# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by firstly providing a summary of the main points addressed in each chapter. Each chapter's main topics, theories and findings are reiterated here, and thereby draw together the findings made in the previous chapters. The final chapter highlights the contributions of the study and expresses its significance. The chapter also indicates some of the limitations of the study and makes suggestions and recommendations in terms of further research.

## 5.2 Summary of chapters

The first chapter provided a brief introduction of the SABC television channels and their location within the South African television environment. The chapter also contextualised the television channels within South African culture and within academic discourse that engages cultural forms in a political manner. It also indicated that this study of the brand identities of the SABC television channels is situated in the field of Visual Studies.

The first chapter suggested that brands, and television channel brands in particular, are powerful metaphors that allow the communication of complex theories, and contribute to the manner in which people think about their society and their national, cultural and personal identities. The chapter put forward the idea that post-apartheid television continues to be structured around the differences in race, class, wealth, culture and language, for example. The dissertation maintains that the SABC organises, defines and addresses audience members according to different groups, and that these structures and definitions are indicators of the importance of the media in the construction of national, cultural and personal identities.

The second chapter highlighted the different power relations in the South African media and in the SABC in particular. It briefly mapped the historical changes and shifts of power in the SABC and in its television channels. The chapter also explored ideology

theory from a historical perspective, thereby discussing key concepts in ideology theory alongside developments in South African television in a chronological manner. The main concepts and theories of ideology discourse were divided into four chronological categories and explored simultaneously with four major phases (or decades) in South African television history to illustrate the main principles and ideas of ideology theory and their relevance in terms of South African national television.

Classical Marxist notions of ideology, such as the base/superstructure model and the idea of false consciousness, were explored alongside discussions on the apartheid economic system and the delay in starting a television service in South Africa only in the 1970s. Neo-Marxist concepts of ideology and the concepts of Ideological State Apparatuses and hegemony were explored together with South African television in the 1980s when the SABC was criticised for being an apartheid mouthpiece. In spite of this, black and white viewers accepted the SABC's division of so-called 'black' channels (TV2, TV3 and TV4) and 'white' channels (TV1), so that consent was won and the convention agreed upon to divide the audience according to race and language.

A Cultural Studies approach to ideology was explored together with SABC television during the 1990s. In both areas active attempts were made to include marginalised and disempowered groups. Race and gender issues, in addition to class, were addressed by the CCCS. The developments in legislation of South African broadcasting indicate a similar strategy to be more inclusive of different classes, genders, races, languages and ethnicities, for example. The idea of preferred reading indicates that there are inherent power and ideology structures in television and that television representation creates maps of social reality (Hall 1999:513). The channels were re-launched in the 1990s according to the new maps of reality created by the emergence of a new, post-apartheid country.

Chapter Two also explored postmodern notions of ideology in relation to developments in South African broadcasting in the decade 2000 to 2009. The structuring of television channels and their brands became increasingly abstract and fragmented in this decade, and ideologies were ascribed to the viewer's individual conglomeration of images and attitudes gathered and incorporated from the social environment (Hawkes 1996:1). The chapter also explored Barthes' (1972) notion of myth whereby social

codes and conventions are constructed to uphold ideological messages. The chapter also highlighted the importance of myth in the maintenance of ideological power structures in a society where identities are fragmented and where maps of social reality become mere image and representation.

The third chapter introduced brands and corporate identity as key characteristics of the society of the spectacle, where the brand image can carry significant economic weight. Chapter Three explored various concepts from the theory and practice of brands and branding, and created an interdisciplinary link with social semiotic theory that focused on the form and social meanings of cultural artefacts such as brands. The chapter also indicated that the meanings of brands and their use evolved from functional to emotional, and ultimately inspirational branding, and increasingly focused on the needs and concerns of the consumer to achieve self-actualisation. Key concepts and definitions in branding were addressed in terms of their position within the communicative process or semiosis of branding. The on-air elements of television branding were explored as a particular instance of branding with its own methods and terminology. The seminal definitions, terms and typologies of Meech (1996; 1999 & 2001) and Bellamy and Traud (2000) were particularly valuable in this regard.

Chapter Three explored the three components of semiotics, namely signs, codes and meanings. The chapter discussed the signs, codes and meanings specific to branding as a process of semiosis. The definition of the sign was equated to the definition of a brand, and similarities were highlighted between the Peircian notion of the sign, interpretant and referent or object, and the corporate identity, corporate image and the actual organisation. The codes and conventions of television channel branding were explored in terms of the flow in television broadcasting. Concepts of meanings and the layered structure thereof were explored in relation to the ideas of denotation, connotation, myth and ideology as distinct levels in the structure of meaning. Lastly, Chapter Three compared the structural framework for the process of ideology, semiosis and branding and indicated the similarities between these three structures.

The fourth chapter started by contemplating the ideological implications of television channels and broadcast institutions that function as pedagogical narrators. The channel positions itself as an authoritative voice while constituting its viewers as subjects. The brand identity functions as a narrative voice, thereby personifying the

television channel and providing the context for the programming content. It was also noted that the visual codes of television branding identify a television channel in the same way in which people identify others by paying attention to their hair colour, facial features, voices and dress styles.

The main body of Chapter Four engaged in the critical exploration of the visual brand identities of each national SABC television channel during the decade 2000 to 2009. Each channel was briefly introduced, and was followed by a discussion of the visual signs and codes of the channel's brand identity. The changes in the visual signs and codes of the channel branding were followed in a chronological manner so that the brand identities corresponding to the corporatisation of the SABC were explored first. Interim changes according to special events were explored thereafter, followed by the changes that coincided with the implementation of suggestions regarding the segmentation of audiences in terms of attitudes (Introducing ... 2008). The meanings in the brand identities of each channel were explored first on the level of denotation and connotation, thereby focusing on the visual signs and codes of each channel, and were followed by a deeper exploration of meaning on the levels of myth and ideology.

The brand identity of each channel was explored in terms of its logo, colours, fonts, slogans, dogs, idents, advertisements and websites. The largest amount of 'brandcasting' that occurs on television is in the form of idents. It is further noted that the channels use a variety of sets of idents or stings with different functions, and these include brand identification and endorsement idents, hailing idents, break-bumpers, daytime idents, genre idents, forthcoming attractions and menu idents, special promotion idents (specials), announcement idents, clock idents, branded news idents and branded programme idents. The chapter contended that the sequences in junctions depicting continuity presenters are indents too, since they provide a sense of narration, identification and personification of the channel.

Chapter Four explored the *Ya mampela* and *Mzansi fo sho* brand identities of the SABC1 that were launched in 2003 and 2007 respectively. The *Ya mampela* visual brand identity utilised visual signs and codes associated with South African youth subcultures, youth resistance, hip-hop graffiti art, resistance posters, culture jamming and social realism. The branding aimed to portray the channel as an authentic revolutionary leader. It was found that some members of the channel's targeted

audience experienced alienation due to its rebellious youth proposition and its strong Gauteng influence. Accordingly, the SABC1 repositioned itself with a new *Mzansi for sho* brand identity, launched in 2007. The new *Mzansi fo sho* brand identity aimed to broaden its audience appeal to include a wider audience in terms of age, class and location (but not race, as it continues to cater for almost exclusively 'black' viewers). Both brand identities contribute to a specific, vernacular visual vocabulary which includes iconic signs such as street art; graffiti; cityscapes; rural landscapes; townships; various modes of transport such as taxis, buses, luxury cars and bicycles; lampposts; electricity pylons and telephone poles; skyscrapers; street dancers and music speakers to name a few.

On a deeper level, Chapter Four argued that the SABC1 capitalised on the notion of the youth as trouble (*Ya mampela* brand identity) and the youth as fun (*Mzansi fo sho* brand identity). It argued that the *Ya mampela* brand identity deliberately created a style that connotes youth resistance, but argued that the idea of youth resistance, as perpetuated by the *Ya mampela* brand identity, is a myth. The channel's rebellious aesthetics were an ideologically inspired mechanism that ensured subordination to the norm and the current status quo. Visually the brand appeared as a site of resistance, but it was not, since it was a visual style emptied of its original meaning in order to commodify the discourse of struggle. Another myth of authenticity was also implied in the SABC1 branding. The authenticity of the brand was deliberately constructed and became a question of image and appearance. The chapter argued that the 'real' is an impossible state to attain and instead, the 'real' in the SABC1 brand identity became a simulated one, mediated by language and a strategically designed brand identity. Chapter Four also highlighted the channel's association with social realism in the Brechtian sense, and to the ideology of populism. The chapter argued that the SABC1 supported the ideology of populism in its dissemination of the rhetoric of struggle. It was contended that the rhetoric of struggle was used as a mechanism to ensure the subordination of the people it was supposed to liberate, and that populism thereby functions ideologically by masking the real relations of power.

The *Feel at home* brand identity of the SABC2 remained quite similar throughout its visual changes in 2002, 2006 and 2007. Some of the visual signs and codes remained the same, for example the channel colours, logo, slogan, motif of the brushstroke, national symbols like the protea and the South African flag. The visual signs and codes

aimed to communicate a sense of national unity and a notion of the national and domestic family. The vernacular visual vocabulary of the SABC2 includes artistic brushstrokes, cityscapes and landscapes, a variety of dwellings, especially *rondavels* (huts), smiling faces of various races, protea and strelitzia flowers, baobab trees and thorn trees, vintage bicycles, films strips, telephone poles and wind pumps. Whereas the SABC1 reflected a sense of pessimism, the SABC2 created a sense of exaggerated optimism, harmony and unity. Illustrations were depicted in a painterly manner, perhaps aiming to illustrate the broad South African canvas of various people and diverse landscapes.

On the deeper levels of myth and ideology, one can say that the SABC2 supports the myth of the 'rainbow nation'. Chapter Four explored the metaphor of the 'rainbow nation' and the connotations it carries. The chapter argued that the SABC2 and its myth of the 'rainbow nation' construct a utopian sense of national identity. It was argued that Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of an "imagined community" can be associated with the SABC2 channel in its aim to create the idea of a shared, national identity. Both the myth of the 'rainbow nation' and the concept of an imagined community support the ideology of nationalism. It was argued that the metaphor of the 'rainbow nation' is a rhetorical device that aims to unify cultural diversity in a manner that ignores issues of wealth and class through a superficial focus on race. The 'rainbow nation' metaphor is thus a diversion that artificially prioritises the importance and acceptance of racial diversity to mask the differences in power and in wealth. It also masks the ruling class imperative of the ANC to secure wealth and power for the emergent black elite. The utilisation of the 'rainbow nation' rhetoric and its emphasis on national identity fails to address important social issues, and instead of recognising such issues, it glosses over them, preferring to provide a pretty picture of the new national family.

Similar to the SABC2, SABC3 also experienced three changes in its brand identity, but visual changes were more distinct in the latter than in the former. Changes in the SABC3 occurred in line with the SABC strategies of corporatisation in 2002 and 2003, and a renewed understanding and definition of audiences and their attitudes in 2007. Interim changes to its visual brand identity occurred in 2005, but all the changes were visual and the underlying brand strategy remained the same. In 2003 the channel's slogan proclaimed itself as *Much better*, and in 2007 the channel inspired a sense of

audience engagement and loyalty with its slogan *Stay with 3*. The SABC3 brand elements are more abstract than the other channels, and the few representational brand elements include people participating in leisure activities. Chapter Four noted that, in spite of its visual changes, the visual signs and codes in the SABC3 brand identity continue to connote class, sophistication, superior quality, cosmopolitanism, stability, inspiration, leisure, success and innovation.

On the level of myth and ideology, Chapter Four argued that the SABC3 brand can be associated with Veblen's (1912) notions of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. The chapter contended that the SABC3 brand supports the myth of a leisured lifestyle. The concepts of leisure and lifestyle are social constructions that support the aim of capitalism to encourage conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. This has ideological implications since it furthers the goals of those in positions of wealth and power, while exploiting the subordinate classes. The idea of a leisured lifestyle is propagated as an ideal to aspire towards, and in the current economic situation is a reality that eludes the vast majority of South Africans. It thus creates a separation between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in South Africa, thereby fuelling tensions between different classes. It is argued that the SABC3 and its brand identity support the ideology of capitalist materialism.

It appears as if the ideologies and myths behind the SABC1 and SABC2 brand identities are in contrast with each other, each upholding its own version of a new South Africa. The chapter argued that each SABC television channel communicates messages that disseminate specific myths that are prevalent in contemporary South Africa. These myths also support different ideologies.

From the exploration of the messages, myths and ideologies communicated by the SABC television channels, it became apparent that four major ideologies dominate political discourse and became part of the national and cultural rhetoric of a post-apartheid South African nation. From the exploration of the SABC Africa channel, it appears that the myth of African Renaissance supports the cultural imperialism and influence of South African culture on the rest of its African neighbours. The SABC1 channel indicates that the myth of youth resistance and the myth of authenticity support populist ideologies and propagate social action based on populist sentiments. In opposition to SABC1's seeming support of a populist democracy, the SABC2 channel

supports a pluralist democracy. It was argued that the myth of the 'rainbow nation' and the idea of an imagined community further the nationalist ideals and ideologies of a unified nationalism based on unity in diversity. The SABC3 channel appears to support the notions of leisure and lifestyle, thereby encouraging conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure (Veblen 1912). It was argued that the myth of a leisured lifestyle is a current trend that supports the ideology held by capitalist materialism.

## 5.3 Contributions of study

The study contributes to the academic knowledge and research available regarding South African mass media. Very little research exists on the recent changes and developments of the SABC television channels. While most sources, including those of Teer-Tomaselli (1998, 2001), Mersham (1998), Wigston (2001), Jacobs (2003) and Fourie (1996, 2001, 2003) accurately describe the channels and their transformations in 1996, fewer authors note the changes in the channels during the phase of the corporatisation of the SABC in 2002 to 2003. At the time of writing, no academic work existed on the changes in SABC television channels or South African television in general since 2007. This study aimed to contribute to filling the gap with regard to academic research that addresses the recent changes in the SABC and its television channels.

The dissertation additionally contributes towards a theoretical model by which brands, and particularly television brands, can be explored in a manner that links various academic fields. It was suggested that semiotics and ideology theory are useful frameworks whereby television brands can be explored, thus transgressing the boundaries imposed by the traditional marketing or design fields of academic inquiry.

The study further contributes to a currently scarce opus of academic research regarding television channel branding. While some sources address the theoretical and economic principles and practices of television branding, for example Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2001), McDowell and Batten (2005), Eastman (2000), Bellamy and Traud (2000) and Elen (2003), very few of them simultaneously engage visual examples of television channel branding. It was argued that corporate strategy is revealed by the design of the television channel brands, and that the visual brand identities of television channels are rich sources of cultural symbols and national discourse. The work of

Lambie-Nairn (1997), Meech (1996, 1999 and 2001) and Lloyd (2002) appear to be the first to address the visual aspects of television channel branding in an academic manner.

Few of the sources consulted consider the implications of television channels and their visual brand identities regarding the economic and cultural platforms of society; that is the base and superstructure. This dissertation highlights the ideological implication of audience segmentation that constructs a commodity to sell to advertisers, and also indicates the power struggles that may be present in such processes of viewer segmentation and definition. The contribution that semiotics can make to construct and to interpret or understand television channel brands was further emphasised, and the value of television brands in terms of their cultural and economic contributions are accentuated by this study.

In all the SABC television channels, the seemingly contrasting political ideologies of cultural imperialism, populism, nationalism and capitalist materialism came to the fore. This indicates the varied ideas that exist regarding concepts of a new South Africa and also highlights the differences in the myths and messages that are communicated in popular discourse. The brand identities illustrate how different maps of meaning are created, and the manner in which those meanings have been communicated by each channel.

The study furthermore contributed by showing which ideologies and myths are communicated to which language, cultural, ethnic and class groups in South Africa. The study observes that, in order to maintain the status quo, it is appears necessary for the ANC to communicate and propagate various myths and ideologies to different groups of people. In this way things are not much different from the manner in which apartheid television produced different news bulletins and produced different stories to tell to different groups of people. In many ways apartheid logic continues to dominate with regard to the division of channels and their audiences in terms of race, language, class, geographic location and culture.

The new audience segmentation of the SABC partly addresses this matter with an improved endeavour to determine audience segments in terms of their attitude rather than their living standards, income, ethnicity or language. Even though new

segmentation models have been implemented and the brand identities adjusted, the SABC and their television channels seem to retain the original meanings that were associated with the brands since their inception.

In a general sense, the study indicates the manner in which popular culture can be analysed in order to discover the hidden meanings and ideologies within such cultural and representational forms. The study delineated a need for critical analyses and debate of seemingly unimportant and unnoticed cultural artefacts such as television channel brands. The studies of popular culture and also seemingly unimportant cultural artefacts may contribute to the understanding of South African myths and ideologies perpetuated by the media. The rich illustration of various myths and ideologies that appear in the SABC television channel brands appear to be unique to South African television; a tendency perhaps set in motion by the transformation of an apartheid nation to a democratic one.

## 5.4 Limitations of study

The first chapter indicated that SABC Africa can be explored in the same possible depth as SABC1, SABC2 and SABC3, but this has been omitted owing to restrictions in space. The addition of the SABC Africa channel may further contribute to the visual vocabulary, metaphors, myths and ideologies disseminated by the ANC which can be associated with a new South Africa and the idea of the African Renaissance in particular.

Sources and information regarding the SABC and its television channel brands are limited to the biased annual reports, websites, and press releases published by the SABC regarding the changes within the broadcasting environment and are loaded with marketing 'spin'. Clearer insight may be gained into the SABC television channels and their brand identities by interviewing the appropriate on-air managers, brand managers and general managers of the SABC channels, and perhaps also the design and marketing companies responsible for the creation of the visual brand identities. This was, however, impossible to organise owing to multiple rejections of requests to interview managers as a result of their own time restrictions.

A major limitation was the restriction in space. The myths and ideologies in the SABC channel brand identities have been analysed and engaged with rather superficially and may be analysed in much greater detail with the improved incorporation of theories related to the myths and ideologies espoused by each channel. It would be possible to dedicate whole chapters to each of the channels, thereby detailing the various brand elements, signs, codes, and also the meanings, connotations, myths and ideologies that can be associated with the channels.

The study is also limited in the sense that it did not mention any of the brand identities of the other South African television channels, and did not make any comparisons with other channels from other broadcast institutions. An exploration of the brand identities of other channels may give a clearer impression of the SABC channels and their position in the larger context of South African television.

## 5.5 Suggestions for further research

A first recommendation is a more in-depth study of each SABC television channel and the manner in which the channels and their brand identities have been constructed and represented visually. A more detailed exploration would benefit from the inclusion of additional visual examples of the television channels and their brand identities, and it would expand the theories and concepts potentially associated with the myths and ideologies advocated by each channel. It could thus be possible to unpack the theories in a more detailed and logical manner, thereby lessening the likelihood of superficial analysis of the potential myths and ideologies of the television channels. The author is nonetheless confident that the findings expressed in this dissertation will be upheld, even within a more comprehensive dissertation.

The inclusion of contributions and opinions of the brand managers, on-air managers and general managers, together with the contributions and perspectives of design companies, could contribute positively to the research of television channel brand identities. In a similar fashion, clearer insight into the meaning of SABC television channels may be gained from interviews of audience members to establish the manner in which audiences interpret and make sense of television channel brand identities, how viewers perceive such brands, and their influence on the construction of their own cultural, national and personal identities.

Furthermore, it would be valuable to explore the brand identities of other television channels, especially other popular television channels such as M-Net and E-TV. Research regarding the other channels and their brand identities may provide a clearer knowledge of the South African television environment, and the manner in which the various television channels are constructed and defined, and the manner in which, in turn, the channels define their audiences. An exploration of channels other than the national television channels may indicate the power relations of South African media as a whole.

## 5.6 Concluding remarks

The division of audience members into distinctive groups is not necessarily a negative concept. It is an almost natural result of the structuring of media markets in a competitive multichannel environment. However, it becomes a concern when viewers are organised and addressed in a manner that marginalises some viewers and imposes seemingly complimentary definitions on others.

It is also not necessarily negative that conflicting ideologies and myths are communicated by the media. On the contrary, it is an indication of a democratic society that allows the expression of various and sometimes conflicting ideas. It does become a concern when different opinions are expressed in such a manner that deliberately evokes conflict and racism. Instead, opposite views and opinions should be allowed in an objective and equal manner by the media. Language is an important aspect of national discourse, as it is disseminated by the media, and should be carefully considered so that it may be respectful of differing views.

In a world that is still heavily defined by dichotomies, it seems natural that oppositions and contrasts may exist. In South Africa such dualities appear more intense so that the differences between black and white, rich and poor, right wing and left wing, peace and violence, and ubuntu and corruption fed by selfish greed, to name a few, are in starker contrast with each other. The underlying cause of conflict between dualities lies in the cycle of dominance and submission that seems apparent in the social structure. The only way to break the cycle of dominance or submission is to refuse the positions of dominance or submission. In other words, the cycle will not be broken by electing new

political parties – even though they may have wonderful policies or leaders – since allowing that party to dominate will enable the cycle of dominance and submission to continue. The cycle of dominance and submission will be broken when the submissive ones (however they may be defined at a particular point) are taken aboard and included so that everyone can move forward together and on equal terms, without any dominance or submission that goes on (Deutschmann 2008).[1]

The rhetoric of struggle and the metaphors and myths that support ideologies of dominance and submission "grip our imagination, and, for a time, govern our thinking about scenarios and possibilities of cultural transformation, [but hopefully they eventually] give way to new metaphors, which make us think about these difficult questions in new terms" (Hall 1996f:287).

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[1] The ideas in this paragraph are borrowed from Angela Deutschmann (2008), a spiritual teacher and writer based in Johannesburg. The particular angle of her writing with regard to current situations that influence people's lives is particularly insightful.