

https://dspace.org/

Cryptococcal Antigenemia in Advanced Human Immunodeficiency Virus Disease Pathophysiology Epidemiology and Clinical Implications

R M Wake; Sile Molloy; J N Jarvis; T S Harrison; Nelesh Govender

OXFORD UNIV PRESS INC
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/39101
WOS

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Communicatio

South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcsa20

Real Men Do Good Sex: Black South African Masculinities in Men's Clinic International Adverts

Ayanda Myeza & Nicky Falkof

To cite this article: Ayanda Myeza & Nicky Falkof (2023) Real Men Do Good Sex: Black South African Masculinities in Men's Clinic International Adverts, Communicatio, 49:3-4, 23-40, DOI: 10.1080/02500167.2023.2293707

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2023.2293707

Published online: 31 Jan 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rcsa20

Article

Real Men Do Good Sex: Black South African Masculinities in Men's Clinic International Adverts

Ayanda Myeza
University of the Witwatersrand,
South Africa

Nicky Falkof
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2095-6678
University of the Witwatersrand,
South Africa
nicky.falkof@wits.ac.za

Abstract

This article focuses on the representations of black masculinities in television advertisements for Men's Clinic International, a popular franchise of clinics in South Africa that specialises in men's sexual and reproductive health. It explores the ideological assumptions underlying the various constructions of manhood portrayed in the adverts in relation to men's sexual health. Three interconnected themes emerged from the analysis of the texts, namely the centrality of the phallic, masculinity as a sexual performance and the nature and representation of femininities. The article discusses how the adverts work to portray models of black masculinity and male sexuality in such a way that "true" manhood is framed as heterosexual, monogamous, intertwined with male vulnerabilities, performance-based and largely dependent on the female partner's sexual satisfaction.

Keywords: advertising; masculinity; race; sexual health; South Africa

UNISA university of south africa PRESS | Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

Communicatio
www.tandfonline.com/RCSA
Volume 49 | Number 3–4 | 2023 | pp. 23–40

https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2023.2293707
ISSN 1753-5379 (Online), ISSN 0250-0167 (Print)
© Unisa Press 2024

Introduction

Men's Clinic International, a well-known South African medical franchise, specialises in conditions that affect male sexual and reproductive health. As well as being a healthcare provider, Men's Clinic International (henceforth MCI) positions itself as a lifestyle brand: alongside assistance with medical issues, its advertising also implies that it supports clients in accessing, retaining or regaining a particular kind of masculinity. Rather than operating within a biomedical or scientific frame, the chain's television adverts are aspirational and witty, positing sexual health as one of a number of markers of masculine success.

Most conditions that MCI specialises in can affect any man, regardless of demographics such as class, sexuality or race. Despite this, MCI's adverts tend to feature black men who are solely presented as heterosexual and middle class. They are aimed at a specific race-class market, and make this clear by utilising social, representational and even linguistic markers. The ads are in English and feature either monogamous heterosexual couples (rather than traditional relationship forms like polygamy) or single men trying to "get" conventionally attractive women (slender, well-groomed and well-dressed). Everyone who features in the ads speaks and is dressed in ways that connote urban Westernised class performance, in some instances undertaking recognisable forms of middle class leisure. We can safely assume that MCI aims its advertising at the middle class as its products are beyond the financial reach of working class South Africans, who are more likely to use indigenous remedies for sexual dysfunction than allopathic medications like Viagra, which are prescribed by MCI. This illustrates that the close link between black masculinity and consumption, which characterises neoliberal South Africa (Leopeng and Langa 2019), is equally present in the area of sexuality.

This article focuses on the ideological assumptions underlying these representations of middle class black men and masculinities. It examines the ways in which the adverts frame the relationship between manhood and sexual health, arguing that they present an inherent contradiction. In one sense they offer a version of gender that departs from normative stereotypes common to South African media by emphasising men's emotional lives, commitment to monogamy and responsibility for female sexual satisfaction, and women's involvement as equal and agential sexual partners rather than simply passive recipients of male performance. In another sense, their prioritisation of heterosexuality and skilful sexual performance as vital elements of masculinity reinscribes hegemonic notions about manhood, potency and biology.

Connell (1995, 77) famously defined hegemonic masculinity as the dominant ideologies and practices that perpetuate and reinforce men's subordination of women and other men, and thus as a vital element of patriarchy. The concept of hegemonic masculinity "allows consideration of men's power over women, the multiple and unequal location of men themselves, fluidity in power relations and the persistence of patriarchal trends" (Morrell et al. 2013, 3). Men are forced to view, compare and understand themselves and other men in relation to established ideals, which gives rise to a hierarchy of

hegemonic, marginalised, complicit, subordinated and protest masculinities (Connell 1995). The contestation and conflict between these competing masculinities not only leads to violence (often inflicted on women, children and other men) but also inscribes violence, competition and domination as markers of manhood (Ratele 2016). Hegemonic masculinity suppresses and silences non-conforming models of masculinity, "positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy" (Morrell 1998, 608). In South Africa as elsewhere, current models of hegemonic masculinity are complicated by histories of structural oppression and economic and political injustice (Morrell 1998; Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger 2012). "South Africa is a highly contested society where a single national hegemony is not evident and, to the contrary, where hegemony has been forcibly contested for many years on grounds primarily of race and class, but also of ethnicity" (Morrell et al. 2013, 6). The intersection between class, race and gender is never simple.

Advertising Manhood

As well as providing audiences with information about consumer goods and services, advertising creates cultural meanings (Grau and Zotos 2016, 762). It presents images that have the potential to reorganise and restructure practices, attitudes, perceptions, and values (Dyer 2009, 2). Advertising plays an influential role in how we view and construct our various identities, including gender and sexuality (Dyer 2009). Most representations of masculinities and femininities within media texts rely on stereotypes, which can contribute to sustaining oppressive gender relations (Knoll, Eisend, and Steinhagen 2011; Scharrer 2012). "Gender stereotypes depicted in media portrayals … contribute to etching the prevailing conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity in terms of both descriptive as well as prescriptive stereotypes" (Fernandez and Menon 2022, 121).

Studies on South African advertising suggest that these representations rely heavily on stereotypes of gender roles, traits and behaviours (Collins 2011). Men are portrayed as providers while women are domestic caregivers; men are related to "masculine" products such as cars and tools rather than "feminine" products like domestic goods; men exhibit "manly" behaviours like being forceful and assertive (Furnham and Mak 1999). Relations between men and women are often presented as competitive rather than supportive, with women associated with emotionality and neediness and men associated with "strength" (Leopeng and Langa 2020). Television advertising often presents white masculinities as exemplars of "positive", that is, non-violent, dominance and power, in contrast to black manhood, which is constructed as aggressive and violent (Luyt 2011)—this despite white masculinities' long histories of violence in South Africa. In addition to reflecting the racial inequalities that are a legacy of apartheid, these representations maintain hierarchical social relations amongst men.

The most extensive literature on the intersection between advertising and masculinities emerges from the Global North. Scholars writing about print advertisements in men's magazines, for example, argue that these images emphasise physicality and appearance, idealising a model of Western heterosexual masculinity that is centred on the desirable—exposed, tanned, clean, muscular, white, often hairless—body (Jung 2011; White and Gillett 1994). These commonly available images draw on traditional Western stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity and idealise qualities like strength, a lack of emotion, assertiveness, aggression and endurance. Such enviable visions of masculinity, fostered and enhanced by advertising, suggest that male insecurities and feelings of inadequacy can be addressed through consumption and bodywork, which are framed as essential in order for men to be found desirable by the opposite sex (Scheibling and Lafrance 2019). Masculinity in men's magazines in general presents "an overly singular view of male sexuality that naturalises sexist and predatory behaviour; and an overemphasis on men's bodies as sites of vulnerability, risk, or crisis" (Waling et al. 2018). Recent scholarship also suggests that these masculine body ideals manifest outside of Western contexts (for example, Prianti 2018). Like certain other popular media in South Africa, MCI adverts "[endorse] and [challenge] staid gender tropes" (Viljoen 2012, 648), not least by engaging with middle classness while discarding the centrality of whiteness. At the same time, however, they draw heavily on the notion that "proper" masculinity can only be achieved by engaging certain practices of the body and, consequently, achieving certain sexual and social goals.

Many scholars have discussed advertising for products and services related to male sexual health in the Global North. In the main, these texts make use of dominant constructions of manhood; however, they are often associated with negative health behaviours and perceptions of health amongst men. Such adverts suggest that competitiveness, aggression and even violence are integral aspects of largely white male heterosexuality, which is portrayed as dominant over other kinds of sexualities (Stibbe 2004). These representations legitimise heteronormative and biologically driven models of manhood. Similarly, South African advertising for male sexual health services promotes an essentialist view of male sexuality organised around the penis as a symbol of power (Schneider, Cockcroft, and Hook 2008).

We know, of course, that hegemonic masculinity can be damaging for women, children, non-binary people, queer people, disabled people and men who are perceived to be "unmanly". In general, though, we spend less time considering the pitfalls that hegemonic masculinity presents to the "average" men who are its primary target market, the kinds of men who, Kopano Ratele (2016) argues, are urgently in need of social support. In the case of sexual health advertising, representations of hegemonic masculinities can have measurable negative effects on men. Dominant models of masculinity portrayed in media texts not only enforce male power but also promote negative health behaviours amongst men: "By successfully using unhealthy beliefs and behaviours to demonstrate idealised forms of masculinity, men are able to assume positions of power—relative to women and less powerful men—in a patriarchal society

that rewards this accomplishment" (Courtenay 2000, 1397). Garfield et al. argue that "these factors, influenced by traditional masculine beliefs of appearing independent, competent and invulnerable, can undermine efforts to accurately assess, diagnose, and implement effective treatments" (2008, 475). Hegemonic representations of masculinity can be directly linked to men's failure to attain appropriate medical care. This point is particularly apposite in contemporary South Africa, where public health scholars have raised the alarm of low rates of male vaccination against the coronavirus and linked these with men's reluctance to engage with HIV testing and prevention initiatives (Gibbs 2021).

When thinking about the kinds of masculinity that appear in MCI adverts, we must remain cognisant not only of what these are but also of what the social effects of such representations may be. While our primary aim is to interrogate the phallocentric stereotyping that is common to these ads, we also acknowledge that MCI's public texts raise awareness about male sexual dysfunction, and may encourage black men to communicate more openly about their sexual health and emotional concerns. Again, this is the inherent contradiction that characterises these texts: they entrench narrow stereotypes that link successful black masculinity to the performance of the penis, but at the same time they present a version of black masculinity that is associated with intimacy and affect.

Methods

Men's Clinic International's adverts are broadcast on television, including during popular sports matches, and then uploaded to the company's official YouTube channel. A list of thumbnails of each uploaded advert can be found underneath the "videos" tab on the channel's site. When the data collection for this article was undertaken in mid-2019, 46 videos were available. We gave each thumbnail a unique number, randomised them using an online service and generated a list of five numbers, which gave us the five adverts we discuss below. All the adverts were posted between 2015 and 2018.

We analysed these five texts using a qualitative approach that "places emphasis on *meaning*, both as an object of study and as an explanatory concept" (Jensen 2012, 266; original emphasis). We used a combination of discourse and visual analysis to account for meaning disseminated through both visual and verbal language, given that meanings in media texts are constructed through the interplay between language and image (Deacon et al. 2007).

Discourse analysis "can be understood as an attempt to show systemic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices" (Fairclough 1995,16). It involves the examination of how discourse, or talk, influences and contributes to the production and understanding of ideologies, power relations, values, identities, and social conceptions (Deacon et al. 2007, 150). Discourse analysis allows us to consider the ways in which language—in the form of voice-overs, slogans and dialogue between

characters—is used in the adverts. Visual analysis refers to the analysis and interpretation of visual images and texts in order to uncover the layered meanings being communicated through them (Deacon et al. 2007). It considers "how meaning is generated and conveyed" (Berger 2012, 5) through the examination of the content of the image, the arrangement of the elements and features within it and the social context surrounding its production (Leeuwen and Jewitt 2004). Visual analysis allows us to examine the visual content of the adverts, in addition to televisual features such as lighting, camera angles, camera shots, set design and colour palette.

Findings

An analysis of the adverts on both the visual and discursive levels revealed that they present models of black manliness and male sexuality that upend the most frequent and damaging stereotypes, but that nonetheless centralise biology.

While all the videos are different with regard to storyline and narrative, there are notable generic similarities. All adverts are 30 seconds in length, are narrated by a male voiceover and end with the MCI logo and slogan "Let us help you." The scene contexts and characters' clothing, style and grooming suggest urban middle class environments. Characters are predominately black, suggesting that the adverts are targeted at the black middle class consumer.

The tone of the adverts is witty and playful. They undermine obvious tropes of hegemonic masculinity and present a version of black manhood that is humorous, knowing and emotionally literate, in contrast to common South African stereotypes that associate black men with violence (Langa et al. 2018). However, while this subversion is important, it is not the only story that these adverts tell. The varieties of masculinity that are valorised here also reinscribe neoliberal gender ideals: they emphasise the primacy of male biology, associate male success with female sexual satisfaction, equate positive health outcomes with social achievement and posit successful masculinity as a competition between men. Overall the adverts employ a strategy of disavowing overt performances of stereotyped masculinity in favour of a subtler, even softer, presentation of male hegemony, more in line with contemporary middle class social norms.

In the section below we analyse each advert in detail before moving to a discussion of the corpus as a whole.

Advert 1[1] opens with a close-up shot of a black man and woman kissing on their wedding day. The man is wearing a tuxedo and the woman is wearing a traditional white dress. As the couple kiss, we hear the male voiceover asking the audience, "What does it mean to be married?" The voiceover proceeds to recite parts of a conventional

1 Men's Clinic. 2018. "Mens Clinic International Advert with Updated Contact Details Aug 18." Men's Clinic, YouTube Video, 30 seconds, posted 6 July 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7Ve5Bmu3C0

Christian wedding vow ("for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health") as the advert moves on to a montage of six mini-scenes showing the couple in various stages of their relationship. Each mirrors what is being said in the vows recited by the voiceover. The next scene shows a medium shot of a baby girl, clearly the couple's daughter, laughing in a crib. The camera then pans up to show the couple cooing over the baby. Here we are alerted to their social status and financial position. Their clothes are stylish and casual. The woman wears a gold wedding band, a silver watch and a pearl bracelet and necklace. The bedroom that they are standing in is modern yet simple, decorated in an understated manner in neutral and earthy colours. It is large, clean, light and bright and includes decorative objects such as a patterned carpet, vases on the nightstand and cushions on a large bed.

During the "in sickness and in health" part of the vows we see the wife lying in bed with a cast around her neck and the husband serving her food on a tray. The next two scenes show the progression of the family's life and are set in the couple's living room, which has a similar colour scheme to the bedroom in the previous scene. These include scenes showing the couple celebrating Christmas with their daughter, surrounded by gifts and festive decorations, as well as a scene showing them working on their finances, as evidenced by the man using a calculator while the woman sorts through records. The advert ends with the voiceover claiming that the MCI has helped "keep marriages together since 1996", with the final scene showing the happy couple still in love in their old age, cuddled together on a comfortable sofa in their bright living room, with various tasteful objects d'art behind them. Both are dressed casually but well, with jewellery and watches visible. They clutch hands and the wife rests her head on her husband's shoulder, while he gazes directly at the camera.

The advert showcases the idealised stages of married life while portraying an egalitarian model of black masculinity. In all scenes the couple are visually positioned by the same camera distance, focus and angles. This, together with the husband taking care of his injured wife, symbolically suggests that they maintain equal power positions. The advert gestures to a model of manhood that is non-patriarchal, potentially challenging hegemonic ideologies of masculinity that emphasise domination and oppression of women and other men. Given the nature of the business being advertised, however, its primary aim is to suggest that the secret to a happy marriage is a healthy sex life, which is dependent on the man's sexual health. The advert makes no overt or symbolic reference to the penis or male biology; it focuses instead on themes such as intimacy, happy relationships, love and connection. Nonetheless, the fact that this is an advert for a male sexual health clinic, and that it is male bodywork that is "keeping marriages together", means that male biology remains an unstated but powerful presence in the blueprint for a happy life. Even in this presentation of an apparently egalitarian middle class masculinity, success and happiness—epitomised in marital longevity—are intertwined with male sexual potency.

Advert 2[2] begins with a close up shot of a young black man wearing glasses and a backwards baseball cap, exercising on a lateral pulldown machine. We are told by the voiceover that his name is Vuyo. The camera zooms out into a medium shot to show that Vuyo is seated next to another black man, also using a pulldown machine. The machines are placed in front of a white background and evoke the competitive masculine arena of the gym. Both men are dressed in sleeveless vests and exercise shorts. Vuyo is noticeably smaller and leaner than the other man, whose body is larger, more muscular and defined. Through the voiceover we learn that the other man's name is Thabiso, and that he "thinks that he is manlier than [Vuyo]". As the voiceover continues, we see that Thabiso is exercising with substantially heavier weights than Vuyo. These visual cues seem to place them within contrasting models of manliness. Thabiso represents the conventional macho man who traditionally occupies a higher position in the hierarchy, while Vuyo, with his glasses and smaller musculature, represents the physically weaker and consequently inferior man. Thabiso lifts his weights dramatically, visibly showing the effort he is making, while Vuyo makes eye contact with the camera, a sarcastic expression on his face. The camera zooms into a close-up to show him laughing off Thabiso's attempt to prove manliness via muscles. This shot makes clear which of the two men the viewer is expected to identify with, and undermines Thabiso's excessive performance of macho masculinity.

The camera then pans out into a long shot to show a black woman wearing exercise tights and a sports bra entering the scene. She is young, in good physical shape and clearly attractive. She excitedly walks over to Vuyo and gives him a kiss on the cheek. This is followed by a close-up shot of Thabiso's confused face while the voiceover narrates his inner dialogue: "How does [Vuyo] get someone as beautiful as her?" As the woman walks away, the voiceover reveals the answer to Thabiso's question: "Three words, Thabiso: Men's Clinic International."

Similar to Advert 1, this advert contains contradictory representations of masculinities. Thabiso seems to embody dominant ideas about masculinity (i.e., strength, physical appearance), which are often seen as necessary in order to affirm one's desirability to the opposite sex. However, Vuyo is the one who "gets the girl" despite being visually marked by his "geeky" glasses and smaller frame. The advert humorously subverts the hypermasculine features prioritised by many hegemonic forms. In doing so, however, it centralises a model of masculinity that continues to emphasise the social power and primacy of the male body, more specifically of the penis, by implying that peak sexual functioning—rather than obvious bodywork and/or physical appearance—is required in order for social success. Rather than undermining the notion of the "real" man, the advert suggests that male authenticity (and thus female satisfaction and attention) reside in the penis rather than in the body as a whole. Additionally, the advert's setting within a gym, often presented as a competitive place for men, enforces competition and

2 Men's Clinic. 2018. "Mens Clinic International Advert with Updated Contact Details Aug 18." Men's Clinic, YouTube Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDti6RI5_V8

contestation as markers of manhood. This perpetuates the idea that in order to establish a sense of self, men must compete with other men, even if the arena of that competition shifts away from the evaluation of muscular bodies.

Advert 3 is set on a racing track and opens with a close-up shot of a white man sitting in a stationary white car, revving the engine. He is clean-shaven and wears a black leather jacket and dark sunglasses. While the opening camera angle and position do not reveal the car's make or model, we can see that it is a two door drop top with plush tan interior, suggesting an expensive sports car. These visual cues allow the viewer to make presumptions about the man's elevated financial and social status. As the camera pans to the right we see a close-up shot of his opponent, a black man in a red car. The second man's clothes are unremarkable jeans and a t-shirt and his car's interior seems ordinary. Visually he is placed in a lower socioeconomic position. The camera then zooms out into a long shot that shows the two cars side-by-side. The white man's car is a high-end Audi while the black man's car is a Volkswagen. In this shot, the cars are in the background and a black woman stands in front of them in the foreground. She is the marshal for the race, as evidenced by her chequered flag. Seen from the back only, she has an afro, wears short denim shorts, a tied-up shirt and cowboy boots, and is presented as attractive and desirable.

When the woman waves the flag to signal the start of the race, the white car immediately stalls and is unable to move, while the red car drives off at speed and easily wins. In the closing scenes the camera shifts between the white man, who frustratedly hits his steering wheel; the black woman, who cheers the red car on; and the black man, who drives off laughing and smiling. As is common in popular culture, the car is an obvious and easy metaphor for the penis (see, for example, Cagle 1994), and thus for aspirational masculinity. This advert does, however, offer a less common approach to this somewhat clichéd association by suggesting that the most desirable car is not necessarily the most expensive and showy one; that is, the operational phallus/sexually hegemonic man is about more than appearance. As with Vuyo in advert 2, the winning man seems to have some insider knowledge about what constitutes successful masculinity, which allows him to laughingly dismiss his rival's performance of hegemony. The advert ends with the voiceover stating that "it's what you've got under the hood that counts". The implication here is that when it comes to successful masculinity, what matters most is sexual performance. Phallic function, rather than material success, is what confirms one's manhood.

Similar to the previous advert, this text posits competitiveness as a key feature of masculinity. Importantly, it also demonstrates how black masculinity is implicated in, and in competition with, white hegemonic masculinity. The model of black manhood represented in the commercial challenges constructions of (white) manhood that prioritise wealth and status. The black man may not have access to easily legible social symbols like expensive cars and clothes, but within the advert's world he is once again the one who "gets the girl" by demonstrating that sexual potency is not tied to normative

elements of hegemonic masculinity, and that what is important is what's "under the hood". In this way the advert suggests that performances of hegemony, in this case of rich white masculinity, are inauthentic and can be laughed off within spaces of masculine competition.

Advert 4[3] begins with a medium shot of a black man and woman sitting on a couch; he has his arm around her shoulders. The couple are dressed in everyday clothes. The man is wearing a blue golf shirt and the woman a blue blouse. The ring on her finger suggests that they are married. They appear to be in their living room, which is decorated in a neutral colour palette featuring wall art and small ornaments. Their casual clothing and the understated context suggests a status that is comfortably middle class rather than wealthy.

The advert opens with some dialogue from the couple. The woman begins by telling the audience that she wishes that men could talk about their sexual problems to each other. The man refutes this, saying that men do in fact talk about their problems. There is an immediate shift into the next scene, which opens with a close-up shot of a man's hands assembling an electric drill. The camera then pans out into a medium shot showing the husband putting on protective glasses and holding the drill in his hand. The camera pans out further to show that he is standing facing another black man, presumably his friend. The shelves, tools and toolboxes in the background suggest that they are standing in a garage, often coded as a quintessentially male space where men retreat to do manly DIY tasks. The husband turns the drill on, making a suggestive upward motion with it, then looks questioningly at his friend in what is clearly a non-verbal reference to his ability to sustain an erection—literally, to "keep it up". We shift to a low angle shot of his friend looking at the drill, and as the camera angle shifts up to eye level, we see the friend shrug and shake his head in response to the husband's question, then disappointedly hold up the drill's loose, unplugged cord. The implication here is that the friend, unlike the husband, is unable to get his "drill" to turn on.

In the closing scene we are back in the couple's living room with them seated on the couch. Turning to her husband, the woman says, "Men should really talk about it. There's nothing to be ashamed of." The husband then turns directly to the camera and, at an eye level angle, speaks directly to the presumed male audience, who he addresses as "gents", telling them to seek help from MCI to begin the process of enjoying a healthy sex life. Finishing his sentence, the woman whispers "like us", as she lays her head on her husband's shoulder. As in advert 1, a connection is drawn between marital longevity, female satisfaction, male social success and the functioning of the penis. While the relation between men is collegial rather than competitive, there is nonetheless a sense that the husband is the "winner" when compared with his sad friend, who will only

3 Men's Clinic. "Men's Clinic International Adverts 2015—Modern Family." Men's Clinic, YouTube Video, posted 8 September 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uudr9LKLvjs

improve his masculinity, and consequently his status and personal happiness, if he seeks assistance from the experts at MCI.

Advert 5,[4] unusually, features no men at all, focusing instead on two young and attractive black women, Lerato and Peggy. It begins with a medium shot of Lerato angrily crumbling two-minute noodles into a pot. Similar to advert 2, the background is bare and white; however, props like a stove, cooking utensils and a small table show that the scene is set in a kitchen. As Lerato crumbles the noodles into the pot, the voiceover explains to the audience that Lerato's frustration comes from her husband being "Mr Two-Minute Noodle". In medium close up, Lerato uses a fork to raise the limp, cooked, phallically failing noodles up to eye level, with her disappointed expression focused on them.

As Peggy enters the shot to console Lerato, the voiceover tells us that Peggy has the solution to Lerato's problem: MCI. Peggy explains that she and her boyfriend went to the clinic for a similar problem and were able to get help. She tells Lerato that her boyfriend is now "stiff *pap* all the way".[5] The camera pans in to show a medium shot of Peggy opening the pot next to Lerato's, taking her own fork and picking up a solid piece of *pap*—symbolising her boyfriend's ability to maintain an erection—while a wide-eyed Lerato looks on in excitement. While there are no men in the advert, the phallic imagery and symbolism present a construction of manhood that, once again, is centred on the body, with femininity and female sexuality organised around the adequate functioning of that body. It is also notable that the kinds of food used to represent functional and dysfunctional masculinity have cultural meanings of their own: two-minute noodles are cheap, disposable, imported junk food, while *pap* is traditional, sustaining and historical. Only one of these products is shown to be authentic and desirable.

Discussion

In addition to the visual and discursive elements mentioned above, the five adverts evinced a number of interconnected themes, the three most significant of which we discuss in this section: the centrality of the phallus, masculinity as sexual performance and the representation of femininity.

Given the nature of the services being advertised, it is inevitable that the adverts are centred on the male body. However, the way in which they achieve this foregrounds understandings of black masculinity and male sexuality that are informed by phallocentric discourses which claim that the man has an analogous relationship with

4 Men's Clinic. 2018. "Men's Clinic International Advert with Updated Contact Details Aug 18." Men's Clinic. YouTube Video. Posted 6 August 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJo8PhWxIBA

5 "Pap" is a traditional porridge that is a staple food for many South Africans, made from coarsely-ground maize.

his penis, where the penis represents or stands in for him (Potts 2000). Lacanian psychoanalysis argues that the phallus represents the "transcendental signifier in the symbolic order of power and language" (Potts 2000, 85–86). Therefore, notions of authority, power, and control over desire are based on whether one possesses the phallus or not (Lacan 1977 cited in Potts 2000). In this theory, as in phallocentric discourses in general, the physical penis is regarded as a metonym of the phallus, a metaphorical object that lays claim to power. In building on this theory, Grosz claims that "the phallus functions to enable the penis to define all (socially recognised) forms of human sexuality. The differences between genitals become expressed in terms of the presence or absence of a single (male) penis" (1990, 117). The sexual categorisation of bodies into male and female is not based on physiological difference as such, a position that aligns with arguments about the constructed nature of gender (Glenn 2000), but rather on divisions informed by phallocentric discourse. Masculine and feminine sexuality are differentiable from each other by the presence or absence of the phallus, reducing behaviours and experiences of sex and sexual drives to the penis, erections and ejaculations. The erect penis therefore becomes the essence of male (and female) sexuality (Potts 2000). This emphasis on the phallus can be found in both Western and African discourses and constructions of sexualities (Ratele 2011). In addition, this phallic understanding of sexuality informs current biomedical discourses on men's sexual and reproductive health (Khan et al. 2008).

The discursive primacy of the phallus can be seen in the five MCI adverts as well as in the clinic's logo, which makes use of the famous Leonardo da Vinci drawing of the "Vitruvian Man". This image depicts a naked male figure facing directly forward in two superimposed positions within a square, which is simultaneously superimposed within a circle. In the first position the figure has his hands stretched out horizontally with his legs closed straight beneath him, whereas in the second position his legs are spread apart, with his arms outstretched into a Y shape above his head. His exposed genitals are positioned in the centre of the square, literally centralising his penis. This image is famed as da Vinci's ideal man, his idea of the perfect proportions and measurements for the human male (Ashrafian 2011). This vision of manhood lifts the penis above its biological functions (urinating, inseminating) and makes it the site of "true" manliness, power and dominance, signalling the kind of male sexuality that MCI prioritises.

By employing phallocentric discourses to continuously emphasise male biology, as opposed to male happiness, health or security, the adverts suggest that the urban consumer's gender identity should be intrinsically linked to his sexuality and sexual drive. In adverts 1 and 4, these traits are framed as requirements for black men to maintain successful long-term relationships and keep women satisfied, whereas in adverts 2 and 3 they are markers of "true" manhood. Underlying these models of masculinity is the suggestion that a man's sexuality and masculine identity (i.e., how he understands himself and how others view him as a man) are dependent on his sexual drive and, most importantly, his penis. This can also be seen in advert 5 where the men's value and personal identities are reduced to how they have sex and the functioning of

their penises—"Mr Two-Minute Noodle" versus the "firm *pap*" boyfriend. This advert employs essentialist views of black male sexuality that reduce experiences to sexual stamina and penis characteristics. Healthy black male sexuality is dependent on the successful sustenance of an erection, perpetuating stereotypes of black men as sexually aggressive, with high libidos, and "really good in bed" (Wilson et al. 2009, 403).

Rooted in the functioning of the penis, sex is constructed as a space where manhood is consolidated or reaffirmed. This does not mean, however, that sex becomes completely isolated from notions of pleasure. Adverts 1 and 4 show how sex can be a site to experience positive feelings of intimacy and romance with one's spouse, while advert 5 emphasises Peggy's appreciation for her virile boyfriend, also a positive position. At the same time, however, sexual activity and performance remain a measurement of "true" manhood. This can be seen in adverts 2–5, which emphasise sexual performance in order to promote hegemonic ideas that "real" black men do not just *have* good sex but also *do* good sex. Thus, sexual health problems such as erectile dysfunction represent the ultimate failure, inadequacy, and deficiency of the man (Potts 2000, 90).

The adverts perpetuate hegemonic codes by presenting male sexual health problems as a potential crisis in masculinity where the inability to perform sexually is equated with the loss of power. According to these codes, the man loses his ability to enact his manliness through dominance and control the moment he is unable to achieve or maintain a viable erection (Colman 2001). Masculine identity and sexuality are actively complicit in anxieties about male vulnerability that come as a result of the pressure or failure to actualise this ideal. We see this when a distraught Thabo fails to "get the girl" in advert 2 despite his bulging muscles, when the frustrated white man loses the race because he is unable to get his "car" to start in advert 3, when the two friends are embarrassed to talk openly about their sexual failures in advert 4, and when Lerato's boyfriend is ridiculed through phallic symbolism in advert 5. Each of these demonstrates instances of sexual failure that deny men the ability to affirm their manliness through performance, showing how their masculine identities are centred on feelings of insecurity, anxiety, frustration, shame and inadequacy. Schneider et al. call this the "fallible phallus": the paradox whereby male sexuality is framed as biologically driven and focused on the penis, the supposed site of power, and yet is simultaneously centred on feelings of insecurity and anxiety (2008, 143). Thus, the adverts frame sex as a contradictory experience where men exercise power and pleasure but are also subject to vulnerabilities that threaten their sense of self.

Research has shown how the phallocentric nature of constructions of male sexualities frame the male sexual drive as being goal-oriented (usually towards goals of domination or power) and focused on the physical dimensions of sex (Pope et al. 2000; Stibbe 2004). The latter feeds into a phallocentric discourse that claims that the penis only seeks sex as a means to satisfy its carnal desires (Grosz 1990). Sex for men is consequently understood as removed from emotional and psychological dimensions, with emotion classified as a feminine trait. Of course, this is a vast oversimplification of men's sexual

experiences. While the versions of masculinity seen in these adverts are goal-oriented, aimed at proving their manliness, they also challenge the oversimplification of male sexual drives by showing how men's experiences of sex and sexual health are intertwined with psycho-emotional realities and vulnerabilities. Significantly, though, they suggest that these vulnerabilities or crises in masculinity can be addressed through a form of bodywork that includes acquiring services from MCI. They do this in a way that allows MCI to play the role of a supportive friend. Through phrases like "let us help you" and "keeping marriages together since 1996", the clinic is portrayed as an informative, kind and helpful supporter for the targeted consumer, while male psychosocial anxieties are reconstituted within a biomedical frame.

Phallic discourses view women as lacking or incomplete as a result of the absence of the phallus, allowing men and their penises to perform the role of completer by literally filling the lack through penetration (Grosz 1990). Within this discursive logic female sexual drives, behaviours and experiences are the result of women seeking the phallus in order to gain a sense of wholeness. The MCI adverts' emphasis on heterosexuality and male sexual performance rests on a model of female sexuality that is dependent on, and only desires, the adequate functioning of the penis. This can be seen specifically in advert 5, where it is implied that Lerato's sexual frustration cannot be resolved until her boyfriend seeks medical help from the clinic: she cannot be satisfied any other way. Her sexual pleasures and behaviours do not, and cannot, exist outside of the boundaries of erections and phallocentrism, presenting a very narrow and ideologically-driven view of female sexuality.

The adverts construct a codependent relationship between male and female sexuality. While female sexual drives are dependent on the phallic, male sexuality can only be validated by female sexual satisfaction. "True" manhood is established by men's ability to perform *well*, which is measured by women's levels of satisfaction. A man who is unable to adequately pleasure his partner is regarded as less of a man and is subject to feelings of insecurity and anxiety (Schneider, Cockcroft, and Hook 2008). Women are the gatekeepers of masculinity; at the same time, their bodies are merely tools that men use to consolidate or affirm their perceptions of their masculine selves.

Within the adverts, healthy and proper heterosex is implicitly related to monogamy. This challenges constructions of hegemonic masculinity in which manliness is measured according to sexual promiscuity, the number of partners one is able to "conquer" (Ratele 2011). In addition, monogamy is portrayed as resulting in secure masculine identities, as can be seen with the married couples in adverts 1 and 4. Both men appear happy and content in their relationships which, it is suggested, are the products of a healthy sex life. These adverts ultimately claim that a well-functioning penis leads to healthy sex which, within a monogamous long-term relationship, provides men with emotional security and stability and frees them from vulnerabilities such as anxiety and insecurity. The adverts suggest that women's role is simply to facilitate this progress.

Conclusion

These five adverts for Men's Clinic International complicate common presentations of black masculinity in South African and global media, shifting away from associations of black men with dominance and violence. However they way in which they do this simultaneously undermines their progressive potential by locating the source and site of "legitimate" masculinity within the male body. Through the use of phallic imagery and symbolism, they portray a model of masculinity that centres on the body, or more specifically on the penis, suggesting an understanding of black manhood that is phallocentric and biological. The penis is framed as not only essential for successful sex, but also as the site of manhood. Sex is reduced to the act of penetration between monogamous heterosexual couples. "True" manhood is regarded as dependent on a man's ability to perform well sexually in order to satisfy his female partner. The female body is both a gatekeeper and a tool in a man's understanding of his masculine self. The implications of the various forms of men and women in the adverts demonstrate the extent to which current medical discourses around male sexual health in South Africa are steeped in phallocentrism and in rigid gender stereotypes, which can result in understandings of gender roles and sexualities that fail to account for the multiplicity of men's and women's experiences of sexuality, health and the body.

References

Ashrafian, H. 2011. "Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man: A Renaissance for Inguinal Hernias." *Hernia* 15 (5): 593–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10029-011-0845-6

Berger, A. A. 2012. *Media Analysis Techniques.* 4th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Cagle, Robert L. 1994. "Auto-Eroticism: Narcissism, Fetishism, and Consumer Culture." *Cinema Journal* 33 (4): 23–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/1225897

Collins, R. L. 2011. "Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media: Where are We Now and Where Should We Go?." *Sex Roles* 64: 290–98. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5

Colman, W. 2001. "Celebrating the Phallus." In *Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, edited by C. Harding, 121–36. Hove, UK: Brunner Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203361016_chapter_7

Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Courtenay, W. 2000. "Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Gender and Health." *Social Science and Medicine* 50 (1): 1385–1401. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1

Deacon, D., M. Pickering, P. Golding, and G. Murdock. 2007. *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Dyer, G. 2009. *Advertising as Communication.* London Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203158340

Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Routledge.

Fernandez, M., and M. Menon. 2022. "Media Influences on Gender Stereotypes." *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review* 10 (2): 12125.

Furnham, A., and T. Mak. 1999. "Sex-role Stereotyping in Television Commercials: A Review and Comparison of Fourteen Studies done on Five Continents over 25 Years." *Sex Roles* 41: 413–37. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018826900972

Garfield, C., A. Isacco, and T. Rodgers. 2008. "A Review of Men's Health and Masculinity." *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 2 (6): 474–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827608323213

Gibbs, A. 2021. "Men are Slower to get COVID-19 Vaccines in South Africa: Lessons from HIV Research." The Conversation, 2 September 2021. https://theconversation.com/men-are-slower-to-get-covid-19-vaccines-in-south-africa-lessons-from-hiv-research-166800

Glenn, E. N. 2000. "The Social Construction and Institutionalisation of Gender and Race: An Integrative Framework." In *Revisioning Gender*, edited by M. Marx Ferree, J. Lorber, and B. Hess, 3–43. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Grau, S. L., and Y. C. Zotos. 2016. "Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: A Review of Current Research." *International Journal of Advertising* 35 (5): 761–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1203556

Grosz, E. 1990. *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction.* London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203330029

Jensen, K. B. 2012. "The Qualitative Research Process." In *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies*, edited by K. B. Jensen, 265–82. New York: Routledge.

Jung, J. 2011. "Advertising Images of Men: Body Size and Muscularity of Men Depicted in *Men's Health* Magazine." *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing* 2 (4): 181–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2011.10593096

Khan, S. I., Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Sherry Saggers, Mahbubul Islam Bhuiyan, Abbas Bhuiya, Syed Afzalul Karim, and Oratai Rauyajin. 2008. "Phallus, Performance and Power: Crisis of Masculinity." *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 23 (1): 37–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681990701790635

Knoll, S., M. Eisend, and J. Steinhagen. 2011. “Gender Roles in Advertising.” *International Journal of Advertising* 30 (5): 867–88. https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-5-867-888

Lacan, J. 1977. *Ecrits: A Selection. Translated by Alan Sheridan.* London: Routledge.

Langa, M. Kirsten, A. Bowman, B. Eagle, G. & Kiguwa, P. 2018. “Black Masculinities on Trial in Absentia: The Case of Oscar Pistorius in South Africa.” *Men and Masculinities* 23 (3–4): 499–515. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X18762523

Leopeng, B., and M. Langa. 2019. “Black Middle-class Masculinities in Postapartheid South Africa: Consumerism, Fashion and the Portrayal of Masculine Identities in *Destiny Man* Magazine.” *Fashion Theory* 23 (1): 57–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2017.1411010

Leopeng, B., and M. Langa. 2020. “*Destiny* Overshadowed: Masculine Representations and Feminist Implications in a South African Men’s Magazine.” *Feminist Media Studies* 20 (5): 672–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1599037

Luyt, R. 2011. “Representation of Gender in South African Television Advertising: A Content Analysis.” *Sex Roles* 65: 356–70. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0027-0

Morrell, R. 1998. “Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24: 605–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593

Morrell, R., R. Jewkes, and G. Lindegger. 2012. “Hegemonic Masculinity/ Masculinities in South Africa: Culture, Power, and Gender Politics.” *Men and Masculinities* 15 (1): 11–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X12438001

Morrell, R., R. Jewkes, G. Lindegger, and V. Hamlall. 2013. “Hegemonic Masculinity: Reviewing the Gendered Analysis of Men's Power in South Africa.” *South African Review of Sociology* 44 (1): 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2013.784445

Morrel, R., and L. Clowes. 2017. “The Growth of Gender Research in South Africa and Southern Theory.” *Gender Questions* 4 (1). https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-8457/1517

Pope, H. G., A. Phillips, and R. Olivardia. 2000. *The Adonis Complex: The Secret Crisis of Male Body Obsession.* New York: Free Press.

Potts, A. 2000. “‘The Essence of the Hard On’: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Cultural Construction of ‘Erectile Dysfunction’.” *Men and Masculinities* 3 (1): 85–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X00003001004

Prianti, D. D. 2018. “Towards the Westernized Body: A Popular Narrative Reinforced by Men’s Lifestyle Magazines in Indonesia.” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 19 (1): 103–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2018.1422351

Ratele, K. 2011. “Male Sexualities and Masculinities.” In *Sexualities in Africa: A Reader*, edited by S. Tamale, 319–419. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press.

Ratele, K. 2016. *Liberating Masculinities.* Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Scharrer, E. 2012. “Representations of Gender in the Media.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology*, edited by K. E. Dill, 267–73. Oxford: Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195398809.013.0015

Scheibling, C., and M. Lafrance. 2019. “Man Up but Stay Smooth: Hybrid Masculinities in Advertising for Men’s Grooming Products.” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 27 (2): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826519841473

Schneider, V., K. Cockcroft, and D. Hook. 2008. “The Fallible Phallus: A Discourse Analysis of Male Sexuality in a South African Men’s Interest Magazine.” *South African Journal of Psychology* 38 (1): 136–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800108

Stibbe, A. 2004. “Health and the Social Construction of Masculinity in Men’s Health Magazine.” *Men and Masculinities* 7 (1): 31–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X03257441

Van Leeuwen, T. and C. Jewitt. 2004. “Introduction.” In *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, edited by T. Van Leeuwen and C. Jewitt, 1–9. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020062.n1

Viljoen, S. 2012. “Made, Laid and Paid: Photographic Masculinities in a Black Men’s Magazine.” *Critical Arts* 26 (5): 648–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2012.744721

Waling, A., D. Duncan, S. Angelides, and G. W. Dowsett. 2018. “Men and Masculinity in Men’s Magazines: A Review.” *Sociology Compass* 12 (7): e12593. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12593

White, P., and J. Gillett. 1994. “Reading the Muscular Body: A Critical Decoding of Advertisements in Flex Magazine..” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 11 (1): 18–39. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.11.1.18

Wilson, P., P. Valera, A. Ventuneac, I. Balan, M. Rowe, and A, Carballo-Dieguez. 2009. “Race-Based Sexual Stereotyping and Sexual Partnering among Men Who Use the Internet to Identify Other Men for Bareback Sex.” *Journal of Sex Research* 46 (5): 399–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490902846479