PERCEPTIONS OF DARK-SKINNED BEAUTY ON SOCIAL MEDIA
USING SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY:
THE CASE OF #MELANINMAGIC ON INSTAGRAM

By

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree Master of Journalism, Department of Media, Language and Communication Faculty of Arts and Design, Durban University of Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Alicia Naidoo, hereby declare that the research work presented in this dissertation is my original work and all the materials used are appropriately acknowledged and explicitly referenced. A reference list is attached to the dissertation. I also confirm that the dissertation has not been submitted in any of its part or entirety for any degree in any other institution of higher learning internationally or locally. I therefore give permission that my work be available for replication and/or for reprinting, for inter-library loan, and for the title and abstract of my dissertation to be made available to other educational institutions and students that might need it.

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ABSTRACT

The saying, "If you're white, you're alright, if you're brown, stick around, but if you're black, get back" has been around for generations and has racial connotations linked to colourism, a social issue that ranks light skin as the epitome of beauty. While most people of colour have fallen victim to colourism, Indians idolise light skin so much that dark-skinned people are villainised and discriminated against, and skin-lightening businesses thrive on Indian people's desire to be of a lighter skin tone. Millennials and Gen Z are fighting the stigma of colourism through hashtag activism. The hashtag #MelaninMagic has influenced many dark- and medium-skinned individuals to embrace and celebrate their skin tone despite the discrimination faced in previous generations.

In this study, the hashtag #MelaninMagic is investigated, using social identity theory and how #MelaninMagic shapes the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty on Instagram and influences users to embrace the social category into which their skin colour falls is explored. The reasons Instagrammers use filters and the likelihood they will compare their selfies to others before posting was also explored. The research approach is a qualitative paradigm within the interpretivist paradigm. Sixteen (16) Indian South Africans between the ages of 23–30 were purposively selected for one-on-one, semi-structured interviews.

The findings indicate that #MelaninMagic is used as a tool of empowerment for dark- and medium-skinned Instagrammers to express pride about their skin tone, and social media is being used as a tool for change such that the representation of dark-skinned beauty is more evident on Instagram than in traditional media. The aim of Millennials and Gen Z is to end the toxic cycles passed down from generation to generation through having open minds. The phenomenon of skin lightening was also investigated and filters emerged as a modern-day skin lightener. The reasons filters are used to lighten skin in selfies was explored and narrowed down to the influence of family on social categorisation and the caste system. It is also worthy to note that medium-skin tone individuals identitifed as dark-skinned because of the way others made them feel about their skin colour. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that

a mixed-method approach and more participants across different cities in South Africa can be considered in future studies.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents for always supporting me and God for guiding me through the process and the challenges that came while reading for my Master of Journalism degree.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SIT: Social identity theory

GBV: Gender-based violence

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, background to the study is provided. The research problem, the research questions and the significance of the study followed by an overview of the research methodology applied and outline of each of the chapters are also described.

1.2.   Background of the Study

Colourism has been a social issue for those of colour across racial and ethnic groups for decades and is believed to date back to the colonial and slavery period (Phoenix 2014). It is a global phenomenon that fuels stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination based on skin colour (Burke 2014). The prevailing narrative of the concept *colourism* is that dark skin is considered less beautiful than light skin. However, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and so forth have offered a digital space in the form of hashtag activism against such narratives. Yang (2016) describes *hashtag activism* as a discursive protest that takes place on social media through tagged words, phrases and sentences.

Hashtag activism has been the driving force behind many social change movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #MenAreTrash, among others. Similar to movements against racism and gender-based violence (GBV), there have been several attempts at challenging colourism across the social media landscape. Over the last few years, hashtags that encourage pride about melanin pigments have been used across social media platforms. Hashtags such as #BlackGirlMagic, #MelaninPoppin, and #MelaninQueen aim to transform preconceived thoughts and opinions about dark skin to promote diverse Black beauty (Hassan 2018).

A fair amount of research has been conducted on colourism. A study by Li *et al.* (2008) looked at skin lightening in four Asian countries and found that there are notions of

good and bad skin and went further to highlight how White skin is cultural capital in Asian society. In Pakistan, the obsession for fair skin has resulted in social issues such as feelings of inferiority among those whose skin is not light (Ismail, Loya and Hussain 2015). In Charles and Mclean's (2017) study, participants who were Jamaicans asserted that people bleach their skin to acquire both beauty and partners. These three studies are examples that address perceptions of colourism and the extent to which people want their skin colour to reflect the socially accepted standard of beautiful skin. However, there are also opposing views.

Hassan's (2018) study, for example, highlights how dark-skinned Black women have engaged in hashtags to affirm, validate and celebrate their melanin. Mbatha (2016) conducted research to understand the prevailing views about skin colour and colourism in general among Black and Coloured students and found that several students took pride in their identities and skin colours. However, none of these studies about skin colour was conducted on African participants or on social media content for hashtag activism. In other words, while the studies tackle the issue of colourism, none of these studies investigate how social media has attempted to promote and encourage dark-skinned beauty. In this study, colourism in the Indian South African community is explored. It appears that no study at this point has looked at colourism, especially as it relates to how #MelaninMagic has shaped the perceptions of Indian South Africans and reasons for Indian South Africans using filters on selfies or how often such individuals compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting.

1.3. Research Problem

A review of the literature shows ambivalence about the issue of skin colour. Several authors (see, for example, Ismail, Loya and Hussain 2015) have written about the extent to which people go to project a light-skinned colour; others (see, for example, Hassan 2018) state that a dark-skinned colour is just as beautiful as any other. The hashtag #MelaninMagic is a response to the negative discourse about dark skin pigmentation online, especially on the platform Instagram. What all these different views have shown is that there is a social problem with respect to how people characterise different skin colours. The intention of this study is to discover the

different views among young females and males of Indian descent in South Africa who are caught in the discourse about skin colour because there are light-skinned and dark-skinned colours among Indians. In the context of this study a young person is considered to be those between the ages of 23-30. In order to probe this issue, the study was guided by the following research objectives and questions.

1.4.   Research Objectives

The aims of this study are to determine how young people perceive dark-skinned beauty on social media using social identity theory (SIT) as an analytic lens to investigate #MelaninMagic on Instagram. The aims of the study also include the reasons Instagrammers use filters on their selfies and how often individuals compare their selfies to others before posting. To realise the aims of the study, the study was guided with the following objectives:

1. To determine how #MelaninMagic shapes the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty in relation to participants' social identities.

2. To find out how #MelaninMagic influences participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin colour.

3. To investigate the reasons individuals in the Indian community have for using filters on their selfies.

4. To explore if individuals are likely to compare their selfies to others before posting on Instagram.

1.5.   Research Questions

The research questions based on these objectives are as follows:

1. How does #MelaninMagic on Instagram shape the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty in relation to participants' social identities?

2. How does #MelaninMagic influence participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin colour?

3. What reasons do individuals in the Indian community have for using filters on their selfies?

4. Are participants likely to compare their selfies to others' selfies before posting on Instagram?

1.6. Significance of the Study

Social media is a platform that has been shown to influence perspectives about contemporary issues. Contrary to the most common thoughts about social media's influence on females' mindsets, social media platforms might also serve to challenge the thoughts and perspectives that contribute to colourism with which a fair amount of people of colour have grown up. This battle is being fought using hashtag activism, which in the context of this study is #MelaninMagic on Instagram.

In this study, how social media shapes the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty as well the reasons Instagrammers have for using filters on their selfies and whether individuals are likely to compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting is explored. The findings of this study will add to knowledge in the research fields of colourism, social media activism and hashtag activism, ultimately establishing how social media changes the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty among its users by opening up the space for further research. The aim is to understand participants by listening to their points of view and share this information in order to add to a body of knowledge about colourism, especially how hashtag activism is used to fight the stigma about skin colour. The study also shed light on the experiences of dark-skinned South African Indian community where the notion of colourism is very common.

1.7. Research Methods

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. Qualitative research seeks to acquire in-depth information about small groups of people (Ambert *et al.* 1995). The aim of qualitative research is to understand how and why individuals or groups behave the way they do rather than look at a large number of people (Ambert *et al.* 1995). According to Wilson and MacLean (2011), qualitative designs are ideally suited to interpreting experience and unmasking meanings attached to experience; therefore, a qualitative approach would be best suited to analysing participants' experiences of colourism.

1.8. Population

The population for this study is young Indian South Africans from the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Young people are best suited for this study because their generation was born into the digital era, making them digital natives. They are therefore the most familiar with social media. However, because it is not possible to include all young Indian South Africans in Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng as participants in the study, a sample of participants was selected

1.9. Sampling and Data Collection Method

Participants for this study were purposely selected based on a set criteria to realise the objectives and general purpose of the study. The set criteria included participants being Young Indian South Africans between the ages of 23-30 and who are familiar with #MelaninMagic. Participants were approached through social media. The data collection method was interviews. Barbour (2003) describes interviews as the "gold standard" of qualitative research that involve in-depth exchanges between a researcher and the researched. Interviews are best suited for this study because the aim is to understand individuals' perspectives. The interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes per participant and were conducted on a one-on-one basis both in-person and over Zoom.

1.10. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was the strategy used to process the data. The method of thematic analysis is used to systematically identify, organise and offer insight into themes across the data set (Braun and Clarke 2012). The thematic analysis conducted in this study was guided by Delahunt and Maguire's (2017) step-by-step guide to doing a thematic analysis. The steps are becoming familiar with the data to generate initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and writing up the themes identified.

1.11. Outline of Dissertation Chapters

This first chapter has introduced the topic, provided background for the research, and identified the research aims and objectives as well as discussed the significance of the study. In chapter two, relevant literature pertaining to the research topic and the theoretical framework (social identity theory) is reviewed. Chapter three is focused on outlining the research methodology in terms of research design, population, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations. In chapter four, the findings and analysis of the findings are presented and finally, in chapter five, the conclusions drawn from this research are given. In addition, a summary of the findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research are given in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the literature relating to colourism and the social movement of #MelaninMagic is reviewed. The review includes a brief history of colourism and exploration of how colourism symbolises class and privilege, race and skin lightening, and women and mental health. In addition, colourism is discussed in terms of the representation of beauty in media and hashtag activism that relates to the discourse on colourism. Social identity theory is the theoretical framework, and how it is applied to the study will also be addressed.

2.2. A Brief History of Colourism

The term colourism is believed to have been coined and made popular by Walker (1983) in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. She describes colourism as prejudice or discrimination based on skin pigment where a light-skinned person is ranked higher than a dark-skinned person. Colourism is also referred to as skin tone stratification (Keith and Herring 1991) or "shadeism", which is used to describe a "hierarchical social valuing of skin tones on a spectrum along which the lightest is the most cherished" (Hephzibah, Gonlin and Garner 2021: 289). However, earlier grasps of the concept of colourism were evident even if not official early in the 20th century, for example, a Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey said in a speech in 1923 that,

> Some of us in America, the West Indies and Africa believe that the nearer we approach the White man in colour the greater our social standing of privilege and that we should build up an aristocracy based upon caste of colour and not achievement in race (cited in Blaisdell 2004:143).

This implies that although the term colourism was coined in 1983, but the concept existed from the time immemorial, and it has been variously described as an act of providing privileges to lighter skinned people over dark-skinned people within a

community of colour (Hunter 2002; Burke 2008). Hochschild and Weever (2007) stated that colourism, like racism, can be looked at as unidirectional, meaning only those with power and status can exhibit it; and multidirectional, meaning that people of any skin tone can subordinate people of another skin tone. In order for colourism to take place, Hochschild and Weever (2007) state that people have to be able to see subtle differences of colour and attribute meaning to those differences that are in line with others' attributions.

A notable feature of colourism is that it exists both interracially and intra-racially, meaning that the discriminatory or privileged act of colourism takes place against a race group and within that race group. This is because two people of different races can have the same skin tone or different skin tones; therefore, colourism takes place against and within a race group. An example of this is the experiences of the Albinism community. Albinism is described as a group of inherited disorders of the pigment system where there is a reduction or absence of melanin pigments. Mswela and Nothling-Slabbert (2013) state that when it comes to people living with albinism, their skin colour often leads to negative beliefs that they are evil, cannibals or cursed. For example, in certain African countries, people with albinism have to seek refuge because they fear being killed and having their bodies used for muti rituals. In countries like Tanzania, *Sangomas* believe that people suffering from albinism are immortal and their genitals bring wealth (Mswela and Nothling-Slabbert 2013). In South Africa, there are no legal restrictions taken against discrimination directed at those suffering from albinism.

Burke (2014) affirmed that colourism occurs within racial categories because it is reported that in Tanzania, people with albinism are hunted, mutilated and killed because they are categorised differently due to their lack of melanin. Burke (2014) further states that this occurs within the Black community and often at the instruction of a witch doctor. Hassan (2018) states that colourism is a form of racism and Burke (2015) builds on this, claiming that colour and race may overlap and discrimination also occurs between and within races. However, Hochschild (2007) contradicts this with the skin colour paradox, explaining that the skin colour paradox looks at skin

colour differentiation as a secondary marginalisation to a Black racial identity. Hence, there is a need to first understand a Black racial identity to understand the skin colour paradox. Hochschild (2007: 655) explains as follows:

> [A] Black racial identity is an emotional or affective attachment to the concept of being black and to other people who share the same label or self-definition. Its precise contours cannot be specified, nor is precision in this case appropriate; racial identity is simultaneously a sentiment, a worldview, a perspective and a framework for political action. People with a strong racial identity are likely to look at the world through a racial lens – to be acutely aware of other people's race in social settings, to define their own interests in light of the situation of other blacks, to invoke a racial connotation in interpreting complex situations and subtle interpersonal cue.

For most Black people, racial identity is a background issue, and there are three narrowly defined interactions that go with racial identity: these are skin colour, perceptions of discrimination against oneself or one's race, and the belief in a linked fate for Black people in comparison to their light-skinned counterparts (Hochschild 2007). So, in an environment where members of a group feel threatened by institutional or individual racism, it is unlikely that members of that group will protest internal differences, one of which would be skin tone. This means racism and racial identity can supersede colourism when members of the same race are involved.

Hunter (2007) argues that colourism operates on two levels: race and colour. Racism is the first system of discrimination, which has little to do with physical appearance; members of the same race group are subjected to discrimination, denigration and second-class citizenship based on their race. Colourism is the second system of discrimination which operates on the basis of skin tone. Hunter (2007) explains that while all people of the same race may experience racism, their skin colour determines the level of discrimination they experience. This means that a person of colour that is light skinned may experience racism while a person of colour who is dark skinned may experience racism and colourism. Hence, colourism is described as a manifestation of racism.

There is no single history behind the concept of colourism; however, colonisation and slavery played a significant role. Phoenix (2014) states that colonisation and slavery are implicated because of the preferential treatment that was given to lighter skinned slaves. In countries colonised by Europeans, light skin became more desirable because it was associated with high status and dominance and because it mimicked the colonisers skin colour.

Gabriel (2007) states that White racism was a building block for colourism. This was evident in South Africa during the apartheid era when White people were handed privileges, followed by Coloured people and then Black people (Motseki 2019). This implies that the closer to whiteness one was, the better one's privileges and economic chances were in South Africa during apartheid. In this regard, Black people's "blackness" became a disadvantage (Hunter 2007), creating a culture of light-skinned Coloured people trying to pass as White and light-skinned Black people wanting to pass as Coloured to the extent of changing their names to Afrikaans and English names (de Souza 2008).

The same occurrence is evident with the Indian diaspora as colourism in India also dates back to colonialism. The Indian diaspora looks at European features as a sign of high culture and desirable physique (Glenn 2008:289). Therefore, European features became desirable and a light skin was the closest characteristic Indian people had to these features, resulting in light-skinned Indian men being viewed as more intelligent than dark-skinned Indian men and light-skinned Indian women being viewed as more attractive than dark-skinned Indian women (Glenn 2008).

According to Parameswaran and Cardoza (2009), the myth of Aryan superiority in India is that the strong, light-skinned tribes from Central Asia invaded India around 1500 BCE and moved steadily from the north to the south of India, where they conquered the Dravidians of South India. Another explanation for colourism in India is the caste system. The caste system is described as "a prescriptive model for a large-scale division of labour that Aryans introduced to India" (Parameswaran and Cardoza 2009: 225). The caste system ranks people according to social status and

skin colour with Brahmins, who are considered white in colour and are intellectuals and priests at the top. Second are Kshatriya's who are considered red in colour and are rulers and warriors; third are Vaishyas who are yellow in colour and merchants and traders, followed by Shudras who are brown in colour and are servants and manual workers. Last are the "untouchables" who are considered to be black in skin colour and are workers who process animal and human waste (Parameswaran and Cardoza 2009).

As explained by Johnson (2002), the light skinned Aryans introduced the caste system to separate themselves from the dark indigenous population who were the Dravidians, but as observed by Nadeem (2014), the origin of colourism in India is a combination of regional, caste and class relations. Varghese (2017) pointed out that 'purity and pollution' is another aspect in which colourism and light skin are seen in relation to the caste system. The concept of purity equals White race and pollution equals darker skin tones. According to an analysis of advertisements done by Picton (2013), whiteness and a light skin stand for purity and goodness in terms of character and culture, and blackness represents the opposite: impure or polluted. This is evident in the caste system with the darkest skin tone being ranked as 'untouchables'. Sambhi (2016) confirms this by explaining that Aryans set up a rigid caste system that shaped the societal roles of people who are ranked according to skin colour and social position. This took place when light-skinned priests, known as Brahmins, were held higher in society followed by warriors, known as Kshatryas, and Vaishyas or farmers and merchants. Shura or laborers were placed at the bottom of the caste system. This included unskilled people who were often dark-skinned people called the Dravidians and lastly the Dalits, also known as untouchables followed.

Light skin came with its advantages because the most popular women were paler, and they also used skin lightening products and filters. Social media and the advancement of technology allows light skin to be accessed more easily through filters and editing, and this explains the consistent preference for light skin in young migrant women in Chennai, India (Varghese 2017) because the light-skinned tone results in opportunity and privilege.

Colourism is a pervasive phenomenon not only in India but also in countries in Asia such as the Thai and Japanese who value a light skin tone as a reflection of prestige and power (Sims and Hirudayaraj 2015). In this regard, Aizura (2009) noted that people in Thailand associate beauty and success with whiteness, and people in Japan consider people with light skin to be of the middle class or elite.

2.3. Colourism, Class and Privilege

Privileges are special rights belonging to an individual or class but not to the masses (Bailey 1998.) Hunter (2007) explains light-skinned privilege as the substantial privileges received by light-skinned people of colour over their dark-skinned counterparts. Spencer (2008) wrote a guest editorial about power, privilege and oppression. In the guest editorial, the author acknowledged his experiences of racism but noted that he had the privilege of a light skin and the benefits of light-skinned privilege as a person of colour. Spencer (2008: 199) further remarks:

> My interests in issues of oppression, power, and privilege began with my own experiences as a person of colour who has experienced racism. I identify primarily as Native Hawaiian, but I also identify as mixed race. As a person of colour, I am often placed in a position in which I must process the disrespect I perceive or the assumptions that others make of me.

Light-skinned people, known as "yellow" or "red" bone, are at the top of the hierarchy and dark-skinned people, or "charcoal" or "blue black", are at the bottom of the hierarchy of preferred skin colours (Wilder 2010). Coard, Breland and Raskin (2001) note that African Americans also have colloquial terms to describe skin colour; the terms red, red bone, high yellow and light bright can be used to describe light skin. Some of these terms have positive connotations while others come across as negative. This is noted by Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) who acknowledge that some dark-skinned African-American people are proud of their skin while others are ambivalent and view their dark skin as "marks of oppression".

Building on African Americans and skin tone hierarchies, Gabriel (2007) states that colourism exists among African diaspora and can be found anywhere that there was

slavery and colonialism existed. This is evident in the British Caribbean, where ten territories were established with the West Indies and Jamaica being the largest. Gabriel (2007) notes that the first English settlers arrived on the island in 1655, and by 1680, the White population had risen to 10,000 people. Indian people were the first non-White people used as slaves in the British Caribbean. The constructs of race established the foundation of White supremacy in Jamaica, and biological differences, such as skin colour, were used to impose positive attributes to Whiteness and negative attributes to Blackness. These differences were used for White domination and the oppression of Black people. Kinloch (1974:7) explains:

> Race relations involve a particular elite which defines certain physical differences as socially significant (e.g., the importance of "whiteness" over "blackness"). This negative social definition is translated into political policy through the subordination and exploitation of certain groups defined as "races." In this manner, a racist social system is developed on an ongoing basis by a colonial elite.

Therefore, skin colour in Jamaica represented wealth and carefree leisure if a person was considered White and enforced labour and denial of human rights if a person was considered Black (Gabriel 2007). So, the skin tone hierarchy in Jamaica represents light-skinned privilege and dark-skinned oppression. This is explained by Hunter (2007), who states that light-skinned people received privileges and resources that were unattainable by their dark-skinned counterparts. Colonisers used the light-skinned privilege they created to maintain White supremacy and dominance by using the 'colonial elite', a small class of light-skinned colonised people.

While the above may date back generations, Hussein (2010) states that a light skin is still more desirable than a dark skin in India and is held as a standard of beauty and self-confidence, which is believed to lead to success and progress in life. In addition, Desai (20018) points out that this is specifically the case in Bangladesh where a light skin defines a woman's beauty and her desirability in the marriage market, and dark-skinned people are regarded as evil in rural India according to Perry (2005).

People are so conscious of their skin colour in Bangladesh that there are specific terms used to describe women based on their skin colours. Hussein (2010) explains that the scale of skin tone ranges with adjectives, such as *Forsha*, which is fair or light skinned, to *Ujjal Shamla*, which is a brighter version of not too dark yet not entirely light, to *Shamla*, which is not too dark or too light, and *Kalo*, which literally means black or dark. Hussein (2010) states the Hindi and Urdu vocabulary also describe people based on their skin colours or tones. For example, they use terms such as *Gora* (fair/light skinned), *Savla* (not too dark nor too light), and *Kale* (dark skinned).

Rozario (2002) claims that words such as *Shundor* or *Shundori,* which means good looking man or woman respectively, are often synonymous with fair skin. When a dark girl is born in a South Asian family, especially in a financially underprivileged family, the girl is a burden; she will be difficult to marry off and would probably require a larger than usual dowry to get married at all. The connotations of the *Forsha* (light)/*Kalo* (dark) binary in South Asia are closely associated with desirable/undesirable, marriageable/unmarriageable and pure/bad.

According to Bailey (1998), closeted gay men and light-skinned Latin women are good examples of an explanation of privilege because closeted gay men cannot be discriminated against for being homosexual and light-skinned Latin women may pass as White. A report by the Fears (2003) in the *Washington Post* confirmed this by stating that in a 2000 census, Latinos who described themselves as "White" had the highest incomes and lowest rates of unemployment and poverty whereas the Latino's who described themselves as "Black" had lower incomes and higher rates of poverty. Strmic-Pawl, Gonlin and Garner (2021) argue that the origin of light-skinned valorisation comes not from a desire to be White but from a desire to distance oneself from the perception of being a lower-class labourer who had dark(er) skin because of labouring in the sun.

Colourism has some negative connotations. For example, Gabriel (2007) notes that White supremacy is associated with colourism, which has led to racism from certain groups that include Neo-Nazi extremists and The Ku Klux Klan. White supremacy is

described as the process of domination in areas that include policies, systems and structures imposed on people of colour by White hegemony, which resulted in White privilege. Colourism is a global phenomenon and has fuelled stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination based on skin colour (Burke 2014). The privileges and other positive connotations associated with light skin made this skin tone desirable to many people who are willing to go through the process of skin lightening to attain the beauty and benefits that society has given to those with light skins.

While light skins came with privileges, dark skins came with discrimination. Stamps (2018) found that there was a correlation between skin tone and reported discrimination amongst young African-American women; those who perceived their skin tone to be darker reported more frequent experiences at the hands of racists compared to those who perceived themselves to have lighter skin tone. Landor (2012) investigated how colourism may be expressed through preferential treatment in the quality of parenting within the African-American community and found that African-American families displayed a preference for lighter skin in children due to the preference for light skin within the community and more generally in the USA. Landor (2012) also found that there was a higher quality of parenting, meaning parents showed more concern for their darker-skinned children compared to light-skinned children because the parents understood that dark-skinned children experience more discrimination.

2.4. Race and Skin Lightening

Although the apartheid system that used race and colourism as social metrics has been dismantled, Mbatha (2016) remarks that racism and colourism are still prevalent among South African students. Magaisa (2016) noted that in South Africa, stereotypes about darker skin are a corollary of colourism, and it is often associated with negative connotations that were developed during the apartheid regime. In some cases, according to Magaisa (2016), light-skinned individuals face prejudice due to the social meanings attributed to their skin colour, and they often have to defend their skin tone and justify their "Blackness", referring to individuals of African descent and those who identify as Black in diaspora.

At school level, colourism influences the way teachers name or categorise objects, which in turn, influences the way learners indicate their skin colour. As an example, Alexander and Costandius (2017) state that there is a difficulty with race among learners due to educators naming a certain crayon a "human colour" or "skin colour". As a result of this, learners believe White is the "human colour". This shows how problematic having a standard for skin colour is for children that grow up with colourism rooted in them and the desire to be that colour. Li *et al.* (2008) looked at skin lightening in four Asian countries and found that there are notions of good and bad skin colours and went further to highlight how a White skin is cultural capital in Asian society. In Pakistan, the obsession for a fair skin has resulted in social issues such as feelings of inferiority by those whose skin is not light (Ismail *et al.* 2015). In this study, skin lightening among young, Indian South Africans was investigated.

As cultural capital, light skin is considered a currency. Light-skinned privilege affects various aspects of a person's life, often negatively. Therefore, people resort to skin bleaching practices to lighten their skins. Paul (2016) states that more specific reasons for skin bleaching differ from one place to another, but there are historical circumstances involved as well as a play between the politics of beauty and colour. The desire for a light skin has led to skin lightening practices in India becoming commercialised. Paul (2016) explains that the target audience for the skin lightening cream *Fair and Lovely* is women. Advertising of the product started in 1978, but by 2005, skin lightening companies had opened up their target markets to men as well with the fairness cream, *Fair and Handsome*. This shows that there is a significant demand for light skin in India: both men and women want to have light skins because it is considered the epitome of beauty. In this regard, Ray (2010) refers to a study by Hindustan Unilever in which men in the southern states in India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) are said to buy whitening creams because they want to lighten their skins.

Skin lightening is a $200 million industry in India, according to Nadeem (2014). Skin lightening products are divided into two markets: (1) well-known multi-national brands

and products that are sold through the normal retail mediums and (2) stronger products that are potentially unsafe and sold illegally (Adbi *et al.* 2016) The second division of skin lightening products may include controversial ingredients such as mercury and hydroquinone, and they are products, as explained by Vijaya (2019), that accelerate skin lightening by inhibiting the production of melanin in the body. This may result in hyper-pigmentation, premature aging and other long-term health effects.

In South Africa, Motseki (2019) states that in general, light skin is regarded as the epitome of beauty, and Black South African women who are light skinned are called "yellow bone", and these yellow-bone females are what is considered beautiful. Motseki (2019) goes further to remark that the society regards light skin as an embodiment of pure godliness, which encourages skin bleaching among young Black females because they believe it will give them the desired skin colour.

The pursuit of a fair skin drives Black South African women and South African Indian women to undertake skin lightening practices (Dlova *et al*. 2015), but South African Indian women feel more positive about the results of the practices than Black South African women (Dlova *et al.,* 2014). This is not surprising because apartheid South Africa was primarily about the colour of a person's skin. In addition, a correlation exists between colourism (skin lightening and bleaching practices) and colonialism. Dlova *et al.* (2014) conclude that it is an idea rooted in precolonial conception of beauty, giving rise to cosmetic surgery that seeks to help people make their skin fair or light even after the demise of colonialism and apartheid (Hunter 2007). South African celebrities such as Khanyi Mbau, whose appearance has changed through skin lightening, is encouraging the practice and posted skin lightening tips for her 3.1 million followers in November 2021. She wrote as follows in her Instagram stories:

> We are now entering the thick of summer; it's time to switch up our products. Remember I did say in the previous episodes that seasons aren't the same. You need to stop with the brand or product you used over winter before you start breaking out. Peels expose undeveloped skin into the atmosphere, placing shock onto them, then it causes inflammation. Once your skin starts turning pink or red, stop immediately. That's a red flag you have gone too far,

and this applies to the body as well. So once your hands look too red ... you are burning. My experience and observations have proven that your lifestyle is the first point. If you do, every time you touch your steering wheel in the day you are placing your hands into an oven, and all the active lotion will start to cook. That's why finding balance between these three parts has been a mission, making you think the product is slow then you end up going stronger and stronger till you burn.

Khanyi Mbau is not the only South African celebrity to go through the process of skin lightening. *Real Housewives of Durban* star Sorisha Naidoo is also known to have bleached her skin. According to Dayile (2018), Sorisha said that the comments made about her dark-skinned colour when she won the Miss India South Africa pageant hurt her. The reason she decided to lighten her skin, in her own words, is as follows:

I have never shared this, but those comments really hurt me and damaged my self-esteem. I knew I was worthy to be crowned because I'm intelligent. And after so much our [*sic*] country had gone through in terms of racial discrimination, I was shocked people didn't think a dark girl deserved to win. The negativity really pulled me down and I fell into the public [opinion] trap. Looking back now, I regret doing it. I think I was more beautiful before. I loved who I was. It was an irrational decision.

However, unlike Khanyi Mbau, Sorisha Naidoo thought she was becoming too light and also developed vitiligo, a skin condition that involves discoloured patches. She went on to say:

I had to stop caring about what other people thought of me and I focused on the people who really cared about me. "I was becoming too white – my skin was almost paper-thin, and I became very paranoid about my looks. I tried out almost everything that had retinol [vitamin A derivative that improves discolouration] in it and I did a lot of light peels. I had long meetings with my plastic surgeon, who is a highly regarded doctor in Durban, before I found a product that helped to produce melanin.

The assertions by both Khanyi Mbau and Sorisha Naidoo clearly show the degree to which colourism has permeated South African society, and the South African media have played a large part in encouraging the use of skin lighteners.

Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) pointed out that the media plays a significant role in the perception of beauty and femininity because the media is a reflection of society, and a fair-skinned complexion is considered a measurement of beauty. They found that celebrity culture that is glamourised in the media promotes White skin by show casing celebrities who have dark skins and engaging in processes like skin lightening, and young women are influenced by this. Aside from light skin being preferred in marriage and family, light-skinned privileges also stretch into economic value. A light skin guarantees a strong financial income as light-skinned women are more likely to get high salaries than are dark-skinned Black women (Hunter 2002). A light skin, as argued by Hunter (2002), is a form of social capital because in African-American and Mexican-American communities, it connects the person to the right people, making employment and promotion at work easier.

The same applies to how colourism is regarded among women in India. For example, Sims and Hirudayaraj (2016) remark that skin colour is important in terms of certain career paths involving interaction with customers such as salespeople, flight attendants, entertainers, models and television spokespersons who are typically light skinned. Colourism is not only a factor in a person's career path but a factor in marriage because light-skinned African American women have an advantage in terms of marriage by being more likely to marry men of higher status than are dark-skinned African-American women, and light-skinned men are likely to have higher status wives than are dark-skinned men (Hunter 1998), thus adding to the economic benefits of having a light skin. Hence, women bleach their skin to have light skin.

Charles and Mclean (2017) found that Jamaicans bleached their skin to acquire both beauty and partners. The reasons for women bleaching their skins is the need to gain social favours, secure a marriage and secure good jobs (Nyoni-Kachambwa 2012). Wilder's (2010) examination of the language and attitudes of skin colour among

African-American women found that skin colour plays a significant role in the life experiences of young Black women that goes further than the intersectionality of race, gender and class. A key difference in Wilder's (2010) study as compared to other studies is that the author identified skin tone as a three-tier structure whereas most other authors look at skin tone as two-tier structure, namely, light skin and dark skin. The three-tier structure includes a medium-skin tone.

2.5. Colourism, Overt Discrimination and Mental Health

Colourism occurs between and within different race groups, and while colourism affects both men and women, a stronger effect on women than men is evident. Colourism, similar to beauty and gender norms, is a gendered phenomenon that affects women to a greater degree than it does their male counterparts (Parameswaran and Cardoza 2009.) Geetha (2021) notes that the term *subaltern* perfectly applies to women of colour. This is because of their position at the bottom of both the race and gender hierarchies. Green (2002) explains that gendered colourism is a form of oppression that severely impacts people of colour. Rybova (2016) explains that gendered colourism is a serious problem because it pressurises women to want to be beautiful because their quality of life depends on their physical attributes such as a light skin.

A light skin is recognised as a social capital. Sambhi (2016) describes social capital as how others perceive an individual who is a member of a group or subgroup. The author further elaborates that as social capital increases, gaining tangible value such as better work opportunities, education, marriage and more, also increases. In terms of social capital and light skin, light-skinned individuals have social capital that enhances their chances of obtaining more powerful positions as opposed to dark-skinned individuals.

Due to the negativity of colourism, the Dark is Beautiful Campaign was launched in India in 2009 by an Indian nongovernment organisation called Women of Worth according to an article written by Mary-Rose Abraham for *The Guardian* (2017). Women of Worth founder Kavita Emmanuel believes that people are more aware of

the issue now than before, and the campaign aimed to allow the next generation to see colourism differently. Rybova (2016) states that the Dark is Beautiful Campaign used media and online activism to challenge colourism and gendered discrimination, and this was done by empowering dark-skinned women in a similar way to #MelaninMagic. Paul (2016) notes that changing such deeply held prejudices and discrimination will take time because of the nature of colourism, so the problem may not be solved in the near future; however, the younger generations such as Gen Z and Millennials continue in their fight against the social issue.

Colourism has fuelled stereotypes: for example, participants in Wilder's (2010) study remark that light-skinned girls are regarded as pretty and ones with dark skin are regarded as ghetto girls. Thompson and Keith (2001) found that the effect of skin colour affects women and men differently.

Skin colour is considered to be an important predictor of perceived efficacy for Black men but not Black women, while skin colour may predict self-esteem for Black women but not Black men. This means that men are more likely to consider skin colour in their list of desires while women are more likely to be emotionally affected by their skin tone; for example, girls as young as six years old are twice as likely to be sensitive about their skin colour and the effect of colourism than are boys. Thompson and Keith (2001) explain this through stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity dictates that men specialise in achievement outside of the home as well as remain rational and self-contained while women are expected to seek validation and affirmation by being warm and nurturing. Therefore, women are more likely to be conscious of their skin tone.

Film director Spike Lee shared the same theory on Black men's attractiveness to light-skinned women:

> Whether Black men admit it or not they feel light-skinned women are more attractive than dark-skinned and they'd rather see long hair than a short afro because that's closer to White women. That comes from being inundated with media from the time you're born that constantly fed you white women as the

image of beauty. That's both conscious and unconscious… But on the whole, talking to my friends and knowing men, I see the premium is put on light-skinned sisters with long hair (Lee 1993:109).

Charles (2011) affirmed this, stating that some male spouses request that their partners bleach their skin because they find it sexually attractive. Similarly, a study based on Afro-Trinidian women by Doubeni (2017) found that due to stereotypes, community and family members perceive dark-skinned people as less attractive and educated. In the same vein, Mcloughlin (2013) points out that mothers and mothers-in-law associate fair skin to beauty and dark skin to unattractiveness at a family level, thus making people avoid the sun in order not to get darkened.

The same applies in the arranged marriage market in India; Chattopadhyay and Chattopadhyay (2019) used a textual analysis to determine the effect of colourism on marital criteria entitled "Colourism and Love for Fair Skin: An Examination of the Digitisation's Effect on India's Arranged Marriage Matrimonial Advertisements" and reveal that covert colourism or the preference for light skin is evident in almost all the advertisements they analysed.

In contrast to the privileges that come with light skin is the discrimination that comes with a dark skin. Monk (2015) pointed out that light-skinned Black people receive less daily skin colour discrimination from White people while dark-skinned Black people receive significantly more everyday discrimination and skin colour discrimination from both White people and other Black people. Medium-skinned Black people are less likely than dark-skinned individuals to experience everyday discrimination and skin colour discrimination. The discrimination faced by dark-skinned individuals can be a contributing factor to mental health struggles.

Monk (2015) reported that skin colour is a significant predictor of mental health and found that dark-skinned African Americans have the worst self-rated mental health due to discrimination. Dark-skinned individuals reported a higher probability of being depressed (Monk 2015). This finding is mirrored by Veenstra's (2011) study on

mismatched racial identities, colourism and health in Toronto and Vancouver. Veenstra (2011) stated that although Black respondents as a group were not specifically more likely to report feeling more depressed than were White respondents, dark-skinned Black respondents were significantly more likely to report depressive feelings. Therefore, dark-skinned Black respondents were at a significantly higher risk of poorer self-rated overall mental health outcomes than were light-skinned Black respondents. This shows that there is a negative correlation between colourism and mental health.

Hargrove (2019) found that dark-skinned women are more prone to psychological deterioration and report worse health than women who are lighter in skin tone. Louie (2020) built on that notion, stating that skin tone is a contributing factor for depression, and Black adolescents with a darker skin tone experience higher levels of depression than their light-skinned peers, which can be attributed to skin tone discrimination. Females are thought to experience colourism on a larger scale than their male counterparts due to the standard of beauty set for women, but Nwagwu (2019) argues that perceptions may have changed over the years. Nwagwu (2019) found that males reported a lower level of self-worth than females, which may be the result of the change in the perceptions that dark-skinned individuals have lower self-esteem. The participants of the study were minorities in Ireland. Ireland is said to be predominantly White with Black and Asian people making up the minorities. This study, dated 2019, was written after the movements against colourism were in full swing. The suggestion is therefore that social media helped change perceptions around colourism.

2.6.   Representations of Beauty in the Media

Media plays a significant role in the way colourism is portrayed and accepted in any society. In modern culture, female beauty is measured by a light skin, so the notion of what is considered beautiful is derived from the media (Motseki 2019) and perpetuates colourism by using predominantly light-skinned Black models who possess European facial features (Gabriel 2007), which not many people of colour have, and thus dark-skinned Black women are underrepresented in television advertising in the media (Mastro and Stern 2003).

In this regard, whiteness, which is a construct that refers specifically to Caucasians, is promoted as the standard beauty in a magazine aimed at British Asians called *Asiana* (Mcloughlin 2013) and suggests that a pale skin equates to beauty. Mcloughlin (2013) notes that the advertisements and features in the magazine seek to encourage the elimination of racial identity and focus on pale skin models to promote the desirability of a pale skin to receive the lifestyle and privileges that pale-skinned people receive. This is the prevailing representation of colourism in magazines because dark-skinned models are rarely featured or not featured as much as light-skinned models to advertise beauty products for hair (Mitchell 2020). According to Hassan (2018), a lack of representation of dark-skinned women in the mainstream media is apparent, except on a few occasions that are allegedly tokenistic.

Colourism is also evident in Bollywood media. Maity (2021) points out that colourism is seen in Bollywood songs. *Aja piya tohe pyar doon, gori baiyan tumpe vaar doon* means "come dear, let me love you and submit my fair wrists to you" and *gori meri paryon ki chhori* from the film *Beguriah* (cited in Maity 2021) indicates that a light-skinned girl is born out of angelic parentage. *Gori odkhe malmal nikhi mera dil* meaning "the lover is hypnotised by the beauty of the woman when she opens a silk veil to reveal her fair face" (cited in Maity 2021) also indicates a preference for light skin. This, among many other songs, films and advertisements, creates a propaganda of colourism that has led to people subconsciously wanting to be light in complexion. Colourism grew from then into the 1990s. Colourism in Bollywood has continued post Millennium, for example, *Tenu kaala chasma Jachda ae Jachda ae gore mukhde te* (cited in Maity 2021) means "in his black glasses, Jachda is Jachda, he has a white face." This shows that Bollywood still promotes colourism in their music, decades later.

When dark-skinned individuals are models or people are featured or shown in magazines, the notion that the paler your skin the better encourages the media to resort to whitewashing in order to make the skin pale or white. According to Mitchell (2020), *whitewashing* refers to the process of digitally manipulating images of Black

models to lighten their skin, and it is a routine practice in marketing. In 2021, *Vogue Magazine* was accused of whitewashing the skin tone of the current Vice President of the United State Kamala Harris in its February 2021 edition. Kamala Harris, a Black woman of Indian descent, would have no need to be portrayed differently from whom she really is; however, because of the prevailing representational notion of colourism, the magazine resorted to whitewashing her image (Patil 2021). In addition to whitewashing, mainstream media is notorious for using the "brown paper bag test". If a person is a darker shade than a brown paper bag, they are considered "too dark", and some actresses seem to hold this view. Hence, according to Prest (2017: 9), actress Viola Davis shamelessly states, "If you are darker than a paper bag then you are not sexy, you are not a woman, you should not be in the realm of anything men should desire". The extent of colourism using the brown paper bag metaphor went further than mainstream media: there are paper bag parties, clubs, social circles and places of worship, such as paper bag churches, implying these places do the paper bag test before allowing people in. Kerr (2006) confirms this by stating that the brown paper bag test openly accepts light skin and rejects dark skin.

Whitewashing and the 'brown paper bag' test have been around for years and have sparked early movements such as the Black is Beautiful Movement. The Black is Beautiful Movement is an identity-based social movement that was started in the early 1960s with the intention of changing mainstream attitudes to how being Black is viewed in respect of the body, fashion and personal aesthetics and bringing pride to being Black (King 2010). The movement was used to combat the previous perceptions that came with being Black and the skin colour, hair texture and facial features that did not fit the European standard of beauty. The Black is Beautiful Movement allows for individuals to freely celebrate their curly hair, brown skin and lush features with pride (Camp 2015). One of the ways Black women have used social media has been to affirm, validate and celebrate their beauty in the form of social media hashtags (Hassan 2018). A movement similar to the Black is Beautiful Movement is the modern-day, digital age #MelaninMagic Movement. This was done in form of hashtag activism.

Using #MelaninMagic, dark-skinned Instagrammers find other dark-skinned Instagrammers to be attractive based on their similar appearances. This makes these Instagrammers love and embrace their dark skins, which has fuelled the success of #MelaninMagic as an anti-colourist movement.

2.7. Hashtag Activism

New media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., offer a digital space in form of hashtag activism to address such social issues. Russo *et al.* (2008) defines *social media* as a space where online communication is facilitated along with networking and collaboration while Howard and Parks (2012) define social media as the information, infrastructure and tools used to produce and share content in digital form. This includes news, personal messages, broadcast messages and more. Carr and Hayes (2015) have provided an updated definition of social media as a distinct set of tools that share a common set of characteristics and traits for individuals and groups to contribute to the content creation that is consumed to provide intrinsic value that is greater than what an individual site may provide. Therefore, social media is said to be internet-based channels of mass communication that facilitate interaction among users that are derived from user-generated content.

M. F. Smith (2005) defines activism as a process that involves groups of people exerting pressure on organisations or institutions to change policies, conditions, or practices that are found to be problematic. In the era of social media, individuals can express their opinions on social issues that are trending and participate in these online conversations under specific hashtags and more specifically, hashtag activism.

A unique feature of hashtags is that when a social media user adds a hashtag sign in front of a word such as #change, it is easier for other social media users to search, link and interact with that post (Yang 2016). Fang (2105) explains that Twitter hashtags were created by developers as a tool of interpersonal communication that was repurposed as a means to display political resistance and hashtag activism. Manikonda, Hu and Kambhampati (2014) explain that hashtags on Instagram allow users to search for pictures tagged with that hashtag; therefore, users add hashtags

with pictures to appear on the public timeline of that search. Williams (2015) states that social media hashtags bring attention to issues Black women face whereas traditional and mainstream media have ignored Black women's stories for decades. Black feminists' use of social media bridges the gap in national media coverage of issues faced by Black women (Williams 2015). Hashtags on social media are effective; Williams (2015) notes that hashtags on Black Twitter prompts the Black community to acknowledge the issues that are brought up and respond to them. This was seen under the hashtag movement #BlackLivesMatter.

Hashtag activism has been used in recent struggles for racial injustice such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement and to fight gender inequality and GBV violence with hashtags such as #MeToo and #MenAreTrash. According to Clayton (2018), #BlackLivesMatter was created in 2012 when a 17-year-old African-American teenager named Trayvon was shot dead by George Zimmerman, a self-proclaimed neighbourhood watch captain who claimed self-defence. Martin was on his way back to his father's home in a middle-class gated community in Florida and was wearing a dark hoodie. He also had a bag of skittles and an iced tea in his possession when he was pursued by Zimmerman who allegedly thought he was a threat and in the wrong neighbourhood. In 2013, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi reacted to Zimmerman's acquittal by using #BlackLivesMatter on their social media accounts (McLaughlin 2016).

Garza stated that it is not the hashtag that creates the movement but the people. In an interview on *The View,* Garza stated,

> People ask me all the time, how do I change a hashtag into a movement. One of the things I say in my book is that you cannot change hashtags into a movement, the only thing that would do that is people. So, for us we are so grateful to be a part of this movement and we have so much of work to do. As you all said earlier this is a time of incredible crisis but also incredible opportunity.

Garza implies that it took the people involved in using #MelaninMagic to make the hashtag a movement. According to the #BlackLivesMatter website, the hashtag was used as a platform and organising tool while other groups, organisations and individuals used the hashtag to amplify anti-Black racism across the USA. Barnard (2018) states that tweets that were hashtagged #BlackLivesMatter shed light on specific cases of police violence, raised awareness about racism experienced by Black people, and created a united space for individuals around a singular cause. However, Zulli (2020) cautions that there can be challenges associated with hashtag activism because immediacy can be a challenge to hashtag activism. Zulli (2020) states that #BlackLivesMatter along with #HandsUpDontShoot, #BringOurGirlsBack and #MeToo were created because of events, and immediacy is seen in these events that pop up on news feed, timelines, trending topics and more. This, as a digitally and socially constructed notion in terms of #BlackLivesMatter, is made up of separate components. The challenge that comes with immediacy is that the hashtag movement can disappear just as quickly as it was created.

Sinpeng (2021) conducted a study on hashtag activism using the #FreeYouth protests in Thailand and found that the hashtag was largely used to express grievances and personal reasons for being a part of the campaign against the lack of democracy and youth rights, education, and the economy. This shows that hashtag activism has been used successfully in fighting social and political issues amongst Gen Z and Millennials.

Hashtag activism has also been used in battles for racial justice and GBV movements. Dadas (2017) notes that #YesAllWomen, which advocated for the elimination of structural and systemic misogyny, was used 1.2 million times for four days after the hashtag was first used. The movement argued that all women have experienced misogynistic treatment by men. Weisis (2014) argued that misogynistic treatment led to an environment where some men think violence is a justifiable reaction to women rejecting them.

A more notable and popular hashtag that was used to fight GBV was #MeToo. Tuerkheimer (2019) explains that the #MeToo movement was started in October 2017, when accusations of sexual assault and harassment were levelled against Harvey Weinstein. The accusations against Weinstein multiplied in the weeks that followed. The media then shifted its focus to sexual conduct, and this expanded from criminals to industries, institutions, fashion, music, sport and more. Towards the end of 2017, #MeToo became a movement of victims coming forward with sexual abuse accusations against their perpetrators. By 2018, the allegations of sexual abuse looked much different than before as women had found strength in numbers and the cultural responses to their claims.

Tippet (2018) adds that American actress Alyssa Milano asked her followers to reply with the hashtag #MeToo if they had experienced harassment and assault in October 2017. Milano's tweet trended on Twitter and went viral, and the #MeToo has been used over 12 million times to date. The #MeToo movement spread across the USA, the United Kingdom, India, Canada, Australia, South Africa and beyond. According to Xiong, Chom and Boatqright (2018), there were other hashtags such as #TimesUp, #WhatAboutUs, #1BillionRising and more that were directly related to #MeToo. The authors found that using hashtags, such as #MeToo facilitates diagnostic behaviour in social movements because online users frequently refer to these related issues. Dejmanee *et al.* (2020) consider the #MeToo movement to be feminist hashtag activism. This is because #MeToo, like other hashtags such as #YesAllWomen, #BeenRapedNeverReported, and #WhatWereYouWearing, brought attention to the issue of sexual assault. Similarly, #MelaninMagic may be considered feminist hashtag activism because colourism is an issue faced predominantly by women.

Fang (2015) went on to state that hashtag activism has been influential in the higher education setting, citing the internet's earliest digital activists as college students of colour. #MelaninMagic is one such activism hashtag used more broadly that encourages dark-skinned beauty by promoting the dark pigments of melanin as just as beautiful as light skin that represents society's ideal of beauty fighting the ideals and methodologies of colourism. Hassan (2018) also shows that using the hashtag

#Melanin, dark-skinned women constantly reaffirm that they are as beautiful as light-skinned women.

Over the last few years, hashtags that encourage melanin pigments have been used across social media platforms. Hashtags such as #BlackGirlMagic, #MelaninPoppin and #MelaninQueen aim to transform preconceived thoughts and opinions of having a dark skin to promote diverse Black beauty (Hassan 2018). In the context of this study, the focus will be on #MelaninMagic, a hashtag that encourages dark-skinned beauty by promoting the darker melanin pigments as just as beautiful as the light skin that is regarded as society's standard of beauty. There are also Instagram accounts that promote dark-skinned beauty in the Indian community such as @_melaninmagic that seeks to celebrate the melanin and culture of the South Asian community with 4352 followers currently. @Crownthebrown is a South African based Instagram account that seeks to break barriers and change the narratives of the Indian community. The account sits at 62,400 followers and often posts about colourism within the Indian community.

The foregoing discussion shows many hashtag activisms focus on social issues in the South African Indian community, but the current study is focused on #MelaninMagic. This is because no study to date has focused on colourism as it relates to how #MelaninMagic has shaped the perceptions of Indian South Africans.

2.8 Filters on Social Media

Filters on photographs date back to the history of photography. According to Hevesi (2012), Bryce Bayer invented a filter that allowed photos to be coloured in 1974. In 1975, Steven Sasson and Gareth Lloyd invented the first black and white digital camera. The Knoll brothers released Photoshop in 1987 and sold it to Adobe in 1988. In 2008, iPhone released a software development kit that commercialised filters on photographs (Lavrence and Cambre 2020). Through the invention of other mobile apps, filters became easily accessible to mobile users, and social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat made the editing options available before posting photos. Alshehri *et al*. (2020) states that social media allows mobile users to use

special filters according to what they would like to improve on themselves, for example skin colour, and this allows other designers to offer these filters as a service.

Filters are a key feature of Instagram. Manikonda, Hu and Kambhampati (2014) describe filters as different lighting or colour adjustments made to pictures, initially created to change the quality of pictures. Eshiet (2020) details this description further, stating that filters can help a person to alter his or her image on social media. Instagram offers various beauty filters that enhance user's appearances such as bigger eyes, fuller lips, and smoother skin and no imperfections. Filters also have the ability to make users' skin colour appear lighter. Sharma, Sanghvi and Churi (2020) cautioned that Instagram is used as a reel of perfect highlights, and people therefore look at the posts of other people and compare themselves to this. This has an impact on social issues such as colourism because a positive increase in social comparison when it came to colourism is found. This is because people look at airbrushed, filtered and flawless pictures of other people and that leads to them compare themselves to these images and subsequently seek validation. This also causes mental health issues such as depression. One of the objectives of this study is to investigate why Instagrammers compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting.

2.8.   Theoretical Framework

In this study, the social identity theory (SIT) will be applied. SIT is derived from a social psychological perspective that implies individuals define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). SIT originated in Britain with Henri Tajfel's work on social factors in 1959. The theory was further developed in 1963 when cognitive and social beliefs, racism and prejudice were included as constructs.

SIT deals with intergroup relations in terms of how people see themselves as members of a group or category, which is known as the in-group. The out-group is how members of one group compare themselves to another group who is different from them and the consequences of this categorisation and comparison (Turner *et al* 1987). Stets and Burke (2002) explain that having a particular social identity means

that an individual is one with a certain group in terms of being like others in the group and seeing things from the perspective of others in the group. Hogg and Abrams (1988) state that in-group-based identities reveal themselves in several ways on cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural lines as well as social stereotyping. The authors mention that people behave jointly within the group with which they identify (Hogg and Abrams 1988). This means that people who use the group label to describe themselves are more likely than not to be a part of the group's culture. This is often done to distinguish themselves from the out-group. In relation to the current study, skin colour can be identified as an in-group element as people with a similar skin colour are likely to be in the same group and those with the 'undesirable' colour regarded as the out-group.

In terms of #MelaninMagic, the in-group can be used to describe Instagrammers who identify themselves with using #MelaninMagic to highlight issues of colourism. Islam (2014) explains that positive in-group bias occurs as the in-group takes on a self-relevant role in which the person defines his or herself through the group. Therefore, comparisons between these groups equate to self–other comparisons with threats to the group being interpreted as personal threats according to Smith (1999). Turner (1995) describes the in-group and out-group relationship as a competition for positive identity, where the out-group categories are strategically framed to benefit from self-evaluations. Therefore, Islam (2014) notes that the way out-group members are treated is related to the motive of enhancing and protecting oneself.

Tajfel and Turner (1978) developed the interpersonal-intergroup continuum. This can be explained as the extent to which an individual acts in terms of interpersonal relationships or as a member of a group in terms of intergroup relationships in order to explain when the social identity processes are most likely to be applied and how social interaction differs qualitatively between these two extremes. The authors explain that shifts on the continuum function as an interaction between psychological and social factors about which members of the group share an ideology of social change and how the social system is characterised by rigid and intense social stratification.

When applied to the movement of #MelaninMagic, members of the in-group are likely to be dark skinned or identified as dark skinned and the continuum of shared psychological and social factors are the discrimination against their dark skin, which is known as colourism. Trepte (2013) explains that people identify with and favour the in-group, which is the group to which they believe they belong and thus discriminate against the out-group, who are people who are identified as belonging to different groups to the in-group. Out-groups are often discriminated against because people try to maximise the differences of rewards between in-group and out-group, which leads to favouritism of the in-group and discrimination against the out-group.

SIT is derived from a social psychological perspective that implies that individuals define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). In the mid-1980s, Turner developed self-categorisation theory, which forms part of SIT (Hogg, Terry and White 1995). SIT has three theoretical perspectives, which are social categorisation, social comparison and social identity (Islam 2014:1782).

2.8.1. Social Categorisation

Social categorisation is described by Tajfel and Turner (1978: 283) as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves as members of the same social category and share some emotional involvement and some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group membership. The idea behind social categorisation is that the group that a person falls into and feels like they belong to is what defines who the person is in terms of the characteristics that resonate with that social category (Hogg, Terry and White 1995). Each group represents what characterises the group and what group members should think and feel like, and therefore, how group members should behave.

The participants in this study are categorised as "people of colour", a categorisation implying that they belong to the same racial group, which is also referred to as "brown skinned". This is the reason this study will focus on young Indian South Africans as

participants because the sociocultural factors that underpin their worldviews are likely to be the same. This is because the participants may look like each other, but they may have different perspectives, especially regarding issues of colourism. Therefore, participants have different views on how the hashtag influences them to embrace their social category.

2.8.2. Social Comparison

According to Trepte (2006), the aim of social comparison in SIT is to evaluate the social groups to which individuals belong. Social groups are defined as a set of individuals in the same category who share a common social identification or view themselves (Stets and Burke 2000). Social comparison usually takes place with groups that are similar to each other. Thus, in this study, an opportunity to evaluate the different views of participants regarding colourism is offered. Such evaluation enables examination of social comparisons in terms of the identity the participants want to project and how this translates to their self-esteem. This is a necessary consideration because social comparison as a category of SIT holds that individuals compare or categorise themselves based on the social identity vis-à-vis their self-esteem.

There are four different theoretical perspectives to social categorisation: social cognition, social representation, the discursive psychology approach and self-categorisation (O'doherty and Lecouteur 2007). The social cognition approach assumes that the perceiver possesses a stable internal representation of the environment in which they operate (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000); identification therefore occurs within the individual. The participants of this study may not have sufficient knowledge on the background of the discrimination that occurs with respect to colour; therefore, this perspective is not suited for the study. Social representation theory adopts a critical approach by emphasising political and symbolic ideologies of social categories (O'doherty and Lecouteur 2007). However, the authors argue that the social representation theory is not sufficient in studies of representation of minority groups; therefore, the social representation theory will not work for this study. The discursive approach systematically opens up concepts to critical investigation and

does not presuppose static cognitive schemas in the perceiver (O'doherty and Lecouteur 2007). Although this theoretical perspective is used in studies of race, in the current study, the focus is more on looking at an individual's perspective. Self-categorisation theory, in contrast to social cognition theory, allows for a more context-driven method to categorisation because the emphasis is on the validity of group-based perceptions (O'doherty and Lecouteur 2007). This theory is ideal as the study is based on perspectives of members of a group who are young Indian South Africans and their own perspectives of the outcome of #MelaninMagic is anticipated to answer the research questions.

The perceptions of dark-skinned beauty are linked to social comparison because the aim of the study is to examine how participants interpret dark-skinned beauty in relationship to #MelaninMagic. Thus, an opportunity to evaluate the different views of participants regarding colourism is offered. Such evaluation enables examination of social comparisons in terms of the identity the participants want to project and how this translates to their self-esteem. This is a necessary consideration because social comparison as a category of SIT holds that individuals compare or categorise themselves based on their social identities vis-à-vis their self-esteem. The perceptions of dark-skinned beauty link to social comparison because examination of how participants interpret dark skinned beauty was explored after #MelaninMagic was examined.

2.8.3. Social Identification

Social identity is a part of an individual's self-concept according to his or her knowledge of the social group(s) to which he or she belongs (Tajfel and Turner 1979). According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), the self-concept includes personal identity with respect to idiosyncratic characteristics such as physical attributes, abilities and psychological traits, and social identity includes group classifications; therefore, social identity is the perception of belonging to a human aggregate. Stats and Burke (2000) explain that social identity looks at intergroup relations: this is how people see themselves as members of a group (in-group) or in comparison to out-groups. Stats and Burke (2000) further state that having a particular social identity means being in

unity with a specific group. This includes sharing a point of view with members of the group while role-based identity means acting according to the expectations of the role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners, and manipulating the environment to control resources for the responsibilities of the role. Therefore, the basis of social identity is in the consistency of group members' perceptions and actions while role-based identity is seen in the differences of group members' perceptions and actions that come with the role.

Social identity is considered with regard to colourism, which is a concept that arises because of the dichotomous view of how a black or fair skin will apply to how individuals see or feel about themselves along skin colour continuum. Dark and fair pigmentations are a part of a person's identity. This aspect will be applied in the study in terms of how participants identify themselves on social media.

Many related studies have used SIT as an analytic lens. For example, using SIT, Barker and Rodriguez (2019) analyse how participants take selfies to show who they are and connect and empower themselves as well as identify with people like themselves. Barker and Rodriguez (2019) also found that women and LGBTQ groups were more likely to take selfies in order to feel empowered. Seibel (2019) used SIT to analyse how social media users actively and passively construct an identity that influences how they perceive themselves and the world around them. Cornelissen and Horstmeier (2002) used SIT in an analytical study on the social and political construction of identities in the new South Africa based in the Western Cape Province. The study found that a Western Cape identity exists, and it has been grown historically and is characterised by Afrikaans-speaking "Whites" and "Coloureds" who are different from other South Africans.

SIT was also commonly used in studies of race. Mckinley, Mastro and Warber (2014) conducted a study on understanding the effects of exposure to positive media images of self and other intergroup outcomes using two race groups, namely, Latin and White groups. The study used SIT in terms of the relevance placed on group membership and found that the underrepresentation of Latinos in the media influenced broader

perceptions regarding social status and the relevance of ethnic groups. Similarly, Hughes *et al*. (2010) used SIT in a study of race. SIT was used to explain how group identification promotes a positive social identity that promotes a more positive level of self-esteem and therefore increased positive wellbeing. Hughes *et al*. (2010) found that African Americans felt closer to other African Americans when they identified with the group.

Based on the foregoing, SIT will be used in this study to analyse the social construction of colourism on social media (Instagram) with the #MelaninMagic hashtag, especially how such construction manifests in the participants' definitions of themselves in the group to which they belong.

A study on social media's (Instagram) influence on the body image among female university students using the social comparison theory and gratification theory found that female participants have occasionally changed their hairstyles because of a picture they have seen on Instagram, and social comparison was a factor that encouraged them to change the way they dressed (Nyambura 2017). This suggests that Instagram has an influence on how females would like to be seen. Nyambura (2017) also found that most university students have an increased desire to change their appearance after viewing influencers' photos and are sometimes persuaded to purchase certain beauty products they have seen an influencer use, suggesting that influencers have a great deal of influence over people on social media, especially Instagram. It aligns with SIT in that the influencers' influence over participants must have occurred because they defined themselves as they would like to be seen by others in the group (Tajfel and Turner 1979), especially the assumed world of the influencers.

Hogg, Terry and White (1995) compared identity theory to SIT and found that identity theory was more individually focused by role identities and SIT more group focused on the perspective of the in-group and intergroup aspects of behaviour. They concluded that because of this, SIT may be better placed to link social behaviour to features of the social structure.

2.9   Conclusion

The literature presented provides a brief history of the underlying topic of #MelaninMagic with respect to colourism. How colonialism and the caste system in India shaped discrimination against dark-skinned individuals and the preferential treatment of light-skinned individuals were examined. The literature review also focused on colourism, class and privilege, race and skin lightening, and overt discrimination and mental health as well as representation of beauty in the media, hashtag activism and filters on social media. In this chapter, a theoretical framework was provided with discussion about social identity theory and a breakdown of the three theoretical perspectives that fall under the theory, namely social categorisation, social comparison and social identification.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, a review of the literature pertaining to this study was provided. In this chapter, the research methodology used will be described. This will involve discussion of the research paradigm, the research design chosen for the study, the data collection method, and the data analysis procedures applied. Ethical considerations are very important in research, and this has been addressed in this chapter in terms of how ethical issues apply to this study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Kuhn (1962) coined the term paradigm as a philosophical way of thinking. According to Lather (1986), *research paradigm* reflects a researchers' beliefs about the world in which he or she lives, including the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world and interprets and acts within that world. Therefore, a research paradigm is the lens through which a researcher examines the world. In the next section, the dominant paradigms, namely, positivism, post-positivism, and the interpretivism paradigm are examined.

3.2.1 Positivism

The positivism paradigm refers to a worldview that influences a research method that researchers would use. Comte (1856) believed that experimentation, observation and reason should be the basis for understanding human behaviour and is the only means of extending knowledge and human understanding. The positivist paradigm involves a process of experimentation and observation. In this study, the perceptions of #MelaninMagic on Instagram as well as filters and comparison of selfies is the focus, and it involves the use of semi-structured interviews in which the responses from the participants are interpreted from multiple perspectives. Therefore, the positivist paradigm that is objective and based on predetermined answers was not appropriate and not used for the study.

3.2.2 Post-Positivism

Panhwar, Ansari and Shah (2017) describe the post-positivism paradigm as pluralistic because it balances both the positivism and interpretivism paradigms. This means that post-positivism is a flexible research perspective that allows a researcher to use multiple research methods according to the nature of the research questions. Panhwar, Ansari and Shah (2017) note that the post-positivism paradigm reduces the personal bias of a researcher and participants because it allows the use of more than one research method and technique. Therefore, more than one angle is used in the research. For this reason, the post-positivism paradigm was not suited for this study because the current study is focused on examining the perspectives of participants, which includes their personal opinions. In other words, for the current study, one type of research method (qualitative research) was used, and this involved the use of semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants.

3.2.3 Interpretivism

The research paradigm that describes the methodology used in this study is the interpretivism paradigm. In interpretivism, the understanding of an individual and their interpretation of the world around them is emphasized (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Interpretivism, according to Pham (2018), is focused on a single phenomenon that may have multiple interpretations rather than a truth determined by the process of measurement. The interpretivism paradigm is an effort to get inside the head of the subject being studied and understand and interpret the thoughts of the subject as every effort is made to understand the individual rather than the observer (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Therefore, the interpretivism paradigm is relevant to this study as the aim is to determine participants' perceptions that come from their thoughts and opinions: the interpretivism paradigm is a means to get into the head of the subject.

3.3   Research Design

Burns and Grove (2001) explain research design as a defined structure within which a study is implemented. MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) describe the research design as a plan used to select subjects and implement data collection procedures in

order to answer the research question; Durrheim (2004) explains research design as a strategic framework of action used to form a bridge between the research questions and the execution of research objectives.

There are two common approaches used in research, and these are quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Quantitative research is aimed at testing theories as well finding evidence of the relationship between variables and determining facts (Van der Merwe 1996). The quantitative research approach uses methods from the natural sciences to ensure objectivity, reliability and generalisability (Weinreich 1996). Patel and Patel (2019) describe the quantitative approach as research involving measurement of phenomenon in terms of quantity such as the social or economic statistics of a particular area. A quantitative research approach was not preferred for the current study because no measurement or analysis based on quantity or the number of participants that gave a particular response was necessary.

Qualitative research is the other common research approach used when the data collecting method is interviews. Qualitative research seeks to acquire in-depth information about individuals and groups of people (Ambert *et al.* 1995), it is conducted in a natural environment, and it is used when the data collection method is observations or interviews (Thomas 2017). The aim of qualitative research is to understand how and why individuals or groups behave the way they do rather than looking at a larger category of people (Ambert *et al.* 1995). In this light, Flick (2007) notes that a qualitative researcher understands, describes and explains social phenomena by analysing individuals or groups of individuals through interaction and communication processes. Considering that this study is based on participants' perceptions of #MelaninMagic, filters and comparison of selfies, a qualitative research approach was used as it allows for analysis of individuals through interaction and communication processes.

3.2. Population

Shukla (2020) defines population as the set or group of all units that are target of a study. This study is focused on young Indian South Africans within the age of 23–30. There were eight (8) participants from the city of Durban, and of that eight, five

(5) were female and three (3) were male. There were also eight (8) participants from the city of Johannesburg and of that eight (8), four (4) were female and four (4) were male. The reason this age group was used is because those aged 23–30 were born before the time of social media but are digital natives, so they have been exposed to the introduction of social media and will therefore bring this perspective to the study. The participants were from the province of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. It was not possible to include all Indian South Africans as participants in the study, so a sample was selected.

3.3. Sampling

Royse (2004) states that the idea behind sampling is that a small set of observations are able to provide an idea of what can be expected in the total population for the intended study. According to De Vos *et al.* (2011), sampling is considered to take a portion of the population to represent the entire population in which a researcher is interested. This study used the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is used for this study because the participants were selected based on set criteria considered necessary to realise the objectives or general purpose of the study. The participants were identified through social media based on the criteria of being Indian South African, falling within in the said age group of 23–30 years, and active on Instagram as well as being exposed to the campaign #MelaninMagic. There was a total of sixteen participants. Participants who were not exposed to the #MelaninMagoc campaign were not included in the study. The participants who were from Durban and Johannesburg were contacted via the Direct Message (DM) feature on Instagram. To ensure that the participants were from Durban and Johannesburg, their location information before sending a DM was verified. Dworkin (2012) states that experts in qualitative research use anywhere between five (5) and fifty (50) participants. So, the research chose to use two groups of eight participants, one group from Durban and the other from Johannesburg.

3.4. Data Collection

Participants were approached through social media. The data collection method used was semi-structured interviews. The interview technique was chosen because the

data collected were based on the thoughts and perceptions of participants; therefore, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were considered more comfortable for participants than a focus group setting where participants may not open up as much.

Barbour (2008) describes interviews as the "gold standard" of qualitative research that involve an in-depth exchange between researcher and the researched. Semi-structured interviews were best suited to this study because understanding of an individual's perspective was sought. The semi-structured interviews were recorded via the recording feature on a mobile device. Participants were informed that they were being recorded and were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendices A and B).

The semi-structured interviews took place at a local coffee shop that was convenient for each participant with regards to travel. The chosen coffee shops were quiet places that ensured sound or recording issues. The participants were provided with refreshments at the coffee shop but had no prior knowledge of this.

Longhurst (2010) describes semi-structured interviews as a verbal exchange where the interviewer prepares predetermined questions, but the interview flows in a conversational manner. The interviews were semi-structured and each lasted approximately thirty-five minutes per participant. The semi-interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions at the time, one of the interviews was conducted virtually via Zoom. Zoom is a videoconferencing service that offers features such as online meetings, group messaging, and a secure recording of sessions (Zoom Video Communications, 2016). Zoom is an efficient tool in research because the service offers a secure place to record and store sessions without the use of third-party software (Archibald *et al*. 2019). This feature was vital for the study due to privacy, confidentiality and ethical considerations. The interview was also a semi-structured interview and lasted thirty-five minutes.

3.5.   Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis as the data analysis method. The method of thematic analysis systematically identifies, organises and offers insight into themes across the data set (Braun and Clarke 2012). Thematic analysis has two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic themes look at the surface meanings from the data set where the analyst will not look beyond what has been said. In contrast to semantic themes, latent themes look beyond what has been said and identify underlying ideas, assumptions and concepts (Braun and Clarke 2012). This study was focused on latent themes. Delahunt and Maguire's (2017) step-by-step guide to doing a thematic analysis was used. The steps include becoming familiar with the data before generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and writing up the themes identified.

3.6.   Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is a concept that qualitative researchers use to describe the reliability and validity of their studies. The dimensions of trustworthiness are dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability (Gill, Gill and Roulet 2014). The dimensions of trustworthiness that apply to this study are credibility and confirmability.

3.6.1. Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1995), credibility is a factor important for ensuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Credibility is a measure that is used to ensure that the study reflects the findings reported. In other words, credibility is used to show how the findings of a study are in line with reality (Golafshani 2003).

The following provisions set out by Shenton (2003) were used to ensure credibility. To ensure honesty in participants when contributing data, each potential participant approached was given the opportunity to refuse to participate to ensure that only participants who were genuinely interested were involved. Iterative questioning was used to investigate the accuracy of participants' statements as well as elicit detailed data. Debriefing sessions with supervisors were held so that their experiences and

perceptions could act as a sounding board. Peer scrutiny of the project was exercised in so much as peers were asked for feedback.

3.6.2. Confirmability

Qualitative researchers use the concept of confirmability to respond to concerns about the objectivity of qualitative studies (Shenton 2003). By ensuring confirmability in a qualitative study, a researcher is able to show that the findings reflect the experience of the participants accurately and free of a researcher's preferences or biases. Miles and Huberman's (1994) set of six criteria was used as a strategy to ensure confirmability. These were (1) the sampling strategy must be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions. In this study, the researcher used a purposive sampling strategy so the participants that were selected were able to answer the research questions. (2) The sample selected should likely generate rich information for the study. The researcher selected young Indian South Africans as participants and they were able to provide rich information from the perspective of the race group being studied. (3) The sample must enhance the generalisability of the findings. This took place when participants, all from the same racial background were able to make statements about a general population, this being Indian South Africans. (4) The sample should produce believable explanations. This researcher ensured that the data collected was believable by asking follow up questions when participants explained their experiences. (5) The sample strategy needs to be ethical. The researcher ensured participants signed informed consent forms before recording data and the risks and benefits were explained to participants. (6) Is the sampling plan feasible? The researcher ensured the study was feasible by setting interviews on the same day when travelling and also finding locations that were convenient for participants.

Finally, the methods used and decisions taken were acknowledged within the research report.

3.7.   Ethical Considerations

Social research ethics are a set of principles to be considered when doing social research (Hammersley and Traianous 2012). Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and the right to withdraw was practised. Informed consent, as explained by Silverman (2015) states that participants used in the study have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to inform about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time. Each participant was provided with a letter of information ahead of the interview that outlined everything the participant needed to know ahead of the interview (see Appendix A). Participants questions were answered, and they were asked to sign a consent form that provided the finer details (see Appendix B). The researcher herself had to gain permission to conduct the study (see Appendix C) from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee, which is a credible body.

Flick (2007) advises that to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, field notes and transcripts should not include concrete information about real persons' details. Codes were used in place of the names of participants in this study, and participants were aware they had the right to withdraw at any point during the research and were informed about the option upfront. Features such as Direct Message (DM) to ensure confidentiality were used. The DM feature was introduced in 2013 to allow users to have private conversations with one person or between small groups of people (Herman 2014).

3.8   Reflexivity

D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez (2007) define reflexivity as a focus on an individuals' response to his or her situation in terms of self-development and the choices that a researcher has available. Terry *et al.* (2017) state that the role of a researcher is significant in qualitative studies, specifically in the analysis of data. Willig (2008) explains that reflexivity is crucial in qualitative research as it involves an evaluation of a researcher's contributions and knowledge during each step of the research process. As a young Indian female researching colourism within the Indian community, it was borne in mind the role this could play in the analysis and interpretation of data, so the researcher ensured her position and knowledge did not

affect the analysis and interpretation of data nor overshadow the participants' perceptions by reviewing the interview guide with her supervisor (see Appendix D).

Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step analytic method was followed religiously to ensure all the necessary steps in the research process were executed. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method, and this ensured participants were able to speak freely about their own experiences and opinions on both colourism and #MelaninMagic with no influence or bias. Initially, the plan was to use only young Indian females in the sample, but after acknowledging the value males could bring to the study, both females and males were recruited.

3.9 Conclusion

The methodological approach used in this study was discussed in this chapter. The paradigm chosen for this study was interpretivism as the the paradigm aligns with qualitative research method used in this study. The researcher also explained the data collection method and data analysis method. The researcher also shed light on the trustworthiness of the study, the ethical considerations taken and reflexivity in terms of how it applies to this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology employed for this study and stated that this is a qualitative study using the interpretivist paradigm. In this chapter, the analyses of the data drawn from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the sixteen (16) participants recruited is presented. A discussion of the findings is also included in the chapter.

Of the sixteen (16) participants, eight (8) were from the city of Durban, and eight (8) were from the city of Johannesburg. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher used the pseudonym D1 to D8 for the participants from Durban and J1 to J8 for the participants from Johannesburg. D1 means participant number one in Durban and the other participants are numbered in sequence until D8, which means participant number eight in Durban. The same system was applied to how participants in Johannesburg were named.

The aims of this study are to determine how people perceive dark-skinned beauty on social media using social identity theory as a theoretical lens to investigate #MelaninMagic as well as to investigate the reasons for using filters on selfies and how likely participants are to compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting. Therefore, in this chapter, the following research questions will be answered: (1) How does #MelaninMagic on Instagram shape the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty in relation to participants' social identities? (2) How does #MelaninMagic influence participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin colour? (3) In tackling the scars of colourism, what reasons do individuals in the Indian community have for using filters on their selfies? And (4) Are participants likely to compare their selfies to others' selfies before posting on Instagram?

4.2. Themes

Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis was used to code the data. There are six phases to the thematic analysis. Phase 1 was to become familiar with the data. Transcripts were read twice and notes were jotted down when listening to the audio clips of the interview. Phase 2 involved generating initial codes. The data were read thoroughly, each set of data was coded and the text associated with it marked. Phase 3 was to search for themes. Coded data were reviewed and grouped into areas of similarity and overlapping codes to generate themes. Phase 4 was to review the themes extracted. Each theme was analysed for whether there was enough meaningful data to fit into a theme and if not, the data were moved into a theme with similar data. Phase 5 was to define and name themes. Similar codes to name each theme were found and linked to extracts of the data to identify relevant quotes. Phase 6 was to produce the report. Data were interpreted by analysing what the quotes of extracted data meant in terms of the research questions.

4.2.1. Overview of Themes

The discussion centred around the different themes and categories that emerged from the data. Participant's responses are presented in form of quotes for each of the themes discussed.

The first theme that emerged was #MelaninMagic as a tool of empowerment. This was a result of participants' feelings that the hashtag was created to empower individuals with a darker skin tone. The theme is divided into three subthemes: (1) #MelaninMagic brings a sense of community, (2) social media as a tool for change, and (3) Millennials and Gen Z aim to end toxic cycles of colourism.

The second theme that emerged was skin lightening on social media. This is a result of many participants thinking people of the Indian community use filters on Instagram to lighten their skin tones. The theme was further divided into four subthemes, each relating to understanding why people of the Indian community feel the need to use filters to lighten their skin when posting pictures. The subthemes are (1) Filters as the modern-day skin lightener, (2) the influence of family on social categorisation, (3)

perceptions of medium skin, and (4) the caste system is still in play. The themes and their subthemes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Themes

MAIN THEME	Subthemes
#MelaninMagic as a tool of empowerment	- #MelaninMagic brings a sense of community - Social media as a tool for change - Millennials and Gen Z aim to end toxic cycles of colourism
Skin lightening on social media	- Filters as the modern-day skin lightener - The influence of family on social categorisation - Perceptions of medium skin - The caste system is still in play

4.3.   #MelaninMagic as a Tool of Empowerment

Hassan (2018) found that dark-skinned African-American women and Black women were engaging with hashtags such as #MelaninMagic to validate, affirm and celebrate their beauty. This was mirrored in participants' perceptions that #MelaninMagic was being used as a tool of empowerment to create a sense of community. In understanding participants' perceptions of #MelaninMagic, social media, specifically Instagram, was used as a tool for change because Gen Z and Millennials are thought to be ending the toxic cycles of colourist thoughts passed down from generation to generation. Under this theme, therefore, how the hashtag movement of #MelaninMagic has been positive in terms of changing the narrative around dark-skinned beauty will be discussed, as well as how Instagram is being used as a tool for change and Gen Z and Millennials' perspectives on the social issue of colourism being passed down from generation to generation. The reasons filters were used on Instagram and how likely participants were to compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting is also a focus of discussion.

4.3.1. #MelaninMagic Brings a Sense of Community

Caliandro and Gandini (2017) state that an online community exists if its members experience a shared sense of belonging and recognise the space as a common milieu. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) identified three elements that characterise a community: (1) a sense of common identity, (2) shared rituals and traditions, and (3) a sense of duty to the community as a whole and to individual members of the community. From the findings, participants thought that those that engage in #MelaninMagic shared a common sense of identity, which is their skin tone, and this relates to social identity. Social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg and Abrams 1988). In terms of #MelaninMagic on Instagram, participants using the hashtag mostly identify as dark-skinned and are proud of their skin colour. Therefore, the group they share a sense of identity with are dark-skinned individuals, which is the social group with which participants identify. A social group is defined as a set of individuals who share a common social identification or view themselves under the same category (Stets and Burke 2000). Instagrammers see members of the same social group engaging in #MelaninMagic, and they seem to feel a sense of community and are happy to belong to the community.

#MelaninMagic therefore created an online community for Instagrammers to express pride and embrace the beauty of their dark skins. D1 explains that when a person sees a powerful person with whom they identify as belonging to the same social category, they automatically start to feel empowered. This is because participants are seeing a part of themselves being represented positively to a larger audience. This is what has been taking place through #MelaninMagic, and dark-skinned individuals are starting to feel prouder of the skin tone. D1 believed hashtag activism is a powerful tool of social change with respect to the commonly held beliefs about skin colour among the Indian community in South Africa. This is affirmed by Fang (2015) who stated that digital anti-racism activists leverage social media as an activist tool, popularly known as hashtag activism, which has revolutionised the fight for social change. In this regard, D1 states,

It is kind of a tool used, I guess. It is an empowerment tool used; you see someone been empowered. It is a change reaction, like a butterfly effect. So, basically, if I see you being empowered about something, and I have the same thing, then obviously I am going to be empowered about it because it makes me feel better, and you feel better about us having the same trait. So, yeah, it does contribute to the social identity. I mean, the power of social media, especially Instagram and its hashtags is very underrated. It carries a lot of weight. People do not see that, but I think with the continuous use of #MelaninMagic hashtag, the movement can actually be an important tool representing the darker complexion.

Another participant built on this, explaining that the online community that social media users are forming can serve as another family. This is because of shared experiences and the ability to relate to each other. Gatson and Zweerink (2004) affirm this, stating that an online community is understood to be a place as well as a grounded experience that may be carried along in the imagination. This is the same view shared by D4, who states,

They are going to feel like they have another family out there, like who relates to them and is going to accept them for who they are. Everything is going to be okay; they don't have to care about what people think, as long as they know that they are beautiful.

#MelaninMagic therefore serves as a tool of representation for darker individuals who were underrepresented previously in media. A participant pointed out that dark-skinned beauty was underrepresented previously in both traditional and social media. Harrison *et al.* (2008) states that the media is sometimes society's first introduction to the world of the unknown. Therefore, representation and images in the media are important for understanding others. Through an analysis of advertisements and editorial photographs of Black people from 1989 to 1994, Keenan (1996) found that light-skinned individuals with Eurocentric features were used most often. In the same vein, Shorter-Gooden and Jones (2003) state that if movies depict dark-skinned women as less desirable, the public then internalises and believes this. Therefore,

dark skin is viewed as less beautiful. While this is noted, #MelaninMagic serves as a positive representation for dark-skinned individuals slowly attempting to change the stigma around how skin colour relates to beauty. D1 explains,

> From all the brands that we see on Instagram, television, Facebook, the internet and abroad, they favour the light skinned. There is very little representation of darker complexion, and I do not think it is enough to empower people to feel that they are happy with their skin and colour and do not have to do anything about their skin colour.

Another participant explained that once hashtags such as #MelaninMagic begin to trend, other social media users also want to be a part of the movement and begin to celebrate their skin colour as well. This is supported by Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) who state that the more users post a certain hashtag the more likely it is to become a trending topic on Twitter. While Twitter trending hashtags may differ to Instagram, there is a feature that allows Instagrammers to view all the posts (which are public) under a specific hashtag as well as the number of posts under that hashtag. Therefore, the more often Instagrammers see #MelaninMagic, the more likely they were to engage with the hashtag. D2 commented,

> Once it starts trending, it becomes something that you want to be a part of, and someone who feels they are dark skinned and might not have felt beautiful, suddenly there's a trend of #MelaninMagic, and you feel celebrated by thousands of people around the world all hashtagging the same thing. I think it's done a whole lot of good in terms of making people feel more comfortable in their skin.

Another participant explains further, saying that once awareness is spread, people's comfort is increased. This goes back to #MelaninMagic bringing a sense of community. J8 explained this, saying,

> I think it allows people of any skin colour to feel more comfortable. As you spread awareness, you increase people's comfort by spreading the hashtag; I don't think that it is specific to the hashtag. I think the hashtag is just a way to spread awareness, the key message is that skin colour should not be a factor.

#MelaninMagic being a tool of empowerment mirrors SIT. This is because of the social identification aspect of the theory. Social identification is defined as individuals acknowledging that they belong to certain groups, which is attached to emotional and value significance to being a part of that group. So, individuals using #MelaninMagic identify dark-skinned individuals as their group, and when they see other dark-skinned individuals posting under the hashtag, they feel a sense of community. Therefore, it is their social identity in terms of skin colour that allows them to connect with others on Instagram who share the same scars of colourism but are now embracing their skin tone.

4.3.2. Social Media as a Tool of Change

Many participants mentioned that there has been a huge lack of representation of dark-skinned individuals in mainstream media as the industry favoured light-skinned individuals, especially in Bollywood films, something participants pointed out. Mainstream media perpetuates colourism by using predominantly light-skinned Black models who possess European facial features (Gabriel 2007) that many people of colour do not have, and thus the latter are underrepresented in television advertising in the media (Mastro and Stern 2003). Mitchell (2020) affirms that there is a prevailing representation of colourism in magazines but dark-skinned models are rarely featured or not featured as much as light-skinned models. Participants felt that #MelaninMagic stood as a tool of change. So, while Bollywood and the mainstream media often favoured light skin, Instagram and specifically #MelaninMagic is a tool of change and growth, but participants still described the effect that growing up watching Bollywood films and music videos had on them. These Bollywood films and music videos always feature light skin as the ideal skin colour.

A participant explained that colourism is rooted in what children see growing up, and many Indian children grew up watching Bollywood movies in which there were rarely dark-skinned people to look up to in order to celebrate their melanin. According to Maity (2021) colourism in Bollywood dates back to 1950s. Songs such as *Gori Gori Gori mein pariyon ki chhori* (1957) from the film *Begunah* and sung by Lata Mangeshkar seems to have depicted that a light-skinned girl is not mortal: she is an

angel because of her complexion. Light-skin females being praised continued for decades. Therefore, the participant felt there was a lack of representation of dark-skin females in Bollywood films to who she could look up. According to D2:

> It has a lot to do with how they were raised, how their parents were raised and the Bollywood industry that we grew up watching. We didn't really have dark-skinned people to look up to, you know but #MelaninMagic is proving all of these wrong.

Participants pointed out that when dark-skinned individuals appeared in Bollywood movies, they were often depicted as villains. This claim is supported by Geetha (2021) who stated that dark-skinned actors are solely cast in roles with lower caste, lower class and villainous connotations. Participants grew up watching this narrative and therefore may not have loved their skin colour before #MelaninMagic that served to change the narrative on Instagram. This is what D2 had to say about the effect of colourism in media on them:

> I think it is strongly perpetuated in cinema as well, for instance like the villain is always dark skinned, and I think that is something interesting to look at cause a lot of Bollywood films, especially in the 90s and 80s, a lot of villains were dark.

As a result of this, the rejection of dark skin continued to dominate Indian people's perceptions because individuals with dark skins are painted as the villains in movies. This further resulted in some Indian people believing that light-skinned people are more likely to be "good" people, and dark-skinned people are "bad". A participant mentioned that this happens in Indian households where the lighter-skinned child is often the favourite, and it is easier to let go of the wrong they have done while there are more consequences for dark-skinned children. As explained by D4:

> If a light and dark-skinned person had to do the same wrong, I feel like the light-skinned person would get off much more easily. People would be more accepting and forgiving towards the light-skinned person. There will be more consequences for the dark-skinned person. I feel in Indian communities when it comes to children. You will always have that favourite child, [and] you'll be

more accepting to the wrong they do if they are light skinned. Parents are more harsh if they are dark skinned. I feel like when Indian parents have a favourite child and especially if they are lighter then they tend to let go of what wrong they do and favour that child and pick on the dark-skinned child. The dark-skinned child will always have to do more stuff, and they will feel like they aren't good enough. The family won't be picking on the light-skinned child so much.

The participant further mentioned that she has personally experienced her parents being more forgiving to a lighter skinned cousin than her, and she felt that this was based purely on the colour of their skins, and these parents are not online to see that there are quite a lot of good things being said and done about dark-skinned individuals. D4 detailed favouritism in Indian South African families based on skin colour:

My brothers and I are the fairest of the bunch; we are like in the middle, but all of the other grandchildren are fair, on the lighter side, and I've always felt that like my mother had her favourites with her nieces because and her cousins' children because they were fairer and light skinned. It was like whatever they did, it wasn't so much of an issue but when we did the same things then it was like a problem, and you'd think that they did the exact same thing so how is the punishment different, and I feel that the older generation felt like if you didn't come out like their colour then you're not a part of their family. My mom is fair, and my dad is dark, so to be honest, my father's side take a lot to me. I don't know if it's because I'm the same complexion as them or have a lot of features like them, but the lighter skin tone, I feel like mom's side is all like that, all of the grandchildren and stuff. So, they feel like these are our family and we can let go something that they do.

According to D5, dark skin is synonymous with villainous features, as dark-skinned people in Bollywood films are often villainous while the light-skinned female is the lead. This is contrary to how dark-skinned people are portrayed on Instagram. Geetha (2021) supports this, explaining that there is a gap in gender acceptance of skin colour in South Indian movies because dark-skinned females are rarely in lead roles while

light-skinned females taking on the lead role in these films is a norm. The misrepresentation of dark-skinned females in mainstream media is not heroic, and it has led to dark-skinned females feeling less valued than light skinned females. In this regard, D5 said,

> If I have to think back on the recent stuff that I watched: the darker one is usually the villain and the fairer one is always the love interest of 'that girl'. What I watched on Instagram is opposite because the dark-skinned individuals are also portrayed as hero and heroine. This thus makes Instagram a platform in which people are portrayed as they really are.

Johannesburg participants appeared to be less cultural in their thinking as they did not point out the issues with respect to the Bollywood industry. Instead, these participants spoke about mainstream media. However, participants from both Durban and Johannesburg strongly believe social media platforms such as Instagram have the power to change such narratives as they have seen a rise in diversity and inclusivity over the years. This was particularly noted with respect to #MelaninMagic, which promotes dark-skinned beauty on Instagram. One of the ways Black women have used social media is to affirm, validate and celebrate their beauty in the form of social media hashtags (Hassan 2018). A participant mentioned that there is an influencer on Instagram who specifically caters to promoting culture and dark-skinned beauty. The Instagram influencer's name is Harmel Patel. The influencer dives into how darker skinned individuals can do their makeup, which is something the participant felt was not represented previously on social media. Therefore, influencers like this tie in with promoting dark-skinned beauty in the same way #MelaninMagic does. As explained by D1:

> Her name is Harmel Patel, she's always posting aesthetic images about the culture and promoting darker complexions. There are a few that are always doing make up but for the darker complexion.

Another participant also agreed with influencers promoting dark-skinned beauty under #MelaninMagic, explaining that these influencers are shedding light on how dark skin can be beautiful. Chatzigeorgiou (2017) concluded that Millennial's trust in

influencer marketing depends on how many followers the influencer has, the personality expressed through social media posts, and the remarks and activities shown in the media posted by the influencer. Although Chatzigeorgiou's (2017) study is based on influencer marketing in tourism, this can be adapted to the current study as participants believe that influencers promoting dark-skinned beauty influence the way Instagrammers view dark-skinned beauty. Therefore, it is the influencer's personality and media in the form of the videos and photos that are posted that grab the attention of participants. D2 commented:

> I think there are a few iconic Instagram influencers that are dark skinned and are really celebrating it and shedding light on the fact that dark skin can be beautiful.

Dark-skinned influencers who embrace their skin tone left participants feeling more comfortable in their own skins as they could identify with the influencers. This also relates to the social identity theory because social identity is a part of an individual's self-concept, according to his or her knowledge to which social group(s) he or she belongs (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Social media has helped improve the way participants view themselves, and this created a movement for embracing dark-skinned beauty under #MelaninMagic. Social media, more specifically Instagram, is being used as a tool for change to allow Instagrammers, more particularly those that identify as dark skinned, to change the way they view themselves and how society views them as well. This is done by showing off their melanin, which created a trend for others who identify as medium to dark skinned to do the same. This is how social identity theory can be applied to the theme of social media being a tool for change.

4.3.3. Millennials and Gen Z Aim to End Toxic Cycles

Many participants from the study and the felt that the ideals behind the concept of colourism have been passed down from generation to generation. However, Gen Z and Millennials are generations of change, and together with hashtag activism, these generations have displayed on social media, there seems to be hope for future generations displaying different attitudes towards such social issues. Gen Z and Millennials are attempting to change the toxic ways of thinking passed down from

generation to generation. Hashtag activism has been used in recent struggles for racial injustice such as the #BlackLivesMatter Movement and to fight gender inequality and GBV with hashtags such as #MeToo and #MenAreTrash. A participant from Instagram who observed #MelaninMagic pointed out that Millennials and Gen Z do not live the way their ancestors did. Kaplan (2020) supports the explanation that Millennials and Gen Z view themselves as more liberal and open minded than their parents. Kaplan (2020) further states that these two generations feel like they are more likely to push a political agenda that can move generations forward or back. This is evident in how participants view #MelaninMagic as an attempt to end a toxic cycle passed down from generation to generation. #MelaninMagic assists in doing so because the hashtag creates a space for dark-skinned individuals to embrace their skin colour. In this regard D3 comments,

> I don't just see it with the way that we view our culture. I see it in every single detail of our lives. We don't live the way our parents and grandparents lived, and I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing. We are much more open minded, more tolerant and much more accepting of the people around us and I think that is a very beautiful thing. And the fact that we live in the age of the internet where we are able to not just see other people but communicate and experience life from another perspective has allowed us to open our minds up in such ways.

The participant also expressed that Gen Z and Millennials are not "people pleasers", but rather, stand up for themselves. This is in line with what Kaplan (2020) states, namely, that Gen Z are more diverse than the generations that came before them, and they do not accept older generations views on racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and other social issues that include colourism. For example, D6 explains,

> The greatest movers, shakers and dreamers in the world are Millennials and Gen Z at the moment. They are running companies, they are at the forefront of the future so, on any path, if you're looking at the technological and digital age in terms of compassionate movements, they are very rooted to who they are as people. They would not just do things for the sake of doing it or pleasing

people. I would definitely suggest that they have the greatest power to change it because I feel like generations before us with a closed way of thinking and belief system would throw off those shackles that have confined them, but somehow we've been graced with the ability to use our thinking and our freedom, use our almost rebel spirit but for a good cause, you know? You have so many hashtag movements that are coming out, so many social media platforms that are pushing this agenda, and I think if we have that then our future is in very safe hands. It's a movement of righteousness, that's what it is.

This is in line with the social categorisation theoretical perspective. Tajfel and Turner (1978) define social categorisation as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves as members of the same social category. In terms of the current study, Millennials and Gen Z perceive themselves as different from their parents and grandparents' generation because they have found flaws with the older generations' way of thinking. Therefore, their social category, as a younger generation and growing up in a different era, allows them see things differently from previous generations. This was evident on #MelaninMagic hashtag as Millennials and Gen Z saw a problem with colourism and fought this using hashtag activism on Instagram.

4.4. Skin Lightening on Social Media

A key finding of the study is that participants thought many people in the Indian community used filters on their pictures to appear lighter in skin tone. Instagram offers a whole host of filters to use before posting an image to a feed or story, and many are tempted to use this to appear lighter in skin tone. Social media and the advancement of technology allows for light skin to be accessed more easily through filters and editing, and this explains the consistent preference for light skin in young migrant women in Chennai, India (Varghese 2017), and many other societies because lighter skin is socially constructed as better.

4.4.1. Filters as a Modern-Day Skin Lightener

A key finding of the study is that many participants use filters on their pictures to appear lighter skinned. By so doing, they are rejecting the idea of colourism promoted

on Instagram about Black or dark-skinned individuals. This is because people believe light skin equates to beauty. Instagram offers a whole host of filters to use before posting an image to a feed or story, and many are tempted to use this to appear lighter in skin tone. Instagram serves a platform where dark-skinned individuals are celebrated. Lavrence and Cambre (2020) state that filters allow for the production of serial versions of oneself and go on to explain that many filters automatically lighten user's skin tone as well as other effects such as slimming bodies, narrowing noses, removing wrinkles and more.

J1 stated that one of the major reasons why filters are used is to lighten skin colour or conceal spots. This is in line with the social comparison theory as Instagrammers seem to compare their skin tone with others before posting selfies. Lup, Trub and Rosenthal (2015) report that there is growing evidence that following strangers on social media leads to comparing oneself to others. Looking at pictures of attractive people can lead to depression. This is because the unrealistic beauty standards created online can lead others to think and feel less about themselves. Some studies (see Lup, Trub and Rosenthal 2015) have concluded that the number of strangers one follows significantly moderated the association of Instagram with social comparison. Adapted to the current study, the ideology is that Instagrammers following strangers on the platform leads them to comparing themselves to pictures of others. Their desire to also look attractive leads to Instagrammers using filters on the platform to lighten their skin because they feel that this would make them appear more attractive. This is confirmed by G1, who states,

> Skin colour I would say, probably to me, is one of the major reasons why filters were even created. Because it really doesn't impact anything except your skin colour and maybe if your skin has spots. And that itself is so messed up if you think about it. It doesn't even improve the clarity of pictures.

J1's response and the data discussed are about social comparison, meaning there is unfavourable comparison of participants to dark-skinned people. Hence, they are resorting to using filters on Instagram to lighten their skin colour.

Another participant explained that the advancement of filters allows dark-skinned people to appear lighter than their natural tone, and this is a problem in society. Seth (2019) notes that while Bollywood stars previously endorsed whitening products in India, today filters serve as a similar role to skin lighteners as they offer better lighteners for users to appear lighter in skin tone. The participant also explained that the lighter a person appears to be, the more beautiful they come across, leading to more likes. Social media and the advancement of technology allows for light skin to be more easily accessed through filters and editing, and this explains the consistent preference for light skin in young migrant women in Chennai, India (Varghese 2017).

Regarding filters on Instagram, D8 commented as follows:

> That (filters) is the entire backbone of Instagram at the moment is the advancement of more filters coming through on different platforms where you can actually go from a really dark-skinned person with lots of marks on your face and scars to an absolutely flawless white, beautiful person. Not to say that you weren't beautiful in the dark picture, but that's what people are looking for on social media; it's what people are getting the likes for, and I think the advent of filters is creating a major divide amongst the skin colours on social media, which is leading to a whole host of other problems that society doesn't need at this point in time.

Participants also agreed that they compare themselves to other people when posting pictures, which relates to social comparison. Verduyn *et al*. (2020) states that due to the rise in social networking sites, social comparison takes place at an unprecedented rate and scale, which affects a person's social well-being. D7 explained that social comparison is a trap most social media users fall under because the platform exposes a user to so many different people. This also aligns with Lup, Trub and Rosenthal's (2015) finding that following strangers leads to social comparison. D7 agreed that this is a prevalent practice, saying,

> I do it (compare selfies to others) myself. It's unfortunate; it is a trap we fall into quite often. Because of social media, you are exposed to so many different people, so many different models and actors and influencers, and it is bound

to happen where you compare yourself to others, but I think what's important to remember is that you are, the only you around.

D7 went on to say that she does use filters but also posts pictures without using any filters. She explained that filters make her feel confident.

Yes, it does, uhm. I am not a fan of the filters that make you multiple shades lighter and kind of like blurs out your features. Uhh, but I do use filters myself and it makes me feel good, and I love posting without filters as well.

4.4.2. The Influence of Family on Social Categorisation

Almost all participants agreed that the Indian community views individuals differently if they are darker in skin tone compared to the way lighter skinned individuals are viewed. One of the aims of the study was to find out what reasons individuals have for using filters on their selfies. Participants on Instagram feel that filters are used to appear lighter in skin tone. One of the reasons that participants may want to appear lighter in skin tone is because of the negative stereotypes associated with a dark skin. Similarly, Glenn (2008) stated that European features became desirable and light skin was the closest characteristic that Indian people had to these features, therefore resulting in light-skinned Indian men being viewed as more intelligent than dark-skinned Indian men and light-skinned women being viewed as more attractive than dark-skinned women. Participants also seemed to believe that the Indian community felt strongly about light skin being the epitome of beauty; Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) confirmed that fair skin complexion is considered a measurement of beauty. Participants explained that these negative stereotypes come from the Indian community and their families. In addition to being viewed differently, some darker skinned individuals were also treated differently, with one participant stating a parents "favourite child" is usually the lighter skin child. The way the individuals were viewed growing up affected how they view themselves and subsequently their social categorisation. In this regard, D2 states,

Just from my personal experience from growing up as well. I was made very aware that I was a little darker than people in my family, not in a bad way. They

used to call me Shamla, which is another name for Krishna because he was dark.

Some participants from Johannesburg also agreed that the Indian community views a person differently if he or she is of a darker skin tone. Hence J4 states,

> In my opinion if you are dark skin then I think they view you in a different manner as compared to if you were fair skinned, so they would obviously favour the fair-skinned individual. It happens in most families.

This confirms the above finding that light-skinned children are often favoured, a finding that is supported by Hunter (2007), who explained that light-skinned people received privileges and resources that are unattainable to their dark-skinned counterparts. These privileges could be the reason light-skinned children are favoured, making them the "favourite" child.

The finding can be explained through social categorisation theory. Social categorisation is described by Tajfel and Turner (1979: 283) as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves as members of the same social category sharing some emotional involvement and some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group membership. Bruce, Curtis and Johnson (1998) state that social categorisation is a forerunner of ingroup bias and favouritism, which goes hand-in-hand with negative beliefs about members of groups to which one does not belong. In the case of favourite children, favouritism is shown to the light-skinned child and disadvantages are often associated with being the darker skinned child. However, others did not seem to experience the same sentiment. J7 expressed that he did not think that there was much colourism experienced in the Indian community. This is his perception based on his life experiences:

> I think within the Indian community, it is not too bad. There are no real attributes I've come across in the Indian community with regards to colour. I think they think people with lighter skin look better, but I think that's the extent of it.

Although J7 does not believe there is colourism in terms of discrimination, his response supports the fact that light-skinned individuals are preferred in the India community. J3 shared the same sentiments:

> I wouldn't say there was much of a difference. I mean, in my household specifically, we weren't really raised to see colour although we come from an orthodox home.

Therefore, an individual's experience seems to stem from their family backgrounds and the experiences that came with their family background. The influence of family leads individuals to place themselves in specific skin-tone groups. While light-skinned individuals may have been more favoured, they were also pressured to maintain their light skin. Hence, D7's, family was very protective of her skin. In her response, she said,

> My family was so pedantic of my skin colour; I mean if I had to go to the beach, they would lather me in sun block; if I had to play outside, I wasn't even allowed to play outside for too long. I wasn't even allowed to play outdoor sports because they were afraid that I would get dark skin, and growing up, I never really saw colour.

The reason the participant's mother was so protective of her skin colour was because she did not want her daughter to lose her light skin and then be moved into the dark-skinned category. This is in line with the social categorisation theory. The participant's mother is likely to have feared the negative connotations that come with dark skin such as the marriage market and job opportunities, amongst others. Therefore, the mother was likely to have attempted to protect her child's skin in order for her to be able to reap the benefits of her light skin. This is likely to stem back to the caste system in India and how dark skin is viewed. Norwood (2015) reports that some mothers are heard thanking God that their children are not dark skinned. Other parents request light-skinned children when adopting. This does not necessarily mean that these parents are oblivious or are showing hate towards dark-skinned people. It may be a result of the advantages light-skinned people are provided. Parents may believe their light-skinned child could have a better chance in life than a

dark-skinned child. Norwood (2015) also explains that this attitude is present in Black communities where family members favour lighter skin children over their darker siblings and discriminate against the darker skinned children. That participants expressed the stereotypes and discrimination that comes with a dark skin is likely to be the reason individuals use filters on their selfies in order to appear light skinned. A light skin is considered the epitome of beauty and comes with many privileges.

4.4.3. Perceptions of a Medium-Skin Tone

While the predominant focus of colourism is about light skin and dark skin, through the interviews, it was found that a few of the participants experienced colourism as medium-skinned individuals and with light-skinned family members and therefore felt like the dark-skinned child in comparison. The participants' responses are consistent with Wilder's (2010) identification of skin tone as a three-tier structure that includes medium skin instead of a two-tier structure that saw skin tone as light skin and dark skin. While Wilder (2010) argues that medium-skinned individuals are not as affected by the consequences of colourism, the evidence obtained in this study differs. Participants who were medium in skin tone identified as dark skinned because they were not as light as their family members, which made them the "darker" one in the family. Although not dark in skin tone, these individuals also felt the consequences of colourism. An example is a medium-to-light-skinned participant on Instagram who identifies as dark skinned because the participant grew up around family members who were lighter in skin tone. The excerpt of D2 (Section 4.4.2) is relevant in this regard.

The same was true for another participant who is medium in skin tone but feels darker in skin tone due to growing up with family members of a lighter skin tone. Both participants were called names that emphasized their darker pigment because they were not as light skinned as those around them. J1 stated that she was called names such as "blacky" because she was darker in skin tone in comparison to the rest of her family. J1's experience demonstrates discrimination based on her skin colour from family members. That the family members chose to refer to her as 'blacky' is borne out of rejection and resentment towards those with a dark-skinned colour, which J1

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experienced in her family. According to J1, the rejection of her skin colour was such that

> They would make it known that I was dark by saying things like, I was also very chubby, so they would pick on the chubbiness because I was fat and darker so they would call me things like "blacky".

D2 says he was often called "Krishna", a Hindu God, because he was considered darker in skin tone in comparison to his family members. Although both participants said that this was done jokingly, it was a joke that demeaned and insulted them. It left them believing that they were darker skinned, although they were not. D2 says,

> A lot of people in my family are very fair, specifically my mom's side of the family, and I think I became aware of just how dark I was because I was surrounded by so many fair people, and maybe if we are looking at shades of brown, I might not fall under necessarily as dark, but I think in my context, I was considered dark.

These participants were not dark skinned but growing up around family members who were significantly lighter led to these individuals thinking they are dark skinned even in a society with people who were darker than them in skin tone. In South Africa, the separatist ideology of the apartheid government was based on skin colour as reflected with difference races. The data analysed, particularly responses from D2, and J1, show that while under apartheid, problems with skin colour were interracial, but it was also intra-racial in the Indian community in South Africa. According to D2,

> What is so funny is on WhatsApp, you can choose your reaction emoticons, so I set it to the second last dark one, and I had some friends ask why are your emojis the dark-skinned one. But that is the skin colour that I am, and they said I should be using the light-skinned one. I had arguments with a few people that is your skin colour and that is how I view myself.

D2 does not want to pretend to be what she is not, especially growing up in a home where others in the family looked down on her because of her skin colour. Hence, she set her emoji to accurately reflect her skin colour and how she views herself.

J1 also had a similar experience; she explained that she has always thought of herself as dark skinned because of the way she was viewed in her family. She went on to say that when she goes to get her nails done, she thinks certain colours would not suit her because she feels she is not light enough in skin tone. This confirms the social categorisation dimension of social identity theory. Turner (1975) explains that the characteristics of one's group can be ranked in terms of status, richness or poverty, skin colour, or the ability to reach aims. Social comparison aims to evaluate the social groups to which individuals belong (Trepte 2006); hence, J1 feels she is "not light enough in skin tone" because of her conscious comparison to others in her social group and society. Therefore, based on the data collected, medium-skinned individuals identify as dark-skinned individuals if members of their family are lighter in skin tone than are they. J1 continues,

> It was put in very joking ways, and only when I was older did I realise that this was actually something, going back, [that] psychologically affected me. In the things that I do, [for] example when I do my nails, I tell my beautician that this colour is not going to suit me because my hands and feet are dark, and she looks at me and says, "Are you mad?" That's the thing, it is a psychological thing that has been instilled in you from the time that you were very young, so definitely, I feel it brings a strong sense of belonging.

J1 also feels "a strong sense of belonging" not to her family but to the entire clan of dark people because these are people with whom she identifies, and they are ready to accept her for what she is. Similarly, another participant expressed that he would be shouted at for playing in the sun and becoming darker, showing how deeply Indian people fear their children becoming darker in skin colour. Their fears can be attributed to the disadvantages that darker skinned people face both socially and in the workplace. Hunter (2002) states that light skin is considered social capital because light skin will earn one more friends and increase the network of people one can relate to one among African-American and Mexican American communities because it connects one to the right people, making employment and promotion at work easier. This is how J8 an Instagrammer, views the issue of his skin colour:

My mom and sister are extremely fair skinned, and my parents' sides of my family are very fair. I used to be the outdoor type while growing up, playing soccer, cricket, etc. and that used to be frowned upon because when I came home after a day in the sun, you realize the sunburn and being ten times darker than what I was when I left home in the morning. I used to get shouted at and it was seen in a negative light.

J8 was different in his family because of his skin colour, and he was not helping the situation because he was subjecting himself to the sun. J8's view of skin colour aligns with social identity theory because he was seen as a person outside the inner circle or ingroup; hence, he was seen in a negative light.

4.4.4. The Caste System Still in Play

Within the Indian community, colourism can be attributed to the caste system as well as the North/South divide as it applies to India. Like rejecting colourism on Instagram by using #MelaninMagic, Instagrammers are rejecting the caste system in India because that is one of the roots of colourism amongst the diaspora of Indian people across the world. In India, the caste system ranked individuals according to skin colour and the class skin colours fall under. Geographically, people in the North of India were typically, although not in all cases, lighter skinned than those in the South of India. According to Parameswaran and Cardoza (2009), Aryan superiority in India holds that the strong, light-skinned tribes from Central Asia invaded India around 1500 BCE and moved steadily from the north to the south of India, where they conquered the Dravidians of South India. Northern India such as Delhi and Gujarat are home to Hindi and Gujarathri people in terms of language, while the South of India such as Chennai, Kerala and others, are Tamil- and Telegu-speaking individuals. Johnson (2002) explained that the light-skinned Aryans introduced the caste system to separate themselves from the dark indigenous population, which were the Dravidians. Nadeem (2014) observes that the origin of colourism in India is a combination of regional, caste and class relations. A mix of all four language groups came to South Africa, and although they were all Indians in a country of different races, the languages played a significant role in the way colourism was applied to them.

D2 on Instagram, who is Gujarathri with ancestors coming from North India, expressed that his family members are light skinned and commented as follows:

> My family is very light skinned; my cousins are incredibly light. My one cousin is so light skinned that we call her white milk.

This is the same participant who identifies as medium- to dark-skinned because the participants family members are so light.

Based on the data collected from participants, it seems North Indian and South Indian people prefer to have their children married to someone of the same caste because different castes have different skin colours. For example, a participant on Instagram who is Gujaratis expressed that his family instilled in him from a young age that he would marry a Gurajartri girl, while another participant expressed that her boyfriend's family, who is Hindi from North Indian, wanted his sister to marry a Hindi boy, but she instead married a South Indian boy and the family treated him differently. Based on the data analysed, colourism plays a huge role in interpersonal relationships in the Indian community in South Africa. The North and South divide among Indians in South Africa is underpinned by skin colour, resulting in a hierarchy and consciousness about how they relate to themselves, especially in such important issues such as marriage.

Strmic-Pawl, Gonlin and Garner (2021) refer to a community that is colour-conscious as a pigmentocracy. The findings are consistent with Chattopadhyay and Chattopadhyay (2019) findings: a light skin is preferred in the marriage market. Given the history of the caste system in India that influences how skin colour is seen in the Indian community in South Africa, the undertone or subtext of colour in the Indian community in South Africa, particularly in Asian communities generally, is akin to the view of Strmic-Pawl, Gonlin and Garner (2021: 291) who state that "the origin of light skin valorisation comes not from a desire to be White but from a desire to distance oneself from the perception of being a lower-class labourer who had dark(er) skin because of labouring in the sun". In other words, the perception is that the dark-

skinned Indians are inherently less of worthy by virtue of their skin colour, and they do not have a place in the family of light-skinned Indians.

D2, a light-skinned Indian, responded as follows:

> My family is Gujaratri, so I've seen first-hand small prejudice; like being Gujaratri, we are generally lighter skinned where I was told at a young age that I'll have to marry a Guji girl or bring home a Guji girl, so that sort of thing; so, I know there is prejudice in light-skinned versus dark-skinned individuals."

Similarly, a participant from Durban, D4, narrates the degree to which colourism affected the choice of who her sister dated and eventually married a light-skinned Indian. She said,

> In my boyfriend's family, they are Hindi/North Indian. His brother-in-law is South Indian/Tamil; he's on the darker side. So, at first, my boyfriend's parents were not accepting. I think for about a year of them dating, he had to pick his girlfriend up from the gate because they didn't allow him inside the house. They thought because he's Tamil and darker that he wouldn't treat their daughter the way she should be treated. Fast-forward to 10 years: she was hell bent on him because she knew who he was; so, she is fair, and he is dark skinned. She knew the type of person he was even though her parents didn't like him, she still dated him. He is one of the best sons in law that I've seen personally; even they say the same thing.

D4's comments are consistent with SITs social comparison dimension because it reflects a social issue (colourism) in how people from the North and South of India are socially compared. D2 and D4s' responses reveal how a slant of colourism influences relationships in the Indian community. D2 refers to the notion of colourism as a 'small prejudice' but their responses evoke a memory of apartheid that was largely rooted in the politics of colour used by White segregationists in South Africa. However, colourism is present as a "phenomenon [that] is not reducible to racism" (Strmic-Pawl, Gonlin and Garner 2021: 291) but to classicism in the Indian community in South Africa. In order for individuals to reject colourism on Instagram with

#MelaninMagic, they also have to reject the caste system in India, which is what placed those with a dark skin lower on the hierarchy than it did those with a light skin. This also relates to the aims of the study, which looked into the reasons Instagrammers used filters for their selfies. Participants felt like this was done to appear lighter skinned, and the reason for this was because of how low dark skin was ranked on the hierarchy.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the analysis of data collected for the study vis-a-vis the research questions and objectives of the study were presented. Two main themes were identified: (1) #MelaninMagic as a tool for empowerment and (2) skin lightening on social media. These two themes were unpacked and discussed according to the corresponding subthemes. The findings of the study revealed that the online community that #MelaninMagic created was a major reason for its success in changing perceptions around dark-skinned beauty. SIT was instrumental in answering the research questions that tackled the different social categories into which skin colour divides individuals. The other aims of the study include the reasons Instagrammers use filters on their selfies and the likeliness of Instagrammers wanting to compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the themes and analysis of the themes discovered. The analysis was supported by extracts of data from participants interviews about their perceptions, thoughts and experiences. The main aim of this study was to explore how #MelaninMagic shaped participants' perceptions of dark-skinned beauty on Instagram, how the hashtag influenced participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin tone and the use of skin lightening and filters on Instagram as well as selfies comparisons. The study identified two major themes and subthemes that were presented along with each theme to understand the data. In this chapter, a summary of the findings presented in chapter four will be given. How the objectives of the study have been addressed, a summary of the findings, the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future studies are also provided before concluding the research.

5.2   Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study were to determine how Instagrammers perceive dark-skinned beauty on Instagram using the SIT and investigating #MelaninMagic as well as what reasons people have for using filters on their selfies and whether Instagram users compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting. Therefore, the objectives of the study were the following:

1.   To determine how #MelaninMagic shapes the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty in relation to participants' social identities.

2.   To find out how #MelaninMagic influences participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin colour.

3.   To investigate the reasons individuals in the Indian community have for using filters on their selfies.

4.   To explore if individuals are likely to compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting on Instagram.

To fulfil the research objectives and answer the research questions, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Indian community between the ages of 23–30. The findings of the study suggest that #MelaninMagic encourages Instagrammers to embrace and be proud of their skin colour. According to the SIT, social identification is part of an individual's self-concept based on which group the individual feels he or she belongs (Tajfel and Turner 1979). When SIT is applied to the data collected, the social group is skin colour and #MelaninMagic is targeted at dark-skinned individuals who are rejecting the prejudice of colourism. So, the conclusion reached is that #MelaninMagic serves as a tool for empowerment for dark- and medium-skinned individuals. This is because medium-skinned individuals sometimes identified as dark skinned.

The hashtag movement has encouraged Instagrammers to embrace and be proud of their skin tone and their identity as dark-skinned individuals. #MelaninMagic works as a tool of empowerment to reshape perceptions of dark-skinned beauty that were previously not celebrated. Currently, Instagrammers are embracing their skin tones, and #MelaninMagic creates a sense of community between Instagram users, which leads to participants embracing their social category based on their skin colour.

To address the first objective of the study, the participants were asked how they began to feel about dark skin after either seeing or using the hashtag. Participants noted that the hashtag encouraged Instagrammers to celebrate their melanin and be proud of their skin tone. This is how the perceptions of dark-skinned beauty have been shaped by #MelaninMagic.

In order to address the second objective of the study, that there are currently 3.1 million posts under #MelaninMagic on Instagram was noted, which means the hashtag has had a strong influence on Instagrammers. So, participants were asked whether the hashtag encouraged Instagrammers to celebrate their skin tone and had the hashtag changed how they felt about the group their skin colour fell under, meaning the social category of light skinned, dark-skinned and medium-skinned categories. Participants responded positively and said they would be more likely to

embrace their social category, especially darker skin tones, after being exposed to #MelaninMagic.

To address objective three, participants were asked about how they felt about filters, and most thought filters made them look better; as a follow-up question, participants were asked about the reasons they thought Indian people use filters, and most admitted that it was to lighten their skin tones in selfies.

In the world of Instagram, where influencers and celebrity cultures are more disposable than ever, participants were asked in an attempt to address objective four whether they looked at photos of influencers before posting pictures of themselves, and many agreed. This is how the conclusion that participants compare their selfies to the selfies of others before posting on Instagram was reached.

Generally, Instagrammers feel individuals in the Indian community often used filters to appear lighter in skin tone was confirmed. Therefore, filters on Instagram are being used as a modern-day skin lightener. Another finding is that Instagrammers often compare their selfies to others before posting on Instagram. This is in line with the comparison aspect of SIT. Trepte (2006) states that the aim of social comparison is to evaluate social groups to which individuals belong. Although the participants would not overtly say that the rejection of their skin was the primary motive for using skin lighteners, they did not want to be considered dark-skinned individuals. Hence, they resort to the use of filters as skin lighteners. Participants compared their selfies to others whom they admired in an attempt to resemble them or be more like them, whether this is with respect to a personal beauty standard or skin tone. It is also interesting to note that with #MelaninMagic, individuals were looking up to others using the hashtag and wanting to embrace and show off their dark-skinned pigments in the form of rich melanin.

5.3   Summary of the Study

The first chapter of the study provided background information about the study, such as the phenomenon of colourism, which is believed to date back to the times of

colonisation and slavery, being a social issue across racial and ethnic backgrounds for decades. Colourism was explained as light-skinned individuals receiving privileges because of their skin colour while dark-skinned people were discriminated against. Hashtag activism was also described as a driving force behind social change. The chapter elaborated on the research problem, research questions, significance of the study as well as provided an overview of the research methodology.

The second chapter consisted of a review of the literature relating to #MelaninMagic and discussion of the theoretical framework, namely, SIT. Chapter two provided a brief history of colourism, looked at colourism in detail in terms of how it relates to class and privilege, race and skin tone, mental health and the representation of beauty in the media. How SIT is applied in the study as well as its three constituent concepts which are social identification, social categorisation and social comparison and the dynamics of in-group and out-group behaviour was discussed in some detail.

Chapter three focused on the research paradigm used for the study, which was the interpretivism paradigm; the research design, which was qualitative; and the population used for the study which was Indian South Africans between the ages of 23 and 30. The data collection method, which was semi-structure interviews, was described; and the data analysis method, which was Braun and Clark's (2012) thematic analysis, was explained. The ethical considerations applied in the study, such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, were also stated in chapter three.

Chapter four presented the analysis of the data collected. Two main themes were identified: (1) #MelaninMagic as a tool of empowerment, and (2) skin lightening on social media. Each theme was accompanied by subthemes to properly explain the data collected.

The major findings of the study were that #MelaninMagic Is used as a tool of empowerment for dark-skinned beauty, thus changing the narrative around dark skin and empowering both dark- and medium-skinned individuals. Social media was used

as a tool for change, and Millennials and Gen Z were aiming to end toxic cycles passed down from generation to generation, or the belief that a dark skin is less attractive than a light skin. The final chapter is a conclusion to the study after showing how the objectives of the study were met; the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future studies are discussed below.

5.4   Limitations and Further Studies

This study was conducted using only the qualitative research approach. While this may have been the best approach for the study, there are still limitations. Using a single research approach may have limited the depth of the research. Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches leave out contextual sensitivities because they focus on meanings and experiences. The quantitative research approach, which was excluded from the study, is a scientific method that uses statistical data for research descriptions and analysis so that an interpretation of the findings cannot be seen as mere coincidence. Therefore, future studies should consider using a mixed-method approach to improve the accuracy of the findings.

Lund (2012) states that using both a quantitative and qualitative approach may lead to divergent or contradictory results that may requires additional reflection and further research, which would lead to new theoretical insights. Christensen and Johnson (2012) stated that qualitative researchers view the social world as dynamic and not static, so the findings of the research are limited to a particular group of people and cannot be generalised to the entire population in South Africa. This is true of the current study because only participants from two locations, namely Durban and Johannesburg, were used, so the findings are limited to only those locations and cannot be generalised to Indian South Africans. Therefore, more locations might be included in further studies for a more accurate view of Indian South Africans' perceptions of the relevance of dark and light skin tones.

The study also recruited only sixteen participants; if there were more participants included in the study, there would be more data, which could help with generalising the findings in the two provinces studied. However, the findings of this study could

still be generalised because this is a qualitative study, and Dworkin (2012) states that experts in qualitative research use anywhere between five (5) and fifty (50) participants.

There were also other limitations that occurred in the course of doing the study, but there were ways to work around these limitations in order for them not to affect the trustworthiness of the research. These limitations were that I started my Master of Journalism degree in 2020; this was the same year South Africa was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the first-ever national lockdown. During the lockdown, the university was still figuring out how to operate as staff members were at home. The research proposal process was therefore prolonged as I could not meet with my supervisors, and meeting online had not been made possible. The issue was resolved by putting in extra time to work towards the deadline and having Zoom meetings with my primary supervisor. Due to the lockdown, some of the participants I reached were not willing to meet for a face-to-face interview. This was resolved by doing those interviews virtually via Zoom.

5.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, how the data collected through semi-structure interviews answered the research questions and how the research objectives of the study were addressed was discussed. The chapter included a summary of all chapters in study. This was followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study, which included using a single research approach and the number of research participants, which cautions against generalising the findings. Recommendations for future studies were then provided based on the limitations of the current study.

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LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Perceptions of dark-skinned beauty on social media using social identity theory: The case of #MelaninMagic on Instagram.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Alicia Naidoo, Bachelor of Technology in Journalism.

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Dr Sam Erevbenagie Usadolo, Doctor of Philosophy in Communication.
Mrs Deseni Soobben, Master of Arts.

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: In this study, how social media shapes the perceptions of dark skin beauty will be examined using the case of #MelaninMagic on Instagram. The study will use the lens of social identity theory. Social identity theory implies that individuals define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Whether #MelaninMagic is likely to influence participants to embrace their social category in terms of skin color and if participants are likely to participate in #MelaninMagic by posting their selfies under the hashtag is also investigated.

Greeting Hello. I hope you're well.

Introduce yourself to the participant: I am a second year Master of Journalism student at DUT completing my research dissertation.

Invitation to the potential participant I would like to invite you to participate in the research.

What is Research: Research is a systematic search or enquiry for obtaining generalized, new knowledge. This particular study is based on colourism within the Indian community, and you as the participant are entitled to ask as many questions as you wish to for you to best understand the study. You are also entitled to discuss the study with family members and friends, and you are under no obligation to commit at this stage.

Outline of the Procedures: You, the participant, will be invited to a one-on-one interview. The interview will take place at a coffee shop or park that is most convenient to you. The interview will take up to one and a half hours of your time. You are only expected to answer

questions. The interview will be recorded via the researcher's phone; in the event of the lockdown restrictions not allowing this to happen, the interview will be conducted online via Zoom.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: No risk or discomfort to you as a participant is anticipated.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study: You may withdraw from the study if you choose or no longer want to participate. There will be no consequences for your withdrawal.

Benefits: You will be adding knowledge to a social topic. The researcher will benefit with publications.

Remuneration: You will not receive any form of renumeration.

Costs of the Study: You are not expected to cover any costs pertaining to the study.

Confidentiality: You will remain anonymous. When transcribed, the interviewees will be given aliases that would be used for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and the transcriber will have access to these interviews; however, the transcriber will not have any knowledge of the participants as an alias will be used. Besides confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher will practice informed consent, which means that you as the participant must give permission for the information gained from you to be used.

Results: The thematic analysis method will be used to code the data. The results of the research will be summarized and provided to you, the participant.

Research-related Injury: N/A.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: The recordings of interviews will be stored on Google Drive for the transcriber to access and once transcribed within three days of the interview, the recording will be deleted.

Persons to contact in the Event of Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher Alicia Naidoo (0622034288), or supervisor Dr Sam Erevbanagie Usadolo (0313732837) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375.
Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Perception of dark skin beauty on social media using social identity theory: A case of #MelaninMagic on Instagram

Names of Researcher/s: Alicia Naidoo

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, _____ (name of

researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance
Number: _____.

- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant
Letter of Information) regarding the study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age,
date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study
can be processed in a computer system by the researcher.

- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself
prepared to participate in the study.

- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research that
may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____   _____   _____   _____

Full Name of Participant   **Date**   **Time**   **Signature/Right**
Thumbprint

I, _____

(name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Researcher   **Date**   **Signature**

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)   **Date**   **Signature**

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)   **Date**   **Signature**

Please note the following:

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level- use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word), selecting of a non-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counselling (Department of Health 2004).

If the potential participant is unable to read/illiterate, then a right thumb print is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant, e.g., parent, sibling, friend, pastor, etc., should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing this document, e.g., a wrong date or spelling mistake, a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has to be kept in the participant's file and not thrown away, and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

Institutional Research EthicsCommittee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

11 May 2021

Ms A Naidoo
81 Road 707
Montford
Chatsworth
4092

Dear Ms Naidoo

Perception of dark skin beauty on social media using social identity theory: A case of #MelaninMagic on Instagram

Ethical Clearance number IREC 068/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Deputy Chairperson: IREC

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. In your opinion, as a young Indian female how does the Indian community view you if you're dark skin?

2. Do you think #MelaninMagic changes the perception of one's social identity in terms of dark skin beauty?

3. Do you think #melaninMagic 'influences' participants to embrace the social category of skin colour they fall under?

4. Do you think individuals compare themselves to other individuals when posting selfies? Do you think this results in the use of filters on Instagram?