A reception analysis of *Black Panther* by Black South African women in Soweto

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Abstract

This study stems from a part of my master's degree Thesis submitted to Cape Peninsula University of Technology. South Africa was a buzz in February 2018 as the *Black Panther* fever hits the nation. Multitudes of black South Africans thronged the movie houses donning their cultural regalia and chanting traditional songs signalling the arrival of a 'cultural moment'. Scholars have written about the meanings of *Black Panther*, its cultural aesthetic and thematic engagement with black themes, but not much has been done to understand how black South African women in Soweto interact with the characters of the movie and also account to why the movie is admired in specific socio-historical contexts of consumption. The little research that has explored the popularity of *Black Panther* has mainly approached audiences as homogenous and used research methods that privilege textual determinism. The study used a cultural studies approach as its conceptual frame and audience reception analysis as its methodology. The aim of the study wants to understand how these audiences interact with the characters of the movie. It also seeks to understand why the movie is admired among black South African women in Soweto. The study found that the characters of the movie resonates on the black female audiences, which makes them relate to most of the characters in the movie. It is seen that audiences are able to use Afrofuturistic texts as a lens to imagine a possible future for black people. The findings also show that the admiration of *Black Panther* was linked to the meanings and pleasures associated with resistance that it suggests among black South African women in Soweto. The movie gives them voice and space to symbolically recuperate and claim a futuristic world where they have agency and control over themselves. The film creates a moment to resist and challenge global and local forms of oppression that they face on a day to day.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Black Panther, cultural studies, pleasure, reception