 parts: Heading: "Demands of social media" is placed in a box at the top edge of the page.

A quote appears under the heading: "The best moments of my life don't make it to social media". Under the quote are two identical visuals of a social media page. The visual on the left is titled 'Real' and the one on the right 'Fake'. Under the two visuals is a list consisting of 4 lines:

- * Lack of Security / Invasion of privacy
- * Hackers;
- * Society's view on the 'ideal lifestyle' (Pressure)
- * Missing the real (*underlined a few times*) moment

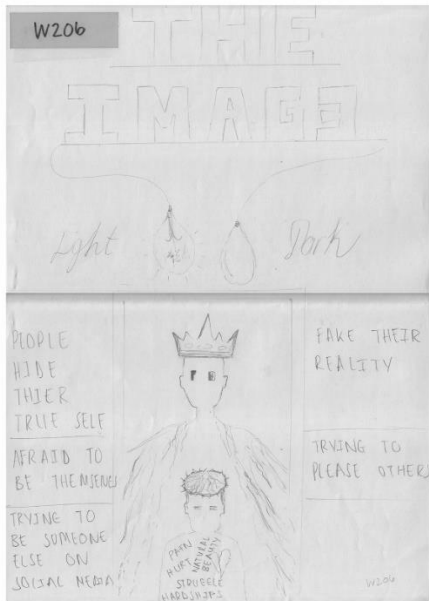
The last sentence has an arrow pointing to a sketch of a person engaging on a cell phone with 6 speech bubbles indicating communication. (Unidentified). Next to the person is another person with a speech bubble that says "Hi....."



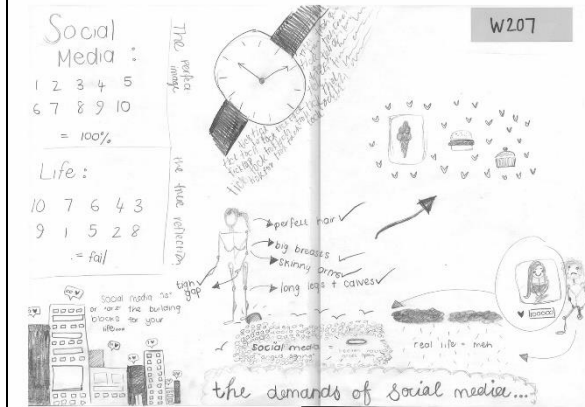
W205 design and description:

The student sketched what appears to be two scenes. On the left hand of the landscape page are 6 people sitting on chairs staring into their cell phones. Their minds are visible and seem to indicate some information (the same squiggles are present in all 6 of them). An f is floating on the left side behind them. Above these people is a line of copy: "Mind Control!!".

On the right hand side we see 6 similar looking people with the same squiggles in their minds. Here, the 6 people are holding their hands and arms out in front of them. Copy above the visual reads: "Hypnotised by Social Networks Then become Zombies". Below the people is a big f (Facebook logo), with a description: "F of Facebook shows the zombie's hand gesture is similar in shape to the f).



W206 design and description: The student designed a piece titled “The Image” with the E in the wrong/opposite direction. The title is underlined by the wire of two light bulbs. The left bulb has ‘light’ written next to it and seems to be glowing. The right bulb has ‘dark’ written next to it in script writing and seems to be empty without light. The bottom half of the design is made up of a visual in the centre and boxes of text on both sides of the visual. The visual has two people: a big towering person wearing a big, typical crown; one eye is the Instagram logo and the other the Facebook logo. There is a small person under the other person, a crown of thorns and broken heart icon. The copy inside the person reads, “Pain, Hurt, Natural Beauty, Struggle, Hardships”. On the left on the visual are three blocks of copy: 1) People hide their true self, 2) Afraid to be themselves, 3) Trying to be someone else on social media. On the right of the visual are two blocks of copy: 1) Fake their reality, 2) Trying to please others



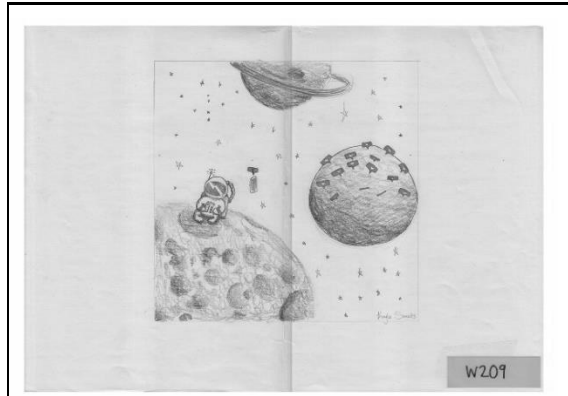
W207 design and description:

The student sketched a few scenarios above the title: “The Demands of Social Media”. There seem to be 5 parts to the design. Part 1) Top left hand corner - two blocks with numbers. The first block: Social Media: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7,8,9,10 = 100%. Next to the block: “ The perfect image”. Block 2: Life: 10, 7, 6, 4, 3, 9, 1, 5, 2, 8 = fail. Copy reads: The true reflection. Part 2) Under the blocks are 7 buildings with social media icons floating over each building (the tallest, clearest buildings have the most heart icons) copy reads: “Social media “is” or “are” the building blocks for your life...” Part 3) Top middle: a big analogue watch surrounded by “tick tock, tick tock” until it becomes scribbles that bleed off the visual. Part 4) In the middle of the page is a drawing of a person with arrows pointing to various parts of the body. After each statement is a tick. - perfect hair (tick) - big breasts (tick) - skinny arms (tick) - long legs and calves (tick) - thigh gap (tick). Next to this visual of perfection are floating fast food items (ice cream, burger, cupcake) surrounded by hearts. Part 5) On the bottom of the page. The words “social media” = drawn visual of a halo - copy reads: ‘Angels singing’ and ‘heaven halos gates open’. These are all surrounded by “aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa’s” On the right side are two dark clouds and words in the rain. Copy reads: “real life – meh”. Next to this, pointing to this visual, are two other visuals: One of a very happy person on a photo with 100 000 social media hearts in a circle (arrow points to heaven visual). On the outside of the circle is a person crying (Arrow points to real life = meh).



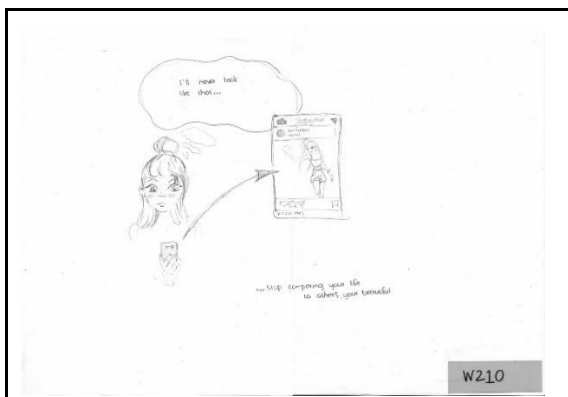
W208 design and description:

The student designed a piece with the focus on a man in the middle of the page; big cartoon-like eyes staring at a cell phone with a picture of Kim Kardashian's behind. Speech bubble from phone reads: "HEEEEEY!" Behind the guy are various words and symbols: Human Trafficking, Violence, WAR, World Hunger, Drug, Children, Starvation, Refugees, Crime, Corruption, Murder, Prostitution. Symbols for 'nuclear' and 'bomb' also appear.



W209 design and description:

The student designed a square-format piece centred on the page. It shows a person in a space suit sitting on the moon with a cell phone floating next to them - a question mark hovers above the phone. In the distance are two planets. The nearby planet has 15 social media-style 'like-hearts' in speech bubbles. No copy on the design.



W210 design and description:

The student used the centre of the page: A drawing of a girl staring at a phone in her hand - thought bubble reads: "I'll never look like that...". An arrow directs us to what is displayed on the phone screen. It's a shot of an Instagram post of 'Jennifer Kain Walvis' in shorts with a crop-top waving. At the bottom of her post is '65231 Likes'. The copy at the bottom of the design reads: "... stop comparing your life to others, your (sic) beautiful".

The designs were analysed in three phases: (1) individual analysis, (2) workshop 1 and workshop 2 analysis respectively and (3) in context of the entire case. Some of data was ambiguous and the insights of a small group discussion were needed to ensure that the context and intent of the themes were understood fully.

4.3 PHASE 2: DATA EMERGING FROM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

A small group discussion⁹ which aimed to discuss and clarify findings and emerging themes from the questionnaires and designs highlighted the following findings:

When asked “What do you define as meaningful visual communication?” (The emphasis being on the word ‘meaning’), the students replied:

D2: “I think meaningful is not just some pretty picture, it actually has some sort of message that’s relevant to you as a person.”

D3: “With meaningful it would generally provoke an emotion so I would have some sort of relation to it regarding a positive or negative emotion, so it would connect to me in some way.”

D4: “Meaningful is, for me it’s more unique not something that you see every day – it’s got some sort of concept, not just concept, but meaning behind it. Someone has taken the time to research or go in-depth into the visual communication and it’s more in-depth and its personal and it can relate to almost everybody on an emotional, basically a personal level.”

D5: “I agree but also something that makes you think or question it or makes you take action.”

D1: “Meaningful communication is when a communicator gets it right to

⁹ See appendix 5 for the transcription of small group discussion

distil an abstract idea or problem in a way that you can digest it simply then it's meaningful.”

Student W101 mentioned in the questionnaire that two particularly negative aspects of visual communication are that it can be (1) intrusive and (2) offensive (See Table 4g). To clarify what the terms ‘intrusive’ and ‘offensive’ hold for this audience, the question “When do you consider visual communication to be ‘intrusive’ and ‘offensive’?” was asked. Students replied:

1. Intrusive:

D2: “I think it's just like in everyday life just the small things like watching peoples' stories then the next thing an ad pops up. Just when you are trying to relax someone is trying to sell you something, so that's the only way I find it quite intrusive.”

D3: “It is intrusive in just your day-to-day life but it's also very interruptive in what you might be doing, very distracting, it can just sort of veer you off your train of thought or things like that whilst you just going on with your life.”

D4: “I think if it's got nothing to do with anything I like and I haven't even been offered a chance to reject it or reject this topic then that's intrusive and annoying – I don't want to see it it's got nothing to do with any of my likes or preferences that I enjoy so, (*whisper*) why is it there?”

D5: “I think it's intrusive when, similar to what number 4 said, when you are trying to enjoy something or do something then an ad pops up and either prevents you from finishing what you are watching or doing or just waste your time by making you watch it and then also ads or communication you feel is not good or being unfair or their not telling the full kind of truth, you can tell that they are trying to persuade you.”

D1: “Intrusive communication for me is when it's irrelevant to the medium or

irrelevant to the person it's talking to.”

2. Offensive:

D3: “I mean, you know things that are offensive to cultures, races obviously all that stuff, but things that, like with millennials and stuff that's a big thing these days. People always say ah millennials are so lazy and procrastinate and social media is doing this to them, yada-yada-yada, but millennials obviously aren't just one whole thing there are individual people that aren't like that, so I think that's also a big thing when people are trying to target communication at millennials in a way that's offensive to them – ah use this because you are lazy and a millennial and this will help you do your work or something. Well, just cause I'm a millennial doesn't make me lazy – you can target this to generally lazy people not just millennials or something like that. So that's a big thing that really annoys me about advertising.”

D4: “Like D3 said, just because we are millennials doesn't mean we are naïve, we are very on top of things so advertising cannot be the same as what it was before and visual communication can't be the same as it was before because the audience knows better. They've been brought up better, they are very much aware and content aware. There was this one ad, I think it was Heineken where they passed the bottle along from the white person and skips the black person, and skips another black person and onto a white person completely. It was everywhere it was blowing up, and people are now wondering is this becoming a thing where brands are doing it to cause a stir and get their brands recognized 'cause we notice. It's not like we don't notice. Very annoying its advertising the wrong way, so I just think you have to be able to communicate without offending millennials because we will notice it, we are not blind and it can be very dangerous to the brand especially on social media because you can share that like (*snaps finger*) that. Very fast.”

Following on from the previous answer, the group was asked if they think the media in general is trying to be controversial and why:

- D4: “Yes, you can see when it’s done on purpose. Especially now that we know the levels it goes through. It goes through different people, how can one person miss that or go that’s a tad racist, that’s a tad sexist, so you can see when a brand is doing it deliberately to get a stir out of people and to get likes, or not likes, but to get the word out there that this brand is doing this or this artist is doing this – it causes a stir, you can’t ignore it.”
- D1: I think it’s because it’s an easy way to get earned media, so if you write your end of year report they get so many shares then they say hey this year we got 500 000 impressions but they don’t necessarily say where it’s from, like you know from hate articles about their brand even. I think their end game is to get clicks and shares and whatever means they to get that is what they will follow especially with fake articles and things like that.”
- D2: “If you look at, I know it’s not visual communication but Eminem whose new album basically slams a whole bunch of rappers and my brother and I were speaking about it and I look at it as him looking for attention because he doesn’t know how else to get it these days. And it reminds me of when Miley Cyrus went through that stage of everyone talking about her because she was going crazy so it’s almost like a desperate attempt of getting attention.”
- D3: “I was thinking exactly the Miley Cyrus case, cause her just doing something that’s completely abrupt and different causing such a stir in media and everything, I think it’s just easier for people to advertise or market themselves in a sense that way, it’s kind of, because people are so, you know there are a lot of feminists and people are all you know very aware of racism and cultural offences and sexism and everything

like that it's a very big thing in our generation now, so I think media is just finding it very difficult to find ways to work around these things cause I mean in all honesty if you say something, and someone is always lashing out, and there's always some issue, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but that's how conversation starts. But I think it's just an easy way for people to be able to weave past that, just create that controversy a little bit and then they create a whole conversation around their brand and for their marketing."

In lieu of the co-design topic (see section 4.2.2 Part 2), the group responded that the role social media plays within this 'fake' and/or controversial world is one of 'instigator':

D1: "It's the medium where it gets spread, so it's the playground of it."

D3: "Starts the conversation."

D4: "It's almost the instigator of it all. You are spreading this stuff but should be able to cancel it out and say this is fake news. I should cancel it out, I shouldn't spread it further and cause a stir, but sometimes like media if it's done correctly like, I can't think of an example, but sometimes political stuff especially media such as artistic media needs to put out there as it gives artists a chance to be put out there, but people are using social media in the wrong way, completely in the wrong way. So like D1 said, it's just about getting likes and shares and getting that brand out there even if it's in a wrong light or the wrong manner."

The questionnaire revealed that some students prefer photography over illustration (W204, W202, W104, W207, W209, W210, W212) when considering the treatment of communication visuals. The group replied that the realistic aspect of photography might appeal to some while the fantasy associated with illustration will appeal to others:

D3: “With photography there is obviously a lot more realism to it so it’s a bit more relatable, it’s a bit more, what’s the word, let’s just say real for now. But you can still convey something in a beautiful way that you might not naturally see with your own eye but you can capture through photography and create a story behind it and I think with animation there really is no limit, which I love. You can - whatever’s in your head and you can’t see in front of you right now you can create with animation and you can still communicate anything you want to in the weirdest, wackiest, unique way possible. So I think it’s just real versus not real.”

D2: “Animation is more fun and sentimental ‘cause it makes you remember what it’s like to be a child, like for me I don’t know, I just enjoy it a bit more than photography, because it’s just like the good old days.”

D4: “Animation all the way. Animation over photography because it’s limitless, you can do whatever tone you’d like it’s not just about fun and carefree. It depends on the style you are going for and I love it. The things you can do with it, the way it moves. It’s not just still, that’s the problem with photography, it’s just still it doesn’t move well it can be still then it’s illustration. But animation you make it move, you make it come to life – how cool is that?”

3 of the 5 group discussion students further stated that they preferred animation to illustration because:

D4: “You can tell a story a lot better than if it’s just standing still. If it’s standing still then that image has got to be really powerful or it’s got to be easy, you got to get it quickly. If not then it’s completely missed, your message is missed, visual is missed and that’s kind of dangerous. Whereas animation you can tell the story, or video you can tell a story, you can have fun with it and like I said you can have a serious tone you can have a light tone, it’s just endless.”

As a response, student D1 said: “I am not sure exactly if I like photography versus illustration, or animation, but I like stuff that has the chance to tell a story or has a narrative – that connects more than a still to me. Even radio.”

As shown in Tables 4c, 4d, 4e and 4f, most students felt ‘somewhat positive’ about visuals aimed at young adults in comparison to ‘mostly positive’ general feelings about visual communication. ‘Relatability’ and ‘sincerity’ were the main concerns raised by the group regarding visuals aimed at them:

D1: “I remember at the time we did the questionnaire the ABSA¹⁰ thing didn’t happen yet, but the closest thing to it was the Nedbank¹¹ one and it just felt very try-hard, it felt very like ‘make your dreams come true’ and stuff – just a lack of sincerity, so it’s easy to do something very cringe worthy, laughable by trying to talk to what you think the youth is like.”

D5: “I also think, I guess we don’t know how old the whoever is creating the content is but they are probably older than us so they should do more like interviews or research and stuff. I think they overlook that. ‘Cause, it’s not relating to us – they need to get that part right first.”

When asked why they feel some communication pieces do not relate to them, student D5 mentioned the communication is, “a bit try hard – maybe they underestimate how mature we are or – they just need to be more real instead of persuasive in a way. It cringes me when they are too persuasive.”

To clarify the meaning of ‘too persuasive’ the group replied:

D1: “They are trying too hard to align themselves with whatever is relevant now and then they kind of lose their own soul, you know. It’s like

¹⁰ Absa. The student is referring to the recent ‘Africanacity’ campaign and re-brand by ABSA bank which received a lot of criticism. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBRxRvu58Nk>

¹¹ Nedbank. ‘I don’t live for money’ campaign. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2Dw6gWY774&t=32s>

whatever thing is trying to be woke – maybe just focus on, you know, what you are trying to do and rather by like package it by what you are completely not. It's ok. It does not mean you are a bad company – you just are what you are you know.”

D2: “I can't think of negative examples right now, but I can think of one that I actually have respect for, was like the Axe campaign¹² being you, just being yourself. So I think like in some aspects I don't think it's like completely bad, some companies do really get it right.”

D4: “The only thing I can think of is when they try to sound like they are speaking like us. We don't have a set dialogue or way that we speak. It's not like we speak in hashtags. Please, delete the hashtags. I cannot with the hashtags. They are so two years ago. But everything has a hashtag or everything is woke, or I don't know who invented the slang that they are sort of coining with millennials, but it doesn't work all the way around. Maybe it works with stereotypical teenage yesteryear millennial, but it doesn't work with current people, we have evolved. It doesn't work with us anymore. It doesn't stick. I think the thing that's lacking is insights. People need to dig deeper how do we speak, how can we reach that target market better because they are missing it especially in terms of copy or dialogue. That's where they miss the mark completely. That's not how we speak.”

The conversations above noted themes and language used and the group was therefore questioned about the type of visuals this 'try-hard' communication throws at them:

D4: “Nobody looks like that. I think we all, we want to. We want to look like that and that's the whole set up of sm. I mean we aim to aspire, to wake up looking like we had our makeup did [sic]. We wake up with our hair done. I don't. Our hair is frizzy, our makeup is never done, we got

¹² Axe. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/case-study-axe-redefined-masculinity/1430092>

bags and I think it would be so much better if we took away that sort of princess look to it and for guys the cool macho man always came fresh from the gym, no. We've got so many different kinds of people and we don't speak like that who don't look like that so. But when they come to what we really are and how we really act that's when it really hits home and that's when we can relate and say: ah that's us."

D1: "Where the Axe thing works is that the benefit of the product has to do with the message. So it's not like they are trying hard to relate. It relates back to them as well. So it's kind of what's disconnects – brands or whatever you want to call it, they want to align themselves to something but it doesn't go back to them. It works when what they try to align with what they are."

D5: "Just to add on to that because we have so many personalities and stuff and we are also trying to find ourselves and stuff at the same time, it's good if brands or communication stick to who they are because if there are so many then we can decide which ones we like, not necessarily them trying to get to us."

The group further stated that brands don't have to try to be everything to everyone and that they "want to have a variety of choices of what different brands stand for" (D5).

When asked what would motivate them to be brand loyal, price, reputation and performance had the biggest influence:

D5: "For specific some brands I am brand loyal for certain reasons, and then other brands if I get the vibe that I like what they are doing then I am keen to try it or maybe first look at what they have to offer."

D2: "For me it's price dependent, the more expensive, I am more brand loyal. Like Adidas or Nike. So for Nike example, their tights, the way

that they design their tights is a lot more comfortable and they last a lot longer than other brands. Aspects like that – because they work for me. But like with tissues or lip balm, I don't really care. So it's definitely the ones, because we are spending our own money, like we are going to go with what we like trust in."

D5: "When it comes to something you are serious about, like either sport or getting a laptop you want to get the one that's going to be the best quality and last the longest."

D4: "I like to see how you position yourself in social media as well, so Nike has got it right in terms of doing ads. They did quite good with their ads. But how you represent yourself on social media is also very important. I like to know that you have a presence and that you are talking to me, you are constantly saying this is what's new, but not in that cheesy, trying to speak to you in a millennial way, but in your own way that's sincere. But ja, performance and price are kind of important."

Student W106 mentioned in the questionnaire (See section 4.2.1.2) that some visual communication aimed at young adults is "trying too hard to be *woke*". According to the group, the term 'woke' is quite broad and relates to social and commercial relevance; where a person/brand demonstrates their own self-awareness and sincerity in a humble, 'non-forced' manner:

D1: "I think it's when they are aligning themselves with something they are not. If they formulated a message that's true to their benefit and also can relate to who they are targeting then it's working, but when it's like not at all what they are about or their service or product's about then it's just going to fall flat. 'Woke' is a very broad term but I think it's socially conscious, aspirational. Togetherness, very big terms that are clichés for good behaviour, aware of your behaviour."

- D3: “Relatable. I think it’s almost just like cheap advertising really you just, I mean we all know a brand like Nando’s they can get away with that – like ‘I am shook’ and all that nonsense. But they are politically woke. But maybe a brand like Audi, if they were to target and say ‘we are woke check out our awesome motor’, and ‘we are shook, it’s so sick’, it’s them being someone they’re not. We know that.”
- D2: “I think the whole brands trying to be woke thing is just they don’t know how else to communicate to us and that’s, they’re just falling back on that, so it’s almost lazy.”
- D4: “Pepsi¹³. That’s trying to be woke and it didn’t work at all with Kendall Jenner. Woke to me means being conscious, socially conscious, politically conscious, being aware of sort of, I can’t think of the right word for it, any current trends, movements that are happening, you have to be on top of it, especially if it’s a brand but don’t force that movement onto your brand. If it’s done badly, it looks horrid. We can see it a mile away and it gets bad publicity for it and then we begin to question ‘Are you doing this on purpose?’ For the likes, the shares, the whatever. Or is it sincere, are you actually caring about this moving or just making a publicity stunt.”
- D3: “I think meaning a brand is woke just simply it’s saying hey we understand you as our audience, genuinely. They are not going: (Sarcastic tone) ‘*We understand you, we can relate*’. No. They are going no we genuinely understand you and we know how we can approach you and how’d you’d appreciate it, in a humble, subtle way, they are not forcing it on you.”

¹³ Pepsi. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/kendall-jenner-pepsi-advert-backlash-police-officer-model-can-protest-a7667251.html>

The group mentioned that some brands such as Apple and Dove succeeded at being relevant because they seem to understand their own products and what they are offering:

- D1: “Apple, especially in the 80s - their ads have always had that tone. And it depends on what your product or your brand is you know, aspirational product then great, but if you are like selling sugar water then maybe don’t go to aspirational.”
- D4: “Dove, they can get away with it because they’ve got this awesome target market; they aren’t beauty models. It’s not about being perfectionist, we are not all these beautiful ladies that are done up all the time. There are real women out there. It’s not really staying woke, but there’s something linked to it. If your target market you can sort of, bring a product with a message of being woke (I hate that word) mixes together well then fine but if you’re a sugar water brand and you have no target market that you can bring this movement into then don’t bother because it looks insincere, it doesn’t look real. You don’t see Coke trying to relate to any strikes or *toyi-toy’s*¹⁴ or revolutions it just doesn’t work. What you are selling, that’s important, you are selling Coke you are selling the moment, enjoy the feeling. Pepsi, I don’t know what they sell. You have to think about what you are selling, you are selling Coke, what are you going to do with Coke? You are not going to start any revolutions any time soon.”
- D5: “They don’t have to advertise their woke-ness as such but they can show it in subtle ways by being more humble or more whoever models, or actors who look more real and down to earth and just, ‘cause that will carry across the vibe that they use for example not the typical model type. They don’t have to shove it in everyone’s faces because people will recognize and appreciate it themselves.”

¹⁴ *Toyi-Toyi*. A dance step characterized by high-stepping movements, typically performed at protest gatherings or marches. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/toyi-toyi>

D2: “If you look at Coke ad when the world cup was happening (the one where he is talking to all the Coke bottles in the factory)¹⁵ and saying to go out and change the world. The whole ad is so over the top and dramatic and profound, but it’s believable because it’s Coke and it’s just talking about making people happy so like if you do it in a way that’s believable and you are not trying to sell a fake idea then it can work as well. You are still selling a basic idea, you are not selling that it’s going to change your life.”

D3: “Dove it’s a good example because they understand that women all have stretch marks and not beauty models. So that’s just a nice way of them to say we get it, we are here for you. That’s cool. That’s it they don’t need to force it.”

The answers led to questioning the use of metaphors, or over-exaggerated concepts in visual communication:

D1: “Maybe if this ties down to the benefit of the product – so if it’s still relating to the benefit then it’s probably more based in truth even if it’s an exaggeration.”

To understand what type of visuals had eye-catching potential, the question “What type of visuals catch your eye when scrolling on Instagram, for example?” delivered the following feedback:

D5: “It doesn’t matter what the topic is, but if something that has a lot of character, or humour then I will still be drawn to it even though I am not necessarily interested in that specific field or topic. Either the visuals in terms of the character or the mood of the visuals can draw me in. Good quality photos, like the actual quality of the photos not too busy, more focused on something.”

¹⁵ Coke. <https://adage.com/creativity/work/coca-cola-world-cup-campaign/54487>

- D4: “Usually illustrations will make me stop ‘cause that’s the only thing that will make me stop and look at it. If it’s just a picture – on Instagram you see picture after picture, so if it’s an illustration then I stop. But then if it’s a picture, then an exaggerated baby picture or animal. They are cute, and innocent and they don’t even know that they are cute and funny. They are just doing their thing. I think if I have to go deep into it, everything in this world, we know too much our eyes have been open to everything and animals and babies don’t even know they are doing it. They don’t even know what’s happening they just do, and it’s so cute.”
- D3: “A lot of illustrations yes but beautifully shot, cinematic videos, I love and I will always watch. I can really appreciate it when someone actually shoots something really beautiful. Beautiful photography - not just your selfies and things. And stuff that’s not as common maybe. The topic of beauty because it’s colourful and expressive.”
- D2: “I like specifically, a page called Talenthouse that has a lot of illustrations from designers, I don’t even know where they from but it’s very cool and it’s very different. And then there is also a photographer who I really like who photoshops, either animals or babies with plants and flowers, and it’s really beautiful, and they’re graded so well and the whole thing makes me very jealous of the Photoshop skills. So those are two specific things that I love and then anything that relates to fitness, fitness videos and stuff that I would like to save like for later, those are things that make me stop as well.”
- D1: “I like interesting moody portraits and poodle videos. Just like quirky dogs doing funny stuff - they kind of like living cartoons, you know. They are styled by their owners, they look ridiculous – it’s funny.”

Following on from the type of images that catch attention, the group was also asked about what type of images they avoid:

- D2: “Animal abuse because it almost like makes you realise there are horrible things happening and there is nothing you can do to change it so you almost just want to ignore it like my mum's friend shared the video of a guy in China it's just a video of a man abusing the dog and it's like really traumatising to see that, especially with animals. Because people are in control of their own minds but animals are more vulnerable things like that. I want to avoid it but part of me wants to watch it too because I feel guilty for not watching it.
- D3: “Animal abuse obviously but there are a lot of things that people just post and understand that they want to post but you just don't want that on your feed. In a bad sense it's sort of like politics - it's just personal. I hate seeing all the stuff pop-up of Donald Trump and world politics. I just want to be naive and stay in my little picture perfect happy world but it's just so it's just so depressing on social media if you click on one and you just scroll through the related it's an endless scroll of negativity and depression basically of all the terrible things that is wrong with the world. And it's a big thing psychologically because you can't skip it it's not like you're going to do anything to help them by watching it but you feel like a terrible person if you don't care for watching it there are a lot of psychological factors in social media.”
- D4: “Vegans with the ‘stop eating meat, don't kill a cow’ because they show everything what they do to the cow. It's not like I don't care, I feel bad for the cow, but at the end of the day I like my Spur burger. I don't like seeing content that I feel like I can't help. You can't help this animal, you can't help this kid, can't help people that suffered a flood, but it's great that you're aware so keep that. Like if there's a flood in Louisiana show me the flood ‘cause then I need to know but what is a ‘like’ gonna do? You are not helping so that's irritating. I hate seeing that. Any religious post is a no-no for me and then celebrity content, but I do follow them.”

The group felt that they follow various people, groups, brands or sites just to stay aware of what is going on in the world and around them:

D4: “I needs [sic] to know, I need to see her but when I see her I'm like ‘ugh, these people’. I follow the Kardashians for no reason they irritate the crap out of me. I follow Kris. I follow Kim. I follow Khloe. I follow all of them, but when I see it I am like ‘uggg’. But I need to know ‘where's the baby, what are they doing, did they do this, oh ok these people are human’.”

D1: “It's a very good way to keep up to date with a campaign that just came out and to gauge also what works and what doesn't work. I opened an Instagram account last year for this reason. Before that I didn't have it. Like my Twitter account - I don't use it but I just keep up-to-date. It's kind of relevant to what we do.”

The discussion also revealed that many celebrities are taking a more casual, everyday life approach on social media and that this is preferred by the group:

D5: “Certain celebrities sometimes then a lot of them actually have very casual profiles. A lot of them are actually starting to not look so glamorous, like Justin Bieber. His profile's very average, very chilled. Their profiles are more real and I think it's nice for them to not have the pressure where every post is perfect with the perfect caption like they're just more showing themselves. It also makes their fans closer to them and increase their relatability but if you want something pretty to look at then you can look at travel pages or like travel people have a living of like travelling and instagramming things and that's fun.”

D3: “I think that's how society is now a lot more accepting of how people are in their everyday life. Don't worry we get you. And if you want to have a day in your tracksuit pants go for it. We appreciate that you are being real with us and that gives them even more of a following and

communication with their fans. The reason why I might follow people that have non-realistic lifestyles on social media is that I see that more as aspiration, more like a goal. I don't want to have a limo but I want to be wealthy and be successful when I'm older. Not looking at them and going 'I wish I had that', but I look at them and I go 'I'll get there one day'. It's cool to see what the lifestyle is like. A lifestyle that I want to have one day. So I don't look at them to be jealous, I look at them to work towards what I want - sort of like little nuggets help for the future."

The questionnaire (See section 4.2.1.2) as well as some design pieces (W107, W108a, W108b, W207, W210) revealed topics around stereotypes. The students were asked how they feel about the use of stereotypes in visual communication in particular in order to establish their views on this subject:

- D3: "Hate stereotypes. I don't like it, it's outdated. You don't need to stereotype people. The first thing I think of stereotypes is negativity. That's just how I view it, but that could also be in our modern day now. We are so aware of the word stereotype and we focus a lot more on the negativity. There are very different ways of defining something, but if you stereotype someone and put them in a bubble it's not how society works these days. So just the word 'stereotype' has a negative connotation to it."
- D2: "I think specifically with food brands, they're still stuck in 'I'm the mother that likes to cook for my children and I like to make them nice lunch' that's like for me the one area where I think they are using it badly. But I enjoy stereotypes when they are used in a mocking kind of way, not serious. And they are acknowledging that they are using a stereotype."
- D1: "If you are making a joke out of it then it's easier to digest but if it's said in like a serious way then you wanna not like it."
- D4: "I am thinking in terms of social media we all see those memes where

they show certain pictures. There's one for a mom that complains too much and calls the manager she's got like a bob cut, a purse and doggie. We can relate to that though – we have all seen these moms that go 'Can I call the manager please'. And it's there for a reason, it didn't just arise out of nowhere. There are these moms, so we can't just ignore that the stereotypes are there. I don't know when and I don't know how, but stereotypes became a negative. It's just got a negative brand on it. Like gay people, not all gays are the same. You get gay people, men that are very macho, not all of them are feminine. Not everyone is the same. Like you get gay people that go to the gym super gym freak addicts, ones that are very feminine but it's not the same so you can't put them all into the same box anymore. And now we have realized it and that's why stereotypes have got a bad brand on it. But it can be funny. Like memes they just do it right. I don't know how. But they just get it right every time.”

To understand the difference between a 'funny' stereotype and a realistic stereotype the question 'When would you draw the line between a funny stereotype versus a hurtful stereotype?' delivered the following response:

D1: “Tali¹⁶ for example is an act and it's for a series and she plays a stereotypical Jewish woman from Seapoint. But it's still endearing, her story, even though it's poking fun, still has an endearing quality and still has sympathy with the topic and also it's based on truth. It's just an exaggeration of truth but it's not like complete nonsense. Then it's similar to what we do when we exaggerate the benefit of something. Maybe the reason why it works is because the satire is coming from a source that understands it well. There's a truth to it and it's kind of almost empathetic towards it, so if you use other stereotypes – I get offended over some stuff that's far removed from me, but if I see a part of myself in whatever joke is being told then I can laugh at it.”

¹⁶ Tali is a character in the documentary: 'Tali's Wedding Diary' on Showmax.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVwMXLkFxlo>

- D2: “If you are going to make it a joke you have to really go way over the top with the exaggerating so that it’s completely clear that it’s not being serious. Like the KFC ad¹⁷ where they’re super dramatic with all the drumsticks. (The giant drumstick that comes up in the background) That works for me because it’s all these stereotypical things that people do but it’s so over the top you know there is no way they are going to be serious about it. So if you get it right and you understand like the people you are making fun of then you can’t really offend them. But when you get it wrong then that’s when the trouble starts.”
- D3: “When it’s blatantly obvious that it’s a stereotype and it’s just not taken seriously, like with Tali. Tali is a good example, you don’t genuinely have people walking around like that 24/7 – if they do there are very few and they probably won’t get offended. I think just if it’s very obvious it’s a stereotype then it can be taken as a joke then you won’t have a problem with it. You are trying to make just a light-hearted situation. You don’t just read a few books, and think that you know it, but if you’ve lived in it and you’ve experienced then you can use that experience to base it off. Then it becomes more real and understandable then it can’t be offensive surely. If it’s essentially factual in a way.”
- D4: “It depends if you know the culture and the people. You’ve got to get it right, spot on. We struggle when we come up with ads, we don’t know are we pushing, are we treading the line just a bit, when do we pull back? So we don’t know ourselves and even though we are ‘woke’, we don’t know ourselves when we make this ad are we being too stereotypical or are we just missing the mark a bit.”

¹⁷ KFC. https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/film/kfc_honest_ad

D5: “If it’s based off something that you’ve actually done and you think it was funny and even if you exaggerated it a bit more then it can’t really be offensive because you’ve lived it like you said.”

The millennial stereotype or label in turn evoked some strong emotions:

D3: “I get really irritated with media these days. I just don’t even like the word millennial. But just like grouping people, I just feel generally the public or society has a negative thought on someone being called a millennial. I’ve had personal experiences with family friends going: ‘oh but you’re a millennial, you won’t understand and you grew up with your parents babying you, nurturing you and telling you ‘you can do anything you wanted’, and then when someone puts you down you lose it because you haven’t got your way, and it’s not true. It’s not how life goes, there might be some people but that’s just how some are raised. But when they say ‘you’re a millennial’ it’s usually something offensive or just rude will come after that. It’s not like (high pitch tone) ‘you’re a millennial, wow that’s amazing you do such good in the world’, no. They don’t generally do that. I was just thinking as much as it does annoy me personally I also feel that when it comes to like me seeing a billboard with a millennial on saying ‘use condoms’ or whatever, I kind of I am not even fazed by it – I am just like well that’s what I expect you to think of me because that’s what I have been told or how I see you think of us millennials. I don’t even care anymore, there’s no point to try to change your mind, because this is how you feel, good for you. I am just going to walk by because I actually could not [sic] care less anymore, because I am just over it.”

D5: “I get bothered by some things that aren’t fair, and I guess it’s not fair that we are treated or looked down on. It’s annoying when someone who is not in your situation speaks to you about how you are. So that’s the only annoying factor. So many things also relate to how you were

brought up and that obviously relates to how your parents were brought up. So that is a huge thing, so we can't be blamed completely."

D4: "The way we are portrayed is that we don't know much we are stuck on our phones, but hasn't technology helped us? Hasn't it advanced in just everything? There is this kid, who is a millennial and designed this little trash compactor thingy that sucks up the trash in the ocean – how cool is that. We have advanced in technology and why not use that to our advantage."

D2: "When I hear 'millennial' I think of my grandparents being like – "you are such a millennial, get off your phone". They are like "I stuck with the same job for 25 years, and you are not even going to be able to last for one year at the same company." Which is true, I don't know if I am going to be able to stick with one job for – I get bored very easily. I don't know if that's a millennial thing, we are just very different, and I don't think we can get annoyed or angry by that 'cause we are completely different."

To understand why the group considers millennials to be 'different', the word 'millennial' was defined:

D3: "Useless. comes down to being lazy, because generally technology was created to make life easier for you and essentially you become a lot lazier than how it used to be."

D4: "Lazy. I think that's what's irritating, because that's how millennials have been coined, we are lazy and we don't do things hands-on anymore and we rely on something else to do it for us so that's what's irritating."

D2: “We rely on technology and convenience and getting our own way and we want life to be easy and we get upset if it’s not. That’s how I think we are. Profound and offended by everything. Highly offended.”

D1: “One thing that annoys me. I remember growing up you were taught from day 1 at school ‘you guys are the future and you are going to fix everything’ and that stereotype offends me, can we just also be normal? ‘You guys are deep and you have a profound outlook on the world’. I hate it when a lot of our peers esteem themselves on it, because you are not – you are just like everyone else. Every moment in history people think the world is coming to an end and every moment this is the worst thing ever. Like ‘OMG these kids are on iPads’, and when our parents were kids it was ‘oh no, daytime TV’. And I think part of it is now ‘you guys are going to change the world’. And I get irritated by that, because we are not, and it’s ok, we are not that profound. We were told we were, but we are not.”

The group expressed that the youth audience seem to reject labels and conformity, yet they seem to conform on social media and the ideals associated with it:

D3: “Generally people (maybe millennials) social media users, everyone is a big hypocrite. We are all hypocrites, whether we know it, whether we don’t whether it’s subtle. Everyone is a hypocrite. I know there is a lot of expectations on social media and we should fight the expectations. I am here taking selfies, drinking champagne, pretending to have the best life, but then I say people should not be doing that. I think when it comes to labels, it just comes down to how everyone is unique. Society is so diverse now with LGBTQ+ community, with racism with different cultures. People identifying in very unique ways that’s only been in the present years. I think labels are just outdated. You don’t need a label. You are just a human being, who’s living and has a heart and has a desire and that should be it. I do understand what you are saying how yet we still conform, I think it’s just a feel a part, like you

participating, it's a community online as well. But also where if you don't identify with a specific label you can still go to a community or something where you do sort of have your label. But there are thousands upon thousands of labels. It's so you can be with like-minded people."

D2: "I think as much as most people don't want to admit it they get offended by labels. Sort of like a trend. As a millennial we are offended by everything and we have an opinion on everything and sharing that opinion. I deleted Instagram for a while I said 'Instagram is so lame, it's just the same photos'. I'm back on it again and I'm posting photos and stories. So as much as we don't like to think that we like labels, deep down inside we still like it because I think we are a part of something. Because I was thinking I was missing out on something. I think we do it because we want to be a part of it because we do have FOMO¹⁸. FOMO is a real thing. People are having babies like very quickly and very frequently and like my friend didn't know about all these people having babies and I said this one's pregnant this one's pregnant and that was just an example you miss something important that you can gossip about."

D4: "Where else are you gonna get your information from like what's happening what's trending? I think we want to say we are also having their lives I'm having a good time too I've got my shit together. It's a psychological need to belong to a group and to belong to something and to fit in so if you don't have Instagram and Twitter where else are you gonna find information? Instagram and Facebook because that's where it's plastered everywhere."

D5: "If you are up-to-date with whatever is happening on social media, maybe more up-to-date with the news or something, then you are part

¹⁸ FOMO. Fear of missing out. Fear of not being included in something (such as an interesting or enjoyable activity) that others are experiencing. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/FOMO>

of the conversations that are happening afterwards, like the next day at college. So it extends the community to offline as well, but I like Instagram because it's kind of like a social media album of your life you can show your kids one day. It's nice also if you can see what people are up to. A lot of the times I'll see a friend at a really nice restaurant and you can see the location and check it out and you can go next week so it's a nice way of keeping up to date with things and find out new things. It's more casual if you are not keen for a conversation it's nice to find out new things.”

Some students illustrated in their designs (W108b, W109, W202) that social media is like a prison and the group felt:

D5: "I don't feel trapped or jail vibes because you can just delete it. Or you can take a break and just delete it for a while and come back, but I really think it's up to you and how are you decide to use your social media because I feel that everything is going more towards accepting of being different and all of that but I guess it depends on what you use it for. My reason is that it's just nice to keep a timeline of what I've done with my life that I can fall back on and it's nice to check up on other people and what they doing and search for things that I'm interested in that's cool. But I don't feel like I have to keep up with that every day every minute every hour but that's just my personal way of using it.”

D4: “You can't get out of it once you enter, you just keep scrolling like a zombie. You always come back. It's not like you can leave and just be done with it. If you take a picture you feel like you should post it on Instagram and this should be on Facebook. But it's that need of 'oh this pictures gotta go somewhere.' A prison, psychologically - it's not good for you either because the content that's on Instagram is not inspiring anymore it's more like showing off. 'This is what I've got' - how am I going to live up to that? I haven't got the money, I haven't got the means also I don't have the time. So now what people have found is

that it's damaging people. People suffer from depression and anorexia and it's because they are trying to be like these people and it's not possible. These people have money for plastic surgery, they have got this, they got that. Some people don't have that and some people try their best. And that's the prison. It's not healthy but I got to know. I have to know what's on there. I am in the jail of pictures. There is no knowledge on there, it's just content, boring content. It's an addiction. I always say I'm going to delete, but when I get to it I just slide into cancel because I'm going to have to upload all these pictures again. I can't imagine deleting it. I always say I'm going to but then I never do."

D3: "It's the same with me. I watched a YouTube video the other day about a girl who deleted all the apps and I thought I want to do that someday. Have I done it? No. I'm avoiding doing it. I don't want to do it. I don't know why I don't want to do it, but I think it's interesting how you said that you (*looking at D5*) will just delete when it got too much for you because of your personal pictures and stuff. With me, I'm attempting to build a brand for myself with my beauty so I have my personal one which I delete that's fine but with my brand I find it's very difficult. Even though I haven't posted in good age and people don't even know I exist anymore because I've been too busy I still don't want to delete it. I still check on other people that are doing similar things to me in South Africa and whilst getting busy, I've got my phone open playing stories one after the other while I'm getting ready to go to college. And I know it's stupid that I'm doing that. I'm like just stop. But I can't stop - it's definitely an addiction. There's a psychological thing behind it but it's not something that I am just willing to stop at the moment - which I don't know if it's a bad thing. It could be a bad thing. It's not a life-threatening thing but it's definitely something worth noting because it is very strange that I am constantly on my phone, constantly. I really just wanna throw it away but it's too valuable. There is too much on this tiny little device for me."

- D2: “I agree it does sort of feel like a prison, because here I am back at it again (After deleting it a while ago). And it's even like with fitness videos and stuff. You watch them and it's annoying because you look how people are looking and you want to look like that. You don't even notice that it's really damaging and it annoys you - these fitness models and stuff - and you know it's not real life, but there you are, looking, scrolling through their photos thinking 'I'll be like that one day'. But realistically I am never gonna have 2 meter long legs - it doesn't matter how hard I gym. So yeah, it is difficult to get out of it because FOMO is a big thing.”
- D1: “It's more like a social contract of sorts. If you are in a relationship and you are going to delete all your social profiles then it is going to look like you are doing some bad things. Just things like that. Especially with our career path - like my Twitter account - I don't use it but I just keep up-to-date. It's kind of relevant to what we do.”

One design in particular mentioned that social media ‘steals time’ (W207). Some students in the group compared social media use to addiction and drugs while others said it was a habitual part of life:

- D5: “Yeh, definitely. It's very time consuming in terms of the little things that probably don't add much, most of the stuff don't add much, but it's entertaining for you and it can be very distracting when you are studying and there is nothing else but your phone lying there. So you just want a quick little scroll but that can turn into half an hour.”
- D4: “Why we are seen as procrastinators? Social media. Instagram; you can feel like you are going on there for 10 minutes and you end up on there for an hour when you look at the time again. Oh wow gotta get back to work. Like my friend, X, she will go on Instagram for hours and hours meanwhile I think she's working - she's on Instagram. You get sucked in what's the next one, what's the next one. So it doesn't

help us it just takes up all of our productive time. And you don't even realise that it's happening - that's the scary part. I think with TV a program ended and then you have to go to bed or the program ended and that was it nothing else came on. YouTube is endless. It's a never-ending thing there is always content. Self-control, we don't have it.”

D3: “It definitely does take up a lot of our time and in a sense that it almost is an addiction. Because with me I look forward to when I can like sit in my bed and scroll through Instagram because it's so relaxing for me and I just do nothing I just sit there. And it is sort of like a drug in a sense because of the feeling I get when I just sit there and just do this and I'm very happy to do it. And I look forward to doing it obviously then it takes up a lot of time. Because it's not like I planned 'ok guys it's 9 o'clock I'm going to start my Instagram' and have a whole thing over in 3 hours. When I open my phone I go 'oooh, I wonder what's happening'. I wanna see, I wanna look at the pretty pictures and all the fun things so yes it is in a sense like a drug.”

D2: “It does steal a lot of our time. I think we let it because it's become a habit now it's just something we do every day it doesn't even feel like an addiction, it just feels like that's your day-to-day thing. And although sometimes when you have something due like a deadline and you are very busy then you do feel a bit of guilt and you are like 'I shouldn't be on my phone'. But most of the time you don't even think twice about it.”

D1: “I think I waste the most time on YouTube watching stuff that doesn't really add value. I just watch a 10 minute video and that will lead to 5 or more where that time could have been better spent watching an episode that's a piece of art or whatever. It's a weird sort of lazy. I remember before we had Internet, people would say 'I can't believe kids are watching so much TV'. It's even worse now because at least that had some sort of value like a story but this is just like watching some idiot doing funny things. It's a waste of time. Maybe if you get to

that point like with drinking where you are thinking of stopping because you have a problem so it will be difficult if you think about it.”

When asked to name some positive aspects relating to social media, the majority of the group felt that social media connects you with people and various interests:

- D5: “It's so nice to find out things. You can get inspiration in terms of design and animation there are so many business profiles you can follow for information, which is really cool. And then the whole aspect of you can connect with people you have never have had a chance to.”
- D4: “Connecting with people is a lot easier especially internationally. If I follow an Illustrator and they follow me back that's amazing because now they can view my stuff and if they like it that's better. So previously I'll probably have to go to America and be like ‘hi do you mind looking at my illustration’ I’d probably be like a stalker. But now we can just message each other on Instagram. I think it's just constantly having content to look at and I know I said it is negative before but it is also a positive. The fact that you can see what else is out there and endless possibilities of what's out there. You get to see people's profiles you get to see, just being able to see what other people have out there is quite cool.”
- D3: “The big positive of social media is connecting. And communities. With my personal experience I've been able to connect with a lot of like-minded people - South African beauty industry people like that which I love. That no one else knows, I don't know of anyone else whose friends with them. And it's cool to meet new people over social media in Pretoria or something like that. And then getting inspiration and aspiration. It's helping me to aspire. Because a lot of my design stuff - I would love to say it's hundred percent me, but I have gotten inspiration from the Internet and from social media and from other creators and stuff like that. It's helped me to join the dots. Creation is a big thing on

social media I like seeing different creators. And people are very creative in ways that you wouldn't have thought were possible or knew about.”

D2: “I think it's nice because especially for family or friends who have moved overseas - I would still like to see what they doing. Almost feel like I'm still part of their life even though they not here. So for me that's one thing I really like. So sharing like the creative side of it, things that you would never have the opportunity to see if you didn't have social media. So that Talenthouse thing where you can find photographers and illustrators - even if it's not super inspirational things. It's just stuff that you appreciate looking at. Where you have to sit and watch TV about a long documentary about something that interests you, you can just see something and find lots of different things that you are interested in. I love that about social media.”

D1: “It's a good way to keep track of your interests. Also one thing I love about it is, you can meet people like niche groups in a way. Like on Facebook - I love the group function where you can have discussions and chats over very niche interests. And that's not necessarily popping up on people's news feeds but I've met some really cool people through that. And let's say you are into some band and you don't know anyone that can go to the concert with you, then you can actually get to know people who are in to this and who can go with you. Where before it, if you were into some weird thing especially in school you will never meet anyone like you. And it's made it accessible to meet like-minded kind of people. That's very nice.”

The idea of reality was a consistent theme present in the questionnaires (W104, W106, W107, W108, W110, W210, W211), design pieces (W101, W104, W106, W107, W108a, W110, W204, W206, W207, W210) and group discussion. The group was asked to share their thoughts on the concept of 'real vs. fake' within social media and visual communication as a whole. Some students in the group had

concerns about trust and unrealistic, photoshopped idealism and another mentioned the censorship of self in social media and that it could potentially hinder authenticity:

D1: “I find it irritating to have to be your own PR agent to an extent. I can't say this so I can't say that because there are going to be some sort of repercussions. So you are forming an expression of yourself that's a part of you but it's not like your real life to an extent. (Your real beliefs and stuff) Like when we are doing our CV's; I had to sit down and my girlfriend said: 'Are we going through your timeline and all of the controversial shit you have ever said, are we going to go and delete it?'” It sucks having to do that. Everyone is their own publicist and I think in the past people weren't as scared but now people are very safe on it so you have to be your own PR agent and it sucks”.

D2: “I find it almost ironic because people have become so sceptical of everything that we see. We are so cynical but at the same time we see on Instagram a before and after photo and we are like wow that's amazing but we don't actually stop ourselves and think that's not real. And then at the same time a lot of fitness models make it clear they will post on Instagram versus real life photos where it's like airbrushed and a real photo where they actually show stretch marks and I think we appreciate that a lot more. But a lot of what we see we don't even question ourselves when we say: “oh wow that's amazing”. The shit's not real. I think we appreciate a much more a real person these days. The fitness girl that I follow she never wears makeup and she takes photos of herself at gym sweaty and red and she looks horrible. And I love what she posts compared to other woman who looks immaculate. So I much prefer the real ugly truth compared to the pretty girl.”

D3: “We are used to seeing all the Louis Vuitton stuff and we know what the media is portraying and what they expect so it's nice to see something different. It's more real. It catches your eye more when the model shows us how she actually looks that's much more catching. I

know I say the real and stuff but some people posting those pretty pictures and stuff when it comes to aspiring and stuff it's nice to see those pretty pictures, but it's also nice to see the real side. But with my experience with some people I know will post something. For example, this person I know was screaming at her child to stop being such a brat 5 minutes later she posted an Instagram on how much her child is an angel and adores her. I know she adores her but she's all like "Oh my child is snuggling with me and loving me" and I'm like 5 minutes ago you were screaming at her. I hate people that blatantly lie. So I appreciate when people are just being honest. Don't sugar coat it or try just be upfront and honest I think people appreciate that and are attracted to that more."

D4: "With social media especially visual content I don't trust anything anymore that's why I prefer animation even with photography we have been trying to Photoshop this and Photoshop that and you can stretch that. You can take someone else's nose and plonk it on someone else's face, so I don't trust photographs anymore. That's why I like animation because you know it's not real. It's authentic in its own way you know it's not real. You know it's childish and it's made up. But they are giving you the exact thing that it is. It's not trying to be anything else whereas with photography, especially on social media or with the visual communication, we stretch this. How do you trust a brand that does it too often? I will actually un-follow a brand that is trying to make beautiful things but are doing it in such a wrong way. It's not authentic anymore it's not beautiful anymore, you've taken what is beautiful and you have stripped it from all its beauty. I have trust issues when it comes to visual communication and photography."

D5: "It comes down to being honest depending on the category of what is being shown. So if it is maybe someone famous, or whatever, then you will more appreciate it when you see them looking exactly how they are but if it is a makeup artist and they show themselves without the

makeup saying this is how I got here. Showing that they are not just like that because there is a process to it. Just explaining. So, if you are a makeup artist, instead of putting just the final results out there and you are showing them the steps and teaching that they can also make themselves look how they want.”

The group felt that their relationship with the fantasy visual and the real visual depends on the person’s own grasp of his/her own reality:

D3: “I think it depends on the person. You know you can't really attain it. Me personally, I love vampires and I'm obsessed with them, and I will stalk all of the actors but they are not vampires in real life. But I know that I'm not going to be one and I'm not going to be disappointed emotionally. I think with fantasy you just need to check in with yourself and I understand that it's different to reality because I do think some people mash together.”

D1: “I don't really know how I feel about this because it is entertainment and the escapism of social media is the magic of it, and it also can be harmful to you if you are real on it. It can be harmful when you kind of exhibit it in your life. Like if you are a famous person, it's the worst idea ever to over share. Maybe it is not a bad thing to put a certain image of ourselves on there. Because maybe the opposite is way worse.”

When asked if they prefer brands to communicate to them in a more real manner, the group responded:

D1: “More authentic rather than real - what does real mean? It's more maybe just authentic you can still project something but be authentic.”

According to some design pieces, the concept of what is shown on a public platform might not be authentic or truthful (W101, W104, W106, W107, W108a, W110, W206). The group felt that the lines between private and public are blurred:

D3: “What first comes to mind for me is that I literally have to draw a line between public and private. My Instagram account was a mixture of my brand and a mixture of my family and like my little sister and friends and stuff and I would start sort of not really knowing where I am going. So I had to literally delete all of the pictures of my private, save those pictures and move them over onto a private account, so I can section my brain ok this is what I can share with the public like my public profile and I restricted myself to not family not friends. And I made a private account that is on private with people that I only know and I've only met more personal things I do share a few things. For example about my anxiety on my public page, because I do think it is relatable, people will know about it and when you do something like that you can start a conversation and that can help you as well. But definitely when it comes to very personal things: I don't have to show people who have never met her, my 2 year-old sister. That freaks me out - it's not good for her. I share it with my friends and family who know her on the private one, so it does blur it's very difficult. So I literally had to physically separate the two.”

D4: “I'm literally thinking of it now. I think a lot of people struggle with private these days - everything is public these days. If people are gonna post something then it's literally on a topic that's personal today. Maybe they should have consulted somebody in person. You should have kept it to yourself; you don't have to put it out there. But I'm questioning if anything is really private anymore. For example: if you have kids then it has to be private, or to protect them, or if you are protecting something, or you have a serious issue. Or something that relates to you about anxiety or depression and you relate to that and you sort of wanna put that in your little gallery, then maybe that should be private. Because people will comment on that. People can't help themselves but comment: Why you feeling this way or don't you think that's a bit negative? But that's just how I'm feeling and stuff. So I don't

think anything is private anymore. And I don't think in terms of visual communication that anything is private anymore, all topics are open. And that's actually kind of dangerous. So everything is public in my opinion.”

D2: “I also cover the camera on my laptop because I am scared that people are staring at me while I'm working. But also you do get people that just over share. Like the two girls that I knew that had babies. The one posted all the time about her big pregnant stomach and photos and stuff. And the other one posted a story when the baby was born that it was ambiguous whether or not it was her child or not. But I know the inside information so it is her baby. Even on Facebook, it freaks me out. The one night I went out and I met a guy who my boyfriend is friends with and he had nothing to do with me. Or it had nothing to do with what I was doing on my phone because I met him in person for the first time that night. And the next day he popped up as a suggestion to add on Facebook and for me that freaks me out.”

The idea of being constantly engaged was prevalent in several design pieces (W101, W202, W204). The group felt that they are constantly engaged and one student enjoys it while another does not:

D3: “I enjoy constantly engaging or talking to people like-minded people that I haven't met and having a conversation with them and communicating with them, whether privately or in context with other people. I like constantly being engaged with other people.”

D4: “I don't like being constantly engaged with other people on my phone as much as I am. Because I feel I've lost the ability to actually speak to people one-on-one. And that's so scary. Like I'll go to a party and I forgot how to start a conversation. You can hide behind Instagram and WhatsApp and Facebook. You can hide behind that and you can send emojis. I can't put a monkey emoji on my face. So I don't like it. I don't

like being on my phone as much. I shouldn't lose that ability to converse with people one-on-one. You can hide behind a text you can say I didn't mean it that way you just read it wrong but if you say it then I can hear how you say it but I can't hear it if you're texting me. And lots of people hide behind that, and that's quite dangerous.”

D2: “I think for me it's like a need to be constantly engaged but it's frustrating almost. Like if I'm driving and I get a message, I know I shouldn't look on my phone, but I feel like I need to because what if? What if it's something important? For example, if I gym or I'm doing something important it's distracting. That's something that I do and being constantly engaged needs to be like that but it's frustrating.”

When asked to discuss the concept of validation with regard to social media, the students felt that social media does validate certain aspects of their lives:

D5: “Yeah it definitely gives you some. Like it doesn't matter each person has an average amount of likes. I used to care about the likes, but now I don't care. It's more for myself now. But I used to feel more validated if I got more likes I guess it's normal. It's getting a compliment. It's very rewarding to post something about you, that's almost as if they want people to know that they are happy with you. I don't want to sound like trophy vibes, but it's like they are proud of you being part of their lives.”

D4: “I don't feel validated on social media because I think about it, it means you got that tick you are official. So unless I'm official I'm not validated. If you don't have a tick you're not official. You are seeking to be validated because social media like Instagram or Facebook validate you. Because they say you are part of us and we recognise you. I don't really feel part of a community maybe that's why some people are on because they feel like they're part of a bigger something, but personally I just don't feel it. I'm just going through the motions. It's almost like you are not in a relationship if there aren't pictures about the two of you

everywhere. Are you guys together? Like when I was dating someone, someone asked me: "Are you guys still together because I haven't seen any pictures of you recently?" I was like: 'you can just ask, come see us we are right here'."

D3: "I think just having access to social media and being able to express your opinions and something like that. That is validating enough, but also likes and comments. Personally if a video of mine really did well and a lot of people comment on it then it feels great and people care about what you're doing that's a bit of a compliment or an ego boost. There are a lot more people online and because you know me, you might be biased in the sense, like you do support me. I expect you to support me. And when it comes to complete strangers and they think exactly the same way as someone who actually knows me does, then that's really great. That means that I've done something right, so yeah that's definitely a great thing. It's almost like you get the high twice. (Real life and online)."

D2: "I think it definitely does validate you, but most of the time it has the opposite effect because you don't always get what you want out of it. But I think also a big thing is it translating to real life. For instance, if you're dating someone and they post a photo of you two that's validating, because it validates your relationship with that person. If you become Facebook official then that validates your relationship with them, because they want to post that in public so it's more real than them just asking you one-on-one. One-on-one it's real but when it's in public, it validates it. It makes it that much more genuine."

65% of the design pieces either have a smartphone visual or mention a smartphone (W208, W207, W209, W210, W205, W204, W202, W110, W108a, W107, W105, W104, W101). Questioning the relevance and symbolism of this device revealed that a cell phone is a central place for all things social, personal, professional and logistical and mimics the behaviour of a needy child:

- D5: “For me it's a way of just keeping my life in order; socially and logistically. It's a little thing that keeps all your personal, your social, your logistical and professional life in order.”
- D4: “I just imagine a little loudspeaker that with constant notifications constantly telling me something. That's what I imagine - it's almost like having a kid. A little titanium kid that's nagging you constantly: ‘Mum did you talk to me today, did you look at my picture, did you see what I drew’. I need my kid. If my kid had to die then I would mourn it, but it's nagging me. It's in my womb - it's part of me. I love my kid but it annoys me. And sometimes you want to chuck it but you can't because people will frown on that.”
- D3: “I would say my phone is my life, but it's not because if I didn't have it I would be perfectly fine. So I probably say it's more of a bridge. I have my work-work [sic], my college work, my personal, my social something, everything on it. And I think it just helps me to connect. I don't have a bad relationship with my phone. I like my phone but maybe that's just me being blinded. Love is blind; I don't see the negativity of it. I don't hate my phone. I love that I have my phone and I can communicate with people. It's almost like you can reconnect with your family that you haven't seen or anything. You get to speak to them again. I really enjoy having my phone. Dynamite comes in small packages and this is a very small package. It hasn't an air hangar full of dynamite in it, but it does give a lot of access and opportunity.”
- D2: “I see it as a way of connecting. Although connecting in real life is great, but it's just like the new way to connect. But in another way it is also like a security, a sense of security. I'm not the only one, if you feel your pocket and your phone is not there then you start to panic. Because you just rely on it so heavily for everything. Just for simple things like writing a note. If I wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and I have an idea I write it on my phone. I don't write it on a piece of paper. So

there's so much you can lose if you lose your phone; photos and memories and a way of connecting with people, not just in emergency situations. It is definitely a sense of security.”

D1: “I think it has become a universal tool. It's also kind of unfair to say that people are addicted to phones - it's like saying people are addicted to roads. This is the infrastructure that you use. I went somewhere and then my phone dies and I'm thinking: 'how am I gonna get home?' It's actually a logistical thing. And it's also expected of you to keep it on you. Because what if person X phones you, and you don't answer and they think you went off the face of the earth for three hours. Then it's a problem for that person. And that's irritating, but it's expected.”

When asked why some students might portray 'real life' as unpleasant in contrast to a glorified social media life (W101, W104, W107, W207), the group mentioned that you cannot fake real life and it comes with challenges. They felt that social media is therefore the place where you showcase and emphasise the good parts of life:

D1: “Maybe it's like social media as a curated version of life. Like a movie is also a curated version of life. It's actually something I heard yesterday - someone saying this. Like a movie will have the cool parts of life in it, social media is the same it has the cool part of life, the curated version.”

D2: “Real life - you can't fake it. It is what it is, but on social media you can so easily make things seem better than they are. And you think that is so much better than your life. Even looking at something that is well photoshopped. You look at real life and you think that packet is looking shit on the table but I can Photoshop it to look great, so it's just easier to make it look wonderful.”

D3: “I don't think real life is so 'meh'. When I'm on social media I know that is a different reality and I will be there for a minute and I'll come back to you, but I know what to expect afterwards. But it just reminds me a bit

with fantasy and stuff that that's a big thing so if I watch a really great fantasy series and I'm obsessed I'm on a really cool high because everything seems great and I'm like: 'Wow wouldn't it be cool if the world is like this?' And you do come down a bit and you say: 'ok life is not as exciting as that it's a bit boring', but I think it depends on the person if you could just accept and acknowledge that it is not going to be like this, and it's fine. Also I feel like you can make anything possible.”

D4: “Real life has got these problems like anxiety and all these things whereas on social media you don't really see it. You highlight the good stuff, and it comes in short bursts, but if you do suffer from anxiety or something well that goes on forever if it's not treated well. So that's why it's meh. Problems don't just go away - you can't put a filter on it. You can't swipe left or swipe right to make it go away - sometimes they're just stuck there. And it's not a 120-minute movie, it does not end. You have to sort the problem out. And we live in a world where a lot of people don't sort it out. I don't have to face this problem that's sitting right in front of me. It gets ignored and it gets worse and then people are then trapped in this never-ending cycle.”

D5: “I agree, but in terms of my own profile or usage of Instagram, I prefer real life or experiences that you have in real life. Like the good ones, and then you just capture a part of it and you put it on the Gram for memory. But that's just your profile and I guess if you compare your life experiences with what you see on Instagram like the travel stuff or whatever, it will obviously seem more amazing. But you also know that they could manipulate the picture or they have a really good camera compared to your little phone camera.”

Several design pieces illustrated situations where characters compared themselves to others (W210, W207, W107, W101). The group did mention that this was hard but that it can also be motivating if one's expectations are not unrealistic:

D5: “Comparing can be a good thing if it's a little bit because it can be motivating, or it can be bad - you take it too seriously and you don't look at the bigger picture and see where you are coming from or whatever. And then it becomes unrealistic and you think you are not good enough.”

D3: “Yeah it's definitely shit. It was when I was like going to Greece and very lucky to be going to Greece, but in comparison to other people that I've watched when they went to Greece they were staying in these grand hotels and stuff. I was like I don't want to show people where I was staying. We stayed in the cheapest place possible and it was beautiful and was great, but not compared to those, so I didn't properly show them where I was staying. And I knew that I was actively doing that. I'm not going to lie that I didn't stay at a great place but I'm just not gonna mention it.”

D2: “Yeah, I booked an Airbnb place and it's pretty average. We didn't have enough money to book a fancy place then I saw on Instagram this girl I knew from school stayed at this B&B in Mykonos and it was the most incredible thing I've ever seen in my life. And I saw her caption said last person to stay here was Beyonce, so yeah.”

Throughout the discussion the group mentioned their desire to see realness, yet their answers seemed contradictory. They responded that the behaviour online is hypocritical and that it showcases the good in favour of the whole story:

D3: “Everything is hypocritical.”

D1: “And also the hypocrite thing is totally right because sometimes I won't show something because I don't want to be perceived to care. That's also same thing and the same problem. It's like a highlight show, it's not the whole day”

D4: “I think the travel industry suffers so much from that as you have to show the best otherwise people are not gonna go there. But like when I went to Thailand - nobody tells you Bangkok is so crowded - it is flooded with people. I just wanted to get out of there. I was like: ‘I hate this place, I just want to get out’. I saw images of Bangkok and I was like ‘ah we need to go there - there's like shopping and everything’. But nobody tells you that you are going to stand in a line from here to Timbuktu for hours on end. I hated Bangkok and I will never go back. So you Photoshop what an experience is going to be and when you get there you are so angry and you are like: ‘you lied to me’.”

4.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The data gathered from the workshops and the small group discussion was organised and analysed using a thematic analysis process in order to identify patterns, connections and themes. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the analysis made use of the analytical process proposed by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) and included a critical exploration of data, through predefined steps. These phases included: understanding of context, understanding the data, focus on analysis, categorise information, identify patterns and connections, and finally interpretation.

4.4.1 Understanding of Context

The co-design process asked the participants to be involved in the data creation process in order to discover shared meaning constructs of individuals through participation and cooperation.

4.4.2 Understanding the Data

The questionnaires were firstly evaluated individually and reference codes were allocated to each participant. Each participant's questionnaire answers were electronically documented and filed under an appropriate heading (Workshop 1 or Workshop 2). The design pieces were scanned, digitised and coded with the same code as the questionnaires to ensure the correct data remained with the correct participant (Figure 4e). All information obtained from the questionnaires and design pieces was electronically processed and filed on a password secure computer.

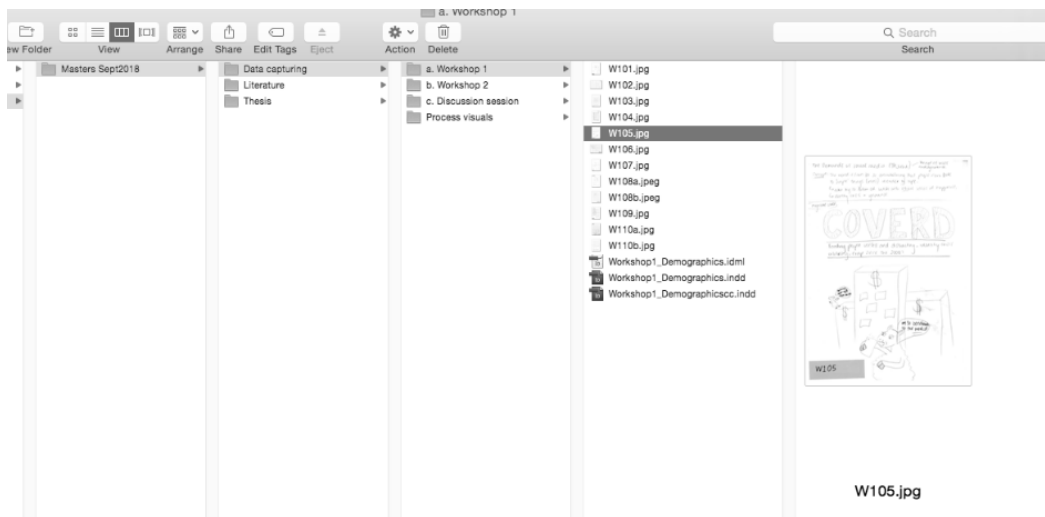


Figure 4e. Documentation and filing of Workshop data. 2018

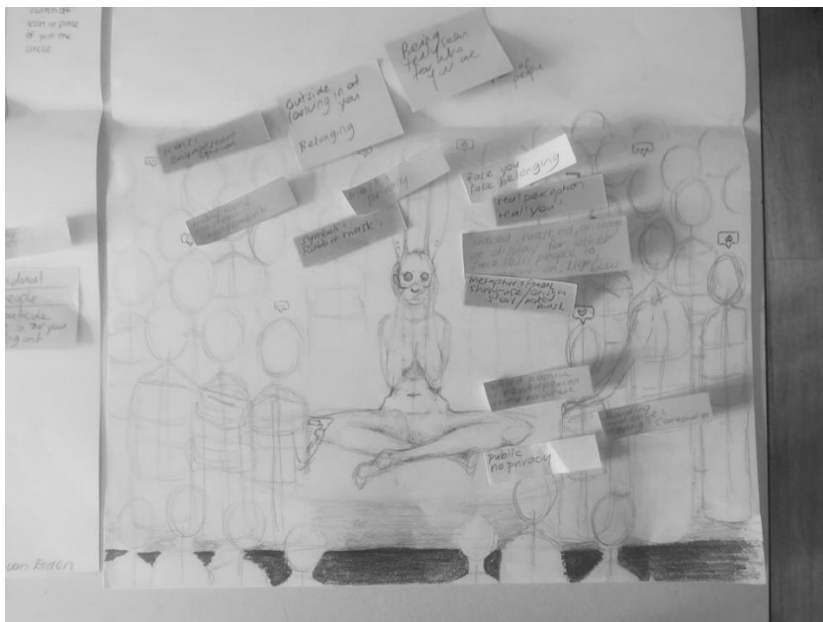


Figure 4f. Examination of individual design piece. 2018

The design pieces were examined individually at first and all findings were noted and colour coded on the actual visual (Figure 4f). The design pieces were reviewed again in each group: Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 respectively, and information was added and documented in each separate group (Figure 4g). All 20 design pieces were analysed again following the review to ensure the body of work was considered as a whole and findings were documented.



Figure 4g. Examination of design pieces from Workshop 1. 2018

The themes were documented electronically and added to each Workshop's allocated folder. The electronic documentation of both Workshops was printed and analysed together in order to establish if any additional data was required. Analysis revealed that additional data on certain topics and themes was needed and a small group discussion session was held to assist with this.

A list of questions was compiled and the group discussion was recorded and the audio file transcribed (Figure 4h). All the documentation from the discussion session (audio file and transcription) was filed together with the documentation from the workshops.

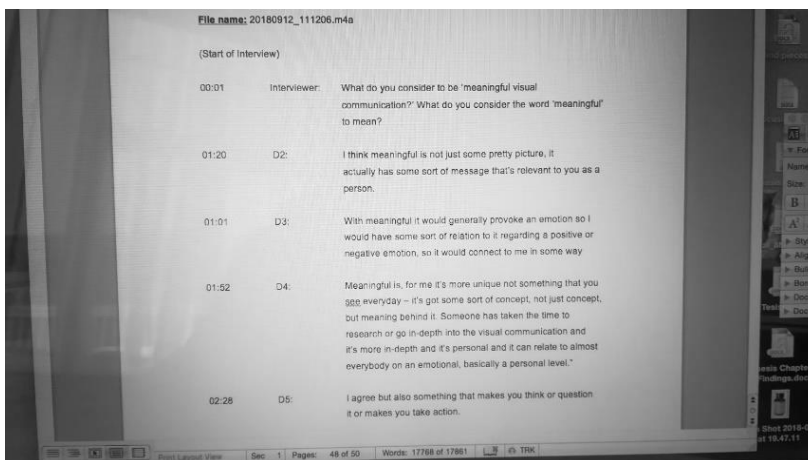


Figure 4h. Transcription close-up of small group discussion. 2018

4.4.3 Focus of Analysis

The data was analysed using a combination of approaches. The analysis tried to establish what a particular youth audience might consider to be meaningful visual communication. It did so by aiming to:

- understand the group's current relationship with visual communication;
- understand what type of visual communication is of interest to this group;
- understand how this group defines themselves as an audience;
- understand the group's definition of meaningful visual communication;
- understand what meaningful visual communication looks like to this youth group.

The questionnaire analysis focused on how each individual and group responded to each question and was documented by individual, group and topic.

The design piece analysis focused on emerging topics found in each piece. Similar topics were noted and documented. The topics were then examined within the context of meaningful visual communication.

The discussion group's analysis focused on clarifying various topics from the questionnaires and designs and assisting with a deeper understanding.

4.4.4 Categorise Information

The data from the questionnaires and design pieces was categorised by individual, group (workshop) and topic:

- Workshop (W1 – Workshop 1)
- Individual (example: W101, W202)
- Small group discussion (D1, D2, D3, D4, D5)
- Topic (example: RE – Realness; AU - Authentic)

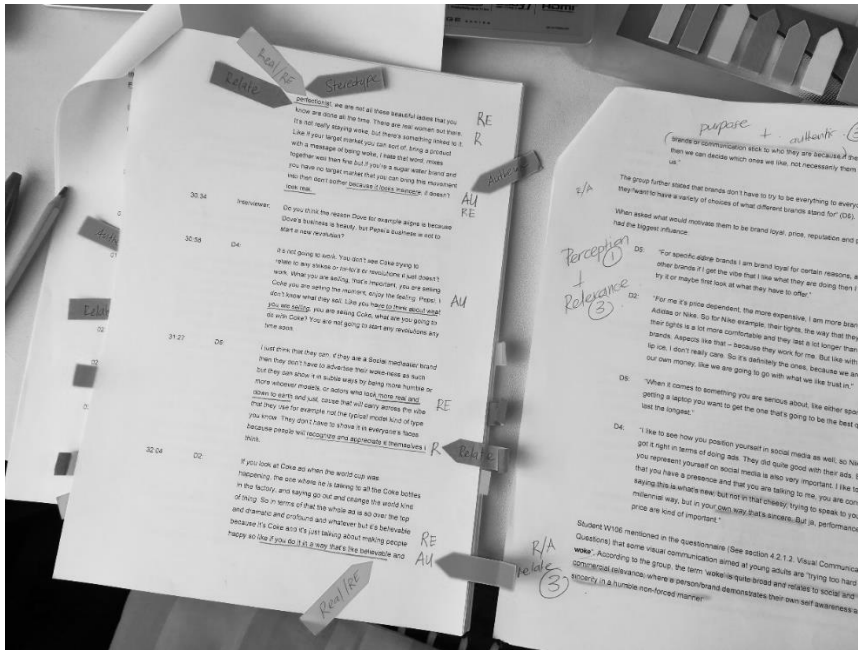


Figure 4i. Topic coding in the small group discussion transcription. 2018

Each of these preliminary categories was cross-examined multiple times to code and categorise re-occurring themes and patterns (see figure 4i). The emerging themes were documented under specific topics and re-organised into broader categories. Several topics therefore served as sub-categories; each living within a bigger umbrella theme.

4.4.5 Identify Patterns and Connections

Several topics were identified, documented and interpreted via a mapping process (see figure 4j).

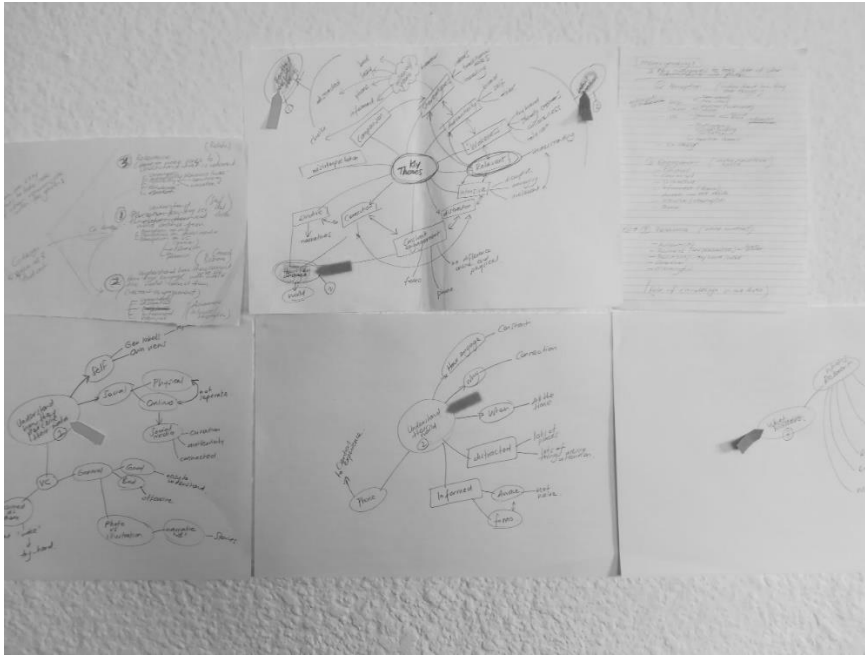


Figure 4j. Mapping process to identify and cross-examine topics. 2018

It was noticed that the topics had several interconnected themes which were identified as building blocks for a bigger category of association (see Table 4e below). Three major categories of understanding were identified:

- Perception: How the youth sees their world
- Engagement: How the youth experiences their world
- Relevance: How the youth relates to their world

Table 4e. The identification of categories

Theme	Sub categories	Data sets	Analysis	Coding	Examples
Perception How the youth sees their world	The millennial label	Questionnaire	Thematic	YL (Youth/labels)	"Stereotypes of millennials: always on the phone posing for selfies" (W108)
		Group Discussion	Thematic	YL (Youth/labels)	"I don't even like the word millennial" (D3)

	Technology and social media	Questionnaire	Thematic	SM (Social Media)	All students have access to social media. (See tables 4a and 4b)
				TEC (Technology)	20 of 21 students own smartphones and all students have access to computers and internet at school.
		Co-design Visualisation	Thematic	SM (Social Media)	W203: The design mentions that “The millennial generation feels incomplete without social media”
				TEC (Technology)	W205: Visual of 5 people staring at mobile phone screens.
		Group Discussion	Thematic	SM (Social Media)	“If you become Facebook official, then it validates your relationship ... Its makes it much more genuine” (D2)
				TEC (Technology)	“... technology was created to make life easier...” (D3)
	Image and emotion	Questionnaire	Thematic	IMA (Image)	“I like to see what people say in photos without actually speaking” (W207)
				EMO (Emotion)	“Visuals that can change your mood in a few seconds” (W104)
		Co-design Visualisation	Thematic	IMA (Image)	All 20 designs contains imagery

				EMO (Emotion)	W206: Copy inside the person drawn reads: "Pain, hurt, struggle"
		Group Discussion	Thematic	IMA (Image)	"I am in the jail of pictures" (D4)
				EMO (Emotion)	"... chance to tell a story or has a narrative – that connects more" (D1)
Engagement How the youth experiences their world	The smartphone as agent of connectivity	Questionnaire	Thematic	SP (Smartphone)	20 of 21 students own smartphones (See tables 4a and 4b)
				CO (Connect)	21 students have access to the internet at school and 18 students have access at all times. (See tables 4a and 4b)
		Co-design Visualisation	Thematic	CO (Connect)	W203: Design mentions that the youth connects via social media.
				SP (Smartphone)	W101: The design shows a girl standing in front of a mirror holding a mobile phone.
				EN (Engagement)	W202: Design shows several moments during the day being engaged with social media platforms.
		Group Discussion	Thematic	SP (Smartphone)	"There is so much you can lose if you lose your phone ..."

					(D2)
				CO (Connect)	"I've been able to connect with a lot of like-minded people" (D3)
				EN (Engagement)	"... very distracting when you are studying and there is nothing else but your phone lying there" (D5)
Relevance How the youth relates to their world	A case for stereotypes	Questionnaire	Thematic	ST (Stereotypes)	Question on negative experiences: "...bad stereotypes or generalisations" (W108)
		Group Discussion	Thematic	ST (Stereotypes)	"I enjoy stereotypes when they are used in a mocking kind of way, not serious" (D2)
	Demand for authenticity	Questionnaire	Thematic	YL (Youth/labels)	"Millennials like authentic, give us something that is not surface value" (W105)
		Co-design Visualisation	Thematic	RE (Real/realness)	W106: The design mentions "you don't do things you Facebook likes if you don't get Facebook likes" and then prompts the viewer to live life first hand not through social media.
		Group Discussion	Thematic	RE (realness)	"... if you have no target market that

					you can bring this movement into then it looks insincere, it doesn't look real" (D4)
	Rejection of 'try-hard' communication	Questionnaire	Thematic	RE (Real/realness)	"Unattainable ideals that create a false sense of security" (W108)
				AU (Authentic)	"... tries too hard to be woke" (W106)
		Group Discussion	Thematic	RE (Real/realness)	"Dove is a good example because they understand that women have stretch marks and not beauty models" (D3)
				AU (Authentic)	"Don't force a movement into your brand ..." (D4)

These broader themes and supporting sub-categories are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

4.4.6 Interpretation

The interpretation of the data was considered with the research objectives and questions in mind and will be discussed in Chapter 6. The interpretation explained the findings through highlighting the important themes and connections.

4.3.2 Summary

The data gathered during the co-design processes characterised by phases 1 and 2 was documented, processed and cross-examined multiple times via a mapping process. The data revealed several themes that overlapped and were categorised within 3 broad categories hosting several complementary sub-categories. The

interpretation of each category will be discussed in Chapter 5 where the impact of visual communication aimed at the youth audience is unpacked.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the categories and themes as documented in Chapter 4. The discussion focuses on emergent categories; where themes and topics emerged during the co-design process (Ryan and Bernard, 2003:85). Three main themes were identified during thematic data analysis, namely: *Perception* (how the youth see their world), *Engagement* (how the youth experience their world) and *Relevance* (how the youth relate to their world). These themes provide insights into the perceptions and needs of a South African youth market and the communication elements this audience finds meaningful.

The thematic analysis of the co-design and discussion sessions highlighted themes rooted in social media communication with potential to impact on visual communication aimed at this youth group. Each theme consists of sub-categories which relate to the main theme. The themes were categorised in this manner to help understand what contributes to and informs each main theme.

The study's findings suggest that the three thematic categories of understanding - *perception, engagement* and *relevance* – are underpinned by a number of related sub-categories. The emerging main themes, and the related elements which make up the themes, are discussed in detail throughout this chapter. In order to gain an understanding of what meaningful communication looks like to the youth audience, these themes must be considered. Only when communication aimed at the youth market is experienced as relevant and meaningful, will advertising and messages aimed at them prove successful.

5.2 PERCEPTION: HOW THE YOUTH GENERATION SEE THEIR WORLD

5.2.1 Introduction

The late researcher, David Marr, (1982:31) said that vision "... is a process that produces from images of the external world a description that is useful to the viewer and not cluttered with irrelevant information." These descriptions instantly inform all

aspects of the brain and give meaning to what is perceived. The sense of sight is informed by optics which allow the mind to predict shapes, materials and colours. The brain, however, needs to solve inverse optics – an innate process of sense-making through the deduction of retinal imagery – where the brain needs to explain the environment of ‘what’ is seen in order to give meaning to the imagery (Pinker, 2015:28). The visual brain fills in the blanks to form a whole of the kind of world perceived. It is this ability of the brain to make assumptions about the world perceived that also informs people and their psychology: It is not possible to sense a person’s beliefs inside their heads so the mind makes use of assumptions about people and their beliefs by looking at what they do and how they act (Pinker, 2015:31). A person cannot for example ‘sense’ the growth that is taking place in a plant, but one assumes it is growing by seeing that the plant is green, getting bigger over time or blossoms. The mind therefore uses various mental constructs and symbols (innate and learned) to make sense of what it sees. This section discusses how a particular youth audience perceive and interpret their visual world in the context of visual communication.

5.2.2 The flouting of the millennial label

The findings showed that the youth are not happy with the labels surrounding generations Y and Z as they do not regard any associations with the generations to be positive in nature: “I don’t even like the word ‘millennial’” (D3). The youth felt that the term ‘millennial’ carried a very negative connotation within the public realm, especially in conversations with older generations. The term, in their experience, is usually followed by sweeping statements such as: “... you grew up with parents babying you, telling you, you can do anything you want” (D3). Results showed that such statements make the youth feel looked down upon by sectors in society; that they are seen as simply being ‘millennials’ regardless of their own individual context. The youth reject demographic segmentation and labelling in favour of realistic, inclusive representations of the individual as it indicates a real understanding of their context and experiences (Whiteside, 2017; Connors, 2017). Sweeping statements ignore individual context, family life and parental nurturing which, according to the findings, plays a big role in shaping the lives of the youth and they feel their generation should not be blamed as a whole.

Expectations of parents and teachers put (sometimes unrealistic) pressure on the youth to be critical, successful, profound and active citizens, working towards global solutions for problems (Randall, Travers, Shapiro and Bohnert, 2016; Schulte, 2014). The youth felt that they are simply members of society, are 'just like everyone else' and they disregard it when some of their peers have an unrealistic opinion of themselves due to this type of conditioning. A recent study on youth attitudes and aspirations indicated that 93% of youth aged 16-24 years feel it is hard to be young today due to the endless possibilities associated with globalisation and technology, and add to their own pressure to make the most of such possibilities (Kok-Jensen, Guerrier, Kong and Kurz; 2017). The study also indicated that, even though the youth strive for a more non-judgemental society, they do not feel confident that this aspiration will be realised in their lifetime (ibid).

5.2.3 The give-and-take of technology and social media

Results indicated that words such as 'useless', 'lazy', 'easily bored' and 'convenience' have a direct association for the youth with regard to their relationship with and reliance on technology and should not be considered as character traits of individuals. Technology is seen as a support in everyday life:

"Millennials don't do things hands-on anymore - technology was created to make life easier for you, and you become a lot 'lazier' than how it used to be ... there are individual people that aren't like that ... just because I'm a millennial doesn't make me lazy" (D3).

The convenience technology provides impacts furthermore on the expectations of the youth as they "... want life to be a bit easier and get upset if it's not" (D2). These expectations surrounding technology-based convenience allow the youth a fluid existence within their online and off-line social worlds as they constantly inform and influence each other (Duffy et al, 2017:10; Letizia and Drew, 2013). Information relating to individual interests is easily accessible online and allows for exploration and connection beyond physical boundaries. Social media, especially, plays a big role in the lives of the youth as they "... often feel incomplete without access to social media" due to its constant mediation of connection and communication (W203).

Social media furthermore has the ability to validate real life experiences due to its public nature:

“If you become Facebook official¹⁹ then that validates your relationship, because they want to post that in public so it's more real than them just asking you one-on-one. One-on-one it's real but when it's in public, it validates it. It makes it that much more genuine” (D2).

The Youth in Flux study indicated that 53% of youth have a love/hate relationship with social media (Kok-Jensen et al, 2017). Social media allows the youth to connect, become a part of like-minded communities, explore new information and maintain new interests. Being up-to-date on social media impacts the offline world by allowing the youth to remain in the ‘conversation’ happening at school, university or work. Besides just allowing access to conversation, events and information required in the present, social media allows the youth to create an archived timeline of their experiences and life. Research on youth interaction with brands on social media platforms resulted in positive cognitive attitudinal responses – indicating that the youth have a positive association with this particular media platform (Labrecque, 2014).

The negative aspects of social media include a general lack of trust, a constant need to engage due to the ‘fear of missing out’ (FOMO), procrastination, distraction and wasting time. Social media is seen as the instigator of controversy and the platform of fake news where “... conversations start” and “... stories get spread” (D1, D3, D4). Online posts and shares should be considered carefully, especially with regard to private, sensitive matters “... because people will comment on that” (D4).

The physical boundaries of social media revealed some personal communication challenges faced by some youths:

“I feel I've lost the ability to actually speak to people one-on-one” (D4).

¹⁹ As a concept 'Facebook official' refers to a status update and public announcement, on the platform, that one is in a relationship with another. Various types of relationships can be indicated, ranging from being in a relationship to being married.

“The millennial generation often lack soft people skills and face-to-face communication” (W203).

The youth feel they can sometimes hide behind social media and said it is easy to justify misunderstandings by saying that information was interpreted incorrectly.

Social media has addictive and prison-like attributes as it is not easy to exit or stop participating. When responding to this, participants noted:

“I am in the jail of pictures” (D4);

“My prison. My life. My jailer” (W202);

“I can’t stop, it’s definitely an addiction” (D3);

“It’s difficult to get out, because FOMO is a big thing” (D2).

The constant access to a never-ending flow of content easily distracts and one can lose time when engaging online. The fact that the smartphone allows for access at any time and in any place increases the opportunity to be distracted (Stevens, Kuegler, Alagon and Ribeiro, 2015). As a participant mentioned:

“With TV, the program ended and you have to go to bed. YouTube is endless ... there is always content” (D1).

Herbert Simon, the father of the concept of ‘the attention economy’, predicted in 1971 that an abundance of information leads to poor attention:

In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it (Greenberger, 1971: 40-41).

The lack of attention in modern culture has been characterised by ‘information overload’ and ‘chronic distraction’ through the interconnections of multiple media platforms (Andrejevic, 2013; Hassan, 2012). Attention is seen as a commodity and

communicators are using 'sticky', affective content strategies focused on clarity, relevance and novelty to catch attention (Paasonen, 2016; Phillips, 2015).

Contemporary diagnoses of distraction indicate concerns over user attention growing ever more elusive a commodity and therefore also increasingly difficult to grab (Paasonen, 2016).

The findings showed that the youth are very aware that they are looking at content that does not always add value to their lives, but the amount of content and the habitual, day-to-day nature of social media engagement makes it difficult to plan and track purposeful engagement. One participant noted:

"It's just content, boring content ... but I *got's* to know" (D4).

Information overload on moral topics such as the environment, faith, identity and sexuality makes it difficult for the youth to negotiate such moral choices (Mena report, 2016). The constant availability of news causes consumers to become overwhelmed and avoid news-related platforms (Song, Jung and Kim, 2017). Real life therefore comes with challenges and social media is the place where you showcase and emphasise the good parts of life, offering a curated view, where "...you can so easily make things seem better than they are" (D2).

The youth are constantly connecting with each other via social media platforms and this 'two-way' feature allows for similar interaction between brands or services and target audiences. This interactive feature gives brands and services the opportunity to "... leverage the power of peer-to-peer recommendation and word of mouth" (Nazir, 2016).

5.2.4 The role of image and emotion in communication

The findings indicated that the youth have a positive association with visual communication as a way to communicate important messages. The visual aspect of visual communication allows for the expression of ideas in a simple, fast, eye-catching and emotional manner which makes it easier to communicate. Participants indicated that images communicated very successfully without the need for additional explanation. If text is used, it should be minimal with an emphasis on

supporting imagery. The youth is an extremely visual target group and the creative strategy for concept development of "show, don't tell" was found to be relevant to the youth audience (Barley, 2015; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014:55). The rise of Instagram (an image-sharing platform) has also contributed to the positive shift towards more visual communications (Barley, 2015).

The potential of visuals to communicate universally allows for visual communication to communicate regardless of language barriers and allows for "...more understanding and presence in a mass context" (W212). The ability of visuals to illicit emotion, as well as impact a person in an emotional manner, is linked to one thinking more deeply and becoming invested.

External and internally generated imagery is the primary mechanism in creating emotions, ideas and the evaluations of the world around us that automatically influence attitudes and choice (Branthwaite, 2007).

Emotion is particularly important in order to connect with the youth as a positive experience with a visual is directly linked to how the visual makes them feel. Research also indicates that advertisements have more impact if they are more emotionally intense (Simon, 2017; Nicks and Carriou, 2016; Thorson and Friestad, 1989). Humour and storytelling plays a pivotal role in visual communication for the youth and emotional connection can be enhanced based on the narrative of the communication:

"I like stuff that has the chance to tell a story or has a narrative – that connects more" (D1).

Storytelling is considered to be one of the most important forms of 'value-added' communication for brands and services. Value-added communication focuses on content with which people voluntarily choose to spend time (Yakob, 2015). Such stories deliver attractive (emotional and visual) content that interests people to engage with brand films and series freely and in an unforced manner (Donaton, 2016).

There is no single preferred visual treatment as results suggested that the youth are open to a variety of executions depending on the story and message: photography is more relatable to real life due to the 'candid', 'realistic' nature of the medium whereas illustration allows for unlimited creativity and expression. Even though the youth in general do not seem to prefer one treatment over another, an awareness of what type of visuals are portrayed on media platforms is important as content or treatment differentiates a visual from the clutter:

“On Instagram you see photo after photo, so if it’s an illustration, then I stop” (D4).

“Video and moving media plays an important role as “you can tell a story better” (D4).

In contrast, participants shared their concern for the potential misinterpretation of visual communication. They noted that if communication is unclear people might interpret the communication differently and from various perspectives. To ensure the message stays in line with the purpose and intent of the communication, content should be contextualised. Context assists with the interpretation of message as it “explains things” (Noble and Russel, 2016:41; Bergstrom, 2008:82; Williams and Newton, 2001:258). Context is ‘meaning system’ that should be considered when creating content to enhance connection and engagement (Kahn, 2018). The use of ‘bad stereotypes’, generalisations, abuse, objectification, unrealistic portrayals and explicit and graphic imagery does not enhance connection with the youth audience and should be avoided.

The youth feel there is a lack of proper segmentation as visuals aimed at them tend to show millennials on phones and posing for selfies and therefore “... lacks insight” (W108, D4). The findings further indicated that the youth do not have a positive association with visual communication aimed at them as it ‘tries too hard’ to relate, be relevant, profound and ‘woke’. The concept of ‘woke’ generally relates to the social and commercial relevance of a brand/person/service where the awareness of self is shown in a sincere, unforced manner. The youth want more authentic

communication as they seek for "... something that is not surface value" (W105). Unrealistic lifestyle images and posed, photo-shopped images reinforce "... unrealistic standards of perfection" which causes the youth to "... compare themselves to the perfect models displayed" (W110, W104, W210, W207). Such visuals could have a negative impact emotionally on some individuals as they 'strive' for similar lifestyles and perfection, even though they are aware it is unattainable and shows a "...false sense of reality" (W110).

5.3 ENGAGEMENT: HOW THE YOUTH EXPERIENCE THEIR WORLD

5.3.1 Introduction

Youth engagement is shaped and informed by globalised information and technology which allows for fluid interaction between online and offline experiences.

Engagement within this globalised context is not conditional and technology allows information and ideas to flow freely and constantly (Southgate, 2017; Carruthers, 2017). The impact of such 'never-ending' engagement is unpacked in the following sub-category:

5.3.2 The smartphone as the agent of connectivity

The findings showed that youth are strongly influenced by technology and their online experiences centre around their smartphones. A smartphone is seen as 'a bridge' and a 'tool' that connects and hosts various aspects of life: social, personal, logistical and professional (D5, D3, D1). The smartphone also provides a sense of security:

"My phone dies and I'm thinking: 'How am I gonna get home?'" (D1)

"There's so much you can lose if you lose your phone; photos and memories and a way of connecting with people, not just in emergency situations. It is definitely a sense of security" (D2).

This technological device plays a central role in the lives of the youth and has the power to inform and enhance experience on all levels of life, and communication directed on mobile platforms is very relevant to this audience. Studies on mobile usage research claim that the portability of smartphones caused this device to

become central to our lives and indicated that users reach for their phones up to 150 times a day (Stevens et al, 2015; Kantar Millward Brown, 2014).

The youth enjoy connecting with people and information that interests them and have an expectation of staying connected to the world around them through various online platforms (Kok-Jensen et al, 2017). The youth find it especially useful to connect and network with various people of interest internationally as "...you can see what other people doing and get inspiration from them" (D3). These connections allow for easy interaction and skill-share between like-minded people who are in countries all around the world:

"Previously I'll probably have to go to America and be like: 'Hi, do you mind looking at my illustration?' But now we can just message each other on Instagram" (D4).

"It is so nice to find out things and connect with people you never had a chance to" (D5).

"I've been able to connect with a lot of like-minded people" (D3).

"If you watch TV, you have to watch a long documentary about something that interests you - on social media you can just see something and find lots of different things you are interested in" (D2).

Global connection enhances the youth's awareness on all levels and brands cannot expect to convince the youth randomly without proper communication strategies (Southgate, 2017; Precourt, 2015). The ease of access and constant flow of information has contributed to the youth being 'on top of things' as they "... are very much aware and content aware" of local and global issues (D4). The youth feel that they are sometimes too aware of what is going on in the world as they follow various people, groups, brands and services in order to stay aware of the world around them (D1, D4). As one participant mentioned:

“My Twitter account – I don’t use it, but I just keep up-to-date” (D1).

The youth are not naïve about the world around them and “... have become sceptical of everything” they see and “... don’t trust anything anymore” (D2, D3). Honesty and sincerity is appreciated and the need for authentic communication is important to the youth:

“Don’t sugar-coat it, just be upfront and honest – I think people appreciate that and are attracted to that more” (D3).

Being constantly connected makes today's youth hyperaware (Kok-Jensen et al, 2017). The youth are aware of what is going on *all* of the time and do not easily trust what they see (Kantar Millward Brown, 2017:2). Technology allows them to search for topics and investigate communication claims seamlessly – communicators should therefore be aware of the fact that this youth group have the ability to critically assess communication aimed at them.

The desire to ‘stay on top of things’ in combination with the amount of content available makes it easy for the youth to get distracted:

“I’ve got my phone open playing stories one after the other while I’m getting ready to go to college, and I know it’s stupid...but I can’t stop” (D3).

Another participant stated that the youth are seen as procrastinators because of social media ‘stealing their time’ as “... you feel like you are going on there for 10 minutes and you end up on there for an hour” (D4). The youth do feel that this online world demands all of their productive time as it can be “...very distracting when you are studying and there is nothing else but your phone lying there” (D5). The easy access to smartphones that allows for interaction at any given time only exacerbates the chance for distraction (Stevens et al, 2015; Goodwin, 2015). The form of distraction that the youth frown upon relates to the irrelevant interruption of their online experience in an intrusive way such as random, unrelated, pop-up advertising as they might be “... watching people’s stories then the next thing an ad pops up”

(D2). The youth do not appreciate irrelevant disruptions online especially if they have not been offered a chance to reject such disruptions (Southgate, 2017; Dawson and Caulkin, 2016).

The interruption of unwanted and intrusive communication could be addressed by looking to value-added communication strategies which aim to get attention through the value they offer not through interruption tactics (Minan, 2017). Value-added strategies focus on the development of content with which people voluntarily choose to spend time (Yakob, 2015). Traditional interruptive strategies focus on interrupting an experience by diverting attention with the aim to sell. Value-added communication delivers on interesting and relevant content that is sought out by consumers as they perceive they receive value from it: "... since it delivers value, consumers will not avoid it and it will engender empathy for the brand, not resentment - it is not spam." (Yakob, 2015). Communicators should therefore focus on creating content that adds value in the consumer's mind and does not merely interrupt their already distracted experiences.

5.4 RELEVANCE: HOW THE YOUTH RELATE TO THEIR WORLD

5.4.1 Introduction

The concept of relevance in visual communication is of utmost importance as "relevant messages, relevant products and relevant interactions foster emotions that touch the psyche of customers in more ways than one" (Ambrosi, 2018). If a communication message is therefore perceived as irrelevant to an audience, it fails not only to connect emotionally but also diverts potential buy-in. The consideration of what relevance might mean to a particular youth audience was unpacked via sub-categories:

5.4.2 A case for stereotypes

The results suggested that the youth primarily associate the word 'stereotype' with negativity – especially with regard to the youth themselves. The labels given to the youth generation and the associated visuals are offensive to this audience as the following quotes indicate:

“Millennials aren’t just one whole thing – there are individual people that aren’t like that” (D3)

“You have to be able to communicate without offending millennials because we will notice it – we are not blind” (D4).

The stereotyping of gender roles where a message reinforces the typical “... mother that likes to cook for her children” (D2) is also frowned upon as the participants perceived its purpose to be to reinforce gender roles and typecast all mothers. It is irresponsible to assume that all mothers enjoy cooking as the individual context is ignored. Research which informed the award-winning #LikeAGirl campaign by Always indicated that gender stereotypes relating to beauty and submissiveness:

... put pressure on girls and define how they should think and behave. It is during puberty, in fact, that for the first time girls feel the pressure to act in ways that are inconsistent with their actual thoughts and feelings, as they begin to learn about traditional gender roles and pick up on everyday sexism perpetuated within society (Coscia, 2015).

Stereotypes, however, can be enjoyed if their use is clearly intentional, based on truth and done in an over-exaggerated manner. Stereotypes have relevance if rooted in human truths where the joke has an endearing, sympathetic quality and the truth is simply exaggerated with the intention not to be taken seriously. The origin of successful stereotypical satire should be based on truth and comes “...from a source that understands it well” as offence occurs when the audience feels removed from the parody (D1).

The use of stereotypical imagery to demonstrate or communicate an idea quickly has been a favourite in past mass media approaches (Sheehan, 2013:77). The youth audience do not seem to mind the use of parodies or satire relating to 'stereotypical' characters, however ignoring the complexities of the individual by labelling an attribute of a specific group (especially concerning gender roles, race and culture) as truth, creates and reinforces assumptions that influence how society relates to or sees certain groups or individuals of such a group (Pounders and Mabry-Flynn, 2016:426, Bailey et al, 2013:94, 95,106).

The reinforcement of such stereotypes not only addresses generalisation but is also an issue of definition and power and, where the “persistence of stereotype is not based on truth (but rather on simplicity and ease), the stereotype itself must be engaged” (Haines, 2015:2). In parody, the stereotype is purposefully shown in an exaggerated way so as to expose and subvert the ‘truth’ of the stereotype - “to undo by overdoing” (Fuss, 1989:32). Parody therefore has the potential to provide commentary on the stereotypes by exposing weaknesses and challenging societal norms (Boxman-Shabtai, 2018:1; Erickson, 2013; Hariman, 2008; Bakhtin, 1984). These ‘truths’ should exist in a blatantly over-exaggerated, satirical, characterised form and showcase the relatable experiences of the audience. The context of such experiences should be clearly grasped and understood by communicators in order to avoid biased and unfounded opinions which can lead to the reinforcement of undesired and out-dated social biases.

5.4.3 The non-negotiable demand for authenticity

The youth feel that some brands/services/people are intentionally controversial in order to attract attention and enjoy free media exposure as a result. The findings indicated that the youth appreciate and favour authentic communication due to this general lack of trust in communication messages. Overly catering to millennials by trying to align brand identity with current trends can come across as disingenuous and inauthentic (Samuel, 2017). Authentic communication, according to the findings, is when the “... benefit of the product has to do with the message – they align themselves with what they are” (D1). The alignment of product purpose and brand message is important to enhance authenticity as the following statement in relation to Pepsi’s²⁰ recent and controversial advertisement demonstrates:

“You don’t see Coke trying to relate to any strikes or revolutions - it just doesn’t work. What you are selling, that’s important, you are selling Coke you are selling the moment, enjoy the feeling. Pepsi I don’t know what they sell.

²⁰ This reference refers to the controversial Pepsi advert which features Kendall Jenner taking part in a protest. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/kendall-jenner-pepsi-advert-backlash-police-officer-model-can-protest-a7667251.html>

You have to think about what you are selling, you are selling Coke, what are you going to do with Coke? You are not going to start any revolutions any time soon” (D4).

The youth feel that some brands are “...trying too hard to align themselves with whatever is relevant now and then they lose their own soul” (D1). Inauthentic communication comes across as insincere and overly persuasive as a brand/service is trying to position itself to be something it is not by forcing current issues and movements into its communication:

“Don’t force a movement onto your brand – are you actually caring about this or just making a publicity stunt ... what you are selling is important” (D4).

“Maybe they underestimate how mature we are – they just need to be more real instead of too persuasive by trying too hard” (D5).

Research indicates that there seems to be an ongoing tension between respecting a brand’s heritage and keeping the brand up to date. Being up-to-date does not mean the brand should mould itself to suit trends. A brand story is exciting and inspiring as long as the story is based on truth, not fiction (Kantar Millward Brown, 2014:18; Barry, 2012:18).

Authenticity therefore does not influence the entertainment value of the communication execution – it can still be exaggerated, humorous, ‘over the top’, dramatic and ‘profound’ but the promise of what the brand/service can do is only believable if the message: “... ties down to the benefit of the product” (D1).

The youth do not believe a brand should try to be everything to everyone. The youth are in a period of constant flux and prefer to have a variety of choices to cater to different individuals within their generation:

“We have so many personalities and stuff and we are also trying to find ourselves and stuff at the same time, it’s good if brands or communication

stick to who they are because if there are so many then we can decide which ones we like, not necessarily them trying to get to us” (D5).

Communicators therefore need to create authentic, genuine communication that relates directly to the values of the target audience to engage them in a meaningful manner (WARC, 2017; Klaer and Gruhn, 2017).

The youth mentioned that social media commentary has the ability to travel with ease and that it becomes risky to engage openly and honestly. The lines between public and private are often blurred on social media and authenticity on profiles is hindered by a censorship of self as the public feature of the platform might affect potential career advancement:

“You have to be your own PR agent. Like when I was doing my CV – My girlfriend said: ‘Are we going through your timeline and delete all the controversial shit you have ever said?’ I hate having to do that. Everyone is their own publicist ... people are very safe ... and it sucks” (D1).

A global study by MARE and Viacom found that being comfortable in one's own skin has become the ultimate personal goal for youth around the world today (Kok-Jensen et al, 2017). The youth feel that the portrayal of idealised perfection and exuberant lifestyles in the media creates unrealistic and unattainable expectations that could affect the youth negatively even though they are aware that such visuals show a false sense of reality (Bryson and Bunker, 2015).

The youth are sceptical about everything they see in communication and prefer relatable, realistic imagery with regard to beauty, fitness and health. The youth are more trusting of brands and services that use realistic portrayals in their communication (Fraser and Taylor, 2012). Constant exposure to stylised, photo-shopped images has further sparked their need to see something different and more 'real'.

“I think we appreciate a much more a real person these days The fitness girl that I follow she never wears makeup and she takes photos of herself at gym sweaty and red and she looks horrible. And I love what she posts compared to other women who look immaculate. So I much prefer the real ugly truth compared to the pretty girl” (D2).

“If it is someone famous, then you will more appreciate it when you see them looking exactly how they are but if it is a makeup artist and they show themselves without the makeup saying this is how I got here. Showing that they are not just like that because there is a process to it” (D5).

The youth further mentioned that they are used to seeing styled, photo-shopped, images and expect such perfect images from the media and that is why “it’s nice to see something different – it’s more real” (D3). The youth feel that there is room for stylised visuals depending on the context:

“If it is someone famous, then you will more appreciate it when you see them looking exactly how they are but if it is a makeup artist and they show themselves without the makeup saying this is how I got here. Showing that they are not just like that because there is a process to it” (D5).

The youth are interested in public figures who are more genuine and relatable (Hulyk, 2015:33). The youth mentioned that many celebrities are taking a casual, everyday life approach and they appreciate these ‘more real’ and relatable social media profiles as this enhances the celebrities’ relationships with their fans:

“Their profiles are more real and I think it's nice for them to not have the pressure where every post is perfect with the perfect caption like they're just more showing themselves. It also makes their fans closer to them and increases their relatability” (D5).

“I think that's how society is now a lot more accepting of how people are in their everyday life. Don't worry we get you. And if you want to have a day in

your tracksuit pants go for it. We appreciate that you are being real with us and that gives them even more of a following and communication with their fans” (D3).

The youth feel that people should do whatever makes them happy and that it is acceptable being yourself. “It's all about keeping it real and a 'take it or leave it' attitude. They are done with keeping up appearances” (Kok-Jensen et al, 2017). The youth have a desire for spaces where they can express themselves more honestly without the pressure to deliver content beautifully and perfectly (Han, 2018; WARC, 2016).

The youth’s relationship with the ‘fantasy visual’ and the ‘real visual’ depends on the person’s own grasp of his/her own reality as participant D3 explained:

“I think it depends on the person. You know you can't really attain it. I love vampires and I'm obsessed with them, and I will stalk all of the actors, but they are not vampires in real life. But I know that I'm not going to be one and I'm not going to be disappointed emotionally. I think with fantasy you just need to check in with yourself and I understand that it's different to reality, because I do think some people mash together.”

The choice to use a real visual or an over-styled ‘fantasy’ has its challenges as the youth feel the fantasy element is central to the charm of social media, and using a realist image “... can be harmful to you; it can be harmful when you exhibit your life” (D1). However, the communication of messages via realistic or fantasy imagery is not as important to the youth as the authenticity of the communication:

“What does real mean? It's more authentic - you can still project something, but be authentic” (D1).

The youth mentioned that even though they desire to see authenticity and ‘realness’, their own online behaviour tends to be ‘hypocritical’ at times as it shows edited versions of the whole truth:

“Everything is hypocritical. When I was going to Greece (and very lucky to be going to Greece), but in comparison to other people that I've watched when they went to Greece - they were staying in these grand hotels and stuff. I didn't want to show people where I was staying. We stayed in the cheapest place possible and it was beautiful and was great, but not compared to those, so I didn't properly show them where I was staying. And I knew that I was actively doing that. I'm not going to lie that I didn't stay at a great place but I'm just not gonna mention it” (D3).

“Social media has the cool parts of life, the curated version. The hypocrite thing is totally right because sometimes I won't show something because I don't want to be perceived to care. That's also same thing the same problem. It's like a highlight show, it's not the whole day” (D1).

Authenticity is marked by consistency, stability and uniformity – when a user or brand or service’s online reality matches their real-world reality (Salisbury and Pooley, 2017). The consensus between a brand or service’s ‘personality’ and the personality shown through visual communication needs to be in perfect harmony in order to promote authenticity and transparency (Coker et al, 2018).

5.4.4 The rejection of ‘try-hard’ communication

The findings suggested that the youth relate to sincere, authentic communication that does not ‘try too hard’ to relate to the youth. The youth feel disconnected from various messages aimed at them as they feel communicators are trying too hard to sound and look like them:

“We don’t speak like that, we don’t look like that. It’s not like we speak in hashtags – But everything has a hashtag or everything is ‘woke’. I don’t know who invented the slang that they are coining with millennials, but it doesn’t work. The thing that’s lacking is insights - people need to dig deeper” (D4).

As mentioned in section 5.2.4, the concept of ‘woke’ generally relates to the social and commercial relevance of a brand or service where the awareness of self is

shown in a sincere, genuine, unforced manner. The youth feel that the majority of the communication aimed at them is trying too hard to be woke or consciously aware in the hope of appealing to the youth's aspirations, ethics and dreams. The over-use of 'socially aware executions' by communicators is seen as a generic way to try to relate the youth:

"I think the whole brands trying to be woke thing is just they don't know how else to communicate to us and that's, they're just falling back on that, so it's almost lazy" (D2).

The youth feel communicators therefore need to try harder to understand the youth audience better as participant D5 explains:

"I guess we don't know how old the 'whoever is creating the content' is but they are probably older than us so they should do more like interviews or research. I think they overlook that. Because, it's not relating to us – they need to get that part right first".

The trends in current advertising where brands aim to demonstrate their 'woke-ness' and "... integrate into their communication current relevant, sensitive and even controversial or borderline topics concerning the community, society, culture, ideas/ideology, the environment or health..." is based on the concept of 'goodvertising' (Minar, 2016). The concept of 'goodvertising' originated as a result of the youth's expectation that brands and companies should be transparent and voice their purpose clearly (Minar, 2016; Hieatt, 2014; Kolster, 2002). Advertising has therefore gone from a one-sided value exchange to a more balanced value exchange where communication nowadays talks about the state of the world and hopes to improve the world with the help of consumers (Minar, 2016; Yakob, 2015; Hieatt, 2014). Goodvertising "... does not mean that a socially sensitive subject is simply added to the content presented by the brand" (Minar, 2016). The youth are savvy, socially aware consumers and recognise when a brand is using value as a mere sales tool:

...for a brand that is searching for ways to engage and tap into this next generation of consumers, showing them that you care is critical, but you must do so authentically ... These

savvy consumers have a good nose for phoniness. They know when you're merely supporting a cause to sell your product (Fromm and Garter, 2013:164).

The misalignment of a brand's purpose and message fails to relate to the youth and could impact on the trust and relevance of the brand or service directly. It furthermore demonstrates a lack of understanding with regard to the youth and brands should consider a more inclusive sharing of ideas to enhance social engagement (Feldwick, 2015; Earls, 2007). Empathy for the target audience is therefore essential and communicators should "... adapt to who you are writing to, and try to think with their heads and see things from their point of view" (Pease and Dunn, 2004).

5.5 Conclusion

The visual communicator blends intuitive and rational cognitive processes when developing communication strategies and it is therefore important that the visual communicator truly understands a target audience (Williams and Newton, 2007: 278). This research aimed to understand what meaningful communication looks like to the youth. The study established that three categories of understanding need to be considered when designing communication aimed at the youth audience: perception, engagement and relevance.

1. Perception informs the communication designer on how the youth see their world: This study indicated that the youth do not have a positive association with the labels surrounding their generation and reject communication that promotes such labels. Technology and social media play a central role in the lives of the youth and continue to inform everyday experiences. The youth favour contextualised communication that makes use of images, emotion and storytelling.
2. Engagement informs the communication designer on how the youth engage with their world: This study confirms that the smartphone is central to the youth's experience as it connects, informs and organises daily life – anytime, anywhere. This device enables the youth to interconnect beyond borders and contributes to the youth's 'hyperawareness'. Communicators should therefore

take note that these connected youths have the ability and means to share and connect with a variety of people across the globe – which has the potential to inform their interests, choices and connection.

3. Relevance informs the communication designer on how the youth relate to their world: This study revealed that stereotypes have the potential to be relevant and useful to the youth audience when used appropriately. For stereotypes to have relevance in this market they should discard gender, racial or cultural biases, in favour of endearing, relatable human-character truths. The youth relate to authentic communication strategies where the purpose of the brand or service correlates with the communication messages. The youth, in contrast, reject communication that 'tries too hard' to relate to the youth and prefers honest communication that demonstrates a sincere understanding of the youth audience.

This study proposes that communication designers utilise three levels of understanding: perception, engagement and relevance when developing meaningful communication aimed at the youth audience.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this research was to explore what types of visual communication have meaning for the youth to enable communication designers to connect with the South African youth market: (1) Information was gathered about the youth's perception with regard to visual communication aimed at them; (2) Co-designed visual examples were examined through thematic analysis to investigate visual meaning constructs; and (3) Relevant research findings to assist with understanding the South African youth market better were established. The research question posed in Chapter 1 aimed to explore what meaningful visual communication looks like to a youth market. In order to explore this complex question, three subsidiary research questions were posed:

- 1) What is the group's current relationship with visual communication and what type of visual communication is of interest?
- 2) How does the youth market define meaningful visual communication?
- 3) When youth are actively included in the creative process, are there any recurring themes present in the resulting body of work?
- 4) How does co-design provide visual communicators with youth market insights?

This chapter concludes the research by discussing how the literature explored and data analysed answered the research questions.

6.2 DEFINING MEANINGFUL VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR A SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH MARKET

Almost half of the world's young adults are between the ages of 20 and 34 and issues surrounding this group therefore cannot be ignored. These young people face unique challenges due to constant movement within the economic and technological contexts globally. The youth grew up in a digitally oversaturated world where the easy and constant access to globalised information allows for intercultural exchange which dissolves cultural borders and informs self-exploration.

The multicultural South African context is informed by unique socio-economic challenges. Youth unemployment is at an all-time high, and the lack of quality schooling continues to feed poverty and inequality by not equipping the youth with necessary skills.

The lack of community support and the high exposure to gangs, violence, trauma and sexual abuse have caused the youth not to feel safe in their communities. These factors contribute to antisocial and aggressive behaviour in adolescents. Such daily stressors are linked to the abuse of alcohol, drugs and risky sexual behaviour. Drug abuse is twice as high in South Africa as compared to global statistics and denies the youth proper participation in the growth and development of the country. Drug use is linked to depression, crime and violent behaviour which further foster gang participation. HIV rates are very high in South Africa and combined with drug abuse and drinking this makes the youth very vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and abuse.

Cultural traditions and norms sometimes hinder open conversations regarding sexual behaviour and the youth do not feel comfortable discussing such matters with their caregivers. The daily struggles and challenges surrounding this audience further highlight the role of communication messages as an important way to assist and aid the youth. Communication designers need to be able to develop meaningful communication that is able to connect with this audience.

6.2.1 The youth's current relationship with visual communication (RQ1)

In response to the research question: "What is the group's current relationship with visual communication and what type of visual communication is of interest?"

The study indicated that the youth have a positive relationship with visual communication and consider it to be a successful way to communicate important messages. Even though there is not one single way to reach this audience, as millions of channels, videos and influencers are all fighting for the same space at the same time every day, the ability of visual communication to communicate quickly and

emotionally via visual platforms has the potential to cut through the clutter and deliver a message successfully.

The youth do not appreciate a 'one size fits all' approach to communication and feel that there is a lack of segmentation with regard to communication aimed at them. The youth also feel that communication aimed at them 'tries too hard' to relate, be relevant and profound and that brands and services should rather focus on being authentic and transparent by aligning a brand's communication with the brand's purpose.

The youth reject the use of stereotypes in communication that reinforce gender, racial and cultural biases. The use of stereotypes in communication has relevance to the youth if these stereotypes are based on human truths and are presented in a blatantly over-exaggerated, satirical manner which illustrates experiences that are relatable for the audience.

The youth are concerned about the misinterpretation of communication as individual context informs how communication is interpreted. The context of the communication message therefore needs to be considered carefully when designing communication aimed at the youth.

6.2.2 Meaningful visual communication: a youth perspective (RQ2)

In response to the research question: How does the youth market define meaningful visual communication?

The youth consider communication to be meaningful if it is relevant to an audience and relates to the values and contexts of such an audience. The concepts of relevance and relatability are considered from two perspectives (a) The communication context, which lists what the youth consider to be relevant for meaningful communication and (b) The visual representation of communication, which lists what type of visual content the youth feel relates to them.

a) The communication context:

Analysis of data and shared perceptions from participants indicated that a range of contextual elements influence meaningful communication.

- Negative connotations surrounding the millennial label impact the youth negatively and they feel that there is a need for better understanding from communication designers.
- The youth seek inclusive, realistic representations of youth individuals in visual communication that show an understanding of their individual context and experiences.
- The youth are sceptical about everything, especially representations of perfect individuals (physique) as such images can negatively impact on self-worth, especially in young women.
- The youth are more trusting of brands and services that use realistic portrayals in their communication.
- A general lack of trust in communication messages causes the youth to relate to authentic communication strategies and reject unrealistic lifestyle images.
- Inauthentic communication to the youth is where a brand or service tries to position itself as something it is not by forcing social issues and movements into its communication.
- The youth feel that inauthentic communication comes across as overly persuasive and insincere.
- The youth feel that communication should relate directly to the values of the target audience to ensure authenticity and enhance connection.
- The youth consider emotion to be a key component in meaningful communication.
- The youth enjoy communication with a narrative or story as they feel it connects more emotionally.
- The youth enjoy humour in communication as it assists with communicating a meaningful narrative and connection.
- The smartphone plays a central role in the lives of the youth and informs their social, professional and personal contexts on a daily basis.

- The relevance of social media is primarily one of connection which spills over into both physical and virtual worlds and allows the youth to keep up-to-date with current trends and topics.

b) The visual representation of communication:

- The youth do not relate to stereotypical representations of themselves.
- The youth prefer relatable, realistic imagery with regard to beauty, fitness and health.
- The use of imagery in communication and media is relevant and relatable due to its ability to convey a message in a quick, eye-catching and emotional manner.
- The youth do not have a preference for either photographs or illustration as long as the visual relates to the message.
- The youth do, however, recognise a difference in imagery context and consider the role of photography to be more realistic in nature whereas illustration promotes fantasy and endless creativity.
- The youth prefer video formats as they feel these have the ability to tell a story better.
- The youth do not relate to visuals of abuse, objectification and explicit or graphic imagery and tend to avoid these types of imagery.

6.2.3 Recurring themes in a ‘self-produced’ body of work (RQ3)

In response to the research question: When youth are actively included in the creative process, are there any recurring themes present in the resulting body of work?

The research made use of co-design workshops which triggered and guided the data and insight generation process. The examination of visual examples produced by the participants through thematic analysis, as set out in Chapters 3 and 4, highlighted several interconnected themes which were identified as building blocks for a bigger category of association. Three major categories of understanding were identified: perception (how the youth see their world); engagement (how the youth experience their world); and relevance (how the youth relate to their world).

6.2.3.1 Perception: How the youth see their world

The category of perception provides information on the youth's perception of their communication world. The main category of perception is supported by three sub-categories:

- a) The youth as a communication audience, which revealed that the youth do not have a positive association with the labels surrounding their generation and reject communication that promotes such labels;
- b) The role of technology and social platforms in communication, which indicated that technology and social media play a central role in the youth's lives and continue to inform everyday communicative experiences; and
- c) The role of imagery and emotion in communication, which claims that the youth favour contextualised communication that makes use of images, emotion and storytelling.

6.2.3.2 Engagement: How the youth experience their world

The category of engagement represents the youth's engagement in their communication world. The main category of engagement is supported by one sub-category:

- a) The smartphone as the central hub of the youth's communicative experiences: The smartphone enables the youth to interconnect globally constantly. This connection leads to a high level of awareness as the youth feel a need to stay aware of what is happening around them, locally and globally. This awareness has increased the youth's distrust of communication messages and their need for authentic communication has increased. These connected youths have the ability and means to share and connect with a variety of people across the globe which has the potential to inform their interests, choices and connection. The identification of smartphones and similar devices as meaningful to youth provides visual communicators with two opportunities to connect to this group. The first speaks to the smartphone

as an icon or image within visual communication, in order to establish relevance, while the second speaks to an appropriate platform for visual communication and media.

6.2.3.3 Relevance: How the youth relate to their world

The category of relevance provides information on what type of communication relates to the youth within their communication world. The main category of engagement is supported by three sub-categories:

- a) The relevance of stereotypes in communication messages, which revealed that the use of stereotypes in communication has the potential to be relevant and connect to the youth audience if gender, racial or cultural biases are disregarded, in favour of endearing, relatable human-character truths;
- b) The demand for authentic communication, which states that the youth relate to authentic communication strategies where the purpose of the brand or service correlates with the communication messages; and
- c) The rejection of 'try-hard' communication, which indicates that the youth reject communication that 'tries too hard' to relate and prefer honest communication that demonstrates a sincere understanding of the youth audience.

The themes have been categorised as such to assist communication designers in exploring three levels of understanding when designing communication aimed at the youth audience.

6.2.4 Insights for visual communicators through co-design (RQ4)

In response to the research question: How does co-design provide visual communicators with youth market insights?

In addition to the examining of self-produced visual communication, the study also explored if a co-design methodology is able to provide visual communicators with

youth market insights. This study used co-design methodology as the foundation for data-collecting within the field of visual communication.

Co-design speaks of the involvement of a target audience in the research process. The participants in this study were considered as experts of their own experiences and the researcher recognised the participants' experiences as central to this research process. The researcher also considers co-design methodology as relevant when conducting youth research as the youth audience seek inclusive methodologies relating to them as an audience. The rejection of demographic segmentation and labels surrounding the youth in this research made way for the individual by truly trying to understand this audience.

Through the analysis of co-designed pieces, the researcher was able to identify key themes via images. The deconstruction of and critical reflection on the images enabled the researcher to investigate various approaches that might be suitable for this particular audience. The process of image-creation delivered several insights that stimulated further discussion relating to the themes. The emerging themes from the images guided the researcher to formulate and ask 'appropriate' questions to stimulate further discourse within the small group discussion. The re-evaluation of data with the participants also addressed researcher bias as it enabled the researcher to 'see' the participants' experiences through their own eyes. The researcher could not simply co-design with the youth and form general assumptions based on the experience. To maintain the integrity and purpose of the co-design process, the researcher needed to re-evaluate the data with the participants, through-out the research and analysis processes. This allowed the researcher to ensure that meaning was seen through the correct lens.

Co-design therefore allows for visual communication designers to immerse themselves in the 'thoughts' of the people they are aiming to connect with. It also assists with the development and formulation of appropriate questions that allow for further exploration. The involvement of the youth in meaningful dialogues concerning themselves allows for value creation between the youth audience and communication aimed at them.

6.3 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focuses on a single South African case study, but it does lay a foundation for the use of co-design methodology in visual communication research when conducting research on the youth audience. To investigate a more generalised view on the perception of visual communication relating to the youth market, it is proposed that this study is conducted with a variety of youth groups, locally and internationally. Emerging as direct areas of future research, the following areas are proposed:

- This study used visual communication students as participants, but it would be of interest to explore how participants without a visual communication background make use of a similar visualisation session.
- The study aimed for a more inclusive approach, however a comparative study in the visual expression of ideas of different youth demographics (cultural, rural versus urban, etc.) should also prove useful when designing for a multicultural audience.
- Further research will also confirm the validity of co-design methodology in visual communication and youth research. It will also validate the use of visuals and images as the main source of data for analysis.

6.4 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

A methodological reflection was completed in order to justify and critically assess the research design and methods employed in this study. The reflection was influenced by the need to rationalise the reasons for this choice of a specific (research) approach and make sensible choices based on the different requirements of a particular question (Jonker and Pennink, 2010:22). It is therefore important to reflect on how the research methodology impacted on the results of this study.

The main features of the study, which were considered during the reflection process, include the actions of the researcher and well as the nature of participatory engagements with participants. The results of the complete case study include that:

- The researcher acquired a deeper understanding of case study research as a reflective, qualitative exploration of a single case;

- The nature of co-design within the case allowed the researcher to investigate meaning through the participants' own life lens by involving the participants in the process;
- The researcher ensured that the participants had the necessary tools to express their ideas properly during the co-design session;
- The researcher made use of two phases of data collection: a) Co-design workshops and b) Small group discussion. The use of these two phases assisted the researcher with data collection and to clarify and discuss emergent themes to ensure participant intention was clear;
- The focus on a smaller group made it possible to manage the co-design process and related resources more efficiently;
- The data was reconsidered several times and analysed twice through primary and secondary analysis, to address any researcher bias that might arise due to the researcher's participation in the study;
- Data from two separate workshops was analysed, compared and combined to ensure the credibility of a single case study exploration;
- The combination of approaches allowed the researcher to explore and identify themes from various angles;
- The researcher captured the data on a password protected computer and categorised the data via (a) workshop, (b) individual and (c) topic which assisted with the access of the data for analysis.

Once the impact of the methodological choice was detailed, the suitability of the choices could be reviewed. The researcher acknowledges that the case study explored in this project does not represent all the youth in South Africa, and only engaged one sample as a foundation case. However, reflecting on research approach and methods did offer insights for future research within the discipline of visual communication, as well as a broader research agenda with youth as the main participants:

- The qualitative nature of this case study yielded a deep understanding of the participants' perceptions with regard to meaningful visual communication. The focus of understanding within this study was concerned with individual

contexts of meaning-making. The research therefore needed a more in-depth approach. Surveys would not have allowed for such a deep understanding as the questions are pre-defined and do not allow for further discussion or clarification. To understand an individual's relationship with visual communication, researchers should consider focusing on a sample group to allow for deeper understanding when investigating meaning constructs within the youth.

- The case study allowed for a variety of data collection methods within a single research project: questionnaires, discussions and co-creation activities. The combination of methods allows for a more informed perspective which in turn can decrease researcher bias. A variety of methods for data collection is advised when trying to understand what an audience perceives to be meaningful communication as it allows the researcher to gather different forms of data and trigger a more informed analysis. The versatility of case study methodology is therefore very useful as it allows for the combination of research approaches.
- The participatory element in the case allowed for the opportunity to obtain first-hand information from each participant. This aspect of the method was very useful in this project when considering the youth's desire to be involved in matters relating to them. This also allowed the researcher to consult the participants on clarifying the findings and emerging themes. Participatory methods should be considered when a researcher aims to understand how individuals make sense of their own experiences as the participants are experts of their own contexts and this is especially relevant for the youth audience as they want to be involved in matters concerning them.
- The use of a case study methodology supported the researcher's inclusive practice which represents the multicultural nature of South Africa. This was facilitated by the running of two separate workshops which allowed for a wider demographic. The flexibility and versatility of case study research allows for a

researcher to change approaches and should be considered when a researcher, for example, needs to add more individuals to a sample group.

6.5 MY PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This research study provided me with an opportunity for personal growth and development. Personal transformation as a result of research, results in greater self-awareness and growth that impacts on how a researcher views herself, the world and others (Anderson and Braud, 2011:xvi). This transformation allowed me to reshape my own lens as a result of engaging with the process and data.

The research study enhanced my knowledge of the youth generation – I became more aware of the youth not only in the South African context but within the broader, global context as well. Literature brought to my attention various issues surrounding the youth, globally and locally, but the most valuable learning experience has been the youth ‘teaching’ me about the youth. The willingness of the participants to spend hours ‘making themselves heard’ so others might ‘understand’ them better made me realise that this generation are open to experiences where they feel they contribute to enhanced understanding. The participants also shared that they found the process very interesting and it made them think more deeply about their own actions and thoughts.

The study challenged some of my assumptions, particularly regarding the ability of the youth to reflect and think about issues critically. I was amazed by the awareness and wisdom of this group, not only with regard to society but also to self. The youth do seem to be very cynical and distrusting of everything they see and hear, and I expected some level of boredom and irritation but they brought to this study openness and sincerity. They were so engaged in the process that I cannot recall one moment where they ‘clock-watched’ their smartphones! This study radically changed my opinion of the youth generation and I reject negative labels surrounding this generation. I consider this generation to be wise beyond their years, well-informed, connected, willing to help and ‘just normal’ youths trying to figure themselves out in a scary time marked by constant change economically and globally. An interesting result was the youth’s openness to stereotypical character

parodies – I always felt that the cynical, politically correct stance of this group made it difficult to connect using humour. The youth have a very strong sense of humour and do not get offended as easily as I thought - as long as the humour is relatable and does not cause intentional harm.

Co-design as a method for data-gathering 'hit the nail on the head' with this group. I think this methodology is still the best option for this case study. Discussing issues the youth faced and designing communication aimed at themselves allowed me to see a side previously hidden. The pieces revealed personal thoughts that might not have had the same result if verbalised. The inter-activity of the process allowed me to ensure that meaning was interpreted correctly and the participants were more than willing to assist with clarification where needed.

I also felt that the process of co-design allowed for a more participant-centric experience which allowed the youth to trust the process and engage more openly. The visuals and discussion did not feel forced or censored – it felt authentic and transparent.

This study provided a powerful platform for me to reflect critically on my own position of visual communicator, educator (who teaches the youth about visual communication) and researcher. The research continues to inform my teaching and design practices.

The process of data analysis was not easy given the amount of data gathered from the questionnaires, design pieces and discussion session. To make sense of how all these themes fit together took considerable time and energy. I spent the majority of my time reflecting on and reorganising the categorisation of the themes, as many of them overlapped and were interconnected. I do, however, realise that there is room for improvement and will continue to reflect on this study and the methods implemented.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Appendix 2: Consent in Principle: Data Collection

Appendix 3: Individual Consent form

Appendix 4: Ethics certificates

Appendix 5: Transcription of small group discussion

Appendix 1: Questionnaire



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Faculty of Informatics and Design

Questionnaire: Participant background and perception of visual communication

Title of Study:

VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR A YOUTH MARKET: AN EXPLORATION OF VISUAL MEANING THROUGH CO-DESIGN

Researcher: Lizelle de Villiers

Contact details: email: lizelledevilliers5@gmail.com, phone: 071-8454-331

Supervisor: Vikki Eriksson

Contact details: email: dupreezv@cput.ac.za, phone: 079-8741-593

ALL ABOUT YOU

Please provide us with information about yourself

Name/Participation code: _____

Ethnic group: Black White Coloured Indian Asian

Home language: _____

Other languages: _____

Sex: Male Female

Age: _____

Marital Status: Single Married Divorced Separated

Current occupational status:

Study full time Study part time
 Work part time Work full time

Do you have a smartphone? _____

Do you have a computer? _____

Do you have access to the internet after class time? _____

Do you use social media? If so, which sites do you use most? _____

YOU AND VISUAL

(There are no right or wrong answers.

These questions are purely about YOUR opinion and perception.

1. How would you describe the term 'visual communication'?

2. How do you feel about visual communication?

- Very positive
- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Negative

3. Name a positive thing about visual communication

4. Name a negative thing about visual communication

5. How do you feel about visuals aimed at young adults?

- Very positive
- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Negative

6. Can you recall an example of visuals aimed at young adults? You can describe any type of visual that impacted you. (Positively or negatively)

YOU AND VISUAL (continued)

7. Where do you mostly access these visuals? (Computer, mobile phone, TV etc)

8. Are there any specific sites or apps that you prefer regarding visual?

9a. If you had to look for specific visuals for inspiration, where do you look?

9b. What type of visuals do you look for?

10. What type of visuals will catch your attention? And why?

Appendix 2: Consent in Principle: Data Collection



Faculty of Informatics and Design

Consent in Principle: Data Collection

To whom it may concern,

Re: Introductory letter for the collection of research data

Ms. Lizelle de Villiers is currently registered for the MTech Design degree at CPUT. Her thesis is titled:

VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR A YOUTH MARKET: AN EXPLORATION OF VISUAL MEANING THROUGH CO-DESIGN

Supervisor: **Vikki Eriksson**

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

E-mail: dupreezv@cput.ac.za

In order to meet the requirements of the university's Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) the student must get consent to collect data from organisations or individuals which they have identified as potential sources of data.

If you agree to this, you are requested to complete the attached form (an electronic version will be made available to you if you so desire) and print it on your organisation's letterhead (if applicable).

For further clarification on this matter please contact either the supervisor(s) identified above, or the Faculty Research Ethics Committee secretary (Ms V Naidoo) at 021 469 1012 or naidoo@cput.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "V. Eriksson".

Vikki Eriksson | April 2018

Agreement to Take Part in Research Activities

Full Name	
Name of organisation	
Position in organisation	

I give consent, in principle, to allow Ms de Villiers, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, to collect data from research interactions with me (or individuals in my organization) for her MTech (Design) project. The student has explained to me the nature of her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participant prior to each research activity. I reserve the right to withdraw my permission at some future time.

In addition, the organisation's name may or may not be used in academic dissemination as indicated below (Tick as appropriate.)

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes				
No				

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Individual Consent form



Faculty of Informatics and Design

Individual Consent for Research Participation

Title of Study:

VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR A YOUTH MARKET: AN EXPLORATION OF VISUAL MEANING THROUGH CO-DESIGN

Researcher: Lizelle de Villiers

Contact details: email: lizelledevilliers5@gmail.com, phone: 071-8454-331

Supervisor: Vikki Eriksson

Contact details: email: dupreezv@cput.ac.za, phone: 079-8741-593

Description of Study

The aim of this research is to explore what young individuals perceive to be meaningful visual communication through the co-design of visual communication examples.

Participation

My participation will consist of a questionnaire and individual interview to establish my feelings and perception with regards to current and desired visual communication. I will also be required to design a communication piece that will express visual that has meaning for me and that I feel connected to.

Confidentiality

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential unless noted below. I understand that the contents will be used only for an MTech thesis and journal article, and that my confidentiality will be protected by a participation code should I choose.

Anonymity

My anonymity will be protected in the following manner: Photos and videos will hide my face if I choose and my identity will remain unknown during the entire process (if I choose)

Conservation of data

All data will be stored in a secure manner. Data from the questionnaire and interviews as well as all visuals (recordings and photographs) will be kept on a password protected computer.

Voluntary participation

I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed

Additional consent:

I make the following stipulations (please tick as appropriate)

	In thesis	In research publications	Both	Neither
My image may be used				
My name may be used				
My exact words may be used				
Any other (stipulate)				

Acceptance:

I, (name or code) _____

agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Lizelle de Villiers of the Faculty of Informatics and Design department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, which research is under the supervision of Ms Vikki Eriksson.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the secretary of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at 021 469 1012 or email naidoove@cput.ac.za

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisors signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4: Signed ethics certificates



Agreement to Take Part in Research Activities

Full Name: Professor Krishna Govender

Name of organisation: AAA School of Advertising
(if applicable)

Position in organisation: CEO / EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
(if applicable)

I give consent, in principle, to allow Ms de Villiers, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, to collect data from research interactions with me (or individuals in my organization) for her MTech (Design) project. The student has explained to me the nature of her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participant prior to each research activity. I reserve the right to withdraw my permission at some future time.

In addition, the organisation's name may or may not be used in academic dissemination as indicated below (Tick as appropriate.)

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes	✓			
No		✓	✓	✓

Date: 21/1/2018

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

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Office of the Research Ethics Committee	Faculty of Informatics and Design
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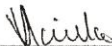
16 May 2018

Ethical clearance was granted to Ms Lizelle De Villiers, student number 218236093, for research activities related to the MTech: Design in the Faculty of Informatics and Design, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of research proposal:	Visual communication for a youth market: An exploration of visual meaning through co-design
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Comments

Research activities are restricted to those detailed in the research proposal.

 Signed: Faculty Research Ethics Committee	16/5/2018 Date
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Appendix 5. Discussion Session

Discussion Session

2018/09/12

Interviewer: Liz de Villiers (Researcher)

Interviewees: Five grad year visual communication students

File name: 20180912_111206.m4a

(Start of Interview)

00:01	Interviewer:	What do you consider to be 'meaningful visual communication?' What do you consider the word 'meaningful' to mean?
01:20	D2:	I think meaningful is not just some pretty picture, it actually has some sort of message that's relevant to you as a person.
01:01	D3:	With meaningful it would generally provoke an emotion so I would have some sort of relation to it regarding a positive or negative emotion, so it would connect to me in some way
01:52	D4:	Meaningful is, for me it's more unique not something that you see every day – it's got some sort of concept, not just concept, but meaning behind it. Someone has taken the time to research or go in-depth into the visual communication and it's more in-depth and it's personal and it can relate to almost everybody on an emotional, basically a personal level."
02:28	D5:	I agree but also something that makes you think or question it or makes you take action.
02:50	D1:	Meaningful communication is when a communicator gets it right to distill an abstract idea or problem in a way that you can digest it simply then it's meaningful.
03:05	Interviewer:	Something that came up in the questionnaire is that on the bad side of visual communication is that it can be intrusive. What does that mean? When does visual communication become intrusive to you?
03:33	D2:	I think it's just like in everyday life just the social media things like watching peoples' stories then the next thing an ad pops up. Just when you are trying to relax someone is trying to sell you something, so that's the only way I find it quite intrusive.
03:57	D3:	It is intrusive in just your day-to-day life but it's also very interruptive in what you might be doing, very distracting, it can just sort of veer you off your train of thought or things like that whilst you just going on with your life.
04:17	D4:	I think if it's got nothing to do with anything I like and I haven't even been offered a chance to reject it or reject this topic then that's intrusive and annoying – I don't want to see it it's got nothing to do with any of my likes or preferences that I enjoy so, (<i>whisper</i>) why is it there?
04:39	D5:	I think it's intrusive when, similar to what number 4 said, when you are trying to enjoy something or do something then an ad pops up and either prevents you from finishing what you are watching or doing or just waste your time by making you watch it and then also ads or communication you feel is not good or being unfair or their not telling the full kind of truth, you can tell that they are trying to persuade you.

05:24 D1: Intrusive communication for me is when it's irrelevant to the medium or irrelevant to person it's talking to.

05:46 Interviewer: A lot of students have said that visual communication that doesn't work is visual communication that's offensive. What types of visual communication do you guys find offensive?

06:07 D3: I mean, you know things that are offensive to cultures, races obviously all that stuff, but things that, like with millennials and stuff that's a big thing these days. People always say ah millennials are so lazy and procrastinate and social media is doing this to them, yada yada yada, but millennials obviously aren't just one whole thing there are individual people that aren't like that, so I think that's also a big thing when people are trying to target communication at millennials in a way that's offensive to them – ah use this this because you are lazy and a millennial and this will help you do your work or something. Well, just cause I'm a millennial doesn't make me lazy – you can target this to generally lazy people not just millennials or something like that. So ja that's a big thing that really annoys me about advertising.

06:58 D4: Like D3 said, just because we are millennials doesn't mean we are naïve, we are very on top of things so advertising cannot be the same as what it was before and visual communication can't be the same as it was before because the audience knows better. They've been brought up better, they are very much aware and content aware. There was this one ad, I think it was Heineken where they passed the bottle along from the white person and skips the black person skips the black person and onto a white person completely. It was everywhere it was blowing up, and people are now wondering is this becoming a things where brands are doing it to cause a stir and get their brands recognized cause we notice. It's not like we don't notice. Very annoying it's advertising the wrong way, so I just think you have to be able to communicate without offending millennials because we will notice it, we are not blind and it can be very dangerous to the brand especially on social media because you can share that like (snaps finger) that. Very fast.

08:08 Interviewer: Can I ask a question on that because sometimes your answers might lead me to ask another question? So do you think media in general is trying to be controversial these days?

08:25 D1: Ja.

08:26 D2: Maybe

08:27 D3: A little bit

08:28 D4: Yes, you can see when it's done on purpose. Especially now that we know the levels it goes through it goes through different people, how can one person miss that or go that's a tad racist, that's a tad sexist, so you can see when a brand is doing it deliberately to get a stir out of people and to get likes, or not likes, but to get the word out there that this brand is doing this or this artist is doing this – it causes a stir, you can't ignore it.

08:56 Interviewer: Why do you think people are trying to cause these stirs?

09:02 D1: I think it's because it's an easy way to get earned media, so if you write your end of year report they get so many shares then they say hey this year we got 500 000 impressions but they don't necessarily say where it's from, like you know from hate articles about their brand even.

09:27 Interviewer: So do you think the media in general: newspapers, visual

communication, magazines, movies and shows are becoming less meaningful if they are just trying to cause reaction?

09:52 D1: I think their end game is to get clicks and shares and whatever means they to get that is what they will follow especially with fake articles and things like that.

10:04 Interviewer: And what role does Social media play within that fake world?

10:09 D1: It's the medium where it gets spread, so it's the playground of it.

10:13 D3: Starts the conversation.

10:15 D4: It's almost the instigator of it all. You are spreading this stuff but should be able to cancel it out and say this is fake news. I should cancel it out, I shouldn't spread it further and cause a stir, but sometimes like media if it's done correctly like, I can't think of an example, but sometimes political stuff especially media such as artistic media needs to put out there as it gives artists a chance to be put out there, but people are using SOCIAL MEDIA in the wrong way, completely in the wrong way. So like D1 said, it's just about getting likes and shares and getting that brand out there even if it's in a wrong light or the wrong manner.

11:00 Interviewer: And that doesn't float for you or you don't relate to that?

11:05 D2: If you look at, I know it's not visual communication but Eminem whose new album basically slams a whole bunch of rappers and my brother and I were speaking about it and I look at it as him looking for attention because he doesn't know how else to get it these days. And it reminds me of when Miley Cyrus went through that stage of everyone talking about her because she was going crazy so it's almost like a desperate attempt of getting attention.

11:38 D3: I was thinking exactly the Miley Cyrus case, cause her just doing something that's completely abrupt and different causing such a stir in media and everything, I think it's just easier for people to advertise or market themselves in a sense that way, it's kind of, because people are so, you know there are a lot of feminists and people are all you know very aware of racial and cultural offences and sexism and everything like that it's a very big thing in our generation now, so I think media is just finding it very difficult to find ways to work around these things cause I mean in all honesty if you say something, and someone is always lashing out, and there's always some issue, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but that's how conversation starts. But I think it's just an easy way for people to be able to weave past that, just create that controversy a little bit and then they create a whole conversation around their brand and for their marketing.

12:44 Interviewer: Why do you guys think that some of you prefer photography or over animation and visa-versa. Some said they prefer visual communication with photographs and other animation. So why do you like photography and why do you like animation or illustration?

13:15 D3: I think with photography there is obviously a lot more real-ness to it so it's a bit more relatable, it's a bit more, what's the word, let's just say real for now. But you can still convey something in a beautiful way that you might not naturally see with your own eye but you can capture through photography and create a story behind it and I think with animation there really is no limit, which I love. You can whatever's in your head and you can't see in front of you right now you can create with animation and you can still communicate

anything you want to in the weirdest, wackiest, unique way possible. So I think it's just real versus not real.

13:57 D2: I kind of find that animation is more fun and sentimental 'cause it makes you remember what it's like to be a child, like for me I don't know, I just enjoy it a bit more that photography, because it's just like the good old days.

14:22 D4: Animation all the way. Animation over photography because it's limitless, you can do whatever tone you'd like it's not just about fun and carefree. It depends on the style you are going for and I love it. The things you can do with it the way it moves. It's not just still, that's the problem with photography, it's just still it doesn't move well it can be still then it's illustration. But animation you make it move, you make it come to life – how cool is that?

14:54 Interviewer: So you prefer moving visual to static visual?

14:58 D4: Ya, I prefer that because you can tell a story a lot better than if it's just standing still. If it's standing still then that image has got to be to be really powerful or it's got to be easy, you got to get it quickly. If not then it's completely missed, your message is missed, visual is missed and that's kind of dangerous. Whereas animation you can tell the story, or video you can tell a story, you can have fun with it and like I said you can have a serious tone you can have a light tone, it's just endless.

15:32 Interviewer: So do you all prefer moving visual to static visual or does it depend?

15:40 D2: I do

15:41 D4: I prefer it

15:43 D5: I also prefer it

15:47 D3: I don't mind

15:52 D1: I am not sure exactly like photography vs. illustration, but I like stuff that's more like has the chance to tell a story or has a narrative – that connects more than a still to me.

16:09 Interviewer: So anything that tells a story whether it's animation, illustration, photography?

16:10 D1: Ja, like radio even, whatever

16:15 Interviewer: Most students felt negative at visuals aimed at young adults, whether it's on social media, TV anything that's aimed at you and your target group – they don't feel positive – why do you think that?

16:56 D1: Ja I remember at the time we did the questionnaire the ABSA thing didn't happen yet, but the closest thing to it was the Nedbank one and it just felt very try-hard, it felt very like 'make your dreams come true' and stuff – just a lack of sincerity, so it's easy to do something very cringe worthy, laughable by trying to talk to what you think the youth is like. I don't know.

17:33 D5: I also think, I guess we don't know how old the whoever is creating the content is but they are probably older than us so they should do more like interviews or research and stuff. I think they overlook that. 'Cause ja, it's not relating to us – they need to get that part right first.

17:59 Interviewer: In what way does it not relate to you? Because we do live in

a multicultural society where everyone is very different and your mindset might be different from others'

- 18:38 D5: It's a bit try hard – maybe they underestimate how mature we are or – they just need to be more real instead of persuasive in a way. It cringes me when they are too persuasive.
- 18:58 Interviewer: What do you mean by being too persuasive?
- 19:24 D1: They are trying too hard to align themselves with whatever is relevant now and then they kind of lose their own soul, you know. It's like whatever thing is trying to be like woke – maybe just focus on, you know, what you are trying to do and rather by like package it by what you are completely not. It's ok. It does not mean you are a bad company – you just are what you are you know.
- 19:53 D2: I can't think of negative examples right now, but I can think of one that I actually have respect for, was like the Axe campaign being you, just being yourself. So I think like in some aspects I don't think it's like completely bad, some companies do really get it right.
- 20:20 D4: The only thing I can think of I when they try to sound like they are speaking like us. We don't have a set dialogue or way that we speak. It's not like we speak in hash tags. Please, delete the hash tags. I cannot with the hash tags. They are so 2 years ago. But everything has a hash tag or everything is woke, or I don't know who invented the slang that they are sort of coining with millennials, but it doesn't work all the way around. Maybe it works with stereotypical teenage yesteryear millennial, but it doesn't work with current people, we have evolved. It doesn't work with us anymore. It doesn't stick.
- 21:03 Interviewer: Particularly in your age group – 18 -24?
- 21:05 D4: It doesn't work, no. I think the thing that's lacking is insights. People need to dig deeper how do we speak, how can we reach that target market better because they are missing it especially in terms of copy or dialogue. That's where they miss the mark completely. That's not how we speak.
- 21:25 Interviewer: And the visuals? Is that the way you look?
- 21:33 D4: Nobody looks like that. I think we all, we want to. We want to look like that and that's the whole set up of Social media. I mean we aim to/aspires to wake up looking like we had our make-up done. We wake up with our hair done. I don't. Our hair is frizzy, our make-up is never done, we got bags and I think it would be so much better if we took away that sort of princess look to it and for guys the cool macho man always came fresh from the gym, no. We've got so many different kinds of people and we don't speak like that who don't look like that so. But when they come to what we really are how we really act that's when it really hit's home and that's when we can relate – ah that's us.
- 22:25 D1: Where the Axe thing works is that the benefit of the product has to do with the message. So it's not like they are trying hard to relate. It relates back to them as well. So it's kind of what's disconnects – brands or whatever you want to call it, they want to align themselves to something but it doesn't go back to them. It works when what they try to align with what they are.
- 23:00 D5: Just to add on to that because we have so many personalities and stuff and we are also trying to find ourselves and stuff at the same time, it's good if brands or communication stick to who they are because if there are so many then we can decide which ones we like, not necessarily them trying to get to us.

23:28 Interviewer: So the brand doesn't have to try to be everything to everyone?

23:30 D1-D5: Yes.

23:31 D5: Ya, cause we want to have a variety of choices of what different brands stand for.

23:40 Interviewer: Would you then say you guys are brand loyal or do you jump around?

23:47 D5: For specific some brands I am brand loyal for certain reasons, and then other brands if I get the vibe that I like what they are doing then I am keen to try it or maybe first look at what they have to offer.

24:07 Interviewer: When are you brand loyal – what would make you brand loyal?

24:10 D2: For me it's price dependent, the more expensive, I am more brand loyal. Like Adidas or Nike. So for Nike example, their tights, the way that they design their tights is a lot more comfortable and they last a lot longer than other brands. Aspects like that – because they work for me. But like with tissues or lip ice, I don't really care. So it's definitely the ones, because we are spending our own money, like we are going to go with what we like trust in.

24:49 Interviewer: And that's usually performance based?

24:50 All: Yes

24:52 D3: Then you know what to expect.

24:55 D5: When it comes to something you are serious about, like either sport or getting a laptop you want to get the one that's going to be the best quality and last the longest.

25:10 D4: Another thing is, I like to see how you position yourself in social media as well, so Nike has got it right in terms of doing ads. They did quite good with their ads. But how you represent yourself on SOCIAL MEDIA is also very important. I like to know that you have a presence and that you are talking to me, you are constantly saying this is what's new but not in that cheesy trying to speak to you in a millennial way but in your own way that's sincere. But ja, performance and price are kind of important.

25:51 Interviewer: Some students mentioned that visual communication aimed at young adults are 'trying too hard to be woke', so what does that mean to each you if I say 'they are trying to be woke'?

26:10 D1: I think I might have written that, (laughing). I don't know I think it's when they are aligning themselves with something they are not. If they formulated a message that's true to their benefit and also can relate to who they are targeting then it's working, but when it's like not at all what they are about or their service or product's about then it's just going to fall flat.

26:40 Interviewer: And what is the meaning of woke?

26:42 D1: I dunno know it's a very broad term but I think it's you know socially conscious, aspirational.

26:51 D3: Relatable

26:56 D1: Togetherness, very you know big terms that are just like this

is good for, clichés for like good behaviour, aware of your behaviour.

- 24:15 D2: I think the whole brands trying to be woke thing is just they don't know how else to communicate to us and that's, they're just falling back on that, so it's almost lazy
- 27:30 D3: I think it's almost just like cheap advertising really you just, I mean we all know a brand like Nando's they can get away with that – like I am shook and all that nonsense. But they are politically woke. But I mean maybe like a brand like Audi if they were to target and say we are woke check out our awesome motor, like we are shook, it's so sick it's them being someone they're not. We know that.
- 28:08 D4: Pepsi. I don't know if anyone remembers Pepsi – that's trying to be woke and it didn't work at all, with Kendall Jenner.
- 28:16 D3: I think everyone has blocked that one
- 28:17 D4: They tried way to hard and missed the mark completely and we can see what you are trying to do and it just doesn't work with your brand at all.
- 28:26 Interviewer: So what does woke mean to *you*?
- 28:28 D4: Being conscious, socially conscious, politically conscious, being aware of sort of, I can't think of the right word for it, any current trends, movements that are happening, you have to be on top of it, especially if it's a brand but don't force that movement, whatever, feminism, racism? Don't force that onto your brand, racially aware don't force that onto your brand. If it's done badly, it looks horrid. We can see it a mile away and it gets bad publicity for it and then we begin to question are you doing this on purpose? For the likes, the shares, the whatever. Or is it sincere, are you actually caring about this moving or just making a publicity stunt.
- 29:16 Interviewer: So you think it's when brands are trying to be too profound in their offering – it's just a car, but they are trying to change the world?
- 29:27 D4: There are certain brands that can do it, I think, what brand did it well?
- 29:32 D1: Apple does.
- 29:33 D4: Apple does?
- 29:34 D1: Yes especially like in the 80s their ads have always had that tone. And it depends on what your product or your brand is you know, aspirational product then great, but if you are like selling sugar water then maybe don't go to like aspirational.
- 30:00 D4: Dove they can get away with it because they've got this awesome target market, that's targeted at, they aren't beauty models and they can do that quite nicely. It's not about being perfectionist, we are not all these beautiful ladies that you know are done all the time. There are real women out there. It's not really staying woke, but there's something linked to it. Like if your target market you can sort of, bring a product with a message of being woke, I hate that word, mixes together well then fine but if you're a sugar water brand and you have no target market that you can bring this movement into then don't bother because it looks insincere, it doesn't look real.
- 30:34 Interviewer: Do you think the reason Dove for example aligns is because Dove's business is beauty, but Pepsi's business is not to start a new revolution?

30:58 D4: It's not going to work. You don't see Coke trying to relate to any strikes or *toy-toyi's* or revolutions it just doesn't work. What you are selling, that's important, you are selling Coke you are selling the moment, enjoy the feeling. Pepsi, I don't know what they sell. Like you have to think about what you are selling, you are selling Coke, what are you going to do with Coke? You are not going to start any revolutions any time soon.

31:27 D5: I just think that they can, if they are a brand then they don't have to advertise their woke-ness as such but they can show it in subtle ways by being more humble or more whoever models, or actors who look more real and down to earth and just, cause that will carry across the vibe that they use for example not the typical model kind of type you know. They don't have to shove it in everyone's faces because people will recognize and appreciate it themselves I think.

32:04 D2: If you look at Coke ad when the world cup was happening, the one where he is talking to all the Coke bottles in the factory, and saying go out and change the world kind of thing. So in terms of that the whole ad is so over the top and dramatic and profound and whatever but it's believable because it's Coke and it's just talking about making people happy so like if you do it in a way that's like believable and you are not trying to sell a fake idea then it can work as well. Like you are still selling a basic idea, you are not selling that it's going to change your life.

32:37 Interviewer: So if I am creating an ad that's using a lot of metaphors, or an over-exaggerated concept you are more willing to say that's cool than if I am trying to show 'real' but in a fake way.

32:52 All: Yes.

32:56 D1: Maybe if this ties down to the benefit of the product – so if it's still relating to the benefit then it's probably more based in truth even if it's an exaggeration.

33:10 D3: I think meaning a brand is woke just simply it's saying hey we understand you as our audience, genuinely. They are not going: (Sarcastic tone) '*We understand youu, we can relate*'. No. They are going no we genuinely understand you and we know how we can approach you and how'd you'd appreciate it, in a humble, subtle way, they are not forcing it on you. Like with Dove it's a good example because they understand that women all have stretch marks and not beauty models yada-yada-ya. So that's just a nice way of them to say we get it, we are here for you. That's cool. That's it they don't need to force it.

33:47 Interviewer: What type of visual catches your eyes? Example: I like to look at dogs or trees – the type of content.

34:12 D5: It doesn't matter what the topic is, but if something that has a lot of character, or humour then I will still be drawn to it even though I am not necessarily interested in that specific field or topic. Either the visuals in terms of the character or the mood of the visuals can draw me in.

34:49 Interviewer: If you are looking at things just for fun are there anything that speaks to you from a topic point of view, or not really?

35:00 D5: No not really. Maybe I am interested for example when I do my projects getting inspiration then maybe certain layouts will attract me or just certain styles or how it's done will attract me.

35:27 Interviewer: So when you are scrolling on Instagram what makes you stop?

35:30 D5: Good quality photos, like the actual quality of the photos not too busy, more focused on something.

35:46 D4: Instagram, then usually illustrations will make me stop cause that's the only thing that will make me stop and look at it. If it's just a picture – on Instagram you see picture after picture, so if it's an illustration then I stop. But then if it's a picture, then an exaggerated baby picture or animal.

36:07 Interviewer: Why do you like babies and animals?

36:09 D4: They are cute, and innocent and they don't even know that they are cute and funny. They are just doing their thing.

36:15 Interviewer: What is it about the innocent aspect that you enjoy?

36:19 D4: I think if I have to go deep into it, everything in this world, we know too much our eyes have been open to everything and animals and babies don't even know they are doing it. They don't even know what's happening they just do, and it's so cute.

36:39 D3: I think if we are using the example of just scrolling through Instagram, a lot of illustrations yes but beautifully shot, cinematic videos, I love and I will always watch. I can really appreciate it when someone actually shoots something really beautiful. Beautiful photography - not just your selfies and things. And stuff that's not as common maybe.

37:06 Interviewer: What types of topics do *you* like? (Looking at another student)

37:08 D3: Beauty, as you can imagine, lots of Youtube things.

37:13 Interviewer: Why do you like beauty so much?

37:15 D3: I dunno, it's colourful, expressive – it's a typical answer but I like, I do follow a lot of beauty things. On the topic of that a lot of weird strange looks that people might do. I follow a lot of special effect artists, all over the world, like Australian, Germany and things like that. I just really like the talent and I like exploring different talents and see how people might apply eye shadow in that place and compare it to how I might do it. I just like it because you can learn a lot of things from it all over the world and see a lot of different things that you might not have even considered.

38:00 D2: I like specifically, there's a page called Talenthouse that has a lot of illustrations from designers, I don't even know where they from but it's very cool and it's very different. And then there is also a photographer who I really like who Photoshops either animals or weirdly enough babies with plants and flowers and it's really beautiful and they like graded so well and the whole thing makes me very jealous of the Photoshop skills. So those are two specific things that I love and then anything that relates to fitness, fitness videos and stuff that I would like to save like for later, those are things that make me stop as well.

38:54 D1: I dunno it's hard to say, you know but I think just to stick to the Instagram thing I like interesting moody portrait's and poodle videos. Just like quirky dogs doing funny stuff.

39:21 D5: And Tali, I saw you (looking at D1) liked it and then commented.

39:23 Interviewer: Why do you like poodles, dogs or animals videos?

39:26 D1: Well they kind of like living cartoons, you know. They are styled by their owners, they look ridiculous – it's funny.

39:39 Interviewer: So how do you guys feel about the use of stereotypes?

39:43 D3: Hate stereotypes. I don't like it, it's outdated. You don't need to stereotype people.

39:54 Interviewer: Can you give an example of something that really irritates you?

39:57 D3: Again just with millennials, I get really pissed off, sorry, I get really irritated with media these days. I just don't even like the word millennial, only millennial pink, cause that's a nice colour. But just like grouping people, I just feel like generally the public have or society has a negative thought on someone being called a millennial. Like I've had personal experiences of family friends or something going oh but you're a millennial, you won't understand and you grew up with your parents babying you, nurturing you and telling you you can do anything you wanted and then when someone puts you down you lose it because you haven't got your way, and I am like it's not true. It's not how life goes, there might be some people but that's just how some are raised. It goes back to before I was born. But when they say 'you're a millennial' it's usually something offensive or just rude will come after that. It's not like (high pitch tone) 'you're a millennial, wow that's amazing you do such good in the world', no. They don't generally do that. In my opinion.

41:04 Interviewer: So do you guys think stereotypes are generally associated with the negative group characteristics rather than positive?

41:16 D3: Well, with me the first thing I think of stereotypes is negativity. That's just how I view it, but that could also be in our modern day now. We are so aware of the word stereotype and we focus a lot more on the negativity. There are very different ways of defining, but if you stereotype someone and put them in a bubble it's not how society works these days. So just the word stereotype has a negative connotation to it.

41:46 D2: I think specifically with like food brands they're still stuck in 'I'm the mother that likes to cook for my children and I like to make them nice lunch that's like for me the one area where I think they are using it badly. But I enjoy stereotypes when they are used in a mocking kind of way, not serious. And they are acknowledging that they are using a stereotype.

42:18 Interviewer: Do you think it's again that idea of over-exaggeration versus realness?

42:25 D2: Ya, because I think if you are making a joke out of it then it's easier to digest but if it's said in like a serious way then you wanna not like it.

42:37 D4: Like if I am thinking in terms of social media we all see those memes where it's like they show certain pictures like there's one for a mom that complains too much and calls the manager she's got like a bob cut, a purse and doggie, I dunno, we can relate to that though – we have all seen these moms that go like 'can I call the manager please'. Uhm and it's there for a reason, it didn't just arise out of nowhere. There are these moms, so we can't just ignore stereotypes are there but I don't know when and I don't know how, but stereotypes became a negative. It's just got a negative brand on it. Like gay people, not all gays are the same. You get gay people, men that are very macho, not all of them are feminine. Not everyone is the same. Like you get gay people that go to the gym super gym freak addicts, ones that are very feminine but it's not the same so you can't put them all into the same box anymore. And now we have realized it and that's why stereotypes have got a bad brand on it. But it can

be funny. Like memes they just do it so right. I don't know how. But they just get it right every time.

- 43:51 Interviewer: So when would you draw the line between a funny stereotype versus a hurtful stereotype?
- 43:55 D1: I think maybe D5 mentioned that Tali person, she is an act and it's for a series and she's a stereotype it's a Jewish woman from Seapoint. But it's still endearing, her story is still even though it's poking fun, it still has an endearing quality and still has sympathy with the topic and also it's based on truth. It's just an exaggeration of truth but it's not like complete nonsense. You know, like you guys know what I am talking about a stereotype that's not based on truth, you know like, so. Then it's similar to what we do when we exaggerate the benefit of something.
- 44:49 D2: If you are going to make it a joke you have to really go like way over the top with the exaggerating so that it's completely clear that it's not being serious, so like the KFC ad where they're super dramatic with all the drumsticks. With the giant drumstick that comes up in the background, so like that works for me because it's all these stereotypical things that people do but it's so over the top you know there is no way they are going to be serious about it.
- 45:20 D3: Ya. When it's blatantly obvious that it's a stereotype and it's just not taken seriously, like with Tali. Tali is a good example, when she talks you don't genuinely have people walking around like that 24/7 – if they do there are very few and they probably won't get offended. I think just if it's very obvious it's a stereotype then it can be taken as a joke then you won't have a problem with it. You are trying to make just a lighthearted situation.
- 46:02 D1: Maybe the reason why it works is because the satire is coming from a source that understands it well. There's a truth to it and it's kind of almost empathetic towards it, so if you use another stereotypes – I get offended over like some stuff that's far removed from me, but if I see a part of myself in whatever joke is being told then I can laugh at it.
- 47:58 D2: I think it depends who it's coming from. Trevor Noah does it so well, no one can really feel offended when he insults whatever race he is insulting because he insults all of them, and he is all of them. Like the thing where he is like: 'Mary I am moving to Australia'. Us white people we laugh at that, we don't get offended because it's literally something that we say. So if you get it right and you understand like the people you are making fun of then you can't really offend them. But when you get it wrong then that's when the trouble starts.
- 48:38 Interviewer: So if I play the roles Marc Lottering play then that's not going to go off well?
- 48:45 D4: It depends if you know the culture and the people. You've got to get it right spot on like one thing I wanted to say. We struggle when we come up with ads, we don't know are we pushing are we treading the line just a bit, when do we pull back? So we don't know ourselves and even though we are 'woke', we don't know ourselves when we make this ad are we being too stereotypical or are we just missing the mark a bit.
- 49:09 D3: I think it's difficult if you are say for example a Jewish producer or writer and you create a show that has a Jewish person or character or something and if you are creating it and you are making jokes about it and you are not being offended, it's not really expected that the audience, culture that you approaching or targeting would get offensive. So like with Trevor Noah he is a South African so he knows a lot about how we are and what we say. He's got a black and white parent, he knows the different cultures, he knows what's respectful and what's offensive. It's just if you completely understand, not just

doing like a bit of research. If it's completely understood because you have lived that. If you are maybe Jewish and you writing about a black character or something like that, perhaps you have or were brought up in a black household or something, you know what I mean, just if you actually understand it properly. You don't just read a few books, and think that you know it, but lived in it and you've experienced then you can use that experience to base it off. Then it becomes more real and understandable then it can't be offensive surely. If it's essentially factual in a way.

- 50:35 D5: I was thinking in very similarly. If it's based off something that you've actually, or something that your mom has actually done and you think it was funny and even if you exaggerated it a bit more then it can't really be offensive because you've lived it like you said.
- 51:03 Interviewer: And that's very tricky in South Africa, and that's what makes our visual communication very difficult, because you have to please...
- 51:10 D3: And tiptoe around everyone because of all the different cultures
- 51:27 Interviewer: So how do you (looking at the other students) feel about the millennial stereotype label?
- 51:33 D5: Personally I get bothered by some things that aren't fair, and I guess it's not fair that we are treated or looked down on. It's the same concept, they need to understand or have gone through. It's annoying when someone who is not in your situation speaks to you about how you are if that makes sense. So that's the only annoying factor, but I mean you can kind of choose to brush it off I guess.
- 52:15 D4: The way we are portrayed is that we don't know much we are stuck on our phones, but hasn't technology helped us, hasn't it advanced in just everything. We've got this kid, who is a millennial and designed this little trash compactor thingy that sucks up the trash in the ocean – how cool is that. So ja we might not be reading books as much, which is not true, you get a lot of millennials who read books. We have advanced in technology and why not use that to our advantage and social media, we didn't create social media, we are just your creation. We didn't create Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, you guys did.
- 53:00 Interviewer: Mark Zuckerberg, Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, Kevin Systrom, they are all millennials.
- 53:13 D4: (laughter) Oh, sorry, we did that, oops. But ja we are advancing and we should be recognized for that.
- 53:39 D5: I also agree with what you said, because so many things also relate to how you were brought up and that obviously relates to how your parents were brought up. So that is a huge thing so we can't be blamed completely.
- 54:01 D3: I won't go too far into it, but I was just thinking as much as it does annoy me personally I also feel that when it comes to like me seeing a billboard with a millennial on saying 'use condoms' or whatever I kind of I am not even fazed by it – I am just like well that's what I expect you to think of me because that's what I have been told or how I see you think of us millennial. I don't even care anymore, there's no point to try to change your mind, because this is how you feel, good for you. I am just going to walk by because I actually could not care less anymore, because I am just over it.
- 54:54 D4: I don't think millennials are even fazed by the term anymore it's there.

54:59 D3: It's just been in our face. I mean there are loads of people, there are kids that are younger than us. I know we are millennials but I see the younger kids as more millennials. The term millennial apply to them.

55:12 Interviewer: They are actually called centennials.

55:12 D4: There is a word for it?

55:14 D3: I have never heard that word before, that's interesting.

55:20 Interviewer: Yes, under the age of 20 they are considered centennials

55:26 D5: Ya, those are the problem ones.

55:29 D3: But that's what I am saying, how they say millennials are I apply it more to the younger generation, because I do find that they are a lot tougher to communicate to a bit more...

55:40 D4: Aren't we doing the same as what all the other people are doing to us?

55:44 D3: I do think that as well – with society move up and blame the younger people and they move up and blame the younger people – it goes in a cycle. It's literally like 'ah in my day.' As much as you say you won't do it, you will do that, you will say it to your children, and you will say it to your grandchildren. It's bound to happen because you have lived a life that is different to their life.

56:09 D4: Babies on iPads, I have seen a 3year old tap on an iPad.

56:11 D3: My little sister holds a phone and she knows how to pause, she knows, she is 2, and she knows my stepmom's code pattern. She knows the pattern that is terrifying to me. Because she it's just so young, I don't know particularly why it's terrifying – I have just been told that technology and young things are bad. But it's literally just like with my parents – 'ah you are on your phone too much – why aren't you watching TV on your phone? 'Cause that's what you do. You go on Instagram whilst you have a series on, that's just what we do. I can't explain it to you. It's just how we've started getting into that habit. But it's always going to happen, I am going to do that to my sister and my mom does it to me, my sisters do it to me.

57:05 D2: I even on the weekend as a millennial look at the kids now and my niece is 8 and she was playing on her iPad and I looked at these other kids (we were on a wine farm) and these kids were covered from head to toe in mud from playing in the garden and his parents put him in a plastic bag to put him in the car. And I looked at my mom and I said back in the day when I was young I used to run around and play in the mud like that but now most kids these days sit on their iPads. So even though we are the millennials and we are the technology addicted thing but I don't know I feel like if someone says millennial I want to roll my eyes.

57:59 Interviewer: Does it have a bad connotation? What does is mean to you, the word 'millennial'?

58:03 D2: For me it's just like when I hear 'millennial' I think of my grandparent being like – "you are such a millennial, get off your phone". You know how they were like "I stuck with the same job for 25 years, and you are not even going to be able to last for one year at the same company" Which is true, I don't know if I am going to be able to stick with one job for – I get bored very easily. I don't know if that's a millennial thing, we are just very different, and I

don't think we can get annoyed or angry by that cause we are completely different.

58:42 Interviewer: But how different? I am trying to understand, because you all say they call us millennials, I hate the word, but what does it mean to you? What is the definition?

58:49 D3: Useless
58:56 D4: Lazy

58:57 D2: We rely on technology and convenience and getting our own way and we want life to be easy and we get upset if it's not. That's how I think we are.

59:16 D3: But that comes down to being lazy, because generally technology was created to make life easier for you and essentially you become a lot lazier than how thing used to be.

59:29 D4: I think that's what's irritating, because that's how millennials have been coined, we are lazy and we don't do things hands on anymore and we rely on something else to do it for us so that's what's irritating – we are not lazy we just found a better way to do it.

59:45 Interviewer: Do you procrastinate a lot? And why? What's the source of that?

59:48 D2: Distraction.

59:55 D4: Social media, Internet

59:57 D3: Series

1:00:02 D1: One thing that annoys me (millennial stereotype). I remember growing up you were taught from day 1 at school "you guys are the future and you are going to fix everything" and that stereotype offends me, can we just also like be normal. "You guys are deep and you have a profound outlook on the world". I hate it when a lot of our peers esteem themselves on it, because you are not – you are just like everyone else. I also think I was watching an old episode of Politically Correct and I just found it so quaint how Bill Maher was like "It's a sign of the times something that happened where there weren't any graves in Britain anymore, '97 or something. It felt so dire then. Every moment in history people think the world is coming to an end and like every moment this is like the worst thing ever. Like you said 'OMG these kids are on iPads', oh no. and when they were kids was like oh no, daytime TV. And I think part of it is now you guys are going to change the world. And I get irritated by that, because we are not, and it's ok, we are not that profound. We were told we were, but we are not.

1:00:50 D2: Profound and offended by everything. Highly offended.

1:00:58 D1: That was put on us.

1:00:59 D3: I do think that with almost every generation they go "you are going to change the world kids". Like in grade 1.

1:01:02 D1: A few weeks ago there was this lady a friend of my mothers' she is like 50 and was an activist and she was going on about millennials and she later said she is a millennial. I found that interesting how she thought of herself, where she is maybe scarred from her upbringing and now they are projecting that onto us and that's actually them. So maybe the 50 year olds are actually the millennials inside.

1:02:48 Interviewer: You seem to reject labels and conformity, but you all conform on social media and it's ideals. Why?

1:03:25 D3: I just think generally people maybe millennials, social media users, everyone is a big hypocrite. We are all hypocrites, whether we know it, whether we don't whether it's subtle. Everyone is a hypocrite. So I know with me, I know there is a lot of expectations [sic] on social media and we should fight the expectations so I am here taking selfies, drinking champagne, pretending to have the best life, but then I say oh no people should not be doing that. I think when it comes to labels, I think it just comes down to how everyone is unique. Society is so diverse now with LGBTQ+ community, with race. Social media with different cultures with I don't know, people identifying in very unique ways that's only been in the present years. I think labels are just outdated. You don't need a label. You are just a human being, who's living and has a heart and has a desire and that should be it. I do understand what you are saying how yet you still conform, I think it's just a feel a part, like you participating, it's a community online as well. But that also where if you don't identify with a specific label you can still go to a community or something where you do sort of have your label. But there are 1000s upon 1000s of labels but ja. It's so you can be with like-minded people.

1:05:13 D2: I think as much as most people don't want to admit it they get offended by labels is sort of like a trend as a millennial we are offended by everything and we have an opinion on everything and sharing that opinion like I deleted Instagram for a while I was so like our Instagram it's so it's so lame it's just the same photos I'm back on it again and I'm posting photos and stories so as much as we don't like to think that we like labels we deep down inside we still like it because I think we are a part of something because I was thinking I was missing out on something I think we do it because we want to be a part of it because we do have FOMO*. FOMO is a real thing.

1:06:08 Interviewer: Do you think that is the biggest reason you are still on social media to belong, a part of even though you don't agree with it?

1:06:12 D4: Yeah that FOMO fear is a big thing

1:06:16 Interviewer: But what will you miss out on?

1:06:17 D4 Where else are you gonna get your information from like what's happening what's trending?

1:06:21 D2: People are having babies like very quickly and very frequently and like my friend didn't know about all these people having babies and I said this one's pregnant this one's pregnant and that was just an example you miss something important that you can gossip about.

1:06:50 Interviewer: But if they are not your friends why is that important?

1:06:51 D2: It's 21st century and people are having babies when they are not married and you know hoops is from one-night stands but we like to be like the drama and you don't wanna be the last person to know about them because you are excited about being the person running around telling everybody about it and about the drama it's true it's true though it's really sad but it's true.

1:07:45 Interviewer: Especially regarding the ideals previously spoke about this perfect image that is show but why do you think people are continuously showing that if there is not what you want to see?

1:07:58 D4: I think we want to say we are also having their lives I'm having a good time too I've got my shit together. It's a psychological need to belong to a group and to belong to something and to fit in so if you don't have

Instagram and Twitter where else are you gonna find that? Instagram Facebook because that's where it's plastered everywhere.

- 1:08:30 Interviewer: But why is that important?
- 1:08:31 D4: I don't know it's a need it's a need inside I don't know I can't not know
- 1:8:40 D5: If you are up-to-date with whatever is happening on social media maybe more up-to-date with the news or something then you are part of the conversations that are happening afterwards like the next day at college. I don't know they are talking about. Like do you think it should have been like this? So it extends the community to offline as well, but I like Instagram because it's kind of like a social media album of your life you can show your kids one day. Maybe I will delete some and then it's nice also if you can see what people are up to like a lot of the times I'll see a friend at a really nice restaurant and you can see the location and check it out and you can be like I let's go next week so it's a nice way of keeping up to date with things and find out new things.
- 1:09:54 Interviewer: And Whatsapp can't provide you with that?
- 1:09:55 D5: No Instagram you have your friends your close friends but you also have people that you know from school or sport or whatever but you don't necessarily talk to you. I only speak to 5 people maybe but it's more casual you are not keen for a conversation it's nice to find out new things
- 1:10:30 Interviewer: What kind of images will you avoid at all cost. What kind of images disturb you?
- 1:10:36 D2: Animal abuse because it almost like makes you realise there are horrible things happening and there is nothing you can do to change it so you almost just want to ignore it like my mum's friend share the video of a guy in China it's just a video of a man abusing the dog and it's like really traumatizing to see that, 'specially with animals. Because people are in control of their own Minds but animals are more vulnerable things like that. I want to avoid it but part of me wants to watch it too because I feel guilty for not watching it.
- 1:11:21 D3: I don't know animal abuse obviously there are a lot of things that people just post and understand that they want to post but you just don't want that on your feed like with poaching and vegans there's nothing wrong with vegans so I don't have anything against them. In a bad sense it's sort of like politics and stuff it's just personal I hate seeing all the stuff pop-up of Donald Trump and world politics and nonsense. I just want to be naive and stay in my little picture perfect happy world but it's just so it's just so depressing on social media if you click on one and you just scroll through the related it's an endless scroll of negativity and depression basically of all the terrible things that is wrong with the world. And it's a big thing psychologically because you can't skip it it's not like you're going to do anything to help them by watching it but you feel like a terrible person if you don't care for watching it there are a lot of psychological factors in social media.
- 1:12:47 D4: Vegans with the stop eating meat don't kill a cow I feel that they haven't tasted a burger because they show everything what they do to the cow it's not like I don't care I feel bad for the cow but at the end of the day I like my Spur burger. I don't like seeing content that I feel like I can't help you. Can't help this animal, can't help this kid find help or people that suffered a flood but it's great that you're aware so keep that like if there's a flood in Louisiana show me the flood 'cause I need to know, but what is a 'like' gonna do, give these people money? You are not helping so that's irritating. I hate seeing that. Any religious post is a no-no for me it's irritating and then celebrity content I don't follow them. But I do follow them.

1:14:00 Interviewer: But then why do you follow them?

1:14:03 D4: Because I told you I need to know, I need to see her but when I see her I'm like 'ugh, these people'. I follow the Kardashians for no reason they irritate the crap out of me. I follow Kris. I follow Kim. I follow Khloe. I follow all of them, but when I see it I am like uggg. But I need to know like 'where's the baby, what are they doing, did they do this, oh ok these people are human'.

1:14:32 D3: I used to be like that but now I just find it so strange because I noticed recently that I don't actually give a damn for what their celebrities are doing anymore I used to be obsessed with it I used to be obsessed with watching TV to read the Daily Mail.

1:15:12 Interviewer: Do you think it's because these celebrities are living the 'Instagram life' - living this amazing 'perfect' life, and you guys all strive to showcase on Instagram? Or does it seem like they are living the life and that fascinates you?

1:15:28 D5: A lot of them actually. I don't personally follow them because I'm more interested in people either that I know are friends with but I do search certain celebrities sometimes then a lot of them actually have very casual profiles. A lot of them are actually starting to not look so glamorous, like Justin Bieber. I think it was him - he's profile's very average, very chilled.

1:16:11 Interviewer: Really are they starting to be more 'average'?

1:16:13 D5: Not average, but like more real and I think it's nice for them to not have the pressure where every post is perfect with the perfect caption like they're just more showing themselves

1:16:27 D3: Yes, 'cause I think that's how society is now a lot more accepting of how people are in there every day don't worry we get you. And if you want to have a day in your tracksuit pants go for it. We appreciate that you are being real with us and that gives them even more of a following and communication with their fans.

1:16:46 D5: Maybe they feel that. It also makes their fans closer to them and increase their relatability but if you want something pretty to look at then you can look at travel pages or like travel people have a living of like travelling and instagramming things and that's fun.

1:17:15 D3: The reason why I might follow people that have non-realistic lifestyles on social media. I see that more as aspiration, more like a goal. I don't want to have a limo but I want to be wealthy and be successful when I'm older. Not looking at them and going I wish I had that, but I look at them and I go 'I'll get there one day'. It's cool to see what the lifestyle is like. A lifestyle that I want to have one day. So I don't look at them to be jealous, I look at them to work towards what I want - sort of like little nuggets help for the future.

1:18:00 D1: I avoid looking at stuff of people that are famous for the sake of being famous I really like social media but I like following stuff that's more like following up on interests outside of it but I like the medium of social media by the Kardashians they are famous for being famous. But Justin Bieber, he is more of a singer and people have a window to his life.

1:19:07 Interviewer: Some students mentioned that social media is like a prison - they felt it's like a jail. Do you agree with that statement do you feel trapped in social media and why do you continue if you feel trapped?

- 1:19:26 D5: I don't feel trapped or jail vibes because you can just delete it. Or you can take a break and just delete it for a while and come back, but I really think it's up to you and how are you decide to use your social media because I feel that everything is going more towards accepting of being different and all of that but I guess it depends on what you use it for. My reason is that it's just nice to keep a timeline of what I've done with my life that I can fall back on and it's nice to check up on other people and what they doing and search for things that I'm interested in that's cool but I don't feel like I have to keep up with that every day every minute every hour but that's just my personal way of using it
- 1:20:37 D4: I interpret prison differently like you can't get out of it once you enter you just keep scrolling like a zombie. Like to leave - you always come back. It's not like you can leave and just be done with it. If you take a picture you feel like you should post it on Instagram and this should be on Facebook. But it's that need of oh this pictures gotta go somewhere and in a prison psychological it's not good for you either because the content that's on Instagram is not inspiring anymore it's more like showing off. 'This is what I've got' like how am I going to live up to that? I haven't got the money, I haven't got the means also I don't have the time. So now what people have found is that it's damaging people. People suffer from depression and anorexia and it's because they are trying to be like these people and it's not possible. These people have money for like plastic surgery, they have got this, they got that. Some people don't have that and some people try their best. And that's the prison. It's not healthy but I gots to know. I have to know what's on there. I am in the jail of pictures. There is no knowledge on there, it's just content, boring content. It's an addiction. I always say I'm going to delete, but when I get to it I just slide into cancel because I'm going to have to upload all these pictures again. Oh gosh no I can't imagine deleting it. I always say I'm going to but then I never do.
- 1:22:14 D3: It's the same with me. I watched a YouTube video the other day about a girl who deleted all the apps and I thought I want to do that someday. Have I done it? No. I'm avoiding doing it. I don't want to do it. I don't know why I don't want to do it, but I think it's interesting how you said that you (looking at D5) will just deleted when it got too much for you because of your personal pictures and stuff. With me, I'm attempting to build a brand for myself with my beauty so I have my personal one which I delete that's fine but with my brand I find it's very difficult. Even though I haven't posted in good age and people don't even know exist anymore because I've been too busy I still don't want to delete it. I still check on other people that are doing similar things to me in South Africa and whilst getting busy, I've got my phone open playing stories one after the other while I'm getting ready to go to college. And I know it's stupid that I'm doing that. I'm like just stop. But I can't stop - it's definitely an addiction. There's a psychological thing behind it but it's not something that I am just willing to stop at the moment - which I don't know if it's a bad thing. It could be a bad thing. It's not a life-threatening thing but it's definitely something worth noting because it is very strange that I am constantly on my phone, constantly. I really just wanna throw it away but it's too valuable. There is too much on this tiny little device for me.
- 1:23:52 D2: I agree it does sort of feel like a prison, because here I am back at it again (After deleting it a while ago). And it's even like with fitness videos and stuff. You watch them and it's annoying because you look how people are looking and you want to look like that. You don't even notice that it's really damaging and it annoys you - these fitness models and stuff - and you know it's not real life, but there you are, looking, scrolling through their photos thinking 'I'll be like that one day'. But realistically I am never gonna have 2 meter long legs - it doesn't matter how hard I gym. So yeah, it is difficult to get out of it because FOMO is a big thing.
- 1:24:56 D1: For me it's more like a social contract of sorts. Like if you are in a relationship and you are going to delete all your social profiles then it is going to look like you are doing some bad things. Just things like that. Especially with

our career path - like my Twitter account - I don't use it but I just keep up-to-date. It's kind of relevant to what we do.

- 1:25:57 Interviewer: So do you guys see social media as a platform to build your career on?
- 1:25:58 All: Yes
1:25:59 D1: It's a very good way to keep up to date with a campaign that just came out and to gauge also what works and what doesn't work. I opened an Instagram account last year for this reason. Before that I didn't have it.
- 1:26:35 Interviewer: 'Social media is stealing my time' How do you feel or think about that statement?
- 1:26:38 D5: Ya definitely. It's very time consuming in terms of the little things that probably don't add much, most of the stuff don't add much, but it's entertaining for you and it can be very distracting when you are studying and there is nothing else but your phone lying there. So you just want a quick little scroll but that can turn into half an hour.
- 1:27:09 D4: Remember why you asked why we are procrastinators? Social media. Instagram you can feel like you are going on there for 10 minutes and you end up on there for an hour when you look at the time again. Oh wow gotta get back to work. Like my friend, Osiro, she will go on Instagram for hours and hours meanwhile I think she's working - she's on Instagram. You get sucked in what's the next one, what's the next one. So it doesn't help us it just takes up all of our productive time. And you don't even realise that it's happening - that's the scary part.
- 1:27:57 D3: It definitely does take up a lot of our time and in a sense that it almost is an addiction. Because with me I look forward to when I can like sit in my bed and scroll through Instagram because it's so relaxing for me and I just do nothing I just sit there. And it is sort of like a drug in a sense because of the feeling I get when I just sit there and just do this and I'm very happy to do it. And I look forward to doing it obviously then it takes up a lot of time. Because it's not like I planned 'ok guys it's 9 o'clock I'm going to start my Instagram' and have a whole thing over in 3 hours. When I open my phone I go 'oooh, I wonder what's happening'. I wanna see, I wanna look at the pretty pictures and all the fun things so yes it is in a sense like a drug.
- 1:28:55 D2: It does steal a lot of our time. I think we let it because it's become a habit now it's just something we do every day it doesn't even feel like an addiction, it just feels like that's your day-to-day thing. And although sometimes when you have something due like a deadline and you are very busy then you do feel a bit of guilt and you are like 'I shouldn't be on my phone'. But most of the time you don't even think twice about it.
- 1:29:21 D4: It sounds like drugs
- 1:29:24 D1: I think I waste the most time on YouTube watching stuff that doesn't really add value. I just watch a 10 minute video and that will lead to 5 or more where that time could have been better spent watching an episode that's a piece of art or whatever. It's a weird sort of lazy. I remember before we had Internet, people would say 'I can't believe kids are watching so much TV'. It's even worse now because at least that had some sort of value like a story but this is just like watching some idiot doing funny things. It's a waste of time.
- 1:30:12 D2: There's this thing on YouTube where this guy makes celebrities eat different chilies and it just gets hotter and hotter and hotter.

1:30:28 D3: I like the animals in the Box stuff. It's Vanity Fair, when they put animals in a box and then celebrities have to guess to guess what it is and I mean it's useless it's adding no value to my life. It's taking my time and adding no value.

1:30:47 D4: I think with TV a program ended and then you have to go to bed or the program ended and that was it nothing else come on. YouTube is endless It's a never-ending thing there is always content. Self-control, we don't have it.

1:31:21 D5: That's why I don't let myself watch series. I can't stop (laughter)

1:31:23 D3: You (Pointing at D5) said that you can delete your account, I think you are very strong in your brain. You have a lot of self-control over yourself. With me it's like I don't want you I really don't want to and then I'm not going to no one is making me do it. So 'I'm going to go here, I'm happy here' that voice in my head.

1:31:55 D5: But I haven't felt the need to delete it. I know I can if I felt overwhelmed. Then I would, but I have not felt overwhelmed or have a need that I feel like I should delete it if that makes sense.

1:32:05 D1: Maybe if you get to that point like with drinking where you are thinking of stopping because you have a problem so it will be difficult if you think about it.

1:32:20 Interviewer: Name some positive aspects of social media

1:32:35 D5: It's so nice to find out things. You can get inspiration in terms of design and animation there are so many business profiles you can follow for information, which is really cool. And then the whole aspect of you can connect with people you have never have had a chance to.

1:33:08 D4: Connecting with people is a lot easier especially Internationally. If I follow an Illustrator and they follow me back that's amazing because now they can view my stuff and if they like it that's better. So previously I'll probably have to go to America and be like hi do you mind looking at my illustration I probably be like a stalker. But now we can just message each other on Instagram. I think it's just constantly hiding content to look at and I know I said it is negative before but it is also a positive. The fact that you can see what else is out there and endless possibilities of what's out there. You get to see people's profiles you get to see just being able to see what other people have out there is quite cool.

1:34:05 D3: The Big positive of social media is connecting. And communities. With my personal experience I've been able to connect with a lot of like-minded people - South African beauty industry people like that which I love. That no one else knows I don't know of anyone else whose friends with them. And it's cool to meet new people over social media in Pretoria or something like that. And then getting inspiration and aspiration. It's helping me to aspire. Because a lot of my design stuff - I would love to say it hundred percent me, but I have gotten inspiration from the Internet and from social media and from other Creators and stuff like that. It's helped me to join the dots. Creation is a big thing on social media I like seeing different creators. And people are very creative in ways that you wouldn't have thought were possible or knew about.

1:35:24 D2: I think it's nice because especially for family or friends of moved overseas I would still like to see what they doing. Almost feel like I'm still part of their life even though they not here. So for me that's one thing I really like. So sharing like the creative side of it, things that you would never have the

opportunity to see if you didn't have social media. So that Talenthouse thing where you can find photographers and illustrators - even if it's not super inspirational things. It's just stuff that you appreciate looking at. Where you have to sit and watch TV about a long documentary about something that interests you, you can just see something and find lots of different things that you are interested in. I love that about social media.

- 1:36:14 D1: It's a good way to keep track of your interests. Also one thing I love about it is, you can meet people like niche groups in a way. Like on Facebook - I love the group function where you can have discussions and chats over very niche interests. And that's not necessarily popping up on people's news feeds but I've met some really cool people through that. And let's say you are into some sort of band and you don't know anyone that can go to the concert with you then you can actually get to know people who are in this town and who can go with you. Where before it if you were into some weird thing especially in school you will never meet anyone like you. And it's kind of like made it accessible to meet like-minded kind of people. That's very nice.
- 1:37:20 Interviewer: What are your thoughts on real versus fake when it comes to visual communication or social media. Or what are your thoughts on reality because every student had issues with reality. For example: real perception, real life you, real opinions, real control, real happiness, real choice, reality-check. So in terms of visual communication we are talking about all of these real aspects that you guys want to see reality but yet we not seeing it everybody's putting filters on Instagram so I just want to get your thoughts on that?
- 1:38:52 D1: Yeah, I find it irritating to have to be your own PR agent to an extent. I can't say this so I can't say that because there are going to be some sort of repercussions. So you are you are forming an expression of yourself that's a part of you but it's not like your real life to an extent. Your real beliefs and stuff like when we are doing our CV's. I had to sit down and my girlfriend said: 'Are we going through your timeline and all of the controversial shit you have ever said, are we going to go and delete it?' It sucks having to do that. Everyone is their own publicist and I think in the past people weren't a scared but now people are very safe on it so you have to be your own PR agent and it sucks you know.
- 1:39:55 D2: I find it almost ironic because people have become so sceptical of everything that we see. We are so cynical but at the same time we see on Instagram a before and after photo and we are like wow that's amazing but we don't actually stop ourselves and think that's not real. And then at the same time a lot of fitness models make it clear they will post on Instagram versus real life photos where it's like air brushed and a real photo where they actually show stretch marks and I think we appreciate that a lot more. But a lot of what we see we don't even question ourselves when we say: "oh wow that's amazing". The shit's not real.
- 1:40:53 Interviewer: But would you prefer to see a pretty person or a real person?
- 1:40:58 D2: I think we appreciate a much more real person these days. The fitness girl that I follow she never wears makeup and she takes photos of herself at gym sweaty and red and she looks horrible. And I love what she posts compared to other woman who looks immaculate. So I much prefer the real ugly truth compared to the pretty girl.
- 1:41:23 Interviewer: So if you see a Louis Vuitton shoot versus what the actual model looks like which one is going to attract your attention?
- 1:41:35 D2: You want to see like the behind the scenes kind of stuff.
- 1:41:41 D3: We are kind of used to seeing all the Louis Vuitton stuff and

we know what the media is portraying and what they expect so it's nice to see something different. It's more real. It catches your eye more when the model is shows us how she actually looks that's much more catching. I know I say the real and stuff but some people posting those pretty pictures and stuff when it comes to aspiring and stuff it's nice to see those pretty pictures, but it's also nice to see the real side. But with my experience with some people I know will post something. For example, this person I know was screaming at her child to stop being such a brat 5 minutes later she posted and Instagram on how much her child is an angel and adore her. I know she adores her but she's all like "Oh my child is snuggling with me and loving me" and I'm like 5 minutes ago you were screaming at her. I hate people that blatantly lie. So I appreciate when people are just being honest. Don't sugar coat it or try just be upfront and honest I think people appreciate that and are attracted to that more.

- 1:43:25 Interviewer: Maybe there's a space for looking like a beauty winner and there is space for that you don't always have to be perfect it's about context?
- 1:43:37 D2: Yes you don't always have to
- 1:43:39 D4: With social media especially visual content I don't trust anything anymore that's why I prefer animation even with photography we have been trying to Photoshop this and Photoshop that and you can stretch that. You can take someone else's nose and plonk it on someone else's face, so I don't trust photographs anymore. That's why I like animation because you know it's not real. It's authentic in its own way you know it's not real. You know it's childish and it's made up. But they are giving you the exact thing that it is. It's not trying to be anything else whereas with photography, especially on social media or with the visual communication, we stretch this. How do you trust a branch that does it too often? I will actually un-follow a brand that is trying to make beautiful things but are doing it in such a wrong way. It's not authentic anymore it's not beautiful anymore, you've taken what is beautiful and you have stripped it from all its beauty. I have trust issues when it comes to visual communication and photography.
- 1:44:56 D5: It comes down to being honest depending on the category of what is being shown. So if it is maybe someone famous, or whatever, then you will more appreciate it when you see them looking exactly how they are but if it is a makeup artist and they show themselves without the makeup saying this is how I got here. Showing that they are not just like that because there is a process to it. Just explaining. So if you are a makeup artist, instead of putting just the final results out there and you are showing them the steps and teaching that they can also make themselves look how they want.
- 1:46:01 Interviewer: So if I can summarise, you are more interested in seeing real life and everything that is brought with real life. You get the good and you get the bad and you don't mind seeing both of it. But then what role does the fantasy element play in that or the escapism of social media?
- 1:46:20 D3: I think it depends on the person. You know you can't really attain it. Me personally, I love vampires and I'm obsessed with them, and I will stalk all of the actors but they are not vampires in real life. But I know that I'm not going there and I'm not going to be disappointed emotionally. I think with fantasy you just need to check in with yourself and I understand that it's different to reality because I do think some people mash together.
- 1:46:58 D1: I don't really know how I feel about this because it is entertainment and the escapism of social media is the magic of it, and it also can be harmful to you if you are real on it. It can be harmful when you kind of exhibit it in your life. Like if you are a famous person, it's the worst idea ever to over share. Maybe it is not a bad thing to put a certain image of ourselves on there. Because maybe the opposite is way worse.

1:47:39 Interviewer: But when a brand communicates to you, you want that brand to be real?

1:47:48 D1: More authentic rather than real - what does real mean? It's more maybe just authentic you can still project something but be authentic.

1:48:09 Interviewer: What is private to you and what is public to you and how much are that are you willing to show? Especially from a visual communication point of view. For example: where does the line between public and private end and where do you draw that line?

1:48:36 D3: What first comes to mind for me is that I literally have to draw a line between public and private. My Instagram account was a mixture of my brand and a mixture of my family and like my little sister and friends and stuff and I would start sort of not really knowing where I am going. So I had to literally delete all of the pictures of my private save those pictures and move them over onto a private account, so I can section my brain ok this is what I can share with the public like my public profile and I restricted myself to not family not friends. And I made a private account that is on private with people that I only know and I've only met more personal things I do share a few things. For example about my anxiety on my public page, because I do think it is relatable, people will know about it and when you do something like that you can start a conversation and that can help you as well. But definitely when comes to very personal things: I don't have to show people who have never met her, my 2 year-old sister. That freaks me out - it's not good for her. I share it with my friends and family who know her on the private one, so it does blur it's very difficult. So I literally had to physically separate the two.

1:50:12 D4: I'm literally thinking of it now. I think a lot of people struggle with private these days - everything is public these days. If people are gonna post something then it's literally on a topic that's personal today. Maybe they should have consulted somebody in person. You should have kept it to yourself; you don't have to put it out there. But I'm questioning if anything is really private anymore. For example: if you have kids then it has to be private, or to protect them, or if you are protecting something, or you have a serious issue. Or something that relates to you about anxiety or depression and you relate to that and you sort of wanna put that in your little gallery, then maybe that should be private. Because people will comment on that. People can't help themselves but comment: Why you feeling this way or don't you think that's a bit negative? But that's just how I'm feeling and stuff. So I don't have anything is private anymore. And I don't think in terms of visual communication that anything is private anymore, all topics are open. And that's actually kind of dangerous. So everything is public in my opinion.

1:51:42 D2: I also cover the camera on my laptop because I am scared that people are staring at me while I'm working. But also you do get people that just over share. Like the two girls that I knew that had babies. The one posted all the time about her big pregnant stomach and photos and stuff. And the other one posted a story when the baby was born that it was ambiguous whether or not it was her child or not. But I know the inside information so it is her baby. Even on Facebook, it freaks me out. The one night I went out and I met a guy who my boyfriend is friends with and he had nothing to do with me. Or it had nothing to do with what I was doing on my phone because I met him in person for the first time that night. And the next day he popped up as a suggestion to add on Facebook and for me that freaks me out.

1:53:04 Interviewer: I wanted to ask about constant engagement. Do you guys think that because of social media and your phones you are constantly engaged, and is that something that you do seek?

1:53:22 D3: I enjoy constantly engaging or talking to people like-minded people that I haven't met and having a conversation with them and communicating with them, whether privately or in context with other people. I like constantly being engaged with other people.

1:53:46 D4: I don't like being constantly engaged with other people on my phone as much as I am. Because I feel I've lost the ability to actually speak to people one-on-one. And that's so scary. Like I'll go to a party and I forgot how to start a conversation. You can hide behind Instagram and WhatsApp and Facebook. You can hide behind that and you can send emojis. I can't put a monkey emoji on my face. So I don't like it. I don't like being on my phone as much. I shouldn't lose that ability to converse with people one-on-one.

1:53:33 Interviewer: It did come up in one of the students' design pieces. He said because there is physical distance you are emotionally also distant. So you tend to be more critical or you tend to have a different take because you can but soon as you get one-on-one that rejection is real?

1:54:46 D4: And you can hide behind a text you can say I didn't mean it that way you just read it wrong but if you say it then I can hear how you say it but I can't hear it if you're texting me. And lots of people hide behind that, and that's quite dangerous.

1:55:01 D2: I think for me it's like a need to be constantly engaged but it's frustrating almost. Like if I'm driving and I get a message, I know I shouldn't look on my phone, but I feel like I need to because what if. What if it's something important? For example, if I gym or I'm doing something important it's distracting. That's something that I do and being constantly engaged needs to be like that but it's frustrating.

1:55:33 Interviewer: Something that I picked up is the purpose of social media. Do you think it makes you feel validated? Example, do you feel validated as a human as it qualifies you as part of a group or an active member of a group? What are your thoughts?

1:55:55 D5: Yeah it definitely gives you some. Like it doesn't matter each person has an average amount of likes. I used to care about the likes, but now I don't care. It's more for myself now. But I used to feel more validated if I got more likes I guess it's normal. It's getting a compliment.

1:56:36 D4: I don't feel validated on social media because I think about a it, it means you got that tick you are official. So unless I'm official I'm not validated. If you don't have a tick you're not official. You are seeking to be validated because social media like Instagram or Facebook validate you. Because they say you are part of us and we recognise you. I don't really feel part of a community maybe that's why some people are on because they feel like they're part of a bigger something, but personally I just don't feel it. I'm just going through the motions.

1:57:29 D3: I think just having access to social media and being able to express your opinions and something like that. That is validating enough, but also likes and comments. Personally if a video of mine really did well and a lot of people comment on it then it feels great and people care about what you're doing that's a bit of a compliment or an ego boost.

1:58:10 Interviewer: Is it more of an ego boost if someone tells you online that they like something rather than your class mates telling you?

1:58:11 D3: Yes because there are a lot more people online

1:58:20 Interviewer: But you know the people here, those are strangers...

1:58:21 D3: Because you know me, you might be biased in the sense, like you do support me. I expect you to support me. And when it comes to complete strangers and they think exactly the same way as someone who actually knows me does, then that's really great. That means that I've done something right, so yeah that's definitely a great thing.

1:58:52 D2: I think it definitely does validate you, but most of the time it has the opposite effect because you don't always get what you want out of it. But I think also a big thing is it translating to real life. For instance, if you're dating someone and they post a photo of you two that's validating, because it validates your relationship with that person. If you become Facebook official then that validates your relationship with them, because they want to post that in public so it's more real than them just asking you one-on-one.

1:59:31 Interviewer: So do you feel that this stuff gets more real online than in your private space?

1:59:42 D2: Like one-on-one it's real but when it's in public, it validates it. It makes it that much more genuine.

1:59:52 D3: It's almost like you get the hi twice

1:59:57 D5: And also very rewarding to post something about you, that's almost as if they want people to know that they are happy with you. I don't want to sound like trophy vibes, but it's like they are proud of you being part of their lives.

2:00:20 D4: It's almost like you are not in a relationship if there aren't pictures about the two of you everywhere. Are you guys together? Like when I was dating someone, someone asked me: 'are you guys still together because I haven't seen any pictures of you recently?' I was like: 'you can just ask, come see us we are right here'.

2:00:42 Interviewer: What is a symbol?

2:00:57 D5: Something that represents something

2:01:01 Interviewer: So what does a cell phone represent? What is a cell phone to you?

2:01:09 D5: For me it's a way of just keeping my life in order; socially and logistically. It's a little thing that keeps all your personal, your social, your logistical and professional life in order.

2:01:57 D4: I just imagine a little loudspeaker that with constant notifications constantly telling me something. That's what I imagine - it's almost like having a kid. A little titanium kid that's nagging you constantly: 'Mum did you talk to me today, did you look at my picture, did you see what I drew'. I need my kid. If my kid had to die then I would morn it, but it's nagging me. It's in my womb - it's part of me. I love my kid but it annoys me. And sometimes you want to chuck it but you can't because people will frown on that.

2:03:14 D3: I would say my phone is my life, but it's not because if I didn't have it I would be perfectly fine. So I probably say it's more of a bridge. I have my work-work, my college work my personal, my social something, everything on it. And I think it just helps me to connect. I don't have a bad relationship with my phone. I like my phone but maybe that's just me being blinded. Love is blind; I don't see the negativity of it. I don't hate my phone. I love that I have my phone and I can communicate with people. It's almost like you can reconnect with your family that you haven't seen or anything. You get to speak to them again. I really enjoy having my phone.

Dynamite comes in small packages and this is a very small package. It hasn't an air hangar full of dynamite in it, but it does give a lot of access and opportunity.

- 2:04:13 D2: I see it as a way of connecting. Although connecting in real life is great, but it's just like the new way to connect. But in another way it is also like a security a sense of security. I'm not the only one, if you feel your pocket and your phone is not there then you start to panic. Because you just rely on it so heavily for everything. Just for simple things like writing a note. If I wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and I have an idea I write it on my phone. I don't write it on a piece of paper. So there's so much you can lose if you lose your phone; photos and memories and a way of connecting with people, not just in emergency situations. It is definitely a sense of security.
- 2:05:11 D1: I think it has become a universal tool. It's also kind of unfair to say that people are addicted to phones - it's like saying people are addicted to roads. This is the infrastructure that you use. I went somewhere and then my phone dies and I'm thinking: 'how am I gonna get home?' It's actually a logistical thing. And it's also expected of you to keep it on you. Because what if person x phones you, and you don't answer and that think you went off the face of the earth for three hours. Then it's a problem for that person. And that's irritating, but it's expected.
- 2:06:05 Interviewer: So you feel constantly connected to your life the world everything around you. (Students nodding)
- 2:06:21 Interviewer: The one student said that social media is like heaven opening it's gates and angels singing when you get likes and people like your stuff and then real life is like a cloud with rain and a description that real life = meh. So what do you think that means why do you think real life is so meh?
- 2:06:51 D1: Maybe it's like social media as a curated version of life. Like a movie is also a curated version of life. It's actually something I heard yesterday - someone saying this. Like a movie will have the cool parts of life in it, social media is the same it has the cool part of life, the curated version.
- 2:07:19 D2: Real life - you can't fake it. It is what it is, but on social media you can so easily make things seem better than they are. And you think that is so much better than your life. Even looking at something that is well photoshopped. You look at real life and you think that packet is looking shit on the table but I can Photoshop it to look great, so it's just easier to make it look wonderful.
- 2:07:51 D3: I don't think real life is so meh. When I'm on social media and stuff I know that is a different reality and I will be there for a minute and I'll come back to you, but I know what to expect afterwards. But it just reminds me a bit with fantasy and stuff that that's a big thing so if I watch a really great fantasy series and I'm obsessed I'm on a really cool high because everything seems great and I'm like: 'Wow wouldn't it be cool if the world is like this?' And you do come down a bit and you say: 'ok life is not as exciting as that it's a bit boring', but I think it depends on the person if you could just accept and acknowledge that it is not going to be like this, and it's fine. Also I feel like you can make anything possible.
- 2:08:59 D4: Real life has got these problems like anxiety and all these things where as on social media you don't really see it. You highlight the good stuff, and it comes in short bursts, but if you do suffer from anxiety or something well that goes on forever if it's not treated well. So that's why it's meh. Problems don't just go away - you can't put a filter on it. You can't swipe left or swipe right to make it go away - sometimes they're just stuck there. And it's not a 120-minute movie, it does not end. You have to sort the problem out. And we live in a world where a lot of people don't sort it out. I don't have to face this problem

that's sitting right in front of me. It gets ignored and it gets worse and then people are then trapped in this never-ending cycle.

- 2:10:16 D5: I agree, but in terms of my own profile or usage of Instagram, I prefer real life or experiences that you have in real life. Like the good ones, and then you just capture a part of it and you put it on the *Gram* for memory. But that's just your profile and I guess if you compare your life experiences with what you see on Instagram like the travel stuff or whatever, it will obviously seem more amazing. But you also know that they could manipulate the picture or they have a really good camera compared to your little phone camera.
- 2:11:12 Interviewer: Is comparing a big thing? How does that make you feel? Obviously all kinds of visual communication make us compare. How does that make you feel and you think it's healthy? Is that maybe why you want to see real people because then the comparing might not be so hectic?
- 2:11:46 D5: Comparing can be a good thing if it's a little bit because it can be motivating, or it can be bad you take it too seriously and you don't look at the bigger picture and see where you are coming from or whatever. And then it becomes unrealistic and you think you are not good enough.
- 2:12:12 D3: Yeah it's definitely shit.
- 2:12:15 D2: Yeah, I booked an Airbnb place and it's pretty average. We didn't have enough money to book a fancy place then I saw on Instagram this girl I knew from school stayed at this B&B in Mykonos and it was the most incredible thing I've ever seen in my life. And I saw her caption said last person to stay here was Beyonce, so yeah.
- 2:12:43 D3: It was when I was like going to Greece and very lucky to be going to Greece, but in comparison to other people that I've watched when they went to Greece they were staying in these grand hotels and stuff. I was like I don't want to show people where I was staying. We stayed in the cheapest place possible and it was beautiful and was great, but not compared to those, so I didn't properly show them where I was staying. And I knew that I was actively doing that. I'm not going to lie that I didn't stay at a great place but I'm just not gonna mention it.
- 2:13:11 Interviewer: So you want to see the realness but you just don't want to show it yourself?
- 2:13:13 D3: Everything is hypocritical
- 2:13:15 D1: And also the hypocrite thing is totally right because sometimes I won't show something because I don't want to be perceived to care. That's also same thing the same problem.
- 2:13:30 D5: Then you can also instead of showing the place where you are living show one of your favourite places that you go to when you are in Greece. Like take a photo of your favourite bar and you post that.
- 2:13:46 Interviewer: So then you just curate?
- 2:13:47 D1: It's like a highlight show it's not the whole day.
- 2:13:54 D4: I think the travel industry suffers so much from that as you have to show the best otherwise people are not gonna go there. But like when I went to Thailand - nobody tells you Bangkok is so crowded - it is flooded with people. I just wanted to get out of there. I was like: 'I hate this place, I just want to get out'. I saw images of Bangkok and I was like 'ah we need to go there - there's like shopping and everything'. But nobody tells you that you are going to stand in

a line from here to Timbuktu for hours on end. I hated Bangkok and I will never go back. So you Photoshop what an experience is going to be and when you get there. You are so angry and you are like: 'you lied to me'.

2:14:43 Interviewer: I just want to say thank you so much for your time.

2:14:48 All: Thank you, it was very interesting.

(End of Interview)