

# Vloggers' Influence on Natural Hair Care: Exploring Perceptions Among Black South African Women

Dr Semona Pillay<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Marketing Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, Orcid: 0000-0002-7446-8453

## Keywords

Natural hair care;  
Black South African women;  
Vlogging;  
Social influence theory;  
Perceptions.

## Abstract

This study explored the perceptions of black South African millennial and Generation Z women regarding vloggers' influence on natural hair care, addressing the research gap of limited academic literature in this area. Grounded in the theories of social influence and perception, a qualitative, exploratory research approach conducted through online focus groups revealed three key themes: (1) participants value authentic vloggers who share personal experiences and honest reviews but are sceptical of those driven by financial gain; (2) the natural hair care movement is empowering, fostering community and shared identity; and (3) vloggers are trusted for product information and tips, with community feedback enhancing credibility and validation. Recommendations from the findings of this study include ensuring that influencers maintain authenticity and transparency, leveraging community engagement, and utilising multi-source information strategies. These findings provide valuable implications for marketers targeting this demographic who can guide targeted influencer collaborations, content creation, and communication strategies that not only boost sales, but also cultivate a sense of community and empowerment among consumers. Future research should expand demographic and methodological scopes to build on these insights and further understand the nuanced perceptions of vloggers' influence on natural hair care among diverse cultural groups.

## 1. Introduction

The natural hair care movement among black women, particularly in South Africa, promotes embracing natural hair textures and rejecting Eurocentric beauty standards. This movement signifies a

---

<sup>1</sup>\*Corresponding Author

\* E-mail address: [semonap@uj.ac.za](mailto:semonap@uj.ac.za)

cultural shift towards self-acceptance and empowerment. Social media, especially video blogs (vlogs), plays a crucial role in this movement, providing a platform for sharing natural hair journeys, product reviews, and styling tips. Despite the growing influence of vloggers, there is limited academic research on their impact on natural hair care practices among black South African women, particularly millennials and Generation Z.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring these women's perceptions of vloggers' influence on natural hair care. It includes a background, problem statement, research aim, and questions, followed by a literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and managerial implications. The study concludes with limitations, suggestions for future research, and a final conclusion.

## **1.1. Background**

During apartheid in South Africa, black natural hair was stigmatized and subjected to racial discrimination, reflecting broader societal preferences for Western beauty standards (Le Roux & Oyedemi, 2022; Baird, 2021). Many black women avoided natural hairstyles to distance themselves from the oppressive associations of colonialism and apartheid. However, post-apartheid, the natural hair movement has emerged as a potent expression of democracy and personal freedom, advocating for the acceptance of natural hair textures without chemical alteration (Brooks, Ngwane & Runciman, 2020; Matjila, 2020). This movement is a powerful cultural and political statement, resisting the remnants of past racial and cultural discrimination and celebrating African identity (Setlaelo, 2022).

Millennials and Generation Z, who have grown up in a more digitally connected and socially progressive environment, are at the forefront of this movement. They view embracing natural hair as both an act of personal expression and a tribute to the struggles of earlier generations (Council *et al.*, 2020; Moloko, 2020). The movement aligns with broader shifts in beauty standards, where authenticity and natural beauty are increasingly celebrated.

Digital platforms and social media, particularly influencer marketing and vlogging, play a significant role in shaping the natural hair care market. Influencers and vloggers like @thebantubeauty and @thobekashozi are popular for their content on natural hair care, providing product demonstrations and reviews that resonate with consumers (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020; Moloko, 2020). A significant portion of millennial and Generation Z consumers trust these influencers, with their recommendations strongly impacting purchase decisions (He *et al.*, 2023; Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023).

Despite the growing importance of digital influencers in the natural hair care sector, there is a lack of academic research on the specific impact of vloggers on the perceptions and behaviors of black South African women (Matjila, 2020; Setlaelo, 2022). Understanding these influences is crucial for marketers to develop effective strategies that resonate with this demographic. Insights from such research can guide the development of targeted influencer partnerships, content strategies, and communication tactics that not only promote products but also foster a sense of community and

empowerment among consumers (Roux, 2020). This understanding can help brands better cater to the unique cultural and aesthetic needs of black South African women who are embracing their natural hair.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

As South Africa commemorates 30 years of democracy, the natural hair movement challenges lingering apartheid-era Western beauty ideals, which prioritize small bodies, fair skin, and light eyes (Baird, 2021). This movement promotes self-expression, authenticity, and pride in African heritage, countering historical suppression (Le Roux & Oyedemi, 2022). It has spurred a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.18% in South Africa's hair care industry from 2024 to 2029 (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). The demand for natural and organic hair care products is rising due to increased consumer awareness of chemical harms (Statista, 2024). With millennials and Generation Z comprising over 50% of hair care consumers, brands are using social media influencers for promotion (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). While influencer marketing's impact on consumer behaviour has been studied in countries like India and Slovakia, there is limited research on the unique cultural significance of natural hair among black South African women. This research gap highlights the need for studies on their perceptions of vloggers promoting natural hair care. Such insights could help brands develop innovative marketing strategies that resonate with the cultural and political context of natural hair, fostering trust, loyalty, and empowerment among consumers (Council *et al.*, 2020; Moloko, 2020).

## **1.3. Research aim and research questions**

The main aim of the study is to explore consumers' perceptions of vloggers of natural hair care among black South African millennial and Generation Z women. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- How do black South African millennial and Generation Z women perceive the authenticity and trustworthiness of vloggers of natural hair care?
- In what ways do black South African millennial and Generation Z women perceive vloggers' contribution to shared interests about natural hair care?
- What is the perceived role that vloggers play in providing information about natural hair care among black South African millennial and Generation Z women?

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature review presented in this section provides insight into the natural hair movement, natural hair consumerism, millennial and Generation Z consumers and natural hair care as well as the role of influencer marketing in promoting natural hair care.

## **2.1. Natural hair movement**

The natural hair movement, originating in the 1960s as part of the “Black is Beautiful” movement, celebrates unprocessed black hair and opposes Western beauty standards that deemed natural black hair unprofessional (Baird, 2021; Langat, 2022). This movement emerged as resistance against colonial oppression, which marginalized natural black hair (Langat, 2022). In South Africa, under apartheid (1948-1994), racial classification was based on physical features like skin color and hair texture, with the infamous “pencil test” used to determine racial categories (Le Roux & Oyedemi, 2023). This test perpetuated severe discrimination, affecting the quality of life for black citizens (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

While research on the natural hair movement in the U.S. highlights similar post-colonial issues (Donahoo & Smith, 2022; Mbilishaka *et al.*, 2020), South Africa’s context remains underexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the natural hair movement’s impact on consumer perceptions in South Africa, where the legacy of apartheid continues to influence attitudes towards natural hair. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the natural hair movement’s impact in the South African context.

## **2.2. Natural hair care consumerism**

Historically, black South African women often used harmful chemicals on their hair due to apartheid-era oppression, which stigmatized natural hair (Oyedemi, 2021). Although apartheid ended 30 years ago, embracing natural hair has only recently gained traction (Matjila, 2020; Moloko, 2020). Market data reflects this shift: a 2018 Mintel report noted a significant drop in chemical product use, with similar trends observed in South Africa. Additionally, 50% of black women in the US reported feeling beautiful with natural hairstyles. A 2023 Halo Heritage survey of 800 South African women revealed that 75% viewed natural hair as more authentic and 65% felt it enhanced their self-confidence. The South African hair care market, valued at US\$496.19 million in 2024, is projected to grow to US\$669.67 million by 2029, with a CAGR of 6.18% (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). This growth, driven by a shift towards natural hair as a symbol of empowerment and beauty, presents significant opportunities for marketers in a culturally sensitive and evolving industry (Abdoolla, 2022).

## **2.3. Millennial and Generation Z consumers and natural hair**

For younger South African women, including millennials and Generation Z, natural hair symbolizes freedom of choice and self-expression, overcoming colonial and apartheid oppression (Jadezwani, 2020; Langat, 2020). These generations value inclusivity, diversity, and cultural representation, influencing their brand choices (Ferraro, Hemsley & Sands, 2023). Millennials are particularly active in the natural hair community, celebrating Afrocentric hairstyles (Moloko, 2020; Walcott, 2021). Generation Z women prefer brands that promote diverse and inclusive beauty standards, supporting

those that align with these values (InterGest South Africa, 2024). This preference has contributed to a significant market value of R9.7 billion annually in South Africa's black hair care industry (Tefu, 2020). The findings highlight the importance of authenticity, cultural heritage, and social empowerment in brand selection for these groups, underscoring the relevance of exploring their perceptions of natural hair care in South Africa.

One of the main drivers of the natural hair movement among Generation Z and millennials is digital engagement with influencers on social media. For the purpose of this study, vloggers are explored in particular.

#### **2.4. Vlogging in the hair care industry**

The launch of social media sites promoting the sharing of video content provided vlogging opportunities to large audiences (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). Vloggers are diffusers of information regarding products, services, and other offerings, and are classified as “influencers”, crucial to consumers’ purchase decisions (Rybackowska, Jebet Chesire & Sparks, 2020). Globally, the influencer marketing industry is set to be worth US\$22 billion by 2025 (Kasumovic, 2024). In South Africa, some key influencer trends were identified in a report by Brand Influence (2024), including:

- At 74%, hair care is ranked as the third-leading beauty category that consumers engage with influencer- and vlogger-related content about;
- 97% of consumers are mainly interested in beauty and grooming content with preferences for tutorials, reviews, and “get ready with me” videos;
- 86% of consumers follow beauty influencers and value connectivity and authenticity; and
- Consumers feel that fostering communities with similar beauty interests can increase engagement and loyalty.

The natural hair movement has become popular among South African millennial and Generation Z women, driven by influencer-vlogger marketing (Moloko, 2020). Vlogging, particularly in the natural hair care niche, provides a platform for sharing personal experiences, product reviews, styling tips, and cultural insights (Tefu, 2020). This content not only educates but also supports psychological well-being and identity formation through community engagement (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020). Vloggers such as @thebantubeauty and @thobekashozi are influential in this space, offering inspiration and education. While this niche is thriving and offers a sense of belonging, there is limited empirical research on the perceptions of black South African women regarding natural hair care vlogging, highlighting a significant research gap (Jadezwani, 2020).

## **2.5. Theoretical framework**

This study is grounded in two theories: consumer perception theory and social influence theory. It is important to note that the discussions presented below formed the basis of research inquiry for this study and were included as broad topics of discussion in the focus group discussion guide.

### **2.5.1. Consumer perception theory**

Consumer perception theory explores how individuals interpret and form attitudes towards products and brands based on selective attention, perceptual organization, and interpretation (Fischer, 2017; Babin *et al.*, 2023). Due to the overwhelming number of stimuli, consumers focus on specific information while filtering out others.

- ***Selective attention***

Perceptual organisation involves structuring and interpreting sensory information to form meaningful experiences. According to Chen and Dermawan (2020), consumers interpret information from vloggers based on their existing beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Everett (2022) highlighted that cultural values significantly influence vlogger followings, especially within the natural hair movement. Black South African vloggers, in particular, resonate with their audience, shaping perceptions of beauty and empowerment (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020; Moloko, 2020).

- ***Perceptual organisation***

Perceptual organisation refers to the process by which individuals structure and interpret sensory information from the environment to form coherent and meaningful perceptual experiences (Babin *et al.*, 2023; Fischer, 2017). Chen and Dermawan (2020) discovered that consumers organise and interpret information provided by vloggers based on their existing beliefs, values, and cultural backgrounds. This view was reinforced by Everett (2022), who claimed that cultural beliefs and values influence vlogger following in relation to the natural hair movement. Moreover, and specifically related to this study, black South African vloggers are more likely to resonate with their audience and shape their perceptions of beauty, self-expression, and empowerment through natural hair care (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020; Moloko, 2020).

- ***Interpretation and meaning***

Interpretation and meaning involve assigning significance to sensory information, influenced by cultural norms and individual differences (Fischer, 2017). Consumers interpret vloggers' content based on personal experiences, social influences, and cultural norms (Chen & Dermawan, 2020; Ladhari *et al.*, 2020). Vloggers promoting self-acceptance and diversity in beauty standards help shape positive perceptions (Everett, 2022; Moloko, 2020).

### **2.5.2. Social influence theory**

Social influence theory argues that individuals will adapt or modify their thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviours in agreement with others (Kwon *et al.*, 2021). Social influence can take place with or without group pressures. For the purpose of this study, social media platforms have significantly facilitated sharing experiences, which makes social influence in social media much stronger (Taillon, Mueller, Kowalczyk & Jones, 2020). Thus, the current phenomenon under investigation is that social influence is driven by vloggers of natural hair care. There are two types of social influences, namely informational and normative, as discussed next.

- ***Informational social influence***

Informational social influence occurs when individuals accept others' opinions as evidence of reality. Influencers perceived as knowledgeable are more likely to exert this influence (Kwon *et al.*, 2021; Tsen & Cheng, 2021). In relation to this study, influencers who consistently provide consistent and coherent messages about natural hair care products, techniques, or trends may exert greater influence through informational social influence by reinforcing their audience's beliefs and perceptions over time (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020; Martínez-López *et al.*, 2020).

- ***Normative social influence***

Normative social influence involves conforming to social expectations. Consumers may change their preferences to align with what they perceive as socially desirable, often influenced by vloggers' perceived attractiveness and similarity (Wang & Huang, 2023). Vloggers' relatability and empowerment messages enhance their influence, encouraging consumers to trust their recommendations (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020). Attractiveness could take the form of consumers' perceived similarity with digital influencers (vloggers) that influences consumer behaviour (Wang & Huang, 2023) and encourages consumers to trust their recommendations, engage in relatable content, and resonate with consumers seeking empowerment in their hair care journey (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020).

## **3. Research Methodology**

This section presents the research methodology for the study. The research paradigm, research method, data collection instrument, population and sample, data collection and data analysis process, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are outlined.

### **3.1. Research paradigm and research method**

This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm and an exploratory research approach to understand the influence of vloggers on consumer decision-making for natural hair care products among black South African women. According to Crick (2021), interpretivism acknowledges that

reality is socially constructed and subjective. Given the socio-cultural and political nuances surrounding natural hair care, the study aimed to uncover the meanings participants attach to their experiences. To achieve this, an ethnographic research method was employed, typically associated with observational data collection. However, this study used online focus groups as the primary data collection method (Moisander, Närvänen & Valtonen, 2020). Thelwall and Nevill (2021) highlighted that ethnography can enrich focus groups by offering broader frames of interpretation and adding context, making the sessions more insightful.

### **3.2. Data collection instrument**

Online focus groups were chosen to obtain primary data by exploring women's perspectives, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs regarding their natural hair care journeys (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). This method allowed participants to freely interact and exchange ideas, fostering rich discussions advantageous from a social and cultural standpoint (Nascimento, Suarez & Campos, 2022). Open-ended questions facilitated detailed responses and meaningful dialogue, aligning with the exploratory nature of the study (Moisander *et al.*, 2020). Online focus groups also mitigated logistical barriers, enabling participation from women across South Africa, accommodating diverse schedules and fostering higher engagement rates.

### **3.3. Population and sample**

The study targeted black South African women who wear their hair naturally and have seen posts by natural hair care vloggers. A non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling approach were used, with inclusion criteria ensuring participants were black South African women aged 18-40 who preferred natural hair and followed beauty vloggers on social media. A sample size of 24 participants was recruited, with four to six participants per online focus group. Smaller groups are preferred in online settings for topics eliciting strong emotional connections or requiring in-depth discussions (Carter, Shih, Williams, Degeling & Mooney-Somers, 2021).

### **3.4. Data collection and data analysis process**

Participants were recruited through salon owners, independent hairdressers, and social media group moderators for natural hair including those on Facebook and Instagram. After obtaining ethical clearance and permission from these sources, participants were contacted via email with the study details. The 40-minute online focus groups were scheduled over four consecutive Sunday evenings via Zoom, chosen for its ease of use and recording capabilities (Falter, Arenas, Maples, Smith, Lamb, Anderson, Uzzell, Jacobs, Cason, Griffis, Polzin & Wafa, 2022). Participants were requested to read through and provide consent on the online consent form before the focus groups took place. All 24 participants attended the discussions and saturation was reached by the fourth session.



Thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis method for this study because it focuses on identifying and understanding themes, which supports ethnographic interpretive research as it delves into the cultural and social context and contributes to nuanced qualitative inquiry. The Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps to thematic analysis were applied to this study as follows:

- Data familiarisation: Immersion into the data collected from online focus groups by reading and re-reading transcripts, gaining familiarity with participants' responses;
- Generation of initial codes: Meaningful segments within the data were identified, with initial codes being assigned to capture themes related to natural hair care, vloggers, and consumer decision-making;
- Searching for themes: Recurring patterns and themes and grouped codes related to similar concepts were searched for (e.g., "influence", "decision-making", "perceptions");
- Reviewing themes: Identification of how themes related to the research questions and interpretivist framework (e.g., "vlogger authenticity");
- Naming and defining themes: Themes reflected participants' perspectives on vloggers' influence on natural hair care choices; and
- Writing the report: The report is presented in the form of this paper and includes rich descriptions of themes, supporting quotes, and interpretations (see section 4).

In qualitative research, ensuring trustworthiness is crucial to enhance the credibility and reliability of findings. The study employed the following four criteria of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba and adapted by Anney (2014):

- Credibility: Actively engaging with participants through iterative questioning during online focus groups ensured that the study's findings accurately represented participants' experiences and perspectives (Singh, Benmamoun, Meyr & Arikan, 2021);
- Transferability: Providing rich descriptions (Rose & Johnson, 2020) of the research context (in sections 3.1-3.4) and detailed data analysis process (the Braun and Clarke [2006] six steps for thematic analysis) supported transferability;
- Dependability: Detailed records of the process, decisions, and changes made during the study were maintained through an analytic memo (Singh *et al.*, 2021); and
- Confirmability: Personal bias was avoided to ensure interpretations were grounded in the data. Peer debriefing (discussing findings with colleagues) and reflexivity (reflecting on one's role through a reflexive journal) contributed to confirmability (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

From an ethical perspective, participants provided informed consent via email, which included an explanatory statement about the study's purpose, duration, privacy, their role, anonymity, confidentiality, sessions to be audio-recorded, and benefits of the study. This study was approved by the College of Business and Economics Research and Ethics Committee (ethical clearance certificate

number: 2020SCiS06). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained when transcribing the interviews and writing up the findings by using pseudonyms, including Participant 1, Group 1; Participant 2, Group 1, etc.

## **4. Results and Findings**

The findings address: (1) how black South African millennial and Gen Z women perceive vloggers' authenticity and trustworthiness in natural hair care; (2) their views on vloggers' contributions to shared interests in natural hair care; and (3) the perceived role of vloggers in providing hair care information. Themes emerged using Braun and Clarke's (2006) coding process.

### **4.1. Perceptions of vloggers' authenticity and trustworthiness**

Content created by vloggers that is "relatable" (Participant 3, Group 3), where one participant wants "a normal person, doing their hair that demonstrates a trial-and-error type of thing. That's what works for me" (Participant 4, Group 2), tends to resonate more with participants. Moreover, participants prefer vloggers who are unafraid to express their opinions, even if a product does not meet their expectations: "Some vloggers are honest and say no, this product doesn't work that well for my hair texture, but these are my top five products that I use ... to me this is honesty" (Participant 7, Group 3). Authenticity and honesty were also named as being essential for maintaining credibility, as consumers of vlogging content may feel deceived if influencers' lifestyles do not align with their content: "They literally just post a video of their wash day and then every other day of the week, they tuck their hair in a wig.... I feel like you are conning me because it's not your lifestyle" (Participant 3, Group 2).

Some participants were sceptical, claiming that some vloggers focus solely on selling products, which raises concerns about influencers being paid to promote products they do not actually use. Scepticism also arises when vloggers appear insincere or disconnected from their content, making them unrelatable, especially for financial gain. Advocating for a product should go beyond financial gain to be perceived as an authentic endorsement, as alluded to by some participants: "If you're going to advocate for a product or a brand, or whatever; it mustn't just be the fact that you're going to get ... R20 000 or R5 000 or whatever the case may be" (Participant 4, Group 3); and "People are paid to say something or people are paid to look like they're using the product whereas they're not even using the product" (Participant 5, Group 2).

One participant claimed that despite vloggers endorsing the products, "I prefer to speak to my stylist because he's done other people's natural hair and ask him 'So what products should I use?'" (Participant 4, Group 2). This indicates that although there is still a perceived level of influence of beauty vloggers, they prefer speaking to professionals whom they know.

- *Theme 1: Participants value relatable content from vloggers who share their experiences and build trust, while scepticism arises when influencers prioritise financial gain over*

*authenticity. Some still prefer to connect with their professional stylists for advice over vloggers.*

#### **4.2. Perceptions of vloggers' contribution to shared interests about natural hair care**

Participants perceived that vlogging communities are more influential in promoting shared interests about natural hair care in addition to vloggers themselves. Participants felt that natural hair care communities have grown in South Africa and those established on vlogger channels/platforms tend to foster engagement: "As the SA [South African] natural hair care community has grown, you do tend to have conversations with those in the vlogging community, you find out what they use" (Participant 3, Group 2).

Furthermore, these vlogging communities are perceived as movements that build "camaraderie to meet like-minded people clearly with a lot of common interests" (Participant 2, Group 3). Participants shared that the natural hair care movement promotes an "embracing" of "their natural hair" (Participant 5, Group 2) and the movement is "teaching young girls that they are more than enough with their natural hair" (Participant 6, Group 3). Overall, participants perceived these vlogging communities as "wonders for the natural hair community just to see a bunch of people on social media also embracing the movement and rocking their natural hair" (Participant 6, Group 3).

Vloggers' relatability adds to the like-mindedness. Participant 3, Group 4 stated: "I follow people that I know because I feel like I relate to them more compared to other people that I have never met before." This was further supported by Participant 3, Group 3, who claimed:

Relatability is definitely important, and the context in which they influence. I mentioned that I switched from UK [United Kingdom] and American sort of vloggers to local ones, because they are quite relevant in terms of the context in which they speak, looking at products that are available and also a similar, I guess, hair type, because we are all under the same climatic conditions.

- *Theme 2: Natural hair care is viewed as a positive, all-embracing movement and vlogging communities strongly foster camaraderie, shared interests, and relatability.*

#### **4.3. Perceived role that vloggers play in providing information**

Participants alluded to the fact that vloggers provide them information, which was specifically highlighted by Participant 6, Group 2: "I think they do have a tendency to make the information available." Participant 2, Group 2 added that they "get information on natural hair care through the internet mostly and speaking to people [vloggers] that actually have healthy looking natural hair. I'd ask questions about what do they use and how often do they use it". When it comes to new products, participants mentioned that they refer to vlogs as sources of information, especially because "it helps to see you can try something new ... it's very beneficial because you might not know something, you

try it out and it actually works out for you” (Participant 6, Group 4). This information is perceived as more credible when there is a “level of trust and a level of transparency” and when vloggers “are not afraid to say if something sucks ... they are honest” (Participant 3, Group 4).

Nevertheless, one participant felt that even though vloggers provide information about natural hair care:

[I would] rather go through the comments on the vlog.... I won't take what they [vloggers] say as serious as maybe the layman who's commenting below to say, “Actually, I beg to differ. This is what it did for me or this is what happened.” (Participant 3, Group 3)

- *Theme 3: Vloggers provide valuable information about natural hair care, specifically about products, routines, and tips. Transparency among vloggers enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of the information, though there is also reliance on comments made by consumers of natural hair care products.*

## **5. Managerial Implications**

The study identified three main themes regarding the role of vloggers in the natural hair care community. The first theme highlights that participants value relatable and authentic content from vloggers, which builds trust. Authenticity and trust are crucial for influencers to effectively promote brands, as confirmed by Kwon *et al.* (2021) and Tsen and Cheng (2021). The study also found skepticism among participants when influencers prioritize financial gain over authenticity, aligning with findings by Mardon, Molesworth, and Grigore (2018). A unique aspect of the study is that some black South African millennial and Generation Z women prefer professional stylists over vloggers for hair care advice, suggesting an area for future research.

The second theme indicates that the natural hair care movement is seen as a positive and embracing trend, fostering camaraderie and shared interests within vlogging communities. This aligns with studies by Jacobs and Kelemi (2020), Moloko (2017), Setlaelo (2022), and others.

The third theme confirms that vloggers are valuable sources of information on natural hair care, offering insights into products, routines, and tips. The credibility and trustworthiness of vloggers are enhanced by their transparency, supported by Woodroof *et al.* (2020). Additionally, participants often rely on community comments for information, highlighting the role of vlogging communities, as shown in a study by Pillay (2017).

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are proposed for marketers of natural hair care wanting to leverage the benefits of vlogger marketing:

- **Prioritise authenticity and transparency:** Ensure that influencers create relatable, personal, and honest content. Authentic endorsements build trust and credibility, which are crucial for

influencing purchasing decisions (Taillon *et al.*, 2020). Marketers should select influencers who genuinely use and believe in the products and encourage them to maintain transparency in their reviews and partnerships.

- Foster community engagement and relatability: Invest in building and nurturing online communities centred around natural hair care. Select local influencers who share similar cultural contexts and hair types with the target audience to enhance relatability (Chen & Dermawan, 2020). Promote interactive platforms where users can share their experiences, tips, and support each other, strengthening brand loyalty and the natural hair care movement.
- Leverage professional insights and user feedback: Combine the influence of vloggers with the expertise of professional stylists to cater to different audience segments. Encourage vloggers to engage actively with their audience in the comments section and incorporate community feedback in their content. This participatory approach enhances the credibility and value of the information provided, fostering greater trust and loyalty among consumers (Zheng *et al.*, 2024).

## **6. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research**

This section presents the limitations, future research, and final conclusion to the study.

### **6.1. Limitations**

The study focused on a specific group of black South African millennial and Generation Z women, which limits the applicability of the findings to other regions or cultural groups with different beauty standards and hair care practices. This limitation, highlighted by Thelwall and Nevill (2021), suggests that the results may not be universally applicable. The methodology used, primarily online focus groups, while valuable for gaining insights, lacks the depth of traditional ethnographic methods that involve more immersive and observational techniques (Moisander *et al.*, 2020).

### **6.2. Future research**

Future studies should broaden the demographic and geographic scope to include a more diverse sample, encompassing different age groups, regions, and cultural backgrounds. Combining online focus groups with traditional ethnographic methods, such as in-person observations and interviews, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences with natural hair care products and influencers.

### **6.3. Conclusion**

The study explored the perceptions of black South African women regarding vloggers' influence on natural hair care. Three key themes emerged: the value of authenticity and personal experiences shared by vloggers, the empowerment and community fostered by the natural hair care movement, and the role of vloggers as trusted information sources. The study emphasizes the importance of

authenticity, transparency, and community engagement for influencers. Future research should further explore these dynamics across diverse cultural contexts.

## References

- @thebantubeauty. (n.d.). Fez | Natural Hair South Africa [Instagram profile]. Available from: <https://www.instagram.com/thebantubeauty/?hl=en>
- @thobekashozi. (n.d.). 4c Hair Content Creator [Instagram profile]. Available from: <https://www.instagram.com/thobekashozi/>
- Abdoolla, R. (2022). *Inclusive beauty: Hair care opportunities on the African continent*. Available from: <https://www.euromonitor.com/article/inclusive-beauty-hair-care-opportunities-on-the-african-continent>
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of emerging trends in educational research and policy studies*, 5(2):272-281. Available from: <https://repository.udsm.ac.tz/server/api/core/bitstreams/cead7c8d-1b27-4a88-809f-3a82a3cbf575/content>
- Babin, B.J., Harris, E.G., Murray, K.B. & Moore, S.G. (2023). *CB: Consumer behaviour*. 3rd Canadian edition. Available from: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=mEy-EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=consumer+behaviour+textbook&ots=9NHcfVIvN9&sig=HmE5hAHViXE6NlfUTm0NR3bmi4I>
- Baird, M.L. (2021). “Making black more beautiful”: Black women and the cosmetics industry in the post-civil rights era. *Gender & History*, 33(2):557-574. doi:10.1111/1468-0424.12522
- Brand Influence. (2024, May 6). Beauty survey results from South African Gen Zs – get it now! *Bizcommunity*. Available from: <https://www.bizcommunity.com/article/beauty-survey-results-from-south-african-gen-zs-get-it-now-017025a>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2):77-101.
- Brooks, H., Ngwane, T. & Runciman, C. (2020). Decolonising and re-theorising the meaning of democracy: A South African perspective. *The Sociological Review*, 68(1):17-32. doi:10.1177/0038026119878097
- Carter, S.M., Shih, P., Williams, J., Degeling, C. & Mooney-Somers, J. (2021). Conducting qualitative research online: Challenges and solutions. *The Patient-Patient-Centered Outcomes Research*, 14(6):711-718. doi:10.1007/s40271-021-00528-w

- Chen, J.L. & Dermawan, A. (2020). The influence of YouTube beauty vloggers on Indonesian consumers' purchase intention of local cosmetic products. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 15(5):100-116. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v15n5p100
- Council, L.D., Johnson, C., Santellano, K. & Yazdiha, H. (2020). Linking contexts, intersectionality, and generations: Toward a multidimensional theory of millennials and social change. *Sociological Perspectives*, 63(3):486-495. doi:10.1177/0731121420914294
- Crick, J.M. (2021). Qualitative research in marketing: What can academics do better? *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(5):390-429. doi:10.1080/0965254X.2020.1743738
- Donahoo, S. & Smith, A.D. (2022). Controlling the crown: Legal efforts to professionalize black hair. *Race and Justice*, 12(1):182-203. doi:10.1177/2153368719888264
- EOS Intelligence. (2020). *Influencer marketing redefining the fashion and beauty industry*. Available from: <https://www.eos-intelligence.com/perspectives/consumer-goods-retail/influencer-marketing-redefining-the-fashion-and-beauty-industry/>
- Everett, A. (2022). Natural hair matters: On autobiographical black girlfriend selfie culture and social media. In *Anti-feminisms in media culture*: 176-196. Edited by White, M. & Negra, D. Available from: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003090212-10/natural-hair-matters-anna-everett>
- Falter, M.M., Arenas, A.A., Maples, G.W., Smith, C.T., Lamb, L.J., Anderson, M.G., Uzzell, E.M., Jacobs, L.E., Cason, X.L., Griffis, T.A.N., Polzin, M. & Wafa, N.Z. (2022). Making room for Zoom in focus group methods: Opportunities and challenges for novice researchers (during and beyond COVID-19). *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 23(1):21. doi:10.17169/fqs-23.1.3768
- Ferraro, C., Hemsley, A. & Sands, S. (2023). Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): Considerations and opportunities for brand managers. *Business Horizons*, 66(4):463-479. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2022.09.005
- Fischer, A.R.H. (2017). Perception, attitudes, intentions, decisions and actual behavior. In *Consumer perception of product risks and benefits*: 303-317. Edited by Emilien, G., Weitkunat, R. & Lüdicke, F. Available from: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-50530-5\\_17](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-50530-5_17)
- Florack, A., Egger, M. & Hübner, R. (2020). When products compete for consumers attention: How selective attention affects preferences. *Journal of Business Research*, 111:117-127. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.05.009
- Garg, M. & Bakshi, A. (2024). Exploring the impact of beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention in influencer

- marketing. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1):235. doi:10.1057/s41599-024-02760-9
- Halo Heritage. (2023, December 15). According to a recent survey we conducted among SA women [Facebook]. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/HaloHeritageZA/posts/189971646110691/>
- He, A., Zink, N., Roeschke, L., Tassin, C., Tran, K. & Moquin, E. (2023). *Report: How brands can succeed at influencer marketing*. Available from: <https://pro.morningconsult.com/analyst-reports/influencer-marketing-trends-report>
- Kasumovic, D. (2024). *The state of AI in influencer marketing: A comprehensive benchmark report*. Available from: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/ai-in-influencer-marketing/>
- InterGest South Africa. (2024). *Beauty products and Gen Z in the South African market*. Available from: <https://intergest.co.za/beauty-products-and-gen-z/>
- Jacobs, L. & Kelemi, A. (2020). Natural hair chronicles of black female vloggers: Influences on their psychological well-being. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 30(4):342-347. doi:10.1080/14330237.2020.1796046
- Jadezwani, A. (2020, January 2). Most black women embrace their natural hair, but it's also okay if you choose to relax your afro. *News24*. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/life/archive/over-76-of-black-sa-women-embrace-their-natural-hair-but-its-also-okay-if-you-relax-your-afro-20201118-2>
- Kwon, W., Lee, M., Back, K.-J. & Lee, K.Y. (2021). Assessing restaurant review helpfulness through big data: Dual-process and social influence theory. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 12(2):177-195. doi:10.1108/JHTT-04-2020-0077
- Ladhari, R., Massa, E. & Skandrani, H. (2020). YouTube vloggers' popularity and influence: The roles of homophily, emotional attachment, and expertise. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 54:102027. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.102027
- Langat, M. (2022). Don't touch my hair: Examining the natural hair movement among black women. *The Asbury Journal*, 77(1):72-91. doi:10.7252/Journal.01.2022S.05
- Le Roux, J. & Oyedemi, T.D. (2022). Indelible apartheid: Intergenerational post-colonial narratives of colonial-born coloured females about hair, race and identity in South Africa. *Social Identities*, 28(2):150-165. doi:10.1080/13504630.2021.1989291
- Le Roux, J. & Oyedemi, T.D. (2023). Entrenched coloniality? Colonial-born black women, hair and identity in post-apartheid South Africa. *African Studies*, 82(2):200-214. doi:10.1080/00020184.2023.2261387



- Le, T.V., Alang, T. & Tran, Q.T. (2021). How YouTube influencers impact customers' purchase intention: An empirical study of cosmetic brands in Vietnam. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(9):101-111. doi:10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no9.0101
- Matjila, C.R. (2020). *The "business" of hair: The meaning of hair for Southern African black women* (Doctoral dissertation). Bloemfontein: University of the Free State. Available from: <https://scholar.ufs.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11660/11534/MatjilaCR.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Mardon, R., Molesworth, M. & Grigore, G. (2018). YouTube beauty gurus and the emotional labour of tribal entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Research*, 92:443-454. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.04.017
- Martínez-López, F.J., Anaya-Sánchez, R., Fernández Giordano, M. & Lopez-Lopez, D. (2020). Behind influencer marketing: Key marketing decisions and their effects on followers' responses. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(7-8):579-607. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2020.1738525
- Mbilishaka, A.M., Clemons, K., Hudlin, M., Warner, C. & Jones, D. (2020). Don't get it twisted: Untangling the psychology of hair discrimination within black communities. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 90(5):590-599. doi:10.1037/ort0000468
- Mintel. (2018). *Naturally confident: More than half of black women say their hair makes them feel beautiful*. Available from: <https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/naturally-confident-more-than-half-of-black-women-say-their-hair-makes-them-feel-beautiful/>
- Moisander, J., Närvänen, E. & Valtonen, A. (2020). Interpretive marketing research: Using ethnography in strategic market development. In *Marketing management* (2nd edition: 237-253). Edited by Visconti, L.M., Peñaloza, L. & Toulouse, N. Available from: [https://researchportal.tuni.fi/files/42401590/Interpretive\\_Marketing\\_Research\\_2020.pdf](https://researchportal.tuni.fi/files/42401590/Interpretive_Marketing_Research_2020.pdf)
- Moloko, K. (2020). *Roles of vlogger influencers and consumer learning: A black female hair care perspective* (Master's dissertation). Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. [https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=27UOJ\\_INST&filePid=1310288880007691&download=true](https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=27UOJ_INST&filePid=1310288880007691&download=true)
- Mordor Intelligence. (2024). *Hair industry in South Africa: Size & share analysis – growth trends and forecasts (2024-2029)*. Available from: <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/south-africa-hair-care-market-industry>
- Muda, M. & Hamzah, M.I. (2021). Should I suggest this YouTube clip? The impact of UGC source credibility on eWOM and purchase intention. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 15(3):441-459. doi:10.1108/JRIM-04-2020-0072

- Munsch, A. (2021). Millennial and generation Z digital marketing communication and advertising effectiveness: A qualitative exploration. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, 31(1):10-29. doi:10.1080/21639159.2020.1808812
- Nadanyiova, M. & Sujanska, L. (2023). The impact of influencer marketing on the decision-making process of Generation Z. *Economics and Culture*, 20(1):68-76. doi:10.2478/jec-2023-0006
- Nascimento, T., Suarez, M.C & Campos, R.D. (2022). An integrative review on online ethnography methods: Differentiating theoretical bases, potentialities and limitations. *Qualitative Market Research*, 25(4):492-510. doi:10.1108/QMR-07-2021-0086
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). *It's not just hair, it's a statement of identity*. Available from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/stories/its-not-just-hair-its-statement-identity#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThere%20was%20a%20pencil%20test,wasn't%20just%20hair%20anymore>
- Oyedemi, T.D. (2021). Postcolonial casualties: “Born-frees” and decolonisation in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 39(2):214-229. doi:10.1080/02589001.2020.1864305
- Pillay, S. (2017). *Exploring the influence of vlogging communities on brand loyalty for colour cosmetic products* (Master’s dissertation). Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. Available from: [https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=27UOJ\\_INST&filePid=136122230007691&download=true](https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/view/pdfCoverPage?instCode=27UOJ_INST&filePid=136122230007691&download=true)
- Rose, J. & Johnson, C.W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4):432-451. doi:10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042
- Roux, J. (2020). *How social media democratized beauty: South African influencers experiences of the transformation of cosmetics and work in the beauty industry* (Master’s thesis). Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University. Available from: <https://scholar.sun.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/8f83cbe5-b6ff-457d-8725-4ffdbfbbc926/content>
- Rybczewska, M., Jebet Chesire, B. & Sparks, L. (2020). YouTube vloggers as brand influencers on consumer purchase behaviour. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 12(3):117-140. doi:10.2478/joim-2020-0047
- Saputra, F.Y. & Dewobroto, W.S. (2022). The influence of social media influencers on purchase intention of local personal care products. *International Journal of Quantitative Research and Modeling*, 3(1):13-17. Available from: <https://journal.rescollacomm.com/index.php/ijqrm/article/download/253/214>

- Serbanescu, A. (2022). Millennials and the Gen Z in the era of social media. In *Social media, technology, and new generations: Digital millennial generation and Generation Z* (pp. 61-78). Edited by Atay, A. & Ashlock, M.Z. Available from: [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=c6Z1EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA61&dq=Millennials+\(born+1981-1996\)+and+Generation+Z+\(born+1997-2012\)+have+both+grown+up+in+increasingly+digital+and+socially+connected+environments&ots=-ebNp\\_BrQN&sig=efrTFGme-eWPshQPnviMUzYIX9Q](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=c6Z1EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA61&dq=Millennials+(born+1981-1996)+and+Generation+Z+(born+1997-2012)+have+both+grown+up+in+increasingly+digital+and+socially+connected+environments&ots=-ebNp_BrQN&sig=efrTFGme-eWPshQPnviMUzYIX9Q)
- Setlaelo, S. (2022). Black women's hair consciousness and the politics of being. *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture*, 6(3):24-43. doi:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2022.0023
- Singh, N., Benmamoun, M., Meyr, E. & Arikan, R.H. (2021). Verifying rigor: Analyzing qualitative research in international marketing. *International Marketing Review*, 38(6):1289-1307. doi:10.1108/IMR-03-2020-0040
- Statista. (2024). *Hair care – South Africa*. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/beauty-personal-care/personal-care/hair-care/south-africa>
- Taillon, B.J., Mueller, S.M., Kowalczyk, C.M. & Jones, D.N. (2020). Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: The moderating role of closeness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6):767-782. doi:10.1108/JPBM-03-2019-2292
- Tefu, N. (2020, January 13). The business of natural hair. *Acumen*. Available from: <https://www.acumenmagazine.co.za/articles/the-business-of-natural-hair-10592.html>
- Thelwall, M. & Nevill, T. (2021). Is research with qualitative data more prevalent and impactful now? Interviews, case studies, focus groups and ethnographies. *Library & Information Science Research*, 43(2):101094. doi:10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101094
- Tsen, W.S. & Cheng, B.K.L. (2021). Who to find to endorse? Evaluation of online influencers among young consumers and its implications for effective influencer marketing. *Young Consumers*, 22(2):237-253. doi:10.1108/YC-10-2020-1226
- Vidani, J., Meghrajani, D.I. & Das, S. (2023). Unleashing the power of influencer marketing: A study on millennial consumer behaviour and its key antecedents. *Journal of Education: Rabindra Bharati University*, 25(6):99-117. Available from: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4459943>
- Walcott, E. (2021). *The complex reasons why more black women are relaxing their hair again*. Available from: <https://refinery29.com/en-gb/relaxer-natural-hair>

- Wang, P. & Huang, Q. (2023). Digital influencers, social power and consumer engagement in social commerce. *Internet Research*, 33(1):178-207. doi:10.1108/INTR-08-2020-0467
- Wang, X. & Picone, I. (2023). The art of attracting attention: A process model of Chinese toubu vloggers' strategies to create online identities and self-brands. *Celebrity Studies*, 14(3):333-349. doi:10.1080/19392397.2021.1991408
- Woodroof, P.J., Howie, K.M., Syrdal, H.A. & VanMeter, R. (2020). What's done in the dark will be brought to the light: Effects of influencer transparency on product efficacy and purchase intentions. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(5):675-688. doi:10.1108/JPBM-05-2019-2362
- Zheng, L., Huang, B., Qiu, H. & Bai, H. (2024). The role of social media followers' agency in influencer marketing: A study based on the heuristic-systematic model of information processing. *International Journal of Advertising*, 43(3):554-579. doi:10.1080/02650487.2023.2229148