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A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Masters Research Report

AFRT7034

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Research by Coursework

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Plagiarism Declaration

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Students on the AFRT4029 and AFRT7034 modules 2022

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"Part of the Journey is the End"

Tony Stark, Avengers: Endgame

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background/Purpose

1.1.1 Brief History of Romance

The romance genre has always been aligned with a White audience and has always had a Eurocentric outlook in terms of its foundational grounding. Furthermore, historically, romance novels featured White women protagonists as defiant of social conventions or as able to overcome personal issues to achieve their own happiness (Pagan, 2019). Wimmer (2021) explains the evolution of the romance genre, dating it back to the fourth centuries A.D. in Greece with the framework that would categorise romantic literature. This evolution continued to the Middle Ages which gave rise to the tales of knights and chivalry until 1605 when the idealised notions of knighthood and romance were satirised by Don Quixote, which ultimately caused the genre to nearly die out. However, this changed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with gothic writers taking over the genre and steering it into darker love fantasies. Since then, the genre has continued to grow and evolve further to include narratives and authors that are not of European decent.

The emergence of Black romance as a racial subgenre of romance is one of the many breakaways that took place within the romance literary genre that worked towards fostering the need for further classification of romance literature. According to Regis et al., (2006) as well as Tucker (2006), Julia C Collins is said to be the first Black American author to write a Black romance novel in 1865, although there is very little known about her because she died 19 months after publishing the debut novel and her work was silenced for more than a century. This case of silencing authors' work is a common occurrence within the publishing community especially the act of silencing the work of Black authors who do not write for their White counterparts. Given that, "Neglected African American women's stories, if they survive at all, often survive in fragments that cannot be fully comprehended without being recontextualized," (Tucker, 2006). These findings on silencing, neglecting, and rewriting Black narratives is a very large factor of the gatekeeping that takes places within the publishing industry as described by this source. These forms of gatekeeping seem to be a common issue that Black

people on the African content and within the diaspora have experienced and the 158 years between then and now point to the discrepancy in the manner in which Black women authors' works are handled by traditional publishing houses.

Traditionally, the romance genre was shaped and characterised by a female audience and is still shaped and characterised by women to this day. Radway (1991) states that the characteristics and the desire for romance are heterosexual social constructs which have managed to place themselves into the heteronormative standards of marriage and courtship within female subjectivity. This heterosexual social construct can also be historically identified as internalised patriarchy (Bruneau, 2018). Since internalised patriarchy and patriarchy as a whole are part of the construction of the romance narrative, it could be implied that the genre would then be inclusive of various patriarchal iterations that occur. The changes in the existing genre, to date, suggest that there are more subgenres of romance that can be identified based on their themes and how they connect to the genre of romance. Additionally, it suggests that there could be an identifiable market in South Africa for Black romance. Patriarchy in South Africa is presented in the context of romance in relation to how gender-based violence, intimate partner violence and violence are themes that are reproduced by the authors in their narratives.

1.1.2 Black South African romance as localised romance genre

Romance markets in South Africa reflect international trends, whilst being focused also on White markets. The advancement of publishing within South Africa has allowed Black women to create narratives that reflect themselves and their lived socio-political experiences. Numerous studies have been conducted in defining and categorising what romance is and the patriarchal tenets that establish the foundation of romance This can be seen in Janice Radway's' *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1991*).* However, there is an absence in research that directly focuses on the patriarchal tenets that make up Black romance written in South Africa. A similar study was done on Afrikaans readers (Snyman & Penzhorn, 2011). Radway (1991) found romance to be an act by women for individualisation and actualisation but because the narratives are written by women who have grown up within patriarchal family settings this misogyny, it is then replicated within the language and subsequently the narratives. This research addresses the role of patriarchy in romance outside of the gatekept, traditional market.

Gatekeeping as aforementioned, is a tool that is meant to control and limit the accessibility to specific spaces. Gatekeeping within the South African trade publishing sector, according to Gibixego (2021), can be defined as the resistance to transformation in fundamental respects such as ownership, African-language publishing, racial diversity of staff, and critical value-chain configurations. The term, gatekeeping, will be further defined as it relates to the topic, genre, and authors in the literature review. Gatekeeping, especially within the publishing sector, is not something new or unheard of within the South African context and can be linked back to the legacy of the Apartheid. The censorship of authors was an active controlling tool used by the Apartheid government to keep the control over the kind of information that was disseminated and the legislations that were created to overlook this were often changed and adapted to include more themes that had to be silenced.

The legislation of the Customs Management Act of 1913 (as amended in 1955) is more than relevant to the focus of the study (Tomaselli, 2019). Although, these legislations on censorship were repealed by the democratic government post 1994, the legacy of market manipulation by the apartheid government is still clear in South African publishing spheres. This background for romance focusing on patriarchal themes, racial romance classification, and censorship in the form of gatekeeping is important because it is with that background in mind that Black South African romance can be situated as an existing subgenre to romance within the South African publishing market. The Black South African romance genre has had a new emergence within the South African publishing market over the last 10 years, especially with the rise of authors such as Dudu Busani-Dube, Ayanda Xaba and Busisekile Khumalo. These authors have managed to infiltrate the publishing market through self-publishing or independently publishing their work which decreases the ability for traditional publishing communities to practice gatekeeping.

1.1.3 History of (Gatekeeping) censorship in Apartheid South Africa

Apartheid, an Afrikaner ideology supported by the National Party government and implemented in South Africa after 1948, is relevant to the context (Giliomee, 2003, p. 375). Norval (as cited in Giliomee, 2003, p. 375) proposed that apartheid aimed to create a "new moral language" based on family, community, ethnic group (race), beliefs, customs, language,

and community history to reconstruct society. This definition distinguishes apartheid from segregation, which was solely based on race. Gerdener (as cited in Giliomee, 2003, p. 383) further reinforces this definition by stating that apartheid was based on race in conjunction with language, tradition, and lifestyle. In essence, apartheid entailed the cultural and social oppression of people through legislation. The racial hierarchy established by apartheid also served as a tool to degrade and control non-White races. As a result, Germanic languages in South Africa received significant funding and development, leading to disparities in the types of literature produced academically and socially, including the publishing industry. In summary, the advancement of White languages and literature contributed to the existing gap between White and Black authors within the publishing sector.

Both Morrell (1998) and Snodgrass (2015) indicate the emasculation and degradation of Black men in South Africa under apartheid laws. Snodgrass specifically argues that apartheid emasculated and degraded Black males who resisted racial injustice by asserting their masculinity, leading to misplaced rage and hostility towards women as they sought to reclaim their lost masculinity, status, and authority. Patriarchy in this context is associated with increased violence as a means to regain authority. This expression of patriarchal subjugation is reflected in the literature produced by Black female authors within the South African romance genre, influenced by their lived socio-political contexts.

With the accessibility of publishing spaces, such as self-publishing, Black female authors have been able to establish a presence in the market that caters for and resonates with Black readership. The notion that Black people do not read, as reiterated by Khumalo (2010), is a misconception perpetuated by limited exposure and lack of encouragement to read for leisure, rather than an inherent disinterest. This emerging market challenges long-standing publishing companies and highlights the demand for new stories that accurately represent and include Black readers (Gibixego, 2021). The emergence of the Black South African romance genre has attracted a younger generation of Black readers who actively engage with these books, emphasising the need for a classification that aligns with the content produced by Black women authors and recognises their contributions within this subgenre.

It would be remise not to indicate that thorough search on the internet search engines has yielded results that constitute Black romance as being based solely on Black Americans and Caribbeans. This would be incorrect when looking at the African diaspora and African

countries. It illustrates a biased view that there is no clear African identity within Black romance regardless of the different lived experiences that can be attributed to these books. This differentiation has been shown in the paragraphs above, by looking at the history of the romance genre and the histories behind Black American romance and Black South African romance genres. This allows for the gap within the research to be identified and addressed by identifying the themes and tenets that are part of the foundation for the romance subgenre.

1.2 Research Problem/s

For the research report, the term 'Black South African Romance' will be defined by combining insights from two separate sources to construct a working definition. According to Cameron (2020), romance is a subgenre of fiction characterised by two foundational elements: a central love story and an emotionally satisfying ending. Building upon this definition, the guidelines provided by Sapphire Press, an imprint of Kwela Books (2011), which is also an imprint of NB uitgewers, can be incorporated. These guidelines are further discussed in Chapter 2, specifically in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Based on these sources, 'Black South African Romance' can be defined as a narrative that revolves around a love story, focusing on the personal growth and development of the main character within the context of a relationship. This genre explores the challenges and dynamics of navigating traditional patriarchal stereotypes prevalent in Black South African society, as well as the presence of violence within romantic settings. This definition aligns with the exploration of Black South African romance as previously discussed in section 1.1.2.

1.3 Research Question(s)

How have authors reflected the socio-political contexts of their readership in Black South African romance?

a. What role does internalised patriarchy play in independently published Black South African romance?
b. How has Black South African romance portrayed male characters and opened discourse around patriarchy and violence?

c. How has independent publishing been used as a tool to address the challenges of gatekeeping by authors of self-published Black South African romance novels?

1.4 Rationale

Previous research on romance has primarily focused on the genre from a predominantly White perspective, centred on themes and ideals that cater for a Western audience in the publishing market (Carter, 2020). This Eurocentric perspective has limited the recognition and understanding of the diverse variations of romance that exist beyond its scope, particularly when considering the racial diversity found in South Africa. Additionally, it has failed to create a space for these unique iterations of romance within traditional publishing, leading to gatekeeping practices that impact Black female romance authors seeking to publish their work through traditional channels in South Africa. However, the role of independent publishing and self-publishing in addressing this gatekeeping issue and allowing subgenres like Black South African romance to emerge under the broader umbrella of romance has not been extensively studied. It is crucial to investigate these research gaps as they contribute to establishing a foundational understanding of what Black romance entails in the South African context and how it has thrived and expanded within the local publishing market. Research conducted on the growth of romance through independent and self-published authors has already highlighted the need for more diverse variations or subgenres within the publishing industry (Salomon, 2016). These demanded variations do not align with the Eurocentric focus, instead, they reflect the narratives of Black women romance authors, providing relatable stories that resonate with the audience and allow for easier identification. By examining the impact of independence and self-publishing on addressing gatekeeping practices within the publishing market, researchers can gain insights into the growth and significance of subgenres like Black South African romance. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and evolution of romance in the South African context, shedding light on the experiences and contributions of Black female authors in shaping the genre.

The patriarchal link that is contingent on the existence of romance has brought about the themes of violence and gender-based violence into the romance genre. In South Africa, gender-based violence has been on a steady rise (Minisini, 2021). Based on the link between patriarchy and gender-based violence, research has shown that internalised misogyny has equated violence into being acts of love in the context of a heterosexual couple relationships within Black

societies (Dekel & Andipatin, 2016). This link between love and suffering, and how it has managed to replicate itself within the romance narratives that are then produced by Black South African female romance authors, will be explored further in the proceeding Chapters. What research is yet to focus on is how Black women as authors have managed to engage with the situational gender-based violence through their literature and create discussions around the violence experienced by women in relationships that should be deemed as safe and conducive whilst navigating the effects of systemic gatekeeping left over from the past apartheid governments.

1.5 Assumptions

The research report focused on the existence of the Black South African romance as a subgenre of romance. The following assumptions were made:

1. It is assumed that gatekeeping and the censorship it endorses is a large factor as to why the subgenre has not been formally created by traditional publishing.
2. It is assumed that the existing traditional publishing market failed to correctly cater for an existing market, thus chose to exclude it rather than reworking their approach.
3. It assumes that the act of self-publishing and independently publishing are closely related and are seen as an option when dealing with gatekeeping and censorship.
4. Sapphire Press is no longer operating, and archival resources had to be used. As they are the only local publisher that had attempted to access the Black South African romance market, it is assumed that the information they provide is representative of traditional publishing perspectives on Black South African Romance readers and markets.

The proposed methodology of this research is to firstly, conduct a literature review of previously published literature. This literature review will function as a tool to define the genre of Black South African romance, establish the links between Black South African romance and patriarchy and its patriarchal expressions of violence, as well as define gatekeeping and identifying its historical link to an oppressive system and the manner in which it effects Black female authors. The purpose of this approach is to create a foundational basis for the identified experimental definition of Black South African romance and how, as a genre, it is more

inclusive of the chosen themes of patriarchy, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence. It also explores how the themes in these narratives are then being gatekept from traditional publishers. Secondly, primary research collection will be done through using focus groups. The participants being targeted are self and independently published Black South African female authors and the purpose of this is to understand the relationship that exists between the authors, gender-based violence and male characters portrayal as a symbol of internalised patriarchy and gatekeeping. Thirdly, the Paratext and reader engagement will be analysed to connect the literature review to books that have been self-published by Black women in South Africa under the romance genre. The Paratext and reader engagement will also look at how the authors and readers interact with romance narratives that are explicit in expressing gender-based violence and patriarchal control as a means of further defining the existence of the Black South African romance genre as an existing form of romance within the genre.

1.6 Terms and Definitions of the Study

1. The term ‘genre analysis’ describes a manner of examining a type of style of writing in order to better understand the conventions, expectations, purpose, and target audience for that genre (Purdue University, n.d.)

2. The term ‘reader’ is defined as the consumers of authors’ content, the people who purchase the content published by the authors. Readers also form part of the audiences, communities and fans, but their main identifying characteristic is the consumption of the authors’ content (Saffy, 2020).

3. The term ‘feminism’ according to the Eastern Kentucky University, is an interdisplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality as understood through social theories and political activism (Day, 2016).

4. The term ‘Black’ is used to refer to all international races of ‘Black people’ and is referred to as such in the research.

5. The term ‘self-publishing’ refers to an author completing the entire publishing process including printing, editing, proofreading, formatting, cover design, and book marketing on their own. This is done without the help of a traditional publisher or publishing company (MasterClass, 2021).

6. The term ‘independent publishing’ refers to a publishing company publishing the work of an author (Fincher, 2019).

7. The term ‘internalised patriarchy/misogyny’ describes the prejudiced behaviour women projecct upon themselves. Projecting these misogynistic claims is a result of a gnawing fear of being percieved as weak or incapable due to one’s association with feminity (Jani, 2020).

8. The term ‘patriarchy’ refers to an analytical concept referring to a system of political, social, and economic relations and institutions structured around the gender inequality of socially defined men and women (Nash, 2009).

9. The term ‘gatekeeping’ refers to persons or instutions who are able to confer visibility or legitimacy to cultural productions and occupy an intermediate position between production and consumption (Johnson, 2020).

10. The term ‘actualisation’ can be refered to as ‘making real’ (Vocabulary.com, 2023). In this context, it would refer to patriarchal romance narratives being reflections of lived reality.

The next Chapter will be the literature review and in it, secondary literature will be analysed to gain an understanding into the romance genre and how Black South African romance differs from it. It will also look briefly at the differences that extist between an African press and one that was established in South Africa. The analysis will also include socio-political themes that have been identified and seen as part of the Black South African romance genre.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

As discussed in the introduction of Chapter 1, romance literature over the years has been localised on more European ideals of romance and a lot of that romance has stemmed from European patriarchal social constructs of what romance should be. However, these romance themes do not fit into every romantic context because patriarchal constructs of romance are regionally, culturally, and racially specific hence they cannot be applied as being the only existing variables of romance construction. Although the literature covers a wide variety of such themes, this review will focus on themes that have revealed themselves as important in identifying and further cementing the existence of the Black South African romance subgenre and the issues of gatekeeping and censorship that the authors of this genre face within the traditional publishing sphere in South Africa.

Exploring the definition of a new genre for publishing narratives produced by Black romance authors brought about the identification of themes that were looked at individually, not as interlinked but part of a larger focus. The purpose of this review is to help the reader understand the distinct aspects that are implied in the Black South African romance narratives. This is significant because it illustrates the way White romance genres have excluded key thematic issues linked to patriarchy and romance narratives that are central to the lived experiences of South African readers who are Black. There has been much research and discussion conducted on these opinions of romance narratives including patriarchy in romance, intimate partner violence in romance, violence in romance, the gender narrative theory, and gatekeeping in romance. However, this research will link the themes of patriarchy and patriarchal violence to the narratives that are written by Black romance authors in South Africa and how they are often based on the reflections of society. It will also explore how, because of these themes, these stories have been not given equal focus as traditional romance narratives.

The roles of an author and those of a publisher are perfectly explained by Ol James, who states that unless an author self-publishes, the roles of the author and the publisher are not the same. According to James (2023), the responsibility of the author is to provide a complete and wanted manuscript to the publisher, whereas the responsibility of the publisher is to delegate the budget effectively, source an editor and a marketing team, and get the book to sell. The split roles then

coalesce into one role when it comes to the role of self-publishing because the author carries all the responsibilities of creating a complete book, overseeing the budget of publishing, and any editing and marketing that needs to be done.

This research paper will consist of three main sections within the literature review, each analysed separately before being applied to the specifics of this research. The three main sections of the literature review are:

1. Romantic fiction – a description of the romantic fiction literary genre, with specific focus on Black South African romance and African romance, where both 'subgenres' are written within the African continent, by Black female authors.
2. Gender-based violence - a description of gender-based violence, internalised patriarchy, the patriarchy, tradition, and intimate partner violence, where all these themes are discussed within romantic fiction particularly Black South African romance fiction.
3. Gatekeeping – an in-depth look into the definition of gatekeeping and an analysis of the way it is dealt with by Black female authors.

2.1 Defining Black South African Romance

It is important to note that there is no set definition of Black South African romance, however, a definition specific for this research can be found by combining Cameron, Radway and Sapphire Press' respective definitions found in *The Romance Publishing Industry and Its Reputation (2020), Reading the Romance: Women: Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1991), and *Kwela romance-writing guidelines (Sapphire Press)* (2011). The purpose of this definition is to ascertain the parameters in which the proposed subgenre falls into through primary and secondary texts, when looking at the characteristics of Black South African romance and how they compare and contrast to those of the romance genre as a whole. In an attempt to succintly define the parameters of romance, Gulshan (2021), provides a list of characteristics of romance literature. The characteristics are as follows:

1. There must be a conflict challenging the relationship that needs to be overcome.
2. The stories are aspirational, hence issues outside of the central courtship are limited.

3. Romance novels are told through the perspective of a woman and feature strong-willed and clever female characters (although this has changed to be inclusive of other genders and character portrayal).
4. All romance novels follow the prevalent principle that good behaviour is rewarded with unconditional love.
5. The stories have a happy conclusion.

Before listing the characteristics for what is defined as romance by Kwela Books imprint Sapphire Press, it is important to place the imprint, Sapphire Press, within the context of this research and the purpose it serves in defining Black South African romance. Kwela books was launched in 1994 by NB Publishers with the onset of the South African democracy and its aim was to publish narratives from Southern Africa and about Southern Africa. According to Boswell (2011), Sapphire Press is a subsequent imprint that was launched by Kwela Books on the basis that there is a need for 'Black romance'. Furthermore, the launching of this imprint by NB uitgewers indicates that there have been previously identified markets which suggests that there has been a need for Black romance books (Chris, 2011). The Sapphire Press imprint was supposed to fill the identified gap with their version of Black romance narratives.

The characteristics identified by Sapphire Press to define their version of Black romance are as follows:

1. The story must be set in South Africa, preferably in a big city.
2. The story is told from the main female character's perspective and feature independent, spunky, and smart female characters.
3. Both the hero and heroine should be Black South Africans.
4. The main male character must have a more traditional outlook on life which then becomes or creates the conflict.

The characteristics identified by Sapphire Press share a common theme with those provided by Gulshan, and that is the narrative should be in the main female character's perspective, which is consistent with the romance genre (Sapphire Press, 2011; Gulshan, 2021). However, what was interesting about these lists is that the only point where they 'differ' is the point of conflict. The conflict for traditional romance is not explicitly mentioned, but for the type of Black South African romance that Sapphire Press was writing, the point of conflict had to be based on the

male main character having a "more traditional outlook on life" (Sapphire Press, 2011, p. 2). This outlook could be implied to be steeped in patriarchal beliefs regarding womanhood and subservience. This point of difference could be attributed to traditional African societal influences that would impact the narrative since it is about Black South Africans.

2.1.1 Similarities in African Romance and Black South African Romance

African romance, as a regional subgenre to romance, has the closest correlation to the characterisation that can be found when identifying romance literature written by Black women in South Africa. The table below was drafted with the specific purpose of identifying romance books that were written by Black women authors in the broader African continent while using them as a guideline to identify romance books written by Black South African authors. To accomplish this, the common abuses that African and South African women face were identified. According to Laher (2016), 45.6% of women, 15 years and older, in Africa have experienced intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual) or non-partner sexual violence, or both, which is the highest prevalence in the world (para. 2). Although this number is likely to have risen to include a larger number of African women who have suffered based on the premise that Black South African women write romance novels that reflect their lived socio-political experiences, it can then be assumed that other Black women on the African continent do the same with their romance narratives.

The reasoning behind separating South African novels from those published from the rest of Africa is based on the contextual setting that has been identified from romance books that have been independently published within the South African publishing market. The titles that were chosen to illustrate the similarities between African romance novels and Black South African romance novels were carefully selected to highlight the prevalence of literature within the romance genre that includes themes such as intimate partner violence, violence, and gender-based violence as key tenets of the storyline. The similarities presented within these books written by Black women authors found in the larger African continent and by Black women authors found in South Africa include themes of patriarchal violence, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and a myriad of other themes such as failed marriages and infertility. According to the World Health Organisation (2021), an estimated 30% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner violence in their

lifetime. Specifically, the African Gender Bank's Gender Data Index (as cited in Dorah, 2022) suggests that close to 40% of women in Africa have suffered from intimate partner violence and gender-based violence. Furthermore, the Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health (as cited in Brits, 2022) estimated that up to 50% of women in South Africa had experienced some form of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence. This link between experienced hardship against patriarchy and its forms of violence becomes the common thread or similarity that exists in African romance books and Black South African romance books.

Table 1.1: A Sample of titles of African Romance and Black South African Romance

No.	African Romance	Black South African Romance
1.	*Stay With Me* by Ayobami Adebayo	*Hlomu the Wife* by Dudu Busani-Dube
2.	*The Memory of Love* by Aminatta Forna	*Love Next Door* by Amina Thula
3.	*In Dependence* by Sarah Ladipo Manyika	*The Harvard Wife* by Busisekile Khumalo
4.	*Love and Hiplife* by Nana Prah	*Scarred* by Ayanda Xaba
5.	*Not Just Another Interlude* by Lara T. Kareem	*Ngcwethi her Warrior* by Nelly Page
6.	*Expecting Ty's Baby* by Empi Baryeh	*The Man I Married* by Tsakani Msisinyane

2.2 Analysis of Similar Markets on the Continent

Indigenous publishing houses around the African continent, such as Sapphire Press, Nollybooks, Storymoja Drumbeats, Cassava Press, and Adoras, have begun creating contemporary romance stories that reflect regional placement on the continent (Shercliff, 2014). These publishing houses imply the existence of romance genres that do not conform to the Eurocentric version of romance narratives, including genres like Black South African romance.

Ankara Press, an imprint of Cassava Republic Press, a Nigerian publishing house, has a mission statement that states that their aim is "to publish a new kind of romance, in which the thrill of fantasy is alive but realised in a healthier and more grounded way" (Ankara Press, as cited in Pitamber, 2015). Publisher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, the owner of Cassava Republic Press, also supports this mission and emphasises that the books produced by Ankara Press challenge romance stereotypes, empower women to love themselves in their search for love, romance, and wholesome sex, and reconfigure gender relations (Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, as cited in Shercliff, 2014). Therefore, Ankara Press has positioned itself within the romance genre while diverging from Eurocentric values and ideals of romance. The way Ankara has managed to establish its characteristics is by:

1. Challenging boundaries
2. Going beyond conventional expectations
3. Reflecting the complexity of modern lives
4. Avoiding associating their literature with educational materials (reading for entertainment and not escape)
5. Challenging the stereotypical perceptions of romance

In addition to this, it has managed to differentiate the romance novels Ankara produces by structuring its narratives in what it believes to be the ideals of modern African women as identified by Pitamber (2015) such as:

1. No damsel in distress; this means that there is no unhealthy attachments and co-dependency between the main characters of the narrative and they both become well-rounded individuals at the end of it all.
2. Through empowerment and enlightenment; this mean that these narratives do not rely on the notions of patriarchy, male dominance, control, and manipulation that can be harmful to women because romance novels have normalised these abusive acts as being a part and parcel of romance.
3. A worthwhile read, meaning that the female main character is not presented as having self-doubt, and underestimating her worth, she is assertive about her wants and needs and how they should apply to her life.

Sapphire press, as mentioned before, is an imprint of Kwela Books which is an imprint of NB uitgewers, a previously Afrikaner owned publishing house in South Africa, although now the board is more diverse.

2.3 Characterisation of Black characters as identified by Kwela Books for Sapphire Press

These stereotypes can be seen in the following table as taken from the Sapphire Press Guidelines (2011), curated by Kwela Books, a subsidiary of NB uitgewers:

Table 2.1: Stereotypes identified in Kwela romance-writing guidelines (Sapphire Press)

Heroine	Hero
1. She must be an independent, spunky, smart woman	1. He must be strong
2. She must be financially independent	2. He must be intelligent
3. She must be extremely self-motivated	3. He must be good-looking
4. She must be determined to achieve success	4. He must be slightly older than the heroine
5. She must be committed to overcoming past hardships	5. He must be successful in his career
6. She must feel financially responsible for her family	6. He must have a traditional outlook on life than the heroine
7. She must have a strong spiritual base	
8. She must have at least two girlfriends she can rely on for moral and emotional support	

9. She must like to see celebrities and to be seen around them	
10. She must experience personal growth and self-discovery	
11. She must realise her own worth and inner strength	

This stereotypical view of Black South Africans is detrimental in the manner that it is portrayed because it does not display a true reflection of what Black South Africans are like romantically. Wanner (as cited in Lewis and Baderoon 2021, para.5) states, "… Black women writers in South Africa have distinct experiences of being stereotyped." These stereotypes are clear in the above table but the most problematic will be addressed in the subsection below because it illustrates the differences present between Ankara Press established by Black women and Sapphire Press established for Black women. The latter cements Black people in 'traditional' settings that are set from patriarchal social constructs further underpinning tenets such as abuse and violence as being a part of Black romance narratives.

2.3.1 Ankara Press vs Sapphire Press

Ankara press was used as a tool to illustrate what a traditional publisher that is created for Black women can accomplish once they have identified their target market and created characters that are not stereotypical to the women who consume them. Ankara press is centred around creating literature that does not associate itself with the patriarchal heteronormative ideals of womanhood in romance narratives. Sapphire Press has grounded itself in creating narratives that are entrenched in patriarchal heteronormative and stereotypical ideals of womanhood in their romance narratives. This distinction between these two Presses is so prevalent that only a surface analysis is necessary to identify the polarities that exist.

Where Ankara Press is focused on creating well-rounded individuals, who do not rely on notions of patriarchy and who are assertive about their wants and needs, Sapphire Press was focused on creating characters that must still realise their own worth and inner strength, are shallow and vain, and still need to experience personal growth. This polarity in defining characteristics is where the stereotypical evidence is evident between the two presses. Since Ankara is an African press created by a Black woman, it avoids the recurrent stereotypes that become the means of creating a narrative for Black characters, this however, is not the case for Sapphire Press and that is evident in their use of stereotypical characterisations for the assumed Black character narratives. The use of stereotypical characters can be seen as a form of gatekeeping and Gibixego (2022) makes a mention of this by stating that if a publishing business is resistant to reform in the most basic of ways, it can then be seen as a systemic form of gatekeeping, which will be discussed further in the following literature.

Even the structure of the plot is based on the traditional stereotypes that are found in romance genres and are also associated as part of being the 'issue' in Black relationships. These plot structures taken from the Kwela Guidelines put in place for Sapphire Press are as follows:

1. The plot should revolve around the heroine and hero's struggle to build a romantic relationship
2. Outside forces such as work, or community should try to keep them apart
3. Their own conflicting beliefs about modern society and the role of women also threaten to keep them apart
4. Intimate scenes between the main couple only and no other boyfriends/lovers should be included.

These differences between these two imprints, Ankara Press and Sapphire Press, illustrate the differing ideals that differentiate romance novels that are written by Africans for Africans and those that are meant for Africans but are structured by White Eurocentric ideals. It also highlights the internal and external views that are present in the publishing community when looking at African romance. The internal view as presented by Ankara Press shows the growth and self-reliance and sexual command that African women possess on their own without the need for male validation and domination. Whereas the external view that Sapphire Press presents is steeped in 'oppressing' self-growth and own sexual command of Black South African women, this external view gives the male main characters control over the female main

characters' growth and often this growth is restricted to conform to patriarchal social constructs.

2.4 Reading Patriarchy in Romance

Romance has always been a patriarchal social construct that was meant to control and contain women's individuation and self-actualisation. According to Harilaou (2018), patriarchy can be defined as an institutionalised system of power based on gender that places men above women, and polices anyone who deviates or falls outside the binary and categorises children at birth. Patriarchal societal constructs have set the interactions between men and women to take place in a superior-subordinate relationship model. This exertion of male superiority in romance is illustrated through restricting the autonomy and freedom of women or through physical abuse as found by Mukherjee and Dasgupta (2020). These restrictions of autonomy as socially constructed by patriarchy then find themselves romanticised in romance narratives and are often portrayed as the man taking charge and dominance over situations rather than being seen as a tool of patriarchy to control women's expressions of freedom. These findings can then be used to imply that any iteration of womanhood and romance, regardless of it being figuratively or narratively, is dictated by patriarchal social constructs and it cannot be read as separate.

The analysis that Ann Jones conducted of *Mills & Boon* romances has shown that the romance genre has found it necessary to engage with feminism, and it revealed two major contradictions that take place within the genre (Jones, 1986, as cited in Radway, 1991). Those contradictions are:

1. A tendency to consolidate certain feminist agendas for women in the character of a working independent heroine even while disparaging the women's movement itself, usually through the speeches of the hero.
2. Narrative continuity, irreconcilable, and inconsistency in realist dialogue.

Patriarchal norms have managed to entrench themselves in romance, whether this was done deliberately or not does not change the fact that romance novels have become a model for reinforcing patriarchal norms and expectation towards women. According to Radway (1991), by binding female desire to heterosexuality constructed as the only natural sex alliance,

romance continues to prescribe patriarchal marriage as the ultimate route to the realisation of a mature female subjectivity. This, coupled with Irokoze (2018) stating that the conditioned belief of women being raised in preparation for a husband, is among one of the major reasons why the worth of a woman is centred on men. Furthermore, Deacon (2022) states that the definition of romance has been built on layers of patriarchal ideals, such as chivalry, courtship and marriage, despite it being a new age for women empowerment, there still seems to be an existence of these patriarchal romantic conventions. This further illustrates the way patriarchy has become so intertwined with romance that it has become a defining characteristic for romance literature.

2.5 Internalised Patriarchy and Black South African romance

In comparison to other forms of media, romance novels are rarely chastised for problematic depictions of relationships or violence; in fact, one study found that romance fiction has largely remained consistent in its portrayals of 'western sexual scripts,' which do not include violent or deviant sexual scenarios (Ménard & Cabrera, 2011). Additionally, this westernised format is still followed by local publishers in South Africa and can then be seen as a tool of the systemic gatekeeping that exists within the publishing industry. Boynton (2019) found that readers and authors take part in the greater cultural movement that glamourises and encourages domestic abuse by classifying narratives such as Wuthering Heights as romance. These two polarities in Eurocentric views of romance then establish the gap in which Black South African romance could situate itself as a literary subgenre, not only because it could carry the characteristics of what can be defined as romance, but it also could address the prevalence of patriarchal abuse in romantic narratives.

There have been studies that investigate the act of escapism that comes into play when readers read romance, although it would be important to note that this form of reading has had both negative and positives traits associated with it. Some researchers see escapism as a form of story immersion, stating that the reader is not reading to escape reality but just to fully engage with the story (Gold, 2017). However, some use the term of escapism figuratively to give substance to the intense relief they experience by identifying with a heroine whose life does not resemble their own in certain crucial aspects (Radway, 1991). This disparity can then be looked at to address the internalisation that takes place when readers interact with romance narratives. In addition, Gold (2017), further states that stories with an ‘escapist’ element give

the reader the mental strength to face reality and try to improve their situations. This then adds onto the question of whether Black South African women authors draft their books as a means of giving their readers the mental strength to deal with their realities when it comes to romance, patriarchy, and violence, or as a means of writing narratives that can be fully engaged by the audience. The argument raised in this section will be used in Chapter 3 to construct the methods of the research and used in Chapters 4 and 5 with establishing the parameters to the focus group questions and how they are phrased to the focus group participants.

The analysis that Julia Wood (2001) conducted in, *The normalization of violence in heterosexual romantic relationships: Women's narratives of love and violence,* is based on an inductive analysis of interviews they had with 20 heterosexual participants who had been in violent romantic relationships and how they had used gender and romance narratives to make sense of their violent relationships. The research questions of the study were:

1. Do participants describe violence against them as normal or understandable?
2. If participants describe the intimate partners' violence against them as normal or understandable, how do they narrate themselves and their partners' violence?

The results of this study firstly, addressed how the women justified and excused the acts of violence that were committed against them by their intimate partners. The study secondly addressed how these participants initially associated their relationships with the fairy tale narrative associating love with the tool to 'conquer' all the acts of violence with which they had dealt. The participants also associated with a second narrative, the dark romance narrative, which constructs violence as a norm or typical in a romantic relationship (Wood, 2001).

This research uses the framework from Wood's (2001) understanding of gender narrative theory. According to Wood (2001), women have been socialised to believe that there are three narratives that can be used to explain their romantic relationships, this applies to heterosexual relationships. These three narratives are the fairy tale narrative, the dark romance narrative and the new narrative theories. The two gender narratives to be mostly identified in romance are the fairy tale narrative and the dark romance narrative but the third narrative also makes an appearance within these romance narratives.

1. Fairy tale gender narrative centres itself by casting men as domineering, superior, and aggressive and women as subordinate, forgiving, loyal and accommodating. These characteristics then centre themselves around the societal heteronormative gender roles and the social construct of women needing men.
2. The dark romance gender narrative builds itself based on gender narratives, which pin the blame on women for the actions of men and this is achieved through the societal norm of justification. Women must justify the violence acted upon them through terms such as: she provoked him, she had it coming, she wanted it, and she enjoyed it. These are all terms that have been constructed by society to accurately shift the blame from men to women and use them as oppressive tools.
3. The new gender narrative centres itself around women constructing new narratives for themselves that justify leaving the abusive man and dissociates women's existence from being attached to a man. According to Fischer (1987 as cited in Wood 2001) humans can create or accept new narratives when those they have grown up believing no longer explain or guide their lives, although this option is more difficult to choose rather than the ready-made narratives offered by culture and society.

These narratives' ability to shift from the Prince Charming narrative to the Dark Prince narrative is important and will be further highlighted by the discourse analysis in the coming Chapter since it illustrates one of the foundational tenets of what constitutes a romance narrative regardless of subgenre.

Snyman and Penzhorn (2011) conducted a quantitative study in *Reader and Context: A reception study of Afrikaans Romance Readers,* which investigated the reading habits and reception of Afrikaans romance by Afrikaans speaking women. The study was part of a collaborative piece written by the University of Pretoria and LAPA publisher. The study had 593 respondents who were open to sharing their individual experiences and opinions about the romance genre. The research questions of the study were:

1. Afrikaans romance readers: who are they, where, when and what do they read?
2. Who are Afrikaans romance readers and what is their reading material?
3. African romance readers: why do they read romance?
4. The Afrikaans novel reader: what is one escaping from?

The results of the study revealed that Afrikaans readers separate their patriarchal lived experiences from the romance narratives that they read. This school of thought differs from those expressed by Radway (1997), Wood (2001) and Gold (2017) and brings about an interesting insight into how other ethnic groups interact with the romance literary genre. The study states, “In spite of the patriarchal environment in which Afrikaans speaking women in South Africa find themselves, this (patriarchy) was not … a reason/factor from which to escape. Instead … they read romance to escape from … rampant crime and violence touching … their … lives” (Snyman & Penzhorn, 2011, p. 239). However, the study and the participants have contradicted themselves with the former stating that the relationship between the reader and the text is connected to the social reality that Afrikaans romance readers find themselves and the latter stating that ‘living’ in the romance novel ‘changes’ their own lives and gives them more ‘insight’ and teaches them to ‘handle’ their own lives better (Snyman & Penzhorn, 2011).

This contradiction of thought is interesting because in English and African romance, the link to read and experienced patriarchy is clear and used as the reason to read to escape. Nonetheless, in Afrikaans romance, that link is shifted to the external violence and crime which is a very arbitrary factor to attribute as the reasoning for escape in literature. This factor can be read as a way of not addressing the patriarchal issues that exist within the Afrikaans community and as a way of not engaging and gaining insight on how to manage their own lives.

2.6 Gatekeeping of Black South African romance within the Publishing Market

The term 'gatekeeping' does not have a set definition and can vary depending on the context in which it is applied, such as publishing, medicine, or journalism. Kroeker (2017) defines a gatekeeper as someone who has the authority to grant or deny passage to the next stage of a publishing journey, while Gardner (2018) emphasises that individuals in gatekeeping roles focus on finding authors to bring in rather than excluding authors. For this research, the definition of gatekeeping will be based on the exclusion of African narrative variations of romance within the South African context due to the lack of reform in the publishing industry. Caser (1975) identifies two types of publishing houses, one that is willing to publish anything saleable and another that only publishes works in line with the established tradition of the house. Johnson (2020) further explains that if the content and themes of a work do not align with what agents or publishers can sell, they will not take up the work for traditional publishing

(p. 29). This poses a problem, particularly in a country with a history and cultural tradition of oppression.

According to Gibixego (2021), a trade publishing business that is resistant to reform in basic ways, such as ownership, African-language publication, and racial diversity of employees, is one of the numerous results that can also be seen as a systemic form of gatekeeping. The analysis conducted in this research hopes to explore the impact of gatekeeping on authors more directly. This reform in racial diversity can be beneficial when addressing the bias in decision making and title selection. The publishing industry is still dominated by colonial languages and publishing houses are owned by major international business that enforce Eurocentric styles and intellectual standards. Maake (2000) cites Malan (1980) stating that Black literatures are considered inferior to Afrikaans and English South African literature. Because of this stronghold of power, Maake (2000) states that the corrupt practices of gatekeepers play a threefold role as members of the Language Boards, literary scholars and financial stakeholders in the publishing industry. This breakdown and understanding of gatekeeping is relevant because it speaks to the way authors, in turn, look at the publishing industry and further cements the lack of interaction the self-published authors choose to have with traditional publishers.

Harris (2020) states that South Africa is one of Africa's greatest publishing sectors. Deon Meyer, a crime novelist, is the bestselling author in South Africa, with his book *Donkerdrif* selling 30 000 copies in 2020. Dudu Busani-Dube, a romance novelist who self-publishes after starting her literary career on Facebook, is the second highest with 10 500 (Harris, 2019). Although, according to Nielsen BookScan Data, Dudu Busani-Dube has now sold 17 633 copies of her most popular book *Iqunga* and totals 55 374 copies sold from 2015-2022. Many publishers still consider Black women's writing to have a limited market even though audiences have more access to the narratives published from the global South and Black women's viewpoints are more apparent in the public sphere (Lewis & Baderoon, 2021).

Black South African romance possesses a duality in its nature; one of the reasons being the language style that is used and the themes that they choose to include within their narratives. Black South African English, according to Klerk (2003), is a variety of English used by mother-tongue speakers of South Africa's Indigenous languages where English is not the language of majority. The use of Black South African English, within the literary works of authors that publish Black South African romance makes it more accessible to the South African publishing

market especially, within a country that has a "population of 49.1 million" people who were classified as Black African (Galal, 2022). Black South African romance authors such as Dudu Busani-Dube use this Black South African English variation of English to make their narratives more relatable to their audiences. Brink (n.d., as cited in Chait, 2000) states that Black South Africans needed to deny parts of their identity to be seen by White South Africans as 'fitting'. The use of the themes of patriarchal violence such as intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and internalised patriarchy, coupled with this language style use, are then used as tools to create narratives that readers can relate to and as a means to reflect and engage their audiences. These become "… gatekeeping practices that selectively provide visibility or legitimacy to certain cultural products, and practices of consecration that confer durable status to cultural products already available to a consuming public." (Merriman, 2015). This makes the story more reflective of society and considers the educational level that, firstly, the readers might have and secondly, language level necessary for identifying, and explaining the various acts of violence and abuse that could fall under the patriarchal guise. These elements are identified motivations for gatekeeping.

2.6.1 Effects/Consequences & Drivers of Gatekeeping for Black South African women Romance Authors

Financial considerations are also one of the gatekeeping challenges that are faced by authors. Johnson (2020) expresses this by stating that these considerations often consider the viability of the work, or the saleability of an author to a wider reading public. Struggle for legitimacy is a gatekeeping challenge that is also faced by these authors. A study conducted by Gunderson (2015 as cited in Merriman 2015) found that self-publishing authors continue to struggle for legitimacy against institutionalised systems of gatekeeping and authority in the traditional publishing industry. If legitimacy is associated with other gatekept genres, publishers will be less likely to concede/believe that the author has a legitimate readership. Once an author is self-published, they lose legitimacy through retail representation as well since retailers rarely deal with authors directly, and do not qualify for literary awards, which limits their potential readership even further. This essentially perpetuates their lack of legitimacy in the publishing industry. Structural considerations also play a role in the challenges that gatekeeping presents. Caser (1975) states that larger publishing houses can afford to experiment with titles without the assurance that all will do well as long as at least one is likely to be a success. Smaller

publishing houses do not have this luxury because their existence is based on publishing marketable and saleable books to the market. Marketing also plays a role in the challenges presented by gatekeeping in South Africa. There is a lack of available information that supplies knowledge for self/independent authors and how they can have market awareness in marketing their books to the public. Baverstock (2015, as cited in Johnson 2020) states that "they [authors] need to have an understanding of which agents and publishing houses are best suited to the kind of writing they have produced." There is a lack of knowledge and research about African/Black readership, because of legislative oppression during apartheid. And much of the existing knowledge is for an English and Afrikaans readership, and those markets are almost exclusively supplied by traditional publishers.

2.7 Intimate Partner Violence and Romance

Intimate partner violence, as defined by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), refers to abuse or aggressiveness within a romantic relationship. It includes both current and previous spouses, as well as dating partners, and "intimate partners." The occurrence and severity of intimate partner violence can vary, ranging from a single violent event with long-term consequences to chronic and severe bouts over a prolonged period. In the context of romance narratives, the theme of intimate partner violence can be portrayed in various ways. Some romance narratives may explore dark romance, which encompasses elements of power dynamics, dominance, and aggression within romantic relationships. These narratives may engage with the complexities and dynamics of relationships involving abuse or violence. It is important to note that readers' perceptions and engagement with such narratives can vary. Some readers may be drawn to dark romance narratives, finding them compelling or cathartic, while others may find them problematic or triggering. It is crucial to approach these narratives with sensitivity and acknowledge the potential impact they can have on readers. Overall, the presence of intimate partner violence in romance narratives reflects the broader social issue of abuse within relationships. It is important for authors, publishers, and readers to approach this theme responsibly and critically, considering its potential implications and ensuring that discussions around it are respectful and considerate of survivors of intimate partner violence.

Any of the following sorts of behaviour can be classified as intimate partner violence according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2021):

1. When a person hits, kicks, or uses another physical force to injure or attempt to injure a partner, this is referred to as physical violence.
2. When a partner refuses or cannot consent, sexual violence is defined as forcing or attempting to force a partner to participate in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual encounter.
3. Stalking is a pattern of unwelcome attention and contact from a partner that generates worry or concern for the victim's or someone close to the victim's safety.
4. The use of verbal and nonverbal communication with the purpose to injure another partner mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another partner is known as psychological aggression.

According to Dekel & Andipatin (2016), based on a study on intimate partner violence conducted in Cape Town, the responses they got from the interviews that they conducted showed that women's reports of their relationships were intertwined with romantic ideologies.

The link between intimate partner violence and romance comes from the issues that arise with violence being romanticised with elements such as stalking, controlling a victim's movement, unwanted physical contact, and violence being represented as loving gestures by romance novels through scenes with sudden embraces, and jealous altercations with any perceived romantic rivals (Domestic Violence Services Network, Inc, 2021) . Again, the elements of the dark romance gender narrative in the romance genre further illustrate that these elements exist within romance despite them not fitting into the script mentioned above for traditional romance narratives. Nonetheless, even with the prevalence of such abuse, romance novels still romanticise these acts of violence that are committed and this romanticisation then brings into question of how deeply rooted misogyny is in women if they are still able to interact with narratives that contain violence towards them.

Conclusion

The South African publishing market has a very skewed perception of what can be classified and characterised as romance. Efemia Chela (as cited in Johannesburg Review of Books, 2020, para. 25) further illustrates this perception by stating, "publishing in South Africa pretends to be interested in growing a literary culture and reading culture that is diverse. However, time

and again we see a narrow-mindedness in genre, and the types of stories authors recognised and represented." This narrow-mindedness in genre and types of stories that is recognized can be based on how narrowly genres like romance are dealt with by predominantly White-controlled publishing houses. The existing Black romance books that have been produced by traditional publishers have often been based on type casted Black characters because that is what they had identified as being needed by the market. However, new Black authors are challenging this narrow-mindedness that afflicts traditional publishing houses by creating narratives for these overlooked markets that were deemed unprofitable and illustrate a legacy of market manipulation.

The similarities between African romances and Black South African romances are initially steeped in pain and violence. The emergence of publishers such as Ankara press have, for African romance as juxtaposed to Sapphire Press for Black South African romance, allowed the former to create narratives that are progressive and feature growth and independence of the African woman whereas the latter has based its foundational writing on the stereotypes of Black people and how they related to love.

The emergence of new Black romance authors has managed to illustrate the differences that exist when comparing Black romance versus the traditionally White romance structure. The literature review has been designed to reveal these differences in a structured way to illustrate this number of differences between the traditional romance genre and the proposed genre of Black South African romance. Furthermore, the instances of exclusion or systemic effects of censorship linked to suppression of the Black South African romance genre could then be classified as gatekeeping and this act of gatekeeping is one of the themes that will be focused on in the literature review.

The challenges presented by gatekeeping for self-publishing Black women romance authors are many and dependent on how many times the author has interacted with the publishing industry. Johnson (2020) states that "Each of the gatekeepers in the publishing industry has a different role that defines their position within the hierarchy of the industry and enables them to claim an authority to define what can be a book" (p. 28). These various roles that are internally constructed and externally dealt with, make it harder for self/independently published Black women authors to make their work public and financially workable outside of traditional publishing.

The following Chapter, which is the methodology Chapter, will identify and define the research methods that will be used to gather data for this research. It will focus on defining the paratextual analysis and in what manner it will be used within the research. The same will be done for the bibliographic analysis. Lastly, it will focus on the method and avenues used to identify and contact the authors that will form part of the focus group discussion.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to introduce the research methods for the mixed-methods exploratory study of the Black South Africa romance genre. The theory from the literature review identified that the chosen themes of patriarchy and its violent expressions can be identified as part of the themes that Black South African self/independently published romance authors could have included within their narratives. The planned paratextual analysis will look at the blurbs and reviews of books that have been self/independently published under the 'Black South African' romance genre and try to identify the themes that had been chosen for the literature review. The planned bibliographic analysis will look at the data from Nielsen BookScan Data and look at the market penetration and market response that self/independently published romance authors have managed to achieve vs the traditional publishers. This Chapter

will then offer a summary as to how the self/independently published Black female romance authors were contacted and asked to participate with the research.

This approach allows for a deeper analysis into identifying existing narratives that fall within this genre of Black South African romance and to discuss why they fall within this proposed genre. The applicability of the mixed methods approach for this study is discussed in this Chapter. This Chapter's focus is the research strategy, which includes the methodology, study participants, methods, analysis method, and ethical considerations.

The study explores this data to answer the following questions:

How have authors reflected the socio-political context of their readership using Black South African romance?

a. What role does internalised misogyny play in independently published Black South African romance?
b. How has Black South African romance opened discourse around patriarchy and violence?
c. How has independent publishing been used as a tool to address the challenges of gatekeeping by authors of self-published Black South African romances?

3.1 Research design

The mixed methods research approach will be used within the following analysis Chapters. Qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomenon, Teherani et al (2015). On the other hand, McLeod (2019) states that quantitative research involves the process of objectively collecting and analysing numerical data. Because the purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the content and the genre of Black romance in South Africa, a mixed method approach is the most appropriate choice. The qualitative research method will make use of the data provided by the paratextual analysis to verify that the themes that were addressed in the literature review are present in books that have been identified as Black South African romances. The quantitative research method will make use of the data collected from the bibliographic analysis. This would be used to look at market statistics on the market penetration and market response of the romance genre in the market.

3.2 Research instruments

The qualitative portion of the research was performed using paratextual analysis, a focus group, a literature review and, reader reviews in the form of an epitext. According to Genette (as cited in Buchanan 2010), the term paratext means the framing devices authors and publishers use to contextualise works and generate interest, i.e., blurbs, and celebrity endorsements which are in the publishers' control. The analysis will consist of blog reviews which are not in the publishers' control, and reviews from platforms such as Goodreads. The analysis will take place through a discourse analysis, which is used to construe meaning of socio-political issues from these reviews and use that meaning to answer the set research question of identifiable themes of patriarchy and violence and in identifying the genre, that is, Black South African Romance. According to Kitzinger (1995), focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants to generate data, and the purpose of this chosen methodology is to use the data to fully address the systemic concept of gatekeeping in the publishing market and how it is dealt with by the chosen participants and how they write about gender-based violence, patriarchy, intimate partner violence and violence. The data-collection method that will be used is the questionnaire comprising of qualitative questions and will be for authors of self-published Black South African Romance.

The paratextual analysis will consist of blurbs and online reviews (see Appendix B) to identify the following:

a) the way in which the male main character is portrayed if instances of intimate partner violence are alluded to,

b) how those scenes were received by the public,

c) instances of patriarchy, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence that are identifiable according to the reader from the blurbs and online reviews.

1.2.1 Title selection

The titles used in this research have been chosen from the African continent. The titles used in the Literature Review (2.1.1 Similarities in African romance and Black South African romance) were chosen in a purposive sampling method from Western Africa and were further used to compare the similarities in themes that were identified for this research. The occurrence of these themes at a continental level was used to illustrate the societal situating of Black female

romance authors on the African content and how: a) they view and respond to patriarchy and gender-based violence and b) how the representation of violence is received by their readers. The titles that are chosen to take part of the paratextual analysis were chosen based on having been self-published by Black women who are categorised as romance authors by their markets.

3.2.1 Focus Group Instrument Development

English-language discussion guides (see Appendix A) were developed by the researcher as well as recommendations offered by the Supervisor. The Ethics Committee then reviewed and approved the discussion guide.

There were fourteen questions that the participants had to answers and these questions and the consent form was made available to participants before the focus group discussion. Assistance was given to participants when they required help, and this was done through clarifying and rephrasing questions.

3.2.2 Study Participants

The target population of the focus group is a sample of self-identified and self-published romantic fiction authors from South Africa; this will be done using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of informants based on their ability to bring light to a specific theme, (Robinson, 2014). These authors will be contacted and based on their level of response; the researcher will determine if further participants are required. It is worth mentioning that there are only a few authors that fall within the characteristics of publishing Black female South African romance, hence the need for purposive sampling. Snowball sampling defined by Zikmund et al., (2019) is the action of selecting one subject and conduct the research with the participant and then request them to suggest the next participant that could take part in the research. Snowball sampling, in the case of a focus group, would consist of identifying all the authors that are willing to participate in the focus group. Instead of individually conducting the research with the participants, a time will be made available to all participants and the research will be conducted as a group. Both the purposive and snowball sampling methods will be used to contact authors for the focus group. These sampling methods

will be used in the research to identify Black romance authors that would participate in the focus group and who can relate to the subject matter.

Multiple authors will initially be contacted to participate in this research. A minimum successful level of response is four of the initially selected authors. If this minimum response level is not met, other self-publishing authors will be identified and contacted using a hybrid purposive snowball sampling method.

The sample was chosen from a population of Black women who had previously published books that had been categorised as romance. The women could be full-time or part-time authors and there was no age limit imposed. All participants had to be fluent in the English language, but English did not need to be their native language. The authors could have written in the vast genres under publishing but had to have also published Black South African romance novels.

Bridge books assisted in the initial recruitment through supplying contacts of authors that could be willing to participate in this study. The researcher emailed the participants suggested by Bridge Books using the information sheet in Appendix D, which lays out the focus of the research and what part the participant plays in the study. The researcher also contacted authors through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook to ask self-published and independently published authors to participate in the focus group, they were also sent the Appendix D information sheet. Authors that were unable to participate were requested to suggest an author they thought would be better suited for the focus group.

The authors were sent the questionnaire in advance so that they could fully ascertain that they were the targeted demographic for the focus group. Of the four initially emailed participants, only two authors were willing to participate in the study. The next round had four participants that were contacted through Facebook, and of those, only two agreed to participate. The last round of three participants were contacted through referral from one of the participants found on Facebook and two participants agreed to participate in the focus group. The participant sampling pool was designed to be limited to participants for this research as defined in this study. An informed consent form (as cited in Appendix C) was required from each participant prior to the focus group engagement. The final number of participants was six.

3.2.3 Data Collection

This study used a focus group research method, the transcript of questions for the focus group can be found in Appendix A. The focus group discussion was recorded electronically using Microsoft Teams. The focus group questions were made available to the participants in advance, so that they could formulate well thought out responses to the discussion. The focus group began with establishing house rules for the progression of the discussion and reaffirming that consent and participation could be withdrawn at any point in the discussion and that no repercussion would come from withdrawing. The first couple of questions that were posed to the group were to ascertain race, age, and language use of the authors. The proceeding questions had to do with whether the authors published solely under the romance genre and why they have chosen to self-publish their work. The next sets of questions focused on the authors' interactions with traditional publishing houses, if they believe their work would have been altered if they had gone to a traditional publisher and if any of the suggested themes of patriarchy were previously included in their narratives. The focus group recording was transcribed by the researcher in the form of individual author specific documents.

The transcribed documents of the focus group were sent back to the participants to be reviewed and verified by the participants. Participants were not part of the writing or editing process of the analysis and results.

3.3 Ethical Concerns

The questionnaires will be designed by the researcher and the data will be gathered, transcribed, and analysed through an online meeting via Microsoft Teams or Zoom with the focus group. All these have been approved by the University of Witwatersrand Ethics Committee.

The researcher ensured that ethics remained a key factor throughout the study. The informed consent form and the information sheet (as seen in Appendices C and D) was provided to each participant prior to the focus group discussion. The risks to human subjects associated with this study was low. All participants were over the age of 18 years and did not demonstrate any impaired mental capacity when approached to participate in the study. Additionally, all recorded material will be erased after 5 years following approval by the research committee.

3.4 Limitations of this research study

1. It is assumed that gatekeeping and the censorship it endorses is a large factor why the subgenre has not been formally created by traditional publishing.
2. It is assumed that the existing traditional publishing market failed to correctly cater for an existing market, thus chose to exclude it rather than reworking their approach. This assumption is based on there being more successful independent authors, and fewer traditionally published Black romance titles.
3. Sapphire Press is no longer operating, and archival resources had to be used. As they are the only local publisher that had attempted to access the Black South African romance market, the information they provide is still relevant.

In conclusion, the approach of this Chapter will be based on conducting paratextual and bibliographic analysis to look at, firstly, the occurrence of the themes that have been identified in the literature review and, secondly, to look at the market presence and competition these books have in the traditional market in South Africa for the latter. Lastly, the research will conduct a focus group discussion with Black South African women authors that have previously published under the romance genre to find out how they deal with the systemic gatekeeping that arises when writing Black South African romance that includes the themes identified in the literature review and the paratextual analysis. These methods will be applied in the following Chapter to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 4: Data/results presentation

Introduction

Applied in this Chapter are the research methods that were previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the paratextual and epitextual analysis, and the bibliographic analysis. These methods of analysis will include the analysis of secondary materials such as blurbs and online reviews as well as data taken from the Nielsen BookScan Data spreadsheet.

The first subsection will deal with the paratextual analysis which includes a breakdown of the secondary data that exists online and in the form of blurbs and online reviews which were obtained by manual data collected by the researcher from several verified sources such as Goodreads, Facebook, Bookish Things, African Book Addict, Visionary Writings, eBooks Teach, and Amazon. Books were included based on being self/independently published, written by Black South African women, and categorised under the romance genre in South Africa by the South African market. The books that were excluded from analysis were books written by White authors, or books that did not fall under the genre of romance, or books that were published internationally and sold locally. This was done through individual analysis of the titles, blurbs and conjoining online reviews. In the end, they provide an overall summary of the commonalities and recurrences that have been identified in this analysis in the next section.

The second subsection will focus on a bibliographic analysis that is based on data that was collected by Nielsen BookScan and used by the researcher to look for the existing market need and demand for Black South African romance. It also focuses on the kinds of market revenue that these narratives draw as compared to other more established romance genres and publishing styles (self/independent publishing vs. traditional publishing).

4.2 Blurbs and Online Review Analysis

This subsection presents a compilation of titles authored by Black South African women, specifically within the genre of Black romance. The identification of these titles was carried out by the researcher. In Section 2.1 of the literature review, the concept of Black romance in the South African market was defined. The selection of these titles aims to explore potential common themes that Black South African romance authors incorporate in their narratives, reflecting societal aspects. The choice of themes for analysis in this research stems from the limited existing literature in this genre, emphasizing the contextual factors influencing production.

The online reviews can be found in the Appendices of the research under Appendix B and have been ordered and labelled to match the blurbs below.

4.2.1 *Hlomu the Wife* – Dudu Busani-Dube

Blurb and Online Review

Hlomu the Wife is a love story that takes its cues from life in a South African township. A young woman named Mahlomu meets Mqhele Zulu, and they fall in love. Even though aspects of Mqhele's personality and past make her uncomfortable, Hlomu is happy. Their love is strong, and they stand by each other through good and bad. But Mqhele and his seven brothers have a dark and tumultuous past that involves a dead warlord father, mob justice, and lots of unaccounted-for money. The Zulu brothers are rich, handsome, powerful, and dangerous. They eventually become one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Johannesburg - but the inherent danger remains. (Busani-Dube, Hlomu the Wife, 2023).

Online Review - 1001 Bookish Things Review

This Zulu love story is beautifully written, the reader goes through many emotions as the book progresses. Hlomu is driven, career-orientated and feisty. Soon after moving to JHB, from an upbringing in DBN KwaMashu, to pursue her career dreams as a journalist, she catches the attention of a taxi driver at Bree.

Mqhele pulls out all the stops to woe the beautiful Hlomu, who is sure she will not agree to

date a taxi driver of all people. After two weeks, she gives in, led by her heart and the door is opened to a life she didn't know existed and a "Taxi Queen" status. Hlomu soon discovers that Mqhele is one of eight Zulu brothers and they all look alike, bug-eyed, tall and very handsome. In six months, Hlomu and Mqhele are married, the first of the brothers to get a wife. Nkosana, the oldest of the brothers is the head of the family, having had taken care of all of his siblings after a painful exit from Mbumba, their childhood home.

Hlomu, being the only wife in the family, takes on the role of mom to Nkosana's three boys, introducing them to the culture of Christmas clothes, as well as the close-knit family of brothers to legitimising their business and the way they store their money. Mqhele and Hlomu go through their ups and downs, like any married couple right? No, their love is crazy, they love too much, and their fights are as passionate as their love. Hlomu helps the family deal with and come to terms with their past. She soon becomes a full-time mother, discovering more than she bargained about the handsome Zulu brothers, seeing the effects they have on all who cross paths with them, most of all being loyal to not just one but all the Zulu men and protecting them like her own.

A great read, the only warning is you won't be able to put this down until you finish it. – Phumzile Z (1001 Bookish Things, 2016)

4.2.2 *Zandile the Resolute* – Dudu Busani-Dube

Blurb and Online Review

Zandile the Resolute is the second in Dudu Busani-Dube's blockbuster, Hlomu series. This novel continues the story of the eight Zulu brothers. Rich, handsome, powerful, dangerous and the wealthiest and most powerful families in Johannesburg, Zandile is the wife of the first brother Nkosana, their love story is like a South African township Romeo and Juliet, their families hate each other but their love is so strong, it endures all the hatred, the deaths and even prison time. (Busani-Dube, 2023).

Online review - 1001 Bookish Things

Book Two of the *Hlomu* series. A word of advice, if you have not read *Hlomu the Wife*, this book won't make much sense. One thing though that never left my mind throughout the book is though book two still has the same conversational style as *Hlomu*, the two are so different. The focus is on Zandile and Nkosana (head of the family). Zandile has been around since before Hlomu. She is Nkosana's 'wife' and mother to two of Nkosana's sons (whom Hlomu raised). Zandile is mature. Matured by life's cruelty, experiences from her younger self and by a lost 17 years. She is filled with a mixture of good memories and nightmares of past events. After 17 years, of course, much has changed – the one constant is and has been the love Zandile and Nkosana share. In Hlomu, Xolie and Gugu (wives to Mqhele, Sambulo and Nqoba), Zandile has found sisters, they share their stories, lives and laughter with one another, they even know where what stays in each other's houses.

Zandile has somewhat adjusted to life living with the Zulu brothers, the money; media and the rules of do's and don'ts. She's a lady (emphasis on hair – it must always look good), stubborn but knows how to pick her fights. She learns of how judgemental people can be (the media of course) but she doesn't let that shake her, in fact, she takes matters into her own hands and demands to be listened – telling her own story, her own way. She becomes accustomed to a life of always getting what you want, remains humble, confident and returns the love Nkosana has and gives her (1001 Bookish Things, 2016).

4.2.3 *Naledi His Love* – Dudu Busani-Dube

Blurb and Online Review

The epic love story centred on eight Zulu men, whose surname is Zulu, continues, Naledi his love focuses on Qhawe and the woman he comes to love, Naledi. She. like Hlomu and Zandile. comes to understand that loving one of the Zulu brothers means loving all of his dark and tumultuous past and as much as she will enjoy the trappings that comes with being the wife of one of those rich, handsome, powerful, and dangerous men. She also has to accept and live with the inherent danger that remains (Busani-Dube, 2023).

Online Review - 1001 Bookish Things

It wasn't my turn yet but I couldn't resist the temptation to take it and read it. So I did. And read it in three days! It was somewhat of a sad read because of the realisation that it was the last of the books and Dudu, if you are reading this, it's a NATIONAL CALL – you have got to write more books! We need a book on how the Zulu brothers see things, we need more. We've read about Mqhele's Hlomu (who was the first wife and a very impactful figure in the lives of the Zulu brothers), Nkosana's Zandile (with an unreal kind of beauty, inner strength and stubborn), the last is about Naledi, Qhawe's queen.

Naledi is a Tshwana Princess, her father is the village chief. They meet with Qhawe over a parking spot and as they say, the rest is history. In the previous book, Qhawe had made a strong connection to Oleta, whose life ended abruptly and Qhawe didn't quite recover. It seems Naledi has big shoes to fill. Like any woman, Naledi feels she will live in the shadow of a former lover, who would've made it to the aisle had her life not ended. "Chawe", as is lovingly called by his Tshwana Princess, because she can't quite get the 'Q' in his name, is very similar to his brothers. He's all about family, loyalty, honesty and love but Naledi doesn't get to that level. As with all the wives to follow (except Zandile), Hlomu's approval is important to the brothers and without her approval, no girl will move from girlfriend to wife. Naledi is in the moment, she meets the family at Qhawe's mini birthday celebration. She's a medical doctor by profession and is as stubborn as both Hlomu and Zandile.

Naledi comes with baggage, mother issues. Her mother walked out on her and her sisters when Naledi was just one. She was raised by her sisters and her dad especially, his status as chief didn't make it easier. With Qhawe in her life, she is forced to make amends with her past and to forge a stronger relationship with her sisters, all of them, especially the one who has not gotten along with them all. Naledi goes through many ups and downs in her relationship with Qhawe and finds out just how important loyalty is to this family and that she's not only dating Qhawe but the entire family and that she no longer has as much privacy as she had and would like to have. Because of love, she overlooks a lot of things and like the wives, is introduced to a completely new way of life that she never thought was possible.

This was a beautiful read. Dudu is a brilliant writer and her conversational style makes the reader feel part of the story and you go through the emotions the character goes through.
I found myself towards the end of the book and wanting it not to end. When it finally ended, I held it for a while hoping that there is a fourth, fifth and sixth book that is hidden somewhere

waiting to be discovered and would somehow find their way to me. If you still have not read these books, you have to. Add them to your bucket list! (1001 Bookish Things, 2016).

Analysis of all three blurbs by Dudu Busani-Dube

When looking at cultural norms and how they relate to the socio-political context of South Africa, the title of the first text, *Hlomu the Wife,* can be suggestive of patriarchy. The female main character of the text has immediately lost her individuality and becomes an extension of her husband and his way of life as is indicative of patriarchal households. The blurb introduces the public to the female main character as Hlomu, a driven, career-oriented woman but, in the same breath, as the woman who gave up her career just six months after meeting Mqhele. The patriarchal expectations of motherhood and family are immediately placed on her, and this can be seen in the blurb when it uses terms such as 'close-knit family,' 'culture of Christmas' and 'role of mom.' These are used to justify/excuse why she had to lose her individuality once she joined the relationship.

The discourse of patriarchy is also easy to find within this text, *Zandile the Resolute,* and it builds on from *Hlomu the Wife* and presents multiple instance that highlight its patriarchal underpinnings. Firstly, it highlights the patriarchal discourse through its title, by using the term 'resolute' which means determined and unwavering, the main female character is portrayed as a determined woman who knows what she wants but in the same line, she is said to be humble and confident, within heterosexual normativity based in patriarchy. These words are used to refer to submissive and compliant women who are ideal for marriage but are also used as key defining characteristic in misogynistic women. Zandile is also portrayed as a spoilt character which can be inferred as a result of her submissiveness to Nkosana, the patriarch of the family and her husband. Secondly, the patriarchal underpinning that highlights itself is the hierarchy that is set out for the Zulu brothers, with the eldest being presented as the patriarch of the family. This dominant structure also becomes clear with the women of the family where Mahlomu is dubbed the matriarch of the family.

The patriarchal subversion continues when looking at the mirrored matriarchal structure with Hlomu being assigned as the family matriarch and having the ability to dictate the course of the brothers' love lives, which might seem like it benefits feminism, but it is just a placating

position given to her to excuse having taken away her individuality and independence by further defining her in a role of the family and othering her role under the established patriarchy.

These texts also present themselves as subverting the discourse of violence and they achieve this by suggesting danger or violence but do not tell this outrightly as a fact. The violence within the text presents itself as the internal and external allusion of violence. Firstly, what is referred to as internal is directed towards the violence that takes place within the relationship of the main characters of the texts, and this violence is alluded to when words such as, 'aspects of Mqhele's personality make her uncomfortable' and 'their love is strong, and they stand by each other through good and bad'. These words highlight the instability within the relationship and how this could be seen especially within the South African context as possibly toxic and even abusive when dealing with cultural norms of gender-based violence. Secondly, what is referred to as the external allusion to violence and danger is the violence that takes place outside of the relationship of the main characters. This expression of danger and violence can be illustrated when showing the terms such as 'Mqhele and his seven brothers have a dark and tumultuous past,' 'dead warlord father,' 'mob-justice,' 'unaccountable money' and 'Zulu brothers are rich, handsome, powerful and dangerous'. In any other setting, this blatant display of violence would be seen as realistically dangerous to partake in but within the romance genre, this aura of danger is the key distinction necessary for attraction within a man.

A recurrent theme within these texts is the theme of sisterhood, and this can be seen in the relationship that Zandile has with, not only Hlomu, but the other sisters-in-law as well. This relationship of sisterhood could be viewed in two ways, the first being that the family is a close-knit family thus forming these friendly relationships amongst themselves. The second option would be that the types of relationships that they can have as women have been restricted and determined by the patriarchal structures in their lives. Thus, these women can only build relationships with women who are in the same relationships which further goes to restrict their independence. However, this then opens the aspect of this close friendship as a means of sharing a lived experience of dealing with the patriarchal parameters set out for them in relation to these men.

The blurb and online review for *Zandile the Resolute* also highlight the 'loss of the self' as a discourse. This discourse is important because it is closely related to patriarchy and how under

patriarchal relationships the woman loses her identity and becomes an extension of her male counterpart. Within these texts, Zandile is only given a one-dimensional aspect of existence by always being characterised as the duties that she performs and not as an individual with unique characteristics. An example of this would be how in the texts she is referred to as the submissive wife and the mother to two boys that she did not raise. The only time she is referred to as being an individual outside of her set role is when we are told that she went to prison, meaning that she has failed to be a proper member of society. This is also seen when we are told that she failed to raise her children meaning that she has failed to be a mother in the eyes of society. This misogynistic expression of failed motherhood could then be seen as an extension or even an effect of 'loss of self' because one always relates to oneself through patriarchal societal lenses.

Naledi His Love places itself into the fairy tale gender narrative and it is important to note that within this instance, the fairy tale narrative is situated within patriarchal structures. It situates Qhawe, the male main character, as the shinning knight, ready to charm and romance Naledi into falling in love with him. These 'trappings' of luxury and riches feed into the discourse of patriarchal dominance and internalised patriarchy because they are used as a tool to control and strip Naledi of her independence.

4.2.4 *Love Next Door*- Amina Thula

Blurb and Online Review

When business analyst, Abby, finally moves into a place of her own, she is delighted to discover that her new apartment block is also home to a hunk-next-door. Kopano – teacher, swim coach, artist, and all-round nice guy – seems too good to be true until Abby discovers evidence of a mystery girlfriend.

As neighbours, Abby and Kopano spend more and more time together as 'just good friends', the attraction deepens and their close connection develops into something more intense.

But just as her love life finally seems on track, a fabulous career opportunity opens up for Abby

in New York - and she is torn between making her career aspirations come true and leaving behind the man of her dreams (Thula, 2016).

Online Review- African Book Addict Review

Love Next Door is a cute story about Abongile (or Abby) and Kopano in Johannesburg, South Africa. Abby, an ambitious business analyst is finally independent and has moved into her new apartment in Johannesburg. Next door to her new apartment is schoolteacher and artist, Kopano. Once they meet outside Abby's door as she struggles with hauling groceries into her new home, it is like at first sight and readers follow the blooming love affair between Abby and Kopano.

This was a quick read and I loved how the author incorporated a lot of South African culture into the story, for example: Amina Thula enlightens readers on the negative and positive stereotypes surrounding Xhosa women and the Xhosa language. This is peppered throughout the novel and gave the story an authentic feel. I didn't even need a glossary at the end of the book as it was easy to infer the meanings of the various foreign words. The intimate moments between the main characters were milder than that of *The Seeing Place*, so I guess readers of all ages could enjoy this book. However, the writing style wasn't as vivid as I had liked and the book could have been edited a little more closely. The ending was quite abrupt for me… or maybe I just didn't agree with how the characters seamlessly reconciled their love after all the ups and downs they endured. Perhaps *Love Next Door* targets a younger, teenage audience as the tale was quite juvenile… or maybe the characters were a bit juvenile to me. On the whole, this book was well thought-out and I commend Amina Thula for writing this modern love story (Darkowaa, 2016).

Analysis

The blurb and online review for this title, pretend to subvert the patriarchal discourse by presenting Abby as a professional and Kopano as an artist, or her in terms of her career category and him in terms of his looks. That act of characterisation is subverting how men and women are usually described and is quite modern and feminist. But, by placing her in the dilemma of having to choose between her family and career, it subjects her to the same dominant discourse

of patriarchy that it subverts. It is in the subversion itself that patriarchal structures are put into place by creating a narrative where a woman must choose even when it is not necessary by defining her by her roles of womanhood constructed by the patriarchy.

The discourse of 'loss of self' is further continued in this title because the main character's name is Abongiwe yet she refers to herself as Abby. The westernised moniker could be seen to conform to white societal norms of Black women that have 'pronounceable' names, or it falls within the space of taking on more westernised qualities that are found to be more attractive by Black men. This westernisation of 'Abby' can also be related to her western career that places her outside of the traditional tenets of the role of women in African society. This westernisation of the self could then be seen as a form of resistance from traditional patriarchal constructions that are meant to oppress African women.

4.2.5 *The Harvard Wife* – Busisekile Khumalo

Blurb and Online Review

The Harvard Wife is a portrayal of the modern professional – her struggles in relationships, marriage, divorce, and motherhood. It's a story about a woman who finds herself in an unhappy marriage and while running away from her problems, on safari with her best friend, she runs into the one who got away.

Things spiral downwards from there for her marriage but through it all – divorce and almost losing her child – she finds herself and grows (Khumalo B. , 2021).

Goodreads Review

The HARVARD WIFE follows the love triangle that Mpumi, the Harvard graduate, finds herself trapped in. The story sets off when her unresolved past - in the form of Jarred who was her Harvard lover that took her innocence reconciles with her present in the form of Daniel, the husband, who represents a patriarchal masculine society. Daniel, the dysfunctional husband is summed up by one incident between him and Mpumi, when she accounts, "He threw me on the bed and said he would show me who wore the pants in this marriage. He...ripped my clothes

apart like I was some slave, I kept telling him no" - the statement Daniel is actually submitting is that, his body is a biological weapon, he can't be narrated to by a person who is biologically unarmoured when nature gave him all the ammunition to assert himself to her. I hate the scoundrel Daniel because he is a fictional character of our realities. We have many Daniels in our circles, we applaud their theatrics in our circles, we are their cheerleaders in our circles - it's high time we weather the storm.

Over and above, I love how Jarred and Mpumi shared their love. I would equate their love with wine, it got better with age - while her love with her ungrateful husband aged like milk. The marriage Mpumi had with Daniel yielded no paramount damage to her value from the eyes of Jarred. Often, because of our masculine egos, our value for a woman would have devalued; on the contrary, Jarred's fondness of her did not depreciate despite the fact that her body had exhibited signs of succumbing to aging and that her body had been laboured to the service of Daniel in all those years they had been married. Inkomo ikhishwa esibayeni - abashela intombi ngogwaqa nonkamisa bathi, oseyishayile akakayosi oseyosile akakayidli oseyidlile udle icala.

What fascinates me is how the story captures the gender power struggle that is gradually looming in South Africa. Western value systems in the form of education give females a leverage, a voice to articulate their souls into existence, this poses a threat to the black men whose existence is articulated through the cultural value systems for which their masculinities thrive. As more and more black women are absolved in the globalisation of neo-liberal politics and the advent of universalism, there is an emergence of female voices and appeal of confidence for women to be agents of their own destinies. This appeal is made apparent by the statement made by Miss Universe, Zozibini Tunzi, that women must be taught leadership, to take up spaces - this book, through the characters of Mpumi and Daniel, seeks to reflect precisely this power dynamic. Thus, I found the book to be in vigorous touch with reality and up to date in promoting thought leadership amongst women; it represents the coming of age of the era of "yebo Ma", "kuzobanjalo Ma", from women. This paradigm shift is captured in a heated conversation between Mpumi and her mom, when she retorted, "No Ma you are my mother, your duty is to look out for me, make sure I don't get hurt and hold me when I am hurt... So forgive me but I have to pack and get away from all of you, if you are concerned about umkhwenyana wakho, you can come and check up on him", this comes after her mother made an attempt to keep her in-check when she was failing to stomach infidelity issues in her marriage.

Though the book does not prescribe age restriction, I found the language contained might be too explicit for a certain age group audience. One scenario that reflects that uncensored and elucidation in sexual content was a sexual scene in the elevator where the narrator says, "Somehow how he had pushed her panties to one side and was rubbing her clit aggressively, every movement was like a lick of flames and she purred at this torture". Of course, the book is riddled with sexual scenes which will require you to abdicate your Hannah Montana panties and brace yourself with some lingerie and wine to fully appreciate and enjoy the epic hospitality the book offers you.

Moreover, I had the impression that the thickness of the book might intimidate and throw novice readers off, as the book is close to 400 pages long. However, I found the choice of wording and the structural organisation of the literature piece to not alienate the reader; the language used does not make the book exclusive to those of academic nobility, but makes the story accessible to pedestrians - I normally get the impression that sometimes writers are trapped in trying to prove or warrant their authority of being an author by intimidating you by using a more linguistically sophisticated tone; on the contrary, I found the writer was genuine, honest to herself and allowed her content to do the walk. As a first-time novelist, I foresee a bright future in her literary crusade.

I wholeheartedly invite you to make this book part of your new year's resolution as a must accomplish literary odyssey (Gasa, 2019).

Analysis

One of the discourses that can be identified in the blurb and online review is the discourse of patriarchy. It can be seen when looking at the types of relationships Mpumi consistently finds herself within, firstly with Daniel who is described as dysfunctional and Jarred who is the man that took her innocence. The former had to be 'fixed' by Mpumi because the duty and burden of being functional had fallen on her even when the faults were not hers. The latter, on the other hand, refers to the patriarchal construct of associating sex to regressive childlike descriptions for virginity which is often associated with purity, innocence, and naivety when it is about the woman.

The blurb and online review have also found the discourse of intimate partner violence and it is very prevalent and evident in these texts. The online review goes into heavy detail on the acts of violence that had occurred. The most prominent act of violence prevalent in the online review would be the scene where Daniel, Mpumi's husband, rapes her in their home and when she, Mpumi, tells her mother of what had occurred, her mother justifies the abuse by shifting the blame from Daniel to Mpumi and sides with her [Mpumi's] husband. This summary offered by the online review allows the reader to already have managed to find the themes of intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and internalised patriarchy within this narrative.

What is also interesting about this blurb and online review is the link to the societal norms of violence in South Africa through the fictional piece that have been portrayed in this narrative. Daniel is the fictional ideation of Black South African men and the author managed to juxtapose it to real Black South African men that Black women interact with. This juxtaposition of the fictional and the real goes further into solidifying the existence of Black South African romance as a subgenre of romance.

4.2.6 *Scarred* – Ayanda Xaba

Blurb and Online Review

Sizwe, with his undeniable charm and good looks, laid in the pool of his own blood - breathless. The scar on his left cheek is the only sign of the once notorious lover Mzansi has ever seen. How many girls did he violate? The police would never know. The scar is a souvenir from his first victim. He spent hours looking at it, admiring it, years after the incident. He got an erection every time he touched it. His scar - his mark. *Sizwe wabantwana* (English: Sizwe who is popular with women). The screams were his drug. First, he thought that's all he needed, just another terrified scream to get his high. but that's not how drugs work. He would start with the screams; spanking, strangling, raping, burning, cutting… Why stop if you could get more? He never stopped. Not until she stopped him (Xaba, Scarred, 2021).

Online Review - Goodreads Review

What a dark book! It is not just the cover.

"Can you please scream for me, baby?.... Don't hold out, just let it out. Scream for me real nice... I love you so much."

When they scream, he gets excited. His erection gets even harder when he hears them scream. Now, it's not all of them that can scream as loud as he wants. In such cases, which is almost on all of them, he has to come up with ideas to help them scream to his satisfaction. He would spank, burn, even cut them. What is worse, the more they scream, he is in another world. He doesn't seem to see when he has crossed the line. The guy is so dark that even the scar he acquired while raping one of the ladies gives him more erection.

Sizwe made me sick yet the empath in me felt like he needed help more than death. By the way, he is not Sizwe to all the ladies, he uses different names. However, like all psychopaths (if he is one), there are always deep rooted causes for their behaviour. But what is sad, women always become victims of these men. No, they are not written in their foreheads that they are sick, you will learn as you get more attached to them.

Themes that Ayanda has addressed here are alcoholism, women abuse, rape, sex and revenge.

It's dark, but you can read it. Ayanda's sense of humour on some parts made it easy to read. Thank you Ayanda. Another tip for our girls, while you can, run (Ngidi, 2022).

Analysis

The discourse of violence is prevalent throughout this blurb and the online review and is presented as an escalating occurrence that happens between this male protagonist and the women that he chooses to harm. Sizwe is portrayed as this charming man with good looks despite the scar on his cheek and is known to be quite promiscuous and as a man who ‘doesn’t seem to see when he has crossed the line.’ As mentioned in the earlier Chapter, the fairy tale narrative and the dark romance narrative as so intricately linked that they even at times intersect as is the case with this text. The online review is quick to try and justify the actions taken by the male protagonist saying that he had a deep-rooted cause for his actions rather than

persecuting him for those actions. This further illustrates the effects of internalised patriarchy and how women have been systemically conditioned to feel empathy for men and this empathy has been structured to also include forgiving men even after having experienced violence at their hands. Patriarchy has become so entrenched in women's minds that it is no longer identifiable by the self and can only be found by the external when identifying problematic issues that might be mentioned by the (women) self.

4.2.7 *Ngcwethi her Warrior* – Nelly Page

Blurb and Online Review

Ngcwethi Mthembu is a young man with a special gift, the woman he's going to spend his life with has been chosen for him by the ancestors. As the civil war between the Mthembu's and Ngwane's over the road and farm continues to claim lives, Ngcwethi finds himself trapped between his heart and staying loyal to his family. It's a rollercoaster, secrets are revealed, and love is found in most hopeless places. These are the Mthembu brothers! (Page, 2023).

Online Review - eBook Teach Review

It is fiction geared toward women, but the message is one we all need to be reminded of in our age of snap judgments & ready condemnations don't judge someone till you have walked a mile in their shoes and while at times the story is entertaining, sometimes it's a long mile. It turned out to be more elaborate and interesting. As with all endings, there are things that need to be tied up, and the author did this nicely. It was well-paced, and the reader gets closure. It goes down like an ice-cold guilty pleasure on a hot beach-reading day. This book is perfect for those looking for an easy summer beach read. If you enjoy hard fiction, you will definitely love this book. Even if you think you are not interested in a heavy story, pacing and the optimism of the writing is more than enough to make this book a wonderful, exciting read. To cut the story short, this is an outstanding novel with a powerful story that will keep you up all the night in a highly entertaining way (eBooks Teach, 2021).

Analysis

In this text the protagonist is a male, which is something not as common within the Black South African romance subgenre. What is interesting about this is that even within the male perspective, Ngcwethi Mthembu is said to be a young man with a special gift that was chosen

for him by his ancestors, the situational living is still centred around violence, or ‘civil war’ as suggested by this text. This situational living then brings one major question to the fore, is violence so inherent to men that women are affected by it by being near it through the men they meet?

What is interesting about the patriarchal situation within these texts is that it has switched around the order of sacrifice from the woman to the man, which does not fit into the original tenets that dictate what a romance novel is or should include. Although this change in perspective could be used to indicate the ‘level’ of internalised patriarchy that the author has and how it has managed to bleed through to her narrative, her readers are still women and that further illustrates the level of internalised patriarchy that is present or unidentified in the readers’ minds.

4.2.8 *The Man I Married* – Tsakani Msisinyane

Blurb and Online Review

She's a girl who has been through thick and thin. Through hell and back and she strives for independence. Until she meets him and surrenders her heart, body, and soul. What happens when she can lose herself in the process? What happens when she realises that she has no idea who she married?

Two different people, from different backgrounds with childhood traumas trying to make their marriage work. Will they survive? (Msisinyane, 2019).

Online Review - Goodreads review

It was what I needed after going through an emotionally investing read. This book was silly, too-fictional but I enjoyed it. I don't have a problem with converting Facebook stories to a book but it's really important to invest in an editor and storyline check as well to make it worth its standard. Themes that stood out for me: Controlling partner bordering abuse, sexual abuse, family dynamics, death and losses. On to the next one (Hondo, 2019).

Analysis

The patriarchal discourse present within this blurb and online review manifests itself in many forms throughout the blurb and review. Firstly, they refer to a woman as a girl and the lack of a name is also an indicator of this because it alludes to the fact that the woman has no identity of herself even though she has suffered during her marriage. The blurb and review state that she surrenders her heart, body, and soul once she meets her 'prince charming' not knowing the type of man he is and what he can do.

Although she is said to subvert patriarchy by fighting for her independence, her lack of individuality and identifying characteristics make it harder to accept. They make it harder to identify when she transitions from fighting for her independence to be willing to risk it again by entering into a relationship with a man that she does not fully know. Essentially, the main female character is identified by her relationship status.

4.2.9 *The Beloved MaShenge* – Nelly Page Magwaza

Blurb and Online Review

When Yangomuhle bumps into her new boss for the first time she has no idea who he is, her dauntless character lands her in his office, but he is not who she thought he was from the onset. He is amiable and charming, it's love at first sight for him, but is he going to be able to shuck down the hedge around her? She is as stubborn as a mule; he has to pull out all the stops in order to win her heart. The journey is not easy, repugnant past is the constituent to their subdued cries, emotional instabilities, and unexecuted needs of justice (Xaba, The Beloved MaShenge, 2020).

Online Review - Abantu Reading Movement

Yangomuhle Buthelezi is a struggling young woman trying to get a job in Durban so she can provide for her family back in Ndulinde. She gets an interview at a famous bakery, which she messes up, but is saved by the company receptionist who hooks her up with a job. There she meets Sosha Cele, the owner of JC Bakery and he becomes her ride or die. The book takes you through their rocky relationship and how two broken souls try to heal each other.

Firstly, let me say how humorous Nelly Page's writing is. I'm not one to easily laugh but this book had me cracking up. It tackles serious issues like mental illness, rape, political instability, and poverty in rural areas. Yet she manages to include light stuff to make you laugh.

Secondly, I saw so much of myself in Yanga. I can relate how that incident turned her into the angry woman she is. Feeling like you don't have a voice because society has rules that silence women and protect men. I felt it when she said she fears dying in the hands of the man she loves...

Thirdly, how amazing is a man who can cook and bake? If it weren't for his violent tantrums, I'd say get me a Sosha and make my year. I enjoyed the fast pace of the story and the information on various disorders and how to treat them. It makes it easy to understand certain behaviour from people around us. Also, I'm a crazy fan of psychology.

It was such a pleasure reading this book. I was sceptical since I'm not much of a romance person but mixing it with these important social issues made all the difference for me. It's a definite must read (Xaba, 2020).

Analysis

Yangomuhle is presented as this go getter, who fights for the life that she wants. She is described as having a dauntless character which exists through the modern lens of what is expected of young women within this day. Sosha Cele, the male protagonist, is instantly described as amiable and charming but also as presenting a false image. The blurb and online review try and subvert the patriarchal discourse at first, but that discourse subversion is quickly left behind when it comes to ‘matters of the heart’ which is then visible within these texts further illustrating the internalised patriarchy that exists within romance characters and how women become powerless in the face of romantic prospects.

This blurb and online review portray how the gap between ‘love at first sight’ and ‘violent tantrums’ is made to seem so finite that one cannot exist without the other. It is a recurrent theme that has been identified in the titles that have met the criteria set out for the research and have been made available for analysis. This portrayal brings into play the dark romance gender narrative because in Sosha presenting a false image, he is already distorting the fairy tale narrative and bringing to the fore elements that would be seen as psychologically and emotionally abusive.

The discourse of violence has also made itself present within these texts and it is not portrayed as something that the main female character fights against individually, yet there is an instance where it seems as though she should fight against it, but she never does. The online review interestingly states that 'society has rules that silence women and protect men' which is both reflective within the text and is a true reflection of the socio-political context of South Africa.

4.2.10 *Through Her Eyes*- Ayanda Xaba

Blurb and Online Review

Ziningi Ntuli leaves the comfort of her home when she breaks up with her first love, Siya Khoza. The move sees her life spiralling out of control. Human Trafficking, drug smuggling, albino persecution, and a bittersweet love affair are the things she needs to entangle herself from to return to herself again. Will she be able to escape? Is there a home to go back to? What of that albino child that must be sacrificed? (Mbotini, 2020).

Online Review - Abantu Reading Movement

Ziningi Ntuli's life changed on that fateful valentine's day evening at 7 p.m. when she broke up with her boyfriend, leading to her working at a brothel. She then gets rescued by an Anyabwile Chiwanga at a promise of a better life. The better life only opens to more drama involving, human trafficking, drug smuggling, albino persecutions and money laundering.

It's a story about loss, choices and survival.

Some of the themes also portrayed were Gender based violence and witchcraft.

I was impressed by the author's ability to make you fall even for the antagonist, feel not only the protagonists emotions but their emotions too. I was also impressed by the dropping of music on the book, the songs connected and resonated to the theme of the book. Oh... and by the end of the book, you would have an addition of books on your to buy/to read list (Mbotini, 2020).

Analysis

Ziningi Ntuli's portrayal within the texts seems to be from a patriarchal perspective, meaning that her existence or life experiences are based on her 'being' in relation to her male counterparts. Her major life milestones are measured by her interactions with men as is the

case with her first major life change that is marked by her breakup with her ex-boyfriend. The second life change is also marked by her interaction with another man. This cataloguing makes her existence one dimensional as a character that is meant to be holistic. This means that she, Ziningi, only exists within the patriarchal setting and interactions of her life but fails to exist as an individual able to self-govern and self-control.

4.3 Comprehensive Analysis of Paratext: Online Reviews and Blurbs

The blurbs and online reviews offer a great insight into the situational context of the above texts when looking at narratives written by self/independently published Black female romance authors in South Africa. Even though they are fictional works, they contain elements that can be found in South African societies, such as the gender-based violence, intimate partner rape, patriarchal dominance, and mental health issues. Based on the analysis conducted in Chapter 2, these themes are unusual for romance narratives and do not fall into the western 'scripts' of the literary romance genre.

When drawing similarities from the Paratextual analysis of the blurbs and online reviews, these overlapping discourses can be identified throughout the analysis conducted. The similarities, inclusive of examples taken throughout the analysis, will be listed as follows:

1. Patriarchal Discourse: Each text examines and challenges the patriarchal structures and norms that exist in South African society.

2. Violence and Abuse: The texts address the themes of violence and abuse, both within intimate relationships and in broader societal contexts. They depict instances of physical, emotional, and psychological violence, highlighting the prevalence of gender-based violence and its impact on women.

3. Loss of Self: The concept of "loss of self" emerges as a recurring discourse. The texts depict how women's identities are often defined solely by their roles in relation to men, leading to a loss of individuality and autonomy. Women's personal aspirations and desires are overshadowed by societal expectations and patriarchal constructs.

4. Sisterhood and Female Relationships: The texts explore the importance of sisterhood and female relationships as a means of support and navigating patriarchal constraints. The close-

knit relationships among women serve as a source of solidarity and shared experiences in challenging patriarchal norms.

5. Fairy Tale and Dark Romance Narratives: The texts employ elements of fairy tale and dark romance narratives, often subverting or challenging these narratives. They critique the idealisation of romantic relationships and question the power dynamics and problematic behaviours depicted within these narratives.

6. Internalised Patriarchy: The analyses highlight the presence of internalised patriarchy within the characters and readers of the texts. Women are shown to have internalised societal expectations and biases, leading to empathy for male characters and a perpetuation of patriarchal norms.

7. Societal Norms and Context: The texts reflect and comment on the societal norms and context of South Africa. They explore how cultural expectations, historical factors, and power dynamics influence relationships and gender roles within the country.

What was also interesting about these texts is the way they were able to replicate Wood's (2001) gender narrative theory, representing the fairy tale gender narrative and seamlessly switch over into the dark romance gender narrative, and even the new gender narrative (see Chapter 2, subsection 2.3. Internalised Patriarchy and Black South African romance). According to Woods (2001), these narratives are constructed as tools for women to navigate their romantic lives and now with the crossover from the real to the fictional, as is the case with these stories, it is then not farfetched to assume that the authors' works reflect their lives and maybe experiences. The inclusion of issues such as gender-based violence, intimate partner rape, societally entrenched patriarchal dominance and mental health issues as themes of discussion within these chosen blurbs and online reviews, provides the necessary link between narrative and reality. It can then be said that these authors are writing based on their own experiences and interactions with patriarchy and its violent tenets.

4.3 Sales Analysis

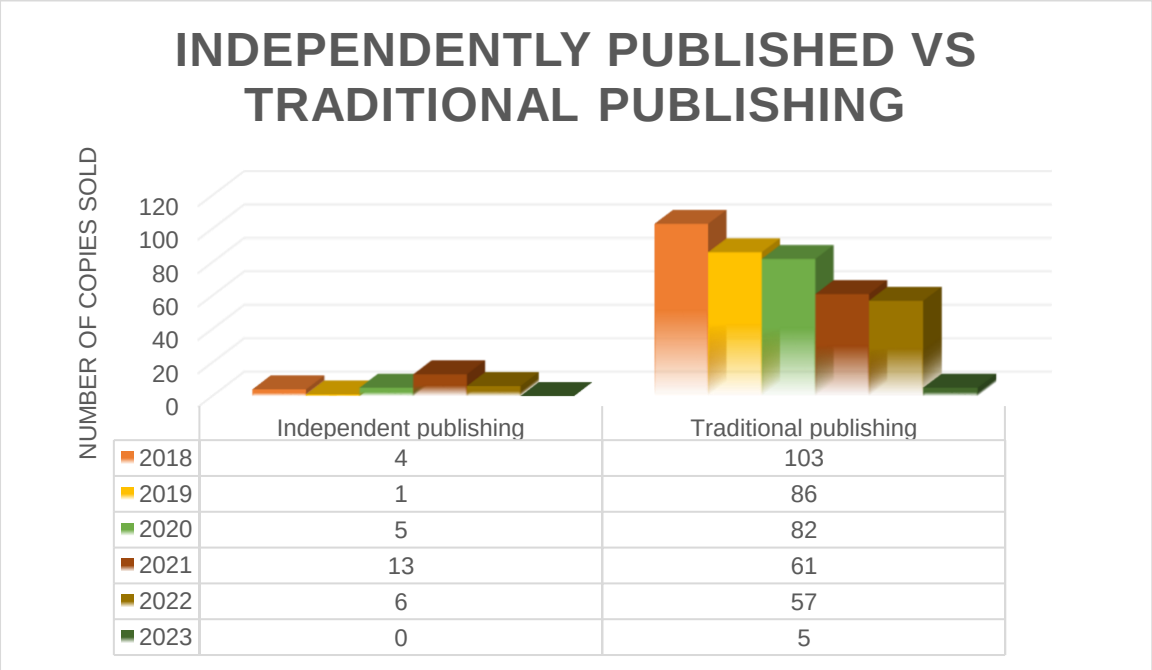
This section discusses the major findings of the empirical data that was gathered throughout the course of this research process. It contains the analysis of the Nielsen BookScan Data, looking at book sales, book revenue, author race and gender, and affiliate publishing houses/companies. The quantitative data is represented through statistical graphics that offer

clear visual presentations which convey information quickly and easily to the reader (Taylor, 2019).

Internationally, Nielsen BookScan Data offers a variety of services to the book industry that supports book discovery, distribution, and sales measurement. The history of the company dates to 1858 and it was a periodical that featured a list of books from 129 different publishers in each issue (Nielsen BookData, n.d.).

The analysed data will be taken from a list of South African romance books and will range from December 2018 to February 2023. This range will be inclusive of books that were made available to the public market by traditional publishing houses such as Pan MacMillan SA, Jonathan Ball SA, Protea Boekhuis, NB uitgewers, Jacana Media, and Penguin Random House. It will also be inclusive of books that were made available to the public market by independent publishers such as Hlomu Publishing and made public on behalf of independent authors by West Park Productions, and BalaKudu which are all platforms that have been used by authors as a means to self/independently publish their works.

Figure 4.3.1: Comparative Analysis of Romance Sales - Independent Publishing vs. Traditional Market in South Africa



	Independent publishing	Traditional publishing
2018	4	103
2019	1	86
2020	5	82
2021	13	61
2022	6	57
2023	0	5

The graph above looks at the past five years of sales within the publishing industry in South Africa with the X axis looking at the number of copies sold and the Y axis looking at the

number of books that were published in those respective years. It looks at the past five years of the market because it can be used as a trace to when Black romance authors became visible within the publishing market. These stats were chosen based on whether they fell as part of the independent publishing (other publishing) which often addresses titles that have been self or independently published, or if they fell as part of the titles published by traditional publishing companies.

Independently Published Books - over time, the number of independently published books varies, peaking at 13 in 2021 after falling to 0 in 2023. It began with four books in 2018, dropped to one in 2019, and then increased once more in the proceeding years. However, the quantity of traditionally published books varies as well, declining progressively over time. In 2018, there were 103 books, but by 2023, there were only 5 books. Based on this data, we can see that over the past five years, the number of traditionally published books has decreased while the number of independently published books has fluctuated.

As illustrated by the graph above, traditional publishing has had a dominant presence within the market over the past 5 years. The reason behind this could be varied as the concept of self/independent publishing is a 'new' avenue for publishing these titles; growth is still to be determined. This form of gatekeeping is based on the market manipulation and market control through distribution and retail, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.1). The challenge of gatekeeping, in the form of market manipulation and control through distribution, is evident and is fostered by these authors not having the monetary means to compete with traditional publishers in penetrating the market. Rather, they have to rely on their market and distribution occurring organically.

What is fascinating to see is that over the years from 2018 through to 2023, there has been a steady decline when it comes to romance books written in English and published by these major publishers. This has been illustrated in the graph below.

Figure 4.3.2: Decline in Traditional Publishers' Output of Romance Books

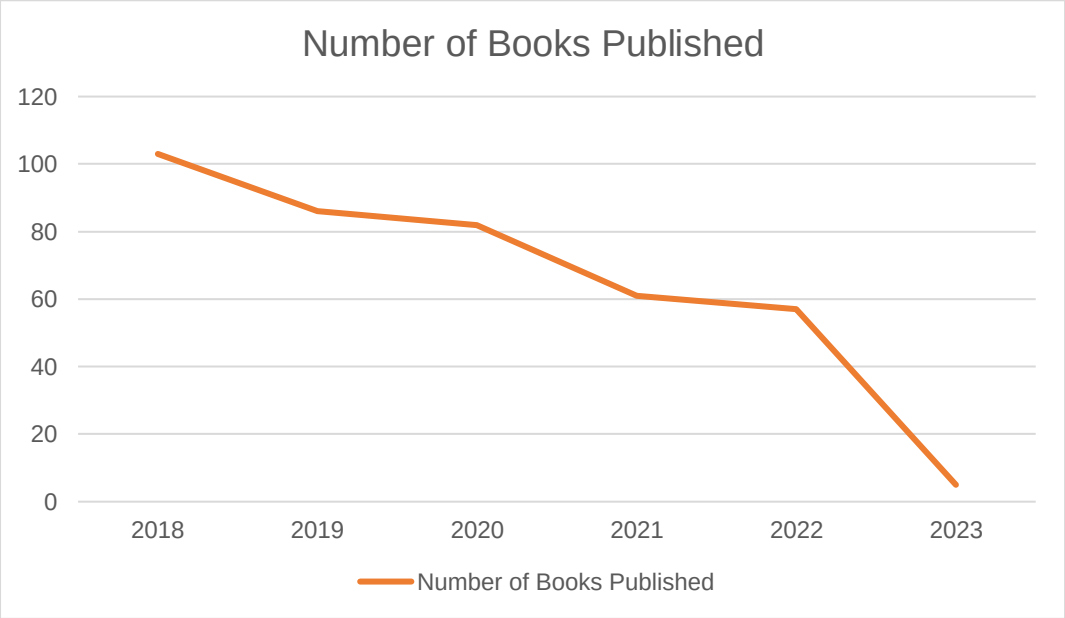
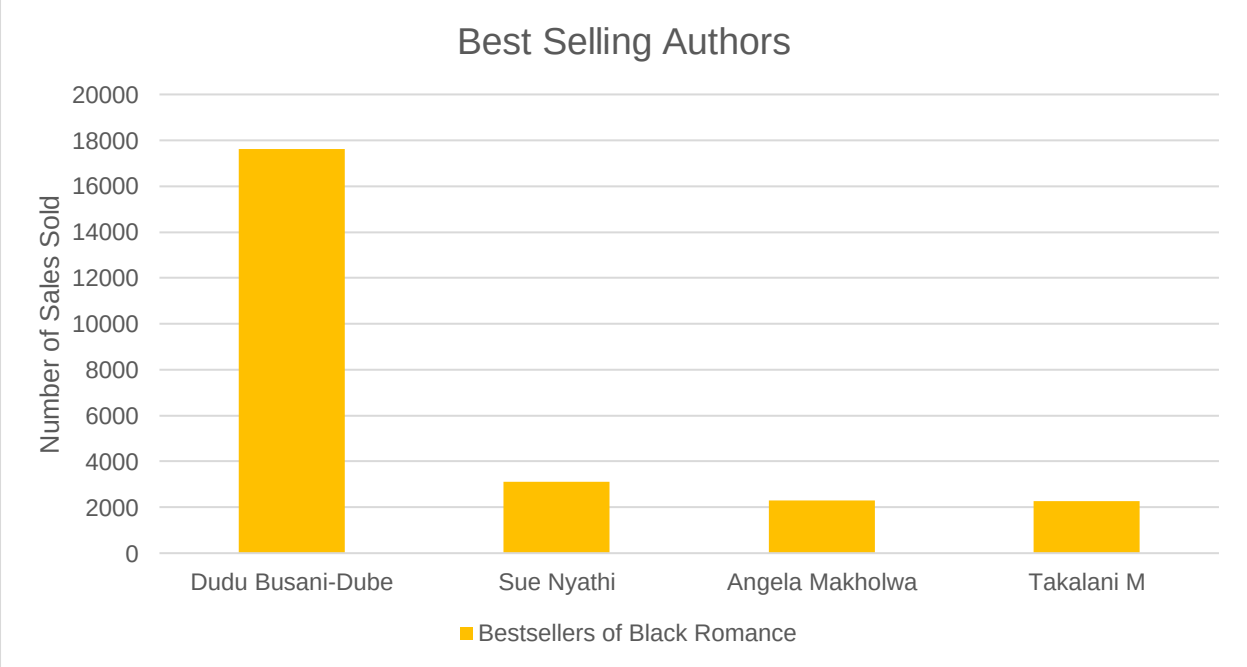


Figure 4.3.3: Comparative Analysis of Author Sales (2018-2023) for Independent Publishing vs. Traditional Publishing

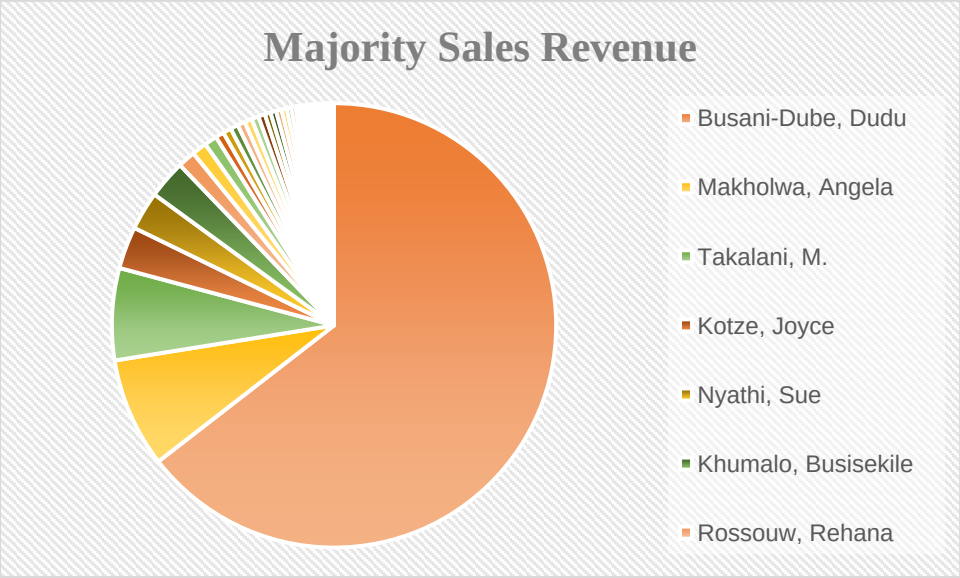


In the above graph the authors have been chosen based on their ranking on the Nielsen BookScan Data list based solely on English romance literature from 2018-2023. This list changes when it is opened up to include Afrikaans and isiZulu and the number of books they have managed to publish within the past 5 years. Two of the four Black authors, Dudu Busani-

Dube and Takalani M, mentioned in the graph above are self and independently published authors and are the top two selling authors and there could be more independent authors with lower sales. On the other hand, Sue Nyathi and Angela Makholwa are authors published through traditional publishing houses and are the bestsellers of Black romance within the traditional publishers and there could be more traditionally published authors that could have lower sales. Looking at the sales of just one of the authors' respective titles, the popularity of the title by Dudu Busani Dube and the fact that Takalani can compete with these other authors illustrates that there is a market for the kinds of narratives that they produce.

These numbers reveal that within the last five years, there has been no romance book published with the capability to produce a revenue stream and market loyalty that Dudu Busani-Dube has been able to produce through the independent publishing as an indie author. This implies that there is an untapped market that traditional publishing has not been publishing for.

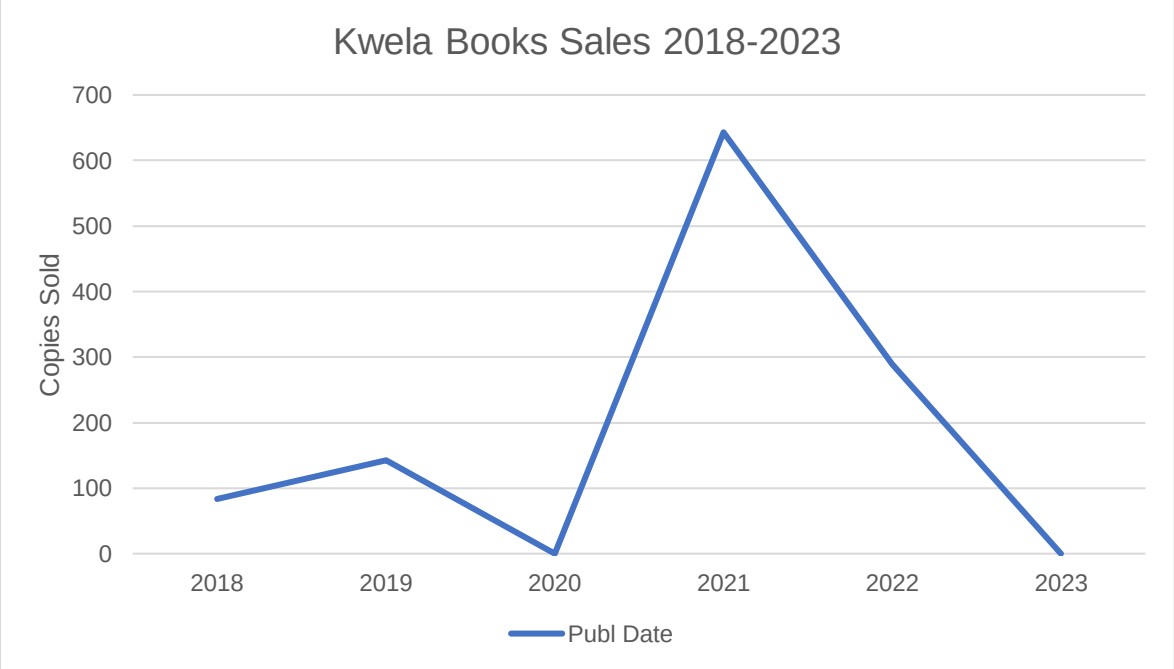
Figure 4.3.4: Analysis of Author Sales Volume (2018-2023)



When looking at the data sheet focusing solely on English romance narratives, and the revenue in sales that the titles have brought in under the romance genre, Dudu Busani-Dube accounts for most of the revenue that is brought in with 65% of that revenue being accounted to her titles. When further analysing the Nielsen BookScan Data, it then becomes clear when looking at author sales that Dudu Busani-Dube accounts for 65% of the sales volume that were recorded

for 2018 through to 2023 and she was ranked first position for Top South African Romance and Sagas written in English, according to the Nielsen BookScan Data.

Figure 4.3.5: Kwela Books Imprint sales 2018-2023



What was interesting when looking at the data for Sapphire Press, an imprint of Kwela Books, who is an imprint of NB uitgewers, is that its position as the home of Black South African romance has failed to gain momentum in terms of sales and market impact. The last time Sapphire books published a book was in 2013 according to the data sheet.

Analysis of Kwela Books' Sales Performance and Market Identification

When examining the data and its graphical representation, it becomes evident that Kwela Books, which established the imprint Sapphire Press as its publisher, experienced a notable shift in sales. In 2016 and 2018, they sold approximately 81 and 83 books, respectively. However, in 2020, they did not record any book sales. Nevertheless, in 2021, they made a remarkable recovery, reaching their all-time high with 643 books sold. Although their sales declined to around 289 books in 2022, Kwela Books demonstrated a consistent growth in their book production.

It is important to note that this analysis aims to highlight that Kwela Books, along with other publishers, successfully identified a market for their publications. However, it does not solely focus on the Black romance genre. Kwela Books has the prerogative to choose not to publish Black romance without the involvement of Sapphire Press, and they cannot be compelled to diversify their markets. Thus, this data does not imply a failure on Kwela Books' part, but rather underscores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on book sales in South Africa.As cited with the above graphs, the sales in the romance genre have increased with Dudu Busani-Dube joining the romance genre. This research hopes to show that the existing information that had been curated by imprint Sapphire Press under its Kwela writing guidelines, did not address the market needs. The research will also show that it did not consider conceptualising a market for Black women and it will use the analysed sales data.

Table 4.1: Publisher Distribution in the Romance Genre 2018 - 2023

% distribution of 'Publisher Group'

Publisher Group	Count of Publisher Group
LAPA Publishers	53,76%
Hlomu Publishing	23,86%
NB Uitgewers/Publishers	8,98%
Other Publisher Groups	4,61%
CUM Books	3,47%
Macmillan	2,36%
Protea Boekhuis	1,64%
Struik Christian Media	0,69%
Jacana Media	0,27%
Penguin Random House South Africa	0,26%
Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	0,07%
Macmillan South Africa	0,02%

Oxford University Press	0,01%

Traditional international publishers such as Penguin Random House SA and Jonathan Ball SA have all found themselves under the 5% Publisher Group counter as shown in the above graph yet they are considered as local publishers even though most of their sales are made of international titles. Penguin Random House SA found it's at 0,26 whereas Jonathan Ball Publishers SA found itself at 0,07% which is quite shocking when looking at these stats because it could be assumed, that publishing houses like this would be ranking at the top of the list based on their expertise and longevity within the South African publishing market. It must be stated that these publishers are not exclusively active in romance and both of them are publishers of different content and have sales in other genres as well. What this data shows is that romance is badly represented by local publishers, which in turn correlates with the decrease in the amount of local content published.

Table 4.2: Revenue value by Publishing Company

% of total 'Revenue' by 'Publisher Group'

Publisher Group	Sum of Revenue
Hlomu Publishing	68,45%
Other Publisher Groups	11,25%
Macmillan	9,04%
Protea Boekhuis	3,81%
Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	3,02%
NB Uitgewers/Publishers	1,62%
Jacana Media	1,50%
LAPA Publishers	0,66%
Penguin Random House SA	0,43%
Struik Christian Media	0,22%

Based off the earlier table, when looking at distribution and the total sales, this table focuses on the revenue return when it has to do with publishing houses that publish South African romance in the English language. This has been done to illustrate the revenue impact that Black romance narratives have, such as those written by Dudu Busani-Dube and other self/independently published authors who had smaller sales revenues but were still able to compete with traditional publishers.

Similar to the previous table, the first two positions of the table are occupied by Other Publishing Groups, an amalgamation of independent publishing companies, and Hlomu Publishing which is an independent self-publishing company owned by a Black woman. This is not the case for the other publishing houses and companies that are listed above.

Chapter 2, (sections 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7) based on the literature review and Chapter 4, based on the paratextual and the peritextual analysis, shows that these themes chosen by the authors to be addressed are prevalent in popular titles and this is further cemented by the sales analysis conducted within this Chapter.

Based on the lack of conceptualisation of a Black romance market established by traditional publishers, it seems that traditional publishers are still unable to identify markets for Black women that indie romance authors have managed to identify. Even with the revenue to manipulate and shape the market, these traditional authors are still unable to identify romance markets similar to those of the indie authors. This can be seen when looking at the romance sales for publishing houses such as Pan Macmillan, Penguin Random House SA, Protea Boekhuis, Jonathan Ball SA, Jacana Media, LAPA, and Struik Christian Media.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

This Chapter discusses the major findings of the empirical data that was gathered throughout the course of this research process. It contains the interpretation of the focus group data. The analysis results have been organised along the themes discussed in the literature review: defining Black South African romance, gatekeeping of Black South African romance in the publishing market, reading patriarchy in romance, internalised patriarchy and Black South African romance, and intimate partner violence and romance.

5.1 Focus Group Report

A focus group was held with independently published Black women authors that publish under the genre of Romance or Black South African Romance, as identified by this research. The focus group consisted of 6 Black women in their twenties who had published narratives through the various avenues available to self-publishing.

Through the focus group, information was gathered for the following purposes:

1. To identify the age range of the authors and their market
2. To address gatekeeping within the traditional publishing sector
3. To identify themes of patriarchy, gender-based violence, internalised patriarchy, and violence as major components in Black South African Romance
4. If they intend for their literature to function as a form of escapism for their readers or as a form of engagement within escapism as defined by Gold (2017).

The information gathered in this focus group is to be used as a basis for defining Black South African romance and defining the barriers of gatekeeping within traditional publishing in relation to the romance subgenre and the associated censorship of key themes. It will also serve as a tool in illustrating that traditional publishing houses do not publish for existing Black romance markets. Rather, they publish for a more Eurocentric white women market, which amounts to less than half the population of the country statistically and caters only to a minority readership.

Focus Group

One focus group was conducted on the 4th of December 2022.

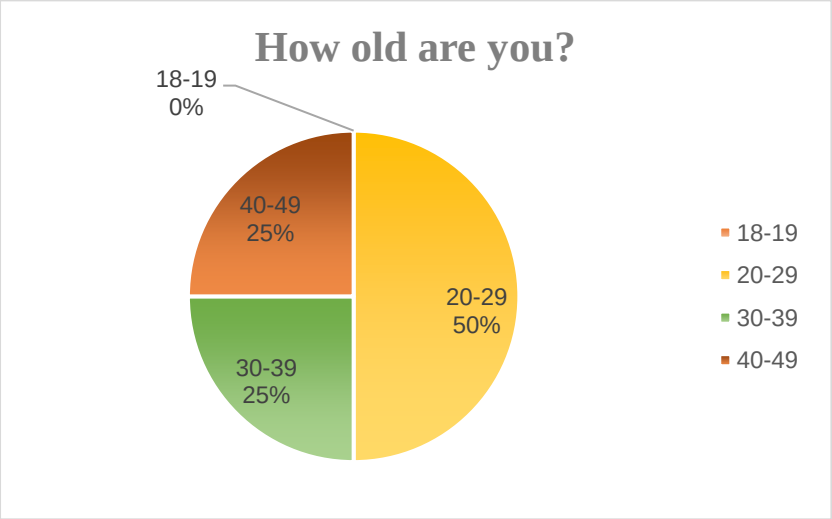
Date	Location	Participants	Number
4/12/22	Microsoft Teams	Women	6*

*An alternative author arrived but did not take part in the focus group discussion.

5.1.1 Demographics

Outcome 1: How old are you?

Participants' Age

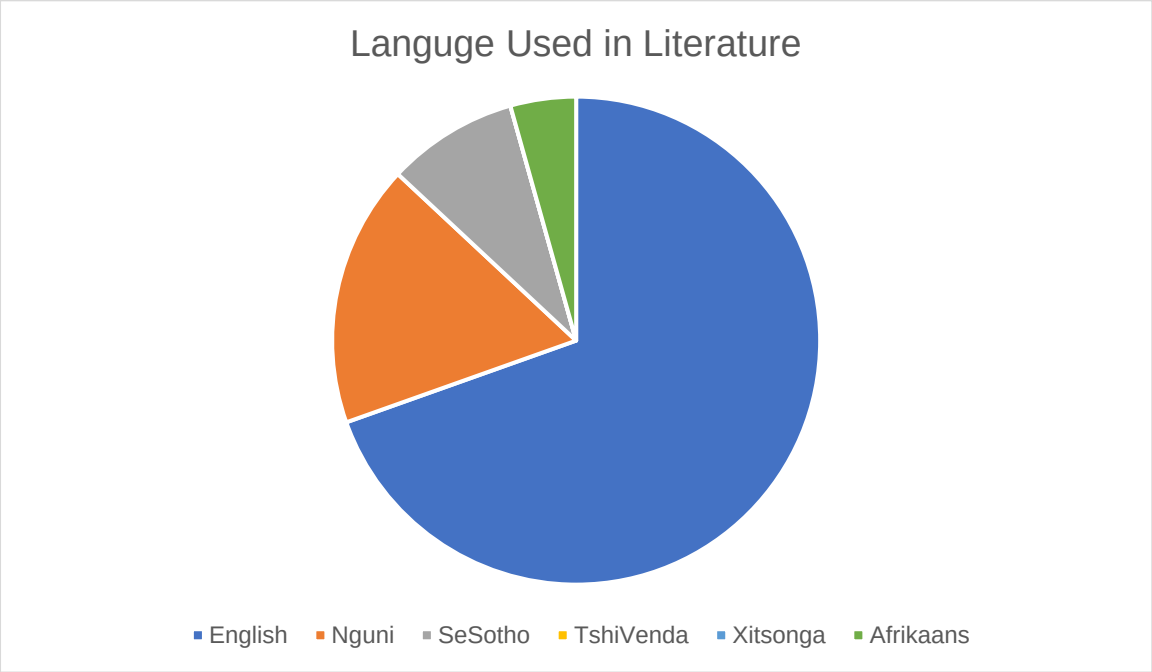


All the participants speak the English-language as a second language, and it is their chosen medium for writing their literature. It is also the chosen medium for the analysis because it is the language in which reading for leisure occurs. They are also Black women who have grown up in Southern Africa and have had some form of interaction with patriarchy and its forms of manifesting.

Outcome 2: What gender do you primarily identify as?

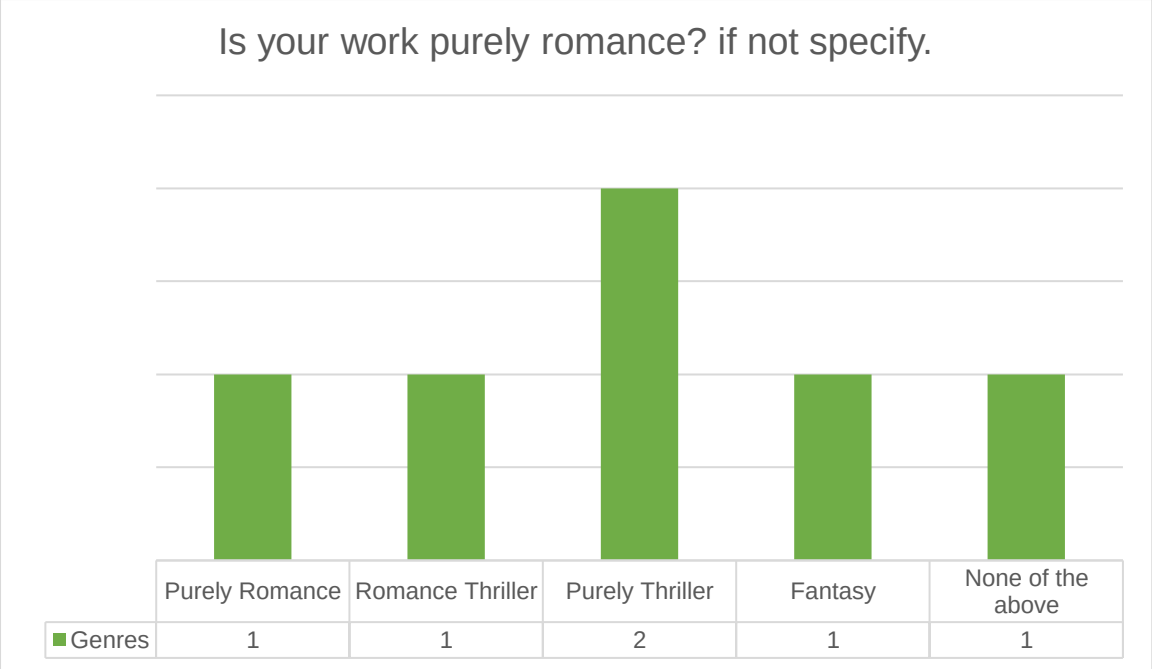
All participants identified as binary CIS women using she and her as their pronouns in the participation of this study and focus group discussion. They will be referred to as such throughout the data analysis and data presentation of this study.

Outcome 3: What language do you primarily publish your self-published romantic fiction in?



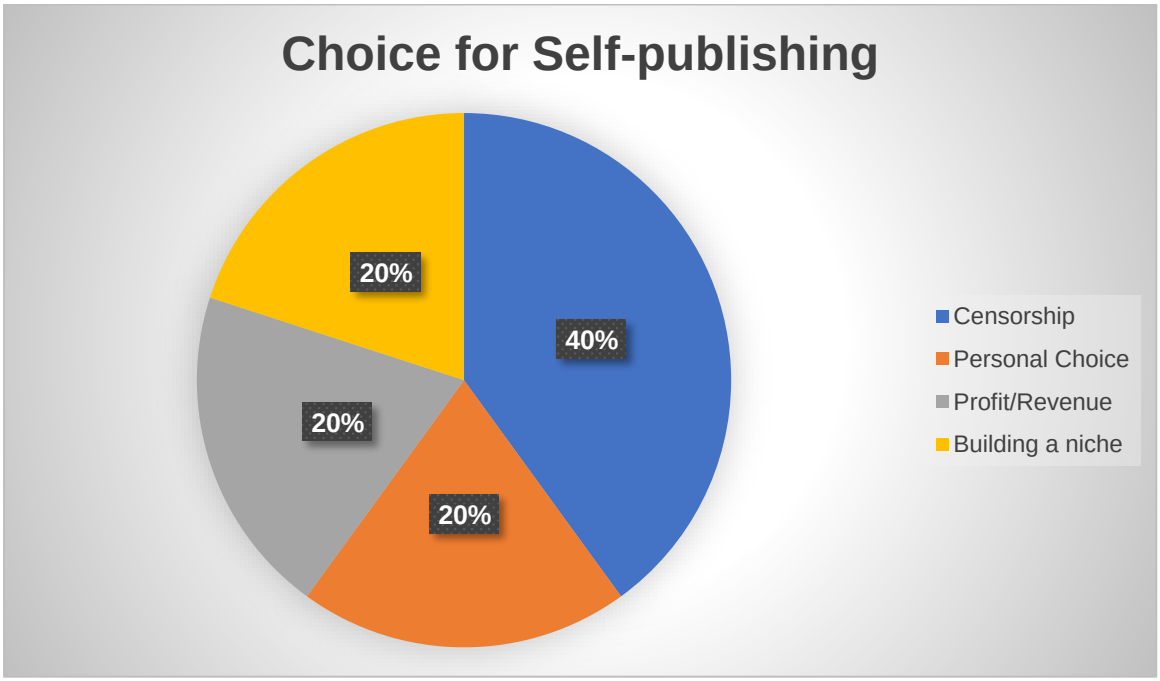
They primarily publish their literature in English, but when further prompted on the language composition that South Africans used and their ability to code switch and code mix, the participants stated that upon further reflection, there are influences of other languages within their published works. They identified that they commonly used South African exclamations such as ‘Ja’, ‘Eish’, and ‘Mos’ as examples of this code mixing. This then prompted the participants to state that even though their primary medium of publishing is in English, it needs to be made clear that it is South African English rather than just simply English.

Outcome 4: Would you say that your work is purely romance? & Outcome 7: Do you think that if you had published through mainstream publishing, you would have been categorised as part of the romance genre?



Only one author stated that their work was purely romance, the other authors were split amongst romance thriller, purely thriller and fantasy. A follow up question was posed to the authors; if they considered their work as thrillers because of the themes that are included, would they 'reclassify' their works to something other than romance? One author that stated, "maybe," (none of the above) was sure of what her work would be categorised as because it had romantic elements that could be considered as part of the romance genre but due to majority of the content being extremely explicit, she was unsure as to the reception it would have gotten. The selection process for the authors that were invited to participate in this focus group was based on their work having been sold under the romance genre either by themselves or by online e-commerce sites.

Outcome 5: Why have you chosen to self-publish?



The author responses were split but what is interesting about this is 40% of the older authors stated that they had initially decided to go through the traditional publishing route until they were told that they would have to change key elements of their work for it to be published through those publishing houses. The other 20% were split in half on choosing to self-publish for revenue or to create a market base for themselves. About 40% of the authors felt that they would have been censored had they chosen to go to traditional publishers. In this instance, censorship can be defined as having key parts of the author's work changed and/or removed. This form of censorship is gatekeeping and can be referred to as the market manipulation that exists as an effect of the legacy of apartheid laws as explained in the literature review. It also illustrates how traditional publishers have found a way of dissuading authors to publish their works because it is already seen as unfit for the market. This is mainly because the targeted market they have created is not inclusive of Black women.

When prompted as to why, the women who had personally chosen to self-publish stated that they were afraid of their work being altered when presented to established publishing houses. This fear of alteration and silencing was echoed by the other authors, and it seems to be a 'known fact' that interacting with mainstream publishers will see Black authors' works being

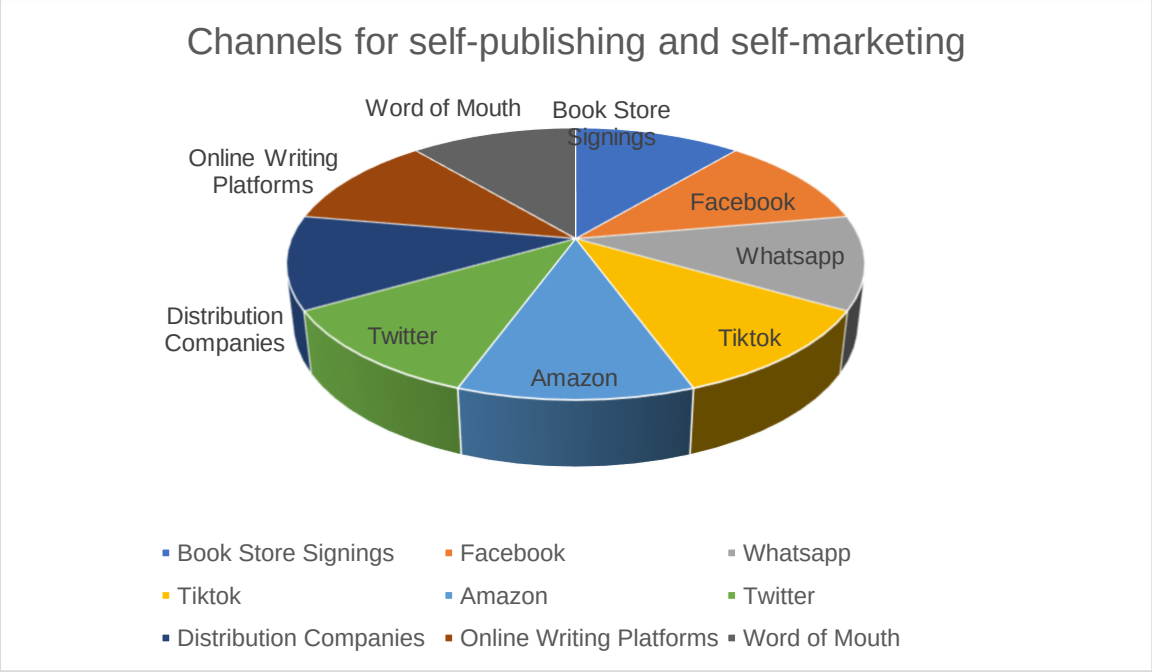
altered to fit into westernised scripts of literature, even if they are not being written for the western market.

The most interesting response for this question came from one of the younger authors who said, "…currently publishing my work on Facebook. It is not expensive and easy to connect with readers. Furthermore, I am a young, upcoming writer and still growing as a person while building customer base (Author A, 2022)." This response was interesting because this author identified a problem within mainstream publishing and its systemic gatekeeping and found ways to circumvent them. She built a market for herself that would exist as an alternative of the mainstream market. This is the case because it has to do with both the author circumventing traditional publishers and the reader gaining access to reading material that they would not previously had access to due to financial constraints when looking at the pricing of books marketed by traditional publishers.

Outcome 6: Given your experience with dealing with mainstream publishing in South Africa, do you feel as though your books would have been published as is with the themes that can be identified in your books?

One of the older authors had experience with dealing with mainstream publishing in South Africa and stated that, "there was a time when I was in communication with a publisher, and they were already talking about changing the story and removing some details that I feel are particularly important to the story. That book won two awards with the themes they wanted to remove (Author B, 2022)." The other authors supported this by also stating that they doubt that their works would have been published in their original form if they had chosen to go to traditional publishers.

Outcome 8: What channels have you used to self-publish and self-market your work?



The authors have relied on word of mouth and social media to market their books, with some of the more experienced authors having the means and access to book signings in bookstores and distribution companies to place their work within bookstores and online sites that sell books such as Makro, Loot and Takealot. The younger authors stated that they are still dependent on online writing sites such as Visionary Writers to advertise and market their works.

Outcome 9: Patriarchy is said to be a huge theme in romance novels, do you agree with this notion?

The authors had a lot to say in this regard and their answers varied from, “In most books yes. However, current authors are changing the narrative. They are pushing for more independent female characters (Author C, 2022).,” to, " Yes, I'm a true believer that a man is the head and the provider of the family.” (Author D, 2022). This indicates that the authors are aware of the patriarchal tenets that exist within their own works but also, they are combatting those tenets by introducing more independent women characters to their narratives to combat this.

These expressions then illustrate that romance has been constructed in such a way that it has to include patriarchal elements in order to be identified as romance, but one of the other authors did not agree with this notion and although she could not further expand on her response, it

would be easy to assume that she was firmly against her romantic life, literally or figuratively, being controlled by patriarchal norms and customs.

Outcome 10: Which of these elements of patriarchy do you think you have included within your work?

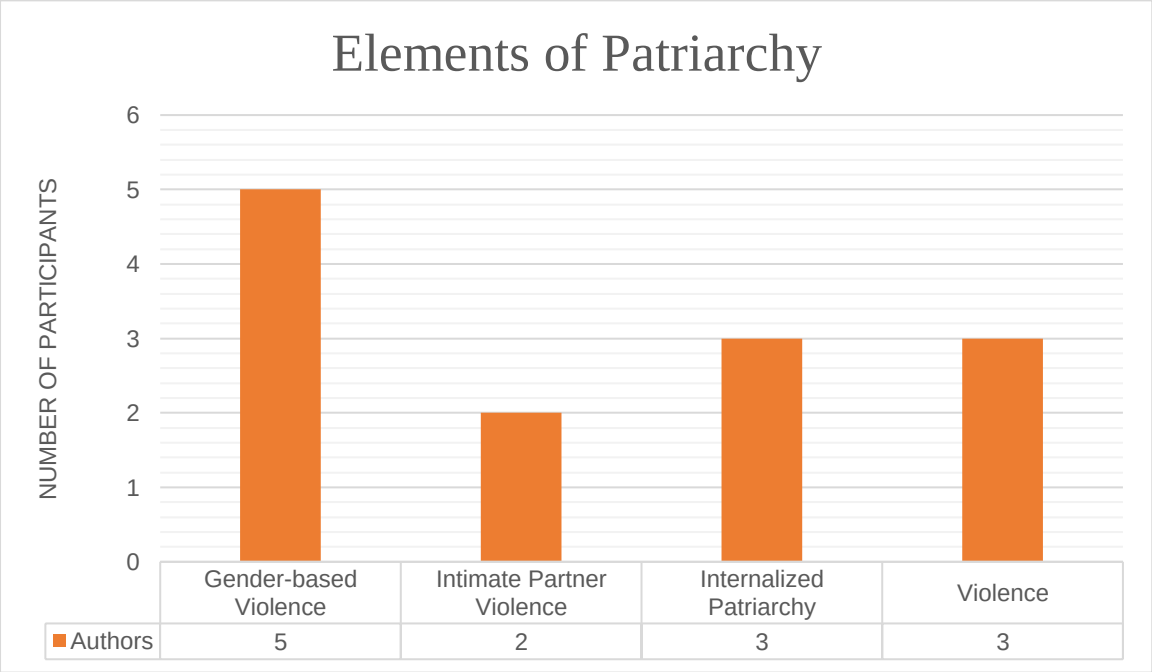
Themes of patriarchy:

a. Gender-based violence

b. Intimate Partner Violence

c. Internalised Patriarchy

d. Violence

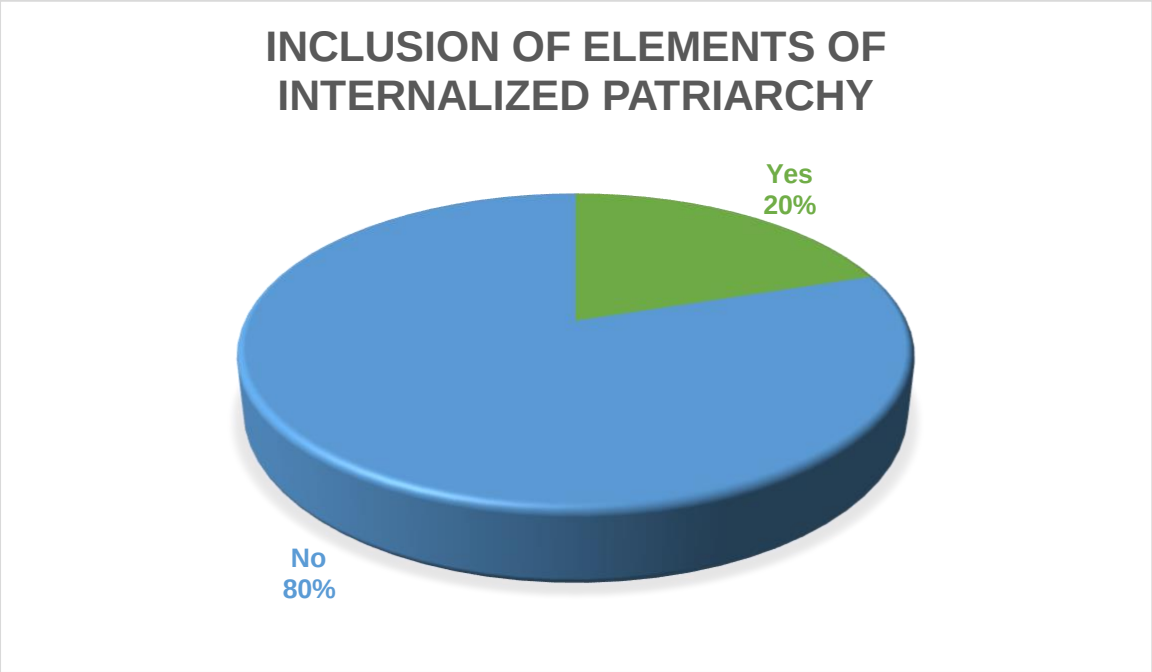


All the participants have had to discuss gender-based violence as a theme in their literature, regardless of whether they classify themselves or their works as part of the romance genre. The high usage of the gender-based violence theme as part of the literary discourse has to do with the socio-political context in which these authors find themselves in and are forced to engage with it rather than suppressing it, as though it is not a large part of their lives.

Internalised patriarchy and violence have the same number of participants engaging in it in their works and this has to do with the direct correlation that patriarchy and violence have in South Africa. The patriarchal system instantly creates a hierarchal setting that needs to be upheld and controlled and the only way that this system has found itself able to control this

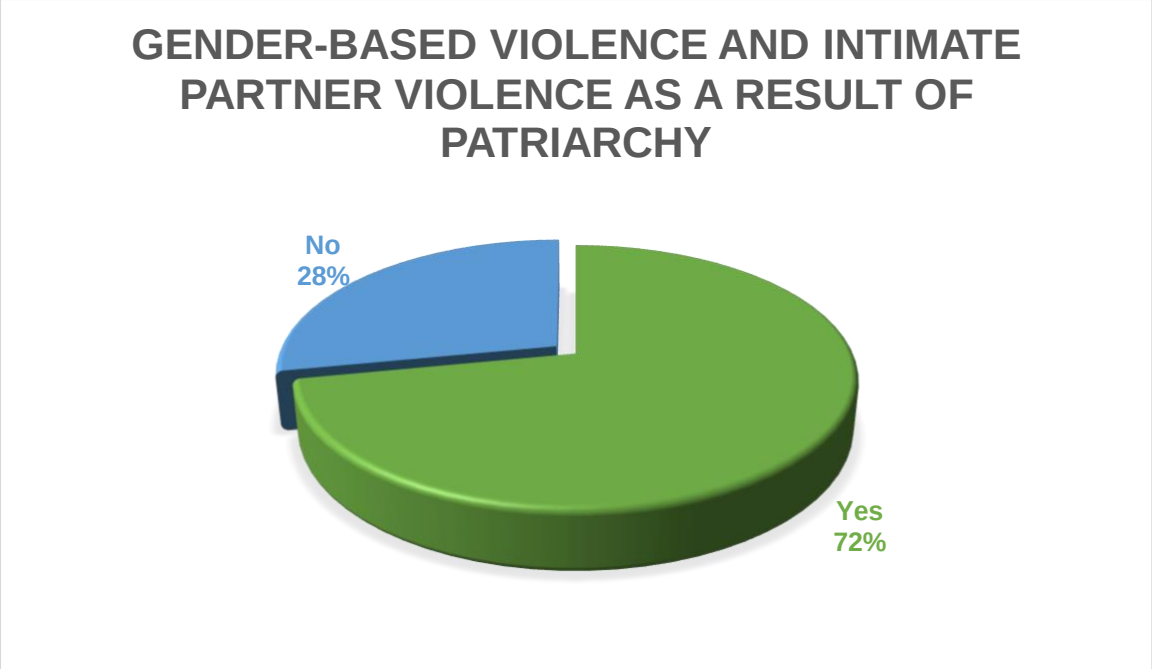
hierarchal setting has been through violence and domination. This then brings about the contradictory existence these authors find themselves within because, even though they understand the negatives that surround patriarchy, they still find themselves entrenched within it, unable to break away even within their own 'escapist' narratives.

Outcome 11: Do you think that the inclusion of these elements is a result of internalised patriarchy/misogyny?



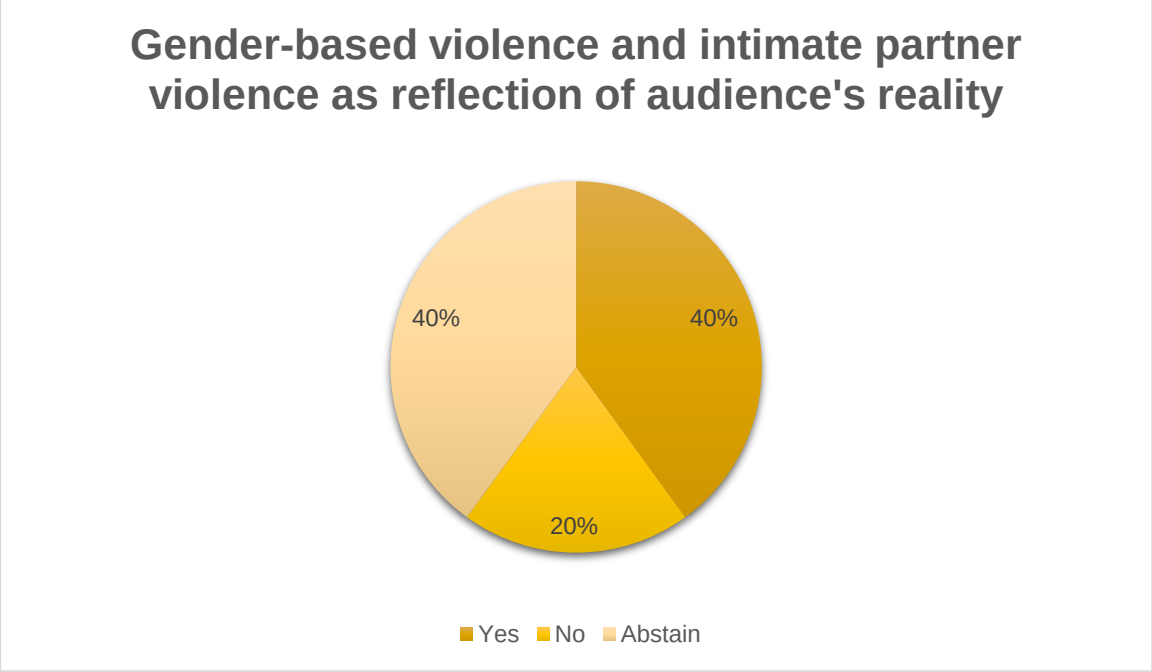
The majority of the authors stated that the only reason that they had included these elements within their works had to do with engaging, warning, and educating their readers on these themes and the ways in which they could be identified. One author stated that, *"... relationships are formed by societal norms and for my work to be relevant, it has to mirror societal norms."* Another stated that her work is very intentional in confronting and dismantling patriarchy while empowering women hence seeing her work as a resistance tool against the patriarchy.

Outcome 12: Would you say that gender-based violence and intimate partner violence are a result of patriarchy?



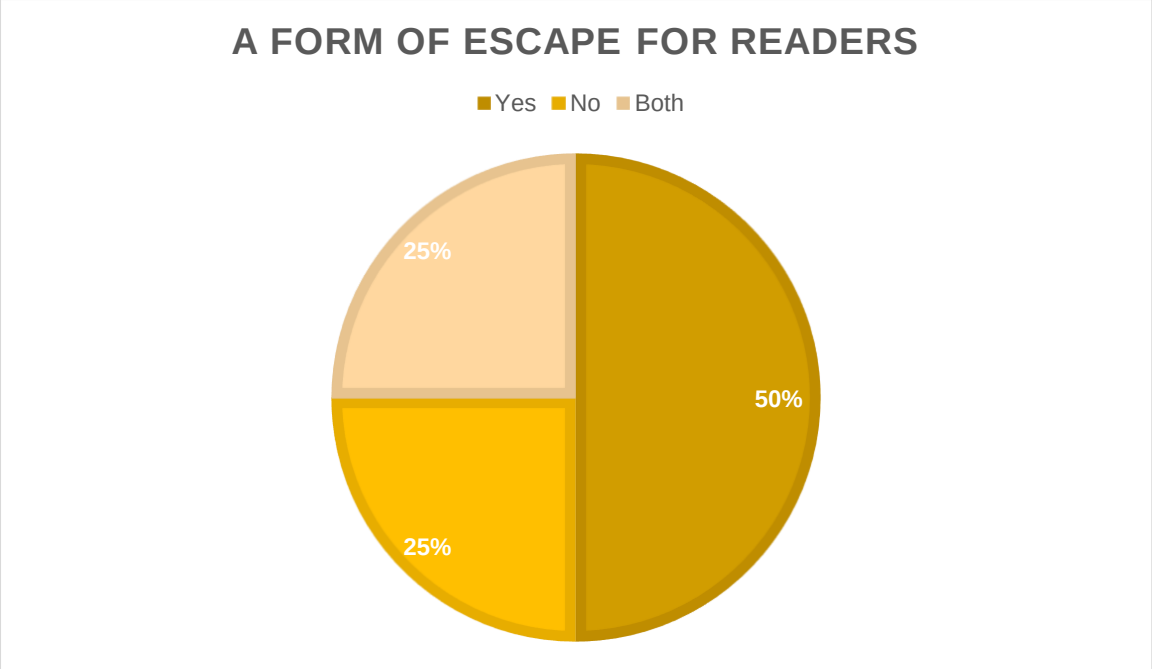
Majority of the authors agreed to the posed question, that there was a direct corelation between patriarchy, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. One author stated that toxic patriarchy, "portrays men as figures of fear that need to be respected as a form of placation and situates women as these objects of submissiveness and subservience." This was echoed all around except for one author who stated that intimate partner violence and gender-based violence were a result of trauma and not inherently patriarchy.

Outcome 13: Could you say that the inclusion of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence within your work is based on the reflection of your audience's reality?



The participants were split regarding this question with one choosing to abstain because they had no experience with the theme. One of the authors that agreed with the question stated that, her work is inspired by everyday life and that she tells the stories that she feels like are hidden or shunned. By doing so, she gives a voice to the voiceless where, in a patriarchal country like South Africa, it is necessary due to the persecution and ridicule that victims are faced with when it comes to speaking out and fighting for justice. This voicelessness and inability to advocate for oneself then becomes the trappings that are used to continue this cycle of violence in society and reflexively in romance narratives since the two, violence and romance, are interlinked.

Outcome 14: Do you think that your works create a sense of escape for your readers, considering that romance novels are considered as a form of escape?



The majority of the authors (50%) agreed that their works created a sense of escape for their readers even with their chosen themes that they have included in their works. One author stated that whilst her books had an escapist setting, they were also structured in such a way as to engage the reader, she stated, *"It is a form of escape as well as a chance to see themselves in the characters and heal as they go through the story. A lot of my readers have told me that they found healing in my work, that they know that they are worthy of love and the kind of love they deserve."* On the other hand, the author who stated that her books do not offer her readers the opportunity to escape, stated, *"I am not sure I give them an escape per se…. I mostly force them to reflect and learn, as much as they are entertained."*

5.1.4 Focus Group Summary

The focus group that was conducted presented an opportunity to explore the ways in which selected Black women authors view gatekeeping and the socio-political themes of patriarchy in their self and independently published romance narratives for Black audiences. Although this group is not representative of all Black women authors, the opinions obtained provide an insight to the unspoken realities that Black authors must navigate when dealing with traditional publishers and how they would then choose self/independent publishers over traditional publishing and the vice versa. The information obtained in the focus group above provides an insight into the themes of patriarchy and patriarchal violence within romance narratives which

are concepts of literary narratives in publishing which are not well understood. More importantly, it gives an awareness to the issue of gatekeeping within the South African publishing market. These findings indicate that there is a willingness for Black women as authors to infiltrate the market that has been dominated by traditional publishers all these years.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

The presentation of findings in this Chapter will be discussed using subsections to focus individually on the analysed data. This data was partitioned into three subsections. This data was obtained through a paratextual analysis, a bibliographic analysis, and a focus group. The chosen approach was used in dealing with collecting varied data responses in a simplified and concise manner.

The data collected from the literature review focused on themes such as patriarchy, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and gatekeeping, and their relevance to defining the genre of Black South African romance. The analysis revealed the presence of these themes in the blurbs, reviews, and narratives of Black South African romance novels. It also highlighted the challenges faced by Black romance authors in engaging with traditional publishers and the need for independent publishing to cater to the Black reader market.

The analysis illustrated several important points. Firstly, it showed the recurrence of patriarchal themes in Black South African romance novels, indicating the socio-political realities experienced by the readers and markets. Secondly, it demonstrated the sales potential and market demand for books containing these themes within the mainstream publishing market in South Africa. Additionally, it shed light on the gatekeeping practices in the publishing market, which restrict the representation of Black South African romance narratives. Lastly, the analysis highlighted how Black authors navigate their own internalised patriarchy while writing their narratives.

The findings contribute to the definition of Black South African romance as a subgenre by identifying common themes and books within this genre. The paratextual analysis played a crucial role in identifying these recurring themes in blurbs and online reviews. The analysis also emphasised the importance of market awareness and proper categorisation to establish the subgenre within the publishing market. Furthermore, it highlighted the use of Black South African English, which incorporates elements of various South African languages as a defining characteristic of the genre.

Gatekeeping in the South African publishing market was found to be a significant factor affecting the representation of Black South African romance. The analysis questioned the

reasons behind the scarcity of published romance narratives for the Black demographic, despite their popularity among the self and independent publishers. Authors in the focus group described experiencing gatekeeping in the form of censoring and alterations to their manuscripts. The research identified the lack of education and market manipulation as contributing factors to gatekeeping.

The analysis also explored the reading of patriarchy in Black South African romance, drawing on Janice Radway's study on romance novels. It revealed the presence of patriarchy in the narratives and discussed the use of the gender narrative theory, particularly the fairy tale and dark romance narratives. The study compared Black South African romance to African romance and highlighted differences in their approaches to entertainment and education.

The findings presented in this Chapter signify not only the attempt made to define the genre of Black South African romance but also to illustrate what separates it from other racial romance genres. The findings also helped in identifying traditional romance tropes in western romance and used them as the link between traditional romance tropes and the tropes that have been identified in the chosen narratives.

6.1 Defining Black South African romance as a subgenre.

In defining Black South African romance as a subgenre, this research has shown that there are specific themes common to self-published romance by Black women authors. Through conducting a paratextual analysis, it has become possible to identify books that would form part of this Black South African romance genre of literature. These books have been identified as self and independently published and were purposely selected because of their independence from the mainstream.

Upon purposively selecting the blurbs, it became evident that they consistently exhibited certain themes throughout the paratextual analysis. This finding holds particular significance when considering the broader context of independent Black South African romance literature. It is noteworthy that the chosen titles, which may include the best-selling or most recent works, all incorporate these themes. This observation emphasizes the intriguing and significant nature of this aspect. The analysis of paratexts and peritexts revealed recurring themes such as patriarchy, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and general violence. These

themes align with the guidelines set forth by Kwela for Sapphire Press, which specifically include themes of patriarchy, sisterhood, and spirituality. The inclusive representation of these themes within Black romance literature effectively reflects the socio-political realities experienced by both its readers and target markets. It can be inferred that Sapphire Press would have benefited from a deeper understanding of the socio-political and cultural environment they intended to publish for.

Furthermore, the focus group responses from Black authors who have published within the romance genre in the South African market further reinforce the presence of these themes. The Nielsen BookScan Data provides additional evidence of how these authors can successfully enter and compete within the realm of romance narratives, even when compared to traditional publishers.

For this genre to be fully defined and established, publishers need to be aware of the market needs. This necessitates the subgenre to catalogue narratives that fall under its banner within the publishing market in the same manner as Afrikaans romance which has managed to establish itself as a romance that provides a form of security for its readership by providing escape from the crime and violence that is experienced closely by Afrikaans speaking women, (Snyman & Penzhorn, 2011). English romances have managed to establish themselves as escapes from reality. In line with this, it is also important to note the language used in this genre, although it is in the English medium, a large differentiating point of the genre is that it is written in Black South African English which is a cumulation of other South African languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans and Tsotsitaal. The use of this code mixing and switching in language is also a true reflection of how Black people in South Africa speak and narrate their lives, hence its reflection in the identified books and the lack of reflection in the market due to the systemic gatekeeping that takes place there. Gatekeeping is a vague construct that still needs more detail and definition within the scholarly landscape, this will be attempted by the research.

6.2 Gatekeeping of Black South African romance in the Publishing Market

The topic of gatekeeping in the South African market is interesting, especially when looking at the contrasting views that are used to justify the ‘scarcity’ of books published for a black demographic from traditional publishing markets. Books written by authors such as Ayanda

Xaba, Busisekile Khumalo, Pumza Shabangu and Dudu Busani-Dube have been proven to be popular in the Black romance market. This brings about the question why publishers are not publishing more romance narratives like these. Furthermore, these markets are being satisfied by self and independent publishers despite the lack of traditional publisher involvement.

Authors in the focus group stated that the form of gatekeeping they had encountered from the traditional publishing houses was a form of censoring. They stated that the manuscripts that they had submitted were returned with major corrections and deletions of key storyline themes because they were either deemed as too explicit or they did not fit the genre under which they were submitted. Chapter 2 (section 2.6.1) illustrates the challenges presented when engaging with elements of gatekeeping and how gatekeeping cannot be limited to one deciding definition because it emerges and forms in several ways that may have been encountered and may not have been encountered yet.

Gatekeeping, according to this research, is heavily reliant on the ignorance evident in informing self/independently publishing authors how they can manage to correctly position themselves within the publishing market and have their books correctly categorised, genre-wise, to reach their intended target markets. It also relies on the presence of market manipulation by traditional publishers and how this market becomes harder to engage because the narratives no longer fit into those set for the market. Gatekeeping is therefore not one decision made to influence a market; it is a series of decisions made without consulting a market based on inherent bias.

6.3 Reading patriarchy in Black South African romance

Having based the study on Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance,* all romance has some element of patriarchy that cannot be excluded or separated from romance. Radway's study (1991) specifically focuses on the entrenchment of patriarchy within romance and how this social construct has become the means of dictating the responses and reactions for what can be constituted as romance. Wood's study (2001) goes on to introduce gender narrative theory which breaks down the abovementioned social construct on responses and reactions to romance. Wood does this by identifying the fairy tale gender narrative theory and the dark romance gender narrative theory.

Snyman and Penzhorn (2011), based on the study conducted by Mills and Boon as seen in Radway (1991), conducted a quantitative study of looking at the reading habits and reception of Afrikaans romance novels. The study response claimed that 19,62% of the participants stated that they read romance to escape their "daily problems" in relation to crime and violence yet these women live within Afrikaner patriarchal settings (2011, p. 246). What is interesting about this study is the active shying away that the participants have from linking patriarchy to romance. The link that the participants establish has to do with the external factors that are not commonly seen as points of entry to romance as a tool for escape. The study also generalised its results to encompass all South African women to be reading novels as an escape from the rampant crime and violence. However, the study indicated that, "some respondents go so far as to claim that this "living" in the romance novel "changes" their own lives, gives them more "insight" and teaches them to "handle" their own lives better." (Penzhorn & Snyman, 2011, p. 247). This distinction of ideals then fails to support the theme of reading to forget the violence and crime of the country and rather support the theme of reading to escape from the patriarchy and violence that these readers live through. Romance novels then act as a tool of educating Afrikaans speaking women on how to 'handle' their own lives. The act of using Afrikaans romance novels as the avenue of educating women to navigate their everyday lives would be a commonality it shares with Black South African romance. This sight of education is further highlighted by one of the focus group participants who stated that, "*"I am not sure I give them an escape per se, lol. I mostly force them to reflect and learn, as much as they are entertained."* (Author B, 2022).

In comparing Black South African romance and African romance, Black South African romance, as mentioned above, acts as a sight to educate and reflect whereas African romance published by Ankara Press, acts as a sight of entertainment and moves itself away from educating its reader markets. This disparity between genres might be accounted to African romance having had a longer time to establish its genre definition and experiment with the forms of literature with which it will deal.

One of the running constants of the paratextual analysis was that of the dark romance gender narrative which coincides with patriarchy, as defined in the literature review. The dark romance gender narrative states, "Women must justify the violence acted upon them through terms such as: she provoked him, she had it coming, she wanted it, and she enjoyed it. These are all terms

that have been constructed by society to accurately shift the blame from men to women and use them as oppressive tools." (Wood, 2001).

What also is a key constant in Black South African romance is that all the authors write their storylines using the duality of the gender narrative theory. This can be seen when, looking at the analysis of the paratextual data and how it repeats the notion of the storyline, beginning as a fairy tale gender narrative and how not soon after, the dark romance narrative comes into play especially through the patriarchal themes of violence and psychological abuse. This duality is also apparent within the focus group discussion and the authors stating that they use themes such as patriarchy, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence within their romance narratives. These narratives then follow the narratives of the fairy tale narrative which then flows into the dark romance narrative and then end at the fairy tale narrative as part of the storyline.

6.4 Internalised patriarchy and Black South African romance

One of the participants of the focus group stated that she did not believe that internalised patriarchy shaped her work in any way. Rather, she believed that all her work was shaped by what has become the norm in society, which could be a truthful statement when it is looked at in isolation. However, it becomes faulty when looked at holistically because it does not factor in the very high possibility that societal norms have been shaped by traditionally patriarchal cultures meaning that society as a whole has internalised patriarchy.

The paratextual analysis data also goes to show how internalised patriarchy has shaped the minds of the authors, the characters, and the storylines. This has been shown repeatedly through the literature review (section 2.7) and the blurbs and reviews analysis. The link between internalised patriarchy and romance, like patriarchy, has managed to become part of the social construction of society and womanhood. Even when authors state that their works are not influenced by their own internalised patriarchy, that is untrue, because those elements of internalised patriarchy are replicated within the narratives they produce and are consumed by their reader markets.

Internalised patriarchy present in the blurbs and online reviews that have been chosen for this study can be seen from the manner in which the blurb is structured to portray the leading man

as the life changing event that the woman main character gets to experience. Though he has his bad moments in the form of abuse and trauma, his good outweighs the bad hence he is the perfect man for you.

6.5 Intimate partner violence and romance

During the paratextual analysis, the component of intimate partner violence was not made evident by the blurbs that had been produced for the books but rather was made evident by the online reviews that the readers had posted. Perhaps, withholding key themes that take place in the narratives, the author then mimics society in forcing people to engage with this form of violence through expressing the way it might portray itself in society; the hidden violence that is covered in acts of romance. An example of this would be in the narrative, *Hlomu the Wife,* and how both the main character and the reader are Mqhele's acts of violence in the forms of gender-based violence and intimate partner rape. These findings can be used to imply that because of how common these themes are, they do not have to highlighted to the reader in the blurbs because they should be expected.

The analysis highlights the process of justifying the abuse and the separation of pain from the romantic feelings. What these authors have managed to do is to give voice to the multitude of women in South Africa who suffer from intimate partner violence within their relationships, and they have managed to do this by highlighting the pain and wrongness that comes from such acts being forced on women. However, what she has failed to do is to use this space to show her readers how to escape from such relationships. What she has chosen to do is to further entrench the ideal that *umshado uyabekezelwa* (English: one must persevere in marriage).

A couple of the authors from the focus group stated that they use the theme of intimate partner violence as a way of teaching their readers about the forms of abuse and gender-based violence that can occur within intimate partner relationships and how to essentially escape those types of relationships, and what could possibly happen to you should you chose to stay within that relationship. It is important to study this phenomenon of how Black female authors engage with the violence and patriarchy that is perpetrated towards women because it allows for Black women to have a setting where they can identify and process the acts of violence that they may be dealing with.

What the paratextual analysis and the focus group have managed to reveal is that no woman character, as presented by the paratextual analysis, was exempt from fighting and losing to patriarchy. Through empowerment and enlightenment, these narratives do not rely on the notions of patriarchy, male dominance, control, and manipulation that can be harmful to women because romance novels have normalised these abusive acts as being a part of romance. These acts of violence are in turn still met with unconditional love from their female counterparts as illustrated by Black romance narratives in South Africa.

6.6 How have authors reflected the socio-political context of their readership using Black South African romance?

Looking at the data from the focus group, the responses that answer this question can be taken from the question on whether the authors write their literature as a reflection of the socio-political norms that have been constructed for society. In response to this question the authors agreed that their work was heavily influenced by their own socio-political context which would be the same as that of their readership. The paratextual analysis also reflected how authors included socio-political themes of patriarchy and patriarchal violence within their narratives. This is reflected in the responses identified from online reviews. These reflections then correspond with the sales analysis and the market demand for narratives that reflect this context in Black South African romance.

6.7 What role does internalised patriarchy play in independently published Black South African romance?

Internalised patriarchy plays a huge role in Black South African romance. It becomes the distinctive tool that separates South African romance and Black South African romance. The patriarchy in Black society has become so inherent that even authors of Black romance are unable to separate their narratives from it and this difference between romance mainstream and self and independently published romance seems to be the violence in Black readership and Black authorship. The theme of internalised patriarchy is evident in the paratextual data collected from blurbs and reviews and the manner in which the blurbs suppress the patriarchal elements present within their narratives. Perhaps that suppression can be seen as the authors

themselves intentionally doing so for the reader to later discover or as a means of still being categorised as part of the romance genre.

6.8 How has Black South African romance opened discourse around patriarchy and violence?

While the representation of male characters meets Westernized tropes, it also reflects the experiences of the women as authors under patriarchy. Black South African romance has managed to open discourse around patriarchy, violence, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence by engaging with the themes within their work rather than shifting them to the background and behaving as though they do not exist and do not have an effect on people. Romance, at often times, is seen as a form of escape but is not seen as a form of engagement and as a space to learn and relate to others. The research has shown that authors accept the responsibility of educating their readership on these themes.

The male main character has been presented initially as a duplicate of male protagonists depicted in white romances. This duplication is through the fairy tale gender narrative but as shown by the data collected, the paratextual analysis conducted on the online reviews, after a couple of Chapters, the male protagonists are depicted in a more truthful and relatable way, showing the traits of toxic masculinity. This is when they undergo the dark romance gender narrative and are portrayed as a reflection of the socio-political norm when it comes to men and their patriarchal customs and norms. Examples of this can be seen in Takalani Msisinyane's *The Man I Married* and Busisekile Khumalo's *The Harvard Wife* and more glaringly in Ayanda Xaba's *Scarred.*

6.9 How has independent publishing been used as a tool to address gatekeeping by authors of self-published Black South African romance?

According to the focus group participants, independent publishing and self-publishing are used as tools to circumvent gatekeeping that takes place when interacting with traditional publishing houses. This is mainly because authors have and believe that they will experience censorship. It is not the sole reason behind authors self-publishing, but it is a major factor when it comes the decision-making process. Revenue and identifying a market niche are close seconds why

these authors have chosen to self-publish their literature rather than deal with the traditional market.

Because of the research conducted, gatekeeping has had the opportunity to be clearly defined and its several aspects identified. Gatekeeping has been identified to include aspects such as the gatekeeping of market accessibility because independently published authors often do not have the necessary finances to penetrate the marketing and distribution used by mainstream publishers. There is also the aspect of educational gatekeeping that had to do with the lack of information made public as to how independent authors can navigate the publishing space in terms of positioning themselves and their narratives within the market because that readership has been overlooked for Western and Afrikaans readerships. Lastly, the commissioning and publishing aspect of gatekeeping looks at the work that is published but not representative of the various readerships because of the lack of knowledge in existing authors of other overlooked readerships. A paratextual analysis of the Black romance books published by the traditional publishers would need to be conducted to confirm this assumption, but it can only be assumed that the reason traditional publishers have had low sales in their Black romance narratives has to do with not having sufficiently identified what readers want to read and not targeting the market effectively for its sales. It will also serve as a tool in illustrating that traditional publishing houses do not publish for existing Black romance markets, rather, they publish for a more Eurocentric white women market, which amounts to less than half the population of the country statistically.

Conclusion

To summarise, the purpose of this research was to examine and categorise Black South African romantic literature. The study discovered shortcomings in previous research efforts, especially regarding gatekeeping and the lack of representation for Black romance writers within conventional publishing establishments in South Africa. Additionally, it explored topics such as gender inequality, violence against women based on their gender identity or expression, and socio-political commentary present throughout these narratives about love among Black individuals from South Africa.

The literature review scrutinised the Eurocentric perspective in analysing romance, which has primarily concentrated on White romantic stories and principles. This biased lens disregards the different aspects of love, particularly in South Africa where racial heterogeneity is crucial. Black authors of romantic novels have found alternatives to avoid gatekeeping within conventional publishing markets through self-publishing or independent publication methods. The emergence of these options led to subgenres like Black South African romance that addresse familiar storylines and reflections among readership audiences.

The research also explored the link between romance narratives and gender-based violence, particularly in the South African context. The rise of gender-based violence in South Africa is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and internalised misogyny, which have equated violence with acts of love in heterosexual relationships. Black South African romance authors have engaged with this issue within their literature, creating discussions around the violence experienced by women in supposedly safe relationships. The study emphasised the need to address these themes and their systemic effects on the genre, considering the historical influence of oppressive governments.

The study highlighted the narrow-mindedness in the South African publishing market, particularly in terms of genre and representation. Traditional publishing houses, predominantly controlled by White individuals, have often type casted Black characters and overlooked the demand for diverse narratives. However, new Black romance authors have challenged this narrow-mindedness by creating narratives that reflect their experiences and resonate with their audience.

The methodology Chapter outlined the research methods employed in this study, including paratextual analysis, bibliographic analysis, and focus group discussions. Paratextual and bibliographic analyses were used to identify the occurrence of themes and evaluate market presence and competition in the traditional South African publishing market. The focus group discussion involved Black South African women authors who had previously published romance novels, aiming to understand their experiences with gatekeeping and systemic challenges.

The research study had certain limitations, including the assumption that gatekeeping and censorship significantly influence the absence of a formal subgenre in traditional publishing.

It also assumed that traditional publishers failed to cater for existing markets and resorted to exclusion rather than adapting their approach. The reliance on archival resources from Sapphire Press, the only local publisher that attempted to access the Black South African romance market, limited the availability of information. However, the relevance of their insights and experiences remains significant.

The research study addressed the objectives by defining Black South African romance as a subgenre and exploring the themes within it. It shed light on the role of gatekeeping in excluding Black women authors from traditional publishing and discussed the socio-political reflections and challenges they face. The research methods employed facilitated the analysis of content, market presence, and author experiences, contributing to a better understanding of Black South African romance.

Further research is recommended to delve into the definition of Black South African romance and identify additional themes that fall under this genre. Replicating the study with different samples would enhance its grounding as a subgenre of romance. Additionally, future research could examine the challenges posed by gatekeeping in other literary genres in South Africa to gain a comprehensive understanding of the systemic issues within the publishing industry.

6.2 Limitations

This research study encountered certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the reliance on author participation was necessitated by the scarcity of available information on the specific focus points of the study. In particular, understanding gatekeeping dynamics within the South African market and the inclusion of violent themes within the romance genre proved challenging due to limited existing data.

Secondly, the study utilized a small focus group, implying the need for replication to validate or refute the findings obtained in this research.

6.3 Recommendations

Moving forward, several recommendations can enhance and expand upon the current study:

1. Future research endeavors should delve deeper into the definition of Black South African romance, aiming to identify additional themes that can be considered integral to this genre. Replicating the study with diverse samples would contribute to establishing a more solid foundation for Black South African romance as a distinct subgenre of romance.

2. Research efforts could investigate the extent to which gatekeeping challenges, as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.1), manifest in other literary genres within South Africa. This exploration would shed light on the broader dynamics of gatekeeping in the country's literary landscape.

3. Given the selection of reviews based on their thorough engagement with the narrative and the identification of relevant themes, future studies could involve a different researcher to conduct a more comprehensive analysis, utilizing new data and replicating the study's findings with heightened precision and rigor.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

Given that this research focuses of Black women authors, publishing work for a Black female readership age and publishing work that could be classified as Black South African romance, the first couple of questions will be based on linking you to the study through questions based on gender, age, and language.

1. What gender do you primarily identify as?
2. How old are you?
3. What language do you primarily publish self-published romantic fiction in?
4. Would you say that your work is purely romance?
5. Why have you chosen to self-publish?
6. Given your experience with dealing with mainstream publishing in South Africa, do you feel as though your books would have been published as is with the themes that can be identified in your books?
7. Do you think that if you had published through mainstream publishing, you would have been categorised as part of the romance genre?
8. What channels have you used to self-publish and self-market your work?
9. Patriarchy is said to be huge theme in romance novels, do you agree with this notion?
10. Which of these elements of patriarchy do you think you have included within your work?
    Themes of patriarchy:
    a. Gender-based violence
    b. Intimate Partner Violence
    c. Internalised Patriarchy
    d. Violence
    As sub-questions to question 10.
        a. Do you think that the inclusion of these elements is a result of internalised patriarchy/misogyny?
        b. Would you say that gender-based violence and intimate partner violence are a result of patriarchy?
        c. Could you say that the inclusion of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence within your work is based on the reflection of your audience's reality?

11. Do you think that your works create a sense of escape for your readers, considering that romance novels are considered as a form of escape?

Appendix B: Consent Forms

A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Nolwazi Mhlambi

I, Ayanda Xaba, (author) agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will be made public	YES NO	
I agree that the researcher may use quotes in her research report	YES NO	
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES NO	
I agree that the interview may be video recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used publicly after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES NO	



..... (signature)
Ayanda Xaba ..... (name of participant)
23/10/2022 ..... (date)

..... (signature)
..... (name of researcher)
..... (date)

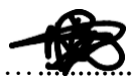
A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Nolwazi Mhlambi

I, ……Busisekile Khumalo ……..., (author) agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will be made public	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes in her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be video recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used publicly after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO



…….. (signature)

……Busisekile Khumalo……(name of participant)

……06 December 2022……(date)

N. Mhlambi

…..... (signature)

……Nolwazi Mhlambi…… (name of researcher)

06 December 2022 (date)

A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Nolwazi Mhlambi

I, Siphiwe Mpungose, (author) agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will be made public	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes in her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be video recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used publicly after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers,	YES	NO

subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.

S. M Mpungose (signature)
Siphiwe Mpungose (name of participant)
04 December 2022 (date)

N. Mhlambi (signature)
Nolwazi Mhlambi (name of researcher)
05 December 2022 (date)

A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Nolwazi Mhlambi

I, …Catherine Phiri….., (author) agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will be made public.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes in her research report.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.	YES	NO

I agree that the interview may be video recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used publicly after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Catherine Phiri (signature)
Catherine Phiri (name of participant)
05 December 2022 (date)

N. Mhlambi (signature)
Nolwazi Mhlambi (name of researcher)

05 December 2022 (date)
A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa

Nolwazi Mhlambi

I, Pumza Shabangu, (author) agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will be made public	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes in her research report	YES	NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be video recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used publicly after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Pumza Shabangu (signature)
Pumza Shabangu (name of participant)
02/12/2022 (date)

N. Mhlambi (signature)
Nolwazi Mhlambi (name of researcher)
05 December 2022 (date)

Appendix C: Information Sheet



Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Nolwazi Mhlambi, and I am a Masters student in Publishing Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating "A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa" under the supervision of Laetitia Cassells. The aim of this research project is to identify Black South African Romance that is self-published by black women authors within the South African publishing market. The study is about how these featured themes of gender-based violence, patriarchy and intimate partner violence is the reason as to why these books were not published through mainstream media. The data that will be used are primary sources from books and journals, as well as data from a focus group and from a paratextual analysis. The data will be collected through independent search on online platforms, through conducting a focus group with Black women authors and paratextual analysis from online reviews.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion. This activity will involve answering questions in a group-based setting and will it take around 30 minutes to an hour based on discussion and will only be this single interview. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device which will take place online. This recording will be stored in a password protected device and only the researcher will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after 5 years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. Since participants will be taking part in a focus group, it will be difficult to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as part of a research report. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected device and will be kept for 5 years. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an anonymized format. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Researcher:
Nolwazi Mhlambi, 1659763@students.wits.ac.za, 0627292014

Supervisor:
Laetitia Cassells, Laetitia.Cassells@wits.ac.za, 0117171000

Appendix D: Ethics Certificate



TRREE

Zertifikat
Certificat
Certificado
Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Clinical Trials Centre
The University of Hong Kong

Nolwazi Nokulunga Mhlambi

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2022/04/26
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Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator

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[REV : 20220217]

SCHOOL OF Literature, Language and Media ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **PROTOCOL NUMBER:** SLLM-PUB-2

PROJECT TITLE A CONTENT AND GENRE ANALYSIS OF BLACK ROMANCE NOVELS IN SOUTH AFRICA

INVESTIGATOR Nolwazi Mhlambi

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT Publishing Studies

DATE CONSIDERED 19 August 2022

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE Approved

RISK LEVEL Low risk

EXPIRY DATE 19 August 2023

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 22 August 2022 **CHAIRPERSON** Prof. Anette Horn

A. Horn

cc: Supervisor : Laetitia Cassells

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committe

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

N. Mhlambi 01 / 09 / **2022**

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES