The use of social media to advance to HIV and AIDS awareness in South Africa: An investigation into how the *Intersexions Facebook* page is used for HIV prevention, care and support and treatment.

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CFPD Essay

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I declare that this project is my own original work and that I have not plagiarised. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced.

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7817 Words

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Abstract

Intersexions (2010), a South African produced Entertainment-Education (EE) television drama series has been complimented by a social media approach, in order to facilitate HIV and AIDS awareness. Viewers that have internet access were able to join the *Intersexions* group on the popular social networking site, *Facebook*. After joining the group the viewers were able to discuss and comment on the various *Intersexions* episodes and the actions/events therein.

The primary aim of this study was to determine: (1) if and how the *Intersexions* messages facilitated any social or behavioural changes amongst the viewers/participants, (2) how the viewers/participants used *Facebook* as a platform to discuss, "react" and provide feedback on the *Intersexions* episode and its messages, (3) and whether social media is an appropriate medium for the facilitation of HIV and AIDS awareness in South Africa

Keywords: *Intersexions*, **Entertainment-Education, Social media,** *Facebook*, **HIV, Social Change, Behaviour Change, Self-Efficacy, Homosexuality, MSM, Thematic Analysis and Nvivo.**

Introduction

Mass media initiatives have been one of the primary methods for disseminating HIV and AIDS messages across the globe (Myhre and Flora, 2000: 29). While the HIV and AIDS messages are well populated into the public discourse there is still a very high infection rate amongst teenagers and young adults in South Africa (Morrel, 2001: 41). In 2009 it was estimated that 2.5 million people under the age of 15 were living with HIV, and a third of all new infections occur amongst people aged between 15 and 24 (Avert, 2011). Additionally, the South African National Antenatal Sentinel HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey (Department of Health, 2010: 29) revealed that the HIV prevalence in 2009 amongst people aged between 15 and 24 remained at 21.7% from the previous year. Thus, there remains a high prevalence amongst young South African people, despite the dissemination of these HIV and AIDS messages in the public discourse.

Communication development professionals are constantly trying to find new and better ways of facilitating HIV and AIDS awareness. One of these methods is the inclusion of social media. *Intersexions* (2010), a South African produced Entertainment-Education (EE) television drama series has been complimented by a social media approach, in order to facilitate HIV and AIDS awareness.

The advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have revolutionised the way people communicate – keeping them almost constantly connected through emails, instant messaging and social networking sites – and thus also influencing communication within the field of communication development. ICTs are facilitating a two way communication process that is almost instantaneously. Thus any individuals that have access to the internet and ICTs can, almost instantaneously, become a content creator or communicator (McNab, 2009). The aim of this study is to investigate the use of social media to advance HIV and AIDS awareness is South Africa.

Literature Review

In the field of Communication for Development it has long been assumed that mass communication initiatives are important for any development processes, especially in developing countries, such as Africa, where the media accessibility is low (Narula, 2006: 148). Communication for Development can be defined as a process of strategic intervention toward social change, initiated by institutions and communities" (Manyozo, 2008: 34-44),

Entertainment-Education (EE)

EE is a communication development initiative, and can be defined as a mass communication strategy that "involves media programs that incorporate one or more educational issues in an entertainment format in order to influence audience members' knowledge, attitudes and overt behaviour regarding an educational issue" (Papa, Singhal, Law, Pant, Sood, Rogers and Shefner-Rogers, 2000: 32). EE thus aims to utilise the appeal of popular mass media to show its audience members how they can live happier, healthier and safer lives (Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 9).

There are four main concepts that provide the foundation of the EE strategy and that facilitate the influence of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. These four concepts include: marketing, persuasive communication, play theory and social learning/self-efficacy. The marketing concept contributes to the product definition and audience definition (analysis of behaviour, characteristics, needs and desire) and selection. This concept also emphasises the planning and feedback processes. Without these processes the EE strategy would almost certainly be unsuccessful, as it won't understand it audience and won't be able to adequately address their situation (Coleman, 1991: 76).

Persuasive communication emphasises the importance of developing programmes and messages that provide both rational and emotional appeals (for example, reducing the number of sexual partners can reduce ones chances of contracting HIV and not talking about your relationship issues can upset ones partner). It also represents heuristic factors such as source, credibility and indicators that aim at depicting why and how people decide to accept or reject certain pro social messages. The play theory emphasises how EE can provide audiences with pleasure/escapism, information and para-social interactions. The drama factor of EE programmes provide the audience with thrilling suspense and entertainment. Lastly, the social learning/self-efficacy concepts, coined by Albert Bandura (1976), emphasise the importance of modelling behaviours and people's belief in the ability to change their behaviours for their own interest. An audience member can, for example, look up to a "good" character and would thus imitate his positive actions (Coleman, 1991: 76).

Additionally, there are nine characteristics of EE that contribute to its success. Firstly, it is pervasive, which means that it has global reach and will even reach remote areas that do not necessarily have television or radio, through theatre, song and dance. Secondly, it is popular. People seek and enjoy it. It is also participatory and personal, therefore audiences can participate in the

entertainment, through dance and songs, or they can discuss the characters, events and messages with family and friends. The personal aspect enables the audience to identify and relate with the characters. EE is also passionate, which means that it invokes emotion. The emotion not only facilitates discussion and recollection, but also encourages and motivates behaviour change. EE is also persuasive, as audience members can witness the consequences of unwise decisions and behaviour, and they are encouraged to emulate the behaviours of role models. Finally, EE is practical, profitable and proven effective. There is an existing infrastructure for the entertainment industry and successful, 'win-win', partnerships can be created when social and commercial entities have similar interests. EE programmes obtain high ratings which can generate high profit (which enables them to pay for themselves) through sponsors and commercial advertisers (whom gets plenty exposure from the high ratings). Evaluations have proven EE programmes can influence people's attitudes and behaviour towards the educational issue (Coleman, 1991: 78; Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 9).

EE Criticisms and Ethical Issues

Despite the evaluated success of the EE strategies, it has still come under some criticism. Firstly, EE programmes have been criticised for their apparent top-down nature of dissemination (especially when the EE intervention involves mass media). This means that there can be very little participation and that the message producers decide what the audiences 'need' or 'want' (Singhal, 2007: 268; Storey, 2006: 702 and Dutta, 2006: 225). Similar criticism stems from the ethical issue of who gets to decide what is pro-social? What constitutes as pro-social for the EE programme's production team might not be considered pro-social by its audience. Thus, there are also debates centred on the issue of whether it is 'right' to use mass media as a persuasive tool to promote social change (Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 218).

EE initiatives have also been criticised for allowing commercial interests to gain emphasis over social or audience centred interests. Also, as with most communication initiatives, there is the issue of interpretation. Audience members process selectively and might interpret multiple meanings/interpretations from the message, which might not include the intended message. Any form of communication development is complex and thus the consequences are not always predictable, and sometimes unintended/undesirable consequences may result (Singhal and Brown, 1996: 27-28; Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 219; 221). The selective processing also allows for selective recall and the selective use for one's own purposes. For example, the *Archie Bunker*

Effect, that can be defined as "the degree to which certain audience individuals identify with negative role models in EE interventions" (Singhal and Rogers, 2004: 14). This means that negative behaviours, stigma and prejudice will be reinforced rather than opposed (Singhal and Rogers, 2004: 14).

Intersexions and Social Media

Intersexions (2010) is a South African produced EE television drama series, which features 26 independent (stand-alone), but interrelated episodes that follow the HIV infection chain. The series was produced by Curious Pictures in partnership with SABC Education and Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA) (Intersexions, 2010 and JHHESA, 2009). The series is not presented as an overtly HIV and AIDS drama series, but it does take its audience through the lives and loves of a series of individuals that are either infected or affected by HIV. Each episode provides the audience with a better understanding of the interconnectedness of sexual networks. By episode 25 the audience members have witnessed how the virus has touched all of the characters lives, through the prevalence of multiple and concurrent partnerships, and how everyone's life could potentially be affected (Intersexions, 2010).

Mass media development initiatives, such as *Intersexions,* can often be linked to the Modernisation/Dominant Paradigm, which primarily aims at modernising and industrialising beneficiaries in order to generate economic growth, which was assumed to be the definition of development (Rogers, 1976/2006: 110, Melkote and Steeves, 2001: 72). Most of the information was diffused in a hierarchical, one-way track – from sender to receiver, with little if any feedback from the viewers. Additionally, it was assumed that the information/knowledge (regarding the issue targeted by the initiative) disseminated by the agencies and governments were correct and applicable to the beneficiaries (Melkote and Steeves, 2001: 112, Waisbord, 2001: 17-20 and Servaes, 1995: 6), and that simply having knowledge/information about a specific issue would result in a positive behaviour change. Thus, variables such as socioeconomic, political, gender and cultural contexts were ignored (Parker, 2004: 1). These assumptions and characteristics of the dominant paradigm have been attributed to the failure of many of the development initiatives (Roger, 1976/2006: 113 and Waisbord, 2001: 17-18).

In an attempt to improve the effects and reach of EE initiatives, the *Intersexions* television drama series was complimented by a radio talk show (broadcast on the SABC's eleven local language stations), a blog and a group on a social networking site, *Facebook*. These new media outlets were included in order to provide additional and continuous information regarding the series, and HIV and AIDS (cf. Rogers, 1983). Social media provides an opportunity to facilitate HIV and AIDS awareness.

The advent of social media is creating an entirely new environment for the worlds of commerce, communication and connection. Social media are ubiquitous, unavoidable, accessible, scalable, public, transparent and highly influential. It is, thus, not surprising that they already have a massive presence that continues to grow and evolve. Approximately 1 billion (that is half of the world's internet users) have used some form of social media (UNAIDS, 2011). These internet users spend over 110 billion minutes on social network sites, which equals to 22 present of their time spent online. *Facebook*, one of the world's most popular social networking sites has over 700 million users globally (Owyang, 2010 and SocialBakers, 2011), and its users continue to grow at a rate of 500 thousand per day (Wollan, Smith and Zhou, 2011: xii). According to the Friendship 2.0 survey conducted by MWeb, *Facebook* is also the dominant social media site in South Africa. Over the last six months *Facebook* has gained 750 000 new South African users, pushing the overall number of South African users to over four million (MWeb, 2009; SocialBakers, 2011 and SocialMediaDialogue, 2011).

The term social media can be defined as "the swift and easy development, creation, dissemination, and consumption of information and entertainment by both organisations and individuals" (Wollan, Smith and Zhou, 2011: xii). From this definition it can be said that social media can be used by development communicators, in conjunction with EE, to disseminate information and entertainment, and to facilitate discussion regarding an educational issue – audience members can ask questions, answer other questions and start new discussions. The convergence of EE initiatives and social media, thus, facilitate participation and social learning (Odutolu, 2005: 247). Traditional forms of media can only facilitate discussion amongst audience members sharing immediate social spheres (such as working and living environments). Social media, on the other hand, expands these limits of dialogue and enables discussion to take place between people of various locations/spheres, and also allows discussion amongst media producers and consumers. Additionally, social media enables one-to-may and many-to-many conversations amongst individuals, and can enable almost

instantaneous input, feedback and critique regarding the specific subject being discussed (Wollan, Smith and Zhou, 2011). According to Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron (2006: 827), the use of electronic media for social and behaviour change is not a new concept, as it has been utilised by unions, community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) since the nineteen fifties.

Intersexions Episode Eleven and Sexual Orientation

In episode eleven the conflicting marriage of Shaan and Jaymati is revealed to the audience. Jaymati and Shaan fight over his previous affair with Sarah, and Shaan's indifference towards having children. Shaan, feeling repressed, flees to Johannesburg without working out his differences with Jaymati. There, in a bar, Shaan meets Jake, a charming and self-indulgent financial analyst who offers him a place to stay for the night. The following night they go out partying, and end up having sex.

The following morning, Shaan, who is upset and confused, is subtly and coldly encouraged by Jake, a commitment-phobe, to go home. But Shaan, whom is not ready to go home, goes to a gay club that night, and after refusing the advances of another man, goes back to Jake's house. There, Jake counsels Shaan, assures him that [Shaan] is not gay and provides him with insight to personal freedom. Shaan is now a changed man, and with his new outlook on life returns to Jaymati with the hopes of fixing their relationship (Intersexions, 2010).

In 1996 the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) was one of the first constitutions to ground discrimination of sexual orientation as illegal. Before the NCGLE homosexuality/sodomy was considered as an illegal act. Any individuals caught conducting homosexual behaviour was incarcerated. Thus, the current constitution not only deems homosexual activities as legal, but considers discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation as illegal. Homosexual marriages are, however, still not permitted in South Africa (Cage and Evans, 2005:15). Despite these progressions there is still a great deal of bias and stigmatisation against homosexuals and other sexual minorities in Africa. These bias and stigmatisations are generally deeply rooted in cultural and religious values, and can often lead to the physical and verbal abuse of homosexuals and other sexual minorities (Fleshman, 2007 and Avert, 2011). In order to combat these stigmatisations and bias annual awareness campaigns and initiatives are held, such as the Gay Pride March and the South African Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (Afrol News, 2011 and Out in Africa,

2011). Additionally, as HIV is predominantly regarded as a heterosexual disease in South Africa, the homosexuals population and other sexual minorities, such as men sleeping with men (MSM), have generally been ignored in HIV prevention campaigns (Quest, 2010b: 14).

Theoretical Framework

Social Change and Behaviour Change

The general use of EE programmes or campaigns is to promote social and behaviour change (Strong, 2008: 59; Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 9). These changes can occur at various levels, such as at an individual, community, or societal levels. The EE strategy can contribute to social and behaviour change in two ways. Firstly, EE can influence audience's awareness, attitudes and behaviour in a positive way. Here the influences and changes occur at the individual level. For example, encouraging condom use amongst individuals and encouraging individuals to talk about the issues in their relationships. Secondly, EE can influence the external environment of the audience in order to create the necessary/ideal conditions for social change at the system level, for example, changing stigmas and negative beliefs with regards to condom use amongst the public. At this level the influences and changes are located at the social-political and interpersonal sphere of the audience's external environment (Singhal and Rogers, 2004: 5). Behaviour chance approaches aren't always successful, as they do not always incorporate the various socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts and assume that simply having knowledge about a certain issue will result in rational thinking and positive behaviour changes (Parker, 2004: 1). In order to facilitate social and behaviour change development communicators utilise various theories to design the script, theme and 'look' of EE programmes (Ray, 2005: 348 and Dalrymple, 2006: 204). This essay will briefly explore, three such theories, the Social Cognitive Theory, the Fear Appeal theories and Social Learning, as they relate to *Intersexions*.

Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura's (1976) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), or the Social Learning Theory as it is also known, is the crux of any EE intervention. The SCT hypothesizes a triadic, reciprocal relationship between the personal factors of the individual, the social environment and the behaviour itself, which suggests that the personal factors and the social environment interact and influence each other, leading to individual behaviour and social change. The environment can influence the personal factors, and eventually behaviour through observational learning or modelling – people do

not simply learn from formal learning situations, such as in a classroom, but they can also learn by observing the behaviours of models/others (Odutolu, 2005: 242; Glanz, Rimer and Viswanath, 2008 and King, 2009: 64-65).

Self-efficacy, which can be defined as an individual's belief that she/he can exert control over his/her own emotions, thought processes, motivations and patterns of behaviour, plays an important role in the causal structure of the SCT. This is due to the fact that efficacy beliefs not only influence change and adaptation in their own right, but also other determinants that influence them. The efficacy beliefs influence whether an individual thinks optimistically or pessimistically and in ways that could be self-enhancing or self-hindering, thus they influence whether an individual chooses to undertake a challenge or problem, how much effort to expend on the problem and how long to persevere when faced with obstacles or failures. For example, if an individual has high efficacy beliefs regarding his/her ability to properly use condoms, he/she is more likely to use condoms and to continue to use condoms even when faced with obstacles, such a partner trying to persuade him/her against the use of condoms. Thus, the probability that an individual will act on a problem or challenge depends on the individual's belief that he/she can implement the required actions to solve the challenge or problem (Odutolu, 2005: 242; Bandura, 2001: 10 and Strong, 2008: 56).

Fear Appeals

Fear Appeals (or persuasive messages that arouse fear) are behaviour change models that are designed and utilised by development communicators to encourage the adoption of positive attitudes, intentions and behaviour changes (Ray, 2005: 348; Witte and Allen, 2000: 608; 622). There are three variables relating to the fear appeal models: fear, perceived threat and perceived efficacy. Fear can be defined as a negatively valenced emotion that is accompanied by a high level of arousal (Witte and Allen, 2000: 608-609).

The perceived threat encompasses two dimensions. Perceived susceptibility to the treat (the degree to which an individual feels at risk of experiencing the threat) and perceived severity of the threat (the degree of harm expected from the threat). While the concepts of fear and threat are distinct (the former being emotion and the latter cognition), they are intricately related: the greater the perceived threat, the greater the fear experienced. For example, an individual whom perceives multiple and concurrent partners as an immense threat (which could result in the contraction of HIV) will also

have an immense fear of that behaviour, and is most likely to steer clear of such behaviour. Finally, perceived efficacy is also composed of two components: perceived self-efficacy (the individual's belief in his/her ability to act on the threat) and perceived response efficacy (the individual's belief in the recommended response's ability to avert the threat) (Witte and Allen, 2000: 608-609). Thus, if the individual believes that he/she can talk about their relationship issues and if they believe that talking about their issues will ease the risk of a breakup they are more likely to talk about their relationship (high level of perceived efficacy).

American health professionals do not support the use of fear appeal campaigns, as they perceive them as amateurish, misguided, unethical and counterproductive. African health professionals have, however, embraced fear campaigns and even claim that they are a primary reason for the decline in HIV infection rates (Green and Witte, 2006: 245). Four Meta-analyses conducted by three different investigators utilising various statistical summary strategies seem to support the African perception. These studies suggest that fear appeal messages can reliably and consistently encourage positive attitude, intention and behaviour changes if the fear appeal is strong and if the fear appeals are accompanied by equally strong efficacy messages. Thus, if a fear appeal message makes the health issue seem serious and fosters a strong sense of self-efficacy the audience members are more likely to implement behaviour changes (Green and Witte, 2006: 249; Witte and Allen: 2000: 622-623).

Social Learning and Participation

The concept of Social Learning refers to the acquisition of information from other individuals. The information could be related to various subjects, such as a new technology or the social, health and economic consequences of decision making. Thus, Social Learning is the primary mechanism through which social networks influence and affect individuals. While an EE intervention has the potential to facilitate interpersonal peer communication regarding the EE message and what they learned from the message, the integration of social media could further encourage discussion (for example, topics that would not have been considered by the audience), as social media can transform one-way monologues into a collaborative interaction (Odutolu, 2005: 247; Strong, 2008: 60 and Wollan *et al, 2011: xiv*).

Although there are some EE initiatives that do facilitate participation, through community activity (these mainly include grass root media, such as theatre), the majority are high profile mass media productions with specific attitude and behaviour change objectives that are defined by the donor and/or implementing agencies, with very little apparent participation from the beneficiaries . Thus, it is apparent that development communicators have not fully taken advantage of the capacity of media as an open, participatory and discursive system. The most powerful affects of the EE intervention is the ability to create a discursive space for the discussion of health and other issues. But campaign theory and research often tells development communicators to select a medium/channel that is the most appropriate vehicle for the message, and as discussed earlier, social media provides an ideal platform for participation from the beneficiaries (Gumucio-Dagron, 2006: 702; 708).

Media Theories

Other theories relating to EE and its effects are the Uses and Gratification theory, the Media Effects Models and Stuart Halls theory of Encoding and Decoding. The media effects model is an approach that is used to measure the influence, effects and/or impact that media and their content has on their audience members (Morris, 2006: 43). The model assumes that the media and their content will affect the attitudes, thoughts and behaviours of it audience members, and that the audience members are passive recipients of the media content, messages and influence (Subrahmanyam and Šmahel, 2010: 33). One of the most prominent studies relating to the media effects model is a study conducted by Bandura (1986). In this study Bandura not only illustrates the concept of social learning, but also how a group of children exposed to violent images tended to imitate the behaviour. The media effects model has been, however, criticised for its restrictive and linear focus, which does not consider all the potential influential factors (Morris, 2006: 43). These factors include individual experiences and social context, for example (Hammer and Kellner, 2009: 40; Banks 1995).

Hall's theory of encoding and decoding has a somewhat different argument than the media effects model. Hall acknowledges that media and their content can have an effect on the audience members, but argues that the audience is anything but passive in their consumption of the media and their content, and that they are interpreted in different ways (Banks, 1995 and Storey, 2003: 11). Just as the media and their content are encoded/produced with the 'raw material' of everyday life and the media professionals' subjective selections, they are also decoded by the audience

members in an autonomous social context. As the decoding of the films and their content are determined by social context, class, culture, past experiences and other aspects the audiences have the ability to reject, accept or adapt the messages, and the outcome or interpretation/understanding of the media content/messages can never be predictable. The media professionals can therefore never guarantee a specific outcome or interpretation and there is always the potential for misinterpretations (Storey, 2003: 11-12 and Devereux, 2003: 128-129).

The uses and gratification theory, like the media effects model, is an approach that can be used to study the effects of mass media. Like the name suggests the approach focuses on how audience members use media to 'gratify' or satisfy their individual needs and desires (Larson, 2009: 352), their media preferences and their patterns of use (Van Evra, 2004: 11). It assumes that audience members interact actively with media and selects various content, channels and mediums in order to meet their specific needs and desires. For example, audiences might select the use of a radio when they want to listen to music rather than watch a movie. The motivations for selecting specific media content can be divided into escapism/diversion and self-evaluation/self-identity, information/surveillance (Van Evra, 2004: 11-12; Wood, 2011: 297; Larson, 2009: 352 and Watson, 1998: 62-64).

The escapism/diversion motivation refers to our use of the media (such as comedy films) to ease tensions and worries (Watson, 1998: 63 and Wood, 2011: 297). Surveillance/information refers to the information people need to effectively perform their daily tasks and live/function in society. For example, election information (what parties are available and what they promise to deliver), weather (helps people decide what to wear) and economic factors (exchange rates, commodities and price of petrol). Audiences usually turn to news programmes for this information (Watson, 1998: 64 and Larson, 2009: 352). The self evaluation/self-identity motivation refers to the usage of media in order to resolve issues or problems. Audiences can be inspired and encouraged to apply the solutions their favourite characters have for problems, such as the loss of a loved one, illness, rejection and unemployment. Audience members also learn, measure and gain reassurance with regards to their lifestyles, decisions and values through media content/messages (Watson, 1998: 63 and Van Evra, 2004: 12).

This approach also assumes, like Halls theory, that audiences are not passive in their consumption; they derive their own meanings, from the media content, can determine which content is truthful or fiction, important or unimportant and they are also capable or accepting or rejecting certain media messages (these often include messages reflecting the dominant middle-class/male/white discourses) (Asimow and Mader, 2004: 58 and Watson, 1998: 62).

Methodology

The research design that this project has utilised is a reception analysis. The responses to the *Intersexion's* episode eleven posted on the *Facebook* page (during the initial broadcast of the series) will be analysed. The analysis of the *Facebook* page data enabled the researcher to determine (1) if and how the *Intersexions* messages facilitated any social or behavioural changes amongst the viewers/participants, (2) how the viewers/participants used *Facebook* as a platform to discuss, react and provide feedback on the *Intersexions* episode and its messages, (3) and whether social media is an appropriate medium for the facilitation of HIV and AIDS awareness in South Africa. Episode eleven does not depict issues that are directly related to HIV, but covers issues such as homosexuality, MSM and communication issues in relationships.

In order to answer the questions mentioned above the researcher will analyse *Intersexions'* episode eleven and the *Facebook* discussions or data set of episode eleven. Episode eleven (out of the 26 interrelated episodes) was randomly allotted to the researcher. Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis package,   and a thematic analysis technique have been used to analyse the data set of episode eleven.

Thematic analysis can be defined as a method that can be utilised for the identification, analysis and reporting of themes (or patterns) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). This method can also be defined as "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Fereday and Muir-Cocrane, 2006: 3). Thus, thematic analysis is a process that involves the identification of themes by carefully reading and re-reading the applicable data (Fereday and Muir-Cocrane, 2006: 3). In a thematic analysis approach, the concept of a theme can be defined as "a statement of meaning that runs through most of the data or that occurs for a minority of the participants, but carries a heavy emotional or factual impact" (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2009: 235). The theoretical freedom of a thematic analysis makes it a relatively flexible

and useful tool that has the potential to provide a rich, detailed and complex account of the analysed data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:78) thematic analysis should be seen as a primary method for qualitative analysis. The thematic analysis method is thus ideal for the analysis of the data for this study, as the data set allocated to the researcher contains qualitative data. Qualitative data is often based on the opinions, feelings and perceptions of the participants (Macqueen, 1998: 42).

The thematic analysis method includes six phases that cover the data analysis process. The first phase involves *familiarizing yourself with your data*. During this phase it is important to read and re-read the data in order to become familiar with the content and to identify potential themes. Transcription also needs to be completed during this phase, especially when the researcher works with verbal data such as interviews. In this study the researcher cleaned the data by removing unnecessary content, such as the time the participant commented. The second phase involves *generating initial codes* from the data. The codes reflect a feature of the data that the researcher finds interesting and/or an element of the data that is meaningful or relevant to the study. The coding process is still part of the analysis and themes are only developed in the next phase. One should work systematically work through the entire data set, giving full attention to each piece of data in order to either code the entire data set can be or only particular portions of the data. The coding can also transpire manually (for example, using highlighters to indicate potential patters), or through the use of computer software, such as the NVivo programme that is being used for this study (this involves tagging and naming selections of the data texts) (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 86-89).

During the third phase the researcher *searches for themes*. The codes that were identified in the previous phase are sorted into potential themes. Essentially, this means that the researcher considers how the various codes can be combined to form an overall theme. Mind-maps or tables are often used to simplify this process. The relationships between the codes, themes and subthemes are thus, contemplated during this phase. During phase four the *themes are reviewed*. Reviewing the themes will often enable the researcher to realise that some of the themes do not have enough data to support them, or that could be included into other themes or that some can be divided into two separate themes. Subthemes are also identified in this phase. (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 89-92).

Phase five involves *defining and naming themes*. At this phase the researcher should define and further refine the themes. This means that the researcher should identify/determine what each theme is specifically about – what data does each theme capture. It is important to ensure that each theme isn't too broad or diverse – they should be specific. Phase six is the final phase and involves *producing the report*. The final analysis for the study is executed in this phase. It is important that the analysis contains extracts of the data and that it contains concise, logical, coherent and non repetitive account of the data themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 89-92).

Definitions that Relate to the *Intersexions* Data

In the following section the researcher will define numerous terms that appear or are relevant to the *Intersexions* episode eleven data set. The first term sexual orientation "refers to an individual's primary sexual attraction" (Quest, 2010b: 14). People develop their primary sexual attraction over time and it does not necessarily remain constant. Generally individuals have a primary sexual attraction to either individuals from the same sex (heterosexuality), to individuals of the opposite sex (homosexuality) or an individual can be attracted to individuals from both sexes (bisexuality) (Quest, 2010b: 14).

The second term, gender identity refers to social norms that are attached to the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', such as dress codes, mannerisms and social roles, for example in general it isn't very masculine for men to cry. Homoprejudice, the third term, can be defined as a set of individual and social attitudes and practices that perpetuate bias against homosexual individuals and/or their behaviours (Quest, 2010b: 14).Homophobia, is term closely related to Homoprejudice. This term can be defined as the feelings of unease, fear and loathing towards homosexuals (Herek, 2004: 8). It can also refer to social ideologies which stigmatise homosexual individuals (Avert, 2011). The final term is Men who have Sex with Men (MSM). MSM refers to a diverse group of individuals whose sexual orientation, identity and interactions vary considerably. In general it assumed that MSM are homosexuals, but this is not necessarily true, since MSM are extremely complex (Quest, 2010b: 14).

Analysis

In the following section the researcher will summarise the themes and findings discovered through the thematic analysis process. The data set for episode eleven included the comments of seven hundred and fifteen participant/viewers.

The most common feelings invoked by the viewers/participants on the *Facebook* page in relation to the episode (as provided in the *Facebook* data set)

The sexual relations between Shaan and Jake produced primarily two different sets of responses from the viewers/participants. The first set of emotional responses involved fear and shock. Forty-four of the viewers/participants were shocked and horrified at the portrayal of their sexual activities. The shock or fear experienced by the viewers/participants can be attributed to the fact that Shaan not only cheated on Jaymati, but cheated on her with a man as well as the fact that Shaan, a straight man, slept with another man, as is evident in the following quotes*: "This episode was really scary. Intersexions really makes you think", "Intersexions just makes me want to stay single forever!"*, and *"I screamed out loud! I was shocked. It never crossed my mind"*. It can be argued that *Intersexions* utilised a fear appeal strategy to show to the audiences what could happen if they don't talk about their relationships (an extreme over dramatised version). Only forty-four out of the seven hundred and fifteen viewers or participants were shocked by the events of episode eleven, thus it can also be argued that the fear appeal strategy of the episode was not that powerful/influential, or it was not accompanied by an equally strong sense of self-efficacy.

The second set of emotions is related to the concept of sexual orientation, such as homosexuality or bisexuality. Seventy-two of the viewers/participants felt anger and disgust at the sexual relations between Shaan and Jake. Most of the viewers/participants attributed their disapproval to religion, saying that *"It is jus immoral and disgusting"* and *"It is not on! God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve"*. Alternatively, only thirty of the participants argued in favour of homosexuality and bisexuality. Their arguments were based on human rights. They felt that gay and bisexual individuals have the right to live their lives however they choose, as long as they don't impair anyone else. *"Gays are living their and lives and they deserve to be happy and not to be abused or harassed by society, who is still narrow minded"* and *"It's a matter of choice, but don't drag other people in to it"*. Due to the fact that a greater number of the viewers/participants were against homosexuality and MSM it can be argued that South African citizens are still predominantly homophobic.

Another interesting trend that emerged from the data set was that eighty-two of the respondents felt that it was more acceptable for a man to cheat with another woman that cheating with a man (or individual from opposite sex). *"It's kind of normal to cheat with the opposite sex. But uhm... like eew he cheated with a guy. That is more disgusting."* Alternatively, only fifteen of the viewers/participants said that cheating was wrong, regardless of the sex of the individual that they are cheating with or the relating circumstances. *"Cheating is cheating. It doesn't matter what gender it is."*

Social or Behavioural Changes

It can be argued that *Intersexions* episode eleven was an attempt to generate awareness and acceptance with regards to various forms of sexual orientations, such as homosexuality, bisexuality and MSM, especially when the *Intersexions* discussions of the *Facebook* page were considered. Intersexions initiated a discussion on whether or not Shaan was gay and also created a discussion on MSM, which explained what the concept was. Despite this explanation and presentation of information it seems that many of the viewers/participants did not experience a change in their views or opinions on various sexual orientations. *"I try to be understanding and open minded about it, but I will never get how or why guys have sex with guys, same applies to girls."* This is also evident in the fact that a majority of the individuals were against the concept of homosexual or bisexual relations, as mentioned above.

This observation can be linked to Halls theory of encoding and decoding. The EE professionals encoded the episode in order to create awareness on homosexuality and MSM, but the audience did not decode the episode as the professionals had hoped or intended. Therefore, a misinterpretation had occurred. It also facilitates the notion that viewers are not passive recipients of media messages and that their environment, past experiences, culture and beliefs.

There is, however, also some proof that being exposed to the concept of various forms of sexual orientations through mass media can create some form of social change, as is evident in this quote: *"If this was last year I would have said "yuck or gross", but Generations taught us to accept gays, and it is becoming a normal thing now."* Even if this episode of *Intersexions* did not have a massive impact on the opinions of homosexual, gay of MSM individuals, it would seem that regular exposure to this concept might facilitate understanding and acceptance. Additionally, the researcher believes that the context of the episode might have hindered the acceptance process, as Jake, a bisexual was portrayed as a promiscuous 'home-wrecker', which could sustain stereotypes concerning bisexual individuals. If the concept of bisexuals/MSM/homosexuals were portrayed in a

different context the viewers/participants might have interpreted it in a positive way, and acceptance might have been a more prominent response.

In another section of the data set *Intersexions* asks the viewers/participants: "Do you know your lover's lovers?" This is one of the key themes of the *Intersexions* series and is asked in every episode's opening scene. This theme relates to the sexual network chain that suggests that everyone is connected through their previous sexual partners. *Intersexions* argues that if you are aware of who your lover's previous lovers were you can appropriately protect yourself against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs), and other complications, such as finding out that your lover is your best friend's ex-boyfriend. Thirty four of the respondents admitted that they do not know who their lovers' previous lovers were, and that they were too scared to find out. *"As sick as the thought is and ignorant it may sound, I would rather not know."* Only seven out of the seven hundred and fifteen viewers/participants said that they knew who their lovers' previous lovers were, but did not confirm that they had found out or spoken to their lovers about it after watching an *Intersexions* episode. Thus, it can be argued that *Intersexions* did not trigger a behaviour change within the audience, and proves that simply having knowledge of a certain issue is not necessarily going to cause any behaviour changes.

Additionally, thirty five of the viewers/participants comments indicated that the entertainment value overshadowed the educational value of the programme. *"Jake is just too cute"* and *"that was funny"*. It can be argued that these individuals used the *Intersexions* programme purely for entertainment/escapism rather than any of the other uses such as attaining information. Thus, no behavioural or social changes occurred with these viewers/participants.

 Bandura's Social Learning Theory and His Concept of Self-Efficacy

As stated above a huge amount of the viewers/participants haven't asked their lovers about their previous lovers, despite the fact that they have learned through observation (Bandura's social learning theory) that the *Intersexions* characters that a lack of communication with regards to relationships or their issues can have devastating results on either individuals involved. They thus, might not have the self-efficacy to accomplish this action, or they are viewing the issue from a pessimistic perspective (they believe that the suggested solution will have more negative consequences than their current behaviour).

Viewers/participants Identification with the Characters

None of the viewers/participants directly relate/identify with any of the characters, in the sense that they have had similar experiences or issues, but eight of the viewers/participants did, however, state that they understood that Shaan was confused, unhappy and stressed. They empathize with Shaan and argue that since none one is exactly in his position they cannot judge him or his actions.

Dialogue and Efficacy around Behaviour Change

As stated earlier a majority of the participants admitted that they have not asked their lovers about their previous lovers and as such it can be argued that *Intersexions* did not encourage dialogue or efficiency amongst its viewers/participant. Additionally, there isn't one single viewer/participant that stated that he/she had spoken to their partners or family members about any of the issues presented in the episode after they had watched the episode, and the individuals who said that they knew who their lovers' previous lovers were did not directly specify that they asked their partners about it after they had watched episode eleven.

What evidence is there that the episode has given rise to or reinforced new skills and knowledge in relation to HIV*?*

As stated earlier, the primary objectives of this episode was to encourage people to talk about their relationships and to promote awareness/acceptance of various forms of sexual orientations. It was also argued earlier that the *Intersexions* episode did not manage to encourage the awareness/acceptance, nor did it manage to facilitate discussion about the issues portrayed in episode eleven, nor did it facilitate self-efficiency amongst the viewers/participants. Thus, it can be argued that the *Intersexions* episode did not reinforce any new skills or knowledge regarding HIV.

The *Facebook* page on the other hand did provide the viewers/participants with knowledge related to HIV and sex. *Intersexions* was able to provide the viewers/participants with additional knowledge that could/was not presented in episode eleven, such as the information on MSM and the facts of STIs through the *Facebook* page.

Facebook as a Discussion and Feedback Platform

The viewers/participants primarily used the *Facebook* page as a platform to proclaim their opinions or feelings about the events in the episode, such as their shock or disgust as Shaan and Jakes sexual relations. Secondly, they use it to argue or try and change the opinions of some of the other viewers/participants, for example the group of viewers/participants who are arguing that homosexual and bisexual people have the right to choose their own sexuality and that no one has

the right to judge them. The *Facebook* page is also used to answer/comment the questions/facts that *Intersexions* periodically post, or to ask questions regarding these questions/facts, such as "how can a person claim to be straight, but then have sex with another man?" This question was directed at the MSM definition posted by *Intersexions*. Finally, the viewers/participants use the *Facebook* page to give other viewers/participants information that they have on a specific subject, for example one viewer/participant corrected another viewer/participant's assumption on the protection that a condom provides during sex: *The only way one can ever be one-hundred percent safe is to abstain period. A condom only reduces the risk of infection"*. Thus the *Facebook* page facilitates social learning and participation amongst the viewers/participants. The viewers/participants can share knowledge regarding the issues amongst each other and they can provide *Intersexions* with feedback and suggestions concerning the episode and its contents.

Is social media an appropriate medium for the facilitation of HIV and AIDS awareness in South Africa?

As the access to social media grows in South Africa more and more individuals will have the ability to voice their opinions and suggestions, to share their knowledge and to ask for information on social media platforms such as *Facebook*. The EE programmes such as *Intersexions* do not always encourage positive behaviour changes and social changes, or provide their viewers with knowledge or awareness of HIV or related issues, but social media provides an ideal platform to provide additional information that wasn't/couldn't be included in the EE programmes. For example STI facts, the efficiency of condoms, and how smoking can affect not only the lungs, but people's sex lives (can cause erectile dysfunction and diminished circulation, which is important for good sexual function). Secondly, the *Intersexions* programme engages the linear, hierarchical flow of information, which is often unsuccessful. The social media platform facilitates participation and feedback from the viewers/participants (a two way flow of information). Initiatives that embrace participation are often more successful at facilitating behaviour-, social change and knowledge attainment amongst its participants. Thus, social media is an appropriate medium for the facilitation of HIV and AIDS awareness in South Africa.

Conclusion

The results found from this study seems to indicate that EE initiatives cannot always facilitate positive behaviour changes and social changes, or provide their viewers with knowledge or awareness of HIV or related issue. The Fear appeal strategy of the episode did not have an immense

impact of the viewers/participants and a majority of the viewers/participants decoded the homosexuality and MSM concepts in a negative way. Therefore, the episode facilitated very little behavioural or social changes amongst the viewers/participants.

The study also seems to indicate that social media can be used in conjunction with these EE initiatives to encourage discussion and participation amongst the viewers/participants in order to facilitate awareness and knowledge regarding HIV and related issues. Concepts such as STIs and the efficiency of condoms were able to be discussed through the incorporation of social media. Without the social media, these concepts would not have been discussed and the viewers/participants would not have been able to increase their knowledge of the concepts. The Social media also enables the potential for viewers/participants to voice their opinions and thoughts on the EE interventions, and through this feedback the EE professionals can determine what strategies are working and which aren't. Participation by the viewers/participants is also facilitated by social media. The viewers/participants can also discuss the EE initiatives messages and related topics amongst each other, and can also provide the other viewers/participants with information regarding HIV and the related topics.

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