

The discourse of the 'male gaze' : a critical analysis of the feature section "The beauty of sport" in *SA Sports Illustrated*

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Abstract

This article demonstrates, through critical analysis, how words and pictures are manipulated in 'The Beauty of Sport', a regular feature section in *SA Sports Illustrated* (henceforth *SASI*), to construe images of sportswomen that resonate with female stereotypes shaped by 'the male gaze'. Three stereotypes of women seem to dominate in the media, namely the "sex object", "person trying to be beautiful for men", and "wife and mother". The first two, including a number of subtypes, proliferate in the magazine under scrutiny. From a critical perspective, these stereotypes serve to maintain hegemonic power. Journalists derive power from the magazine (as a power elite), which legitimates the selection of 'suitable' interviewees. Via the journalist the selected few gain a "voice" through the magazine. However, they remain subordinate to the magazine, which has a mandate to create idealized identities for them. The stereotyped images of sportswomen in *SASI* stand in stark contrast to the portrayal that the majority of sportswomen prefer, namely that of physically strong and emotionally balanced, sporting professionals. It is concluded that the misrepresentation of sportswomen in *SASI* is not only detrimental because of its reinforcement of harmful discourses, but also because of its role in creating serious social and psychological problems for women involved in sports. Ek meen dat ons niks meer in die abstract hoef te sê nie (dit is per slot van rekening 'n opsomming en nie 'n inleiding nie) en sal dit aan die Redakteur so stel. Normaalweg bevat abstracts nie verwysings nie. Constant emphasis on "traditional feminine stereotypes", may in fact cause women to either switch to a sport that is considered to be more "feminine" (Mathes in Oglesby 1978:60). (al die problems word later opgesom...in die conclusion...ek dink nie dit is regtig nodig om alles hier ook te noem nie)

1. Introduction

Sport is a human endeavour that was and still is associated with predominant male participation and masculinity and is reflected throughout the sports media in the following ways:

- (a) The ratio of sports coverage in the media clearly reveals that whilst men appear to be losing their monopoly over the world of sports, they are still leading in securing the attention of the sports media (Szabo, 2004). Underreporting of sportswomen's achievements seems to follow a similar pattern in all western cultures in which comparable studies have been conducted. The findings show a decrease in women's sport coverage in spite of an overall increase in the total amount of sports coverage (Szabo, 2004).
- (b) If and when women are depicted, they are portrayed in stereotypical feminine roles (Wigmore, 1996), emphasising beautifully proportionate and conditioned bodies, posing in an erotic or sexually available way. In some cases the representations include more than just bodily features (Hargreave, 1994: 160). Personal characteristics? such as chastity, modesty, obedience, inconspicuous behaviour, and being a good wife/mother are often also included.

The portrayal of women in stereotypical roles not only reflect society's view and interpretation of gender roles, but also contributes towards constructing and sustaining "ordinary knowledge", as ordinary knowledge is quite often based on secondary sources and gained through second-hand (media) sources, including magazines on which people rely to "gain understanding" (Babbie & Mouton 2004:5). Discourse is therefore not only capable of reflecting or representing social entities and relations, but can also construct and constitute them (Fairclough 1992b:3). (hierdie een was referred to by Mills (1997:149), as prof net kan seker maak hy is in Fairclough bl.3 (het Fairclough 1992 probeer terugbring)

Clearly, the media only offers the public what sells best, and if the audience is predominantly male, stereotypical female bodily and personality features will ultimately lift (increase) sales. However, it may be suggested that there should be a balance between economic interests and social responsibility (Rintala & Birrell, 1984), particularly if

economic interests fuel a situation that may cause harm at both the societal and the individual level.

By studying language and other forms of semiosis in the media, insight may be gained into the social construction of sportswomen, and the effects of this construal in a broader sociological framework (cf. Mills, 1995: 83). For the purpose of this contribution, the regular feature section 'The beauty of sport' in the monthly glossy magazine *SA Sports Illustrated* (henceforth abbreviated as *SASI*) was selected on the basis of its overtly sexist bias. The hypothesis was formulated that *SASI* assigns to sportswomen roles which resonate with dominant traditional (out-group) stereotypes, such as those of "sex object" and "person trying to be super-attractive to men", as opposed to the roles preferred by the majority of sportswomen (the in-group) such as "dedication, inner and physical strength and professionalism".

The next section provides a brief history of the representation of sportswomen in the media, followed by a description of what may be termed 'the ideology of the male gaze', and a characterization of female stereotypes in the media. Thereafter the semiotic representation of the discourse of the male gaze in issues of *SASI* published between 2001 and 2004 will be critically analysed, with particular emphasis on the construal of certain stereotypical female roles. The article concludes with a critical reflection on the potentially harmful social effects of the discourse of the male gaze.

2. The representation of sportswomen in the media

2.1. Historical overview

The history of women's sport in South Africa has neither been systematically documented; nor are there any accounts of the struggle in this country to provide better opportunities for female participation (Hargreave, 1997: 192). However, if the situation is comparable to that in the USA, women seldom participated in sports before the 1970's.

The establishment of organized programmes, modified Government legislation, the Women's Movement as well as the Health and Fitness Movement, and increased media coverage of women in sports, all contributed towards a gradual increase in participation rates among women (Coakley, 1994: 209). Increased media coverage in turn stimulated female participation in diverse sporting activities.

However, since the very early days of women's participation in sports there has been an emphasis on "cosmetic fitness" (dis hoe Coakley dit beskryf: ek dink dit beteken,

hulle "lyk" fiks, maar nie noodwendig nie- hul het die betekenis bevraagteken?) and slimness. According to Schneider (2000: 124) in Tannsjo & Tamburrini (2000:124), the stereotypical ideals regarding a sportswoman's body were introduced as early as the ancient Olympic Games, and included softness, gracefulness, weakness and beauty.

(Deel van Coakley het verskuif*)

Contrary Bordo (1990: 85) points out that the athletic and muscular image of femininity, although more solid and bulky-looking, has increasingly become more desirable among sportswomen. The emphasis on aggression and competition further seems to fit perfectly with the dominant definition of *masculinity* in many cultures, which in fact contrasts sharply with dominant ideas about femininity. Sport is further culturally-linked with the ideologies of power, masculinity and aggression which have created numerous problems for both males and females who do not fit into the stereotypes associated with this ideology (Coakley, 1998: 236).

The 1980's then saw a shift away from the liberated discourse of the 70's, * during which sport was considered simply as a channel through which women could experience freedom, independence and power (Coakley, 1994: 213). Participation in sports became a means to loose weight and gain sexual attractiveness. The idea of not being physically attractive enough to participate in certain sport types was introduced. Individuals for example avoided swimming, feeling psychological uncomfortable wearing swimsuits (Mathes in Oglesby 1978:65). Sportswomen therefore became increasingly aware of their physical appearance (shape) and wearing the right clothes (sporting outfit) in order to be socially accepted, and to fit the popular definition of a female sports participant (Coakley, 1994: 213) • the definition shaped by the male gaze.

2.2 The ideology of the male gaze

The term 'gaze', in French, *le regard*, means to look or stare, often with eagerness or desire, and has been used in the critical analysis of genres such as art history, films and advertisements in terms of the way in which women are represented, often as sexual and maternal figures (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 76). The 'ideology of the male gaze' therefore refers to the situation in which sportswomen in this case are framed as objects of the male reader's gaze; in other words, construed subjectively according to stereotyped cognitions (mental schemata) that harmonize with the expectations of the male reader.

Early theories of the male gaze, according to Sturken and Cartwright (2001: 74), used the term 'spectatorship', grounded in the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Lacan preferred to use the term 'subject' rather than 'individual' or 'human being' to describe his object of inquiry, arguing that individuality is created through ideology, language and representation.

These terms, and the theories in which they are embedded, are linked to power and domination. The journalist derives power (which is defined by Fairclough, 2003: 41 as 'the capacity to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course') from the editorial policy of his employer (media boss or magazine), and this power is a resource that legitimates the selection of 'suitable' interviewees. Via the journalist, power is again transferred to the selected few who gain a "voice" through the magazine. However, the interviewees remain subordinate to the 'power elite' (the media institution, magazine and journalists) who have a mandate to create idealized (or stereotyped) identities for them. These identities are created through the selection, planning and design of camera angles, length of shots, types of poses, language use and page layout. Ultimately, through the semiotic translation of stereotypical images, power is ceded to the (male) spectator or voyeur who has purchased the right to stare shamelessly. This description resonates with Sturken and Cartwright's (2001: 87) view that the desires of spectators in looking are caught up in the relationship of power, and that the spectators become more powerful than the object of their gaze – so powerful that the stereotypical identities created by them are uncritically accepted by the objects of the gaze (or, differently formulated, the subjects of domination). In the next section, an overview is given of the stereotypical roles or identities assigned to women by the media.

2.3 Female stereotypes in the media

People form stereotypes to make sense of the world they live in. More specifically, they form stereotypes in order to derive knowledge about categories, which in turn serves to explain aspects of and relations between social groups (McGarty, Spears & Yzerbyt, 2003: 199). Early work in the social identity tradition emphasized the function (of stereotypes) to accentuate and sharpen group differences on value-laden dimensions (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, Reynolds & Doosje, 2003: 157). Quasthoff (1989: 187), for instance, distinguishes rigidly between autostereotypes and heterostereotypes. Autostereotypes involve positive stereotyping by the "in-group" and their ideology,

whereas heterostereotyping involves aggression towards, with emphasise on negative personal characteristics of the "out-group".

Currently, social psychologists argue that social identities do not simply provide group members with a common perspective on social reality and common motives for imbuing stereotypes with differentiated meaning; they also provide a platform and a motivation for coordinating social perspectives and using particular stereotypes in the service of social action (Haslam et al., 2003: 161). Haslam and his colleagues therefore propose that stereotypes need to be understood as "tools that are developed by groups both to represent their members' shared social reality and to achieve particular objectives within it. Groups develop stereotypes in order to veridically appreciate the socially structured world they confront (which contains groups of different status, different power, different ideology) and as a platform for creating or maintaining a world with the social structure they desire" (Haslam et al., 2003: 161).

The media in general is known to present categories (including social groups) in ways that assist them (and their readership) to sustain and/or create hegemony for a particular social order (cf. Carstens, 1996: 8). One example is the portrayal of women to suit the desires and objectives of particular interest groups, such as a predominantly male audience, and those of the advertising industry. Feminist media critics, in a process to unravel both the dominant and alternative meanings of gender encoded in media texts (Hole and Levine, 1971: 249, cited by Van Zoonen, 1994: 66) concluded that the following three stereotypes have become prominent in the media:

- a. wife, mother and housekeeper for men
- b. sex object to sell products to men
- c. person trying to be beautiful for men

Not only do these stereotypes serve "the needs of the system" (Davies, Dickey and Stratford 1987: 4) (economic values in capitalist societies dictate the orientation as well as the projected philosophy of the media), they also purvey images that tell women how to be a "perfect mother, lover, wife, homemaker, glamorous accessory, secretary", thereby completing the vicious circle of sexist hegemony.

In the sports media's portrayals of women tend to focus particularly on those stereotypes that emphasize 'feminine' bodily features (b. and c. above). In fact, the body as a signifier of sexual difference and the ideology of gender difference can be considered as

a trademark of the sports media. According to Hargreave (1994: 163), images of sportsmen in action proliferate in newspapers and magazines, but readers constantly see symbols of women's femininity, rather than pictures of female athleticism. The fact that sportswomen have to live up to the expectations of the system in order to gain a "voice" (i.e. access to the media) implies that they have to relinquish their often hard-won professionalism and physically more masculine appearance, as these characteristics may contradict the look and feel of the magazine, its ideology, and the expectations of the readers. Boys and men who don't have the interest or ability to be physically competitive, are often labelled as "sissies" (Coakley, 1998: 236). On the other hand, a woman who continues to play physical contact sports, may be considered unladylike and might portray an image that is more muscular or an image that conveys power and will ultimately be labelled "tomboy", which may change to that of "lesbian" (Coakley, 1998: 238).

Even though the housewife or domestic stereotype is not as prominent in the media as it was 50 years ago, it resurfaces in a different guise. According to Kolnes (1995) sporting females know that they can decrease their chances of being socially marginalized (and getting access to the media – authors) if they present themselves to others in ways that provide proof that they are really 'normal' (cf. also Schneider, 2000: 124). Apart from wearing ribbons, ponytails, make-up and dresses, making statements in interviews about their boyfriends, husbands and children, and/or about wanting to settle down eventually if not yet married, can help them to win or to maintain social acceptability and media visibility (Coakley, 1998: 238).

The next section describes an investigation into the construal of stereotypical female roles in 'The beauty of sport', a regular feature in the popular *SASI* magazine.

3. Research methodology

Data-collection

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth abbreviated as CDA) constitutes both the data-gathering and data-analysis processes in this study. Fairclough states that CDA should not be considered as just another form of academic analysis, as it has the aspirations to take the part of those who suffer from linguistic-discursive forms of domination (sports women) and spread a critical awareness of language as a factor of domination (Fairclough 1995:186).

CDA is not a well-defined empirical method but a cluster of approaches with a similar theoretical base (cf. Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 23). There is no typical way of collecting data, and some of the authors/researchers working in the field do not even mention data-collecting methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 23). Moreover, data collection is not considered as a phase that has to be completed before analysis begins. Therefore, evidence in support of the research hypothesis was sought and recorded according to a process of constant comparison. This methodology can be defended on the basis of the common practice in CDA to combine data collection and data analysis in one process (Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 24): After the first collection exercise the first analysis is done, and indicators of particular concepts are searched for. These are then conceptually categorised, and more data is collected on the basis of the results.

The data corpus comprised 15 feature articles (full quote interviews excluded) from the feature section 'The Beauty of Sport' in *SASI*, published between March 2001 and February 2004.

Data analysis

The semiotic (linguistic and visual) units in the data corpus identified for further analysis were firstly selected according to the main research question and the research hypothesis (compare Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 25). A three-phase procedure, inspired by Huckin's (2004: 4) two-phase strategy for analysing discourse, was followed. During the first phase the role of the typical reader was adopted in an attempt to comprehend the discourse in an uncritical manner. This was followed by a macro-level approach in which salient foregrounding and backgrounding techniques were identified. The third phase of analysis (micro-analysis) comprised the identification and categorization of "smaller" discursive features that were regarded to play a pivotal role in maintaining and constructing the discourse of the male gaze by reinforcing one or more of the out-group stereotypes outlined above.

Since it is not possible to describe the entire process in detail, examples of analysis at the macro and the micro levels will be discussed, with particular reference to stereotyping. Macro-level analysis deals with first-glance phenomena, such as visual and verbal framing, and the micro-level analysis deals primarily with lexis. Although syntax may be important in shaping a particular discursive construction, sentence-level strategies

of foregrounding and backgrounding - such as passivization, nominalization, preposing, etc. - were not investigated.

4. Critical analysis

4.1 Macro level

Macro-level analysis involves a holistic view of the framing techniques used. In *Disorders of Discourse* (1996: 22), Wodak describes the role of framing as attending to "the definition which participants give to their current social activity – to what is going on, what the situation is like, and to the roles that the interactants adopt within it". The main foregrounding elements of printed documents are visuals (photographs, illustrations, graphs, charts, etc.), headings and sections of text isolated through typographic emphasis or layout (boxes, bars, etc.).

Framing involves both foregrounding and backgrounding. Foregrounding entails emphasizing or highlighting particular characteristics of a subject or topic, while backgrounding involves underplaying or even omitting certain other features (Huckin, 2004: 6).

One of the dimensions of a glossy magazine that reveals its ideological agenda through foregrounding, is the table of contents, which is a reflection of its macrostructure. By including a regular section or column entitled 'The Beauty of Sport', which overtly zooms in on the physical (including sexual) attractiveness of female sporting personalities, a sexist agenda is foregrounded.

Visuals are particularly powerful framing mechanisms. According to Barthes (1977: 229), pictures are more imperative than writing because they impose meaning "at one stroke, without analysing or diluting meaning".

The powerful role of visuals is demonstrated by a feature article on the professional golfer, Cherry Moulder, in *SASI* of July 2003. Like the other features, the text is written by journalist David Moseley and the photographs taken by Anton Robert, with only the stylist Aletha Carwell and hair and make-up designer, Rene de Wit being female.

This feature is similar to most of the personality profiles in other issues of the magazine, in that it contains several photographs of the sportswoman. In this article, a total of eight visuals are used, including three full-page photographs. Figure 1 presents the first page of the profile on Moulder:

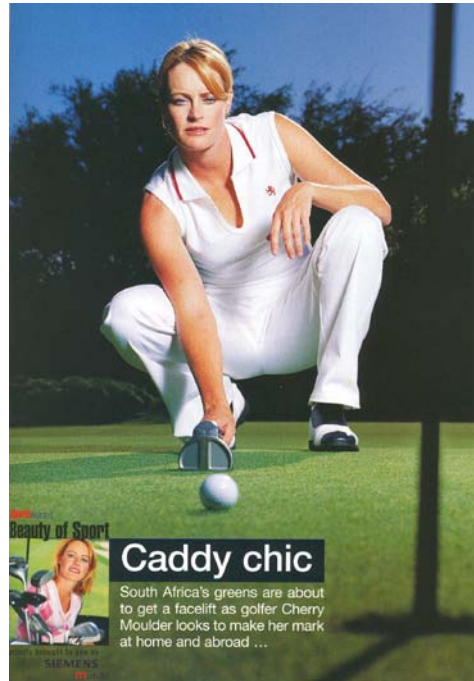


Figure 1: The first page of the feature on Cherry Moulder

As the first stop in the eye's journey through the article, the photograph receives precedence over other textual characteristics, and serves both a "stage-setting" and an attention-grabbing function. By foregrounding the sexual attractiveness of the 'subject', the (male) 'spectator' is lured into "staring with eagerness or desire" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 76), and is enticed into reading/viewing the rest of the article or on the other hand decide not to read the article at all, if the reader finds the 'subject' unattractive.

Particularly notable, is the photographic angle. The 'worm's-eye view' contributes towards representing the female body in a highly erotic and sexualised way, which is amplified by the wide positioning of the legs and the vector that converges on the genital area. The term 'vector' refers to a triangular shape that directionally point at things and thereby creates action, conflict and tension (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2000: 12).

The next stop in the eye's journey is the heading, "Caddy chic". In the same way as the visual representation this structural element emphasises the stereotypical out-group characteristics "person trying to be beautiful for men", and de-emphasises Moulder's sporting achievements and professional status. "Caddy" implies a subordinate position (she must be "caddying" *for* someone), which in this case carries a false presupposition, since Cherry Moulder is a professional golfer; and "chic" draws the attention to her stylish/fashionable look. In addition, "chic" calls up an association with the word "chick"

(used for a young female with romantic potential), which is labelled "dated" and "sexist" by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Crowther, 1995: page?).

In the introduction, "South Africa's greens are about to get a facelift as golfer Cherry Moulder looks to make her mark at home and abroad" metonymy and metaphor (personification) call up the stereotype of women having to be beautiful for men (and if not, having to undergo cosmetic surgery).

The second page of the feature comprises of another full page fashion shot, and page three combines text and graphics in a relationship of approximately 50/50: a fashion shot comprising about half a column and three action shots, plus one and a half columns of feature text, including a streamer (typographically enhanced quotation). The streamer makes it clear that Moulder is actually indebted to men for the opportunities that have enabled her to "make her mark":

I've been swinging since I was three years old ... I grew up with guys and I was always dragged along to the practice tee.

Although the above are the interviewees own words, which might be considered a poor choice on her part (in a feministic light), "framing" and specifically "backgrounding" should also be kept in mind, as the journalist still has the final choice over either including or excluding certain quotations.

A macro-level analysis also involves what the text producer "put first" and "last" (Huckin, 2004: kry nie die quote op die artikel nie?). The focus in the opening paragraph of the article concerns the golfer's name, "Cherry", and her apparent indifference to playing golf (or interest in trivial things like the spelling of names):

Cherry (pronounced with the trade-mark Sean Connery 'Shhh') Moulder's biggest wish in life has nothing to do with playing golf. All she would like is her name to be spelt a little bit differently.

Moulder's professional golf career is mentioned for the first time in paragraph five, starting with: "Apart from worrying about the 'cherry-popping' question, Moulder has a blossoming golf career [...]".

The feature concludes with a quote by the interviewee, which seems to reveal stereotypically female temperamental behaviour, again a framing strategy (backgrounding) possibly intentionally selected by the journalist:

'I'm very competitive and I don't want to give up now. Although, I have to be honest, if things aren't going my way I might be tempted to wrap a club around the tree ... if no one was looking, of course.'

This macro-level analysis reveals a portrayal of the sportswoman through the lens of 'the male gaze'. Through both text and photographs stereotypical images of the (sports)woman as a "sex object", "person made beautiful for men", and "emotionally immature individual" are construed.

4.2 Micro-level

Vocabulary represents the world as it is experienced by a particular culture, according to the ideological needs of that culture (Fowler, 1991: 82). Fowler emphasises the importance for the critical analyst to take note of terms that habitually occur, as these clusters of related terms are found to mark distinct kinds of preoccupation and topic.

Following Fowler's advice, it was decided to seek justification for the research hypothesis about the salience of the stereotypical images of women regularly portrayed in the media, and to establish possible subcategories that may be applicable to sportswomen.

The microtextual scrutiny – looking at the way lexical items are clustered into lexical sets or semantic fields – produced the following stereotypical categories:

(a) *The sportswoman as a consumable product*

In many languages, women are metaphorized as food: *tart*, *crumpet*, *tasty*, *dishy*, and if they are food they can be consumed by hungry men (cf. Beard, 1998: 23 in connection with English, and Van Huyssteen 1996 in connection with Afrikaans). The following examples from *SASI* confirm the salience of this stereotype:

- (1) With tennis' top event, Wimbledon, upon us, we thought it appropriate to exclusively unveil to South African eyes a *sizzling* shoot Martina Hingis did for Adidas International recently (*SASI*, July 2001: 34).
- (2) [...] the *shelf life* of a windsurfer is limited (*SASI*, August 2002: 33).
- (3) Ziada ... 'sounds like *apple cider*'. A potent *product* that is too - but the same could be said of schoolgirl swimming sensation Ziada Jardine, who takes breaks from lessons every now and then to compete in exotic countries like Japan and Spain. Lucky girl! (*SASI*, October 2002: 27)

- (4) If you throw a second at the 1999 All Africa games [...] you get a *recipe* that assures a very *tasty outcome*. And at only 17, there is a lot of time to let the *broth brew* [concerning the swimmer Ziada Jardine] (*SASI*, October 2002: 29).
- (5) It's a pity, really, because if Piek had to make a mark at Wimbledon, we might just have had a South African winner – especially if her best shot was one that could drive the umpires into *drooling* states of delirium (*SASI*, December 2002: 31)
- (6) *Tantalising* threesome. South African hockey's Anli Kotze, Luntu Ntloko and Kate Hector all have something in common – they're super hot! (*SASI*, February 2004: 53)

Apart from the fact that sportswomen are stereotyped as consumable (edible) products, the journalist seems to have been preoccupied with exactly what and how much food his interviewees consume:

- (7) When Fry is not training, *munching on a watermelon* or representing her country, she leads a fairly busy lifestyle (*SASI*, March 2002: 30).
- (8) But there is an overriding bonus that puts the physically demanding world of a triathlete into perspective - *you can eat anything you like and not give two hoots about it* (*SASI*, January 2003: 31).
- (9) [...] sits across me (journalist) *tucking* into her *fourth slice of pizza*, it's evident that this is a career boon she takes full advantage of (*Sports Illustrated*, January 2003: 31).
- (10) Surfers have a hard life. They wake up, head for the beach and spend the best part of the day in the swell, interrupting their 'hectic' schedules only to *eat* and maybe to go to the loo (*SASI*, April 2001: 31).

Examples like these confirm the statement that women have to be physically perfect (achieved through not eating too much), as this image will be quickly consumed by a male-gazing voyeur. (* Die punt wat hier was, hoort by `n ander seksie volgens reviewer B)

(b) *The sportswoman as a skinny model*

To be slim carries positive connotations for women and are generally regarded as something they are supposed to aspire in order to please men (Beard, 1998: 26).

Examples emphasizing the desirability of thinness, and a preoccupation with weight and food issues, proliferate in *SASI*:

- (11) Its not like the *petite-looking*, but considerably dangerous Fry needs to worry about her *weight*. No Steers Burgers or Quarter-pounders for this karate kid; she's a self-confessed vegetarian (*SASI*, March 2002: 29).
- (12) If you've had a look at the pictures of the *petite* Roberts on the opposite pages, you will see that she has little dilemma in choosing between thin base, thick base, large or small (*SASI*, January 2003: 31).
- (13) While Roberts is busy running, cycling and swimming her *diminutive ass* off... (*SASI*, January 2003:33).
- (14) The *59-kilogram* [...] (*SASI*, July 2001: 38).
- (15) The *slim-as-a-rake* Wucherpfennig [...] (*SASI*, February 2002: 28).
- (16) Who would you rather look at Corne Krige's perpetually battered mug on the back pages or the *slim-line body*, flowing hair and jubilant smile of Marsha Marescia? (*SASI*, April 2003: 31)
- (17) She's not *starving*, she's a triathlete! (*SASI*, May 2003: 27)
- (18) According to the *extremely hungry-looking* Kingsley (*SASI*, May 2003: 29)

(c) *The sportswoman as a beauty queen and fashion icon*

Long legs and blonde hair, according to Beard (1998:26 (sal moet seker maak, het nie meer die boek nie), form part of the stereotypical attractive female, as do wearing the "right" clothes (Coakley, 1994: 213) and conforming to the stereotypical female beauty features. Consider the following examples:

- (19) If horses almost always exude *elegance* and *style* on the sporting stage, it's a bonus if their riders do too! Debbie Becker, however comfortably fits the bill (*SASI*, November 2001: 31)
- (20) Being a triathlete requires immense discipline. You can't just rock up on race day hoping to win with a designer energy bar in your pocket, *shaven legs* and the *latest slung* over your shoulder (*SASI*, January 2003: 31, opening paragraph)
- (21) Jenna Worlock fits the *beach babe* description to a tee. *Blonde hair* - within that tinge of salt-wateriness about it - the *perfect tan*, and *legs* that could only get that way from running on the sand every day (*SASI*, April 2002:27, opening paragraph).

- (22) Prancing around in a *costume* all day (albeit in a *full-piece*) is sure to attract the attention of the odd, unscrupulous male admirer (*SASI*, April 2002: 29).
- (23) Windsurfing is probably best taken with a pinch of eighties nostalgia - the *rolled-up jacket sleeves*, the sometimes *ludicrous hair*... (*SASI*, August 2002: 33).
- (24) South Africa's greens are about to get a *facelift* as golfer Cherry Moulder looks to make her mark at home and abroad (*SASI*, July 2003: 29).

It can be argued that these lexical items, embedded in contexts that enhance the sexual and beauty connotations, amplify the stereotypical construal of sportswomen. The 'beauty lexicon' of the magazine becomes a kind of selection grid that forecasts the profile of sportswomen who will be approached, and which will determine the actual reader of the section 'The Beauty of Sport'.

(d) The sportswoman as a sex object/romantic prospect

According to Hole and Levine (1971:249) feminist research often revolves around how women are viewed in the media as sex objects or products sold to men. Compare the following examples:

- (25) [...] *nothing* but a *two-piece costume* on [...] (*SASI* September 2002: 31)
- (26) She would be an enticing *girlfriend prospect* for many a Sharks rugby fan (*SASI*, September 2002: 31)
- (27) Kiss me Kate! Sorry chaps, but Bloemfontein's ace triathlon *babe* is probably way too busy perfecting her trio sporting skills for that [...] (*Sports Illustrated*, January 2003: 29)
- (28) Hingis' *appeal* is *pretty obvious*, really. Perhaps not the conventional *stunner* in the Anna K league, she nevertheless radiates a girlish, almost naïve *sex appeal* that elevated her into our reader's top 10 (*SASI*, July 2001: 35)
- (29) Wind, water, *sex appeal* - the perfect elements! (*SASI*, August 2002: 29)
- (30) The sensible-speaking hockey ace has been playing the game a lot longer than she's been *shedding* some of her *clothes* (*SASI*, April 2003: 31)
- (31) And the *elegant, streamlined* qualities of the lasses taking part should be enough to convince any man to watch indoor molasses growing [...] especially if Gabi

Christie is in the immediate vicinity. The 24-year-old *blonde bombshell*... (*SASI*, March 2001: 31)

- (32) School fashion shows aside, Marescia has not had too many occasions to find herself behind the prying lens of a fashion photographer nor has she been at the mercy of a production crew intent on getting their prey as *naked* as possible before the censors strike (*Sports Illustrated*, April 2003: 31)

It is sometimes difficult to separate the "sex object" and "marketable product" stereotypes as they are often merged into one category that may be described as "a sex object with a price tag", as illustrated by the following example:

- (33) Oh, and she's *decent-looking*; it's *a complete package* that no South African man could turn a blind eye to (*SASI*, September 2002: 31)

An editorial feature in *SASI* (May 2002), entitled 'Beauty Bazaar', instantiates this interdiscursive mix of sex and marketing language that characterizes the magazine (authors' emphases):

It's no secret that sportswomen are as much admired by **hot-blooded** males for their **captivating virtues** off the field as they are for their **talent** on it just as a lot of women admire Bobby or Vossie for more than their line-out **ability**!

That's why *SASI* runs the monthly Beauty of Sport feature and it's why we are now publishing our second Beauties of Sport annual issue. The **ripping** success of last year's 'Beauties' issue was so inspiring we've decided to **showcase** the worlds '**sporting vixens**' every year.

Requirements for making the cut are straightforward - you simply need to be a female athlete of international class.

We've dropped the number of girls this year because we believe in the old adage of **quality** and not **quantity**...

Happy **viewing**!

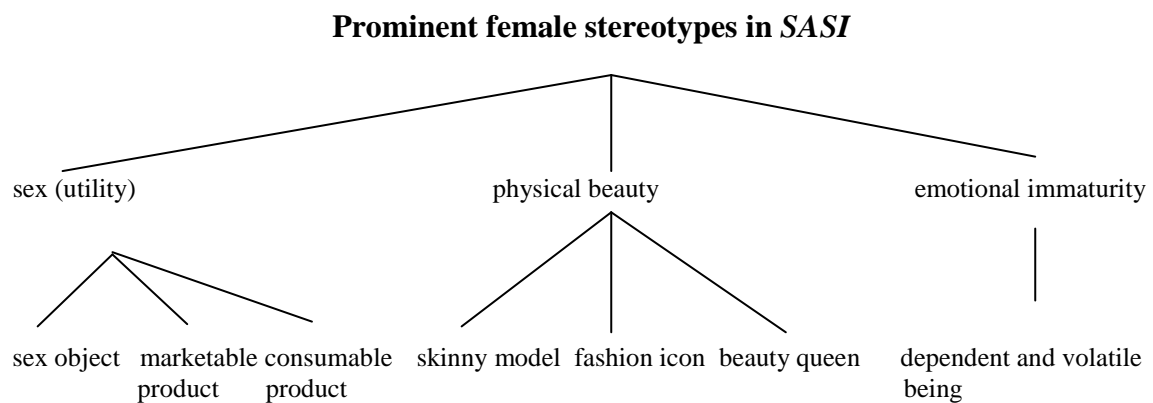
The heading 'Beauty Bazaar', and the lexical items *showcase*, *quality*, *quantity*, and *viewing* constitute a lexical network of marketing - carefully examining goods on display

to determine whether they are good value for money. On the other hand, *hot-blooded*, *captivating virtues*, *ability*, *ripping* and *vixens* constitute the sexual thread.

In this context, the magazine's criterion that sportswomen who qualify for the feature "simply need to be a female athlete of international class" seems to be contradicted by the journalist's admission that the magazine has "dropped the number of girls this year because we believe in the old adage of quality and not quantity..."

5. Discussion of findings

On the basis of the analyses in 4.1 and 4.2, it can be concluded that SASI, and the feature section 'The beauty of sport' in particular, is populated by the following stereotypes of sportswomen (The first level of the hierarchy indicates the semantic field, and the second tier gives a breakdown of the purported stereotypes):



According to this exposition, the visual and verbal 'vocabulary' used to describe sportswomen cluster within the semantic fields of weight/feminine physical beauty, sex/romance and temperament/emotional predisposition. Professionalism, dedication, hard work, muscular and emotional strength (which must have been ingredients in achieving success) are? backgrounded. Instead of being the actors that dictate what is being reported, the sportswomen become reactors who act upon, and are moulded by the demands of the magazine and its male "gatekeepers" – the editor, writers and photographers.

6. Conclusion

The examples discussed in this article strongly suggest that there is a mismatch between images of sportswomen preferred by the in-group, and the images that are discursively

construed by the popular media. The status quo, in this regard, is undesirable for various reasons:

- In the first place, it has *detrimental physical and psychological effects* for women involved in sports: Being coerced into conforming to the media-induced stereotypes, sportswomen resort to aides and practices such as laxatives, diet pills, diuretics, self-induced vomiting, binges, and starvation (Coakley, 1994: 213).
- Secondly, it may have *career-limiting* effects: There is a tendency among women to switch sports (Mathes in Oglesby 1978:60), drop out of sports programmes (Coakley 1994: 213) or deliberately choosing to under perform in order to meet physical and social expectations.
- Thirdly, there are *ethical implications*, which reflect on the integrity of sports journalism. Sports magazines construe biased (even false) images of professional sportswomen, purely for financial gain. And, one could argue, it is not as if journalists are unaware of their skewed reportage.
- Lastly, biased reportage may *stimulate harmful discourses* among its readers, which may be termed "the discourse of voyeurism".

In line with the tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 279-280), social action is necessary to address the problem of hegemonic stereotyping in the media. One possible route of action is to launch a female sporting magazine similar to the US magazine *Sports Illustrated Women*, in which sportswomen are recognised and portrayed from an in-group perspective, focusing on the construal of sportswomen as individuals pursuing a career in sports, irrespective of whether they attract any male spectatorship or whether they fit male-defined stereotyped beauty norms. Other measures could include letters of complaint to the editor of the magazine, as well as open letters to the daily press.

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