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‘TAKEN FOR A RIDE’:

AN ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM, LIFESTYLE BRANDING AND IDENTITY PERFORMANCE WITHIN JOHANNESBURG-BASED URBAN CYCLING

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of the Arts in Media Studies

September 2018

DECLARATION

I, Reitumetse Vanessa Mpholle (Student Number: 571036) am a student registered for a Master of Arts in Media Studies degree in the years 2016 – 2018. I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above degree is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

This Dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of a Master of the Arts by Research in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

_____

(Signature)

05 September 2018

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Mother

Motshidisi Sarah Mpholle

You have always put your children first – even at the expense of your own happiness and ambitions. Your willpower, devotion and outlook on life have all moulded me into the woman I am today and for this, I am truly grateful. I hope that I have made you proud and that all your sacrifices have been worthwhile.

This is for you.

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Abstract:

Instagram is a social media platform that enables its users to take photos and videos, filter and edit them, and then shares them instantly with fellow users. Because Instagram is free-to-use, it has become a platform for self-expression as well as a commercial space. Accordingly, several users have become increasingly aware of the nature of Instagram and have taken to putting on selected versions on themselves as means of making themselves commercially viable. Using the Maboneng City Riders (a social and urban cycling group that is based in the Maboneng Precinct) as a case study, this study looks into the group's use of Instagram as a means of lifestyle branding via the 'performance of self'. This is done by looking into the MCR's identity in online and offline spaces as well as looking into the economies that are generated and sustained by this lifestyle branding. This study therefore reveals that the MCR are branding their lifestyle through the performance of self. At the centre of this performance is Instagram as both a staging space to show the MCR's creativity and self-expression but more importantly, it is a platform being used to brand the MCR as lifestyle which is proving to be a profitable space. Whilst this branding is only benefitting a few people, it has also proven to be a highly effective and profitable system. It can be established that the findings of this study shows how the nature of Instagram enables lifestyle and branding to connect on social media as a form of performing self – a performance that is essentially feeding profits back in to very specific brands and commercial entities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction to Study 09

Chapter 2: Literature Review 14

Section 1: Johannesburg's Cycling Background 14

Section 2: The Complexities of Instagram 21

Section 3: Identity Performance 29

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework 35

Section 1: Uses and Gratifications Theory 35

Section 2: Capitalism and the Critical Political Economy of the Media 38

Section 3: Goffman's Theory of the Performance of Self 42

Section 4: Postmodernism and Signs 46

Chapter 4: Methodology 50

Section 1: Offline Research Methodology 50

Section 2: Online Research Methodology 53

Chapter 5: Research Findings 58

Section 1: Research Findings – Online 58

Section 2: Research Findings – Offline 67

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion 94

Chapter 7: Conclusion 119

Bibliography 122

Appendices 135

Appendix One: Analysed Instagram Posts 135

Appendix Two: Coding Manuals 139

Appendix Three: Populated Coding Sheets 144

Appendix Four: Ethical Clearance Certificate 149

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:Instagram Editing and Operating Functions 22

Figure 2: An example of the use of branded (left) and non-branded (right) photos in an MCR Instagram post 66

Figure 3: Likes generated from general cycling content vs. advertisement posts on MCR Instagram page 69

Figure 4: Number of like generate by the use of branded and non-branded photos in the MCR Instagram posts 70

Figure 5: Types of comment on the MCR Instagram page 72

Figure 6: Top 25% hashtags used within MCR Instagram Posts 73

Figure 7: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Chevy Lane Ride 76

Figure 8: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Blind Tiger Cafe Ride 77

Figure 9: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Brown Sugar Backpackers Ride 81

Figure 10: Example of riders during re-group at MCR Brown Sugar Backpackers Ride 81

Figure 11: Example of group photo taken at MCR Keyes Art Mile Ride 83

Figure 12: Example of riders during re-group at MCR Keyes Art Mile Ride 83

Figure 13: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Soweto Derby Ride 86

Figure 14: Riders who had isolated themselves at Victoria Yards Ride 89

Figure 15: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Victoria Yards Ride 89

Figure 16: Example of group photo taken at MCR Mall of Africa Ride 91

Figure 17: Riders playing games together at Mall of Africa Ride 91

Figure 18: Riders wearing casual clothing at numerous MCR rides 94

Figure 19: Fixie bikes identified at the MCR rides 95

Figure 20: Riders matching their bicycles to their clothing at the MCR Soweto Derby Ride 96

Figure 21: The Maboneng City Riders Economy 111

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Race and Gender of Riders in the MCR Instagram Posts 63

Table 2: Advertisement Posts on MCR Instagram page 68

Table 3: Most liked advertisements post on MCR's Instagram page 69

Table 4: MCR Instagram post with mentioned users and types of posts where they were featured 71

Table 5: Top 25% most used hashtags in MCR Instagram posts by category 74

Table 6: Representation of the race of the riders at MCR rides 97

Table 7: Representation of the race of the riders in MCR Instagram posts 97

Table 8: Representation of the gender of the riders at MCR rides 98

Table 9: Representation of the gender of the riders in MCR Instagram posts 98

Table 10: Relationship between advertised rides and ride attendance within MCR 107

Table 11: Mentioned users on MCR Instagram Page 110

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

1.1 Background to Case Study: The Maboneng City Riders

The Maboneng City Riders (MCR) is a social and urban cycling group that is based in the Maboneng Precinct (Mncadi, 2017). The Maboneng Precinct is situated in the east of Johannesburg's Central Business District. Over the years, the area had deteriorated into a no-go zone due to rising crime levels and migration of businesses out of the CBD (Nair, 2013). More recently, however, the district has transformed markedly into a vibrant social centre comprising art galleries, markets, boutiques and diverse restaurants and pubs that are active at all hours all year round. It has become the heart of the arts and creativity in Gauteng (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2017). According to founder of MCR, Senzo Mncadi, Maboneng was the ideal place to station the group because it tends to attract a diverse culture of people, mainly those seeking varied entertainment and recreational ideas around Johannesburg (Mncadi, 2017). The MCR was established in 2014 with aims of encouraging people to conquer their fear of exploring Johannesburg through the use of bicycles. Thus, the group is directed towards introducing a culture of cycling that incorporates the discovering of the city's gems by exploring social markets, venues, events, iconic restaurants and cultural activities (Mncadi, 2017). The group is not restricted to gender, age or the type of bicycle a rider has; instead, the MCR group appeals to participants who are interested in enjoying Johannesburg's multicultural surroundings whilst displaying a 'cool factor' when doing so (Mncadi,2017). The MCR was not necessarily created to promote a healthy lifestyle but rather to encourage people to meet new people, explore unexplored parts of Johannesburg and to have fun while doing it (Mncadi, 2017). For this reason, the group is a public and non-competitive space that is open to everyone from professional cyclists, gym-fanatics, and fitness freaks as well a first-time and recreational riders. The MCR is made up of a combination of occasional and once-off riders as well as regular riders who participate in most planned events. The MCR hosts two types of rides: the weekly and monthly rides. The weekly rides are generally shorter and entail visiting markets, iconic venues and spaces as well as partaking in various cultural activities. On the other hand, the monthly rides tend to be longer and follow a selected theme; accordingly, these rides have become the group's flagship events. The monthly rides generally pull in a large number of riders and have therefore become celebration events for the entire group. A typical ride in the group entails a meeting at pre-agreed location in Maboneng, cycling to a selected destination, stopping for a meal or drink to mingle with fellow riders and then cycling back to the initial departure

destination (Mncadi, 2017). The primary objectives of the MCR are to "establish a cycling culture in Maboneng Precinct through welcoming 1st time cyclists" (Mncadi, 2017). This will be done by ensuring that the MCR hosts several rides for the cycling community as well as establishing a bike station for the first time in the city (Mncadi (2017). Additionally, they are advocating for the establishment of permanent cycling lanes in Johannesburg to promote the culture of cycling throughout the city. More importantly, the group aims to expand into alternative regions and cities with the assistance of other stakeholders and interested commercial partners. Based on all the above, the MCR is now being seen as more than just a cycling group. Instead, they have been increasingly identified as embodying a desirable and purposeful lifestyle. This is predominantly because the group has created a culture of urban cycling in Johannesburg through their clothes, bicycles, activities, affiliations and an appealing general way of life (Mncadi, 2017).

The fundamental characteristic, especially with regards to the study at hand, is how the MCR uses Instagram as their primary platform for communication. Instagram is a social media platform that enables its users to take photos and videos, filter and edit them, and then share them instantly with fellow users. This content can also be shared across other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr (https://instagram.com/about/faq/?hl=en). An important aspect of the platform is that it is owned by *Facebook* – a multibillion social networking service that also own *WhatsApp*, one of the most popular instant messaging sites for smartphones (Covert 2014). Instagram has since become one of the largest photo-sharing sites. Apart from being owned by social media conglomerates, Instagram owes its success to the fact that the platform "appeals to society's values and needs by providing a means of communication that can conveniently and uniquely express users' personalities" (Ginsberg, 2015: 78). Accordingly, the application has in essence shaped the way in which visual communication is conceptualized. Reverting to the MCR, the group primarily uses Instagram as a biography which serves as a description of the group's profile, their experiences, activities as well as what the group essentially stands for. Instagram is also used to showcase the highlights of the rides that have taken place as well as Johannesburg's hidden treasures through cycling-centric photography. As a result, the MCR Instagram page has been used to attract and acquire new riders and to encourage them to join the cycling group. Since joining Instagram, the group has experienced significant growth holistically in its Instagram followers as well as in the number of participants in their events.

1.2 Research Problem

Due to the fact that Instagram is free-to-use, the platform has been used by ordinary individuals as well as commercial brands and entities. With regards to ordinary users, Instagram has become a platform for life-casting with friends and family, self-expression as well as a way for these users to display their authenticity and creativity through visual material (Koosel 2013). On the other end of the spectrum, Instagram has become a highly effective tool for brands and commercial entities. This is primarily because the platform is an inexpensive means for brands and commercial entities to advertise and market themselves to consumers as well as to acquire niche markets (Hellberg, 2015). Thus, Instagram has become an increasingly popular tool for branding and marketing. More recently, however, Instagram has shown that branding and marketing are no longer exclusive to brands and commercial entities (Lindhahl and Ohlund, 2013). Several users have become increasingly aware of the platform's commercial nature and how profitable it can be, and have accordingly taken to branding themselves (Chang, 2014). On a larger scale, users have taken to lifestyle branding. The term 'lifestyle branding' refers to the selling of a particular image with the intention of attracting an audience and to in essence become a well-recognised phenomenon (Saviolo and Marazza, 2012). It is important to note that in order to build a lifestyle brand, there needs to be a community of likeminded people or people with similar interests (Kressmann, 2016). Instagram has become the ideal platform to facilitate this because it not only allows users to partake in branding; it also allows them to attract people who have similar interests to enable the building of a community.

Due to the fact that Instagram is a competitive market, several users are presenting nuanced versions of themselves as a means of identity performance. These users are therefore creating and altering their online identities to make themselves more appealing and commercially viable – especially to brands and commercial entities (Lindhahl and Ohlund, 2013). It is important to note that this 'identity' that is put forward on Instagram may not be an actual reflection of the realities of the user behind the posts. Instead, it is an identity that the users are performing as a branding and marketing exercise. This notion of 'selling' a particular image with the deliberate intention of gaining a following and becoming well-recognized has become highly questionable by scholars such as Cwynar-Horta (2016) as well as Archer and Harrigan (2016). This is because it raises several flags as to whether people are forming groups for the purpose of pursuing a shared interest or passion, or purely for the commercial gain that could arise from the consequent powerful branding and social media marketing

within the groups they form. Furthermore, there is a strong suggestion the identity put forward on Instagram may not be a true reflection of the group's identity in reality.

In the context of the case study presented, it is evident that the MCR is showing exponential growth and this is largely due to their use of Instagram. However, the smoking gun here is that Johannesburg, unlike other cities such as Copenhagen, Montreal and Nagoya (see Lindsay, 2017), is not a pleasant a place to cycle in. This is primarily because the city has not managed to successfully encourage people to use bicycles for practical purposes, like commuting, for example, and from a security standpoint the city is not the safest place to cycle. Additionally, there has been low buy-in from fellow road users to share the road. Apart from this, Johannesburg sidewalks are bevelled, the roads are constantly congested, bicycle lanes are being used as parking bays, bicycle parking is rarely available and there are political tensions circulating around the development of a cycling infrastructure as a whole. This poses the fundamental question as to why the MCR would even bother to focus on cycling at all and what are the real motivations are behind cycling for these people? Furthermore, what does cycling actually do for the MCR and which economies are generated and sustained by it? Accordingly, this study aims to delve into the platform that is at the centre of the above-presented dynamic: Instagram.

1.3 Aim of Study and Research Question

Using the Maboneng City Riders as the subject, the purpose of the study at hand is to understand the role of imaging as a form of identity performance. The study aims to do so by understanding how identity performance, through the use of these images, essentially serves as a means of branding on Instagram. Thus, this study aims to comprehend what the MCR's use of Instagram essentially reveals about identity performance as a means of branding. Particular focus will be on 'lifestyle branding' as the group has been seen as more of a lifestyle. Additionally, this study aims to provide an understanding into the economies that underlie this lifestyle branding. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the MCR's 'performance of self' on Instagram, it is important to note that the images put on their Instagram page are directly linked to their offline activity which is cycling. Thus, in order to understand their online identity, the offline identity of the group cannot be ignored. Taking all the above into consideration, it can therefore be established that the approach to this study aims to contribute to the better understanding of the relationship between Instagram, identity

performance and lifestyle branding. Accordingly, the primary research question of this study is:

> *What does the Maboneng City Rider's use of Instagram reveal about the 'performance of self' as a means of lifestyle branding?*

In order to be able to understand the above presented question, this study will also take into consideration the following subsidiary questions:

1. *How does the group's 'performance of self' compare in online and offline spaces?*
2. *Which economies are generated and sustained by this lifestyle branding?*

1.4 Rationale

This study aims to contribute to an already existing field of work relating to the performance of self and identity construction on social media; however, the gap is that most of these studies are focused on individuals in their own capacity and not necessary on what the dynamics are within the context of a social group like the MCR. Secondly, there is very little research into the performance of self through lifestyle branding on Instagram. Thus, the findings of this study aim to fill this gap in academia. Thirdly, there is very little research into how Instagram operates as an economy as well as how the platform has micro-economies that are generated and sustained by it, which is another gap that this research aims to address. Lastly, the research into the mediation of Instagram and urban cycling in Johannesburg, to the best knowledge of the researcher, has yet to be studied and conceptualized. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to a field of Media Studies that is yet to be academically discussed. Overall, the motivation behind this study is to contribute to a better understanding of viral social media marketing and self-construction.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This literature review aims to discuss previous academic contributions that will best explore and ground the research topic presented. Accordingly, this chapter will firstly provide a background to conceptualising urban cycling and the contributions towards this topic as well as a background to Johannesburg's landscape and the existing perceptions of cycling in the city. Secondly, Instagram will be discussed by outlining its properties and functions, how it functions as a platform for self-expression and a commercial space as well as how lifestyle branding has become a fundamental representation of this bifurcation. Lastly, a background to identity performance will be provided by also discussing how this performance compares in online and offline spaces, as well as how this differs on a group level.

SECTION 1: JOHANNESBURG'S CYCLING BACKGROUND

1.1 Conceptualising Urban Cycling

On a broad perspective, the term 'cycling' refers to the use of bicycles for transportation, exercise, sport and recreational purposes. According to a study conducted by Schwartz (2010), there are three distinct types of cycling: road cycling, commuter cycling and urban/underground cycling. *Road cycling* generally refers to cycling for recreational and fitness-orientated purposes. This type of cycling generally is by those "who probably drive a car during the week and then on the weekends, go ride out in the countryside." (Schwartz, 2010: 33). These types of cyclists are generally well-organised and structured because they belong to a cycling club or organisation. On the other hand, *commuter cycling* refers to the use of bicycles for transportation which is an essential part of the daily commute; this is also the most common and widely used form of cycling (Schwartz, 2010). It is also important to note that commuter cyclists are generally a lot more concerned about better cycling infrastructures:

> "Commuting cyclists are concerned with bike lanes, with safety again, of course. I think the primary thing the commuting cyclists would like to have is designated bike lanes which are contiguous, so that you don't have bike lanes stopping and starting, so that you could go almost anywhere […] on designated bike lanes" (Fortune in Schwartz, 2010:49).

With regards to *urban/underground cycling*, this type of cycling generally takes place in the city and not necessarily on rural roads. This type of cycling is more informal and spontaneous

than the other types of cycling. Furthermore, this type of cycling is seen as a substitute for cyclists who do not necessarily want to be road cyclists and prefer more relaxed casual rides (Schwartz, 2010). It is also essential to note the following with regards to urban/underground cycling:

> "More than any other cyclists, underground/urban cyclists are interested in building a culture around the bicycle. And despite the affiliated groups, there is no structure to the underground/urban cycling culture; rather the culture is built around spontaneity and creativity in an effort to instil enthusiasm and charisma into their brand of cycling […] It's okay to ride bikes with regular clothes; you don't have to dress up like a superhero to get on your bike, you don't have to have special shoes; you just get on it, get on your bike and ride." (Brandon in Schwartz, 2010: 38-39).

Accordingly, this type of cycling has therefore been regarded as countercultural and recalcitrant in that it defies the way in which cycling is conceptualised. More importantly, these cyclists aim to create a cycling culture through their appearance and their bicycles; accordingly, underground and urban cyclists are often associated with a 'hipster' like appearance and the use of fixed-gear (also known as a ' fixie) or single-speed bicycles (Schwartz, 2010). Overall, it can be established that this type of cycling is an expression of self and creativity. Taking the above mentioned into consideration, it can be established that there isn't a unified understanding of cycling primarily because various individuals cycle for various reasons. Thus, even though cyclists may share many commonalities, they also have unique characteristics, interests and objectives that contribute to the types of cycling that they will engage in (Schwartz, 2010). Due to various streams of cycling, it can be argued that cycling is not just a sport but also, a way of life or a lifestyle. More specifically, the study at hand aims to understand whether there are similarities in the way urban cycling is conceptualised in the abovementioned or whether it differs in the case of Johannesburg. Thus, this study aims to expand on an existing field of work by honing in on Johannesburg specifically.

1.2 Academic Contributions Outlining Johannesburg Cycling

The research into urban cycling has been widely explored across various disciplinary fields. A large amount of this research predominantly focuses on the motivations to cycling (see Kitamu, 2016 and Nkurunziza, 2013), the risks and threats to cycling (see Burton, 2012), the development of sustainable cycling infrastructures (see Daly, 2014; Hussey, 2012) and the incorporation of cycling in everyday transport systems (see Francesco, 2013). Whilst these contributions are insightful, they are mostly based on urban cycling in European, American

and Asian cities. With regards to Johannesburg specifically, despite the developments into a cycling infrastructure, there isn't sufficient research into cycling in Johannesburg explicitly. Academic scholars that have centralised their studies on Johannesburg-based cycling have looked into it as a possible solution to the city's overly populated streets. In a study conducted by Nkosi (2015), the primary focus is on Johannesburg's traffic congestion problem and how it is starting to affect the quality of life and the possible resolution to this problem is to encourage cycling as well as to develop the necessary infrastructure. Other scholars such as Lekgothoane (2015) have looked into the practicability of transforming Johannesburg to a bicycle-welcoming city in order to create more maintainable transport solutions. Randall (2016) as well as Thaba and Jacobs (2017) hone in on this by arguing that Johannesburg's lack of sufficient facilities such as bicycle lanes and parking is one of the main reasons behind the slow development of a cycling culture in the city. It is important to note that even though the abovementioned contributions are exemplary, they predominantly focus on the infrastructural developments of cycling as well as how cycling can be used to improve Johannesburg's transport situation which is not the direction that this study is taking. The study at hand is less about cycling itself and more about how lifestyle and branding connect on Instagram as a form of the performance of self. However, in order to understand the aforesaid, it is central to understand the setting in which the MCR operate. Thus, it is fundamental to discuss Johannesburg's environment as well as the existing perceptions of cycling in the city.

1.3 Existing Perceptions of Cycling in Johannesburg

1.3.1 'Cycling in Johannesburg is Unpleasant and Hazardous'

Several researchers have argued that cycling in Johannesburg is unpleasant. A discussed by Vijayakumar and Burda (2015), the creation of cycling culture requires a buy in from people who also share these roads such as pedestrians and motorists. Furthermore, the creation of cycling culture is determined by the city and the context of which country it exists within as well as what the country's priorities are (Vijayakumar and Burda, 2015). Without this cooperation, it becomes highly challenging to create and integrate this culture successfully. This has been particularly evident in the context of Johannesburg as discussed Stones (2012):

> "The weather is good, the population is largely poor and public transport is appallingly inadequate. The problem is you're likely to get killed, and that's a huge deterrent. South African drivers are notoriously bad, and cyclists and motorbike riders are the usual victims"

As can be deduced from the above, there is little sensitivity around the safety of cyclists on the road. The other reason as to why cycling in Johannesburg is not pleasant is the reference to crime and theft. According to Jamal (2017), there has been a significant increase in the number bicycle thefts which has caused alarm (Cupido in Jamal, 2017). Cyclists are frequently being hijacked at knife and gun point for their bicycles and belongings. In several instances, cyclists have been hit with tree branches and removed of their bicycles; these bicycles are later put up at pawn shops (Jamal, 2017). In an interview with one of these victims, who had a bicycle worth R135 000 stolen from them, it was evident that bicycle theft has become a norm:

> "I gave them my bike instantly so that they would not draw the gun on me. It was an efficient attack and they were not in a hurry. They emptied out my pockets and took everything [...] I went for trauma counselling but realised we live in South Africa and there is no point in being sensitive about it'" (Levy in Jamal, 2017)

As a result, several cyclists are being forced to change their cycling routes and patterns as well as to not cycle too early in the mornings or too late in the evening in order to avoid these attacks; more seriously, cyclists have been encouraged to not cycle at all (Jamal, 2017). Apart from cyclists being attacked on the road, bicycle stores are now also being robbed and targeted (see Rood, 2017 and Guy, 2017). It can therefore be concluded from all the above that Johannesburg is not perceived as a pleasant or safe environment to cycling in.

1.3.2 Poor Reception of Cycling Infrastructure Developments

According to Morgan (2017), the development of cycling infrastructures in Johannesburg has not been received well by other users of the road. The development of cycling lanes was done to encourage people to cycle in order to reduce traffic congestion as well as to aid the city's transport problem. However, this development has caused outrage because several people felt that this was not a priority for the city and that the money could have been invested elsewhere (Morgan, 2016). The other aspect that needs to be discussed is how this development has not automatically translated into a culture of cycling or empathy towards cyclists (Morgan, 2016). This has been quite evident in Johannesburg as discussed in a study conducted by Lekgothoane (2015) that reflects the behaviour towards the development of bicycle lanes in the inner-city parts of Johannesburg. This includes how motorists disregard these developments by parking their cars on the bicycle lanes or how people use the lanes as temporary storage places (Lekgothoane, 2015). Lekgothoane (2015) delves in on this by discussing the reasons as to why these developments have not been well received. Firstly,

there is a *lack of availability of bicycles*; this is primarily due to the fact that Johannesburg's cycling infrastructure is still fairly new thus, unlike other cities, many people do not have bicycles (Lekgothoane, 2015). Secondly, the *lack of incorporation and cooperation* with public transport is having a negative impact on bicycling culture. A key example is how the rules of the Gautrain, Johannesburg's bullet-train, "prohibit people from getting into the train with a bicycle, unless it is covered in a bag" which is a difficult task to do with an ordinary bicycle (Lekgothoane, 2015: 40-41). Taking all the above into consideration, it is evident that there are several challenges with regards accepting the development of cycling infrastructures in Johannesburg.

1.3.3 'Cycling in Johannesburg is a White-elitist Activity'

In a study conducted by Van de Berg (2006), it is argued that cycling in Johannesburg has been perceived as an elitist activity that White people participate in. This is arguably because, much like many other sports and activities, cycling was not able to evade South Africa's political background (Van de Berg, 2006). Initially, only White people were allowed to participate in cycling as a sport which has translated into cycling being a predominantly White activity today. It is important to note that other ethnic groups did cycle in the past however, this was not cycling as a sport or activity but rather for commuting (Van de Berg, 2006). Accordingly, cycling in South Africa is perceived to be an elitist, leisure sport that is restricted to wealthy White South Africans (Msimango, 2017).

It is due to these perceptions that the development of bicycle lanes across Johannesburg has become a matter of controversy as well as an issue of race and class (Brown, 2016). In 2016, opposition party leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, Julius Malema, addressed this issue by suggesting that the development of cycling infrastructures was for the betterment of White citizens as Black citizens barely cycle: "shame on White people for demanding bicycle lanes while Blacks use bucket toilets" (Brown, 2016). Consequently, the construction of new bicycle lanes across various parts of Johannesburg, including Diepsloot which is a predominantly Black township in desperate need of bicycle infrastructural development, were halted due to a lack of proper justification for the developments (Brown, 2016). Then Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba went on to argue that "the project's cost couldn't be justified, given the hundreds of thousands of city residents who suffer in abject poverty and without even the most basic of services" (Brown, 2016). On the other end of the spectrum, some civilians and organisations have argued that cycling is not necessarily restricted to

wealthy White South Africans but rather a mode of transport for low-income earning employees:

> "Ironically, the primary beneficiaries they envisioned were the city's poor – people such as Martin Mathe who bikes 20 miles a day, seven days a week, simply because he can't afford anything else… there is no designated bike lane, and the dirt shoulder is gnawing at the asphalt, leaving riders barely any room to avoid the hulking minibuses – South Africa's preferred mode of public transit – that swerve in and out of traffic" (Brown, 2016).

Based on the argument presented above, it can be seen that the development of these bicycle lanes were purportedly implemented as a way of resolving the gaps in transport system in the city. However, it was received as a way to improve the quality of the cycling experience for White people, which has only contributed to the perception that cycling is a White elitist lifestyle in Johannesburg.

1.3.4 'Cycling in Johannesburg is for Men'

Another fundamental issue regarding cycling in South Africa as a whole is the reference to how it is also a male dominated activity as discussed by Van de Berg (2006: 03): "South African sport, specifically, reflected the extraordinary power and privilege of White men, but was also the site of inequalities between men and women". This clearly outlines that much like race, there is also a skew towards men when it comes to cycling in the country. The research into gender and cycling has found that cycling is a male dominated lifestyle. Various scholars such as Heesch (et.al, 2012), Garrard (et.al, 2007) and Forbes-Mitchell (2015) have highlighted that cycling is a largely male dominated activity and that men are more likely to cycle than women are. Recent developments by Simone (2012) discuss how there has been an increase in women who cycle for recreational purposes because it not a competitive space and the environments is generally very safe:

> "I wouldn't even call it a sport, [perhaps] a recreational activity, because a sport has that inference that you're racing or you're competing… it's more the enjoyment of morning tea, (riding) chatting with people and lunch, (riding) chatting with people." (Simone, 2012: 110)

Thus, whilst cycling is still a male-dominated activity, it is important to note that there is a growth in female participants as well as a large section of research that looks into solutions to encourage women to cycle (see Emond et.al, 2009; Garrard et.al, 2007). An intriguing aspect is how women who cycled were traditionally seen as being self-empowered. This was primarily because: "to men, the bicycle in the beginning was merely a new toy, another

machine added to the long list of devices they knew in their work and play…to women, it was a steed upon which they rode into a new world" (Macy, 2011 in Jose, 2012: 1). Thus, the bicycle was seen as a key driver towards the emancipation of women as it allowed them to be self-reliant and independent. This notion was previously explored by Simpson (1998: 74) who argues that:

> "The bicycle offered women an entirely new form of leisure; it was unlike any other physical pursuit women could enjoy in the nineteenth century. It could be used for informal outings, for loosely-organised activities at social gatherings, and for more structured pursuits in the context of a recreational or sports club".

Taking the aforementioned into consideration, it can be seen that women are seen to be active participants of urban/underground cycling as well as road cycling for recreational purposes. In addition, Simpson (1998) goes on to argue that the fact that there are all-female cycling clubs is a reflection of women's interest in cycling. It can therefore be established that cycling is indeed a male-dominated activity; however, this is not to say that women are not interested in the activity and that they are participating in cycling. With regards to the MCR, it will be particularly interesting to see the role that women play within this dynamic as well as whether the group reaffirms the perceptions that cycling in Johannesburg is a male dominated activity.

From all the above, it can therefore be concluded that there are several preconceived notions about cycling in Johannesburg. More importantly, the abovementioned contribution raises an interesting question that needs to be unpacked. Unlike other cities across the globe such as Amsterdam and Nagoya, Johannesburg is not necessarily a pleasant city to cycle in as outlined. It is also not a city that has managed to successfully encourage the use of bicycles or a culture of cycling which raises the question as to why people like the MCR would bother to create an entire social cycling group based in the most inner-city parts of Johannesburg. For this reason, the aim of the study at hand is to provide a better understanding of urban cycling in Johannesburg as well as the real motivations behind the MCR's cycling by unpacking the role of cycling, the objectives of the group as well as whether the group challenges or reaffirms the perceptions of cycling presented in this section.

SECTION 2: THE COMPLEXITIES OF INSTAGRAM

2.1 Conceptualizing Instagram

Instagram, a mobile photo and video sharing application, has rapidly become a focal point of numerous disciplinary fields. Launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, the application enables its users (who are more familiarly known as 'Instagrammers') to instantly share photos and videos through the use of a smartphone; this can be shared either publically or privately (Frommer, 2010; Instagram, 2016). Moreover, the application allows users to share this content on other social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Tumblr (Instagram, 2016). Instagram was in essence created to be more than just a visual communication platform but rather, to create a platform for users to be able to share their way of life at any given time (Macon, 2017).

Instagram has several operating functions as can be seen below in figure 1. *Firstly*, Instagrammers are able to use filters, which "manipulate colour, hues, and tone" of the photos and videos (Macon, 2017: 13). *Secondly*, the application enables them to add captions and their location to their Instagram post. *Thirdly*, the application enables its users to 'like' other Instagrammers posts by touching the like options or by double-tapping the screen of the smartphone. *Fourthly*, Instagrammers are able to link to other users through the use of the '@' function which is followed by a username; this is commonly referred to as a mention or tagging. More specifically, a mention is when an Instagrammer links another user in their post via their caption whereas a tag is when an Instagrammer links to another user by tagging them on the actual photo or video. The use of the '@' will therefore notify the user that has been mentioned or tagged. *Lastly*, Instagrammers can make use of hashtags which can be added to the caption or comment segment of the post. According to Caleffi (2015), a hashtag refers to the use of '#' symbol (commonly known as a hash) which is followed by a thread of characters, for example: #MabonengCityRiders. The hashtag function has frequently been used to "describe the pictures and videos, to cultivate images under a certain name, or to connect with other users who use utilise the same hashtag" (Macon, 2017: 12).



Figure 1: Instagram Editing and Operating Functions

Since the launch of the Instagram, several scholars have dedicated their research to better understanding the complexities of the application. Due to the fact that the platform is free to use, it accommodates a variety of users that are amateurs, professionals as well as brands, and commercial entities. For this reason, academic contributions towards understanding Instagram have focused on two dominating themes. The first is how Instagram operates as a platform for self-expression and how these users utilise the platform to gratify their needs. The second is how Instagram operates as a business and a profitable space. It is therefore fundamental to delve into these abovementioned tensions which will be discussion below.

2.2 Instagram as a Self-Expression Space

As previously mentioned, Instagram was essentially created as a platform for people to express themselves and share their way of life at any point (Macon, 2017). For that reason, there has been a significant amount of research that has gone into better understanding the role that Instagram plays in this capacity. In a study conducted by Hu (et al. 2014), it was recognised that Instagrammers generally use the platform to gratify their need for self-expression by posting photos that are a reflection of their everyday life; these posts included post about friends, food, gadgets, pets, activities, fashion, selfies as well as photos with an embedded text such as a meme or quote (Hu et al. 2014). All these posts were identified as a reflection of the users' personalities and interests as well as how they use the application to

express themselves through creative visuals. This notion has been reaffirmed by scholars such as Cheung (2014) who investigated the motives behind the usage of Instagram. On a broad perspective, the motivations as to why people use social media in general are for seeking information, entertainment, maintaining relationships and social interactions, passing time and escapism as well as self-expression. With regards to Instagram specifically, it was established that self-expression was the major reason as to why people utilise the platform (Cheung, 2014). Other contributions from scholars such as Fallon (2014) have argued that an individual's Instagram feed can be seen as a 'narrative autobiography' or diary because the application is in essence the layering of several posts that reveal numerous aspects, whether intentionally or not, about the user:

> "Looking through these portraits may tell us who the person is or who they want to be, the things they like or what society tells them they should be like. It would of course be foolish to generalise about the nature of this portrait or place too much weight on the documentary evidence it is capable of providing, but it can offer us alternative perspectives and ways of being that may differ very much from our own" (Fallon, 2014: 59).

From the above, it can be recognised that these posts are seen as a reflection of the user thus, several qualities of the user can be learnt through their Instagram posts. It is important to note that the photos and videos posted on Instagram are often a portrait of a person's reality or they can be a reflection of an ideal or imagined self but nonetheless, both are self-expressive. Fallon's (2014: 59) discussion of Instagram as a narrative autobiography introduces another fundamental notion that cannot be ignored in that the platform's most active users are often professionals who are using the platform either as a way of escapism or as another avenue to direct profits to themselves; accordingly, "we find the same mix of authenticity and commodification at work". From all the above, it can be established that Instagram is a platform for self-expression. However, Fallon's (2014) discussion around Instagram being a two-pronged platform for self-expression and commodification requires further probing. It is therefore imperative to discuss how Instagram operates as a commercial space.

2.3 Instagram as a Commercial Space

Several scholars have argued that Instagram, for the most part, operates as a commercial space with the sole purpose of generating profits via advertising and marketing. The first way to do this is through paid for advertising on the platform, as discussed by Pessala (2016). In 2015, Instagram introduced paid for advertising options that are restricted to reputable brands that have a distinguished following (Pessala, 2016). Accordingly, several brands and

commercial entities have been able to advertise via photos and videos that are paid for (Pessala, 2016). The second way is not as traditional as the aforesaid. In a study conducted by Huey and Yazdanifard (2014), it was determined that brands and commercial entities such as Dunkin' Donuts have used Instagram to promote and brand themselves through the prevalent use of the brand's name, logo, colours and their products; this is all done as means of targeting the specific audience by simply creating an Instagram profile for their business. The advantage of this type of advertising is that it is a cost-effective way to advertise to audiences as it purely relies on imaging and that it is able to reach desired target markets more directly and rapidly (Huey and Yazdanifard, 2014).

On the other hand, several neo-Marxian scholars have argued that social media like Instagram are merely tools that are used to generate income by sponging-off on user-generated content. It is important to understand that Instagram itself is a business that needs to generate profits for its parent company – Facebook. Thus even though it comes across as if the primary goal is to allow people to express themselves and their creativity, Instagram is a business that needs to feed revenue back to its owners (Simon, 2017). This revenue is generated through its users. According to Hesmondhalgh (2010: 267): "a dominant theme of recent critical analysis of digital media, user-generated content and cultural industries is that they involve unpaid work ('free labour') on the part of participants". This conception of 'free labour' essentially argues that when users utilise the platform and generate their own content as a form of self-expression, their data becomes a commodity that is sold to advertisers (Fuchs, 2014). Thus, users are obliquely working for these entities and presumptively generating profits that the users will not receive. As a result, these sites are perceived as having managed to advance capitalism through the generation of profits by disguising these platforms as spaces for self-expression.

The academic contributions discussed all share a commonality in that there is a general reference to companies and corporations as being at the receiving end of the commercial aspect of Instagram and that users are merely consumers whose data can be sold to advertisers. This is however not the case as can be seen in recent contributions into how users are also making the most of Instagram as a means of meeting their own commercial needs. As probed by Archer and Harrigan (2016), many Instagram users have become increasingly aware of the potential to capitalise on the growing popularity of the platform; consequently, these users are utilising Instagram to promote themselves, their lifestyles and their services with the sole purpose of generating profits and being more commercially viable via the

content that that they generate. More importantly, the more followers these users have, the more profitable they become; thus, followers have become a 'currency' on social media like Instagram (Barker, 2017). A popular example of this is the reference to Instagram influencers. An 'influencer' is a person or group that has the capacity to sway the behaviour and opinions of other people especially with regards to purchasing decisions; in the context of Instagram specifically, the term refers to users that are generally deemed as trustworthy and authentic and they must have a high number of followers or have access to niche and specified markets (Burke, 2017). In addition, these users became increasingly popular when Instagram was first launched primarily because there was incapacity to advertise on the platform; thus, influencer marketing became the best way to do so (Burke, 2017). In view of this, influencer marketing is therefore defined as the process whereby:

> "Users endorse products by either featuring posts where they are using the products, or post professional and staged images of the products. […] Images and captions are constructed in order to make advocates more relatable to their followers and create a connection to their brand" (Cwynar-Horta, 2016: 42).

It is important to understand that the abovementioned does not mean that Instagram users are operating as billboards for brands. Instead, it is salient to note that influencer marketing is a form of bartering (Samp, 2014). This is primarily because users are able to generate profits through the exchange; the exchange is not always through direct advertising revenue but it can also be the exchange of photos for luxury items and access to exclusive products for the users. This essentially suggests that it is not only brands, corporations and commercial entities that are benefitting as previously suggested but instead, Instagram users are benefitting too. It can therefore be established that Instagram operates as the interposer between the commercial entities and users.

2.4 Instagram and the Revival of Lifestyle Branding

A visually distinct aspect that is continuing to grow on Instagram is lifestyle branding. On a broad perspective, the term 'branding' refers to the "marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products" (Entrepreneur Small Business Encyclopaedia, 2018). Branding therefore aims to create a long-lasting presence within a specific market in order to retain the respective consumer base (Kotler and Keller, 2012). According to Kotler and Keller (2012), branding is essentially achieved through numerous implements such as advertising, in-store experiences, sponsorships and partnerships and through visual elements such as social media, websites and

logos (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The fundamental aspect regarding branding is how successful branding relies on a strong brand identity which is how various brands make their connections with the consumers and target market as well as what makes the brand recognisable (DeBara, 2017). There are numerous types of branding and this is primarily because anything can be branded for instance companies, products, people and lifestyles (see Phillips, 2018). With regards to the study at hand, it is important to reiterate that the primary focus is lifestyle branding; accordingly, only this type of branding will be discussed below.

2.4.1 Defining Lifestyle Branding

The term 'lifestyle branding' has conventionally been used by corporates and commercial entities thus, there is no definition that is agreed upon in academia; notwithstanding this, several scholars have attempted to provide a definition. According to Jung and Erlin (2003: 40), lifestyle branding is understood as follows:

> "Lifestyle branding can be defined as a product or service that provides consumers with an emotional attachment to an identifiable lifestyle - the rugged outdoorsman, the posh executive or an urban hipster, for example. The consumer then projects this lifestyle to society by purchasing and using particular brands"

This type of branding is not necessarily about creating an advert around a brand but more about creating an identity around a certain area of life (Cull, 2017). Furthermore, lifestyle branding is primarily based on selling a particular image with the intention of attracting an audience and to become a well-recognised phenomenon (Saviolo and Marazza, 2012; Turner, 2016). It is important to note that in order to build a lifestyle brand, there needs to be a community of likeminded people or people with similar interests (Kressmann, 2016). Other scholars such as Turner (2016) have argued that this type of branding aims to embody the interests, attitudes and opinions of a group or a culture.

According to a study conducted by Jung and Merlin (2003), there are three aspects that contribute to successful lifestyle branding. The first is that it has to have *self-expressive benefits*. A self-expressive benefit is understood as a way in which an individual communicates their self-image – how an individual perceives themselves in terms of appearance, personality and performance. When engaging with the brand, it is important to understand that product or service is in essence affecting the consumer's self-image; thus, the consumers are generally drawn to brands that have a positive impact of their image (Jung and Merlin, 2003). Thus, lifestyle brands need to ensure that their offerings will have a self-

expressive benefit. The second aspect is the need for an *integrated marketing communication (IMC*). This aspect essentially refers to the need for a consistent brand personality and messaging:

> "Inconsistent messaging to customers dilutes brand image and prevents a brand from reaching its brand pinnacle. Companies must strategically integrate every point of contact with customers and stakeholders to build profitable relationships (Gronstedt, 2000 in Jung and Merlin, 2003: 41).

Essentially, if there are inconsistencies, successful lifestyle branding is not attainable. The third aspect is the need to use *range branding*. A range brand is commonly understood as "a brand name that extends across many product categories" (Aaker, 1996 in Jung and Merlin, 2003: 42); these categories are usually related. The need for range branding is primarily because a lifestyle is not linked to a specific product but rather, to a way of life (Jung and Merlin, 2003). Anttonen (2015: 21-22) supplements this by arguing that some other most successful examples of lifestyle branding relates back to commercial entities that they do not necessarily appeal to a singular group:

> "The most successful lifestyle brands, such as Nike, do not appeal only to one subset of people either. Nike started out as strictly an athletic brand, but during the years Nike has produced clothes, shoes and accessories that fit into athlete lifestyle, but also for people who are not playing sports at all. Nike products are comfortable, stylish, and colourful and they can be used in any situations whether people are jogging or just hanging out with friends at the park"

It is important to note that these brands will inevitably compete for the consumer's identity and that any movement that is seen as being self-expressive becomes a sellable commodity. Lifestyle branding has proven to be highly profitable for these commercial entities because they are able to build sustainable relationships with their consumers. This is primarily because lifestyle brands are actually more than just a purchasing decision that the consumer makes but instead, it is an extension of the consumer's identity and a form of self-expression: "those brands are an attempt to sell an identity, or an image, rather than a product and what it actually does" (Anttonen, 2015: 21). Accordingly, companies make a rapid return on investment through lifestyle branding because it translates directly into the purchasing of products (Jung & Erlin, 2003). On the other end of the spectrum, the goal for the consumer is to gratify their need for self-expression and lifestyle brands are commodifying this. For that reason, lifestyle branding has received much criticism and pushback from consumers: "as more brands enter the self-expressive domain and consumers find more non-brand ways of

self-expression, the relative importance of many lifestyle brands will likely decline" (Marketing Science Institute, 2013).

2.4.2 Lifestyle and Branding merge on Instagram

Instagram has become the platform for lifestyle branding because it not only allows users to partake in branding, but it also allows them to attract people who have the same interests therefore building a community. Shoates (2016) argues that lifestyle branding is achieved by finding an audience and building a community and then using social media to brand and advertise accordingly. With the development of social media like Instagram, lifestyle branding has become more relevant than ever before. This is primarily because, as previously mentioned, Instagram is a platform for self-expression and consumers are able to express themselves and their lifestyle choices more frequently than before. The photos and videos that people generally post are often seen as saying a lot about the person. Instagrammers generally post about themselves, their friends and family and the activities that they partake in which are a summary of their lifestyle (Hu et al. 2014). An example of this is someone who genuinely enjoys running will post their running statistics on Instagram and make mention of Nike because they wear Nike running shoes. This selection and posting of lifestyle brands has been seen as a form of self-expression:

> "A recent vehicle for self-expression involves the ability to customize company offerings to reflect individuals' personal preferences […] In addition to expressing their identity through choice, customers often engage in acts of self-expression by customising products to reflect their identity. Such self-expressive acts are ubiquitous" (Chernev et al. 2011: 66).

Based on this, it can be established that people will align themselves with particular brands because they represent certain aspects of their identity and lifestyles. Accordingly, it has become increasingly easier for these commercial entities to locate and target existing and potential consumers. It can therefore be established that lifestyle branding on Instagram best reflects the two-pronged function of the platform as a space for self-expression but also a commercial space. The abovementioned contributions predominantly focus on lifestyle branding as being exclusively conducted by large corporations and commercial entities such as Coca-Cola and Nike, which have the financial foundation to attract and reach a wide-ranging consumer base. However, it is fundamental to recognise that lifestyle branding is a dynamic that pulls in several elements such as people, brands, landscape and commodities. Additionally, this notion of branding is a concept that has been heavily criticised by scholars

such as Klein (2000) who argues that these large brands and commercial entities are more interested in branding than they are in developing and delivering the product or service. Thus, the image and presentation of these products and services becomes the reflection of the brand as oppose the reality and quality of the product or service (Klein, 2000). Klein (2000) proceeds by suggesting that this is a process whereby brands and commercial entities have shown that profits are not drawn from the development of a product or service but rather, through the construction of a 'branded identity' that people adopt within their lifestyles. Based on this notion, it can be seen that there is a correlation between lifestyle branding and identity construction. It is therefore fundamental to bring into discussion identity performance which will be done in the following section.

From the above-presented, it can therefore be established that Instagram has been seen as a commercial space, not only for brands and commercial entities, but also for individuals to market and advertise themselves. What becomes particularly challenging is differentiating when users are being genuine and sharing their genuine interests and when they are portraying a certain image for commercial gain. This study therefore aims to understand how MCR use Instagram as well as whether it is merely an expression of self or whether they are merely putting on a performance of self for commercial gain and to attract an audience of their own through the use of lifestyle branding.

SECTION THREE: IDENTITY PERFORMANCE

3.1 Background

According to Davis (1992), the body functions as a laden site of identity performance via the clothes people wear, the way they speak and the impressions that they give off. Accordingly, what people put forward about themselves is what other people see and perceive as their identity. Thus, people can alter their performances which is more commonly understood as the performance self which was coined by Goffman (1956). It important to note that 'self' can essentially refer to an individual, a group or a community (see Van Dienderen, 2003). At the centre of this notion of the 'performance of self' is impression management (Goffman, 1956). Impression management is a deliberate or undeliberate procedure whereby individuals attempt to alter the perceptions that other people have about them. Accordingly, impression management is therefore directly linked to self-presentation (Goffman, 1956). As discussed by Mori (2010: 36), "self-presentation is how individuals perform, interpret other's responses, and then adjust behaviours based on this interpretation. Individuals use self-

presentation strategies to make their identity more favourable to their audience". It can therefore be established that depending on the environment or circumstance, individuals will alter their personalities in order to put forward the best versions of themselves through identity performance.

3.2 Identity Performance Online and Offline

Social media have been seen as an extension of identity performance thus, a significant amount of academic contributions have leaned towards understanding identity performance within online (virtual) and offline (reality) spaces. One of the most prominent arguments within this subdivision of academia is how there is direct relationship between the online and offline identity:

> "We can speak of construction because our personal identity necessarily exists across time and is constituted, at the same time, of what we are (i.e., the "actual self" made of information describing our features) and of what we would like to be or what we ought to be (i.e., the "ideal self" made of information describing our expectations or the social expectations about us). In other words, personal identity is always constituted of both reality and - virtuality" (Durante, 2011: 595).

The above therefore suggests that it is misrepresentative to perceive online and offline identities as unrelated primarily because the very notion of identity essentially emerges from an individual's real life interests, associations and connections; subsequently, online identities derive from various aspects of the individual's real life (Turkle, 1995). As further explained by Boyd (2008: 129), online profiles "can be seen as a form of digital body where individuals must write themselves into being to express and represent salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret". Accordingly, people's online identities and activities can be seen as reflecting their offline relationships and interactions (Heivadi and Khajeheian, 2013).

On the other end of the spectrum, several scholars such as Durante (2011),Van der Walt and Eloff (2017) as well as Zhao (et al. 2008) have challenged this notion by arguing that the relationship between online and offline identities is not as simplistic as suggested above. This is primarily because people are able to construct and 'reconstruct' their identities in a way that is different to what happens in their real lives (Durante, 2011). Intangible and anonymous online environments allow users to reinvent themselves by producing new identities: "disembodied online encounters enable people to hide their undesired physical features; anonymity allows individuals to re-create their biography and personality" (Zhao et al. 2008: 1818). Thus, even though there is some link to their real identities, there is also ample space

to foster alternative identities online. Thus, people create ideal personas on social media. This is further explored by Kim and Lee (2011) who argue that in the age of social media like Instagram, the depiction of an ideal persona has become a commercialised space. As previously mentioned, the number of followers a user has translates into a sellable commodity; as a result, there is a direct link between a positive self-presentation on social media and the number of followers. This is primarily because positive images are more likely to gain attention and endorsement from other people in comparison to negative images (Cheung, 2014). Lindahl and Ohlund's (2013) aforementioned discussion around individuals choosing to show selected aspects of their identities on Instagram raises two fundamental points. The first is that the identity presented online is not necessarily an accurate reflection of their identity in the reality. The second point is the notion that people are omitting certain aspects of their identity which can be seen as putting forward a fake identity which has a negative impact in the greater scheme of things. This is further expanded on by Cwynar-Horta (2016: 42) who suggests that these individuals put forward a well-curated identity that is not an accurate reflection of their true self for commercial gain:

> "What followers see in these artificial images is what companies want consumers to see, and is not the real lives of the influencers, but rather a branded identity. Furthermore, in images where they are not endorsing products, users are still performing as audience commodities by creating the content (i.e. preferences, tastes, likes) that is then packaged and sold to advertisers" (Cwynar-Horta, 2016: 42).

From all the above, it can therefore be seen that Instagram users have to put forward an identity that is more commercially feasible in order to effectively attract and retain these brands, corporations and commercial entities.

3.3 Groups and Identity Performance

Another fundamental aspect that needs to be discussed is the reference identity performance at a group level, primarily because the MCR are a social cycling group. According to Farooq (2014), a social group is understood as a group of individuals that interact with one another based on a set of common goals and interests. Others have defined social groups as two or more individuals that come together and have a common loyalty to a specific activity and participate in it (Farooq, 2014). Social groups are in essence an organised hierarchy because the relationships within the group are organised according to a particular structure (Farooq, 2014). This is further expanded on by Koksi (et al. 2015: 527) who argues that these groups

will "rapidly self-organise into hierarchies, where members vary in their level of power, influence, skill, or dominance". Hierarchies in groups have proven to be effective in that they allow the groups to be more organised. With that being said, hierarchy has also been the reason behind disunity within groups in that those who are at the top of the hierarchy tend to treat those who are the bottom of the hierarchy differently (Anderson and Brown, 2010). Notwithstanding this, these groups are generally organised in such a manner that everyone has a position or role that they play within the group. This notion was essentially coined by Goffman (1956) who argued that in a group 'performance', the members of the group will come together for the sake of their obligation to the performance which therefore creates the group's identity. This notion is expanded on by Klein (et al. 2007) who discusses how a group's identity is the foundation for the group's power, organisation and coordination. Klein (et al. 2007) goes on to argue that identity performance plays two roles in a group. Firstly, identity performance is important because it is the way in which the group expresses themselves as what makes the group unique and authentic (Klein et al. 2007). Secondly, it preserves and maintains the existence of the group (Klein et al. 2007). At the centre of these aspects are the group members; without the cooperation of the group members that are working towards a collective goal, it become challenging to maintain the group's identity performance (Klein et al. 2007). Thus, there is an emphasis on the role that the group members play with regards to a group's identity performance.

The abovementioned notion introduces a different conversation when dealing with group identity performance on social media. Hobgan (2010) argues that social media posts are not only seen as a presentation of self but rather as an exhibition and at the centre of this, there are content curators. Followers on social media are seen as a composition of groups which are known as an 'audience'. This audience is made up of numerous groups that consist of "family members, co-workers, actual friends, neighbours, acquaintances, high school friends, people from online hobby groups or gaming sites, one-night stands, distant friends of friends, students past or present, and generally any other potentially personal relationship" (Hobgan, 2010: 383). Thus, the social media curators are submitting content to multiple groups. In addition, these curators do not necessarily need to consider all the groups that they are submitting this content; instead, the curator is only submitting content to two groups:

> "One need not consider everyone when submitting content but only two groups: those for whom we seek to present an idealized front and those who may find this front problematic. That is, in addition to the traditional audience of situations, one must add a hidden audience who are not the intended recipient of content but will have access

> to it as well. One might not post for one's boss on Twitter, but if one's boss is following (or is likely to follow), then one will certainly post in light of the fact that the boss may read it. One might not be posting for one's parents (or children or students) on Facebook, but again, one is posting in light of the fact that these individuals may have access; these individuals define the lowest common denominator of what is normatively acceptable" (Hobgan: 2010: 383).

The abovementioned notion is further buttressed by Papacharissi (2012) who argues that the curator essentially decides which content is appropriate and interesting on social media – all as a means of putting forward a certain identity. Thus, even though a social media account is representative of a group of people, at the centre of it is an individual or a group of individuals that need to play a particular performative role (Papacharissi, 2012). This means that identity performance on social media is relatively controllable because there are generally a handful of people that are managing the account – these are generally the people who are top of the hierarchy in the group because they are believed to best understand the needs and objectives of the group. This can also be the members that have been in the group the longest because they have a similar understanding (Farooq, 2014). Accordingly, social media posts are put forward by these group members as a means of ensuring consistency and cohesion of the group's identity. As a result, these members make sure that the best versions of the group's identity are put forward on social media. This therefore means that identity performance, on a group level, is determined by an individual who is curating content on social media. The group's online identity will naturally attract people who do not know each other and have probably never met but they will share a mutual interest and objective. Accordingly, people will usually remain as members of these communities because it is beneficial to them or because they genuinely want to contribute to the community (Johnson, 2014).Traditionally, social groups are seen as stemming from pre-established relationships such as that of friends, family or colleagues at work; thus, the assumption of a social group is that the members already know each other (Johnson, 2014). On the other hand, it becomes intriguing when a social group has a combination of people who do not have pre-existing relationships and are complete strangers much like the MCR.

From all the above, it can be deduced that depending on the setting or situation, people will put on the appropriate identity performance by portraying their ideal self. It can also be established that this dynamic becomes complex when trying to understand the aforesaid within the context of identity performance on a group level. With regards to identity performance within online and offline spaces, it can be seen that there are two opposing arguments, the first being that online and offline identities are not related and the other being

that they are. Based on all these abovementioned academic contributions, this study aims to understand how the MCR's identity performance compares in online versus offline spaces as well as whether their identity performance is indeed a true reflection of the group or not.

CONCLUSION TO LITERATURE REVIEW

From all the above sections, it is evident that this is indeed an extensive field of study that touches on several topics of discussion. Accordingly, this review firstly explored urban cycling as well as Johannesburg's cycling landscape and the existing challenges to cycling in the city. This will aid in providing a background to the environment in which the MCR exist within as well as the motivations behind the group's existence in such a hostile space. Secondly, a discussion around Instagram was provided as well as its bifurcated function as a platform for self-expression and a profitable space especially with lifestyle branding as a justification. This will assist in providing a better understanding of the way in which in MCR utilise Instagram and to comprehend which needs Instagram can gratify for the group. Lastly, this literature review has explored identity performance in online and offline spaces as well as in the context of a group. Due to the fact that the MCR operate online and offline, this discussion will provide a background to the various performances of identity within the various settings as well as the reasons behind these performances. The arguments presented in this literature review will therefore provide critical insights that will aid in answering the research questions presented in this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

In order to carve out the most feasible justification for the research at hand, the theoretical framework will take account of a combination of four integral academic theories. The first of these is the uses and gratifications theory in respect of how audiences use the media and the purposes for which they use the media. Secondly, this framework will consider the theories pertaining to capitalism and the critique of capitalism through the use of the critical political economy of the media. Thirdly, Erving Goffman's concept relating to the performance of self will also be factored in order to unpack key thoughts on self-presentation in online and offline spaces. This will be expanded-on by discussing Baudrillard's arguments on postmodernism as well as the distinction between reality and media representation that has been blurred.

SECTION ONE: USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

The uses and gratifications theory (UGT) is a method of understanding the reasons behind why people consume specific media as well as how they use this media to satisfy their specific needs (Katz, 1959). UGT's origins can be traced back to Lasswell's (1948) model of who uses which medium, how, and with what effect. The theory emerged as a response to the 'Magic Bullet' or 'Hypodermic Needle Theory' which argues that the audience are passive consumers of the media and they can easily be manipulated by it (Tanta et al. 2014). Therefore, UGT asks the fundamental question of what people do with the media, as opposed to asking what the media does to people, as is often traditionally asked (Katz, 1959). Overall, the aim of the UGT is to examine the reasons why people use the media, what they essentially do with the media and why they consume certain media over others (Katz, 1959).

1.1 Core Assumptions of UGT

According to theorists such as Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (see Tanta et al. 2014), there are five core hypotheses of the UGT. The first is that the audience is active and that they use the media to reach their goals as well as to gratify various needs. The second assumption is that the media does not exist independently, which implies that the media is in direct competition with other facets of life. The third assumption is that the audience determines which medium to use to satisfy their selected need. The fourth aspect is how the value of the media can only be determined by the audience itself. Lastly, the fifth assumption of the UGT is that "people

have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests, and motives to be able to provide researchers with an accurate picture of that use" (Kunczik and Zipfel, 2006: 190 in Tanta et al. 2014). It can be deduced that UGT is an audience-centric approach to conceptualizing mass communication.

1.2 Uses of Media

UGT argues that the audience will select and use the media to address their needs thus, it is important to understand what the uses of the media are. The uses of the media within the context of UGT can be categorized into five groups. The first is that the media is used to address cognitive needs such as obtaining information and knowledge, as well as a better understanding of the environment. The second use is for pleasure and enjoyment purposes. The third use for the media is to address audience's need for personal identity. Accordingly, the media is used to address the need for "self-confidence, personal stability, integrity, social status, the need for self-respect" (Tanta et al. 2014: 87). The fourth use of the media is purely for social interaction and to maintain relationships with friends and family. Lastly, the media is used as form of escapism and tension release. Whiting and Williams's (2013) study extends on this by adding more uses, namely, the surveillance and the expression of opinions. From all the above, it can be established that UGT argues that audiences control their consumption of media and that they have a functional role in how they choose to use the media (Katz, 1959). More importantly, the theory is founded on the conclusion that "people are goal-oriented and seek out gratifications that lead to active media use" (Lineberry, 2012: 11).

1.3 UGT and Social Media

Initially, UGT was applied in the context of the effects of mass communication however this has shifted as discussed by Feaster (2009: 966):

> "classically used for study of mass communication media and more recently for interpersonal communication media (e.g., telephone, email, instant messaging; henceforth referred to as interpersonal media), the approach has been aimed at explaining media use patterns for individuals by determining the needs or motivations that lead to media use".

Consequently, a significant amount of research has gone into understanding how UGT applies within the context of social media. Social media has arguably become an example of media that allows people to fulfil their needs because users are in essence able to become the

creators of their own media. Thus, UGT has specific relevance to social media (Whiting and Williams, 2013). As discussed by Shao (2009), there is a direct relationship between UGT and social media. This is because social media is a platform to produce and consume user-generated content which produces two results. The first result is that people will use social media to produce their own content, hence called 'user-generated' content (UGC), for the purpose of self-expression and self-fulfilment (Ward, 2016). The second result is that other users will consume this media that is produced as a means of interacting with people while creating social connections in the process (Shao, 2009). Furthermore, scholars such as Oloo (2013) have argued that in such a technologically advanced world, there is an increasing need for instant communication. This is because it allows users to engage and interact with their peers. With regards to Instagram specifically, sharing photos, liking and commenting on information that has been posted is that interaction. Thus, the use of Instagram is seen as gratifying the need to communicate instantly through creative spaces. Additionally, the use of Instagram by selective groups of people can also be seen as gratifying "their interest in new ideas which leads them out of a local circle of peer networks and into more cosmopolite social relationships" (Rogers, 2010: 364).

1.4 Critique of UGT

UGT provides valuable understanding into the reasons behind why and how people use the media. It is, however, fundamental to discuss the limitations of this theory. Firstly, UGT argues that people are free to choose what media they consume but what it fails to address are the factors that are behind the production of the media (White, 1994). Whilst the audience has several media choices available to them, they do not have any control over the media itself. This is primarily because the media is produced by gatekeepers who are trying to put forward their own perceptions and ideologies which is a factor that UGT does not take into consideration (White, 1994). Thus, UGT fails to address factors such hegemony and ideology which are hidden behind various media types (White, 1994). Secondly, UGT is limiting because it can be too individualistic. The theory puts emphasis on the audience having several media choices being available to them. However, UGT does not necessarily acknowledge the fact that audiences do not have the same access to the different types of media. Thus, the theory fails to discuss the relationship between the audiences, media consumption and the political and socioeconomic factors. Thirdly, scholars such as Ruggiero (2000: 12) have argued that the understanding of UGT is based on 'self-reports' instead of observable behaviours from the audience:

> "Some critics continue to argue that traditional U&G methodologies, particularly those dependent on self-reported typologies and relying on interpretation of lifestyle and attitude variables rather than observable audience behaviour, are suspect. Self-reports may not be measuring the individual's actual behaviour so much as his or her awareness and interpretation of the individual's behaviour. This dilemma is further complicated by evidence that suggests that individuals may have little direct introspective access to the higher order cognitive processes that mediate their behaviour".

Taking all the above into consideration, it is important to highlight that even though there are several critiques of UGT, the theory still provides valuable groundwork in understanding how audiences use the media.

Whilst the aforementioned is insightful, it does not address an increasingly popular reason as to why audiences use the media – commercial gain. As discussed in the previous chapter, social media has been used as a platform for advertising and to generate profits. However, the discussion around the relationship between UGT and theories around capitalism is a concept that is rarely explored. Accordingly, it is fundamental to include a discussion on theories of capitalism.

SECTION TWO: CAPITALISM AND THE CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MEDIA

2.1 Defining Capitalism

On a broad perspective, capitalism is understood as a "political, social and economic system in which property, including assets, is owned and controlled for the most part by private persons" (Scott, 2006: 02). This system is subsequently centred on ownership, control and economics as discussed by Michie and Lobaob (2012: 317): "ownership delivers control - most obviously with corporate ownership delivering control in terms of economic and industrial processes, with the corporate owner having direct control over the labour process". Accordingly, under capitalism, in order to produce and maintain these assets, there is a need for labour which is then exchanged for wages (Jahan and Mahmud, 2015). Capitalism was essentially founded on principles such as the freedom of choice with regards to consumption, private property, competitive markets, self-interest, as well as a pricing system that is determined between the buyers and sellers (Jahan and Mahmud, 2015). Thus, capitalism cannot function without consumers. This is primarily because capitalism relies on the buying and selling of goods by consumers in order for the economy to function. As a result, there is

an emphasis on lifestyle and attaining material goods within a capitalist establishment (Thompson, 2017).

2.2 Critical Political Economy of the Media

In the context of the media, these core principles are translated into media being privately owned as a means of encouraging freedom, accountability as well as transparency. On the other hand, the media under capitalism is also seen as a business hence the generation of profits is the main objective. This aspect has been heavily criticised by theories such as the Critical Political Economy (CPE). According to Hesmondhalgh (2012), CPE sees the media, the economy, and social, political and cultural life as holistic entities as opposed to separate domains. Accordingly, CPE argues that capitalism is unequal and that it leads to wealth being concentrated in fewer hands which widens the gaps of economic inequality between the haves and the have-nots (Hesmondhalgh, 2012). One of CPE's core areas of concern are funding, where the media is seen as being primarily interested in maximizing profits (Barwise et al, 2002). The reference to the corporatisation of the media sees audiences not as citizens but rather as commodities that can be sold to advertisers and commercial entities (Barwise et al, 2002). This understanding shows that members of the audience, even though it is their democratic right to actively participate in the media, are used to generate income for the media. Another central area of concern within CPE is ownership. Ownership of the media can be state, private or public community. The concentration of ownership is seen as being problematic because domination of ownership by fewer players affects the diversity of the media (Doyle, 2002: 13). Furthermore, concentration of media ownership is seen as restricting autonomy and production control to a large extent (Doyle, 2002). The third area of concern in CPE is the internal media dynamics where the structure of the media has implications for the individuals who work within the media organisation (Gallagher, 1994). Essentially, individuals must operate within the views and values of the institution (Gallagher, 1994). This creates constraints to their creative capacity and their right to freedom of expression because their media texts are framed into certain settings and ideologies (Gallagher, 1994). It can therefore be established that CPE aims to show the different ways in which the financing and organising cultural production have noticeable implications on the media and its flow of information (Golding and Murdock, 2000).

2.3 Critique of CPE

It is fundamental to note that there are some critiques of CPE. Firstly, CPE derives from the views of Marxists; Marxism's historical underpinnings are traced back to communism (Browning and Kilmister, 2006). The biggest challenge in this context is the fact that several scholars have argued that there is no alternative to capitalism considering the failures of communism (Browning and Kilmister, 2006). Thus, CPE criticisms have been labelled as outdated (Browning and Kilmister, 2006). Secondly, CPE argues that the media under capitalism is produced as a commodity that is aimed at generating profits which is viewed as a flawed approach to understanding the media. The theory fails to acknowledge that "a free market system, which is not dominated by government control or government, owned enterprises, offers media far more freedom than an authoritarian or soviet system would" (Mawson, 2011: 16). Thirdly, CPE has been heavily criticised for completely disregarding the audience's reception of the media:

> "Political economists simply forget to study media reception properly – instead they assume that the reception of ideological media content leads directly to the formation of 'false consciousness'. This is especially disturbing for cultural studies, which is interested in the complex interaction between texts and audiences" (Ampuja, 2004:62).

Because the theory sees the media as being a commodity, it ignores the fact that audiences can be active participants that are able to decipher the content of media as well as to actively choose whether they want to consume the content produced in the media. From all the above, it can be deduced that there are fundamental criticisms of CPE. Notwithstanding this, the arguments raised by CPE provide valuable insight into understanding the media and the economies that they exist.

2.4 Modern Adaptations of Capitalism and CPE

This traditional understanding of CPE of the media was generally in the context of mass media, however, modern day interpretations have also tried to understand the implications of capitalism within the context of social media such as Instagram. Several neo-Marxian scholars have argued that social media are merely a tool for capitalism that is used to generate income by scrounging on user-generated content. User-generated content (UGC) is a term used to describe any form of media content such as social media posts, digital images and videos, blogs and vlogs, audio files as well as any other content that is created by the consumer and is publically available to other consumers for consumption (Beal, 2017).

Hesmondhalgh (2010: 267) argues that "a dominant theme of recent critical analysis of digital media, user-generated content and cultural industries is that they involve unpaid work ('free labour') on the part of participants". This notion of 'free labour' suggests that when people use social media and generate their own content, they are indirectly working for larger corporations who are likely to make profits that the users will not share in. As a result, these sites are perceived as having managed to advance capitalism through the generation of profits while disguising these platforms as spaces for creativity and self-expression.

Contemporary academics have argued that the relationship is not as parasitical as it is suggested above. According to Bruns (2008), social media represents the melee between culture, self-expression and business which has in essence translated into evidence of a new era of cultural production where consumers have become producers as well as distributors; this blurred differentiation between producers and consumers is more familiarly known as 'prosumption' (Lister et al, 2009). Despite the arguments of contemporary academics, prosumption is one of many inclinations of capitalism in that a capitalist economy has continuously been dominated by prosumption (Fuchs, 2013). This notion of prosumption has been particularly evident with regards to Instagram. Several scholars such as Halzack (2016) and Cwynar-Horta (2016) have argued that Instagram represents what can be argued as modern day capitalism. This is primarily because many Instagram users have become increasingly aware of the potential to capitalize on the growing popularity of the platform (see Archer and Harrigan, 2016). Consequently, these prosumers are using Instagram to promote themselves, their lifestyles and their services with the sole purpose of generating profits and being commercially viable. Accordingly, the understanding of how Instagram operates essentially reflects a narrative deep-rooted in capitalist activities whereby the media is being used as a marketing and advertising space (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). Additionally, what is posted on Instagram and what followers see are carefully curated artificial images that do not necessarily reveal the lives and reality of the user but rather that of a 'branded' identity: "Images and captions are constructed in order to make advocates more relatable to their followers and create a connection to their brand" (Cwynar-Horta, 2016: 42). Consequently, prosumers therefore have to work hard to maintain their brand identity by "creating images that are perfected and fit the aesthetic of Instagram" (Cwynar-Horta, 2016: 42). This identity that is put forward not only creates a certain image of the user, but it also enables them to attract more followers and to make themselves commercially viable.

The aforementioned ties directly into the uses and gratifications theory in that people are using the media to cater to their various needs as discussed in section one; in this case, audiences who have also become producers are in essence using social media for marketing purposes and to reap a profit. The abovementioned also touches on another aspect that needs to be expanded on: the creation of an ideal self as well as an emphasis of an 'artificial self' in order to be more appealing. In order to be able to sell yourself, there is a large emphasis on the self-presentation and how other people perceive you. Thus, it becomes fundamental to ensure that the best version of 'self' is put forward on these platforms. Accordingly, it is essential to bring in to discussion Goffman's (1956) reflections on self-presentation and 'the performance of self' theory.

SECTION THREE: GOFFMAN'S THEORY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SELF

The performance of self is a concept that was introduced by Erving Goffman in 1956 in a sociology book titled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In the book, Goffman (1956) uses the descriptions of a theatre and dramaturgy as a means to describing the way in which human beings interact with one another within various settings and environments. Goffman critically examines the interaction of individuals as well as how they put on a performance as a means of projecting a desirable image of themselves. The core argument is that when an individual comes into contact with other people, that individual will try to put forward a certain image of themselves; this can be done by altering and correcting their setting and appearance (Goffman, 1956). This performance is therefore not a true reflection of the person but rather a selected view of what the 'performer' wants the audience to see and is also based on what they choose to conceal. Furthermore, the, performance of self does not only happen on an individual level, it can also take place on a group level. As discussed by Goffman (1956), in a group 'performance', the performers will come together for the sake of their obligation to the performance. Thus, the performers will work together as a group in order to put forward a certain persona.

3.1 Front Stage, Back Stage and Off Stage

A key analogy that Goffman introduces is the reference to the front stage, backstage and off stage; these three areas all have an impact on the individual's performance (Tashmin, 2016). With regards to the front stage, this is the region where the individual is fully aware that they are being watched, hence, the acting is at its best. Accordingly, the individual will ceremoniously perform as well as abide by conventions that make sense to the audience

(Tashmin, 2016). On the other hand, the back stage is the part where the individual is no longer being watched, thus, they no longer have to perform. This is an instance where the individual can be their true self (Tashmin, 2016). This is well-explained by Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013: 101):

> "Individuals 'perform' in order to project a desirable image, using the theatre to illustrate individuals' contrasting *front stage* and *back stage* behaviour. During interaction, those participating are viewed as *actors*. When in front stage, an actor is conscious of being observed by an audience and will perform to those watching by observing certain rules and social conventions, as failing to do so means *losing face* and failing to project the image/persona they wish to create".

Lastly, the off stage region is the situation where the individual comes into contact with their audience without the rest of the group in the performance. At this point the individual may then turn on the performance for the audience members that they come into contact with (Tashmin, 2016).

3.2 Impression Management

One of the points that emerge within Goffman's analogy of identity performance is the reference to Impression Management. Impression Management is understood as:

> "The process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them. Because the impressions people make on others have implications for how others perceive, evaluate, and treat them, as well as for their own views of themselves, people sometimes behave in ways that will create certain impressions in others' eyes" (Leary and Kowalski, 1990: 34),

It is noteworthy that this process is both a conscious or unconscious way of adjusting and monitoring the information that one shares about their identity within various social interactions and situations (Tashmin, 2016). For this reason, impression management and self-presentation have been used homogenously. According to Leary and Kowalski (1990) who expand on Goffman's analogy, there are two components of impression management. The first component is *impression motivation* which refers to the desire to develop certain impressions in other peoples' minds about themselves. The second component is *impression construction* which refers to a situation in which the individual acts on this desire and accordingly modifies their behaviour in order to create a more suitable impression of themselves to other people (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). This construction can be done through numerous ways such as a change of wardrobe or the use of props. It can therefore be

established that the performance of self is largely shaped by the individual or group's goals, environment and other people.

3.3 Motivations for Identity Performance

According to Brown (2013), there are numerous reasons why people will engage in this notion of self-presentation. The first is to facilitate *social construction*. Self-presentation in this sense is initiated as a means of identity creation. This is generally done through the adoption of various dress codes and behaviours in an attempt to put forward a certain identity. This is also predominantly inward and personal because it is more about the person trying to convince him or herself before they can try to convince other people. Based on the above, it can be deduced that self-construction is directly linked to self-enhancement which is in essence a form of self-verification (Swann, 1990). The second factor is to enable *social interaction*. This is the most common reason as to why people generally engage in self-presentation (Goffman, 1956). This will generally entail behaving in a certain way as a means of fitting into a particular environment. This type of self-presentation is a means of creating a pleasant environment, to reduce any tension and to avoid social conflict (Brown, 2013). The third reason is for *material gain and social rewards*. As previously discussed, people generally present themselves in a particular manner so that other people think highly of them (Brown, 2013). This type of self-presentation is very strategic as the primarily goal is to benefit. As a result, there are "selective disclosures and omissions, or matter of emphasis and timing, rather than blatant deceit or dissimulation" (Jones, 1990: 175). A common example of this is how employees portray themselves as intelligent, hardworking and dedicated as means to secure a promotion or a salary increase.

3.4 Critiques of Goffman's Performance of Self

As valuable as Goffman's contributions towards understanding identity performance are, it is essential to highlight that there are a few criticisms and limitations of his work. Firstly, the biggest critique of Goffman's work is that it puts too much emphasis on "an active and prior subject that consciously performs his/her own sense of self" (Silva, 2013: 10). Other scholars have argued that identities are already constructed from within as well as through discourse (see Butler, 1988). Thus, the criticism is that identity is simply not act that is constantly being constructed but rather a pre-existing facet (Butler 1988; Silver, 2013). Secondly, Goffman's

contribution has been criticised for failing to address power relations as well as how people exist and behave within these power relations. According to Gouldner (1970: 379), Goffman fails to deal with social stratification as well as providing an inadequate discussion around the "metaphysics of hierarchy" (Gouldner, 1970: 379). Thus, Goffman's work sees identity and power relations as two unrelated entities which is a key weakness of the theory. Thirdly, Goffman fails to sufficiently discuss the role that objects and properties play when explaining identity performance':

> "He uses the term 'setting' to claim that items such as clothes, furniture, and décor are 'vehicles for conveying signs' which reinforce the identity the individual wishes to convey. However, no further attention is paid to how and why the elements that compose any setting affect the performance" (Silva, 2013: 09).

Thus, the relationship between materialism and the performance of self is an aspect that is overlooked in Goffman's work. Lastly, Goffman's work is limited to synchronous media: "Goffman is better applied to social interactions on synchronous media (i.e. phone calls) rather than asynchronous (i.e. e-mail)" (Aspling, 2011: 02). Asynchronous media includes email, texting, blogs as well as social media. For this reason, Goffman's work, in its purity, has been argued as being obsolete as it is restrictive. Taking all the above into consideration, it can be established that Goffman's theory on the performance of self does have flaws however, it still provides valuable insights into understand identity and its construction.

3.5 Performance of Self on Social Media

Even though Goffman's theory did not explore identity performance on social media, it is a field that has been expanded on by other academic. According to Tashmin (2016), social media has enabled users to not only present various versions of 'self' but it has allowed users to create new versions of themselves. Accordingly, "individuals who possess this motivation to impress others […] frequently shape their online photographs (via shooting or editing practice) and account information into the idealized image that they wish to portray" (Tashmin, 2016: 98). Thus, on social media people are constantly aiming to manage their impressions. For several users of social media, 'being liked' and seeking approval from other users is a central requirement (Feiler, 2014). For that reason, the number of 'likes', 'favourites' and 'retweets' a user receives from their followers has become a representation of the user's 'worth'; this means that receiving poor amount of responses is understood as not being liked whereas the opposite is a reflection of being liked (Feiler, 2014). This ties in directly with Goffman's discussion around the performance of self:

> "A user has the ability to post their interests, hobbies, books they have read, movies they have watched, blurbs or pictures of activities they engage in as a way to guide their audience into creating understandings of them. This allows users to perform a role and present themselves in a way they find most desirable and acceptable to others" (Ganda, 2014: 10).

It can therefore be established that users will essentially put on the best versions of themselves on social media in order to be more desirable. Another aspect of Goffman's work that needs to be taken into consideration is the discussion of online and offline performances of self: "while the user is creating this performance of themselves in order to shape how others see them, there is also the backstage or offline time where the user is no longer performing their role and can be their 'true self' (Ganda, 2014: 11). What is particularly noteworthy is when discussing online and offline identity performances, several scholars (see Hogan, 2010; Pearson, 2009; Miller and Arnold, 2009; Gilmore, 2014; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013) do not factor in the 'off stage'. Instead, they see the offline interactions as the backstage as the online interactions as the front stage. The offline performance of self is seen as the backstage and the offline performance of self is where people no longer have to perform and where they can be themselves – hence the likening to backstage. This essentially suggests that the actor's performance and behaviour will be different in an offline and private environment because there is no longer a need for the theatrics. This also puts forward the idea that the person or group's true identity is revealed in offline spaces. This is not to say that the two versions of self are completely unrelated. The online and offline self are a blended identity in which the online-self reinforces the offline-self (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). The biggest challenge here is that "an individual is expected to 'keep face' by maintaining the initial impression that they have made on an audience and live up to it" (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013: 103). Based on this challenge, it is more probable for the online-self to be distanced from the offline-self as users are not always able to replicate their whole identities.

SECTION 4: POSTMODERNISM AND SIGNS

Goffman's notion of the performance of self has been argued to be the antecedent to postmodernism (Kenneth, 1997). Traditionally, postmodernism has been perceived as a critique of capitalism and positivism. One of the main philosophies of postmodernism is "the disbelief in absolute truth and it instead says that everything around us is constructed and that everything depends on its context" (Lindahl & Ohlund, 2013:16). Postmodernism also argues that in the modern world the distinction between reality and representation is blurred,

hence creating a simulated reality or 'simulation' (Baudrillard, 1994). This notion of a simulated reality is more familiarly understood through concepts such as hyperreality. Hyperreality argues that the real world has been replaced with several representations that often are not a reflection of reality and seldom have a true origin (Baudrillard, 1994). Thus, hyperreality reflects that in certain situations, people may find themselves more in touch with the virtual world as opposed to the real world (Ward, 2015). Hyperreality is relevant because it addresses the existing cultural environments especially with regards to how people build their identities. Accordingly, people generally find it difficult to develop 'real' identities. Thus, people will create identities based on what they are told and believe. In summary, the theory views reality as what individuals or social groups make it to be.

4.1 Postmodernism and Media

With regards to media specifically, postmodernism argues that the world is media-centric and consumer-based hence the distinction between reality and media representation becomes unclear. As discussed by Baudrillard (1994), the media single-handedly has the ability to transform and filter reality to such an extent that it becomes the hyperreal. Furthermore, society has become so reliant of models and representations that there is a loss of contact from the real world. This is primarily because contemporary media are not necessarily interested in conveying messages to audiences but rather that the media wants audiences to understand their realities through a media lens (Baudrillard, 1983). Consequently, "it is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody…it is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (Felluga, 2011). Accordingly, the information that the media puts out is now perceived as the 'new reality' where selected images are used to represent reality (Lindahl & Ohlund, 2013). More recent studies of postmodernism have applied the theory to the understanding of social media. With regards to the notion of hyperreality, Goneos-Malka (2011) argues that the concept of digital media in itself is a direct form of hyperreality:

> "In examining media and hyperreality, Baudrillard's description of the hyperreal as a form of reality that has been constructed on an imagined plane is considered. Taking this definition literally implies that all forms of electronic media are hyperreal, because they are invented forms of reality" (Goneos-Malka, 2011: 61).

Regarding social media specifically, the argument is that virtual and real communities are closely connected but with contrasting effects. Virtual and real communities reinforce each other in some way or another, however, there may come a time when these virtual

communities supersede the real communities primarily due to an increasingly digitally connected world.

4.2 Critique of Postmodernism

Even though postmodernism contributes to an understanding about the media, reality and representation, there are a few weaknesses. Firstly, postmodernism has been criticised for not contextualizing fundamental societal aspects. Whilst postmodernism scholars such as Baudrillard and McLuhan have been acknowledged for recognising the importance and impact of media and technology, they fail to adequately outline the connections between media, culture and society (Kellner, 2010). This is largely because it fails to discuss media production, the media environment as well as the political and economic landscape which are all fundamental aspects that cannot be ignored (Kellner, 2010). Secondly, postmodernism has been criticised for being self-contradictory. According to Stonestreet (2018):

> "Postmodernism is full of self-contradiction. It denies that any metanarrative can offer an all-encompassing story that applies to all people and all times. The basic suggestion here is that the only story that applies to all people and all times is that no story can apply to all people and all times. In other words, postmodernism offers a metanarrative that there are no metanarratives".

Thirdly, as argued by Nicol (2005: 01), the actual definition of postmodernism is challenging because it is a "notoriously slippery and indefinable term" that "became overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as a whole range of different examples of cultural production". In addition, postmodernism uses a significant amount of jargon and it tends to be ambiguous (Nicol, 2005). Baudrillard's work has also been criticised for not providing clear explanations of key terms such as hyperreality:

> "Unfortunately there is no simple straightforward explanation of hyperreality within the corpus of Baudrillard's written work. There are contextual clues. The function of hyperreality is really found in understanding divisions of symbolic exchange" (Hosterman, 2009: 44).

For this reason, the very understandings of postmodernism and terms raised by postmodernism has been argued as being ambiguous and open-ended. Based on all the above, postmodernism has been argued to be an implosive theory that is not in the position to breakdown the margins of existing social theory (Kellner, 2010). It can therefore be concluded that there are certain limitation to postmodernism as a theoretical underpinning.

Notwithstanding these limitations, postmodernism does raise important points about the media, representation and reality which are all fundamental for the study at hand.

CONCLUSION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories discussed above all offer relevant arguments that will frame the study at hand. The uses and gratifications theory is central to this study as it addresses the way in which people use the media as well as their purposes for using the media. In understanding how the MCR use Instagram as well as which needs it is gratifying, the study can be better understood. With regards to capitalism and the critical political economy, the study at hand aims to understand which economies are buttressing the MCR as well as the implications thereof. Thus, the use of these theories will aid in addressing these questions. The use of Goffman's discussion on the 'performance of self' will assess the differences in the online and offline identities of the MCR in addition to exploring whether these identities are connected or not. Lastly, the use of Baudrillard's discussion on the signs replacing the real world will aid in understanding if the MCR's distinction between reality (the offline activity) and media representation (which is the Instagram identity) has become unclear.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to discuss the most viable research method for the study at hand in addition to how this research will be conducted. It is vital to outline the research questions at hand. The study primarily aims to understand what the MCR use of Instagram reveals about the performance of self as a means of lifestyle branding. This will be done by assessing the MCR's identity in both online and offline spaces as well as identifying the economies that are being generated and sustained by the group's lifestyle branding. Accordingly, this assessment will require the use of both online and offline data. Traditionally, the use of online and offline data has been seen as two separate exercises:

> "Unlike other media such as the television or the telephone, Internet spaces have been often studied as self-contained social spaces which encompass relations and practices of their own. These spaces have commonly been seen as distinct and separate from "offline", "real" social life" (Orgad, 2009: 04).

This has however changed because "researchers have consistently argued for the need to frame the online both in its own right, and in relation to other contexts and realities" (Orgad, 2009: 05). The study at hand requires use of a combination of the two because the online data cannot be understood independently of the offline data. Based on the intricacies of this method, the study at hand relied on a mixed-method research design that incorporated participant observation as a means of gathering the offline data with a combination of content analysis and visual analysis to gather the online data. This will all be discussed below as well as their respective research designs.

SECTION ONE: OFFLINE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Participant Observation

Participant Observation is a qualitative research method that aims to study "the beliefs, social interactions, and behaviours of small societies, involving participation and observation over a period of time, and the interpretation of the data collected" (Naidoo, 2012: 01). It is generally conducted by an individual who solely serves as the instrument for data collection through their observation. Traditionally, participant observation has been used across various disciplinary fields such as geography, anthropology and sociology as way to study social groups, communities, everyday life and other spatial phenomena (Laurier, 2003). For this reason, participant observation is not necessarily used to prove theories but to rather provide

an-depth analysis and exploration of a particular phenomenon (Naidoo, 2012). Participant observation has accordingly become one of the most practical ways of studying a social groups, communities and organisations (Guest et.al 2012).

With that being said, it is fundamental to outline that there are several weaknesses that are attached to the use of participant observation as a research method. Firstly, as outlined by Jorgensen (1989), the data collected is solely dependent on what is observed and understood by the researcher. It is therefore highly probable for the researcher's observations to be biased which is a primary concern. Accordingly, "the researcher must understand how his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation" (Kawulich, 2005: 05). Secondly, the use of participant observation as a method means that the data collected cannot be checked or repeated for reliability. This is primarily because the data collected is purely based on the observations of a subjective researcher thus, using a different researcher to repeat and check the reliability of the data will result in different observations being made (Kawulich, 2005). A third weakness of participant observation is how the researcher never fully becomes a member of the group or community being studied. Thus, researchers may experience some level of exclusion during the research process (Kawulich, 2005). Lastly, as discussed by Rahman (2016), participation observation can be restricting as it often fails to deal with imperative issues. Whilst participant observation provides great descriptive detail, it primarily focuses on the experiences and behaviours of the participants therefore underestimating contextual issues and power relations. Subsequently, this research method ignores greater economic, political and social frameworks that these groups and communities exist within (Guest et.al 2012).

Taking all the above into consideration, it is important to understand that whilst participation observation has several weaknesses, it is still the most feasible method for studying social groups such as the MCR. The method is a highly advantageous because it allows the researcher to understand the reasons behind human behaviour and experiences within specific environments. Furthermore, when studying groups, it allows the researcher to understand their identities and practices as well as why they function the way that they do (Laurier, 2003). This allows the researcher to become an 'insider' who is privy to information that would be ordinarily available or accessible only within the group but not to non-participants. A further advantage of this method is that it allows the researcher to record the nonverbal aspects on the case study (Kawulich, 2005). The researcher is able to observe mannerism, gestures and the unspoken aspects of the group and use these observations as data which is

pivotal for building a multi-dimensional understanding of various situations. More importantly, participant observation produces rich qualitative data because it shows peoples' experiences as well as how they live (Laurier, 2003). From the above, it can therefore be established that participant observation is indeed the most viable method to analyse the offline identity and behaviour of the MCR.

1.2 Research Design

In order to understand the research design, it is fundamental to discuss the four types of participate observation, namely: non-participation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation (Spradley, 1980). Non-participation is when information is attained without the need to actively participate. This information can be attained from reading material such as newspapers and magazines as well as watching television (Spradley, 1980). On the other hand, passive participation refers to when the researcher restricts their interaction by distancing themselves from the people being observed. Accordingly, the researcher acts purely as a recorder or spectator. With regards to moderate participation, this type of participant observation that does not require active participation or interaction but rather, the researcher goes to an area of study to make observations; it is important to note that during this type of participation, the researcher will sporadically engage with people within the area of study (Spradley, 1980). Active participation is generally the most common type of participant observation. This is the process in which the researcher will participate and engage in most of the group or community's activities (Spradley, 1980). Lastly, complete participation refers to a type of participant observation where the researcher essentially becomes a member of group or community that is being studied; in most instances, the researcher is already a member prior to the research process so they have a pre-existing understanding and perception of the group or community being studied (Spradley, 1980). In order to harvest the richest data for the study at hand, the researcher used active participant observation for the study at hand. This was primarily because it enabled the researcher to fully comprehend the dynamics of the MCR from an insider's perspective without losing too much of their objectivity. Furthermore, it is important to note that the researcher is very familiar with numerous social cycling groups in Johannesburg. However, as a means of avoiding the ethical implications of participating as both researcher and member, the MCR were deliberately selected as a case study because the researcher had no prior knowledge of them and had never previously cycled with them or participated in their organised events.

The researcher spent 10 weeks immersed in the MCR. During this period the researcher was able to attend a total of eight rides. These rides were selected and attended based on the researcher's availability at the time of the announcement by the MCR that there would be a ride. Over this period of 10 weeks, the total sample size was 102 riders. At the rides, the researcher took detailed field notes and photographs. The researcher's field notes included documenting dates, times and locations; details regarding the events that took place on site; summaries of conversations as well as other behavioural observations. The photographs were taken as a means of supplementing the field notes and to add a visual element to support the accuracy of the recorded observations. The observations were then summarized and consolidated, and will accordingly be discussed in the following chapter.

SECTION TWO: ONLINE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With regards to the online aspect of this research, this study is interested in looking at more elements than just the photos posted by the participants; instead it is also interested in looking at other interactions such as the mentioned and tagged users, the number of likes, the comments as well as the hashtags used. More specifically, the aim of the online research method is to address two questions. Firstly, the study aims to understand how the MCR present themselves on Instagram. This entailed conducting a visual analysis of the photo elements on Instagram to observe what is being represented and recording the observations that can be derived from the materials presented. Secondly, the study aims to understand which economies are supporting the group's lifestyle branding aspect. As previously discussed, the use of mentions, tags, likes and hashtags are all functions that carry commercial value within the Instagram economy. Hence, there is a need to look at the content and the types of posts in the group to understand the economic factors that support the group. Accordingly, there was a need for a method that would look for the relevant patterns and noticeable occurrences within the Instagram posts. Hence, content analysis was used to address this aspect of the research question.

2.1.1 Visual Analysis

Visual Analysis is a qualitative research method that depends on the use of visual materials such as photographs, videos, films, sculptures as well as paintings, graphics and drawings (Van Staden, 2015). Visual material has always been seen as a valuable source of information that has the ability to capture reality. It is however important to note that analysing visual material entails dealing with a socially constructed way of seeing this 'reality' (Van Staden,

2015). This implies that, visual materials can be interpreted differently by different observers depending on how the materials are perceived. Accordingly, to address this, visual analysis aims to analyse the production of visual materials by encompassing an understanding of who the creators or contributors are, where and when it was made as well as the circumstances under which the materials were produced (Van Staden, 2015). Another fundamental aspect of this understanding is that it also takes into consideration how the material is received by the audience (Van Staden, 2015). As discussed by Van Staden (2015), there are several theoretical methodologies of visual analysis such as *psychoanalysis* which primarily focuses on the emotional state and reception of the audience; *content analysis* which focuses visible patterns and counting what actually appears in an image; *discourse analysis* which focuses on how audiences understand the material and how the producer of the text wants the text to be understood; *photo elicitation* which is the process of showing respondents photographs and getting their commentary and understanding of the material; *memory work* which aims to use photos to understand how people narrate their lives and experience; and lastly, *semiotic analysis* which aims to look at what is literally in the visual material as well as what meanings can be derived from the material. From all the above listed theoretical methodologies to visual analysis, it can be reasoned that the most viable method to address the visual aspects of the MCR's posts is a visual semiotic analysis. This is because the researcher is primarily interested in what is posted as well as what meanings can be deduced from these posts.

Visual semiotic analysis has a very strong reliance on the researcher's interpretation of images rather than on objective testability. Additionally, this analysis is not necessarily interested in the objects represented in the image but rather on the meanings that can be derived from the image (Van Staden, 2015). In semiotics, the term 'sign' is a crucial term. A sign can be almost anything such as:

> "body language, gesture, clothing, behaviour, hairstyle, type of house or car owned, accent, etc. Signs, which are used to convey thoughts, information, commands and judgements, enable us to develop perceptions and understandings of each other and the world we inhabit" (Jiang-Ping in Parsa, 2004:31).

According to Saussure (1983), a sign is branched into two characteristics: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the actual word, sound or image whereas the signified is "the concept the signifier represents, or the meaning" (Parsa, 2004: 847). Thus, there is a distinct

emphasis on the image's denotation and connotation: what is literally represented and what it means, respectively.

As effective as this method is, however, it is important to note that there are some limitations. The biggest limitation to visual semiotics is how it is purely dependent on the opinion and interpretation of the person analysing the text (Chandler, 1995). Accordingly, there is an assumption that the analyser of the text is correct in their assumptions and that there is no need for cross-validation which can be seen as a flawed approach to research (McQuarrie and Mick, 1992). Accordingly, even with these limitations, visual semiotics is still a feasible method for the analysis of the MCR online identity on Instagram because of its effectiveness. The limitations must be borne in mind and considered carefully when materials are being assessed. This view is supported by other academic scholars such as Lavoie (2015) and Bevins (2014) who have used visual semiotics as a means of understanding identity and brandings on Instagram. It is therefore established that a visual semiotic analysis will assist in understanding the meanings, cultural codes and the online identity of the MCR's Instagram page.

2.1.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method that has traditionally been utilized by communication scholars. Over the past few years, it has been a dependable method to also analyse media messages (Manganello and Blake, 2010). It is commonly understood as "a method of analysing verbal, written or visual communication messages" (Cole, 1988 in Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 107). Essentially, content analysis is a method that aims to systematically and objectively identify specified characteristics of messages in a text. The method relies on a series of processes to ensure the data is valid, replicable and objective (Prasad, 2008). Therefore, content analysis intends to attain a representation of fact as well as being a practical guide to action. Thus, the aim is to condense a broad spectrum of information into a concept or phenomenon (Krippendorff, 1980; Elo & Kyngas, 2007). A key strength of content analysis is its ability to convert raw data into useful and categorized data (Miller, 2013). There are several limitations to content analysis with the primary challenge being that it does not take into consideration the context in which the text was produced, the views of the producer of the text as well as the manner of things after the text has been produced (Busch et al, 2012). Furthermore, content analysis has also been seen as failing to uncover important extrapolations especially when dealing with intricate data sets (Busch et al, 2012). Notwithstanding these limitations, content analysis has been used and proven to be an

effective method for analysing Instagram posts as outlined by other academic contributions. Key examples of this are Stever & Lawson's (2013) usage of content analysis to analyse celebrity Instagram accounts, or Hu's (et.al, 2014) usage of the method to analyse the various types of photos and video that people usually post on Instagram (also see Ward, 2016; Ginsberg, 2015; Chang 2014). From all the above, it can be concluded that content analysis is the most viable method to understand the types of posts and the entities that are supporting the Maboneng City Rider's lifestyle branding.

2.2 Research Design: Visual and Content Analysis

As discussed in Section 1, the researcher spent 10 weeks immersed in the Maboneng City Riders (MCR) community. Accordingly, the researcher collected the Instagram posts that were posted during this ten week period in order to ensure synchronicity with both the online and offline data. Moreover, the researcher included posts from the week leading to and from the week following immediately after the ten week period, looking specifically at the group's pre-ride and post-ride content. This one week pre and post-participation period was included in the analysis to allow for a sufficient time over which the researcher could capture data that is as complete as possible for the ten week period. This is because the participants do not necessarily always post photos immediately before and after a ride. This resulted in the analysis of a total of 15 Instagram posts (which can be seen in appendix 1) from the MCR's by the researcher.

The researcher firstly conducted a micro-level visual semiotic analysis of all the Instagram posts by conducting a semiotic analysis by defining the object being presented, gathering the texts, analysing the texts by discussing denotations, connotations, the ideological positioning of the texts as well as the visible cultures, identities and whether they fit into certain stereotypes, drawing conclusions and relating the text to other academic frameworks (see Pierce and Barthes in Gibson, 2016). Once all these posts were analysed, themes were derived from data which will be outlined in the next chapter. The researcher then conducted a content analysis of the Instagram posts. It is essential to note there are two approaches to conducting content analysis which can be either inductive or deductive. The deductive approach is used to test existing theories or to test preconceived hypotheses whereas an inductive approach is used to generate a statement or theory about particular instances that are observed (Chinn & Kramer 1999). Traditionally, an inductive approach has been used to sort qualitative data and deductive content analysis has been use to deal with quantitative

data. In the context of the study at hand, a quantitative content analysis was used to address the question at hand. Accordingly, the research applied the following traditional six step approach to content analysis as presented by Prasad (2008) by formulating a research question as well as its objectives, determining the range and size of the sample, creating content categories, confirming the units of analysis, creating a coding manual and pilot testing and lastly, analysing and interpreting the data collecting. The coding manuals as well as the populated coding sheets for the aforesaid can be seen in appendix 2 and appendix 3, respectively. The results of the abovementioned were then consolidated and will accordingly be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research findings from the online and offline material that were analysed. Accordingly, this chapter will start by discussing the findings from the online data. As previously outlined, the researcher analysed 15 Instagram posts via visual analysis and content analysis. Thus, Section A will discuss the themes that emerged from the visual analysis data by means of identifying the signs and what is signified (part 1) and the findings from the content analysis (part 2). This will then be followed by a discussion of the observations from the participant observation which will be discussed in Section B.

SECTION A: ONLINE DATA FINDINGS

PART 1: Research Findings from Visual Analysis (see Appendix One)

1.1 Appearance

The visual analysis looked at 15 Instagram posts. Of the 15 posts, 9 post had a clear depiction of the participants as well as what they were wearing. The cycling attire and the fashion choices of the riders in the pictures were the most visually distinct aspects that emerged. According to Todorović (et al. 2017:125), "fashion, too, is a language of signs, a nonverbal system of communication". Thus, it can be argued that the clothing and fashion choices of the riders in the posts can be identified as the sign. It is, however, fundamental to note that different types of clothing and fashion can signify different things.

With regards to posts 3-7, 10 and 13, the riders are seen wearing casual clothing such as denim jeans, cargo pants, shorts, t-shirts, casual dresses, sandals and sneakers. This type of clothing can be seen as signifying casualness, youthfulness as well as a certain level of informality (Boero, 2015). Furthermore, this type of clothing can be seen as signifying comfort, self-expression and non-conformity (Boero, 2015). According to Schwartz (2010), this type of clothing has come to represent a certain type of cycling – urban/underground cycling. The urban/underground cycling culture is associated with a very casual and informal style of riding hence casual clothing is preferred conventional cycling attire (Schwartz, 2010). This visible hipster-like appearance can be seen as relating directly to the MCR's identity. In this instance, there is no inherent correlation between urban/underground cycling and casual clothing as it is something that must be culturally taught by being part of or exposed to the respective cycling communities (Peirce, 1990).

With regards to post 15, it can be seen that the riders in the post are wearing of suits, ties, formal shirts and formal shoes. This type of clothing has traditionally been recognised as the standard when attending social events such as weddings, special ceremonies or formal dinners (Livni, 2016). This type of clothing has been seen as signifying power, capability,

intellectualism as well as certain level of professionalism (Livni, 2016). Thus, the clothes worn in this post are not conventionally associated with cycling, because they are somewhat impractical for the purpose of riding a bicycle (Schwartz, 2010). It can be argued that this choice of clothing can be seen as suggesting that the MCR are countering cultural norms in the way that they dress. The MCR are illustrating that a cycling outing can be a fashionable social event as opposed to it being seen as just a sport or a casual activity, and that it should be treated accordingly. Furthermore, the choice of clothing within these posts can be seen a reference to the level of professionalism and efficiency in the MCR. Alternatively, formal attire is perceived as signifying an inapproachable, dominating and stand-offish attitude (Livni, 2016). This can be seen as a suggestion that the MCR is not necessarily a welcoming and inviting space.

On the other hand, post 14 is in contrast to the above-mentioned point. This particular post is from the group's upcoming long distance ride from Johannesburg to Mozambique. The photo shows what appears to be a professional cycling jersey placed on the floor alongside a few bags. Paying specific attention to the jersey, it can be see that it is branded with the MCR logo. The cycling jerseys similar to the one presented in this post have traditionally been seen as representing competitive and recreational cyclists. This is primarily because these cyclists generally belong to a formalised cycling group. Thus, the jersey acts as a uniform and as a means of members being identified as part of the group (Schwartz, 2010). Uniforms have therefore been seen as signifying a sense of formalisation, togetherness and organisation (Hodge and Kress, 1988). Other contributions have argued that this type of clothing has been seen as signifying masculinity as men have generally been affiliated with athleticism:

> "Sports were intended to emphasize and teach "manly" values and behaviours. Further, it was claimed that organized, competitive sports were perceived as being sites in which boys were taught to be tough while creating men who fit dominant forms of masculinity. According to Messner (1992), these sports demonstrated that men's bodies could sustain physical punishment and engage in violence in ways that made them superior to women's bodies. This "superiority" is underpinned by the notion of hegemonic masculinity" (Drummond, 2002: 131),

It can therefore be argued that the cycling clothing in this post can be seen as a reference that the MCR as a representation of masculinity and the 'old boys club' (Drummond, 2002).

Taking all the above into consideration, it can be established that whilst the MCR define themselves as a casual and relaxed group which is predominant across the majority of their post via the visibility of casual wear. Furthermore, the MCR define themselves as an open space for new and inexperienced riders that also welcome experienced formal cyclists. This

notion is reaffirmed by the reference range of casual, formal and professional cycling attire that are seen across the analysed posts. This shows that the group is actually a hybrid space for various types of cyclists. Furthermore, it can be argued that the choice to dress in this manner is also a reference to the diversification of the MCR and how they portray their interpretations of cycling. The types of clothing worn in these posts also make references to a certain level of professionalism and efficiency in the MCR based on the posts where formal clothing is worn. It is however fundamental to note that some of the types of clothes identified in the posts also have subtle suggestions that the group is not necessarily a welcoming and inviting space as well as the reference to the group reaffirming hegemonic masculinity.

1.2 Types of Bicycles

Of the 15 posts that were analysed, the presence of bicycles was an aspect that frequently featured. Within these posts, the presence of bicycles could clearly be identified in 8 posts. It is key to point out there were a number of other posts that had the presence of bicycles in the photos, but these were not included for analysis because the photos were either too dark in colour or the bicycles were out of focus in the photos.

According to Lee (2016), a wide variety of sporting activities and equipment operate as a sign which is essentially a communication mechanism of sporting text itself. For this reason, it can be argued that the bicycles in these posts are identified as the sign. The bicycle has become a signifier of several aspects. Firstly, bicycles signify power, mobility, liberation, exploration and personal freedom; this is primarily because bicycles are a mode of transport that relies purely on the rider (Adler, 2012). Secondly, bicycles signify exercise or competition and this is predominantly because cycling has been identified as a competitive and non-competitive sport (Adler, 2012). Thirdly, bicycles have also been perceived as signifiers of the collapse of class hierarchies because bicycles "created an egalitarian community: when both dukes and drapers took to the road similarly attired and on similar machines, class distinctions were obscured" (Adler, 2012: 72). Fourthly, the bicycle has been seen as a signifier of the emancipation of women because it allowed them to be independent and self-reliant (Adler, 2012; Macy 2011). Amongst other things, the bicycle is also a signifier of "carefree lifestyles, health, escape or nostalgia" (Adler, 2012: 01).

Looking specifically at posts 2 to 6, 9 and 13 to 15, it can be seen that the majority of the bicycles featured are fixed gear bikes or a 'fixie' (Schwartz, 2010; Urban Velo, 2008). The functioning of the fixie bicycle relies solely on the cyclist's pedal power without the assistance of additional leverage from gears; gears are a feature that is standard on all modern

bicycles. Based on the aforesaid, it can be argued that the fixies are a symbol of self-sufficiency, power and strength. Furthermore, a distinct characteristic of these bikes are how stylised they are. The riders are able to customise their bikes to best reflect their unique preferences and personal style. They have access to a very wide selection of the design, shape and colour of the bicycle frames, wheels and tyres, and other accessories (Schwartz, 2010). For this reason, the fixie can also be seen as a symbol of coolness, 'hipsterism' and authenticity (Li, 2016). On the other end of the spectrum, fixie bikes have also become a signifier of recklessness and danger. This is primarily because most fixie bikes do not have freewheels or brakes:

> "At their finest, bikes are efficient, safe, and eminently enjoyable means of transportation. However, strip away a couple key components—namely the brakes and freewheel—and they become dangerous and impractical. […] Taking a bike which is essentially a style statement—a direct insult to conformity and functionality—and trying to make it practical seems self-defeating" (Regenold and Rosenfield, 2013)

Based on this, these bikes and their riders have been perceived as symbols of recklessness and danger. This correlation between fixie bikes and coolness and authenticity is something that is culturally learnt by being part of or exposed to the respective cycling communities (Peirce, 1990).

Taking all the above into consideration, it can be deduced that the bicycles that frequently appeared in the Instagram posts that were analysed can be seen as a statement about the MCR's identity. The reference to clear visibility of fixie bikes can be seen as a suggestion that the MCR is a symbol of coolness, authenticity and creativity. It can therefore be reasoned that this aspect suggests that the MCR are a stylised group who express their creativity through their bicycles and cycling. It is also essentially to the there is also an underlying reference to the MCR being a reckless and dangerous due to the connotations of the fixie bike.

1.3 Body Language in Group Photos

The body language of riders in the 'group photos' was another aspect that was distinct across the posts that were analysed. All the photos where riders appeared had more than two riders in the frame. From the 15 posts that were analysed, 8 of them were identified as group photos. However, only 6 of these posts were analysed; the 2 posts were not taken into consideration because the riders had their backs turned to the camera thus, it was not necessarily possible to adequately read their body language. According to Abushihab (2012), gestures and body language are a signs because they communicate numerous non-verbal

messages. It can therefore be argued that the body language in these posts can be identified as the sign. Expanding on this, it is fundamental to highlight that body language is a sign that signifies multiple things.

If post 3 is taken into consideration, it can be seen that photo shows four men standing in the street. One of the riders has his hands placed by his hips in a relaxed state, while another rider has his hands resting comfortably on the handle bars of his bike. The appearance of the men in the photo can be identified as a signifier of confidence and control whilst cycling on the road (Kreydlin, 2012).

With regards to posts 4, 5, 6 and 13, it can be seen that these posts shows the majority of the riders smiling and participating in group poses. The riders appear to be willingly participating in picture taking and engaging with one another. A smile is a signifier of cheerfulness and happiness; a smile also signifies trust and comfort (Abushihab, 2012). It can be argued that this is a symbol of the MCR being a friendly and fun space that is trusted and comfortable. With regards to the riders participating in group poses, it can be argued that this signifiers a sense of togetherness within the group. This can be seen as suggesting that the group is positive and welcoming impression of the group.

In post 13 is taking into consideration, it can be seen the body language in this photo differs from the other group photos. It can be seen that some of the riders in these photos are seen with their hands on their waists whilst other riders are standing upright stance. This gesture has been seen as signifying assertiveness and confidence (TMI, 2017). Other riders can be seen with their heads up and chins protruding forward. These gestures can be seen as signifying arrogance, superiority and fearlessness (TMI, 2017). It can therefore be argued that this post suggests that the MCR are assertive, confident and fearless.

From all the above, it can be concluded from the body language of the riders in the posts suggest that the MCR is a warm, friendly and fun environment as are the rides where anyone will be welcomed if they want to participate. Furthermore, there is a suggestion that the group is fearless, assertive and confident on the roads.

1.4 Race and Gender

The fourth aspect that was noteworthy within the posts that were analysed is the race and gender of the MCR riders. According to Semali (2002), race and gender are understood through different signs such as dress code, hairstyles, skin tone and language. For this reason, race and gender are understood as codes because there are numerous signs that are linked to create meaning (Semali, 2002). It is, however fundamental to note that these signs are based on cultural norms and stereotypes – especially with regards to gender and race. Accordingly,

there are certain cultural norms and stereotypes that seen as being a representations of gender and race (Mcilwain, 2007; Marcangeli, 2015).

Of the 15 posts analysed, only 6 photos were analysed for this aspect because these were the only photos where the riders were in-focus and could be clearly be seen in the photo. In these 6 posts, a total of 67 riders were identified in the photos as can be seen in table 1 below. Table 1 illustrates that the majority of the people in the photos, 73%, were identified as Black. This was followed by riders who were identified as White making up 21% of the riders and 6% of the riders identified as Coloured. Lastly, none of the riders were identified as Asian or Indian.

	Black		**White**		**Coloured**		**Asian/Indian**	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Post 3	2		2					
Post 4	3	2	2					
Post 5	6	2	6	2		2		
Post 6	3	4	1					
Post 13	5	1	1			2		
Post 15	16	5						
TOTAL	**35**	**14**	**12**	**2**	**0**	**4**	**0**	**0**

Table 1: Race and Gender of Riders in the MCR Instagram Posts

In relation to what it suggests about the MCR, it can be argued that the abovementioned signifies that the group is a predominantly group. This can be seen as suggesting that the group counters the prevailing perceptions of cycling as an elitist activity that is dominated by White people (Van de Berg, 2006). Consequently, the MCR can be seen as countering stereotypes and culture. Moreover, the presence of other racial groups in the photos can be seen as further reflecting that the MCR are a group that is indeed open to all willing participants regardless of their race therefore reflecting a certain level of diversification.

Table 1 also reflects some noteworthy points regarding gender in the MCR. Women are in the minority in the photos. Of the 67 riders that were identified in the photo, 30% were women. This can be seen as signifying that the MCR is a male-dominated group. This can therefore be seen as reaffirming the perception of cycling as a male-dominated activity (Heesch, et.al, 2012; Forbes-Mitchell, 2015). On the other hand, posts 4, 5, 6, 13 and 15 show the women in

the pictures at the front of the group. They too appear to be participating fully and confidently, and they are comfortable and at ease. This can deemed to suggest that even though the women are fewer in number than the men, they take a lead during the rides, which would exemplify how cycling can be a driver of self-reliance and independence as argued by Jose (2012).

An interesting argument can however be raised if post 15 is taken into consideration. In this post, it can be seen there are 16 men and 5 women the photo. At first glance, there is a strong suggestion that the MCR is a 'boy club' however, if the clothing worn in the picture it taken into account. It can be seen that some of the women in the picture are dressed in dungarees as well as suits with suspenders. These clothes do not fit into the gender norms of femininity should wear. Instead these clothes are often affiliated with masculinity. According to Marcangeli (2015: 91),

> "When women chose to wear male signs in their clothing, they chose to redefine not only what it meant to be feminine but what it meant to be masculine as well. By wearing male signs, women managed to feminize masculine clothing. The deconstruction of these gender norms has allowed women and men to get one step closer to gender equality".

It can therefore be deduced that post 15 suggests that even though the women are out-numbered, there is a suggestion of gender equality within the MCR.

1.5 The Environment

The environment and locations within these posts is another factor that needs to be taken into consideration. According to Knox and Marston (2010), semiotics can be applied to landscape, spaces and places. This is primarily because these aspects are identified as signs which communicate messages and have meaning with regards to geographic locations. Therefore, the environments and locations that are visible within these posts can be seen as a sign.

If post 5 is taken into consideration, it can be seen that the photo it is taken with a backdrop of graffiti somewhere in the Maboneng Precinct. Firstly, the photo has been taken in Maboneng, which has become a "collaborative hub of culture, business and lifestyle that entices curiosity encourages exploration and promotes a sense of urban togetherness" (Maboneng, 2018). Secondly, the fact that the backdrop of the photo is a wall covered with graffiti is noteworthy. Historically, graffiti has been seen as a form of vandalism and has been associated with negative connotations. It has also been seen as a way for people to mark their territories (also in a negative sense) (Bates, 2014). More recently however, graffiti has been seen as an art form and also as a legitimate creative form of self-expression. Factoring these two aspects, it can be argued that the environment and surroundings of this post signify that

the MCR are marking their territory in Maboneng through cycling, which in itself should be seen as creative and self-expressive. This is especially so when considering the highly stylised bicycles and the attire of the riders. Furthermore, the fact that they are in Maboneng suggests that the MCR align themselves with everything that the precinct represents: urban togetherness, culture, business and lifestyle.

This observation is taken further in post 2. As can be seen, the photo in this post depicts a bicycle in front of a gate with the words 'Revolution House'. The term 'revolution' has two meanings namely: to up rise or create a new social order and to rotate or cycle (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/revolution). The fact that the bicycle is positioned in front of this sign can be seen as a reference to the MCR and their cycling lifestyle. There is a suggestion that the MCR want to or are becoming a new social order through cycling and that they want to take over the roads instead of being seeing as a minority by other road users, especially motorists. Thus, the MCR can be seen as signifying a revolution.

On the other end of the spectrum, post 1, 3, 6 and 7 introduce an interesting dynamic. With regards to post 1, it can be seen that the photo shows a white vehicle driving behind five cyclists in Braamfontein. The photo appears to be taken by another rider who is cycling at the back of group. The image shows the riders facing forward with their backs turned away from the camera. The photo clearly shows that some of the riders are cycling in the centre lanes of the road and not necessarily on the far left side of the road as most cyclists are encouraged to do for their own safety (see Arrive Alive, 2018). This aspect of this photo can be seen as signifying that the riders are reckless and compromising their safety by riding in one of the busiest sections of Johannesburg. A similar trend is visible in posts 3, 6 and 7, which all show riders who have stopped in the middle of roads in Soweto, Johannesburg CBD and Fordsburg, respectively. Whilst it can be argued that this signifies the riders' disregard for safety, the counter argument is that it can be seen as tying in with idea that the MCR are encouraging a new social order. In this order, the group deliberately takes over the streets and ignores the rules of the road as a means of commanding respect from other road users, especially motorists. The riders express that motor vehicles should make space for them as opposed to the cyclist making space for the motorists.

1.6 Branding and Branded Photos

Another visible aspect that needs to be discussed with regards to the analysed posts is the reference to the types of photos that were used. After analysing the 15 posts, it was established that there were two types of photos: branded and non-branded photos, as illustrated below in figure 2 below.

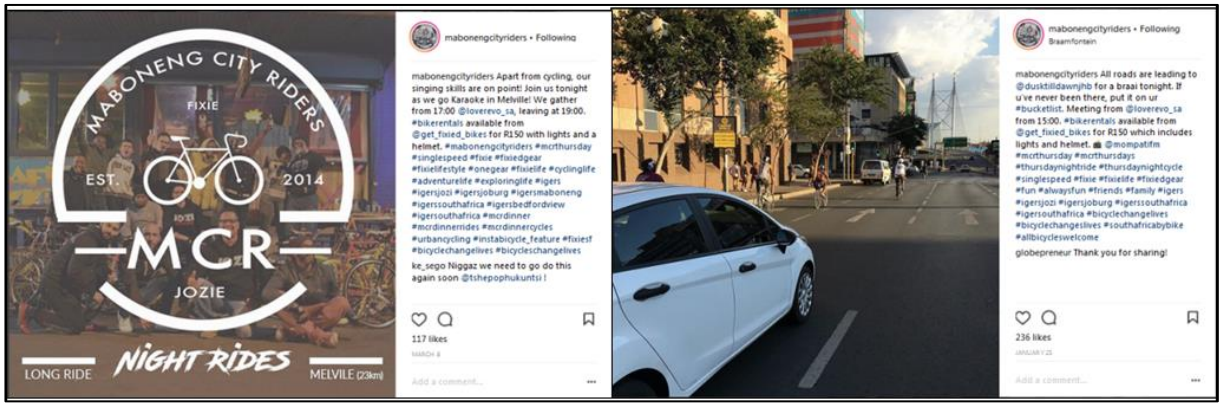


Figure 2: An example of the use of branded (left) and non-branded (right) photos in an MCR Instagram post

According to Franck (2017), logos are signs because they communicate numerous aspects regarding a particular brand and its identity. More specifically, logos are often understood as symbols because the connection between the sign and the signified is something that is culturally learned. It can there be argued that the logo in these posts are essentially the signs. Taking this abovementioned differentiation into consideration, it was established that of the 15 posts that were analysed, 4 used branded photos. As can be seen in post 4, 8 and 12, the posts have MCR logos on covering the photo. The logo is essentially the identity of a company, group or organisation. Furthermore, the use of the logo has been seen as way to make these aforementioned entities memorable, especially to their audience. Thus, "logos act as the primary visual representation of a brand's general image and meaning" (Park et al. 2013: 180). Whilst it can be argued that the MCR trying to build a relationship with various the audiences in the context of their lifestyle, the use of logos has also been known to signify capitalism and the maximisation of profits (see Reed, 2016). Traditionally, the use of logos in this manner was seen as a primary form of branding as well as the selling of a product or service (Reed, 2016). For this reason, the MCR's use of overtly branded images means that they are advertising or selling something - in this case, the MCR's rides are being advertised and 'sold' to the audiences. Similarly, post 11 shows a post of branded image, however, it is

not branded with the MCR logo. Instead, it is the branding of another cycling organisation – Whippet Cycles. Regardless of this difference, the post still performs the same functions of advertising a ride or cycling event.

Another post that needs to be taken into consideration is post 14. As can be seen in the post, there is a cycling jersey on the floor and behind it there is a Black bag with the words 'Interfool'. The way in which the bag has been position and placed alludes to product placement. According to Wigmore (2018), product placement is "the inclusion of a branded product in the media, usually without explicit reference to the product. […] The practice is considered a type of pull marketing, designed to increase consumer awareness of the brand and product and strengthen demand". Thus, this has been seen as another mechanism for brands and commercial entities to maximise profits. In the context of the MCR, it can be interpreted as the group's affiliation with Interfool as being inexplicit advertising on their behalf. This essentially suggests that the MCR are an advertising and marketing space for brands who are trying to target an audience that is interested in Johannesburg-based cycling.

PART TWO: Research Findings from Content Analysis (see Appendix Two and Three)

1.1 Types of Posts on MCR's Instagram Page

From the 15 posts that were analysed, it was distinctly evident that all the posts were directly related to cycling. Moreover, it was established that there were two types of cycling posts. The first, which made up 93% of posts, were posts that were produced and specifically related to the MCR. These were posts about photos taken during the rides, the rides that took place and those that were planned for a future date. The second are posts that were related to cycling but were affiliated with other cycling groups or communities. These made up 7% of the Instagram posts. From the aforesaid, it can be establish that MCR prioritises their own content and identity over other cycling groups and communities. Furthermore, the group does not post anything that is not related to cycling as a whole.

1.2 Functions of the MCR's Instagram Page

After examining the posts further, it was evident that the MCR were using their Instagram page to perform two functions. The first function was as a platform for cycling content that was seen as a form self-expression as well as a narrative of the group's activities and interests through cycling-centric photography. The second function was that the platform was being used to advertise the group's cycling and other events that were cognate because they are of interest to the MCR participants. Of the 15 posts, 53% were identified as advertisements and

the remaining 47% were identified as general cycling content. This reflects that the group has a fairly even balance between the two types of posts. This can be deduced to mean that the MCR's Instagram page functions as a platform for the group to showcase their identity, activities and lifestyle. It is equally also a platform to brand themselves and to advertise to audiences that have an interest in the group.

1.3 Advertisement Posts

Delving into the advertising aspect, as can be seen in table 2, it was established that 88% of the advertisements posts on the MCR's page were for promoting rides that were hosted by the MCR itself. The remaining 12% were advertisement posts for events being hosted by other cycling groups.

What Is Being Advertised?	
Post 1	MCR Thursday Night Ride
Post 4	MCR Soweto Derby Themed Ride
Post 5	MCR Thursday Night Ride
Post 8	MCR Thursday Night Ride
Post 9	MCR Thursday Night Ride
Post 10	MCR Thursday Night Ride
Post 11	Whippet Cycle Freedom Day Ride
Post 12	MCR RSA-Swaziland-Mozambique Ride

Table 2: Advertisement Posts on MCR Instagram page

Table 2 shows that the MCR primarily focus on self-promotion and the group's rides are the primary focus. With regards to the Whippet Cycles Freedom Day Ride, it is important to recognise that although it is not an MCR initiative, it is still aligned with cycling and the objectives of the MCR brand in addition to being of interest to the MCR participants.

1.4 Most Liked Content Posts on MCR Page

After analysing all the posts, it was established that a single post on the MCR Instagram page generates an average of 184 likes. However, if this data is looked at more closely, as can be seen in figure 3, the followers respond better to the general cycling content than the respond

to the advertisements. The group's general cycling content attracts an average of 224 likes whereas the advertisements post generate an average of 149 likes.

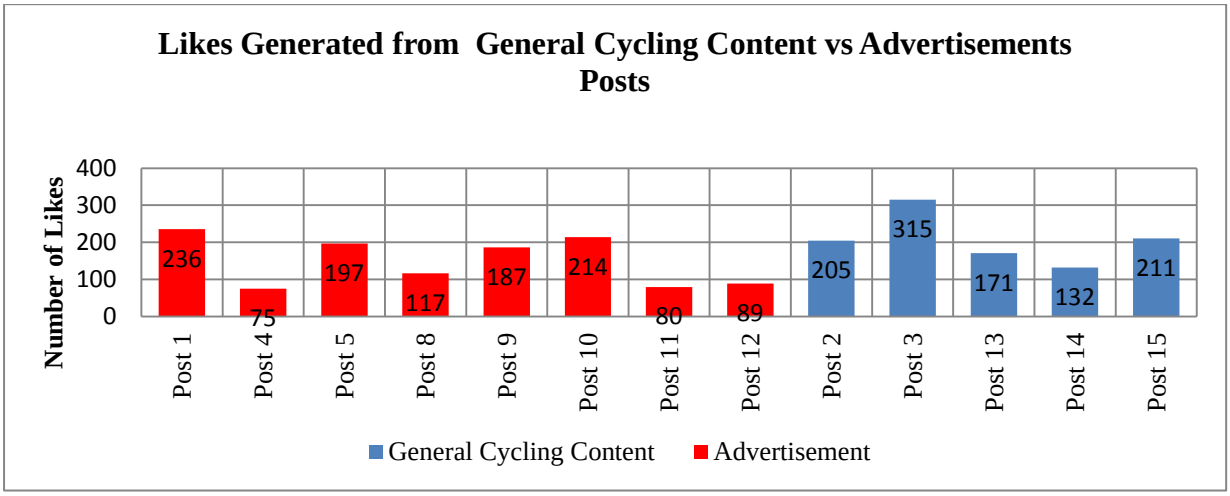


Figure 3: Likes generated from general cycling content vs. advertisement posts on MCR Instagram page

With regards to the above-presented, another trend emerged within the advertisement posts specifically. As can be in table 3, it is established that the MCR's weekly Thursday night rides generate the highest number of likes in comparison to other rides and events that were advertised.

	What is being advertised	Number of Likes
Post 1	MCR Thursday Night Ride	236
Post 10	MCR Thursday Night Ride	214
Post 5	MCR Thursday Night Ride	197
Post 9	MCR Thursday Night Ride	187
Post 8	MCR Thursday Night Ride	117
Post 12	MCR RSA-Swaziland-Mozambique Ride	89
Post 11	Whippet Cycle Freedom Day Ride	80
Post 4	MCR Soweto Derby Themed Ride	75

Table 3: Most liked advertisements post on MCR's Instagram page

From the above, it can, therefore, be seen that whilst advertisements generate the comparatively lower least amount volumes of likes in comparison to general cycling content, the MCR ride advertisements do generate the most likes within these advertisement posts.

Another aspect with regards to likes is how followers respond to the use of certain types of photos. As previously outlined, it was established that there were two types of photos used in the MCR's posts: and those were branded and non-branded photos. Taking this abovementioned differentiation into consideration, it was established that of the 15 posts that were analysed, 27% used branded photos and the remaining 73% used non-branded photos. Looking at this in relation to the number of likes generated by the posts, it can distinctly be seen in figure 4 below that the branded photos which were used in posts 4, 11, 12 and 8 were the least liked posts in the total batch of posts, respectively.

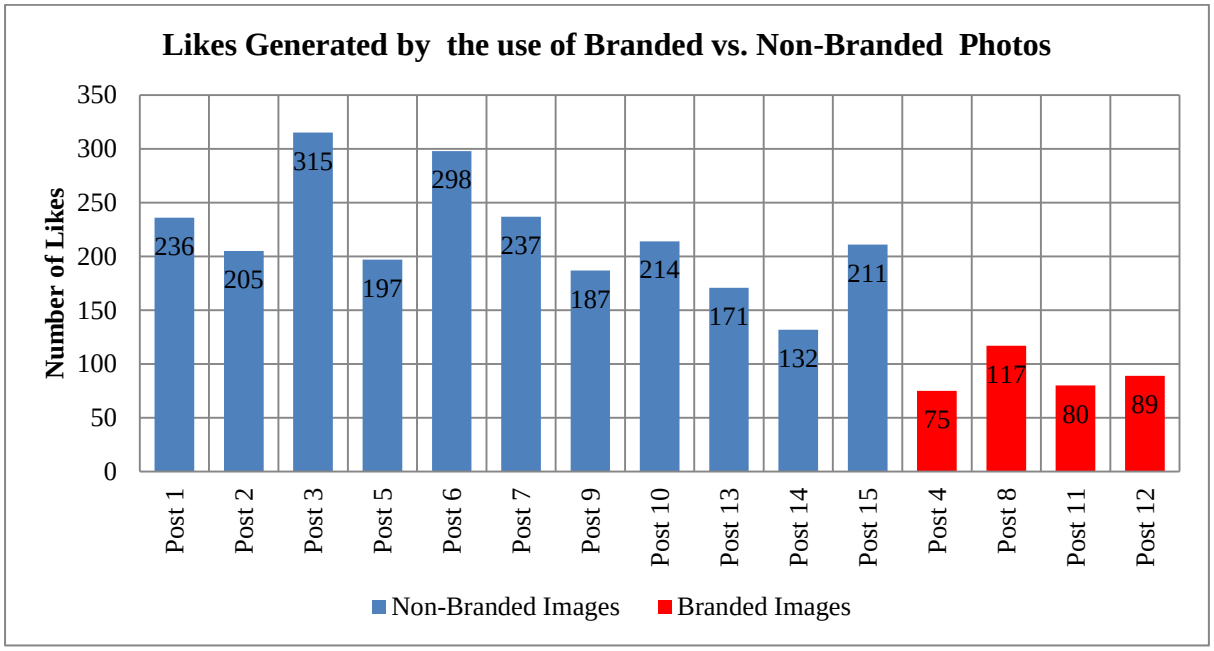


Figure 4: Number of like generate by the use of branded and non-branded photos in the MCR Instagram posts

It can therefore be deduced that the use of non-branded photos on the Maboneng City Rider's Instagram page is received better than the use of branded photos.

1.5 Frequently Tagged and Mentioned Users in MCR's Instagram Posts

From the 15 Instagram posts that were analysed, it was established that there were 13 unique users that were mentioned within these post. It is important to declare that there were no posts

that had users tagged on the actual images used. Thus, all the users were mentioned in the captions of the Instagram posts. As seen in table 4 below, the two most frequently mentioned users were @Get_fixied_bikes and @Loverevo_sa. It is noteworthy that both these users were always mentioned together in the posts. This means that at no point was there a post that mentioned @Get_fixied_bikes and @Loverevo_sa separately from the other. Furthermore, it can be seen that the users were predominantly mentioned in advertisement posts

Mentioned User	Frequency of Mention	Type of Post Mentioned In	
		General Cycling	Advertisement
@get_fixied_bikes	7	1	6
@loverevo_sa	7	1	6
@mompatifm	2		2
@breezeblockbrixton	1		1
@dusktilldawnjhb	1		1
@interfool_store	1		1
@kcfcofficial	1		1
@leandreh	1		1
@Maboneng	1	1	
@mabonengcityriders	1	1	
@madmaxllew	1	1	
@orlando_pirates	1		1
@whippetcycles	1		1
TOTAL	26	5	21

Table 4: MCR Instagram post with mentioned users and types of posts where they were featured

From the above-presented table, it can be seen that the majority of the mentioned users on the MRC's Instagram posts were directly linked to the advertisement posts.

1.6 Comments Generated from MCR Instagram Posts

From the 15 posts that were analysed, only 13 had comments from other users. From these 13 posts, 31 comments were collected. These comments were then grouped in accordance to the sentiment they expressed namely a positive, a neutral or a negative sentiment. Thereafter, the comments were then further categorised based on their type. This could be any one of a general commentary, a post sharing, a commentary of rides, queries (questions and answers) or 'other', which is a category for comments that did not fit into any of the aforesaid categories. Taking this into consideration as well as figure 5, it was established that there

were no comments that were identified as being negative. Instead, 77% of the comments on the posts were identified as being positive and the remaining 23% were identified as being neutral. Furthermore, it can be seen that 51% of the comments were identified as general commentary, 19% were identified as comments about the rides, 13% were identified as post-sharing, 13% as queries and 3% were identified as 'other', as can be seen in figure 5.

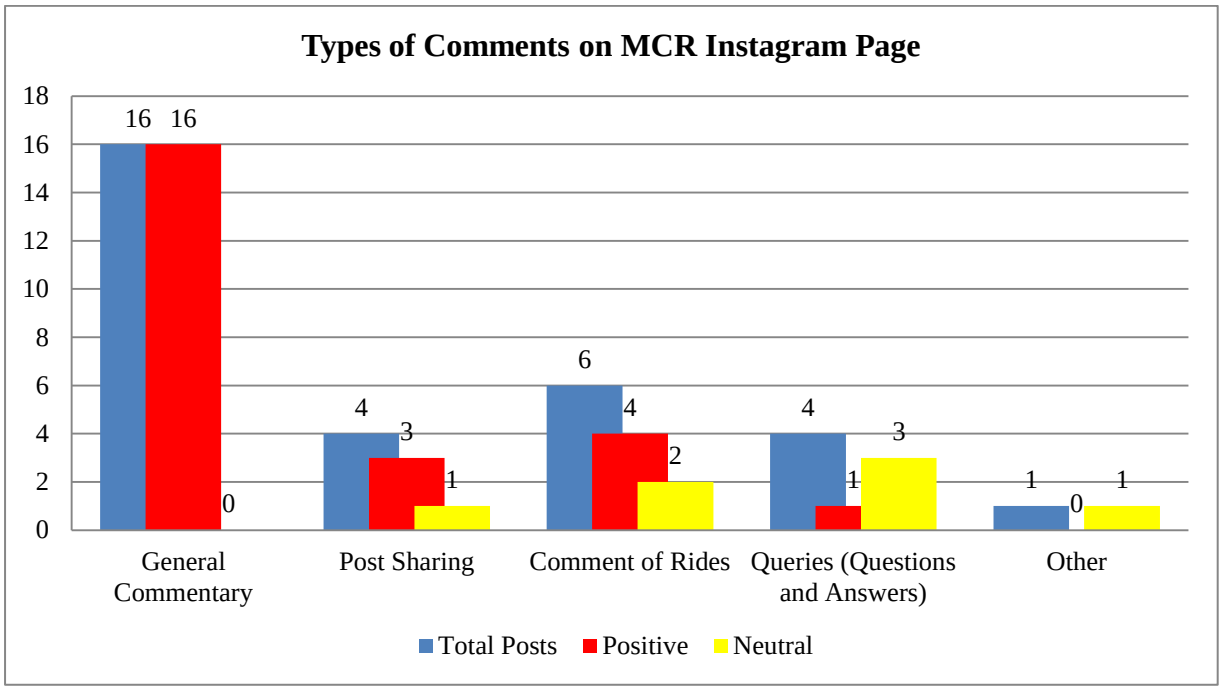


Figure 5: Types of comment on the MCR Instagram page

From the above, it can be deduced that the MCR's post on Instagram generate very positive commentary. Additionally, the commentary reflects the general public's interest in the group through the types of comments that are posted. Thus, it can be seen that not only do other Instagrammers use the platform to address any questions and queries with the regards to the group's activities, but they also use it an informal way of sending through their reservations for events and to appreciate the group's activities.

1.7 Frequently used Hashtags in MCR's Instagram Posts

From the 15 posts that were analysed, it was established that there were 357 hashtags used in total. This means that a single post on the Maboneng City Rider's Instagram page can attract an average of 23 to 24 hashtags. Of these 357 hashtags, only 127 were unique hashtags. Figure 6 reflects only the top 25% of the hashtags that were frequently used within the posts.

The most frequently used hashtag was #fixie, which appeared in 87% of the posts. This was closely followed by #bicyclechangelives, which appeared in 80% of the posts.

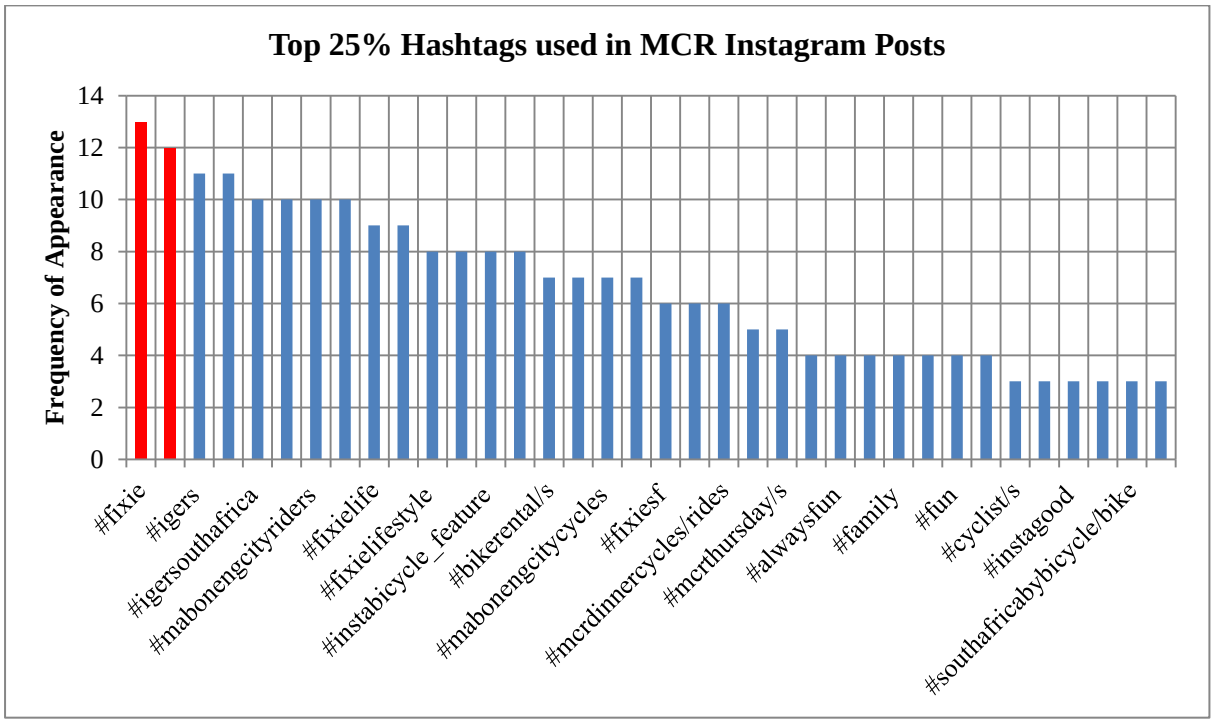


Figure 6: Top 25% hashtags used within MCR Instagram Posts

The top 25% hashtags were then characterized according to the category that they were related to. The categories were bicycle type, MCR community, Igers (Instagram locations), perceptions of cycling, general cycling-related as well as 'other' which is a category for comments that did not fit into any of the aforesaid categories as reflected in the below in table 5.

Hashtag Categories	Hashtags Considered	Total Frequency
'Igers Community'	#igers #igersjozi #igersouthafrica #igerssouthafrica #igersjoburg #igersmaboneng #igersbedford/view	62
Bicycle Type	#fixie #singlespeed #fixielife #fixielifestyle #onegear/speed #fixiesf #fixiedgear	58
MCR Community	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengcitycycles #mabonengcitycyclists #mcrdinnercycles/rides #mcrthursday/s #mcr #mcrdinner	41
Perceptions	#bicyclechangelives #alwaysfun #fun #adventurelife #exploringlife #family #friends #instagood	39

General Cycling-related	#instabicycle_feature #urbancycling #bikerental/s #cyclinglife #cyclist/s #southafricabybicycle/bike	36
Other	#sowetoderby	3

Table 5: Top 25% most used hashtags in MCR Instagram posts by category

Taking the above into consideration, it can be established that the most frequently used hashtags belonged to the 'Igers' community, closely followed by the type of bicycle types that were frequently mentioned. As outlined in previous chapters, the use of a hashtag can be seen as communicating certain aspects regarding the user. This is because they reveal the ideas, topics and communities that the user associates themselves with. The above-presented categories provide five key insights regarding the MCR. Firstly, the hashtags used under the 'bicycle type' category suggest that the group frequently rides fixed-gear or one-gear bicycles. Secondly, the hashtag used under the 'MRC Community' show how the group is trying to create their own hashtag communities. Thirdly, the use of the hashtags under the 'Igers community' category suggests that the MCR see themselves as being part of Instagram's photo-sharing communities across South Africa. Fourthly, the use of the hashtags under the 'perceptions' category suggest the MCR environment is fun, a place to explore life as well as a place to make friends. Lastly, the hashtags used under 'general cycling-related' make other suggestions such as the MCR being an urban cycling group. With these in mind, it can be concluded that the use of these hashtags represents numerous dimensions that would help to explain the online identity of the MCR.

SECTION B: OFFLINE DATA FINDINGS

MEETING ONE

Ride Type	Weekly Thursday Night Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	*Chevy Lane*, Bedfordview							
Distance	22km							
Instagram Posts	None							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: 6	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	3	1	2					

Observations:

For the first ride, the researcher was asked to join the MCR at *Love Revo* which is a restaurant in the Maboneng Precinct. This is apparently where the group often meets for their rides. Riders without bicycles were also able to rent one as well as the necessary equipment from *Get Fixied Bikes* (the bicycle rental company) which is located next to *Love Revo*. The researcher was informed that the rides generally commerce at 19H00. By 19H00, the group was not ready to leave which resulted in the departure time being moved to 19H30. At 19H30, one of the organisers briefed the group that they would be cycling to a restaurant in Bedfordview called *Chevy Lane* as well as the mapped out route. Furthermore, the group was encouraged to ensure that they take several photos throughout the ride. After 1 minute of riding, the organisers asked the riders to stop in order to take a group photo with a backdrop of graffiti. Once this was done, the group cycled for 5 kilometres before stopping in Malvern to take another group photo with a taxi as the backdrop. The group then continued to cycle an additional 3 kilometres until they reached *Chevy Lane* where they stopped for dinner and drinks. At dinner, the riders were socializing, engaging in conversation and getting to know each other. Once dinner was completed, the group took a final photo before heading back to *Love Revo*. The group then left the diner and cycled for 8 kilometres, non-stop, until they reached *Love Revo*. Upon arrival, some of the riders went home whilst the others stayed behind for drinks. There were two highlights from this ride. The first is how there was a constant emphasis on taking photographs for Instagram as well as ensuring that the photographs were taken with a suitable backdrop as can be seen in figure 7. Other riders kept mentioning that the photographs were evidence that the ride did take place and that they needed to ensure that the photographs were of a highly quality. At the end of the ride, the organiser asked one of the riders, who had been taking many photos, for their contact details so that they could send the photos for posting purposes. The second highlight is with regards to what followed a day after this ride. The researcher was invited to join the MCR's *WhatsApp* group. According to the founder Senzo Mncadi, the *WhatsApp* group is the platform where the 'regular' riders of group communicate and organise rides before they are posted on Instagram. Accordingly, for example, before advertising the Thursday Night Rides on Instagram, the group discusses whether there should be a ride as well as the possible destinations. Once this is decided upon, the ride and relevant details are then advertised for the general public to join.



Figure 7: Examples of group photos taken at MCR *Chevy Lane* Ride

MEETING TWO

Ride Type	Weekly Thursday Night Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	Blind Tiger Café, Parkview							
Distance	20km							
Instagram Posts	None							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: 12	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	5	2	2	1		2		

Observations:

A day before the ride, it was agreed upon in the WhatsApp group that the MCR would be cycling to a restaurant in Parkview known as *Blind Tiger Café* for the weekly Thursday ride. On the day of the ride, the group was asked to meet at *Love Revo* in the Maboneng Precinct two hours before the ride and to be ready for departure at 19H00. During this period, riders were mingling, eating and drinking whilst waiting for the rest of the group to arrive; other riders were collecting their bicycles and equipment from *Get Fixied Bikes*. By 19H00, the group was not ready for departure. Accordingly, the departure time was moved to 19H40. At 19H40, one of the organisers briefed the riders that they would be cycling to Blind Tiger Café as well as the mapped out route. After cycling for roughly 5 kilometres, the group had to stop in Braamfontein because one of new rider's bikes got punctured. It is noteworthy to mention that this rider was using a rental bicycle. However, none of the organisers had a spare tube or puncture repair kit to fix the tyre. Accordingly, the new rider and a more experienced rider agreed to cycle back (with the puncture) to *Love Revo* to go and pick up a repair kit and fix the bicycle. The remaining riders were asked to wait in Braamfontein until the 2 riders had returned from the *Love Revo*. After waiting for 45 minutes, the organisers tried calling the 2

riders to determine how far they were but they were unsuccessful as no one was answering their phone. For this reason, the organisers of decided that group should not wait any longer and accordingly headed straight to their destination. After cycling for an additional 5 kilometres, the group finally arrived at *Blind Tiger Café* where they had drinks and dinner. Several riders immediately took to purchasing and consuming copious amounts of alcohol despite the fact that everyone still had to cycle back to Maboneng. At this point, the group was mingling, having conversations and getting to know one another. Several photographs were also taken as per the persistence of the organisers in order to ensure that there would be photos for Instagram as can be seen in figure 8. The researcher used this opportunity to engage with one of the organisers of the ride to find out why the ride had not been posted on Instagram as it is supposed to happen with all rides. The organiser responded by firstly saying that sometimes they forget to do so and secondly, it was a good thing that the ride was not posted because the ride distance was 20 kilometres and that it would have been challenging to cycle with beginners for such a long distance on a Thursday night. After dinner, one of the riders asked if anyone had tried to contact the 2 missing riders and the organiser responded by saying that they will have to figure things out for themselves since they were not answering their phones. As a result, the group started preparing to cycle back to Maboneng. However, the organisers did not have a mapped route for the return trip. Accordingly, riders had to wait for 10 minutes in the streets of Parkview at night while the organisers planned a route back. Once this was done, riders cycled for 10 kilometres non-stop until they arrived at *Love Revo*. Upon arrival, some of the group riders left and others stayed behind for drinks.



Figure 8: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Blind Tiger Cafe Ride

MEETING THREE

Ride Type	Sunday Breakfast Ride
Ride Theme	None
Destination	Alexandra Township | Maboneng | Soweto

Distance	N/A							
Instagram Posts	N/A							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: N/A	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women

Observations

A day before this ride, the MCR decided in the WhatsApp group that they would be doing a Sunday Breakfast Ride. Everyone who was interested in participating was told to meet at *Love Revo* the following morning and they should be ready to depart at 10H00. When riders inquired about the destination, the organisers informed the group that they had not decided on the destination. When riders insisted on finalising the destination in order to be able to plan their days, one of the organisers then suggested that the group would be cycling to the Alexandra Township and then they would determine where they go afterwards.On the day of the ride, the researcher arrived 15 minutes earlier than the departure time. By 10H00, there were still no riders present. Eventually, by 10H30, the researcher left *Love Revo* under the assumption that the ride was not taking place. At this point none of the organisers had communicated that the ride times changed or whether the ride was cancelled. Furthermore, the ride was not posted on Instagram. Later that day, it was discovered that there was a ride earlier in the day but the organisers decided to change the departure destination by starting the ride in the Alexandra Township, pit-stopping in Maboneng and ending in Soweto. However, none of this was communicated to the riders that wanted to cycle. Instead, only a selected group of riders were privy to this communication.

MEETING FOUR

Ride Type	Weekly Thursday Night Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	Brown Sugar Backpackers, Observatory							
Distance	17km							
Instagram Posts	Yes							
Sponsored Elements	Complimentary Beverages from Heineken Lager Beers Complimentary Dinner and Drinks at Brown Sugar Packpackers							
Attendance: 25	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	11	3	6	2	1	2		

Observations:

A day before this ride, it was agreed upon in the WhatsApp group that the MCR would be cycling to *Brown Sugar Backpackers*, Observatory for the Thursday Night Ride. The ride was accordingly posted on the MCR's Instagram page. The group was also informed that there would be complimentary drinks and food upon arrival at Brown Sugar Backpackers. On the day of the ride, the riders were asked to meet at *Love Revo* Restaurant in the Maboneng Precinct. Riders were encouraged to arrive two hours before the departure time so that they could grab a free Heineken Lager Beer that was proudly sponsored by *Love Revo*. Whilst some riders were enjoying their beverages, others were collecting their bicycles and equipment from *Get Fixied Bikes*. Once riders were done, they started getting ready to depart for the ride at 19H00. At 19H00, some of the riders had not arrived and the group was not ready for departure thus, the time was extended to 19H45. At 19H45, one of the organisers briefed all the riders that they would be cycling to Brown Sugar Backpackers in Observatory. It was at this point that the organiser informed the riders that there was a shortage of helmets and lights for the new riders that had rented bicycles as per the advertisement on Instagram. In order to resolve this problem, the whole group would have to take a detour via Braamfontein to collect more helmets and lights at another destination where they were stored.

After cycling for roughly 500 metres, one of the organisers asked the group to stop so that they could take a group photo with a graffiti background as can be seen in figure 9. Once this was done, the group cycled for an additional 4 kilometres until they reached Hotel Lamunu in Braamfontein where the helmets and lights would be picked up. Whilst the helmets and the lights were being collected, the other riders went to the hotel to buy drinks. At this point, the majority of the riders were consuming alcoholic beverages. At this point, the riders were engaging with one another, having conversations and getting to know one another**.** Once this was done, the riders began the ride to Brown Sugar Backpackers. Whilst cycling to, most of the new and inexperienced riders kept lagging behind the rest of the group because they were struggling to keep up with the pace. One of the riders called several times for a 'regroup' which is an opportunity for riders to all get back together and make sure that no one is left behind. At some point, one of the riders asked that pace of cycling be reduced in order to accommodate the riders that were struggling; one of the organisers responded by saying that the pace was perfect and that the new riders needed to pedal faster as a means of avoiding being left behind. Accordingly, the pace of the ride did not change which forced to new and

inexperienced riders to cycle at an uncomfortable pace so as to not be left behind or get lost in an unfamiliar environment.

After 6 kilometres of cycling, the group reached Brown Sugar Backpackers where riders would be treated to complimentary dinner and drinks. However, when the riders arrived at the dining area, they were informed that there would be no complimentary dinner because the group arrived very late and the kitchen was closed. Accordingly, riders did not eat and they had to pay for their own refreshments such as crisps and biscuits and soft drinks which frustrated several riders. Yet again, the majority of the group was consuming alcoholic beverages. While riders were relaxing, the organiser encouraged the group to take a few photos for the MCR's Instagram page as can be seen in figure 9 which changed the mood temporarily. Once the photos were taken, the reality resurfaced that many riders were still upset and disgruntled because there were several disappointments in what was advertised and what was actually delivered. Due to the fact that the riders were hungry and vocalizing their frustrations, the organisers made a decision to leave Brown Sugar Backpackers earlier than expected in order to allow time to make a stop at a 24 hour fast-food restaurant in Doornfontein.

Whilst cycling to Doornfontein, most of the new and inexperienced riders were still lagging behind the rest of the group because they were struggling to keep up with the pace. Accordingly, one of the riders called a 'regroup' to allow the riders to catch up. This notion of leaving huge gaps between riders is evident in figure 10 which shows how during a re-group, the riders who were ahead had ample time to take a group photo. In this figure, it is clear that only 14 riders were in the photo whilst the others were still trying to catch up. It was also at this point that one of new riders that had rented a bicycle from *Get Fixied Bikes* experienced a mechanical complication in that the chain of the bicycle snapped. Even though several riders tried to fix it, the chain was beyond repair. Due to the fact that the organisers did not have any spare parts or a vehicle to collect the damaged bicycle, the rider had to use the bicycle without a chain by rolling on downhills as well as pushing the bicycle on steep inclines; other times, one of the other riders had to tow the bicycle with the rider. After cycling for roughly 3 kilometres, the group arrived at a 24 hour KFC drive through. Upon arrival, riders were told to pay for their own dinner whereas the ride was supposed to come with a complimentary dinner, which was another frustration for the riders. Nonetheless, riders bought their own dinner and they had to sit on the pavement to eat accordingly. Once dinner

was completed, riders cycled back non-stop to *Love Revo* where some of the riders headed home and others stayed behind for dinner and more drinks.



Figure 9: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Brown Sugar Backpackers Ride



Figure 10: Example of riders during re-group at MCR Brown Sugar Backpackers Ride

MEETING FIVE

Ride Type	Weekly Thursday Night Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	Keyes Art Mile, Rosebank							
Distance	24km							
Instagram Posts	Yes							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: 20	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	13	4	2			1		

Observations:

A day before this ride, it was agreed upon in the WhatsApp group that the MCR would be cycling to the Keyes Art Mile in Rosebank to an event called First Thursdays (First Thursdays is a monthly event that takes place in Rosebank where people are able to explore art galleries and cultural events) for the Thursday ride. The ride was accordingly posted on

the MCR Instagram page. On the day of the ride, the riders were asked to meet at *Love Revo,* two hours prior to the ride and to be ready for departure at 19H00. Upon arrival, many riders were drinking at eating whilst others were collecting their rental bicycles and equipment from *Get Fixied Bikes*. Once riders were done enjoying their beverages and meals as well as collecting bicycles, they started getting ready to depart for the ride at 19H00. By 19H00, the group was not ready for departure thus, the departure time was moved to 19H40. At 19H40, before departure, one of the organisers briefed the riders that they would be cycling to Keyes Art Mile in Rosebank.

The group cycled for a kilometre until they stopped to take a group photo with a graffiti backdrop as can be seen in figure 11. The group then cycled for 5 kilometres until they stopped to regroup in order to allow the riders that were lagging behind to catch up with the rest of the riders. Most of the laggards were the new and inexperienced riders as they were struggling to keep up with the pace. This notion of leaving huge gaps between riders is evident in figure 12, which shows how during a re-group, the riders who were ahead had ample time to take a group photo. In this figure, it is clear that only 10 of the 20 riders were in the photo whilst the others were still trying to catch up.

Once all the riders were together, the continued to cycle for an additional 6 kilometres until they reached the Keyes Art Mile. Upon arrival, riders parked and chained their bicycles and went their separate ways to stalls that interested them. There was no group interaction at the location as everyone was scattered. Another visible aspect was how most of the riders were consuming significant amounts of alcohol despite the fact that everyone still had to cycle to back to Maboneng. The researcher used this opportunity to investigate the safety implications of the riders cycling under the influence of alcohol. This was taken very lightly by the organisers; one of them responded by arguing that the consuming of alcohol was irrelevant because all the cycling that they do makes them sweat the alcohol out of their systems so they sober up very quickly. It was also at this point that organisers decided that it was time to leave especially because the location was overcrowded.

When it was time to leave, it became challenging to find the rest of the riders as most of them had gone off on their own. Accordingly, other riders were sent to go look for the missing riders which delayed the group by 35 minutes. Eventually, when all the riders were found, the group cycled for a kilometre when some of the riders asked if they could stop at the McDonalds in Rosebank because most of them were not able to eat at the Keyes Art Mile due to time constraints and how crowded it was. Accordingly, half of the group stopped on the side of the road whilst the other half went to buy food and drinks. Once the other group of

riders had bought their food, they were not given time to eat by the organisers as the group started cycling ahead.

The group then cycled for 5 kilometres when they approached a steep incline in Parktown. Prior to tackling the incline, the group agreed to meet at the top of the slope where they would re-group. By the time the riders reached the end of the steep, the group was split into three. The first group had two regular riders who refused stop and wait for the rest of the group at the end of the steep as expected. Instead, they continued to cycle and went straight to Maboneng. The second group had 3 cyclists who decided to wait for the rest of the group; this group essentially waited for 20 minutes until the group behind them arrived. When the last group arrived, it was revealed that there was a delay because one of the bicycles that had been rented from *Get Fixied Bikes* had a malfunction in that the pedal broke whilst the rider was cycling up the slope. Even though several riders tried to fix it, it could not be repaired. Due to the fact that the organisers did not have any spare parts or a vehicle to collect the damaged bicycle, the rider had to continue using it. At one point, the rider was towed by a delivery motor bike on the steep incline. Once the riders were all together, they continued to cycle for another 3 kilometres until they reached another steep incline at Constitutional Hill. Yet again, the group was split into two because there was a group of riders that went ahead and left other riders behind. Accordingly, one of the riders called for a 'regroup' to allow all the riders the catch up. Once this was done, the group continued to cycle, whilst towing the broken bike along with its rider, until they reached *Love Revo*. Upon arrival, some riders parted ways and went home whilst others stayed behind at *Love Revo* for food and drinks.

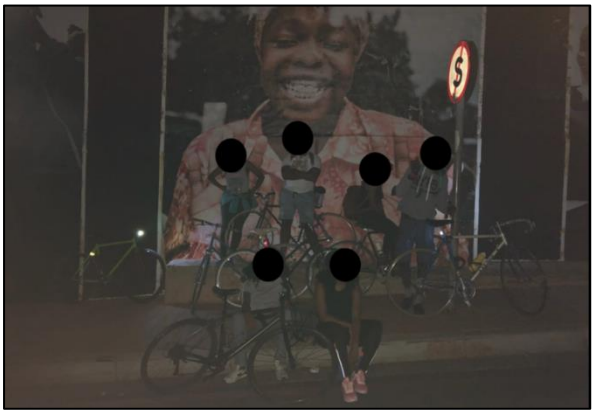


Figure 11: Example of group photo taken at MCR Keyes Art Mile Ride



Figure 12: Example of riders during re-group at MCR Keyes Art Mile Ride

MEETING SIX

Ride Type	Monthly Ride							
Ride Theme	Soweto Derby Ride							
Destination	FNB Stadium, Soweto							
Distance	30 km							
Instagram Posts	Yes							
Sponsored Elements	Complimentary Carling Black Label Beers at *Love Revo* Interfool Hamper for the Best Dressed Derby Supporters Complimentary Beers at FNB Stadium							
Attendance: 12	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	7	4	1					

Observations:

Riders were informed of the ride 6 days prior in the WhatsApp group that there would be a ride to FNB Soccer City for a Soweto Derby Themed Ride; The Soweto Derby is a soccer match where Soweto's soccer giants, Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs, go head-to-head with one another at the FNB Stadium. At this point, the organisers explained that they only had 12 tickets for the derby and that it would be a first-come-first-serve basis. Consequently, anyone who wanted tickets would have to send the organisers money to secure their ticket. Almost immediately, they were all purchased within the group. Even though the tickets were completely sold-out, the ride was still posted and advertised on Instagram to the general public. On the day of the ride, the riders were asked to meet at *Love Revo* an hour before the 12H00 departure time so that they enjoy complimentary Carling Black Label Beers courtesy of one of the rides sponsors: *Love Revo*. At this point, the riders were engaging with one another, having conversations and getting to know one another whilst others were renting bicycles from *Get Fixied Bikes*. Once this was done, the riders started preparing themselves to depart for FNB Stadium.

The ride was supposed begin at 13H00 but the group was not ready thus, the departure time was extended to 13H15. The group cycled for 500m until they stopped to take a group photo with a graffiti backdrop as can be seen in figure 13. The organisers also used this opportunity to inform the riders that there would be a prize given to the best dressed rider in accordance with the Soweto Derby Theme. The prize would be a backpack Interfool - Interfool is a daily travel brand that predominantly focuses on street and urban contemporary culture through travel accessories. At this point, one of the organisers deemed themselves as an automatic winner of the competition because they felt that they were the best dressed. However, other

riders disputed this and pointed out that there was another member who was better dressed and that they deserved to win the prize. The organiser then caved in and agreed with the rest of riders. Moreover, the organiser did mention that he would have ideally liked to keep it for himself because it was too nice to giveaway.The organisers also used this opportunity to announce that they had not managed to print the entrance-to-stadium tickets and that all the riders would have to make a stop to allow time to do this. Accordingly, the group cycled for 3 kilometres until they reached 1 Fox Street where 2 of the organisers went to print tickets and the rest of the group waited for 30 minutes until they returned. When the organisers returned, riders were informed that they were not able to print tickets and that they would have to print them at the stadium upon arrival. The group then continued to cycle for 9 kilometres non-stop until they reached the stadium where the group took several group photos as can be seen below in figure 13.

At the stadium however, the group encountered several problems. The first problem was that the group could not enter the stadium because they did not have their tickets printed and the tickets counter was closed. Additionally, the only place to print tickets in close proximity was inside the stadium therefore, one of the organisers had to purchase a counterfeit ticket from people who were selling them in order to get into the stadium. The rest of the group had wait outside the stadium for 20 minutes until the organiser returned with the tickets. At this point, many riders were annoyed and disgruntled because of the organiser's lack of organisation as well as the fact that they would not be able to watch the full match because they were late. Once everyone received their tickets, all riders were able to enter the stadium. The second problem was that there was no safe place to park the bicycles and that none of the organizers had brought bicycle lock chains. Instead, only one of the more experienced riders had brought their own bicycle lock chain which the organisers then said it would be used for everyone else's bicycles. However, the chain was not long enough to secure all 12 bicycles. Instead, only 6 of the bicycles were secured and the other 6 were left unsecure. When the researcher inquired if it was safe to leave the bicycles unchained, one of the organisers responded by saying it was not safe however, the group had done this before and the best thing to do was to hope the bicycles would be there after the soccer match is finished. Yet again, riders expressed their frustrations and anger with the lack of concern and organisation that was displayed by the organisers.

The group then entered the stadium to find their seats but before that, one of the organisers then told all the riders that there would be a complimentary round of beers courtesy of the

ride's sponsors. Some of the riders vocalized that they were not comfortable consuming alcohol when the ride was not finished and enquired if they could get a non-alcoholic beverage; one of the organisers then vocalized that they were only paying for beers and all non-alcoholic beverage would be on the rider's personal account. This purchasing of drinks was time consuming therefore resulting in the riders missing the first 30 minutes of the soccer match. Once all the riders had their drinks, they moved to their seats to watch the remaining minutes of the game. At this point, riders were engaging with one another and most were in high spirits due the energy at the stadium. Throughout the ride, the organisers kept on encouraging the riders to taken several photos and that they should post them on Instagram. Furthermore, riders that were part of the WhatsApp group were asked to make sure that they send their photos to the group so that they could be posted.

As soon as the soccer match ended, the group then made their way to pick up their bicycles which were all still where they had been parked and the departed for Maboneng. After 2 kilometres of cycling, one of the riders announced that 2 riders had been left behind due to a bicycle chain malfunction. Accordingly, the group had to stop for 10 minutes to find the missing riders. Once the riders were found, the group continued to cycle for 14km non-stop until they reached *Love Revo*. Upon arrival at *Love Revo*, the winner of the Best Dressed prized tried to collect their prize but was informed by the organiser that they could only collect it at the next Thursday Night Ride. At this point, the organiser then revealed that there were actually two prizes that were supposed to be given away to the riders but the organiser had opted to keep one for himself. One of the other riders then suggested that it be given to one of the new riders because they managed to keep up with the rest of the group. Accordingly, the organisers then said that they will give the prize to the new member but they too will only receive at the next Thursday Night Ride. After this, some of the group riders stayed at *Love Revo* for dinner whilst the other riders parted ways.



Figure 13: Examples of group photos taken at MCR Soweto Derby Ride

MEETING SEVEN

Ride Type	Weekly Thursday Night Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	*Victoria Yards*, Lorentzville							
Distance	4km							
Instagram Posts	Yes							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: 20	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	10	5	2		1	2		

Observations

A day before this ride, it was agreed upon in the WhatsApp group that the MCR would be cycling to dinner at *Victoria Yards*, Lorentzville for the Thursday Night Ride. The ride was accordingly posted on the MCR's Instagram page. On the day of the ride, the riders were asked to meet at *Love Revo* two hours prior to the departure time of 19H00. Upon arrival, many riders were eating and drinking whilst others were collecting their bicycles and equipment from *Get Fixied Bikes*. Once riders were done enjoying their beverages and meals as well as collecting bicycles, they started getting ready to depart for the ride at 19H00. The ride was supposed to begin at 19H00 but several riders had still not arrived and most of the rental bicycles were still being serviced for the ride. Accordingly, the departure time was extended to 19H45. At 19H45, before departure, one of the organisers briefed the riders that they would be cycling to *Victoria Yards* for dinner and drinks. It was also at this point that one of the riders informed the group that the place was closing at 20H00 and that due to the fact that the group was running late, they might not make it in time. Riders consequently started rushing and departing. At this point, there were 7 riders who were still servicing their bicycles were left behind. After 500m of cycling, one of the riders asked that the group stop cycling as some of the riders were left behind. Accordingly, the group stopped for 5 minutes to wait for the other riders to catch up. Once all the riders caught up, the ride continued. The group cycled at a very fast pace for 2 kilometres until reaching Bez Valley.

At this point, the organiser who was also directing the group then decided to take a detour in the middle the street to go and greet a friend that lived in the neighbourhood. At this point, several riders continued cycling without knowing where they were going. One of the other riders then called for a re-group in order to figure out where the group was going. After

waiting for 5 minutes, the organiser of the ride finally caught up with the rest of the group and led them to *Victoria Yards*. When the group arrived, they were informed that the kitchen was closed and that only drinks would be served. At this point, most of the riders were very annoyed and frustrated. More importantly, two of the organisers started arguing over the fact that the group was late because the organiser that was leading the group decided to detour to his friend's house instead of prioritizing the group. This notion is evident in figure 14 where riders can be seen isolating themselves from others because they were unhappy with organisers and the ride as a whole. After much negotiating, the manager of the restaurant was able to organize pizzas for everyone. Accordingly, the riders had dinner and drinks; the majority of the group was consuming copious amounts of alcoholic beverages. While the riders were eating and drinking, one of the organisers asked to address the group with regards important matters. Riders were informed that a group of 4 riders (mostly organisers of the group) were planning a 900 km cycling trip from Maboneng to Mozambique and were expected to depart in the next 2 weeks. Furthermore, the riders were informed that this ride required money for accommodation and meals along the way. Accordingly, the riders were asked to make a contribution towards this long distance ride (even if they would not be partaking in these rides) in order to ensure that the ride is a success. In response to the abovementioned, some of the riders were curious as to why they were not involved from the beginning as well as why they should pay towards something that a selective group of riders decided on. As a means of avoiding conflict, the conversation was ended with some of the riders saying that they will see how they can contribute. At the end of the dinner, the riders were preparing to leave when they were approached by an artist who was also at the restaurant. The artist invited the riders to go see his art exhibition which was around the corner and said that he would give the group exclusive access. The riders agreed and went to the exhibition where they spent 30 minutes there.

After the exhibition, the organiser insisted that the riders should take a photograph which will be posted on Instagram which can be seen in figure 15. However, some of the riders did not take photos because they were still not happy about the ride as a whole. Once this was done, riders departed for Maboneng. As it was now late, one of the organisers explained that all the riders would have to cycle at a very fast pace and that all the new and inexperienced riders must keep up or they will be left behind. After one kilometre of cycling, some of the riders were left behind because they were struggling to keep up because the pace was too fast. When one of the riders called for a re-group, the organiser responded by saying that there will be no regroup and that the riders left behind must pedal fasters. Accordingly, some of the

riders were left behind and had to catch up with the rest of the group. The group then cycled for another kilometre until they reached *Love Revo*. Upon arrival, some of the riders stayed behind for drinks whilst the others went home.



Figure 14: Riders who had isolated themselves at *Victoria Yards* Ride



Figure 15: Examples of group photos taken at MCR *Victoria Yards* Ride

MEETING EIGHT

Ride Type	Long Distance Ride							
Ride Theme	None							
Destination	Mall of Africa, Midrand							
Distance	50 km							
Instagram Posts	None							
Sponsored Elements	None							
Attendance: 7	Black		White		Coloured		Asian/Indian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	5	1					1	

Observations

Two days before this particular ride, it was agreed upon in the WhatsApp group that the MCR would be cycling to the Mall of Africa as it would be a public holiday.

Riders were informed that the ride was only open to people with their own bicycles as there would be no rentals for this ride. Riders were also told to make sure that they brought their own bicycle repair kits and spare tubes in case anyone experienced a puncture. On the day of the ride, the riders were asked to meet at *Love Revo* in the Maboneng Precinct and to be ready for departure at 09H00. The researcher arrived 15 minutes prior to the departure time but no one was there. The researcher waited until 9H30 until the organiser of the ride arrived. The organiser informed the researcher that some of the riders were running late and that the group would be departing at 10H15 instead.

The group cycled for roughly 2 kilometres until they reached Ellis Park Stadium where the group stopped for 5 minutes in order to allow the riders who had been left behind to catch up. Once these riders had caught up, the group continued to cycle for another 3 kilometres until they reached a petrol station. The group stopped here because one member had a broken chain and another member had a puncture in the tyre. Once both of the riders had fixed their bicycles, the group continued cycling for another 6 kilometres until they reached Wynberg where the riders stopped for 5 minutes in order to allow the riders who had been left behind to catch up as well as to drink water and rehydrate.

At this point, one of the riders informed the rest of the group that they were scheduled to arrive at Mall of Africa at 12H00 and that they all riders would have to pick up the pace in order to reach the destination on time. In great disagreement, another rider argued that if the group had left at 09H00 as per the agreement, there would be no need to speed. Regardless of this dispute, the group picked up the pace in an attempt to reach Midrand at 12H00. The group cycled for an additional 7 kilometres until they reached Woodmead. At this point, the rider who had informed the group that they were running behind schedule then took a detour from the rest of the group. One of the riders asked the rest of the group if they should wait but the organiser said that the group must continue to cycling without him. Accordingly, the group cycled for an additional 9 kilometres until that reached a petrol station in Waterfall, Midrand where the riders stopped for 5 minutes in order to allow the riders who had been left behind to catch up as well as to drink water and rehydrate.

Once this was done, the group then continued cycling for a few metres until they reached the Mall of Africa. It was at this point that the organiser asked the riders to stop at a bus stop in

order to take a group photo which can be seen below in figure 16. After the photo was taken, the group then cycled to the mall's food court where they locked their bicycles and went out for lunch and drinks. During lunch, riders were able to mingle, get to know each other and playing games with each other as can be seen in figure 17. At this point the researcher asked why the ride was not advertised on Instagram and one of the organisers expressed that it would have been a logistical nightmare to take new and inexperienced riders on a long ride because it would take too long and that these riders would have struggled. The organiser used this opportunity to contact the rider that had detoured in Woodmead in order to find out whether he would be joining the group or not; here, the rider expressed that he had gone elsewhere and would not be joining the group.

After lunch, the group then prepared themselves to cycle back to Maboneng. The group cycled non-stop for 10 kilometres until they reached Woodmead where the group stopped for five minutes in order to allow the riders who had been left behind to catch up. Once these riders had caught up, the group continued to cycle for another 7 kilometres until they reached a petrol station in Houghton. The group stopped for 5 minutes in order to allow the riders who had been left behind to catch up. Once these riders had caught up, the group continued to cycle for another eight kilometres until they reached *Love Revo*, Maboneng. Upon arrival, some of the riders went home and the other riders stay behind for drinks and dinner at the restaurant.



Figure 16: Example of group photo taken at MCR Mall of Africa Ride

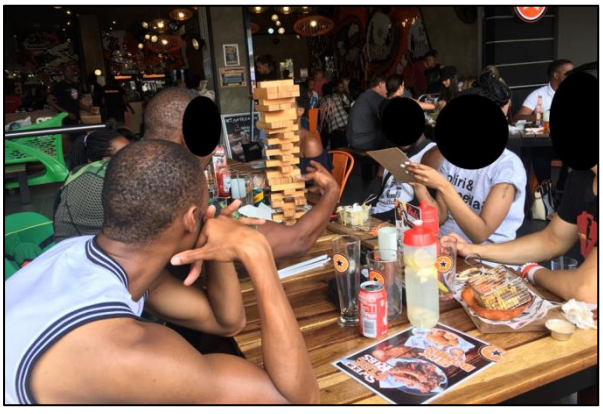


Figure 17: Riders playing games together at Mall of Africa Ride

RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY SUMMARY

Apart from all the above that has been discussed, it is fundamental to outline some of the experiences of the researcher which may be valuable for the study at hand. Firstly, when the researcher started cycling with the group, there was a certain level of awkwardness and segregation. Whilst riders were aware that the researcher was conducting a study, they did treat her like a new member and an outsider. Throughout the first few rides, there was very little engagement with fellow riders. In the same token, the researcher was also not as comfortable with the other riders because she was only meeting them for the first time which may have contributed to the lack of engagement. By the fourth ride however, some of the regular riders started becoming more familiar with the researcher and vice versa. Accordingly, the level of engagement between the researcher and fellow riders improved. Other aspects that contributed to a better level of engagement between the researcher and the riders was how the researcher started being treated as a member of the group when the regular and experienced riders started realizing that the researcher was quite fit and could keep up with them and the lead riders. This trait in the researcher essentially operated as a way into the group's 'inner circle'. The aforementioned reference to the fitness of the researcher was also the reason as to why she was able to cope with the pace of the riders. Throughout the rides, the researcher did not struggle with the longer rides, the pace and the steeps. With that being said, it was also evident that in order to keep up with all the rides, riders have to very fit which actually shows that the rides and their respective routes were not necessarily designed for new and inexperienced riders. *Secondly*, the reference to gender roles within the group was an aspect that stood out. Throughout all the rides that the researcher attended, it was evident that all the ride marshals were male. At no point were any of the female and experienced riders appointed as marshals. Furthermore, when some of the bicycles were broken down or damaged, the male riders were asked to assist and never any females. In addition, the researcher was also made aware of the fact a lot of the male riders kept on checking if she was okay during the rides as well as how they were impressed that she (being a woman) was able to cope with the pace and routes of the rides. This suggested that it is not a norm for the women to be able to keep with the pace of the lead male riders. Expanding on this, it is essential to highlight that even though the women were outnumbered at the rides, the researcher did not feel like they were in a 'boys club'. This is primarily because most the male riders that were making an effort to engage with other riders which made up for the imbalance. The *third* aspect that stood out is the reference to how other

motorists treated the MCR during their rides. It was particularly interesting to see that the other road users were very cautious of the group during the rides and accordingly created space for the riders and did not rush them when they were cycling on the roads. There was definitely a lot of respect and caution from other road users when the group was cycling. This was especially evident at the rides that had a high attendance. Several motorists would hoot as a way of greeting and showing encouragement to the riders. It can be argued that when cycling in a larger group, other road users were very aware and cautious of the MCR.*Fourthly*, the reference to safety is an aspect that needs to be discussed. The researcher is very familiar with Johannesburg and its most inner city parts. Throughout the ride, the researcher did not feel unsafe at times because of some of the locations of the rides. With that being said, the researcher felt unsafe because she is familiar with the city and is well-acquainted with some of the crime hotspots. With that been said, it is important to mention that to an unknowing rider who is unfamiliar with Johannesburg, safety may not be a concern because they do not have this knowledge. For this reason, safety was a constant concern for the researcher which made some of the rides uncomfortable for her. *Fifthly*, the researcher expected the rides to be more well-coordinated, organised and efficient. This may have been due to the fact that the researcher had previously cycled with different Johannesburg-based cycling groups. However, this was not necessarily the case as the group was very disorganised, inefficient and under-prepared, as clearly outlined. These aspects made the rides unpleasant for the researcher. Overall, the most enjoyable parts of all the rides were the cycling – especially the night rides. Whilst the researcher was concerned about safety, it was definitely a beautiful sight to explore quiet streets of Johannesburg at night as it is not common to see the city so quiet. Furthermore, cycling in the most inner city parts of Johannesburg has a liberating feeling especially when other road users show their respect by making way for riders. Another enjoyable aspect of the rides was meeting new people and engaging with them. The MCR comes across as a great space to meet interesting from various parts of the world and to engage with them.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is to critically analyse and discuss the findings of the data discussed in chapter five. It is therefore central to discuss these findings in relation to the presented research questions. In order to answer the primary research question, the subsidiary questions need to be discussed first. In addition, the findings of this study will also be positioned into other academic contributions and theoretical frameworks.

SECTION ONE: COMPARISON OF THE MCR'S ONLINE AND OFFLINE IDENTITY

The aim of the first subsidiary question is to understand if the MCR's online identity matches the identity that is put forward in their offline space. In order to answer this, it is necessary to look into the differences and the similarities between the group's identities in online and offline spaces which will be discussed below. Thus, a comparative analysis of the data collected from the participant observation as well as the visual and content analysis was conducted in order to understand these differences and similarities.

1.1 Matches with the MCR Online and Offline

Cycling Attire

The first aspect of the online identity that correlated with the offline is the reference to the appearance of the riders in terms of cycling attire. As established in the visual analysis, a common trend across the posts was how the riders were wearing casual clothing such as denim jeans, cargo pants, shorts, t-shirts and dresses. This was echoed in the participant observation whereby the riders were seen as wearing similar clothing. After attending all eight rides, it was visibly distinct that the general attire was very casual, as can be seen in the figure 18 below.

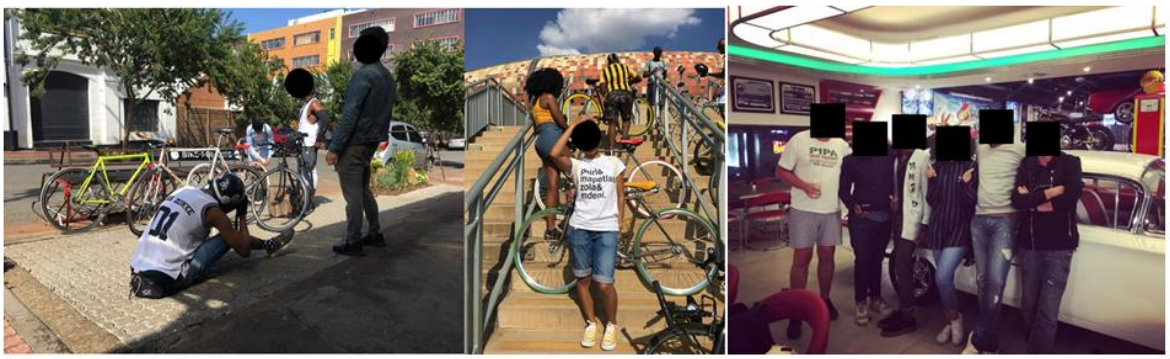


Figure 18: Riders wearing casual clothing at numerous MCR rides

It can therefore be established that indeed the overall appearance of the MCR is of a casual nature and that the Instagram posts are in essence reflective of this notion. Another aspect that was established from the Instagram posts is how their choice of cycling attire was a representation of the casual and informal nature of the rides and the group. This was supported by the findings of the participant observation which revealed that the MCR had a very casual approach to cycling as whole. In addition, the reference to the fact that none of the rides that the researcher attended commenced at the stated time is a reflection of the informal nature of the group. It can therefore be deduced that the MCR has an informal and casual approach to cycling which is buttressed by their Instagram which is a key allusion to the group's identity. Taking the above-presented into consideration, it is evident that there is a correlation between the MCR's presentation on Instagram as well as in reality.

Types of Bicycles

The second similarity between the online and the offline aspects of the MCR is the reference to the types of bicycles that frequently featured at the rides as well as in the Instagram posts. As observed at the rides that were attended, there was an overt use of bicycles that were identified as being fixies or single-speed as can be seen in figure 19 below. These bicycles were brightly and multi-coloured. Furthermore it was observed at the rides that the rentals from *Get Fixied Bikes* were actually fixie bicycles as well, hence the name of the company.



Figure 19: Fixie bikes identified at the MCR rides

The above-presented was corroborative with the findings from the visual and content analysis. From the 15 posts that were analysed, it was evident that there was a frequent appearance of bicycles that were identified as being fixies and single-speed in the photos used. Furthermore, the reference to the fact that some of the most frequently used hashtags made references to a fixie or single-speed bicycles reinforces this notion. Another aspect that

was pointed out in the analysis of the Instagram posts is how the use of these types of bicycles has been seen as form of self-expression and creativity. This notion was confirmed at the rides that were attended. As can be seen in figure 20, it was evident that some of the riders were matching their bicycles to their clothes. This suggests that the bicycles are not only merely equipment that is needed for cycling but that the bicycles are also being used as a fashion accessory which is also an extension of the rider's identity, personality and creativity.



Figure 20: Riders matching their bicycles to their clothing at the MCR Soweto Derby Ride

Based on the above-presented, it can therefore be established that the findings from the online and offline data are directly related which suggests the MCR's online presentation of self is directly related to the real life aspects of the group in the context of the bicycles used. Furthermore, it can be established that the use of these fixie and single-speed bicycles can be seen as making a reference to the group's identity which is recognised as a symbol of coolness, 'hipsterism' and authenticity

Race of Riders

The third aspect of the MCR's online identity that correlated with the offline identity is the reference to the race of the riders. As can be seen in table 6, it was established from the participant observation that there was a significantly high attendance of riders that were identified as Black. Of the total 102 riders that attended the 8 rides, 72% of them were identified as Black. This was followed by riders who were identified as White and Coloured who made up 18% and 9% of the riders, respectfully. Lastly, the minority of the riders were identified as Asian or Indian who made up 1% of the all the total riders.

Offline Data Findings (Participant Observation)				
Ride	**Black**	**White**	**Coloured**	**Asian/Indian**
1	4	2	0	0
2	7	3	2	0
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	14	8	3	0
5	17	2	1	0
6	11	1	0	0
7	15	2	3	0
8	6	0	0	1
TOTAL	**74**	**18**	**9**	**1**

Table 6: Representation of the race of the riders at MCR rides

With regards to the data attained from the content and visual analysis, it can distinctly be seen that there is a similar trend, as can be seen in table 7 below. From the 15 posts that were analysed, a total of 67 recognizable people were counted within the posts. Of these people, 73% were identified as Black. This was then followed by people who were identified as White and Coloured who made up 21% and 6% of the riders, respectfully. Lastly, there were no riders that were identified as Asian or Indian.

Online Data Findings (Visual And Content Analysis)				
Post	**Black**	**White**	**Coloured**	**Asian/Indian**
Post 3	2	2		
Post 4	5	2		
Post 5	8	8	2	
Post 6	7	1		
Post 13	6	1	2	
Post 15	21			
TOTAL	**49**	**14**	**4**	

Table 7: Representation of the race of the riders in MCR Instagram posts

The abovementioned clearly shows that riders who were identified as Black were the majority in both the online and offline data. It can be seen that there is a direct relationship between the findings of the online and offline data. Accordingly, it can be seen that the online data is an actual reflection of the real identity of the MCR. This relationship reflects that the people who cycle in the MCR are predominantly Black which can be seen as a reference to the identity of the group.

Gender of Riders

The fourth similarity between the online and the offline aspects of the MCR is the reference to the gender of the riders. As can be seen in table 8 below, the findings of the participant observation reveal that there was a significant difference in the ratio of riders who were identified as men and women. Of the total 102 riders that attended the 8 rides, 71% were identified as men and the remaining 29% were identified as women.

Offline Data Findings (Participant Observation)		
Ride	**Men**	**Women**
1	5	1
2	10	3
3	N/A	N/A
4	18	7
5	15	5
6	8	4
7	13	7
8	6	1
TOTAL	**72**	**30**

Table 8: Representation of the gender of the riders at MCR rides

Taking the findings of the visual and content analysis into consideration, it can be established that there is a correlation with the aforesaid as can be seen in table 9. From the 15 posts that were analysed, a total of 67 recognizable people were counted within the posts. Of these people, 30% of these riders were identified as women and the remaining 70% were identified as men.

Online Data Findings (Visual And Content Analysis)		
Post	**Men**	**Woman**
Post 3	4	
Post 4	5	2
Post 5	12	6
Post 6	4	4
Post 13	6	3
Post 15	16	5
TOTAL	47	20

Table 9: Representation of the gender of the riders in MCR Instagram posts

Based on the abovementioned, it is quite evident that the MCR is skewed towards men. From these findings, it can therefore be gathered that the MCR is an environment that is dominate by men as both the online and offline data reflect this. Therefore, the group's online representation of themselves is an accurate reflection of the reality of the MCR in the context of the gender of the riders.

1.2 Realities of the MCR

'Us and Them'

After analysing the MCR's Instagram page, it was established that there is a strong sense of happiness and togetherness within the group. This was primarily because the riders were identified as smiling and participating in the group poses which shows their willingness to participate and engage with each other. The use of these images was seen as a connotation of the riders' willingness to participate and a sense of friendship in the MCR as well as the idea that anyone is welcome to participate and that they will be welcomed by the group. This was also reaffirmed by the use of hashtags that made references to the environment of the MCR such as 'family', 'friends' and 'always fun'. This gives the impression that the MCR is an environment that is fun and welcoming as well as an environment where people can make new friends.

On the other end of the spectrum, the reality on the group proved otherwise. As previously discussed, the MCR is not a competitive space but rather a space for casual and relaxed rides. Thus, the group attracts riders who are either experienced or inexperienced. For this reason, the pace of the rides needs to accommodate this broad spectrum of riders. However, this was not the case as observed at the rides. Throughout the rides that were attended, it was evident that new and inexperienced riders struggled to keep up with the pace of the rides but nothing was done to address this. Some of the organisers as well as the more experienced riders, on numerous occasions, refused to slow down the pace of the rides especially when the new and inexperienced riders were struggling. Accordingly, these riders kept getting left behind in environments that were unfamiliar to them. Due to this, a lot of these riders did not feel welcomed into the MCR. Subsequently, new riders did not want to socialise with the rest of the group which caused a division and tension throughout the rides.

This division of riders was also reaffirmed by the fact that some of the rides were deliberately not advertised to the general public. The findings revealed that of the 8 rides that were

attended, only 4 of them were actually advertised on the MCR's Instagram page. The other 4 rides were only communicated in the *WhatsApp* group, which is an exclusive group for the regular riders.

After further investigation, it was established that these rides were not advertised because the organisers had forgotten to advertise the rides on Instagram and the second reason being that they deliberately did not want new and inexperienced riders to attend certain rides. This was especially evident with regards to the rides that had longer distances whereby the organisers felt that the new and inexperienced riders would not be able to keep up with the rest of the group. Taking this into consideration, it can be argued that there is a strong suggestion that the organisers of the rides deliberately exclude new and inexperienced riders from what is supposed to be a 'public space' because they do not want to be inconvenienced. This shows that the group is not necessarily as welcoming and friendly as they portray themselves on Instagram. Furthermore, the reference to the group being a public space that is open to anyone who wants to cycle is actually deceptive because there are divisions between the new and inexperienced riders and those who are regular and experienced. For this reason, it can therefore be established that there is a strong sense of 'us-and-them' within the MCR.

'Safety? You're Alone in These Streets!'

Another observation that stood out was the reference to the safety within the group. On Instagram, there is a strong sense of reliability and safety that is put forward. This is primarily because the group's advertisement posts have constant references to the rental of bicycles being inclusive of helmets and lights, especially with regards to the rides that take place at night. The fact that all the cycling equipment is being provided by the MCR gives the impression that the group is not only organized but that they also take the safety of their riders seriously. On the other end of the spectrum, the reality of the group's behaviours and approach to safety suggests otherwise. Firstly, a lot of the rental bicycles did not come with helmets and lights, as per the advertisement posts. Furthermore, the fact that the rental bicycles were not necessarily in good condition shows the lack of safe cycling equipment. Some of these bicycles experienced mechanical issues such as chains snapping, pedals breaking as well as punctures. The biggest problem here was the fact that none of the organisers had a repair kit or contingency plans in the event that a bicycle was beyond repair. Accordingly, the riders who had rented bicycles had to struggle along by pushing their bicycles or being pushed by other riders as well as having to use the broken bikes or trying to

fix them independently. Most of the people who were renting these bicycles were the new and inexperienced riders. Thus, the need for these riders to have the correct cycling equipment as well as assistance when there is mechanical fault with the bicycles is crucial. The aforesaid was supported by a comment that one of the organisers made on the overall safety of the MCR. At one of the rides, the researcher asked one of the organisers if they felt that the rides were safe and whether the necessary safety measures had been put in place. In response, the organiser explained that MCR was not entirely safe as they should be and this was primarily because the riders were often not fully equipped (in terms of helmets and lights) which made them vulnerable on the roads. Secondly, the reference to the fact that the new and inexperienced riders were left behind during the rides due to the pace being too fast is another safety hazard. This is primarily because a lot of these riders were in unfamiliar environments and some of them had never cycled in the inner city parts of Johannesburg. Accordingly, these riders were left behind, without a marshal – a marshal is an older and experienced rider in the group that is put in place as means of ensuring that new and inexperienced riders are taken special care of and are taught the etiquette of the road during the rides. This can therefore be seen as a reflection of the group not necessary being as safe as they claim to be.

The other challenge was the reference to the culture of consuming alcohol before and during the rides. It was distinct throughout the rides that several riders were consuming copious amounts of alcohol. Whilst cycling under the influence has not yet been deemed illegal and it is the decision of the riders, it should not necessarily be encouraged either. As was seen at some of the rides, some of the sponsored elements of the rides were complimentary beers. Furthermore, when some of the riders communicated that they did not want to consume alcohol while cycling, organisers made it clear that only the alcoholic beverages were free and that anyone who wanted a non-alcoholic beverage would have to pay for it from their own pockets. This therefore suggests that the MCR are actually encouraging a culture of drinking and cycling through the complimentary elements of the rides. The biggest challenge here is there is already a perception that cycling in the streets of Johannesburg is dangerous because other users of the road do not respect cyclists. Thus, to cycle under the influence of alcohol is a safety hazard because it is contributing to the problem and the overall safety of riders.

Taking all the above into consideration, it can therefore be established that online and offline reference to the safety aspect of the MCR do not correlate in that on Instagram, the group

comes across as a safe and organised environment whereas in reality, there are several aspects suggesting that the group is unsafe and irresponsible.

Prizes not Advertised or Received

The reference to prizes and sponsored elements within the rides was another aspect that needed to be discussed in the context of the inconsistencies of the MCR's online and offline identity. As outlined in the participant observation, some of the rides had sponsored elements such as complimentary drinks and meals as well as prizes such as hampers from brands such as *Interfool.* When asked why the prizes were being provided, one of the organisers explained that it was a way for these brands and commercial entities to gain exposure via the MCR as well as a means of trying to get many people to come to the rides. The irony here is the fact that none of these sponsored elements and prizes were publicized in the Instagram advertisement posts. However, the riders who were in the *WhatsApp* group were informed that there would be prizes and sponsored elements if they participated in the rides. The problem here is that only existing riders were told about this and the potential riders that the MCR are trying to acquire were not informed which defeats the whole purpose of having these elements included in the rides. Another aspect regarding this discussion was the awarding of prizes. At the Soweto Derby themed ride, it was established that there were 2 *Interfool* hampers that were to be given to the 2 best-dressed riders. However, it became clear that the organiser of the ride had intentions of keeping both prizes for himself. After further investigation, it was discovered that both the riders who were supposed to receive a prize were never awarded their hampers. Expanding on this, some of the rides were supposed to come with a complimentary dinner and drinks. This, however, was not delivered on because the group arrived at the venue and the kitchen was closed. This was due to the fact that the organisers made the group take a detour in order to collect more helmets and lights for the riders that had rented bicycles. This resulted in the group arriving late; subsequently, the kitchen was closed and riders could not get any to eat. Consequently, riders were made to purchase their own dinner at a different location.

This therefore reflects that that not all the sponsored elements and prizes of the rides were delivered. This shows how the organisers of the MCR are not only hoarding prizes for themselves that are actually meant to encourage people to participate but they are also not following through on their commitments. The abovementioned therefore puts into question the sincerity behind the existence of the MCR as well as whether its aim is to actually grow

the group or whether it is to merely aims to use the group as a means of receiving merchandise under the false pretence of 'growing the cycling group'.

'Smile for the Camera'

Taking all the above mentioned into consideration, it can be established that there were indeed several reasons that were causes for division, tension and dissatisfaction with the rides hosted by the MCR. What is particularly intriguing with regards the aforesaid is how none of it is visible on the MCR's Instagram page. As outlined in the observations from the rides, it was highlighted that there were numerous points where the riders were sitting separately due to the abovementioned tensions at the ride. However regardless of what was happening, when it was time to take a group photo, this became irrelevant. This was particularly evident at rides 4, 6, and 7 where there was a lot of tension behind the scenes but the riders were still able to take a group photo, smiling and posing, regardless of the reality of what was actually happening at the ride. The reasons as to why these riders participated in these pictures despite the tensions are a reason unknown. It might have been to avoid further awkwardness and to avoid further tensions in the rides but this is purely speculation. Nonetheless, it can therefore be established that, regardless of the mood and tensions within the group, the riders would come together to take a photo and smile or join group poses while doing so. These were the images that were constantly featured on the group's Instagram page. Accordingly, to an outsider, it may appear as if this is a happy and welcoming environment but this is not necessarily the case. Taking this into consideration, it can be seen that there is an emphasis on taking photos regardless of the mood as a means of showing that all the riders are enjoying themselves, even when they are not.

1.3 Answering the Question

From all the above, it can be deduced that there were some correlations with regards to the online and offline data. It can therefore be reasoned that the MCR's online identity is made up of the group's cycling attire, the types of bicycles they ride, the gender and race of the riders as well as the overall body language put forward in these posts as these are the qualities that define the group. All these qualities tie into the essence of urban cycling because it defies the way on which cycling is conceptualized because of the use of fixie or single-speed bicycles, the choice to dress casually while cycling as well as an informal nature of the group (Schwartz, 2010). Furthermore, even though the MCR reaffirm the perception that cycling is a male-dominated activity, the fact that the group is predominantly Black demystifies the

perception that cycling is a predominantly elitist activity taken part by White people. Based on the qualities, it was also established that the MCR's Instagram page gives the impression that the group is a casual and inviting space that enables people to express their creativity through cycling. Moreover, there are suggestions that this is an inviting and safe environment, not only to cycle, but to also meet new people, make new friends and to have a good time while exploring Johannesburg on a bicycle. This notion is also supported by the fact that several people who had commented on the MCR's posts had predominantly positive things to say about the group as that there were no comments that were identified as being negative. This therefore shows that the MCR's online identity is well-received by their followers on Instagram. On the other end of the spectrum, the reality of the group proves to be otherwise. Firstly, the reference to the fact that the new and inexperienced were treated differently to older and experienced rides throughout the rides was a clear reflection of the division within the MCR. Secondly, the group's disregard for the safety of the riders as well as promoting a safe environment also contrasts with the group's identity that is put forward on Instagram. Thirdly, the reference to the fact that the group did not uphold their commitments as well as not producing elements that were advertised are all reasons as to why the online and offline identity of the MCR were not corroborative. Based on the aforesaid, it can be presumed these qualities of the MCR give off the impression that the group is a careless, unreliable and unwelcoming space, especially for outsiders. For these reasons, there is a strong suggestion that MCR's priority is not independently the cycling aspect and the successful coordination of the rides that they host. Instead, the MCR's priority appears to be their appearance on Instagram as well as how it is perceived by the general public.

Taking all the above into consideration, it can be seen that even though there is a disconnection with the online and the offline, people are still attending the rides why raises the question as to why they attend the rides if they are so unpleasant at times? At the centre of this is that maybe riders return for the company and meeting new people or maybe they enjoy the peace of Johannesburg at night without the commotion and traffic. Alternatively, the reason for the constant return to the MCR might tie into Baudrillard's arguments around postmodernism, signs and hyperreality. Baudrillard argues that in the modern world, the distinction between reality and representation is blurred, hence creating a simulated reality or 'simulation' (Baudrillard, 1994). Furthermore, hyperreality reflects that in certain situations, people may find themselves more in touch with the virtual world as opposed to the real world (Ward, 2015). To contextualize this into the MCR, it can be seen that the representation of

the group on Instagram puts forward the perfect image. An outsider, who only knows the group via Instagram, would look at the MCR as an enjoyable, trendy, casual and inviting environment therefore making them want to join the group. This is primarily because the media representation of the MCR becomes the first point of contact for these people thus, it is important for the group to put forward an image that will make someone want to join the group. The identity that is put forward on Instagram is well-received by the people who engaged with the MCR. This was particularly evident with regards to the fact that the findings of the online data revealed that the Instagram posts were generally well-received. In fact, 74% of the posts were identified as positive commentary on the group's posts. It can therefore be seen that in this case, Instagram carries more weight than the reality on the group as this is where people come into contact and understand the MCR. Furthermore, the fact that there were no negative posts means that none of the riders have actually gone to complain about their experiences at the rides. In this instance, it appears as if people are more in touch with the virtual world than the reality of the group which is potentially why they keep on returning. This perception of the media carrying more weight than the reality of the MCR is the essence of Baudrillard's arguments that are raised around discussions of postmodernism and media representation. The reference to the idea the identity put forward on Instagram becomes the first contact point for the outside world shows the significance of the group's media representation. Accordingly, the Instagram posts lure the potential riders into the MCR through this media representation that is a filtered version of reality (Felluga, 2012). Thus, the MCR is being understood through a media lens which is the essence of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1983). Thus, the media is has the ability to transform and filter reality to the extent where it has become hyperreal. Therefore, the media representation of the MCR has become more valuable than the reality of the MCR which ties into this theory's argument that virtual communities may reach a point where they supersede the real communities primarily due to an increasingly digitally connected world.

SECTION TWO: ECONOMIES ARE GENERATED AND SUSTAINED BY THE MCR'S LIFESTYLE BRANDING

The aim of the second subsidiary question is to understand which economies are generated and sustained by the MCR's lifestyle branding. Taking all the research findings into consideration, it was evident that the lifestyle branding was generated and sustained by the use of rider-generated content and Instagram as well as certain commercial brands and entities.

2.1 Rider-generated Content

One of the most distinct economies that are being generated by the MCR's lifestyle branding is the use of rider-generated content. A visible theme that emerged from the offline data is the reference to how often riders had to constantly stop to take a group photo as well as how the riders were continuously being encouraged and reminded to take photos throughout the rides. These photos could either be for the riders to post on their private social media whilst the other riders were encouraged to send all the photos to the exclusive WhatsApp group. Some of these photos were later used as Instagram posts that were either showing the beauty of Johannesburg through cycling-centric photography or to show the activities of the group. Some of these photos were used as advertisements posts to invite people to the next rides that the MCR would be hosting. If the mentioned users are taken into consideration, it can be seen that users such as @madmaxllew, @mompatifm and @leandreh were all mentioned as taking the photos for various posts on the MCR's Instagram page. These users were identified as MCR riders that had attended some of the rides. Therefore, the MCR is able to quickly and frequently produce and share content for the group on Instagram through the use of photos and videos that were taken by people who are attending the rides. Thus, it is not incorrect to assume that this is why there is a constant emphasis on taking these photos throughout the rides. It is vital to recognize that these riders whose photos are being used to the advantage of the MCR are actually not being paid for their work which can be seen as the riders working for free on behalf of the MCR. Therefore, the riders are working for the MCR, through 'free-labour', via the production of their photos which can accordingly be identified as one of the economies that are generated by the MCR's lifestyle branding.

2.2 Instagram

The other economy that underlies the MCR's lifestyle branding is their use of Instagram. Firstly, it is noteworthy to mention that the MCR's use of Instagram sustains the platform on an overall business level. The fact the group uses the platform only contributes to a pool of users whose data is sold to larger brands and commercial entities which generates revenue for Instagram, on behalf on Facebook. Furthermore, the MCR's use of WhatsApp as a means of coordinating their rides is also generating revenue for Facebook. It can therefore be seen that even though the MCR are using Instagram to gratify their own needs, the use of Instagram and WhatsApp means that they are working for the larger brands and commercial entities such as Facebook via 'free labour'.

Secondly, as highlighted in the previous section, it was established that the MCR are using Instagram to perform a dual role and that is a platform for self-expression as well as Instagram as public space for advertising. With regards to Instagram as an advertising space, it was clearly evident that the MCR were using the platform to advertise rides to the people. From the Instagram posts that were analysed, 53% were advertisements posts. Of these advertisement posts, 86% of them were advertising the MCR rides. Thus, it is clear that there is a great deal of self-promotional advertising taking place. This notion is reinforced by the fact that the group was using MCR branded imaging within their posts. As was seen in the types of photos that were used in the posts, it was established that 27% of them were branded and these were all advertisement posts. According to Mncadi (2017), one of the long term goals of the MCR are to expand into other cities and regions in partnership with larger commercial brands and entities. In order to do this, the MCR have to gain a significant amount of riders as a means of attracting and acquiring these entities (Mncadi, 2017). One of the most effective ways of doing this is by advertising the rides. Therefore, self-promotion is essential within the context of the aforesaid. This has been effective in that, since joining Instagram, the MCR have seen a significant growth in the number of people who are in the group and those who are interested in joining (Mncadi, 2017).Thus, it can be seen that advertising via Instagram has proven to be a very effective way of doing this. This is supported by the fact that the rides that were advertised on Instagram attracted some of the highest ride attendance figures as can be seen in table 10 below. Even though ride 6 was advertised to the general public, the ride attendance was limited to the number of tickets that the organisers were able to acquire for the Soweto Derby. The organisers had a total of 12 tickets hence, only 12 riders were able to attend.

	Advertisement Post	**Ride Attendance**
Ride 1	No	6
Ride 2	No	13
Ride 3	No	N/A
Ride 4	Yes	25
Ride 5	Yes	20
Ride 6**	Yes	12
Ride 7	Yes	20
Ride 8	No	6

Table 10: Relationship between advertised rides and ride attendance within MCR

Apart from the MCR's overt use of Instagram as an advertising space, the platform is used for self-expressive purposes that also operate as a billboard for the group. As previously discussed, the MCR's Instagram page is usually the first contact point for many riders who have never heard of the group or are interesting in joining. As a result, the visuals that are communicated to the public say a lot about the group and their activities. The use of visually appealing photos within these posts can still be seen as a means of branding and advertising for the group because it communicates a great deal about MCR. In view of this, the use of these self-expressive photos becomes a form of communication and self-promotion on behalf of the MCR, intentionally or unintentionally. Accordingly, the non-advertisement posts operate as a representation of the group. Based on the above, it can therefore be seen that the MCR's lifestyle branding is sustained by Instagram which is at the centre of how the group operates and brands itself.

6.2.3 Brands and Commercial Entities

As previously mentioned, the use of the '@' function has been understood as a currency and a profitable function on Instagram. Instagram users have been able to generate profits in exchange for mentioning or tagging numerous brands and commercial entities in a post through the '@' function. This exchange is not always through direct revenue but it can also be the exchange of photos for luxury items and access to exclusive products for the users (Samp, 2014). Accordingly, it was fundamental to discuss the most frequently mentioned accounts on the MCR's Instagram page. With regards to the most frequently mentioned users, it was established *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* were the two most frequently mentioned users and both were mentioned in 47% of the posts that were analysed. Of these posts, 88% of them were MCR ride advertisement posts. In order to fully understand the aforesaid, it is essential to provide a better understanding of *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes*

Love Revo is a Maboneng-based African bistro that serves Tapas - small savoury dishes, typically served with drinks at a bar (Hippy, 2017; Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). The restaurant aims to attract the cosmopolitan consumer through Bohemian meals, cocktails and wines (Hippy, 2017). The concept behind *Love Revo* is to create a food revolution where a person is able to create their own meal with smaller dishes unlike other restaurants (Hippy, 2017). Additionally, most of the dishes that are offered are locally inspired and they are also organic (Hippy, 2017). Essentially, the restaurant's emphasis is on "the ambience through the music played, the funky chic décor, the large bar mixing all types of alcohol and the affordable

meals prepared with quality meats" (Food24, 2016). As a result of the restaurant's authenticity and where it is located, it has become a space for creatives and hipsters to hang out. The fundamental aspect with regards to *Love Revo* is that is the marked starting and end location for all the MCR rides. All the rides that were attended started and ended at *Love Revo*. Furthermore, this was clear in the advertisement posts for the rides that were promoted on Instagram. More importantly, *Love Revo* is owned by Senzo Mncadi who is also the founder of the MCR.

Get Fixied Bikes is a bicycle rental company that was developed as a product of the MCR. The MCR became increasingly aware of the fact that the many people were interesting in cycling but they did not have bicycles. Accordingly, *Get Fixied Bikes* was created. Thus, the rental company aims to provide people without their own bicycles with the necessary equipment that is trendy and modern in order to allow them to fit into the group (Mncadi, 2017). *Get Fixed Bikes* charges R150 per ride which includes a trendy fixie bike, a helmet and lights if the rides are at night (Mncadi, 2017). This is to ensure that all new riders are safe and protected at all times (Mncadi, 2017). *Get Fixied Bikes* is owned by Senzo Mncadi who is also one of the founder and owner of the MCR and *Love Revo* (Mncadi, 2017). In addition, *Get Fixied Bikes* is stationed at *Love Revo* in order to centralize the overall operations of the MCR (Hippy, 2017).

From all the above-presented, it can be established that the MCR, *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* have a symbiotic relationship with the MCR. From the observations at the rides, it was clear that the MCR uses *Love Revo* as a general meeting and starting location for all their rides. Furthermore, the fact that *Love Revo* is the general meeting and ending place for the rides, it is convenient to station *Get Fixied Bikes* in the same location. This makes the operations of the MCR more efficient in that everything is stationed in one location. In addition to the abovementioned, *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* were also the most visible brands and commercial entities at the rides that were attended. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that three of the rides that were attended had sponsored elements; of these rides, two of the rides were sponsored by *Love Revo*. Additionally, whenever the MCR have a ride, the group is encouraged to meet two hours prior at *Love Revo* as well as to rent bicycle through *Get Fixied Bikes*. During this period, several riders would purchase drinks and appetisers from *Love Revo* while waiting for the ride to begin. Furthermore, the rides all ended at *Love Revo* where the rental bikes and equipment are returned to *Get Fixied Bikes*. After these rides, some of the riders would stay behind at the restaurant to socialize and

mingle as well as purchase more drinks and food whilst the others parted ways and went home. Taking this explanation into consideration, it can be seen that a single MCR ride is generating profits for *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* via the people attending the MCR rides which all belong to one individual. A single advertisement post of the MCR rides on Instagram is resulting in riders simultaneously being directed to *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes*. Whilst there were other users mentioned, they did not appear frequently within the online and offline data collectively. However, these mentioned accounts were all directly related to the MCR either as riders, visited places and events attended during the rides as well as brands that were mentioned because they were related to the rides. Thus, all the mentioned users were directly related to the MCR as can be seen in table 11.

	Mentioned Users
MCR Riders	@mompatifm @leandreh @madmaxllew
MCR Visited Places and Events	@breezeblockbrixton @Maboneng @dusktilldawnjhb
Brands and Commercial Entities Affiliated to MCR Rides	@interfool_store @kcfcofficial @orlando_pirates @whippetcycles
Self-Promotional	@mabonengcityriders

Table 11: Mentioned users on MCR Instagram Page

Taking the aforesaid into consideration, it can be seen that the mentioning of these accounts also operates an advertisement for the brands and commercial entities that are all related to the Johannesburg cycling community. All these above-presented aspects reflect how profits are being directed to fewer hands as well as how the MCR rides are being used as a platform to generate attraction and revenue for these mentioned brands and commercial entities.

6.2.4 Answering the Question

Taking all the above into consideration, it can therefore be recognized that the MCR's lifestyle branding is generated and sustained by the photos created by the people who attend the rides, Instagram as a business, an advertising and self-expression space as well as brands and commercial entities such as *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes*. It can be argued that the MCR's lifestyle branding has generated an economy of its own as illustrated below in figure 21.

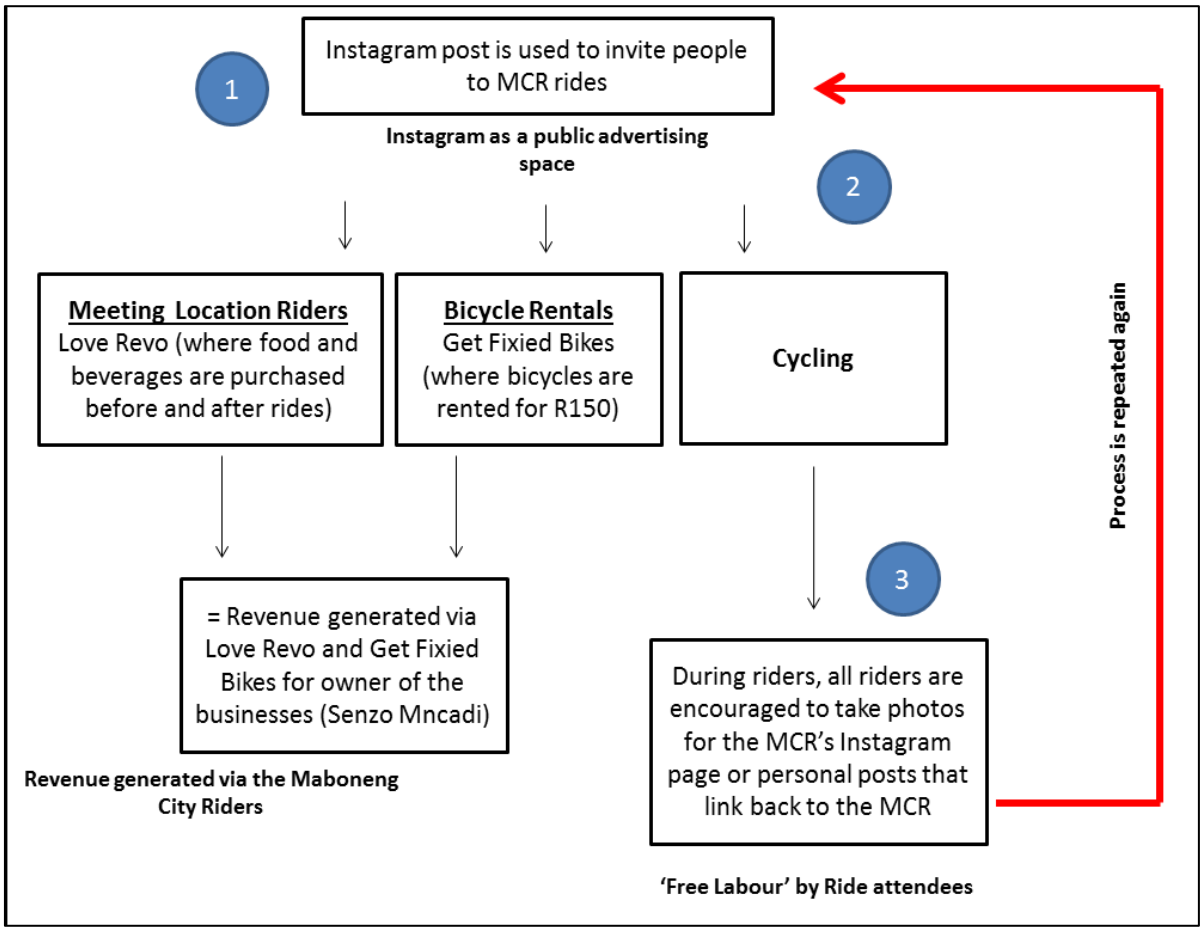


Figure 21: The Maboneng City Riders Economy

Taking the above-presented economy into consideration, it can be seen that the MCR has generated a well-organized economy. A ride is advertised on Instagram inviting old and new riders to participate. These riders are then asked to meet at *Love Revo*, 2 hours prior to the departure time, where they can also rent bicycles upon arrival at a cost of R150 with a helmet and a set of lights. Upon arrival at *Love Revo*, riders will generally sit and mingle as well as purchase appetizers and drinks from the restaurant. Once the ride starts, riders are encouraged to take many photos that they can later post on their own Instagram account or they can be shared in the MCR's WhatsApp group. These photos are often used on the MCR's Instagram page as a way of branding and advertising themselves to the general public and to invite people to join the rides. At the end of the ride, some rides go home and the others head back to *Love Revo* for drinks and food. Later, the photographs that are viewed as being high quality and representing the essence of the MCR are then posted on Instagram either as general cycling-related content or as an advertisement for the next ride. Accordingly, the abovementioned process is repeated again. It can therefore be deduced that at the centre of

the MCR's lifestyle branding is an economy that is proving to be quite profitable, not necessarily for the riders, but for the key stakeholders.

The aforesaid also reflects an interesting relationship that ties into the uses and gratifications theories (UGT) as well as capitalism and the critical political economy. With regards to UGT, the theory examines the reasons why people use the media, what they essentially do with the media and why they consume certain media over others (Katz, 1959). Based on the above-presented economy, it can be seen that MCR uses of Instagram ties into UGT's theorised uses of the media which are: obtaining information and knowledge, address audience's need for personal identity, social interaction and to maintain relationships with friends as well as the expression of opinions (Tanta et al. 2014; Whiting and Williams, 2013). The abovementioned economy also taps into UGT's discussion around how social media is a platform to produce and consume user-generated content. This economy shows how riders are generating their own content for the purpose of self-expression and self-fulfilment (Ward, 2016). These photos are the consumed by other users as a means of interacting with people while creating social connections in the process (Shao, 2009). Furthermore, this ties into UGT discussions around social and how the use of Instagram is seen as gratifying the need to communicate instantly through creative spaces. More importantly, this economy taps into a limitation of UGT by addressing how audiences use the media for commercial gain. This economy reflects the essence of capitalism as well as theories around the uses and gratifications. With regards to the rider-generated content, it can be seen that the riders are taking these photos as a means of gratifying "their interest in new ideas leads them out of a local circle of peer networks and into more cosmopolite social relationships" which is at the centre of the uses and gratifications theory (Rogers, 2010: 364). However, the fact that the photos that are produced by riders are being used by the MCR for branding and advertising purposes reflects the essence of capitalism and its intricacies. It can be seen that the abovementioned notion ties in directly with the notion of modern day capitalism and 'free labour'. In order for a capitalist environment to flourish, there is a need for labour (Jahan and Mahmud, 2015). This labour is traditionally exchanged for wages. In this instance, it would appear as if the people who attend these rides are essentially working for the MCR through their production of amateur photography and self-expression related images. The fact that these self-expressive photos are being used for advertising purposes shows that the participants are actually engaging in 'free-labour' because they are not actually receiving wages or compensation. This study therefore provides contemporary insights into how it is not the social media owners that are exploiting

its users through user-generated content but rather, it can be seen that is it also the users of Instagram themselves that are exploiting fellow users through the content that they produce.

In the context of Instagram especially, it can be seen that the findings of this study shows how the platform is both a space for self-expression as well as a space for commercialization. In addition, the MCR's use of Instagram reflects the arguments presented through the uses and gratifications theory. It can be seen that the MCR are using Instagram (which is 'the media') to gratify their need to expand the number of riders they have and to grow the group – thus, Instagram is being used as a branding and advertising tool. Accordingly, this study highlights an emerging aspect regarding the uses and gratifications that is rarely taken into account which is the use of the media for material and financial gain. The MCR use Instagram to brand the group through self-expressive content as well as to advertise to join the group's rides to the general public which again reflects the relationship between capitalism and the uses and gratifications of the media in that these aspects are able to co-exist on the same platform. A noteworthy aspect of the MCR's use of Instagram is how they are generating profits for Facebook through their use of WhatsApp and Instagram. This ties into the arguments presented by Fuchs (2014) that when users utilize these platforms and generate their own content as a form of self-expression, their data becomes a commodity that is sold to advertisers trough unpaid word. This also ties into one of the biggest criticisms of capitalism, as outlined by the critical political economy of the media, around the funding and ownership of the media. It can be seen that MCR is generating revenue for one company through their use of multiple platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp which shows how there are indeed fewer players within the media space as well as the concentration of the media (Doyle, 2002). Furthermore, it can be seen that through this concentrated ownership of the media, the media is being corporatized and is primarily interested in maximizing profits (Barwise et.al 2002).

An extension of the commercial aspect of Instagram is also how the MCR uses the platform to direct people to brands and commercial entities such as *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes*. The fact that the founder of the MCR is also the owner *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* ties in directly with the critique of capitalism and how private ownership results in fewer hands owning numerous entities and consequently, profits belonging to fewer hands (Michie and Lobaob, 2012). Thus, the MCR are essentially ensuring that the profits stay with their group. With regards to the mentioning of other users, it can be established that, though they do not necessarily benefit the same way that *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes* do, they are all related

back to the MCR which shows how the group does not stray from the core. From all the above, it can therefore be deduced that Instagram is the bridge between brands and commercial entities as well as ordinary people. This accordingly reflects how the platform does indeed represent the melee between culture, self-expression and business which has in essence translated into evidence of a new era of cultural production whereby consumers have become producers as well as distributors as argued by Bruns (2008). This notion of producers being consumers and vice versa reflects the core essence of a capitalism economy (Fuchs, 2013). Furthermore, the aforesaid reaffirms the notion that it is not only large-scale brands and commercial entities that have taken to using Instagram for its commercial benefits but also ordinary users that have become increasingly aware of the potential to capitalize on the growing popularity of the platform (see Archer and Harrigan, 2016). Consequently, users like the MCR are using Instagram to promote themselves, their lifestyles and their services with the sole purpose of generating profits and being commercially viable.

SECTION THREE: WHAT DOES MABONENG CITY RIDER'S USE OF INSTAGRAM REVEAL?

Based on all the material that has been provided, it can therefore be established that this study demonstrates that the Maboneng City Rider's use of Instagram reveals that Instagram is a staging space for identity performance - one that is not necessarily a direct correlation with their offline identity, as a means of lifestyle branding. The findings of this study demonstrate that the group's identity performance on Instagram puts forward a positive image of the group. As outlined by the findings from the analysis of the online data, it was established that MCR comes across as a trendy, casual and welcoming space for experienced and inexperienced riders who are interested in exploring Johannesburg through the use of bicycles. At the centre of this identity is their casual cycling attire, their use of fixie bikes as well as their general approach and attitude towards cycling. Furthermore, the group put forwards an image that they are a counter-cultural group because their riders are predominantly Black which demystifies the perception that cycling in Johannesburg is a primarily White activity. In addition, it can also be established from their Instagram identity that the MCR is more than just cycling group but instead, they represent a lifestyle founded on the activity of cycling. Accordingly, it can be established that the MCR, to a certain extent, uses Instagram as form of self-expression through their posting of rides as well as other cycling-related content that pertains to the group's interests. However, when looking at the analysis of the offline data, it was established that whilst there was some correlation

between online and offline identity, there were several aspects in reality that were omitted on Instagram. This included the lack of safety and safety equipment such as lights for the night rides, helmets as well as bicycle repair kits. The fact that regular and experienced riders were treated very differently to the new and inexperienced riders during the MCR ride as well as the reference to the fact that certain commitments such as the handing over of prizes and providing the sponsored elements of the rides were not met, all reflect this. The reference to the fact that the group was not always a pleasant environment and that there was often tension at the rides due to internal conflict supports this notion.

This shows how the MCR deliberately choose to put on a selected and nuanced version of themselves as a means of putting forward a positive and favourable identity on Instagram which is the essence the performance of self. It can therefore be established that this study confirms the argument that the assumption that the online and offline identities are unrelated is a sweeping statement as can be seen with the MCR (Durante, 2011). The fact there was a correlation, to a certain extent, between the MCR's posts on Instagram and the realities of the cycling group confirms this.

However, there were also several undesirable aspects that were observed in reality that were completely misaligned with what was put forward on the group's Instagram page. This reaffirms Goffman's discussion around people deliberately omitting selected aspects of the identity in order to make themselves seem more appealing. According to Goffman (1956), an individual or group will try to put forward a certain image of themselves. This can be done by altering and correcting their setting and appearance. This performance is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the individual or group but rather a selected view of what the 'performer' wants the audience to see and what they choose to conceal. The MCR are therefore putting on a performance for anyone who follows or comes into contact with the group on Instagram. Many of the riders who participate in the MCR rides found out about the group through Instagram and after viewing several posts, they then decided to participate in the rides. An outsider, who only knows the group via Instagram, would look at the MCR at the as an enjoyable, trendy, casual and inviting environment therefore making them want to join the group. This is primarily because the media representation of the MCR becomes the first point of contact for these people thus, it is important for the group to put forward an image that will make someone want to join the group.

The reference to the idea the identity put forward on Instagram becomes the first contact point for the outside world shows the significance of the group's media representation. This notion of media representation being the first point of contact for people is the core essence of branding. Branding is how an establishment creates a certain image of itself to its consumers and target market (DeBara, 2017). At the centre of this is the brand's identity which is a collection of various elements that are developed as a means of portraying the ideal image of themselves which makes these the groups or establishments distinctly recognizable. Thus, the brand identity is how these groups or establishments build relationships and connections with their consumer-base. For these reasons, the aim of branding is to show their uniqueness from others, irrespective of how average a product or experience may be. Tying this into the MCR, it can be established that the MCR are branding themselves. More specifically, they are lifestyle branding because the MCR has been identified as a lifestyle. As previously outlined, lifestyle branding is not necessarily about creating an advertisement but it is about creating an identity around a certain area of life (Cull, 2017). Furthermore, this type of branding aims to exemplify the interest, attitudes and opinions of a group or a culture (Turner, 2016). In order to build a lifestyle brand, there needs to be a community of likeminded people or people with similar interests (Kressmann, 2016). This reflects the essence of the MCR. Through the group's 'performance of self', it can be argued that they are creating an identity around Johannesburg-cycling as an area of life. Furthermore, this identity that is put forward on Instagram can be seen as trying to represent the interests and attitudes of the MCR. This identity will accordingly attract likeminded people or people who are interested in the cycling group. On the other end of the spectrum, it is vital to understand the challenges of branding and that is the difference between good branding and a poor branding experience. Whilst the essence of successful branding is to never reveal the flaws in the product or experience that is being sold, the reality of the brand experience can prove otherwise because absolute control of a brand is impossible (Fullerton, 2017). Accordingly, having a perfected image on social media is not sufficient if the reality of the product or experience is not picture-perfect (Fullerton, 2017). This is the challenge that is faced by MCR. The fact that the online identity is being used to brand the group but the offline identity and experience of the group suggests otherwise is an example of this challenge. It would be high unlikely for the MCR to have actually have publicized the inadequacies of the group. If the MCR had advertised that they had a shortage of helmets and lights as well as the fact that even though the group is not a competitive space, it's not necessarily for new and experienced riders, people would not be interested in the joining the

group and participating in rides. Instead, these actualities were discovered in reality which is the brand experience.

Taking all of this into consideration, it can therefore be argued that the MCR's performance of self through lifestyle branding reflects the essence of Goffman's (1956) metaphorical description of a theatre and dramaturgy as means describing identity performance in various settings. Looking at his key analogy of the front stage and the backstage, it can be argued that this represents the essence of the MCR's performance of self. With regards to the front stage, it can be seen that the MCR's performance on Instagram reflects this whereby Instagram is the staging space for this performance. Instagram is the space where the group is well aware they are being closely watched thus, there is a need for their performance to be at its best. Hence, the best versions and desired aspects of the group are put forward on the platform (Tashmin, 2016). If the back stage is taken into consideration, this is the part where the performers are no longer being watched by the audience thus, they no longer have to perform which allows the performers to be their true self (Tashmin, 2016). Therefore, the MCR's offline activity, which is the real life cycling aspect of the group, can therefore be seen as the 'back stage' region of their identity performance. It is important to highlight that the 'offstage' is not factored in because the offline interactions are seen as the backstage as the online interactions as the front stage (as argued by Hogan, 2010; Pearson, 2009; Miller and Arnold, 2009; Gilmore, 2014; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). Thus, this is part where the MCR reveals the misalignment of their identities in online and offline spaces. It can therefore be concluded these stages of the performance of self by the MCR are reflective of the essence of their lifestyle branding on Instagram.

Expanding on Goffman's dramaturgy metaphor, the front stage is where the main performance takes place and it is therefore what the audience pays for when they go to the theatre. Additionally, because the front stage is where the main performance takes place, it is also a platform for self-expression through performance, especially on the part of the scriptwriters and directors. In the context of Instagram which is the front stage of the MCR's identity performance, it can be seen that Instagram mirrors this analogy. Based on the findings of this study, it can be established that Instagram is indeed a platform for self-expression and commercialization and at the centre of this melee is lifestyle branding. The MCR's use Instagram as form of self-expression through the content they share about their activities, whereabouts as well as other content that is related to cycling. Furthermore, even though the group puts forward the ideal versions of themselves, it is still a form of self-

expression which has become a tool to brand the MCR and their lifestyle. On the other hand, the MCR also uses the platform to promote and advertise themselves which shows the ability of Instagram to operate as a commercial space. Advertising is a tool used to enhance the brand's identity and branding gives the direction to advertising (DeBara, 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that Instagram enables the MCR's lifestyle branding because of its dual function as both a commercial and self-expressive space.

Based on all evidence supplied by this study, it can therefore be concluded that the MCR are branding their lifestyle through the performance of self. At the centre of this performance is Instagram as both a staging space to show the MCR's creativity and self-expression but more importantly, it is a platform being used to brand the MCR as a lifestyle which is proving to be a profitable space. Whilst this branding is only benefitting a few people, it has also proven to be a highly effective system. In conclusion, it can therefore be established that the findings of this study shows how the nature of Instagram enables lifestyle and branding to connect on social media through identity performance – a performance that is essentially feeding profits back to the founder of the MCR and brands and commercial entities that are directly related to it.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION TO STUDY

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to provide valuable insights into what the Maboneng City Rider's use of Instagram revealed about the lifestyle branding via the performance self by exploring the group's online and offline identity as well as looking into the economies that are generated and sustained by the lifestyle branding. This was done by firstly providing a review of academic contributions and literature that would best explore and ground the research topic presented. This was done by discussing Johannesburg's landscape and the existing perceptions of cycling in the city, Instagram as a platform for self-expression and a commercial space as well as how lifestyle branding has become a fundamental representation of its two-fold nature as well as identity performance in the context of online and offline spaces. Secondly, the study provided a collection of four integral academic theories as a means of carving out the most feasible justification for this study. These theories included the uses and gratifications theory, theories relating to capitalism and its critique through the discussion of the critical political economy of the media, Erving Goffman's concept relating to the performance of self as well as Baudrillard's arguments on postmodernism and media representation. Thirdly, this study used a mixed-methodology that included participant observation, visual analysis and content analysis as a means of best addressing the research questions. This was the followed by a discussion of the research findings that were extracted via the methodologies which all led to addressing the research questions at hand.

The findings of this study essentially reveal that the MCR are branding their lifestyle through the performance of self – a performance that differs in online and offline spaces. At the centre of this performance is Instagram as both a staging space to show the MCR's creativity and self-expression but more importantly, it is a platform being used to brand the MCR as a lifestyle which is proving to be a profitable space. The findings also revealed that the MCR's lifestyle branding was generated and sustained by the photos created by the people who attend the rides, Instagram as a business, an advertising space and self-expression space as well as brands and commercial entities such as *Love Revo* and *Get Fixied Bikes*.

Overall, this study has therefore contributed to a wide field of study that relates to social media and the performance of self. However, this study expands on this field of academia by discussing how lifestyle and branding come together on Instagram. Moreover, it contributes to a field of research into capitalism and social media marketing in the age of visual and

digital communication. Furthermore, there is very little research, if any, into the relationship between lifestyle branding and identity performance which yet another gap that this study is contributing towards. More importantly, the research into the mediation of Instagram and urban cycling in Johannesburg, to the best knowledge of the researcher, is yet to be studied and conceptualized. Therefore, this study has contributed to a field of Media Studies that has not been explored in academia. Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of viral social media marketing and online group self-construction.

Limitations of Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides valuable insight into the performance of self as a means of lifestyle branding as well as how this is done through the mediation of Instagram and urban-cycling in Johannesburg. As insightful as these findings are, there are some limitations that can be explored in future research. The *first* limitation is that this study focuses on the MCR as a representation of identity performance as a means of lifestyle branding through the use of Instagram. The limitation here is that there is a possibility that other social cycling groups behave differently and use the platform for different purposes. Thus, this study can be improved by expanding into various types of cycling groups in Johannesburg. The *second* limitation is the amount of the time that was spent with the MCR. As previously outlined, the researcher spent 10 weeks immersed in the MCR. Whilst this period was sufficient for the study at hand, it would be particularly insightful to see what the data findings would have revealed if more time was spent within the group. This would have allowed the researcher to understand if the MCR behave differently at various times of the year as well as whether their identity performance varies accordingly. If this was done, there is a high likelihood that richer findings could have been collected from the online and offline data. The *third* limitation of this study is how it does not provide an in-depth understanding of the rider's perceptions of the MCR and their behaviour. As the study at hand relied purely on the observations and conclusions of the researcher, it can be argued that it is a subjective assessment of the MCR. It would have therefore been insightful to understand if these findings were in line with how the people attending the rides felt about the MCR. Even though the researcher attempted to do so through the use of participant observation, it was done of a small-scale and only when an observation required further clarity. Similarly, in relation to the analysis of the Instagram posts, it would have been insightful to understand how the followers of the MCR perceive the group in relation to the identity that they put forward of themselves on platform as oppose to purely relying on the researchers views as well as the comments and likes generated by the

posts. Therefore, the use of perceptions and discernments from the some of the people participating in the rides and following the MCR on Instagram would have contributed to the richness of the research findings of this paper. Taking all of these limitations into consideration, it can be established that even though the findings of the study are sufficient a paper of this nature, there are indeed areas for improvement that can be looked into in the near future.

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APPENDIX ONE: ANALYSED INSTAGRAM POSTS

Post 1



Post 2



Post 3



Post 4



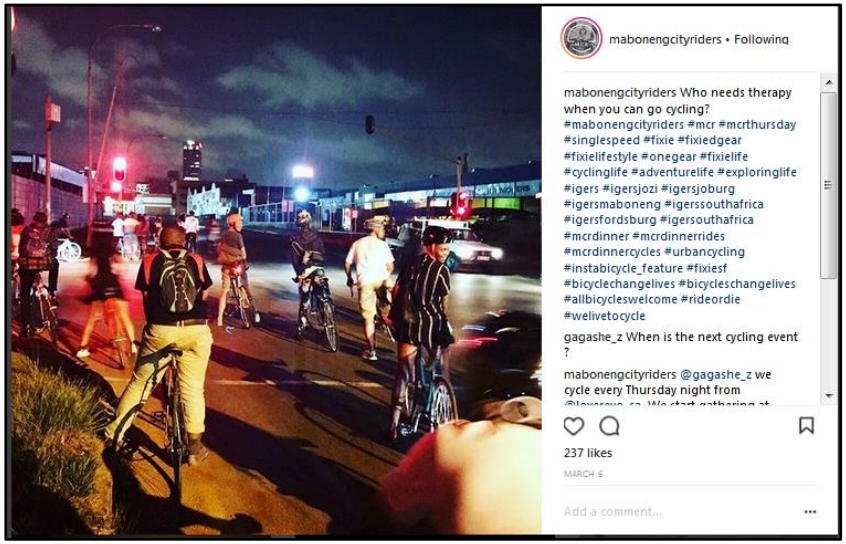
Post 5



Post 6



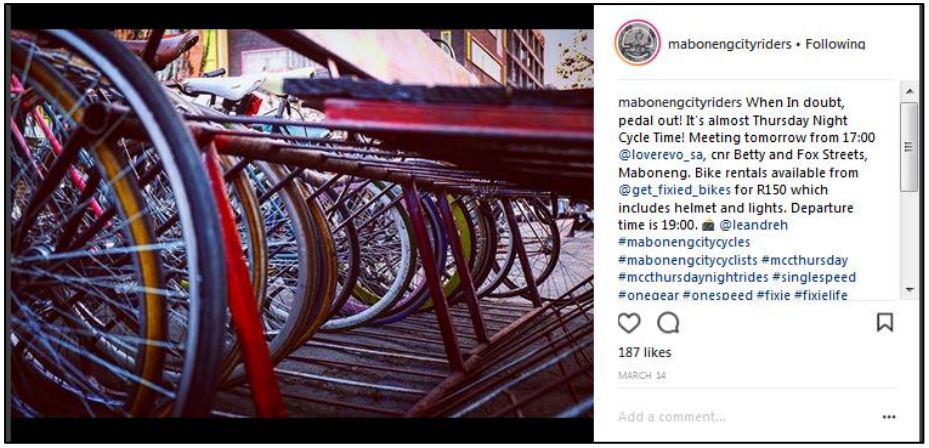
Post 7



Post 8



Post 9



Post 10



Post 11



Post 12



Post 13



Post 14



Post 15



APPENDIX TWO: CODING MANUALS - DESCRIPTORS

Type of Post

After a general analysis of the Instagram posts, two types of posts were identified: Maboneng City Rider specific content and content related to other groups. This was determined by the captions of the photo. This difference is illustrated below.

Example of Posts on behalf of other Cycling Groups





Example of MCR Specific Post





Description	Posts that do not make reference to the MCR	Posts that make a reference to the MCR
Example:	Other Cycling Groups	MCR Content
	Join @whippetcycles tomorrow for a fun ride. 11am for 11:30am start. Food and drinks will be available from @breezeblockbrixton. No helmet no ride.	Blessed Easter weekend to every cyclist out there from us passionate city riders @mabonengcityriders.

Function of Post

After a general analysis of the Instagram posts, two functions were identified: advertisement posts and general content related to cycling. This was determined by the captions of the photo. This difference is illustrated below.

Example of General Cycling Content Post



Example of Advertisement Post



Description	Posts that makes reference to cycling in general	Posts that are advertising or inviting people somewhere
Example:	General Cycling Content	Advertisement Post
	Who needs therapy when you can go cycling?	Tonight we ride! It'll be a short one, but it'll be worth it! We meet from @loverevo_sa at 17:00, leaving at 19:00. #bikerentals available from @get_fixied_bikes for R150 with lights and a helmet. Photo by @mompatifm

What is being advertised?

After a general analysis of advertisement posts, it was established that there were various riders that were being advertised based on the caption. This is illustrated below:

Description	MCR Thursday Night Ride	MCR Soweto Derby Themed Ride	MCR RSA-Swaziland-Mozambique Ride	Whippet Cycle Freedom Day Ride
Example:	Tonight we tackle Rosebank for First Thursday's! Please join us at the usual time slot, from 17:00 @loverevo_sa, leaving at 19:00. #bikerentals available from @get_fixied_bikes for R150 with lights and a helmet.	This Saturday we tackle the Soweto Derby at FNB Stadium!Bring or hire a bike and get your @kcfcofficial or @orlando_pirates crew to witness the #sowetoderby with us. We're meeting at @loverevo_sa and leave at 12h00 sharp on the 3rd of March 2018. Price is R100 for your ticket and an additional R150 if you will be hiring a bicycle from @get_fixied_bikes.	Our boys are on another mission! Next week they will be leaving @Maboneng and cycling through Swaziland to reach their final destination Bilene, Mozambique! We wish them all the best in this exciting adventure!	Join @whippetcycles tomorrow for a fun ride. 11am for 11:30am start. Food and drinks will be available from @breezeblockbrixton. No helmet no ride.

		Which team will win??? Join us and come see!		

Branded vs Non-Branded Photos

After a general analysis of the Instagram posts, it was established that there were two types of images that were

Example the use of a branded image in Instagram post



Example the use of a non-branded image in Instagram post



used: branded and non-branded images. This difference is illustrated below:

Description	Branded Photo	Non-branded Photo
	Photos with a brand or commercial entity logo over it	Photos without a brand or commercial entity logo over it

Types of Comments

After a general analysis of the comment on the Instagram posts, it was established that there were 5 types of comment categories as illustrated below.

Types of Comment	**Description**	**Example**
General Commentary	Comments that are making non-specific commentary on the posts	@User: "love your style, keep it up!"
Post Sharing	Comments that have users mentioning or tagging other users	@User: " @zwakalabrewery @lulutooley check these oaks"
Comment of Rides	Comments that are directly linked to ride attendance or rides that were attended	@User: "Il be there can't wait 🏃"

Queries (Questions and Answers)	Comments that are asking questions or addressing questions within the post	@User: "When is the next cycling event?"
Other	Comments that do not fit the abovementioned descriptions	@User: "#nobikenolife'

Furthermore, these comments were then group according to whether they were positive. Neutral or negative comments as illustrated below.

Sentiment of Comment	**Description**	**Example**
Positive	Comments are encouraging, optimistic and constructive	@User: "love your style, keep it up!"
Neutral	Comments that are neither positive nor negative	@User: "When is the next cycling event?"
Negative	Comments that lack positive attributes and are disparaging	@User: "I hate this group"

Hashtags

From the 15 posts that were analysed, it was established 357 hashtags were used in total. For the purpose of this study, the frequency of the appearance of unique hashtags were taken into consideration; once this was done, only the top 25% of the most frequently appearing hashtags were taken into consideration then grouped and tallied as illustrated below.

Hashtag Categories	**Description**	**Example**
Bicycle Type	Hashtags making reference to a type of bicycle	#fixie #singlespeed
MCR Community	Hashtags making reference to the MCR	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengcitycycles
'Igers Community'	Hashtags making reference to the 'igers' or 'Instagrammers' communities	#igers #igersjozi #igersouthafrica
Perceptions	Hashtags making reference to sentiments or view about the content related to the post	#bicyclechangelives #alwaysfun #fun

General Cycling-related	Hashtags making reference to cycling	#instabicycle_feature #urbancycling
Other	Hashtags that do not fit into any of the abovementioned	#sowetoderby

CODING SHEET

Based on all the above descriptors, three coding sheets were developed which were populated and can be founding in appendix (insert number)

SHEET ONE

Post Number	Type Of Post	Function	What Is Being Advertised	Number of Likes	Tagged/Mentioned Users	Type of Photo Used	Hashtags Used

SHEET TWO

Post Number	Comment	Type of Comment	Positive/Neutral/Negative

SHEET THREE

Hashtag Categories	Hashtags Considered	Total Frequency

APPENDIX THREE: POPULATED CODING SHEETS

APPENDIX THREE: POPULATED CODING SHEETS

Post Number	Type Of Post	Function	What Is Being Advertised	Number of Likes	Tagged/Mentioned Users	Type of Photo Used	Hashtags Used
1	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR Thursday Night Ride	236	@dusktilldawnjhb @loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes @mompatifm	Non-Branded	#mcrthursday #mcrthursdays #thursdaynightride #thursdaynightcycle #singlespeed #fixie #fixielife #fixiedgear #fun #alwaysfun #friends #family #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igerssouthafrica #igersouthafrica #bicyclechangelives #bicyclechangeslives #southafricabybike #allbicycleswelcome
2	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		205	@madmaxllew	Non-Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengcitycycles #mabonengcitycyclists #mcr #mcc #singlespeed #fixie #fixielife #fixielifestyle #onespeed #steelisreal #fun #alwaysfun #friends #family #explore #igers #igersjozi #igersmaboneng #igersrevolution #revolutionhouse #meetsouthafrica #southafricabybike #southafricabybicycle #bicyclechangelives #bicyclechangeslives
3	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		315		Non-Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengcitycyclists #mabonengcitycycles #mcrweekend #mcrweekendcycle #mcrweekendride #instaride #instabicycle_feature #urbancycling #bicyclechangelives #bicyclechangeslives #shotleft #sowetobybike #igers #igersjozi #igerssoweto #igersoweto #igerssouthafrica #igersouthafrica #meetsouthafrica#shovanathi #shovanathiekasi #masemenecycles
4	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR Soweto Derby Themed	75	@kcfcofficial @orlando_pirates @loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes	Branded	#mabonengcitycyclists #sowetoderby #chiefsfc #piratesfc #soccercity #mabonengcitycycles #sowetoderbycycle #get_fixied #bikerental #singlespeed #fixie #fixielife #fixielifestyle #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #fun #alwaysfun #friends #family #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersfnbstadium #igerssoccercity #igerssouthafrica #igersouthafrica #igersmaboneng
5	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	Ride MCR Thursday Night Ride	197	@loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes	Non-Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mcrthursday #singlespeed #fixie #fixiedgear #fixielifestyle #onegear #fixielife #cyclinglife #adventurelife #exploringlife #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersmaboneng #igerssouthafrica #igersbedfordview #igersouthafrica #mcrdinner #mcrdinnerrides #mcrdinnercycles #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #bicyclechangelives #bicycleschangelives
6	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		298		Non-Branded	#sowetoderby #3-1 #chiefsfc #piratesfc #soccercity #mabonengcitycycles #sowetoderbycycle #get_fixied #bikerental #singlespeed #fixie #fixielife #fixielifestyle #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #fun #alwaysfun #friends #family #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersfnbstadium #igerssoccercity #igerssouthafrica #igersouthafrica #igersmaboneng
7	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		237		Non-Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mcr #mcrthursday #singlespeed #fixie #fixiedgear #fixielifestyle #onegear #fixielife #cyclinglife #adventurelife #exploringlife #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersmaboneng #igerssouthafrica #igersfordsburg #igersouthafrica #mcrdinner #mcrdinnerrides #mcrdinnercycles #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #bicyclechangelives #bicycleschangelives #allbicycleswelcome #rideordie #welivetocycle
8	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR Thursday Night Ride	117	@loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes	Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mcrthursday #singlespeed #fixie #fixiedgear #fixielifestyle #onegear #fixielife #cyclinglife #adventurelife #exploringlife #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersmaboneng #igerssouthafrica #igersbedfordview #igersouthafrica #mcrdinner #mcrdinnerrides

							#mcrdinnercycles #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #bicyclechangelives #bicycleschangelives
9	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR Thursday Night Ride	187	@loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes @leandreh	Non-Branded	#mabonengcitycycles #mabonengcitycyclists #mccthursday #mccthursdaynightrides #singlespeed #onegear #onespeed #fixie #fixielife #fixielifestyle #cyclinglife #instafun #instagood #instafixie #instacycling #instabicycle_feature #urbancycling #igers #igersmaboneng #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igerskensington #igersbedford #igersouthafrica #igerssouthafrica #get_fixied_bikes #bikerental
10	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR Thursday Night Ride	214	@loverevo_sa @get_fixied_bikes @mompatifm	Non-Branded	#mabonengcitycyclists #mabonengcitycycles #mccthursday #singlespeed #fixie #fixiedgear #fixielifestyle #onegear #fixielife #cyclinglife #adventurelife #exploringlife #bikepod #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersmaboneng #igerssouthafrica #igersbrixton #igersouthafrica #mccdinner #mccdinnerrides #mccdinnercycles #urbancycling #instabicycle_feature #fixiesf #constitutionalhill
11	Other Cycling Groups	Ride Advertisement	Whippet Cycle Freedom Day Ride	80	@whippetcycles @breezeblockbrixton	Branded	#social #whippetxprojects #whippetcycles #whippetcyclingco #jozimyjozi #jozilife #jozistreets #jozi #johannesburg #visitgauteng #GPLifestyle #myjozistreets #cyclists #humanrightsday #publicholiday #fixie #cyclelife #mabonengcityriders #mabonengcitycyclists #mcr #brixton #discoverbrixton
12	MCR Content	Ride Advertisement	MCR RSA-Swaziland-Mozambique Ride	89	@Maboneng	Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengcityriders #mcr #mcrtravels #mcctravels #mccexplores #mcradventures #mccadventures #gearedbike #multispeed #multispeedbike #changinggears #cyclinglife #instafun #instagood #instacycling #igers #igersjozi #igersjoburg #igersswaziland #igersmozambique #igersouthafrica #igerssouthafrica #mcrgoesinternational
13	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		171	@mabonengcityriders	Non-Branded	#mabonengcityriders #mabonengprecinct #mabonengcitycycles #nightride #citynightlife #cyclists #nightriders #fixie #fixielifestyle #singlespeed #cyclinglife #cyclingcrew
14	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		132	@interfool_store @get_fixied_bikes @loverevo_sa	Non-Branded	#2spin #biketour #biketouring #mabonengcityriders #mcctravels #instagood #instabike #fixie #fixiegram #fixieporn #jhb2moz #joburg #joburgcity #cyclist #interfool #loverevo #getfixied
15	MCR Content	General Cycling Content		211		Non-Branded	#fixie #fixieporn #fixiegang #bikecrew #fixiegram #indwangu #indwangurides #loverevo #getfixied #suits #instasuits #instasuits #mensstyle #mabonengprecinct #mabonengvibes

POPULATED CODING SHEET 2

Post Number	Comment	Type of Comment	Positive/Neutral/Negative
1	Thank you for sharing!	General Commentary	Positive
2	Welcome back	Comments About Rides	Positive
3	zwakalabrewery@lulutooley check these oaks	Post Sharing	Neutral
	@reubenpople @maxime.michelet	Post Sharing	Neutral

	Hadn't seen you guys in a while ☺👍✔	Comments About Rides	Positive
4	So cool	General Commentary	Positive
	Il be there can't wait🏃	Comments About Rides	Positive
	Wish we could be there for this!	Comments About Rides	Positive
5	🚵	General Commentary	Positive
	Wow brilliant 😍😍😍	General Commentary	Positive
	Yesssssss	General Commentary	Positive
	(handstand emoji x 5)	General Commentary	Positive
	Great	General Commentary	Positive
6	☠	Comments About Rides	Neutral
	#incredible :)	General Commentary	Positive
	👋☺👍	General Commentary	Positive
	Nice one Senzo and the gang! 🎸□□□🚁 Big Up for keeping the movement alive 🚵□	General Commentary	Positive
	much love Bro	General Commentary	Positive
7	When is the next cycling event ?	Queries (Questions and Answers)	Neutral
	We cycle every Thursday night from @loverevo_sa. We start gathering at 17h00 but leave to our destination at 19h00!	Queries (Questions and Answers)	Neutral
	· @that_zakesguy	Post Sharing	Neutral
	Love your photos. Follow us and tag us in your photos to be featured ☺	General Commentary	Positive
	Sweet!!	General Commentary	Positive
	Can I join I love your bio	Queries (Questions and Answers)	Positive
8	Niggaz we need to go do this again soon @tshepophukuntsi !	Post Sharing	Positive
9	Nice shot	General Commentary	Positive
10	love your style, keep it up!	General Commentary	Positive
11	Rekaofela	Comments About Rides	Neutral
	If you guys are riding on Thursday, please make your end point agog gallery in Maboneng for Last Thursday 🙏	Queries (Questions and Answers)	Neutral
12	#nobikenolife	Other	Neutral
13			
14			

15	All over it with Love	General Commentary	Positive

POPULATED CODING SHEET 3

Hashtag Categories	Hashtags Considered	Total Frequency		Hashtag Categories	Hashtags Considered	Total Frequency
Bicycle Type	#fixie	13		Perceptions	#bicyclechangelives	12
	#singlespeed	10			#alwaysfun	4
	#fixielife	9			#fun	4
	#fixielifestyle	8			#adventurelife	4
	#onegear/speed	7			#exploringlife	4
	#fixiesf	6			#family	4
	#fixiedgear	5			#friends	4
MCR Community	#mabonengcityriders	10			#instagood	3
	#mabonengcitycycles	7		General Cycling-related	#instabicycle_feature	8
	#mabonengcitycyclists	6			#urbancycling	8
	#mcrdinnercycles/rides	6			#bikerental/s	7
	#mcrthursday/s	5			#cyclinglife	7
	#mcr	4			#cyclist/s	3
	#mcrdinner	3			#southafricabybicycle/bike	3
Igers	#igers	11		Other	#sowetoderby	3
	#igersjozi	11				
	#igersouthafrica	10				
	#igerssouthafrica	10				
	#igersjoburg	9				
	#igersmaboneng	8				
	#igersbedford/view	3				

APPENDIX FOUR: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE