

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO FAN IDENTITY AMONG SUPPORTERS OF
THE ENGLISH SOCCER PREMIER LEAGUE IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.**

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By

Leah Komakoma

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Eitan Prince
(Supervisor)

Abstract

This study investigates Zambians' construction of identities based on their following of the English soccer premier league. The study seeks to understand how Zambian supporters of this league construct their identities based on their encounter with foreign teams/players and how they appropriate the meanings obtained through such viewing in their daily lives.

The study is informed by the theories of fandom. Using an ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis, the study attempts to explore the meanings that the fans of the English soccer league in urban Lusaka make of the mediated soccer games, while in and outside the viewing spaces – the bars – where the games are ritually watched in groups.

Based on the qualitative methods of focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and observations, the study probes the phenomenon of the consumption of English premier league football in countries abroad, focusing specifically on the experiences of fans in Lusaka, Zambia. Observation of this phenomenon in Lusaka reveals that fans find pleasure in the tactics that the teams in the league display, the professionalism of the players, goal scoring and self-empowerment for the few women supporters. This study probes these issues in greater depth.

The foremost conclusion of the research is that it neither completely rejects nor accepts the media imperialism thesis. Instead, meanings should be understood within the context of the lived experience and reality of the fans.

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Dedication

To mum, Gabriel, Dawson, JJ, and Kachama.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The title of this research is, “An investigation into fan identity among supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, Zambia”.

Drawing on theories of fandom, this study investigates how soccer fans in Lusaka, who follow the English soccer Premier League on satellite television, form identities based on their encounters with foreign teams/players, and how they appropriate these meanings in their everyday lives. This report has been divided into the seven chapters as follows:

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the literature reviewed in constructing the theoretical framework that informs this study. This research is informed by theories of fandom. Fandom is a common feature of popular culture that selects from the repertoire of mass-produced and mass-distributed entertainment and takes them into the culture of a self-selected fraction of people (Fiske 1992: 30). One of the proponents of theories of fandom is John Fiske, who argues that fandom has three general characteristics (Fiske 1992).

The first characteristic is that fans discriminate the boundaries between what falls within or outside of their fandom, thereby creating a line that clearly marks someone as a fan (Fiske 1992). It is argued that such investments in specific differences make fans divide the cultural world into ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (Grossberg 1992). The second characteristic of fandom is that of productivity and participation, which is divided into three types. Semiotic productivity consists of making meanings of social identity and social experience from semiotic resources of cultural commodity (Fiske 1992). When the meanings made in semiotic productivity are spoken and shared within oral culture, thereby taking a public form, enunciative productivity occurs (Fiske 1992). Textual productivity arises when fans produce and circulate texts among themselves, which are often crafted, but not intended for sale (Fiske 1992). The third characteristic of fandom is that of capital accumulation (Fiske 1992). Here, fan cultural capital lies in the

appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events, therefore making the accumulation of knowledge fundamental to the accumulation of capital (Fiske 1992). For this research, the theories of fandom are employed within a broader context of globalisation, because it is precisely through this process that popular culture, through media, has spread from country to country (Hannerz 1996).

Efforts to research and analyse the impact of global media on local audiences using the Media Imperialism thesis as the main explanatory framework, gained prominence in the 1970s to early 1980s (Schiller 1976; Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991; Tomlinson 1991). Significantly, the conclusions reached by Media Imperialism theorists are restricted to textual and institutional analyses. An area overlooked in such approaches to media research is the role of the audience in making sense of the texts (Skovmand & Schroder 1992). Hence, based on Fiske's (1992) fandom theories, this study employs an ethnographic critique of the Media Imperialism thesis in trying to investigate how the fans of the English soccer premier league make meaning of the globally mediated games.

Chapter 3: Research Context

Fans are the most visible and identifiable of audiences, who make their culture out of commercial commodities such as texts, stars and performances (Lewis 1992:1). They display interest, affection and attachment in aspects of their chosen field (Jensen 1992). This study concerns itself with the phenomenon of Zambian soccer supporters in urban Lusaka, who have come to be fans of England's highest professional soccer league. This following of English soccer in Lusaka is one example of fandom, which offers me an opportunity to explore the meanings that the fans make of this media coverage. These Zambian fans are exempted from the experience of presence at the stadium as the matches are happening. Thus, this study asks the following questions:

- Why do they follow this foreign league?
- What are the pleasures they derive from watching this league?
- Why do they engage in a ritualistic nature of viewing the league from public places?

- What are the particular meanings they make when they are watching the league?
- How do they appropriate these meanings in their everyday lives?

In conducting this research, certain aspects of a personal nature influenced my choice of topic. In the early 1990s, the Zambia national soccer team was considered as performing well in African soccer due to the numerous times that the team won. Most of these games used to be televised. Whenever the national team was playing, members of my family would all gather around the television to watch the games together. Unfortunately, on 28th April 1993, the whole Zambia national soccer team perished in a plane crash off the coast of Gabon. After this loss, a team of young players was formed to continue where their counterparts had left. This new team failed to qualify to the world cup, but managed to qualify to the 1994 Africa cup of nations, where they reached the finals and lost 2 – 1 to Nigeria. These events led to my heightened interest in the game.

When I enrolled to study Mass Communications at the University of Zambia (UNZA) in 1997, I used to watch soccer from the University's common rooms. In 1998, I and many other male students – with whom I used to watch soccer in the common rooms – started following the English soccer Premier League, which had been introduced to me by these fellow soccer fans. The introduction of digital satellite television (DSTV) had made possible the live broadcast of the games. At the beginning, I had no idea which team I could align myself with, but due to the ways that the people I used to watch the games with talked about Arsenal Football Club, I found myself supporting this team.

Further, when I enrolled at Rhodes University to read for a Master of Arts degree in journalism and media studies, Professor Larry Strelitz introduced me to some of the audience reception studies conducted by scholars such as Ang (1985) and Katz and Liebes (1985). These scholars investigated how audiences living outside America made meaning of American media texts that they were exposed to, particularly the 1980s American soap opera Dallas. Such examples led to my interest in attempting to investigate how fans of the English soccer Premier League make meaning of the globally televised games.

In this 'context of the research' chapter, the history and the organisation of the English soccer Premier League will be outlined. This will be followed by an overview of the socio-geographical position of Zambia, which contextualises the space of the study. The economic context of Zambia will be discussed too, as it is vital to understand the class background of the supporters of the league. Following this is an outline of private television in Zambia, particularly because it is through the subscription Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) service that the English soccer Premier League is televised. The physical locations where the observations, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews that were conducted for the purposes of this study, will also be outlined. This will be followed by an overview of the Football Association of Zambia, which runs football affairs in the country.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

In this chapter, the qualitative methods that were used in gathering data for the study are discussed. I conducted observations from the places where the fans watch the games. I also conducted focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews. For the purposes of qualitative research, the responses were categorised thematically, as suggested by Hansen et al (1998) and Flick (1994), using the theoretical framework to make sense of the themes identified during interviews and observational methods (Berg 1998). The findings acquired from the interviewees' responses are presented in chapters five and six.

Chapter five: Presentation and discussion of findings

This chapter presents and discusses the reasons why Zambians follow the English soccer Premier League based on the responses received from the interviews. Here, interpretations of how the Zambian supporters identify a fan of the league among themselves will be provided. Interpretations of how fans make meaning of the mediated games through oral culture will also be provided. The pleasures that the fans revealed as a result of following this league will then be presented.

Chapter six: Presentation and discussion of findings

The findings from the interviews that I conducted with regards to the process undergone by the fans as a result of their viewing the games from public eating and drinking places are analysed in this chapter. It is in these viewing spaces that the fans construct meanings out of the mediated English soccer Premier League, thereby formulating their identity in the process. Issues challenging the Media Imperialism thesis are also analysed in this chapter. Further, an interpretation of how the fans' soccer identity engages with other identities in the Zambian society will also be provided. These other identities that I discuss here revolve around class, gender, politics and religion.

Chapter seven: Conclusion

This chapter presents the summary of the report. It proceeds by providing a recount of the chapters preceding it. The conclusion is divided into two sections. The first of these provides a summary of the findings. The second section presents the report's view that challenges the Media Imperialism thesis.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is outlined. Of the literature reviewed, this chapter has been divided into eight sections.

- 2.1 Sociology of sport
- 2.2 Evolution of the media in society
- 2.3 Sport and the media
- 2.4 Popular culture
- 2.5 Fandom
 - 2.5.1 Characteristics of fandom
 - 2.5.2 Discrimination and distinction
 - 2.5.3 Productivity and participation
 - 2.5.4 Capital accumulation
- 2.6 Media Imperialism thesis
- 2.7 Evolving practice of reception research
- 2.8 Conclusion

In the first section, an overview of the concepts underpinning the sociology of sport is provided, so as to bring to the fore the context within which sport is understood to exist, for example masculinity, nationality, and politics. In the next section, the evolution and development of the media in the modern day is discussed in an attempt to illustrate how the technological developments of the industrialisation process led to the development of the media. Here, the concept of globalisation is employed in order to help demonstrate that industrialisation in western society spread beyond the geographical confines of Europe, and with it took technology to the rest of the world. An outline of the interdependent relationship between sport and the media is then mapped out. This outline is vital because the study concerns itself with soccer fans in Zambia, whose experiences

of the English soccer Premier League are almost exclusively mediated via satellite television.

In the fourth section, I discuss popular culture, precisely because it is within this realm that mediated sport exists. Importantly, both sport and fandom are features of popular culture. As a result of the study being informed by Fiske's (1992) theories of fandom, the next section provides an outline explaining what fandom entails. This section proceeds with a discussion on the characteristics of fandom – discrimination and distinction, productivity and participation and capital accumulation. These characteristics draw the line between a fan and a casual follower.

Following this section is a discussion of the Media Imperialism theory, an explanatory framework used in the 1970s and 1980s to explain the effects of global media on local audiences. This framework views the introduction of global media pessimistically and claims that imported mediated material displaces the local culture. However, alternative research on global media effects on local audiences has challenged the Media Imperialism thesis by demonstrating that audiences are not passive human beings that absorb everything they consume in media. This interpretative approach to research, which understands the audience to be active recipients, informs this study and will be discussed in the seventh section of the chapter. The study is also framed by the theories of fandom, which will be used to ethnographically critique the Media Imperialism thesis.

2.1 Sociology of Sport

Generally speaking, sport as a concept is imprecisely defined (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992). It is socially constructed and a result from humans' ability to create, use and manipulate symbols, thereby making it a social symbol (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992). Etymologically, sport derives from the Latin root 'desporto' that means to 'carry away', and by logical extension implies diverting oneself from daily instrumental outcomes (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992).

Sport is also argued to be one of the major ways in which the social system integrates its increasingly differentiated components as well as being one of the ways that societies socialise individuals into what is expected of them (Hargreaves 1982). Hence, sport can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger society, making it a social institution that can neither isolate, nor insulate itself from the rest of broader social elements (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992; Lapchick 1996; Wenner 1989). It is due to this inclusion that sport is seen as complicit in the formation of stable identities or personalities and provides opportunities for tension release as well as being used to channel aggression under socially sanctioned and controlled conditions (Hargreaves 1982).

In line with the above, it has been argued that the most socially visible identification that is constructed and maintained through sport as a cultural symbol is the connection between sport and nationalism (Clarke and Clarke 1982, see also Steenveld and Strelitz 1998, Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). In competitions such as the English soccer Premier League, however, where the teams are made up of not only English players, but players from other countries as well, the link between nationalism and sport may be interpreted through the imagery of national divisions (Clarke and Clarke 1982; Back, Crabbe and Solomos 2001). This is evident among the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League, who pay specific attention to an English team featuring a player from Zambia or any other African country.

There is also a link between sport and politics such that it is “argued that it ‘is not when politics is close to the surface and easily recognisable that it is at its most popularly powerful, but when it is strongly absent, myths work on emotions and ideologies to represent interests of the privileged few, as a natural order for the many’” (Barthes in Rowe 1999: 92). Even though this argument pertains to the ruling class and the manner in which they naturalise their actions, it is important to note that as a result of the elite ruling not by force, but by managed consent (Hall 1997); the above argument can pertain not only to the rulers, but to the people being ruled as well.

Another arena of ideological connection between sport and other social practices is its relation to sexual divisions (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Sports are defended as builders of physical and emotional health, justified to instil national strength, social teamwork, patriotism, nationalism and even religious piety (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992). However, sport is argued to be male dominated and its intimate, long-standing linkage with masculinity has helped secure the dominance of male sport (Rowe 1999). It is further argued that some of the functions that sport plays in society enable it to be a forum that reproduces competitive, strong, challenging, forceful, courageous human beings - men (Clarke and Clarke 1982; see also Lapchick 1996). Since women are allowed entry into sport in subordinate positions, most viewing of sport is predominantly done by and in the presence of men (Clarke and Clarke 1982). This is an issue that is further discussed in chapter six.

As noted above, there is a connection between sport and sexual divisions. For men, sport is also argued to be a site for the safe and controlled expression of softer emotions, which can rarely be expressed in the wider culture (Russell 1999). Therefore, in the space where men view sport, they are allowed to express how emotionally they are attached to soccer. Generally, to express an emotional attachment is considered as a feminine and therefore, a weak quality.

In the next section, the evolution of the media in society is discussed in order to situate media and specifically, mediated sport in society today.

2.2 Evolution of the media in society

Prior to the 18th century, western society was what sociologists call 'traditional' in its organisation. There were only a few factories as well as a few systems for the distribution and consumption of manufactured products. In terms of social organisation, people were linked to each other through family and kinship loyalties to local rulers, or through deeply established beliefs, customs and traditions that guided their behaviour in almost all aspects of life (Lowery and De Fleur 1998). This meant that the information needed by individuals in society was spread from one individual to another through their daily

interactions. It was only when the three major master trends, namely industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation emerged, that the conception of an urban-industrial society developed. The populations of the urban-industrial society use the media to achieve a great number of goals that are economical, political, religious and educational, in ways that are totally different from pre-industrial societies (Lowery and DeFleur 1988). This is because these populations are exposed to advertisements, film, news and other media products as the basis for the information they acquire.

The process of industrialisation started when developments in science and engineering yielded new power sources and machinery. With these devices replacing human power, goods could be produced far more rapidly, uniformly and cheaply than ever before. Steam power derived from wood or coal soon replaced other sources of energy and transformed one industry after the other. After industrialisation took off, the process of urbanisation, which refers to increasing proportions of the populations of a given area living in towns and cities, also took root. The social significance of this process is that it brought together people with different identities shaped around race, class, religion and others. These people could not relate to each other easily because of their social and psychological differences. Whereas rural and traditional social order was based on clear conceptions of rules and social behaviour, life in the new cities was characterised by a confusion of the rules, customs and traditions, a condition known as anomie (Lowery and DeFleur 1988).

The third master trend was modernisation. Modernisation is greatly linked to the growth of the mass media. At the turn of the 18th century, the industrial order started producing an array of devices that the ordinary family could purchase and use and it is argued that as society modernised, the people did not only increase their consumption of goods, but their use of print, film and broadcast media too (Lowery and DeFleur 1988). Thus, modernisation brought about a situation that allowed for more people to have access to the media.

The sociological change in the structure of the western society has not however been bound by geography. Instead, the trend developed worldwide through the process of globalisation. Globalisation has been described as, “A matter of increasing long distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well” (Hannerz 1996: 17). In other words, there is an intensification of world wide social relations, which link distant localities in such an approach that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away (Giddens 1990). In addition, it has been the first world industrial and capitalist countries on those unequal terms which have made globalisation be seen in large part as being synonymous with westernisation (Hannerz 1996). As a result of globalisation, the broadcasting of sport from some parts of the world to others, has been made possible.

Since the late 19th century, sport at its highest level has become a major form of popular entertainment, and television is associated with modernity and development, thereby allowing sport to expand (Whannel 1992). Citing the popularity of English football among Malaysians in 1985, it has been observed that, “Not only has television football become a global phenomenon, but a western oriented view of the sport successfully extended to the rest of the world” (Geraghty, Simpson and Whannel in Whannel 1999: 64). Among all other things therefore, football’s early development might be regarded as a study in one of the earliest forms of globalisation (Giulianotti and Armstrong 1999).

Like society, sport has undergone changes. The world of sport in the age of mass media has been transformed from the nineteenth century amateur recreational participation, to late twentieth century spectator centred technology and business (Real in Rowe 1999; Jhally 1989). In the next section, the relationship between modern sport and the media is discussed.

2.3 Sport and the media

The intersection between sport and the media rests on the notion that sport is an already socially constructed activity and it is precisely here that the effects of the media ought to be sought (Clarke and Clarke 1982).

With the evolution of both sport and media, and as seasons have extended and competitions proliferated in deference to media needs, the world of sport today can be talked about as a sports/media complex (Jhally 1989, Rowe 1999). There are two reasons why this is so. The first is that most people do the vast majority of their sport spectating via the media so that the cultural experience of sports is highly mediated. The second reason stems from a financial point of view, because professional sports are dependent upon media money for their survival (Jhally 1989).

Sport is, as a result of the above argument, viewed as standing at the confluence of the two principle functions of the mass media, that is, news and entertainment (Rowe 1999). In terms of content therefore, sport can take up a lot of media space and time, by presenting the actual game, as well as highlights, late night reviews and news reports of, for instance, a soccer match (Rowe 1999). It is further argued that the most effective way of pulling the crowd is secured through the advance trailing and promotion of a televised sporting event (Steven 1990). For the media to manage to have the concentration and attention of the viewers, certain values have to be adopted in the representation of sport in the media (Clarke and Clarke 1982). These values include spectacle, drama, personification and immediacy.

The value of spectacle refers to both the status and the location of the event (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Whereas the status of the event involves the significance attached to it, other events are spectacular because of the location where the sport takes place. The value of drama is closely related to the content as it exposes the highlights of the events, including the successes and the failures (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Examples of dramatic episodes may include such things as world breaking records, goal scoring, substance abuse by the sports people (doping) to name a few. Such examples may relate to the pleasures derived by the fans that follow the English soccer Premier League in Zambia.

The value of personification refers to the media's tendency to focus attention on particular individuals (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Thus, through both interview and close

up action, the audience is invited to witness the personal involvement of sport through these individual moments, thereby reminding us that sport is essentially an individual matter (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Moreover, some individuals make for good and easy information to sell. Examples of this may be the stories of former Manchester United striker David Beckham's alleged adulterous behaviour that made headlines for months in 2004. The fourth value is that of immediacy where the audience is taken closer to the action and the participants than the spectators who are at the stadium (Clarke and Clarke 1982). This means that the fans following the game via television are availed more information in terms of such things as 'play backs' in slow motion. Using these values, the media are able to capture sports audiences.

Mediated sport is very much about perspective: for example, the drama included in commentary, the close-ups and alternative angles used in televised coverage. Sport on the screen is therefore argued to be an entirely different experience compared to sport in the stadium, not simply because a living room is a different environment from the stands and terraces, but because the event being witnessed goes through several processing stages before reaching the screen (Rowe 1999). Consequently, the television experience of viewing sport has been enhanced through the increased number and flexibility of cameras, sharpness and variety of pictures they deliver, as well as advance replay techniques, thereby putting the television viewer at an advantage (Steven 1990). Therefore, the value of immediacy mentioned above, is boosted by such arguments.

In addition, the peripheral sounds that require transmission to complement the visual, coupled with a voice over to describe, explain, analyse the event, as well as to contribute an occasional dramatic embellishment that the game itself may not have, adds to the thrill of viewing sport via television (Steven 1990). Further, media provide the definitions of what has been selected by interpreting events as well as providing frameworks of meaning in which to make sense of the event (Clarke and Clarke 1982). The above argument has been consolidated in the following statement:

If we consider the activity of going to a live sports event in the flesh, as a specific kind of embodied consumption of a text, then watching that same sport remotely on television was in the first instance a compensation for the absence of sensory experience of moving with the crowd, soaking up the atmosphere and all the sights and smells unique in space and time, at the same time, some aspects of the sports television viewing may be advantageous such as no or minimal entry cost (for free to air television), no traffic jams, wet clothes, restrictions of alcohol consumption or violent encounters with rival spectators, apart from family members and bar patrons (Rowe 1999: 91).

Viewing soccer on television has the above-described advantages. Due to the reliable offer of audiences, it is argued that advertisers are sure of a market during times that sports are broadcast. Further, media presentation of sport is regularised, as it takes place within clearly demarcated slots, such as Saturday and Sunday afternoons (in the case of football), at the end of news bulletins, and the back pages of newspapers (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Thus, given the regular timings, as well as regular audiences, organisations directly sponsor teams, arguably in the hope to attach their company names to the particular sporting activities (Jhally 1989). In addition, professional sports sell the rights to broadcast to the media, thereby intensifying the sports/media dependency (Jhally 1989; Rowe 1999). Apart from the sponsors, other corporations also buy advertising time during the available slots when sports programmes are on, with the result that sport not only produces audiences faithful to the media, but also produces loyalties to the other products that are advertised during the games, for example phones, televisions, cars and many more (Jhally 1989).

It has been argued that the sponsorships that corporations avail to sport appear to be available to specific types of sports that are able to make for good television (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Therefore, sports such as soccer may get higher television appearances than other sports such as fencing. In addition, it is also argued that particular aspects of the chosen televised sport are given more coverage than others, and such decisions are

based on assumptions of what makes good television (Clarke and Clarke 1982). Thus, for example, if a particular soccer league is going to be televised for a given season, certain teams, usually the winning ones, are afforded the privilege of appearing more frequently on television and their repeats are shown regularly as compared to the teams that may be, for example, facing relegation.

Having established that sport is a significant element of popular culture, it would be useful to briefly discuss understandings of popular culture

2.4 Popular Culture

Popular culture has emerged as one of the main sites of investigation within the contemporary mass communication research and cultural studies. It should, however, be noted that it is rare that the focus is zeroed in on the ways in which non-fiction media output functions within and as popular culture, even though television is a 'popular' feature of the mass media (Dahlgren and Sparks 1992). Popular culture is difficult to define due to the ambiguities related to both the terms 'popular' and 'culture', but it has been argued that the "... main focus of attention in its definition is the relation between culture and questions of hegemony" (Hall 1981: 235).

The notion of hegemony was developed by Antonio Gramsci, who argues that hegemony is a form of power where particular social groups struggle in many different ways to win the consent of other groups and achieve a kind of ascendancy in both thought and practice over them (Hall 1997). The idea of a struggle for hegemony maintains that the elites rule, not by force, but by managed consent (Hall 1997). The elites form historical blocs with other groups that make existing power relations appear natural and just (Lipsitz 1990). This power is not exercised in a manner that simply imposes ideology on a passive and subordinate group, but is a process of negotiation, compromise and struggle, so that the ruling class gives concessions in one area, so as to receive them in another (Jhally 1989).

Popular culture is no exception to this form of power. It should however be noted that it is only from the vantage point of enlightenment ideals of high culture that popular culture can be seen to exist (Lipsitz 1990). High culture is the socially and institutionally legitimated culture, whose taste and competencies lie in the educational system and institutions such as art galleries, museums, concert halls, to mention a few (Fiske 1992). Popular culture is consequently argued to be made by various formations of subordinated or disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that dis-empowers them (Fiske 1989a). Thus, ‘the people’ versus ‘the power bloc’ is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarised (Hall 1981). In other words, popular culture is organised around the contradiction of the power forces against the power bloc.

In his work on popular culture, Fiske adopts the people versus the power bloc approach, in which “...the power bloc consists of a relatively stable alliance of social forces – economic, legal, moral, aesthetic – and the people is a diverse and dispersed set of social allegiances constantly formed and reformed among the formations of the subordinate” (Fiske 1989a: 8). In illustrating this conception, Fiske argues that, “Popular culture is made from within and below, not imposed from without or above as mass cultural theorists would have it” (1989a: 2). It has been argued that, “Mass cultural theorists view the development of the mass media pessimistically as constituting a threat to either the integrity of the elite cultural values or the viability of the political institutions of democracy or both” (Bennett 1982: 31-32). Fiske argues that:

The resources – television, records, video games, language – carry the interests of the economically and ideologically dominant; they have lines of force within them that are hegemonic and that work in favour of the status quo. But hegemonic power is necessary or even possible because of resistance, so these resources must also carry contradictory lines of force that are taken up and activated differently by people situated differently within the social system (Fiske 1989a: 2).

In a study conducted by Fiske (1989a) on teenage girl fans of the pop singer Madonna, the results revealed how the girls used Madonna's music and image as a resource to inspire gestures of independence and fashion rebellion, and thus were empowered to express themselves. Therefore, there were some gaps in Madonna's image (and by logical extension to other forms of popular culture), which escaped ideological control and allowed her audiences to make meanings that connected with their social experience (Fiske 1989a; see also Radway 1984; Jenkins 1989). Essentially, popular culture can be made if it offers meanings that are relevant to everyday lives of the subordinate, which they make out of the content, due to the point that popular culture centres on the body and not the mind, because bodily pleasures offer evasive and liberating policies (Fiske 1989a). Also, the people who consume popular cultural products re-work the messages into intensely pleasurable, as well as intensely signifying messages (Fiske 1992). In describing the relevance of popular culture, Grossberg (1992) suggests that people engage with forms of popular culture because, in some way, popular culture is entertaining and provides a certain measure of enjoyment and pleasure (see also Dennis and DeFleur 1998).

In accordance with 'the people' versus 'the power bloc' concept, it is argued that popular audiences engage in semiotic productivity, producing pleasures that pertain to their social situation out of the products of the culture industries. This research employed a Fiskian approach, using Fiske's theories of fandom in order to investigate fan identity among English soccer Premier League fans in Zambia. These theories of fandom are outlined below.

2.5 Fandom

Fandom is a feature of popular culture that, "Selects from a repertoire of mass produced and mass distributed entertainment and takes them into a culture of a self selected fraction of people"(Fiske 1992:30). It is a particularly intense form of popular culture consumption. Adopting the metaphor of describing culture as an economy in which people invest and accumulate capital, Fiske (1992) adds to it other dimensions of discrimination such as gender, race and age. He argues that the group offers ways of

filling cultural lack and provides the social prestige and self esteem that go with cultural capital. He writes that, “Some may become fans, often of a musician or sports star and through fan knowledge acquire an unofficial cultural capital that is a major source of self esteem among the peer group” (Fiske 1992: 33). Other benefits that come with belonging to a particular fandom include confidence and self-empowerment. Importantly, belonging to a particular fan group is an action that comes with its own sets of inclusion and exclusion. Fiske (1992) identifies three major ways in which fans formulate means of inclusion into their fandom.

2.5.1 Characteristics of Fandom

There are three characteristics of fandom that Fiske outlines. These are discrimination and distinction, productivity and participation, and capital accumulation. The following three subsections deal with each of these characteristics.

2.5.1.1 Discrimination and distinction

This is the first characteristic whereby one can be judged as eligible or not, to belong to that particular group of fans (Fiske 1992). Here, “...the fans discriminate fiercely: the boundaries between what falls within their fandom and what does not are sharply drawn” (Fiske 1992: 34). Thus, there is a distinct demarcation that clearly marks someone as a fan. Among the forms of discrimination that may exist are the selection of texts, stars or teams which offer fans the opportunities that allow them to make meanings of their social identities and social experiences that are self interested and functional, while other forms approach the aesthetic discrimination of official culture and these may include ranking the stars, teams or other performers of the particular object of fandom (Fiske 1992).

2.5.1.2 Productivity and participation

The second characteristic of fandom is that of productivity and participation (Fiske 1992). The argument goes that popular culture is produced by people out of the products of the culture industries, and as a result, must be understood in terms of productivity, as opposed to reception (Fiske 1992). There are three types of this second characteristic, namely semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity and textual productivity, all of

which occur at the interface between the industrially produced cultural commodities for example a star, music, or team and everyday life of the fan (Fiske 1992). Semiotic productivity consists of, "... making meanings of social identity and social experience from the semiotic resources of cultural commodities" (Fiske 1992: 37). It is an internal process that is worked out by an individual, but it becomes external, thereby enunciative, when those meanings made by the individual are spoken and shared within a face-to-face or oral culture, so as to take a public form (Fiske 1992).

An enunciation refers to, "The use of a semiotic system which is specific to its speaker and its social and temporal context" (Fiske 1992: 38). Fan talk is one such example. It involves the generation and circulation of certain meanings of the object of fandom within a local community. Fiske (1992) points out that a lot of pleasure is embedded in fan talk about the object of fandom and this is also one of the major ways in which fans report their source of choice over their object of fandom. Consequently, through oral communication between fans, other people learn of the fandom. Alternative ways of asserting oneself as a member of a particular fan community may include adopting such details as the hairstyle, accessories, choice of clothes and other mannerisms that the performers of the object of fandom express (Fiske 1992).

When the fans embrace some of the above mentioned or any other details of the stars, then those fans demonstrate the construction of a social identity. It is such social assertiveness that can be exhibited for example by a fan who wears his/her team colours, that appears to be a deliberate challenge of more normal social values and the discipline they exert, thereby meeting adult disapproval. This disapproval is an integral part of the intention, albeit un-stated and possibly un-admitted of the enunciation (Fiske 1992). In textual productivity, "Fans produce and circulate among themselves texts which are often crafted with production values, but the fans do not sell these products as compared to those in official culture" (Fiske 1992: 38). These may include such things as key rings, mugs, plates, hats and so on.

2.5.1.3 *Capital accumulation*

The third characteristic of fandom through which one can be included or excluded in a fan community is that of capital accumulation (Fiske 1992). Fan cultural capital is argued to lie in the appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events (Fiske 1992). Therefore, without appropriate knowledge about the object of fandom, one may not be classified as a fan. In fandom, knowledge accumulation is fundamental to the accumulation of cultural capital and the culture industries have capitalised on this by flooding the media with such things as gossip on various players' salaries, marital statuses, number of houses, types of cars driven and many more such stories (Fiske 1992).

Within this accumulation of knowledge are the experts and the novices. This difference between the experts and the novices arises from one group having more knowledge than the other on such issues as the history, current news, or value of the object of fandom. This does not mean that the fans belong to different camps, only that some have acquired over time more cultural capital than others. This situation at times raises a scenario in which the older fans view themselves as having witnessed the changes in the object of fandom, or that the older version was more authentic, compared to the current version of the object of fandom (Fiske 1992). The experts gain prestige within the group and act as opinion leaders (Fiske 1992). Supporters in Lusaka have formed a relationship with the English soccer teams through their fandom of the English Premier League.

As a consequence of globalisation and media coverage of the English Premier league, Zambians have become fans of this league. It has been argued that as global media increased, there also developed a need to research the effects of global media on local audiences. A key theory used to understand the effects of global media on local audiences is the Media Imperialism thesis, which is discussed in the next section.

2.6 **Media Imperialism Thesis**

Some scholars view the process of globalisation pessimistically, and they developed explanations to help illustrate that this process had its limitations. The dependency theory

is one such explanation. This paradigm, which was initially developed in Latin America, built on older critiques of imperialism (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991, see also Boyd-Barrett 1977). It argues that development cannot be a mere mimicry of western structures, but has to be conceived as an anonymous, self chosen path that built on the rich ancient cultures of third world countries (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991). The assumption was that western cultural values such as consumerism and individualism, expressed implicitly in the media, were being exported with the objective of altering third world cultural milieus (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991). In this process therefore, the media are taken to be central to the process of globalisation (Thompson 1995).

It is from this broad, critical framework of dependency theory that the specific model of Cultural/Media Imperialism thesis argued that, "... far from aiding third world countries to develop, the international flows of technology transfer and media hardware, coupled with software flows of cultural products actually strengthens dependency and prevents true development" (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991: 120; see also Tomlinson 1991; Tomlinson 2001). Therefore, globalisation of media transmission here is viewed critically.

Efforts to research and analyse the effects of global media on local audiences gained prominence in the 1970s and early 1980s. It used the Media Imperialism thesis as the main explanatory framework (see for example Schiller 1976; Schiller 1986; Boyd-Barrett 1977). The country that exerts media influence internationally is argued to either export this influence as a deliberate, commercial or political strategy or simply disseminate it unintentionally in a more general process of political, social or economic influence. Furthermore, the country that receives media products from outside, may be argued to intentionally or unintentionally, adopt that country's influence, which the exporting country may set up as a deliberate commercial or political strategy (Boyd-Barrett 1977). Generally, the Media Imperialism thesis has been described as, "The process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or context of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of other

countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (Boyd-Barrett 1977: 117).

One of the most prolific writers of the Media Imperialism thesis is Herbert I. Schiller (Tomlinson 1991). Schiller argues that Media Imperialism develops in a world system within which the single market and the terms and character of production are determined in the core of the market, and radiated outward to the periphery (Schiller 1976). The media are argued to spread their tentacles in a one directional flow from the centre to the margin and they represent the reality of power in that order (Schiller 1976).

Citing the multinational corporations as the basic organisational unit in the modern world capitalist economy, Schiller (1976) argues that a few hundred of these agglomerations of capital, largely American, dominate the global market in the production and distribution of goods and services. The fundamental point is that, “As the trans-national corporate order grows stronger, in large part with the assistance of deregulated private information networks, it usurps and corrupts cultural expression and information diversity globally” (Schiller 1986: 17). These organisations organise the world market, and in furthering their goals of securing worldwide markets and unimpeded profitability, they are compelled to influence and if possible, dominate every cultural and informational space that separates them from total control of their national environment.

Of importance, the economic imperative initiates the cultural envelopment; the impact extends far beyond the profit seeking objectives of some huge media monopolies and cultural conglomerates (Schiller 1976). Given such arguments, one may employ one of Marx’s thoughts that, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (Marx in Bennett 1982: 48). In other words, the people with the means of production have the technology to mass produce and disseminate information to people that lack the technology in such a manner that the recipients do not realise that their actions are influenced by the received information, thereby leading to what Marx dubbed ‘false consciousness’. The depth of the situation is illustrated by the argument that:

The concept of cultural imperialism today best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote the values and structures of the dominating centre of the core system (Schiller 1976: 9).

Thus, the general underlying assumption of the Media Imperialism thesis is that there is cultural and ideological homogenisation of the world (Schiller 1976). It is further argued that the world is now a “Self consciously one single field of persistent interaction and exchange” (Hannerz 1996: 19). In addition, it is argued that through the process of importing western television signals, a third world country invariably imports western value systems that encourage its people to envy and seek to join the alien culture they are viewing (Chaffee 1992).

Significantly, the conclusions reached by Media Imperialism theorists are restricted to textual and institutional analyses. An area overlooked in such approaches to media research is the role of the audience in making sense of the texts (Tomlinson 1991; Skovmand & Schroder 1992; Ang 1996). Other perspectives of looking at how global media affects local audiences have ensued and will be discussed in the next section.

2.7 Evolving Practice of Reception Research

In the previous section, the underlying assumptions of the Media Imperialism thesis were outlined. Here, the contrasting assumptions of research into global media influences on local audiences will be provided. This challenge stems from alternative modes of analysing media effects, which question the international hypodermic needle assumption proffered by the hegemonic model (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991). Citing as an example the works of Fiske (1987a; 1989a; 1989b), it has been argued that arguments about the active audience and the polysemic nature of texts inserted into the international communications debate suggest that the diverse audiences bring their own interpretative

frameworks and sets of meaning to media texts, thus resisting, re-interpreting and reinventing any foreign hegemonic cultural products (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991).

Furthering the above argument, it has been observed that even though the infrastructure of global communication may be very much the development of, as well as in control of, the super powers, this situation does not necessarily determine what happens within individual nations (Boyd-Barrett 1982). Arguments against the Media Imperialism thesis have also been forwarded citing media scarcity, export of media content from third world countries such as Brazil to its neighbours, as well as localisation of media production, for example in India (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991).

This alternative approach involves the engagement in ethnographic audience research, "... in an attempt to determine how texts influence audiences and shape their beliefs and behaviour or provide specific pleasures and resources" (Kellner 1997: 113). Ethnography is further defended as a valid way of studying television and its viewers because it is beginning to show the rich play between the existing culture and the new quasi-international culture (Fiske 1987b).

It has also been suggested that the development of ethnographic studies since 1980s has been designed in part to re-emphasise the status of media use as a form of social action (Jensen 2002). Thus, the object of such kind of study is the way that people live their culture. Its value lies in its shift of emphasis away from textual and ideological construction of the subject to socially and historically situated people, thereby reminding us that real people watch and enjoy television (Fiske 1987b). Therefore, work building on reception theory and models of the active audience is seen to provide a more nuanced understanding of international media effects as mediated by pre-existing cultural frameworks and interpretative schema (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991).

Thus, Kellner (1997) argues that cultural studies has indicated some of the various ways that audiences use the texts, often to empower themselves. Therefore, it is important to note that while the Media Imperialism thesis sounds reasonable, this plausibility is

limited, because it tells only one side of production of meaning (Chaffee 1992). In advancing the argument that following globally mediated programmes does not necessarily equal following the mediated way of life, audiences have been argued to be "... more active, complex and critically aware in their readings than the theorists of the media imperialism model have allowed ..." (Tomlinson 1991: 57).

The drift in audience communications research has the basic premise of trying to understand popular cultural practices as meaningful activities, as part of people's on-going attempts to make sense of their lives and the specific identities constructed around class, gender, race and other identities, which they might inhabit (Skovmand and Schroder 1992). It is further proposed that time has come when popular cultural forms must be taken seriously and specifically in order to examine what popular audiences are doing with the cultural products that they consume in their daily lives. Therefore, the Media Imperialism thesis is argued to have some limitations.

Contributing to the debate on the shortfalls of the Media Imperialism thesis, Thompson (1995) argues that the thesis fails to acknowledge that the reception and appropriation of cultural phenomena are fundamentally a hermeneutical process in which individuals draw on material and symbolic resources available to them, as well as on the interpretative assistance offered by those with whom they interact in their day to day lives in order to make sense of the messages they receive and to find some way of relating to them. Therefore, with regard to television, ethnographic studies acknowledge differences between people and pluralise the meanings and pleasures that people find in television (Fiske 1987b).

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical framework that informs this study was discussed. First, the sociology of sport was outlined so as to help illustrate avenues in which sport is understood, such as masculinity, nationality and politics. Following this was a discussion on the technological development of industrialisation, which led to the development of the media through the process of globalisation. In the next section, an overview of the

world of sport in the age of mass media, which has transformed from recreational participation to spectator centred technology, was provided. After this, the fundamentals of popular culture were discussed because this study is based on mediated sport, which falls under the umbrella of popular culture. Informing this study are Fiske's (1992) theories of fandom. Therefore, these were discussed in the fifth section of the chapter. The three characteristics of fandom, namely, discrimination and distinction, production and participation and capital accumulation were then outlined.

The process of globalisation saw the spread of media technology and content from the first to the third world countries. One of the frameworks used to explain global media effects on local audiences was the Media Imperialism thesis, which views global media pessimistically. It is this thesis that this study endeavours to critique, using arguments provided by alternative modes of analysing the effects of global media on local audiences. Thus, in the seventh section, the evolving practice of reception analysis, which offers conceptual challenges to the Media Imperialism thesis were discussed. Here it was argued that the active audience and the polysemic nature of texts illustrate that the diverse audiences bring their own interpretative frameworks and sets of meanings to media texts. Hence, based on the theories of fandom, this study attempts to critique the Media Imperialism thesis, using ethnographic audience kind of study.

In the next chapter, the context of the research will be outlined as it has been argued that it is important to understand the context in which television viewers consume media productions, because it is in these contexts that meanings are made (Ang 1996).

Chapter Three

Context of the Research

3.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, the theoretical underpinnings of this research were outlined. It was noted that this study is informed by Fiske's theories of fandom. In trying to understand how the local Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League make meaning of the global media texts they are exposed to when they watch the games, the study utilises an ethnographic critique of the Media Imperialism thesis. In this chapter, the descriptions of the conditions that contextualise the research are provided. The chapter has been divided into seven sections as follows:

- 3.1 The English soccer Premier League
- 3.2 The geographical position of Zambia
- 3.3 The economic context of Zambia
- 3.4 Private television in Zambia
- 3.5 Physical location of the study
- 3.6 Football Association of Zambia
- 3.7 Conclusion

The chapter begins with a discussion on the English soccer Premier League and how it is organised. An outline of the geographical position of Zambia is then provided so as to stress its distance from the country where the games are actually played. This is followed by an overview of Zambia's economic context in order to establish how the economic situation in Zambia determines what kind of Zambian can become a supporter of the English soccer Premier League. Following this is an outline of private television in Zambia because access to the televised English soccer Premier League is done through the subscription television – Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) service.

In conducting this research, the qualitative methods of observation, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews were used in order to gather data. Hence, descriptions of the specific locations frequented by the fans to watch the English soccer

Premier League games, where the observations were made will be provided. In addition, an outline of the physical locations of the interviews will also be laid out in section 3.6. This will be followed by an overview of the Football Association of Zambia, which governs football affairs in Zambia.

3.1 The English soccer Premier League

English football is said to have had a long history dating back to the nineteenth century and has undergone seven distinct stages (Horne et al 2001). These seven stages include: (1) the folk game; (2) the formalisation of the athleticist-amateurist codes in the public schools; (3) the split between association football and rugby football; (4) the insularity of the British game in the inter-war years of the twentieth century; (5) the post war years of austerity (6) the years of further commercialisation of the game in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; and (7) the phase based upon the creation of a break-away elite Premier League and sponsorship and media influences upon the game (Horne 2001). It is this seventh stage that this study concerns itself with; hence the discussion regarding the league is confined to this period only.

The English soccer premier league, which is made up of twenty teams, represents the pinnacle of English club football (www.premierleague.com). The league was formed after changes were made to the structure of an older league on 20th February 1992 and the first match was played on 15th August of that year (Chadwick and Clowes 1998, www.premierleague.com). The English soccer premier league comes under the jurisdiction of the Football Association (FA) and therefore submits its rules to the FA each year for approval (www.premierleague.com).

In 1992, the new Premier League was made up of the top division of the previous 104-year old Football League (Horne et al 2001). Changes to the economic infrastructure of football as well as public order concerns in the wake first of the prominence of football hooliganism subculture and then the tragedies, for example, at Bradford, Heysel and Hillsborough in the mid and late 1980s in which hundreds of fans died, led to the replacement of the Football Association (FA) League (Horne et al 2001). The subculture

of hooliganism as well as the tragedies from the collapsed stadia led to a reshaping of the physical environment of sport, where modernised seater stadia were demanded of top clubs (Horne et al 2001).

In the thirteen years of its existence, the English soccer premier league has attracted foreign players and is argued to have the largest contingent in Europe, with over 250 players under contract and an average of three non-European Union players per team (www.premierleague.com, see also Horne et al 2001). The availability of the league matches featuring foreign players emerged to be of importance among Zambian supporters of the league¹.

One of the reasons that there has been a renaissance in English football is the increase in revenue and television coverage for Premier League clubs arising from television contracts with BSkyB (Chadwick and Clowes 1998). Television has played a major role in the history of the 13-year old Premier League. The first Sky television agreement was worth £191 million over five seasons, while the next contract, which started from the 1997/98 season had risen to £670 million over four seasons and the current Premier League's deal with BSkyB television is worth £1.024 billion and runs over the course of three seasons from August 2004 (www.premierleague.com). Thus, through such investments, the premiership has switched from a regional or national remit to producing itself via more globally organised forms of communication, hence its reach beyond England's geographical confines (Cashmore and Parker 2003). Significantly, overseas television coverage has grown to a level where the matches of the English soccer Premier League are televised in over 150 countries and reach approximately 450 million people worldwide (www.premierleague.com). Zambia is one of the recipient countries, receiving television coverage of the league through the digital satellite television (DSTV) service.

As a result of this study being conducted among Zambians in Lusaka, below, the context within which fans in Lusaka consume the media coverage of the Premier League games via DSTV is outlined.

¹ See presentation and discussion of findings in chapter five.

3.2 The geographical position of Zambia

Zambia is a land locked Southern African country of around 750 000 square kilometres, situated on the central African plateau at an average altitude of 1 200 meters above sea level (www.wateraid.org.uk). It is surrounded by eight neighbours, with Malawi and Mozambique to the east, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, Angola to the west and the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania to the north (Banda 2001). There are approximately 11 million people living in Zambia (Banda 2001, <http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/t/team/profile.html?team=zam>). The country is divided into nine provinces – Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Luapula, Lusaka, Northern, North-Western, Southern and Western – and seventy-two districts (Banda 2001). Of the provinces named above, Lusaka is the capital city. This study was based in Lusaka and it is the supporters of the English soccer Premier League residing in Lusaka who were interviewed for the purposes of this research.

Below is a description of the economic context of Zambia, particularly Lusaka, as this was the study area.

3.3 The economic context of Zambia

Zambia's political development is linked to British colonial rule. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the country had its first contacts with British explorers, missionaries and prospectors (Banda 2001). Formally known as Northern Rhodesia, Zambia gained its independence from Britain on 24th October 1964 (Banda 2001).

Since independence, Zambia's economy has been dominated by copper exports, which account for over 70% of the country's earnings (Banda 2001). However, in 1972, copper prices on the world market plummeted and as the cost of fuel increased during this period, Zambia experienced severe economic difficulties (Saasa 1996). This marked the beginning of the deterioration of Zambia's economy. It is argued that probably 80% of Zambians live below the poverty datum line (Banda 2001). This poverty is evident in Lusaka as well.

For several years, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Lusaka has carried out a monthly survey of prices of basic family necessities – for example food and housing – comparing the findings with the take-home wages of average Zambians (<http://www.jctr.org.zm/publications/basicwage.htm>). The JCTR monthly *Basic Needs Basket* (BNB) for June 2005, for example, revealed a gross disparity existed between income on one hand and cost of living on the other. For a Lusaka family of six (plus the inevitable several dependents) the cost of the BNB stood at ZMK 1 349 650 whereas the take home pay ranged between ZMK 120 000 and ZMK 900 000² (<http://www.jctr.org.zm/publications/basicwage.htm>).

Supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka spend money on their team's paraphernalia such as soccer shirts, and they spend money on beverages and/or food when they watch the games from public places, therefore making it necessary to have disposable income for leisure activities. For example, a soccer shirt costs approximately ZMK 250 000. A pint of beer is between ZMK 3 500 and ZMK 7 500 and most viewing of the league games is carried out in places where the beer is at least ZMK 7 000. Thus, supporting the English soccer Premier League is an exercise beyond the means of most Zambians.

3.4 Private television in Zambia

As mentioned above, Zambian followers of the English soccer Premier League watch the games through private television via DSTV channels. Private television was introduced to Zambia in 1995 when the state owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) entered into partnership with South Africa's Electronic Media Network (M-NET) to set up a joint venture known as Multichoice Zambia Ltd, where ZNBC owns 30% of the shares, while M-NET owns the remaining 70%. (Banda 2001; www.dstvafrica.com). However, given the economic hardships of the country as

² The Zambian currency is the Kwacha (ZMK). Currently the exchange rate between US\$ and ZMK is approximately US\$ 1 to ZMK 4 780.

discussed above, having a DSTV connection is limited to people within the middle and upper classes.

Among the twelve people interviewed for this study, five subscribed to the DSTV service, while seven did not. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the seven who had no DSTV can not necessarily afford to. They too belong between the middle and the upper class. Importantly, however, all twelve interviewees watch the league games in public places. I made observations in these public places and I also conducted interviews at some of the interviewees' homes. Descriptions of these physical locations are provided below.

3.5 Physical location of the study

This study concerned itself with sports fans who follow the English soccer Premier League by watching the games in public places such as pubs, regardless of whether these subjects had DSTV in their homes or not. It is argued that the provision of television sport in the bars transforms the social space of the bar into a viewing space, which continues to be a public place, though the provision of a visual spectacle produces a new set of social relations in which the drinkers become the spectators and the spectacle becomes the focal point (Horne et al 2001). It is in such viewing spaces that the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League watch the games and make meanings concerning the league, thereby formulating their identities through this process.

The observations that I made between 2nd and 17th April 2005 – over a period of three weekends – were at three pubs within the city, where some supporters of the English soccer Premier League view the games. These pubs located in central Lusaka are O'Hagans, Times Café and Smugglers Inn.

O'Hagans is an Irish pub operating in Zambia under franchise and is situated at Manda Hill shopping complex. Manda Hill was the first modern shopping complex in Lusaka,

housing South African retail supermarkets such as Game and Shoprite Checkers³. There are three 74cm televisions in O'Hagans, from which soccer fans can watch the games. Similarly, Times Café is located at a shopping complex known as Arcades shopping centre. Arcades also has a South African retail outlet – Spar – as well as Ster Kinekor movie theatres and international restaurants such as Ocean Basket. One has to have membership to enter Times Café, though the membership is free. Only people over the age of 25 are allowed admission into Times Café⁴. Here, there is only one 'big' screen where the matches are shown. Smugglers Inn, on the other hand, is in a residential area known as Longacres⁵. There are two 74cm televisions and one 'big' screen outside by the pool side where fans can watch the games. Smugglers Inn is cheaper, does not require membership and the outside screen allows for more people. These three locations provided the spaces where the observations of the fans were made as they were watching the games⁶.

For each of the focus group discussions, I made use of the residences of the key participants. These participants were the initial contacts that informed other people of the research. The homes of these participants are located in Lusaka's Longacres, Chelstone and Presidential Housing Authority (PHI) residential areas. The individual interviews were also carried out within the same areas.

Longacres is a low density residential area⁷. Chelstone is a medium density area situated near the Lusaka international airport. It is divided in two parts. The one part is known as 'Airways' where former employees of the defunct Zambia Airways live. The other part is made up of houses that were privately built by property owners and as such is looked at as the part of Chelstone where middle and upper class people live. This is the 'Chelstone' where the people interviewed for this study reside⁸. The other area where the interviews

³ At O'Hagans, a pint of beer is ZMK 7 500 and a pitcher is ZMK 44 000.

⁴ A beer at Times café costs ZMK 7 000.

⁵ At Smugglers Inn, a beer is ZMK 7 000 and a pitcher is ZMK 41 000.

⁶ More details on the research procedure are provided in chapter four.

⁷ In Longacres, the rentals may go as high as ZMK 10 000 000.

⁸ Rentals here average between ZMK 1 500 000 and ZMK 3 000 000.

were conducted is PHI. This area has high, medium and low cost houses. The interviewees all live in low cost houses⁹. Mostly, young couples occupy these houses.

The above gives an outline of the physical locations where the observations and the interviews of this study took place. The twelve people interviewed may therefore be said to live in relatively affluent neighbourhoods and from the amounts that these people pay for rentals, one can deduce that they can afford to follow the English soccer Premier League¹⁰.

Eleven out of the twelve people that I interviewed do not follow the Zambian league. Several reasons were given as to why the local league is not followed and these are discussed in the presentations of findings chapter five. Below, however, a description of the local league's organisation is provided.

3.6 Football Association of Zambia (FAZ)

The local Zambian league is run by the Football Association of Zambia (FAZ), which was formed in 1929 and was affiliated to the world governing body – the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) – in 1964 (www.faz.co.zm, <http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/t/team/profile.html?team=zam>). FIFA was formed in 1904 to safeguard soccer's good image as well as make and amend the laws of the game based on the rules that were first ratified in 1886 (www.premierleague.com). The president of the republic of Zambia is the patron of FAZ. The membership of FAZ consists of affiliated clubs and associations. Zambia's premier league season runs from March to October or November every year. The league comprises sixteen teams, where the last four teams are relegated into division one at the end of each season (www.faz.co.zm).

After 41 years of being affiliated to FIFA, FAZ has yet to produce a team that will qualify for the world cup, despite participation since 1970. Zambia has never won the

⁹ Rentals for the low cost houses are approximately ZMK 650 000 in PHI.

¹⁰ Deduction made based on the JCTR monthly study.

Confederation of African Football (CAF) cup, though it reached the finals in 1994 (<http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/t/team/profile.html?team=zam>). The failure of the national team extends to the local league as these players in the local teams are the ones called upon for national duty in the national team. Hence, the limitation of skill that these players exhibit helps make Zambians follow other more exciting leagues such as the English soccer Premier League¹¹.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the context within which this research was conducted was discussed. I began by giving an outline of how the English soccer Premier League is organised and this was followed by an outline that described the geographical position of Zambia. The economic context was then provided due to its importance in determining what sort of Zambians support the league. In the next section, an overview of private television in Zambia was presented, particularly because it is through the private DSTV service that Zambians are able to follow the league. Section 3.6 discussed the physical location of the observations and interviews that were carried out for the purposes of this research. In the section above, an outline of how Zambian soccer is organised through the Football Association of Zambia was provided.

Having outlined the context that forms the background of this study, the next chapter discusses the methods used in order to gather data for this study.

¹¹ See presentation and discussion of findings in chapter five.

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, an overview of the context of the research in terms of the geographical position and economical context of Zambia, as well as the organisation of both the English soccer Premier League and the local Zambian soccer league was provided. In this chapter, the research methods employed in investigating fan identity among supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, Zambia will be discussed. This methodology chapter comprises seven sections:

- 4.1 Research design
 - 4.1.1 Participant observation
 - 4.1.2 Focus group discussions
 - 4.1.3 Individual in-depth interviews
- 4.2 Sample selection and size
- 4.3 Research procedure
- 4.4 Interview guide and my role as moderator
- 4.5 Data processing and analysis
- 4.6 Limitations of the study
- 4.7 Conclusion

The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design, in which an outline of the qualitative research methods: participant observation, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interviews that were used to collect data is provided. In the second section, the rationale behind non-random sample selection and size made to come up with the interviewees is discussed. Under research procedure, an account of the experiences that I encountered in the field while collecting data will be presented. This is followed by an outline indicating the importance of an interview guide and my role as a moderator. In the next section, issues pertaining to data processing will be outlined, followed by an

acknowledgement of the challenges faced in this research under the 'limitations of the study' section.

4.1 Research Design

Scholars have argued that, "For examining the dynamics of what experiential knowledge and terms of interpretation audiences bring to bear in the use of media content, what role media use has in everyday lives of the audiences, or how audiences use the media as a resource in their everyday lives, it is necessary to turn to qualitative methods, because they allow the researcher to penetrate the subjective understandings of audiences" (Hansen et al 1998: 257). Qualitative research refers to "An approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied" (Bryman 1998: 46). It is further argued that in qualitative research, the researcher interprets meaning in action (Jensen 1982, Wimmer and Dominick 1991).

The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its commitment to viewing events, actions, norms and values from the perspective of those being studied, that is, "Seeing through the eyes of the people" (Bryman 1998). Consequently, qualitative analysis allows for a more focussed analysis of experiences and perceptions, as qualitative methods are argued to be "Extensions of normal human activities of looking, listening, speaking, reading and the like" (Lincoln and Guba 1995). In investigating how fan identities are formulated by supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, the research was carried out in the form of participant observation, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews. The use of three methods falls in line with the argument that qualitative researchers should ideally employ more than one method of collecting data, because this allows inferences drawn from one data source to be corroborated by another (Bryman 1998).

Below, I outline and explain my reasons for selecting the three techniques employed in this study. I begin with an explanation and justification for using participant observations.

4.1.1 Participant observation

The method of observation refers inclusively to a set of research activities that involve the conditions and long-term presence, normally of one researcher, and generally in one determined locale (Jensen 1982). In participant observation, the researcher takes part to some degree in the activities of the people being observed (Deacon et al 1999). I embarked on a particular kind of participant observation known as covert participant observation. Here, the investigator participates in the process under study, but is not identified as a researcher (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). Such observation is beneficial in that the Hawthorne effect – a situation where subjects under study change their behaviour when they know that they are being observed – is avoided (Deacon et al 1999). When the people under study do not know that they are being observed, they continue behaving in the same way that they always do. Whereas ethical considerations may be raised when people are being observed without their consent, it is argued that such observation can be carried out in public places such as shopping malls (Hansen et al 1998). I therefore followed this suggestion and observed the fans in the public places - mostly pubs and restaurants - in which the fans watch English football. I conducted all the observations before carrying out any interviews, both individual and group.

One of the most fundamental claims made by observation studies concerns the presence of the researcher – being there – witnessing the events and processes that are being researched, thereby allowing the researcher a chance to produce independent assessments of events and processes (Deacon et al 1999). Observation is also argued to be another ‘everyday’ skill, which is methodologically systematised and applied in qualitative research (Flick 2002). Thus, prior to conducting both the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews, I made some observations.

Following the argument that there are no set times for conducting participant observation, as this process depends on the overall research aims as well as limited time, resources and conditions of access (Hansen et al 1998), I conducted these observations during the games that were broadcast over the weekends between 2nd and 17th April 2005 – over three weekends – a total of six days. The impact of the six days in which I immersed

myself in observing the English soccer Premier League fans had a positive influence in the research. This was because those observations acted as a useful backdrop to the type of questions that I formulated for the use in the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews.

It is argued that one of the hurdles to any participant observation study is access to the group of people under study (Hansen et al 1998). However, some observers have managed to avoid this problem because they are *in situ*, that is, they are insiders to the area of study. The advantage of participant observers who are *in situ* is that they possess insider knowledge (Hansen et al 1998). For example, former magazine journalist Marjorie Ferguson conducted a study on women's magazines and argues that her involvement in the magazine industry put her at an advantage, as she was familiar with the people, the jargon and practices (Deacon et al 1999). In this research I am an insider, as I have been following the English soccer Premier League since 1998. I am familiar with the jargon, the fans in Lusaka and the places in which the games are watched.

In the observations, key issues such as the physical setting of the viewing spaces as well as the activities and interactions of the patrons in these viewing spaces were noted (Merriam 2001; see also Rubin and Rubin 1995). I observed that most patrons of the pub were clad in various soccer shirts and scarves of the English soccer Premier League teams that played on those days. Others displayed mobile phones in phone covers decorated with these team colours. I also noticed that conversations were loud and the fans were purchasing and drinking alcoholic beverages.

Having made these observations, I drew from them and formulated questions informed by the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter two. I then posed these questions to fans in focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews. A more detailed discussion of these research strategies follows.

4.1.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions refer to, “The systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in formal or informal settings” (Fontana and Frey 1994). It has been argued that with the rise of reception studies in media research during the 1980s, focus group discussions became a component of the approaches employed by communications and media researchers (Hansen et al 1998). Importantly, and related to the theoretical perspectives informing this research, the resurgence of interest in the focus group discussion in social science research forms part of the movement toward qualitative methods.

The use of focus groups as a means of collecting data has a long history in communications research, though it is only since the early 1980s that focus group discussions have become one of the most popular means for analysing media audiences (Deacon et al 1999, Lunt and Livingstone 1996, Hansen et 1998). The most cited focus groups study in media research is the work of Morley’s 1980 the Nationwide Audience study, which has been highly influential in the re-emergence of focus groups in the context of cultural studies approach to mass media (Lunt and Livingstone 1996).

Using focus group discussions is a method that involves bringing together a group, often a series of groups of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator¹² (Lunt and Livingstone 1996). Therefore, the focus group discussion is a research strategy for understanding audience attitudes and behaviour (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). This strategy is considered particularly useful when researchers seek to discover participants’ meaning and ways of understanding the phenomenon under study (Lunt and Livingstone 1996), as is the object of this study.

Significantly, it is argued that the use of focus group discussions allows the researcher to observe how audiences make sense of media through conversations and interactions with each other (Hansen et al 1998). The group context is also argued to have the ability to

¹² Discussion on sample selection and my role as a moderator are explained below under sections 4.2 and 4.4 respectively.

induce the expressions of latent thoughts, as negotiation within the groups produces an awareness of others' thoughts (Hansen et al 1998). Further, the interactions among and between participants stimulate discussions in which one member reacts to comments made by another, thereby creating a 'synergistic group effect' that allows one participant to draw from another or brainstorm collectively with other members of the group (Berg 2001). Theorists argue that such kind of synergistic group effect helps the researcher in that the interactions among participants enhance data quality, as the checks and balances on each other cancel false or extreme views (Krueger and Casey in Patton 2002, Hansen et al 1998, Berg 2001).

In view of the above-described benefits of using focus group discussions, I conducted three such discussions in studying how fan identities among Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League are formulated. However, this method also has its disadvantages and these will be addressed below in the sub-section on individual in-depth interviews. In acknowledging that the focus group discussion has some disadvantages, and in line with the argument that the qualitative researcher usually employs a variety of research techniques, I carried out some in-depth interviews.

4.1.3 Individual in-depth interviews

It is argued that data obtained from focus groups are not identical to data obtained from individual interviews because focus group data reflect notions shared and negotiated by the group, while individual data reflect only the views and opinions of the individual, which are shaped by the social processes of being a member of a society (Berg 2001). Therefore, in an attempt to acquire different types of data that would help provide insights into how identities among the supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka are formulated, I conducted three individual in-depth interviews. I also used these individual interviews to probe further some of the issues that were superficially discussed or not addressed at all in the focus group discussions.

An in-depth interview can be considered a type of a one-on-one personal interview, which seeks to provide detailed information about the reasons why respondents give

specific answers (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). This type of interviewing is said to be well suited to tap social agents' perspectives on the media, since spoken language remains a primary and familiar mode of social interaction (Berg 2001). Consequently, the in-depth interview offers the benefit of a wealth of accurate responses (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). It also works well to single out opinions that could otherwise be distorted in group interviews due to group influences (Berg 2001).

As earlier noted, these individual interviews were conducted with the intention to probe further some of the issues that had been raised in the focus group discussions. I therefore conducted three interviews, selecting a representative from each focus group. The first interview – scheduled even before the focus group discussions – was an in-depth interview that served as a pilot interview. This enabled me to assess the validity of the questions, as well as the possible duration of the interviews.

Thus, using observations, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews, I collected data that was later categorised in themes, so that the theoretical issues raised in the literature review may be illuminated and presented in the findings chapters. In the section below, the procedure used to select the sample is presented.

4.2 Sample selection and size

Having decided which methods to employ in my investigation into fan identity among supporters of the English soccer Premier League, I had to find means of selecting the sample. Given the qualitative nature of this research, I relied on non-random sampling methods. It is argued that the one element that all non-random sampling methods share is that sample selection is not determined by chance (Deacon et al 1999). This convenient sampling – a term given for studying individuals most easily available to the researcher – has a variant known as snowball sampling, in which initial contact with an informant generates further contacts (Jensen 1982).

Snowball sampling, which is mainly utilised in situations where no list or institution exists that could be used as a basis for sampling, is argued to be well suited for research

due to its practicality (Deacon et al 1999). The supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka fall within the above-described category, as fans do not collectively organise viewing and there are no fan clubs in existence where a register could be acquired to form a sampling frame.

Given the situation that I follow the English soccer Premier League, I considered myself an insider in this research. Hence, I identified some supporters of the English soccer Premier League that I knew watch the matches from public places such as pubs. I asked them to be the subjects in my research, and upon acceptance, I asked them to invite other people they knew were supporters of the league to act as interviewees in the research as well. Therefore, my first contacts informed other contacts. This method was successful in that I eventually achieved a reasonable number of subjects, whose views were sufficient to enable me have insights into the fandom of supporters of the English soccer Premier League, thereby making it possible for me to analyse these views, whose results are presented in chapters five and six.

On the issue of numbers suitable for qualitative research, it has been argued that there is no single right answer to the question of how big a focus group must be. The consensus is that the optimum group size is within the range of five and nine people (Hansen et al 1998). However, variations do exist. In his 1980 Nationwide Audience study, Morley used twenty-seven groups of between three and thirteen people (Lunt and Livingstone 1996). Another example is that of Livingstone and Lunt's study which made use of twelve focus groups with a total of sixty-nine people in groups of between four and eight (Hansen et al 1998). Whereas my aim was to have the optimum number of people in each focus group discussion, this was not the case¹³. As a result, I conducted three focus group discussions, where the first group had four people, while the second had five, and the third had three people.

The first individual interview was conducted as pilot testing for both the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews so that potential problems with such

¹³ An elaboration on the limitations is offered under the 'limitations of the study' section.

issues as type of stimuli used, sequencing, framing and wording of questions could be highlighted and corrected before going ahead with the rest of the interviews (Hansen et al 1998). Upon conducting this first interview with Gabriel Kabamba, I realised that there were repetitions of some questions. The other problem that surfaced was that pertaining to language. I observed that some of the words I had incorporated into the questions would have ended up being difficult for the participants to easily understand the questions. Accordingly, I made the changes before proceeding to do the other interviews. Gabriel later participated in a focus group discussion. Hence, I used his presence in this discussion to observe if his initial thoughts would contrast in any way when involved in a group discussion, where meanings are negotiated among the participants.

It has been argued that during a focus group discussion, the participants who think that their view point is a minority perspective may not be inclined to speak up and risk negative reactions in the process (Patton 2002). This is one of the reasons that the moderator of a focus group discussion must stimulate discussion among participants, ensuring that there is reasonable balance of contributions from the discussants, although the process of encouraging a balanced flow of ideas must not disrupt the course of the discussion (Hansen et al 1998).

In one of the focus group discussions, I observed that there was a woman – Munkamba Mapulanga – who was reluctant to share her views, despite my encouraging her to do so. Due to my fear of constantly disrupting the flow of discussion in my attempt to enable the woman to start speaking up more, I decided to enlist her as the second person with whom I could have an individual interview. In doing this, I was trying to gain more insight into her opinions concerning the fandom of English soccer Premier League in Lusaka. I also used the opportunity of the individual interview to ask questions that were not discussed in the focus group discussions. As it turned out, she was more relaxed in the individual interview and I found that the data gathered in that interview proved useful to the research.

In seeking the third interviewee, I was guided by the argument that the moderator must manage the discussion in order to avoid a situation where one person dominates the discussion, so that those participants who tend not to be highly verbal are able to share their views (Patton 2002, Wimmer and Dominick 1991). Thus, I selected as the third person for the individual interview, Wiza Chuulu, because he had been talkative in his focus group discussion. In my endeavour to stop him from dominating the discussion, while attempting to accord everyone a chance to speak, I feared that I might have hindered Wiza from expressing more ideas; hence I thought that he could contribute such views in an individual interview.

My decision to use snowball sampling to arrive at a sample for the focus group discussion, as well as my decision of selecting Gabriel, Munkamba and Wiza as the subjects for the individual interviews is justified by the argument that qualitative research methods do not always follow conventional sampling procedures but, instead, depend upon the creativity and resourcefulness of the researcher (Deacon et al 1999). Further, no deliberate decision was taken to have heterogeneous groups, given the nature of the method of sampling. However, initial contacts were encouraged to inform and bring both male and female soccer fans.

This section described how I selected the sample for this research, as well as the sample size. Below, I will provide an outline of how I went about conducting the actual interviews.

4.3 Research procedure

Before I went to Lusaka to collect the data, I got an introductory letter from my supervisor, which I envisaged would help me in finding willing interviewees¹⁴.

I called on people I knew supported the English soccer premier league and explained to them that I was conducting this research. I asked them if they were willing to be interviewees, and when they accepted, I asked them to invite their fellow supporters. Having done so, I made follow up calls to the initial contacts and was informed that the

¹⁴ See appendix 1.

people willing to participate in the interviews could only do so during the weekend, as they had to work during the week. It has been suggested that it is advisable to contact subjects immediately prior to the focus group discussion in order to remind them (Hansen et al 1998). Hence, I compiled the list of people who had accepted to be participants and phoned them so as to reinforce their decision to show up at the interviews, but this was not necessarily the case.

Following the suggestion that an informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure is intended to encourage subjects to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes and opinions they possess, I thought it prudent not to conduct the interviews at my home, as this could have made some participants uncomfortable (Berg 2001). I followed the example of Liebes and Katz's 1990 study where they held focus group discussions in their subjects' homes because this was important to the purposes of the research and also in terms of bringing together families who knew each other to watch and discuss Dallas (Hansen et al 1998). Therefore, I conducted the interviews, both group and individual at some of the participants' homes.

At these discussions, not all the people that had been invited by the initial contacts showed up. This was despite the positive response earlier received. I encountered a situation where on two occasions, fewer than the proposed optimum number of five people required in a focus group turned up for the discussions. It is as a result of such occurrences that the suggestion by Hansen et al (1998), that drawing research from naturally existing groups is easier than drawing interviewees at random, would have become useful in this study.

As noted above, the initial contacts invited other people to take part in the interviews. Due to the reasoning that these people knew each other, it was relatively easy to conduct the interviews from homes that they were already familiar with. Also, focus groups provide a means of replicating some of the everyday social interactions, although inevitably, the settings within which they are conducted are much less naturalistic (Burgess in Lunt and Livingstone 1996). Hence, generally, having people who already

knew each other and watched some of the games together, provided the benefit of achieving a level where the participants were at ease with each other.

The issue of offering incentives to the subjects is one that is highly debated because incentives are feared to hinge on both questions of ethics and quality of data gathered (Patton 2002). The argument goes that with incentives, a researcher can secure that the subjects turn up for the interviews (Hansen et al 1998; Deacon et al 1999). While the subjects may show up for the interviews, it is argued that the quality of data that they may provide could be compromised as a result of receiving incentives and agreeing to the interviews for the sake of it (Patton 2002). However, it is also argued that, "Participants in a research provide us [researchers] with something of great value, their perspectives on their world. We show that we value what they give by offering something in exchange" (Patton 2002: 415). Hence, it is not unusual for researchers to give participants a token of appreciation and this usually takes the form of money (Hansen et al 1998; Deacon et al 1999).

There has been a suggestion that alternatives to cash can instil a deeper sense of reciprocity, and this eases the dilemma that the subjects agree to the interviews because of the money being offered by the researcher (Patton 2002). Hence, I did not offer the participants a stipend for their participation in the interviews, but I thought that the least I could do was to prepare some refreshments. I told the interviewees that the refreshments were being offered just as a token of appreciation because they had given up all their other programmes to come and render me the help I needed in conducting the research.

All the interviews took place on either Saturday or Sunday afternoons. It is argued that the duration of the interviews can range from brief dialogues to hour long sessions, though it is determined by the overall purpose of the study, as well as practical considerations (Jensen 1982). The focus group interviews that I conducted lasted approximately one hour, while the individual interviews lasted about twenty minutes. As above, practical considerations have a role to play in the duration of the interviews (see Gillham 2000). However, the implication for the research was not negative as I still

managed to gather data that was enough to be used to make interpretations that are presented in chapters five and six.

It is argued that the principal data produced by focus groups are the verbal responses, statements, opinions, arguments and interactions of the participants, and as such, focus groups should, as a minimum, be recorded on audio cassette tapes (Hansen et al 1998). In addition, it has been observed that for fear of losing content and disturbance in writing, it is important to record data as the interviews are going on (Fielding 1993). Hence, I recorded all the interviews.

Above, I have discussed the stages I went through in conducting the interviews. Below, I will discuss the interview guide as well as explain the role I played as moderator.

4.4 Interview guide and my role as moderator

In conducting research, it is the job of the researcher to draw up – on the basis of the definition of the research problem and issues to be investigated – a guide for the moderator to work from and follow (Hansen et al 1998). Interviews range from the highly unstructured to the highly structured. The unstructured interview is the most open ended approach to interviewing as it offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate (Patton 2002). On the other hand, a structured interview requires carefully and fully wording each question before the interview, in order to guarantee that each interviewee is asked the same question in the same way and the same order, including standard probes (Patton 2002). These two types of interviews can be combined into semi-structured interviews, where the structured interview with a standardised format specifies certain key questions exactly as they must be asked while leaving other items to be exploited at the discretion of the interviewer (Patton 2002).

In this research semi-structured interviews were employed because they provide flexibility in probing and in determining when it is necessary to explore certain subjects in greater depth, given its qualitative nature (Fontana and Frey 1994). This kind of

interviewing is also believed to generate a well-rounded account of a particular group since it requires minimum guidance from the researcher and allows considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves (Bryman 1998; Deacon et al 1999). In preparation for the interviews, I formulated an interview guide. In these guides, questions should be written out and listed in the interview schedule; though the moderator should not be inflexible when conducting the research and following the interview schedule (Hansen et al 1998).

In formulating the steps of conducting the focus group discussions, I followed a guide as outlined by Berg (2001). In each interview, after thanking the participants for showing up, the first thing I did was to explain what the research was all about. Having done that, I explained how the focus group discussion would be conducted. Upon acceptance to participate in the interviews, I explained to the subjects that I needed to record the interviews so that I have everything said on record for further use in the analysis. I explained to them that I could not accomplish this by writing down their discussions.

Some scholars have argued that the moderator needs to establish some ground rules around the interactions during the focus group discussions (Berg 2001). Based on this argument, I explained to the participants that due to the need to record the conversation, I needed them to try and speak one person at a time, so that everyone's ideas and thoughts would be recorded. When the above conditions were accepted by the participants, I started recording the interview and the first question I asked them was for them to tell me something about themselves and what they did for a living, so as to help them get relaxed, as recommended by Berg (2001).

During the course of the interview, it is the role of the moderator to ensure that the discussion remains on the issue at hand, whilst eliciting a wide range of opinions on that issue (Lunt and Livingstone 1996). It is also the role of the moderator to encourage recalcitrant respondents to participate (Fontana and Frey 1994). Another duty of the moderator is to ensure that a reasonable balance of contributions is maintained (Hansen et al 1998). Therefore, I attempted to remember these points as I carried out the interviews.

In this section, I discussed the place of an interview guide and the role of the moderator in carrying out a research. Below, I outline the means used in analysing the data that was collected for the research, whose findings are presented in chapters five and six.

4.5 Data processing and analysis

This section answers the question: “What comes next after collecting the data?” It has been argued that while there is a possibility that a researcher may commence analysis directly from listening to the taped recording of the interview, it is more often the case that the audio recordings are first transcribed before starting analysis (Hansen 1998). Therefore, I transcribed the data after recording it. During the transcription, I first hand wrote the material before typing it. This decision is justified by the argument that, “Typing and organising hand written field notes offer an opportunity to immerse yourself in the data transition between field work and full analysis, a chance to get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole” (Patton 2002: 441).

Many qualitative researchers prefer to employ verbatim quotations from interviewees’ replies in order to illustrate several points (Bryman 1998). Hence, I transcribed all the interviews verbatim. Analysis of data is crucial as it is argued that all interview statements are actions arising from an interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and as such, interviews have to be interpreted so as to transform from data to sources of information (Jensen 1982).

The notes that emerged from the transcriptions were categorised thematically as suggested by Hansen et al (1998) and Flick (1994) using the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two, to make sense of themes identified during interviews (Berg 2001). Answers from different respondents were then compared and contrasted to establish the frequency of some responses, as well as differences in opinions. These were used in the analysis and interpretation of data, which was summarised in narrative form, using the most significant quotations to illustrate major findings of the study, presented in chapters five and six of this report.

Below, the challenges that I encountered while conducting the research are provided.

4.6 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations that I encountered was that some people that had promised to be participants of the focus group discussions never showed up at the agreed upon venues and times. These absences led to a situation where I could not gather the optimum number of people expected to be in a focus group discussion – between five and nine people (Hansen et al 1998) during two of the three focus group discussions. However, as in the case of Strelitz (2002) who argues to have had a productive session with only two people in one of his focus group discussions, I found that the two groups with fewer people than the optimum number were productive, and the data gathered from them was useful.

I attempted to follow the argument that it is the duty of the moderator to ensure that a reasonable balance of contributions among the participants is maintained (Hansen et al 1998). However, I found that the person that had been used in the pilot interview and was later a participant in a focus group discussion was extraordinarily quiet during the focus group discussion. Probing helped to draw him into the discussion, but he never quite opened up as compared to the excitement that he had shown in the individual interview. I feared that if I concentrated on encouraging him to speak, I would disrupt the flow of the discussion. However, the failure to encourage him to open up may have been as a result of my being a novice at the art of interviewing (Gillham 2000).

The other limitation that I encountered deals with the duration of the interviews. When people did not show up for the focus group discussions, I would not start the interviews in the hope that those who had promised to come would show up. After waiting in vein, I would commence the interviews, but by which time I would start feeling that I had inconvenienced the people that had come early. In addition, some people would start saying that they had other agendas and offered to return on another day. Since I could not take the risk of allowing them to go away in the hope that there would be a better turnout

on another day, I would start the interviews, but perhaps due to pressure arising from the feeling that I inconvenienced the participants, I feel that I might have rushed through the interview schedule. However, the data collected from the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews led to a situation where I had sufficient usable data to analyse on the basis of the theoretical framework presented in chapter two.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methods that I used in gathering the data. I first explained the research design, where I outlined my use of the qualitative methods of observation, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interviews. This was followed by a discussion on the sample selection and size. Thereafter, I provided an overview of the research procedure, after which, I discussed the interview guide and the role that I played as moderator. This was followed by an outline of data processing and finally, I gave an account of the limitations of the study.

In the next chapter, an analysis based on the responses received during the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews is provided. The analysis is informed by the theoretical underpinnings discussed in chapter two.

Chapter Five
Presentation and discussion of findings
Defining the English soccer Premier League fan in Lusaka

5.0 Introduction

This research is an investigation into fan identity among Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League. I employed the qualitative research techniques of observation, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews to gather the data that I analyse and present in chapters five and six. The methods and other methodological considerations were discussed in chapter four.

To reiterate, the goals of the research were to find responses to five questions: (1) why the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League follow this league; (2) what pleasures they derive from following this league; (3) the meanings they make when they are watching the games; (4) how these meanings are appropriated in their daily lives; and (5) why these supporters engage in the ritualistic nature of viewing the games in public places. My interest in finding the answers to the above queries was to develop an understanding of how the Zambian fans interviewed for this study formed their identities based on their mediated encounters with foreign teams/players and how they appropriated these meanings in their everyday lives.

This study attempts to draw insights from the consumption of English soccer Premier League football by Zambian fans in Lusaka. It probes how these Zambian fans consume media coverage of the English soccer premier league games and seeks evidence which problematises the Media Imperialism thesis. I utilise theories of fandom, as advanced by Fiske (1992), in order to situate how the Zambians who follow the English soccer Premier League are categorised into supporters and followers¹⁵. In so doing, the ways in which meanings around soccer fan identity are constructed will be explored.

¹⁵ In this study, ‘supporters’ are taken to be the people who understand the imagined rules that allow entry into the fandom of soccer fans of the English soccer premier league in Lusaka. The words ‘supporters’ and ‘fans’ will be used interchangeably. The word ‘followers’ connotes the people who watch the league, but have not yet crossed the imagined boundaries into the fandom.

The following is the list of people who were interviewed as fans of the English soccer premier league. These people consented to their names being included in this report. Their opinions were recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analysis in this chapter, as well as in chapter six.

Interviewees' details

Name	Gender	Occupation	Team
1. Michael Ngoma	Male	Businessman	Manchester United
2. Munkamba Mapulanga	Female	Student	Manchester United
3. Dawson Komakoma	Male	Quantity Surveyor	Arsenal
4. Wiza Chuulu	Male	Architect	Liverpool
5. Mutaya Kachumi	Male	Accountant	Liverpool
6. Sekwa Musonda	Female	Sales Executive	Manchester United
7. Brian Musonda	Male	Accountant	Liverpool
8. Nambula Sitali	Female	Social worker	Chelsea
9. Gabriel Kabamba (1)	Male	Accountant	Arsenal
10. Gabriel Chishimba (2)	Male	Architect	Arsenal
11. Nguesso Pandawe	Male	Quantity Surveyor	Chelsea
12. Twaambo Kalenga	Female	Advocate	Manchester United

As noted above, this analysis is informed by theories of fandom and particularly, the characteristics of fandom, which were discussed in chapter two. In this chapter, I interpret the information regarding the reasons why Zambians follow this foreign league; how they identify a fan of the league among themselves and the pleasures they derive from following this league. In chapter six, I discuss how the soccer fan identity engages with other identities in the Zambian society. I also interpret the fans' reasons for engaging in a ritualistic manner of watching the games from public places. This chapter is divided into four sections as follows:

- 5.1 Why the English soccer Premier League?
- 5.2 The Boundaries of Fandom
 - 5.2.1 Knowing the rules of the game
 - 5.2.2 Making meaning through oral culture
 - 5.2.3 Having information about the league, the team and the players
- 5.3 Pleasure and the premiership
 - 5.3.1 'Fans' attachment to success
 - 5.3.2 Soccer shirts
- 5.4 Conclusion

The division of the chapter into the above sections has been guided by the dominant themes that emerged from the data gathered during the research interviews. The interpretations of this data are informed by the three characteristics of fandom, i.e. discrimination and distinction, productivity and participation, and capital accumulation. I have used the most significant quotations from the interviews recorded, which were transcribed verbatim, in order to allow for a close reading of the fans' own interpretations of what happens when they and others watch the English premiership via satellite television. Each of the sections deals with a salient aspect of the study.

Much the same way that the characteristics of fandom share similar features, I also found that some of the responses received during the interviews, though categorised under different themes in this chapter, are overlapping in certain cases. Even though these themes will be discussed separately, there are areas in which they overlap.

5.1 Why the English soccer premier league?

The English soccer Premier League fans in Lusaka differ from their counterparts in England in the sense that their engagement with the league is almost entirely mediated. Given this situation therefore, the fans in Lusaka are exempted from the feeling of presence at the stadium as the matches are happening. Yet, why do the Zambians in Lusaka follow the league? Some of the initial responses from the interviews indicated that the league is exciting compared to the local league, has all the big names – including

Black Africans – and that above all, the interviewees love soccer. In addition, following this league plays the role of bringing the fans together and giving them a sense of belonging to a global network of football fans. Wiza, one of the interviewees, elaborates on this view:

Wiza: I feel like I have a **sense of belonging**. Everyone is supporting this league. To be left out would, no doubt make one feel like an outcast and I don't want that, so I am very happy to be a part of this dynamic group ...

Thus, indulging in an activity that other people are practicing can solve the dilemma of being an outcast. For the Zambian fans then, this indulgence has come through their supporting of the English soccer Premier League. It can be argued that there is a bandwagon effect among Zambian supporters; hence more join in this fandom in order to achieve a sense of belonging, thereby achieving a group identity.

As detailed in chapter three, the English soccer Premier League was formed in 1992, replacing an older league. The re-organisation of the 'Big League' to the current Premier League may be argued to have brought about its widespread following. This re-organisation not only brings about the pleasures for the fans, it also provides a forum to learn from, through, for example, the good performance of the players and the teams. For one of the interviewees, such knowledge has come in the following way:

Mutaya: Soccer is an art that is enjoyable to be seen at the highest level. We have so many leagues and they play at different levels, but **the English League is high up there**. It gives me pleasure to watch it at that level. You see, when I watch that league, I relate it to my job and say to myself that if we had to imagine the stock exchange in Lusaka and compare it with the one in New York for example, the advanced one is obviously the New York stock exchange. So when I watch English soccer, I say, compared to the other leagues, this is big. Anyway, soccer is an art and I like to see the way it is played and perfected by the people who play in that league. I am passionate about the league.

When the interviewee talks of soccer as an art, the assertion here is that he is referring to the skill engaged by the players in the sporting discipline of soccer, and how this skill is carried out and perfected in the English soccer Premier League to provide a beautiful

spectacle, accompanied by goal scoring. For a person to get to a stage where he/she looks at this league as an art signifies that the fans' understanding of the league has shifted to represent something else to them, for example, association with quality. Further, for the above interviewee, the league offers a connection with the kind of job that he has. It gives him a chance to admit that there are higher standards of his kind of job in the developed countries. Perhaps he even wishes to be in these organisations that are better organised. However, this was surmised from the data, as the issue was not probed during the interview.

In one of the focus group discussions, Gabriel's view regarding the reasons why he follows the English soccer Premier League was:

Gabriel 2: I think that [that] is the best league and I think every player wants to play in that league. There are high salaries for the players ... they just don't play for peanuts. They have mansions and big cars ... something that our local players cannot have ... even if their team tops the league (local) ... no house ... no car ... they depend on their club bus to pick them up. It's pathetic.

The response above indicates that in comparison to their counterparts playing in the English soccer Premier League, poor working conditions do not encourage the Zambian players to perform well. This response brings me to the issue of discussing why and how Zambian soccer supporters distinguish between the English soccer Premier League and the local Zambian league, and why they have a preference for the former. Out of the twelve interviewees, only one admitted to following the local league. When asked why they do not follow the local league, Dawson and Munkamba responded:

Munkamba: If the local league had **good publicity**, everyone would have interest.

Dawson: Yes!

Munkamba: That is how people developed interest in the English premiership in the first place, through publicity.

In support of Munkamba's argument regarding publicity, it is worth noting here that the English soccer Premier League is highly publicised. However, this may also be indicative of media agendas, which suggest that the English soccer Premier League is more important than the local league. Television continues to play a major role in the history of this 13-year old league. The first Sky television agreement was worth £191 million in 1992 and has since risen to £1.024 billion (www.premierleague.com). On the other hand, the local league is not televised – not even broadcast via radio – thereby making the 'would be' fans rely on newspapers to follow the league. In the same interview, the current situation with the local league is further discussed:

Munkamba: And in the rare event that a game is shown on television, there is **bad quality** of both the game and the picture (camera work).

Dawson: Ah yes! The camera can be showing one side of the pitch where there is nobody, and yet a goal is being scored on the other side.

Michael: The field, the pictures are not okay. Even the teams playing don't have proper jerseys. Our main stadium is very dilapidated ...

The poor quality of the local league extends from the players and organisers to the broadcasters as well. The technical aspect expected of the broadcasters is not carried out as professionally as their counterparts at BSkyB when they televise the English soccer Premier League. The bad quality also extends to the football pitch and the general state of the stadia in Zambia. Consequently, the discourse of foreign versus local, where foreign is taken to be good and local as bad, stands. The implication is that the English soccer Premier League as a foreign league is held in higher regard than the local league. With regards to this point therefore, it may be taken that the issues that the Media Imperialism thesis raises are pertinent. Other responses from the interviews, with regards to the local league, revealed that many of the fans in Zambia do not have paraphernalia such as soccer shirts for their local teams. In light of the responses that will be interpreted below in 5.3.2, that soccer shirts help to distinguish an individual as a soccer fan, this lacuna with regards the local league could be indicative of the seriousness (or the relative lack thereof) with which these fans consider local football.

In the interviews, the respondents acknowledged that **DSTV** has availed them a chance to follow the English soccer Premier League. They were also of the view that due to the absence of televised local league games, as well as poor publicity, the local league is not popular among Zambians, leading them to follow the English Premier League. This is highlighted in a comment made by one of the research subjects:

Gabriel 1: The only thing I would like to tell you is that given a choice, I would like to be watching Arsenal from the stadium, even if I know that [that] would not be always ... you have made me start wondering what we would do for social activity if there wasn't English soccer on TV ...

The English soccer Premier League can therefore be argued to have brought a leisure activity that Zambian fans can be said to enjoy and are happy to engage with. The introduction of DSTV in Zambia has played a major role in encouraging support for this league. Thus, regardless of whether or not the English soccer Premier League is the best league, it is the only one that is broadcast for the whole nine-month season, every year.

The reasons for the popularity of the English soccer Premier League, as described by fans, is that the premiership gives them a sense of belonging, it allows them to associate with 'quality' and – in some ways – they are responding to a sporting league which media have prioritised. Having outlined the reasons why Zambians follow the English soccer Premier League, my next step is to discuss the modes of inclusion and exclusion into the fandom of this league, in order to understand how Zambian supporters negotiate their fandom.

5.2 The boundaries of fandom

In this section, I interpret the interviewees' responses to the question of how they distinguish a soccer fan from a casual follower, with particular reference to the English soccer Premier League. My analysis of these responses is based on the three characteristics of fandom discussed earlier.

5.2.1 Knowing the rules of the game

The first characteristic of fandom, which demonstrates that fans discriminate the boundaries into their fandom, is that of discrimination and distinction (Fiske 1992). When asked how supporters of the English soccer Premier League differentiated between fans and casual followers, the interviewees revealed that there were boundaries for acceptable standards of entry into their fandom. Below these imagined levels, one is viewed as a 'casual follower'. Identity is argued to be most clearly defined by difference, by polarisation, and by the markings of inclusion and exclusion – insiders and outsiders – 'us' and 'them' (Woodward 1997). Thus, for the Zambian fans interviewed for this study, to own some paraphernalia – most notably, soccer shirts – of one's team is important in being identified as a loyal supporter¹⁶. However, even though soccer shirts are popular among supporters, they are not, in themselves, enough to demonstrate a fan's attachment to his/her team. This was expressed by one of the interviewees:

Brian: That person has to have a jersey. When you see this, you have to observe whether he **knows the game**.

Another interviewee had the following opinion regarding the issue of owning soccer shirts:

Michael: ... ideally, the situation is supposed to be that if one is wearing a shirt, then they are fans.

Michael's comment concerning the 'ideal situation' developed because one of the participants in his focus group discussion was of the opinion that most supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Zambia lack the background information necessary for one to be a 'fan'. His response to the question of how one would categorise a fan of the English soccer Premier League was that:

Dawson: There are very few soccer fans. Most just follow what others say ... and mostly just follow whoever is winning. Some so-called fans may not even know who is playing what position in their own teams.

¹⁶ The issue of soccer shirts is further discussed in subsection 5.3.2.

Thus, for the fans of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, it is not only important but essential, to acquire the above kind of knowledge - or be relegated to the status of a follower. The argument goes that fans must have knowledge about their object of fandom, in this case, the league, the players and the particular team that one supports. The supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka adhere to this feature as can be deduced from the following interview response to the question of categorising a fan of the league:

Sekwa: Basically, a fan must understand the rules of the game.

Hence, apart from having such knowledge as the players' positions in one's team, knowing the rules of the game emerged as an important criterion for being considered a fan and not a follower of the league. With the knowledge of the rules of the game, one crosses the figurative barrier into the fandom of soccer supporters of the English soccer Premier League. Those that I interviewed have drawn this line between fans and followers, depending on whether one knows the rules of the game. One of the women interviewed acknowledged that she lacks such information, and as such, has yet to become a fan:

Nambula: I follow the league but I think I wouldn't classify myself as a true fan. I still have things to learn...issues to work through. I don't even know most of the players. I think a fan must have a **well-informed knowledge of the game** ... It's not just a question of following because there are attractions for the game. For me, I have become interested because my boyfriend is ...

Here the interviewee points to the currency of having knowledge of the players and the rules. She also reveals that she follows the league because of her boyfriend's interest in it. This issue regarding the point of entry into the fandom, as well as the reasons why women decide to become fans of the English soccer Premier League is discussed in detail in chapter six, in the sub-section on 'gender'. On the subject of fans versus casual followers, Nambula's response demonstrates the need to have different types of knowledge in order to be a fan, and she knows that she is not a fan because she lacks this knowledge. Nambula's statement about how she does not think of herself as a fan

emerges as an important concern because it reveals the existence of imagined terms for inclusion into the fandom of soccer supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka. Importantly, both fans and followers understand these terms of inclusion, and this explains the self-exclusion by Nambula, when she self-identifies herself as a casual follower.

In the process of discrimination and distinction, there may also be aesthetic discrimination of official culture that includes ranking the stars, teams or other performers of the particular object of fandom (Fiske 1992). Consequently, fans are able to rank players, teams or coaches in a hierarchical order. Interestingly, I found that the fans that have supported the league longer were of the view that they are ‘better’ fans, though they still consider the newer members as supporters as well. In addition, it can be argued that a fan that continues to support the same team reinforces his or her status as a loyal supporter. This was revealed in response to the question about how Zambians distinguish fans from followers:

Brian: A lot of people are watching the league now, but true fans have always been there.

Dawson: ... besides ... sometimes when you wear the shirt that your team wore five years ago, you really look like a **true supporter**, sticking with your team over time, instead of just changing the teams when their performances dwindle.

For these Zambian fans, it is important to be loyal to one’s team, trusting that if the team is not winning, a day will come when the team will enjoy success. The fans that have supported one team, even through the team’s difficult times, have proven a particular kind of strength that is considered important among the fans. It is argued that older fans view themselves as having witnessed the changes in the object of fandom, or indeed that the older version was more authentic compared to the current one (Fiske 1992). In Zambia too, this kind of loyalty to a team is evident. The issue of loyalty is one that the fans take seriously, as was revealed in some of the fans’ comments:

Gabriel 1: If my team became small, I would still support it.

Wiza: Being a fan is about loyalty ... it's about having faith in your team. You must be willing to go under with your team ... and trust that they will rise up again. When you change teams anyhow ... aaah ... you are not a fan. It's a marriage you know ... you commit to a team!

The above responses indicate that the nature of the values held by the fans is generally traditional, related to assumptions about family, particularly about patriarchy. Likening trust and faith in a team to a marriage not only signifies the seriousness of the relationship between fans and their teams, but that the construction of thinking around soccer is based on the traditional Zambian customs. The interviewees invoke a kind of religious discourse, which is acceptable among them, because it underlines their status as fans. Therefore, the fans consider themselves to be key supporters, hence regard it sensible to be so fanatical about the league, that they draw parallels with religion. Religion, particularly Christianity is regarded highly in Zambia and the constitution of Zambia declares Zambia a Christian nation. With such seriousness attached to religion, the fans' religious connotations with regards to the English soccer Premier League symbolises that the fans take seriously, their relationship with the teams of the English soccer Premier League that they support.

5.2.2 Making meaning through oral culture

The second characteristic of fandom is that of productivity and participation (Fiske 1992). Semiotic productivity refers to the process of making meanings of social identity and social experience from the semiotic resources of cultural commodities. Enunciative productivity refers to the situation where meanings produced in the semiotic productivity are spoken and shared within oral culture, so as to take public form (Fiske 1992). These two types of productivity work hand in hand to help mould the identities of Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League. Asked why the interviewees preferred to watch the games from the bars, Nguesso responded:

Nguesso: I find that watching from the bar is **very informative**. I learn a lot of things from the guys there. Things about players and coaches and their

lifestyles. I work in the field so I don't have time to surf the net for stories, but when I am at the bar, I learn things from these guys.

Therefore, it is through the process of other fans' discussion of the league that Nguesso learns of new developments in the league. Thus, the viewing space becomes an information space, where the fans can learn more about the game, the league, the team and the players. Significantly, it is in these viewing spaces that the fans interpret the game and its nuances on their own terms, and in the process, they reproduce this information for others to learn from. During the same discussion, the following conversation ensued:

Twaambo: There is a lot of **talking** in these places ... especially during half time ... huh!

Wiza: Talking is essential because at that point, everyone is making their predictions ...

Nguesso: And yet inside, they are dying of anxiety.

On this evidence, the contention is that it is through the 'talking' in the bars, that identities specific to the fans are developed. It is through the 'predictions' mentioned in the excerpt above, that fans demonstrate how well they know the rules of the game, the players and any other information concerning the games, players or the league. Consequently, the fans that make the right predictions may be looked at by the other supporters as having knowledge of the game, thereby categorising the former as 'the fans'.

In their study of groups of people who watched Dallas, Liebes and Katz (1993) argued that there occurred 'symbolic vocabulary', which the interviewees use to produce further group interaction. This conversational resource functions to keep open the channels of communication among group members. Given the above argument therefore, fan talk can be regarded as a conversational resource among supporters of the English soccer Premier League, which allows for group interactions. Thus, fan talk creates opportunities for the

reproduction of shared meaning, thereby strengthening the group identity, in which ideas are shared and information passed on from the supporters to potential supporters such as Nambula. Therefore, as a result of these interactions, in other instances, fan talk perpetuates the distance between the fan and the follower. In one of the focus group discussions, the interviewee had the following to say regarding fan talk:

Munkamba: It's amazing! It's like ... if you don't have the **vocabulary** ... you simply cannot participate in these conversations.

If a person does not acquire the information needed to be able to participate in the soccer conversations at the bars, then that person is a casual follower. In these bars, which are the viewing spaces, it is difficult to know the difference between a supporter and a follower until the fan has conversed with the follower. Therefore, the casual follower, when only their dress code is observed – which may include a soccer shirt – may be deemed a supporter until such time that he or she engages in the soccer conversations which take place in the bars. From my observation, when an individual is understood to be a casual follower, then that person is considered to be masquerading and these are the people blamed for the *laissez-faire* attitude that society bestows on the supporters of the English soccer Premier League fans. However, these followers are not castigated. Instead, the fans begin to share information about the league with them. Moreover, this process turns the fans that share the information into opinion leaders. The use of the word 'vocabulary' in the statement by Munkamba above indicates the use of certain terms used during the soccer conversations by fans, which a person outside of this community of discourse may not understand.

In an interview with Wiza, he had the following to say when asked if he was a proud supporter of his team:

Interviewer: I take it that you are a proud Liverpool fan ... is that so?

Wiza: Yes ... I must say that I am. People have tried to put me down. They call us *Liverfool* (says that with disgust) ... but I just take it that we are not fools ... we've just lost the [winning] touch. It will come back.

Interviewer: When they say Liver-fool ... do you take it they are saying you are a fool?

Wiza: You see ... when you support a team, you are taken to possess the quality of those players. You stand for what they have portrayed. If by saying Liverfool, they mean that the players are fools, it extends to you, the fan and vice versa. But we know we are not fools ... it's just a question of time.

The above implies that it is through the process of teasing one another, that, for example, fans in Lusaka have constructed the meaning that Liverpool supporters are fools. The citation also designates the importance that the fans attach to distancing themselves from their rivals. Thus, a Liverpool fan knows that other supporters of the league call him/her a fool, but maintains that it is a question of time and their period to win will come again. The importance that the fans attach to winning is further discussed in section 5.3 under the heading 'pleasures and the premiership'.

Another comment made to concretise the point that it is through discussions and particularly through teasing one another that identities are formulated, arose in one of the focus group discussions when the participants were discussing the problems that they face in going to work after the weekend if their teams lost. This is discussed in the interview excerpt below:

Gabriel 2: Anyway, if you have to survive Monday at work, you better pray your team wins.

Interviewer: What happens on Monday at work?

Twaambo: The people whose teams won go to work early ... even 7:30 so that when the losers walk in at 8:00, they are teased ...

Wiza: ... they are told 'we told you so'... or that they are wasting their time supporting their team. I have suffered ... with my support for Liverpool ... (shakes his head).

Ngusso: haa ha (laughing) ... I don't know how you guys do it ... honestly ... Liver-fool! Shame.

Gabriel 2: Chaps make you feel like you are a loser ... just like your team.

It has been argued that fan talk helps generate and circulate certain meanings of the object of fandom (Fiske 1992). Thus, for fans supporting the English soccer Premier League, this support has become a way of proving whether or not one is a performer, depending on which team one supports. To ‘go to the office early’, so as to ascertain that when the ‘losers’ walk in, they are teased, is an indication of how the fans take the games personally. They take the knowledge of information around the game and the tactics that the teams employ seriously too, as this is illustrated in the example that the winners can say ‘we told you so’. The comment by Gabriel that ‘chaps make you feel like you are a loser’ reveals how, through this teasing, the strength or weakness of one’s team is extended to the fans. Hence, the strength or weakness of a fan can be constructed depending on the English soccer Premier League team one supports. The above interview excerpt reveals that it is through the process of fan talk that meanings surrounding the soccer fan identity are constructed among fans.

5.2.3 Having information about the league, the team and the players

A third characteristic of fandom through which one can be included or excluded in a fan community is that of capital accumulation, which lies in the appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events (Fiske 1992). In the interviews and the focus group discussions that I conducted, the need for a fan to have knowledge about the league in general, and the team in particular proved to be of importance. One of the interviewees, Gabriel, expressed his opinion as such:

Gabriel 1: I would say that ... it’s the way that they come out ... how they know that there is a game and then come out to watch. You can see the interest as a fan talks, knowing and saying what happened in the last game, the score line, who the scorers are ... you know, things like that.

The above response was given upon asking the interviewee how he would categorise a fan of the league. In the same interview, when requested to describe a typical soccer-watching day, the following was part of the response:

Gabriel 1: ... see, we are in a constant competition and you have to be at the tavern to follow the game well, otherwise, you can lag behind and fail to have proper soccer conversations.

Thus, having basic information such as fixtures, score lines, and knowledge of what happened in the previous games is vital among fans, otherwise, a fan experiences exclusion from the pleasures derived from the 'constant competition' that Gabriel refers to above. Hence, information of the league as a whole, and teams and players in particular is important, as these are the arsenals that a supporter has in this competition. Regardless of the performance of the team, a fan has to have information about the team, players and league in order to demonstrate the necessary vocabulary to take part in a soccer conversation at the bar, or elsewhere. In this regard, I would argue that the fans whose teams are not winning at the moment could use information about their team during the time that these teams used to win. As a supporter of the league, I have heard, for example, Liverpool fans discuss their glorious days.

Among the supporters of the English soccer Premier League, some can be said to have accumulated more capital than others. The experts, in gaining knowledge about the object of fandom, gain prestige among the group and act as opinion leaders (Fiske 1992). This idea of 'opinion leaders' was acknowledged by many of those interviewed. Asked how the interviewees chose the teams that they support, Michael answered:

Michael: My guardian, Ba Ngoma [Mr Ngoma] supports Man U. That is how I found myself supporting this team. The man would go on endlessly about the indomitable Manchester United. Through him, I heard of the players' names. They stuck in my mind and I found myself slowly developing interest in these people, until now, I am a fan ...

The above response by Michael demonstrates one of the ways that individuals come to be fans of a particular team - through fan talk (Fiske 1992). It can therefore be argued that it is through fan talk that fans decide, for example, which teams they support. Importantly, the fan talk must involve a fan that has capital accumulation about the object of fandom in order to persuade others. Thus, for Michael, his uncle was the **opinion leader**, at least at that point of entry into this particular fandom. In another discussion, Nambula had the

following to say when asked if there were incidents where the interviewees perceive some of their fellow fans as ‘the fans’:

Nambula: I am still in a situation where I think that there are people who know a lot more than I do ... so yah ... I get to say ... okay ... so and so knows what is going on. Some people have really read into soccer and their teams. I am just not there yet.

Therefore, the above statement reveals that there are opinion leaders among the supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, and the views that have led to this deduction are mainly expressed through fan talk. Consequently, there is also a need by fans to search for information about their teams, players and the league as a whole, as can be deduced when Nambula refers to some fans who have ‘really read into soccer’.

Thus, based on the characteristics of fandom outlined in the above three sub-sections, the Zambian supporter of the English soccer Premier League can be argued to be an individual who knows and understands the rules of soccer. This individual must also be in possession of information about the league, the team he/she supports as well as information about the players. Without such knowledge, that individual is considered a follower and not a fan. Importantly, deductions of whether or not one is a follower or supporter are reached through orally expressing different opinions that later define the figurative barriers that have to be crossed into fandom. In Lusaka, these oral expressions are made through the process of fans teasing one another.

Below, I discuss the pleasures that the fans derive from following the English soccer Premier League.

5.3 Pleasure and the premiership

It is argued that there is a lot of pleasure embedded in fan talk about the object of fandom (Fiske 1992). Given such an argument therefore, the question, “What kinds of pleasures do you derive from following the English soccer Premier League?” was included in the interview guide. The interviewees revealed a number of pleasures that they derive as a

result of their engagement with this league. From the answers provided in the interviews, the interviewees appeared to gain personal pleasures that are fulfilled through, for example, the release of tension when a team wins. A number of the pleasures are as a result of the collective viewing experience. In the interview excerpt below, Dawson and Munkamba refer to the kind of pleasures enjoyed by the other interviewees:

Dawson: When you know how your team plays, you somewhat have a jigsaw puzzle in your mind, and when the passes [of the ball] are made as you predicted, it gives intense pleasure. You know ... that kind of pleasure that just says 'I knew it' ... and if you had made the prediction loudly, the pleasure is even tripled. I guess that is why there is too much noise in a place where soccer fans are watching soccer ... **everybody is trying to make known their prediction.** For me, this is what makes it vital to watch with other people that understand the league because you can prove just how well you know the game and the team. Aaah ... (he sighs) it makes you feel good to know who is good at headers, running, scoring etc. It gives you that excitement. You know the tactics and organisation of the team and when they score, it's a plus. When things go wrong, that is when you get upset.

Munkamba: It's an **emotional attachment.** If you are a soccer fan, you have an emotional attachment with the team.

Consequently, to be seen as someone who knows one's team and capability, thereby making the right predictions about the tactics that the players employ, reinforces one's status as an ardent supporter. Therefore, it is important for fans to watch the games with other people who understand the game so that there can be appreciation bestowed on the person that makes the right predictions. There is pleasure in knowing how and which tactics the teams use to develop a winning formula and as Dawson said in the citation above, 'when they score, it's a plus', the contention therefore is that the point of goal scoring is one of the most, if not the most, pleasurable part of watching the games. Ultimately the winning is important. In the viewing spaces where the interviewees watch the games, this point of goal scoring need not be as a result of one's team scoring. It may also be as a result of another team scoring against a rival team. This means that the rival team, if it loses, slips down on the log table. Since winning is usually amongst the 'big

teams', when any of these teams loses to a small team, then that losing team's supporters undergo a phase of ridicule from supporters of other 'big teams'.

Since the issue of emotional attachment was referred to in the above interview excerpt, when asked to explain what 'emotional attachment' entailed, the response was that it equals love for the game, and a team in particular and that it is the emotional attachment that makes people laugh or cry depending on the performance of their team. The above point on showing joy through laughing, and sadness through crying when one's team wins or loses respectively, brings me to the argument that, "... for men, sport is the one site for the soft and controlled expression of softer emotions which can rarely be expressed in wider culture" (Russell 1999). Hence, it was no surprise that one of the men interviewed pointed out that:

Brian: Every time I watch soccer, I am **touched**. I am so **passionate** about the game. At the moment of watching, all I want is my team to win. There have been moments of crying too.

The responses to the question regarding the pleasures that the fans derive from following the English soccer Premier League point to some of the qualities that the Zambian fans of this league find pleasurable. These responses indicate the need by the fans to be associated to success. The supporters of the league feel glorious, honoured and free of tension when their teams win. They enjoy the tactics employed by the players in the league while some enjoy the professionalism that the players exhibit when playing soccer, thereby hoping to extend such benefits to the local Zambian players. Through the fan talk and predictions made during the process of watching the games, these supporters feel a sense of accomplishment when their predictions are right, thereby earning praise and envy from fellow viewers. Due to the emotional attachment that these supporters have for their teams, they experience pleasure in the winning and success of their teams. They feel they are as strong as the teams are. Since these pleasures appear to be embedded in the strength and not the weaknesses of the teams, the theme concerning the fans' attachment with success is discussed below.

5.3.1 'Fans' attachment to success

During the interviews, it was revealed that some of the pleasures that the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League gain include winning, goal scoring, tactics used by the players, professionalism and others. These are the moments or processes around which supporters of the league derive pleasures. In line with these pleasures, I endeavoured to find out if such qualities were equal among all twenty teams of the league. If so, is support among the teams equally shared?

Mutaya: It is not equal across the world, across Europe and in England alike. Teams like Everton, West Brom. [West Bromich Albion] and the like ... you don't see those jerseys being won by people in Zambia ... may be up there, but here, there is no place for them ...

Brian: It's not equal. There are **big teams** in every league and these are the ones that attract the bigger crowds, then there are those small ones that have attracted smaller crowds.

The importance that the fans attach to winning is evident in the above responses. Thus, the choice of the team to be followed may be determined by the performance of the team at the moment an individual decides to start supporting the league. Among the twelve supporters interviewed, four are Manchester United supporters, three support Arsenal, another three support Liverpool, while the remaining two are Chelsea fans. Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool and Chelsea are all big teams, and from the breakdown among the supporters interviewed, it may be argued that the winning teams are most popular with fans in Zambia.

Earlier in sub-section 5.2.3, the role that opinion leaders play in influencing others to join their fandom was laid out. Here, it is important to note that the opinion leaders of losing teams would most probably find it difficult to convince new fans to start supporting their teams. In an effort to determine whether the performance of the teams at the entry point into this fandom influences which team one supports, the response by the 'newer fan' – Nambula – when asked if she started supporting Chelsea in 2004 was interesting. She answered:

Nambula: Yes. I am scared that I may end up being one of those whose support changes from season to season.

Having been runner-up for the 2003/04 season and winners for the 2004/05 season, Chelsea is one team that may be drawing fans who are beginning to understand and follow the game now for the simple reason that they are champions, and thus qualify as a big team.

5.3.2 Soccer shirts

The fans of the English soccer Premier League find it necessary to own their teams' soccer shirts. These shirts symbolise the loyalty that the fans have for their teams. The soccer shirts are also part of the cultural capital necessary for the supporters to possess, and are a sign that the supporters are part of the fandom. All the interviewees own soccer shirts, some, more than one, which they wear whenever their teams are playing. The widespread support for big teams can be seen by the popularity of these teams' soccer shirts that are worn by the fans. It is argued that via such symbols as soccer shirts, fans demonstrate not only their team allegiance, but also attempt to bridge the distance between them and the object of fandom in an imaginary way, because garments give the impression of proximity (Merkel 1999). Thus, requested to explain why the interviewees have soccer shirts, some of the responses were:

Dawson: It makes me feel like I belong to one of the best things to happen on this planet, my team Arsenal.

Munkamba: ... probably it's this **strength** that fans want to be associated with. It's like you, as a fan are synonymous with the team, hence the strength as well. Who doesn't want to be strong anyway?

The above indicates that support for the big teams is common and even necessary because of the fans' need to identify with winning and successful teams. The comments above by Dawson and Munkamba also demonstrate how the soccer fans make meanings. For instance, that an individual is a strong person because he/she wears a soccer shirt that represents a winning or successful and therefore a strong team. The above responses signify that the fans' reading of the globally televised English soccer Premier League

brings about symbolic distancing, where the fans feel removed, however partially, from their day to day local conditions¹⁷.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I interpreted the reasons why Zambians follow the English soccer Premier League, how Zambians distinguish a fan from a casual follower, as well as the pleasures gained from supporting this league.

I started by acknowledging that this analysis is informed by theories of fandom, particularly the three characteristics of fandom as advanced by Fiske (1992). Using these characteristics of inclusion and exclusion into a particular fandom, the chapter was divided into four sections. I began by discussing the reasons given by the interviewees regarding their following of the league. The Zambian fans consider the league to be the best in the world. They also hold the view that it is as a result of the continual televising of this league via DSTV that they are able to support it. Significantly, the fans consider their support of the league as one way that ensures their sense of belonging as it merges them into a particular group identity. The fans also hold that the English soccer Premier League is highly publicised, and that generally it is of higher quality compared to their local league whose quality is poor in terms of infrastructure and style of play.

An interpretation of how the Zambian supporters create a boundary of inclusion into their fandom was then provided. The Zambian fans regard the level to which someone knows the rules of the game seriously. They expect a person to have information concerning the league, the teams and the players. Further, the fans consider their practice of viewing the games from public places as a way of gaining information about the players, the teams and the league. Hence, these public viewing spaces also act as information spaces for the fans. Another point that emerged with regards differentiating a fan from a follower is that a fan must exercise loyalty towards his or her team, failure to which the fan can be considered to be a follower. The interviewees revealed that meanings of who a fan is are made through the oral culture by fans of different teams teasing one another.

¹⁷ The issue of symbolic distancing is further discussed in 6.1.1

Consequently, fan talk plays a major role in formulating the identities of these fans, for example, the strength or weakness of a person based on the English soccer team that he or she follows.

The pleasures they acquire from following the English soccer Premier League was then discussed. The fans enjoy soccer played by the teams in the English soccer Premier League, particularly the winning teams. They enjoy the discussions on soccer when they engage in their ritualistic manner of watching the games in groups at public places. Therefore, the process of making predictions about the possible outcomes of a game before and during the match is of utmost importance to the fans, especially if a fan can make the right predictions. The interviewees also revealed that they experience an emotional attachment with their teams. This emotional attachment leads to the fans being passionate about their teams.

In chapter six, I will present and analyse the fans' own interpretations of the viewing spaces within which they watch the games. I will also discuss how the soccer fan identity engages with other types of identities in Zambia.

Chapter Six

Presentation and discussion of findings

Lusaka fans as active consumers of the English soccer Premier League

6.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, the reasons why Zambians follow the English soccer Premier League were discussed. The most cited reason provided by the interviewees was that they consider the league to be the best in the world and are drawn to the success/es represented by the players and team in the English Premier League. Having interpreted the fans' opinions on why they follow the league, I then provided an outline of the imaginary boundaries that the fans adhere to for the purposes of inclusion and exclusion to their fandom. The bench marks include knowing the rules of the game, making meaning through oral culture – thereby making it essential for the fan to acquire the necessary vocabulary that can enable him/her to have soccer conversations with fellow fans, and having information about the league, the team and the players of a fan's favourite English soccer Premier League team. This outline was followed by a discussion of the pleasures that the fans derive from following the league. The fans invoked a discourse in which they pointed to their appreciation for the professionalism, tactics, and the goal scoring of their teams.

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings from the interviews that I conducted with regards to the process undergone by the fans as a result of their viewing the games from public eating and drinking places, most notably the pubs. This is because it is in these viewing spaces that the fans construct meanings of their identity, both in and out of the viewing spaces. I also present an interpretation of how the fans' soccer identity engages with other identities in the Zambian society. This chapter employs an ethnographical critique of the Media Imperialism thesis in order to investigate the claims made by this thesis that global media's availability in third world countries brings about a homogenised world culture that is determined by the first world countries (Tomlinson 1991). Ethnographic audience research resists the claims made in the Media Imperialism thesis that first world culture is transmitted to and adopted by third world countries, and

argues that the audiences bring their own interpretative frameworks and sets of meaning to media texts. Ethnography, therefore, provides a nuanced view of international effects as mediated by pre-existing cultural frameworks and interpretative schema (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991).

This chapter comprises three primary sections:

- 6.1 The viewing space
 - 6.1.1 Symbolic distancing
 - 6.1.2 Refuting the Media Imperialism Thesis (MIT)
- 6.2 The soccer fan and other identities
 - 6.2.1 Class
 - 6.2.2 Gender
 - 6.2.3 Politics
 - 6.2.4 Religion
- 6.3 Conclusion

6.1 The viewing space

The supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka view most of the games from public places such as bars. For most of those interviewed, viewing the games from the local bars is something that they perceived as an activity from which they derived the most pleasure while watching football. In this section, the task is to analyse how watching the games from public eating and drinking places contributes to identity formation among the fans. In response to the question of why the interviewees watch the games from public places, Gabriel, Twaambo and Wiza said:

Gabriel 2: For me ... I don't know what it feels like to watch from home ... but in the bar ... you meet guys there who understand the game. Guys frustrating each other ... celebrating together ... it's **exciting** to watch from the bar.

Twaambo: ... It **makes me feel like I am at the stadium** ... only just better because you can still have your drink ... mosi, fanta or even water ...

All: Haa haaa (they laugh).

Wiza: You are right! It's like you are at the stadium, but you can have your drink (they wink at each other at the mention of 'drink'). I basically enjoy the **conversations** that take place at the bar ... Me, I have a dish, but I don't watch from home because the people there don't have a high understanding of the game.

The implication in the above excerpt is that Zambian fans of the English soccer Premier League specifically enjoy the shared experience of viewing the games. In the process of such public viewing, a group identity is formed. As noted in chapter 5.3.1, it is the winning teams that enjoy high support. Thus, the viewing spaces are ordered depending on the team one supports, where fans of the same team converge in one section of the room urging their team on, while their rivals sit elsewhere and express their contradicting views. It is through such group viewing that fans gain knowledge of themselves as a group (Strelitz 2002) because "...social groups [do not] agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities ... but ... they only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organisation of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement" (Frith 1996 quoted in Strelitz 2002).

In addition, watching the games from the bars gives the fans an opportunity to feel as though they are at the stadium. They regard the pubs to be exciting viewing spaces, within which they can tease one another. In the individual interview with Gabriel, the first thing he did when asked why he watches the games from the bar, despite having DSTV, was to dismiss the question, as though watching from the bar was the only way possible or available to people who are interested in following the league. His response was:

Gabriel 1: Ha ha haaa (he laughs). You see ... at the bars, you tend to mingle with ... I don't know if I can call them proper fanatics. For me, I like the comments that these people pass when I am there to watch soccer, they make me laugh ... I guess that I can say that I enjoy the environment. The environment is simply too exciting. I make a plan with my friends so that we can all sit and watch

the game together and even if some of my friends don't support my team, we still watch the game together so that we can **compete properly**.

When another interviewee who has a DSTV connection was asked why he watched the games from the bars, he responded:

Wiza: ... if you are among people that understand the game, you share a couple of things as the game proceeds. You enjoy like that ... it is easy to **hide behind arguments** as you are watching the league. You can be scared to death ... but ... as you argue with rivals or console each other with a counterpart, you feel better.

Thus, the inferences in the responses provided by Gabriel and Wiza indicate that the shared viewer-ship is the entertainment. Therefore, both interviewees reiterate the description of a bar as an exciting viewing space which offers them a chance to laugh (relax), learn some new things regarding soccer as well as creating a forum for competition that is mostly carried out through fan talk. During such talk, fans are able to conceal their anxiety, an action that the fans perceive would be impossible to carry out if watching of the matches with someone who does not understand the game, and hence cannot argue with or console the fan. The bars afford the fans a chance to watch soccer with fellow supporters who understand the game. The shared viewer-ship also creates a situation where celebrations by the fans whose teams have won are carried out as though they are watching the games from the stadium where the teams are playing.

Outside the viewing spaces, the fans represent one body that has its own practices and rituals. To outsiders, these fans are well-to-do people who are able to meet the basic needs of life and remain with time and money to engage with an expensive habit such as following the English soccer Premier League. While in the viewing spaces, the supporters go through different emotions that lead them to, for instance, feel as though they are watching the games from the stadium. An emotion such as this may lead to what scholars such as Thompson (1995) term as symbolic distancing. Below is a discussion of this concept, so as to help illuminate how Zambian fans of the English soccer Premier League construct their identities based on their ritual of watching this league via satellite television from public places.

6.1.1 Symbolic distancing

Symbolic distancing refers to a “situation where the appropriation of symbolic materials enables individuals to establish some distance from the conditions of their day to day lives – not literally, but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously, thereby gaining some conception however partial, of ways of life and life conditions which differ significantly from their own” (Thompson 1995: 175). As mentioned above, during the course of watching a soccer match, the supporters of the English soccer Premier League experience a range of different emotions. For example, fans want their teams to win, hence they become emotional when their teams play, thereby getting happy when these teams win, and sad when they lose. The interviewees also said that they become ‘part of the crowd’ when watching the games from the bars. Below, Mutaya reveals why he chooses to watch the games from the bars:

Mutaya: The reason is that when you watch from the bar, it creates an atmosphere that is close to that of the stadium where the match is being played. Usually, as fans, when we cannot be at the stadium, the best option is to be around fellow followers ... you want to watch with people who are thinking like you.

Thus, fans create a community of supporters when watching the games. Due to the interviewees’ emphasis on the issue of winning, it can be argued that the fans are distancing themselves from a situation where local teams as well as the national team do not produce goals, nor have a winning formula. Therefore, the essence of watching the games from the bar is to immerse oneself in a situation similar to that at the stadium, where the game is underway and goal scoring is part and parcel of the excitement. Such distancing is fitting with an interpretation made in a study among women who read romantic novels in mid-western America, which revealed that the women valued their reading because the experience itself was different from the ordinary existence, as it was a relaxing release from the tension produced by daily problems and responsibilities (Radway 1984). Thus, the intimation with regards to this study is that the people at the stadium have better experiences, hence the aspirations by the Zambian fans.

During the focus group discussion with Michael et al, when requested to describe a typical soccer-watching day at the pub, Michael had the following to say:

Michael: It's a game and one team is bound to lose. **Move on** with your life afterwards.

Thus, Michael's response indicates that the interviewees are removed in time and space as they watch the games, only to get back to reality after the games are over. Here, there is an acknowledgement that soccer is a sport and life has to continue when the game is over. Therefore, one may be impelled to argue that the claim advanced by the Media Imperialism thesis that through the process of importing western television signals, a developing country invariably imports western value systems that encourage its people to envy and seek to join the alien culture they are viewing (Chaffee 1992) may have its short falls. Consequently, a discussion is presented with regards to some of the responses that were expressed in the interviews that appear to refute the media imperialism thesis below.

6.1.2 Refuting the Media Imperialism Thesis (MIT)

The engagement in ethnographic audience research has been justified as an attempt to determine how texts influence audiences and shape their beliefs and behaviour or provide specific pleasures and resources (Kellner 1997). Studies conducted by scholars such as Katz and Liebes (1985), Morley (1986) and Ang (1985) help illustrate the rich play between the existing culture and the new quasi-international culture and the shift in the social relations that the latter may foster (Fiske 1987b). The above-mentioned studies made use of American prime time soap opera of the 1980s, Dallas. Therefore, the texts referred to in the above studies were fictional. However, these studies have influenced my interpretations as this research runs parallel to them because it investigates how the audience makes meaning of global media texts that they are exposed to. However, the texts in my research are not fictional.

Having observed this, it is important to also note that the viewers of the English soccer Premier League beyond the geographical borders of England do not absorb the behaviour of their counterparts in England without putting their context into perspective – mainly

the economic context. The following response demonstrates how the first world cultural milieu is thought through before being adopted by people in third world countries. Asked how he demonstrates that he is a proud supporter of his team, Wiza's answer was that he has three soccer shirts, a scarf and a key ring in his team colours. When I told him that he was rich to afford all these, he replied:

Wiza: Noooo (he says laughing) ... it's just that when you love a team as much as I do ... you **make sacrifices** here and there. Ha haaa (continues laughing) ... it's easy. Any serious fan can have these things. You can get them on **lay bye** ... you know ... (he continues laughing) ... with this COMESA of ours ... there are even imitations out there coming from Tanzania that you can buy cheaply. I am sure you have seen the towels with club logos that are being sold at several traffic lights ... I am telling you ... these Tanzanians ... they are something else when it comes to **cheap imitations**¹⁸ ...

Such a response signifies a situation where, even though there is subversion of consuming, such purchase of commodities is either not conducted from the lawful dealers, or in the event that it is, the manner of paying for the goods is split into a payment plan that takes the form of credit. One of the minimum expectations of inclusion into the fandom of the English soccer Premier League is that of owning a soccer shirt and the response from Wiza reveals some of the ways that the fans are able to go round this hurdle. Such forms of purchasing the needed paraphernalia are necessary because generally, the cost of living in Lusaka is high. Research into the cost of living in Lusaka by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) monthly *Basic Needs Basket* (BNB) for June 2005, for example, revealed that a disparity existed between income on one hand and cost of living on the other (<http://www.jctr.org.zm/publications/basicwage.htm>). Hence, had the situation been that the fans in Lusaka did not put their economical conditions into their local context then one would argue that the fans were being duped through advertisements.

In trying to find out whether the supporters of the English soccer Premier League take the rivalry between supporters of different teams seriously, I asked the interviewees what

¹⁸ Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – COMESA is an organisation to promote trade between countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

kinds of interactions they have when they meet other bar patrons who are fans, for instance, later on in the week. Some of the responses were:

Munkamba: Some **friendships** actually start from these bars. You may just smile at the person, even if they are strangers.

Dawson: Yes. As you watch the game, there can be that enmity, but once the game is over, you **go back to normal** and continue with your lives. So when you meet someone you saw at the bar, you can maybe say something like ‘what’s up’ or ‘how’s it’.

The above conversation situates the fans of the English soccer Premier League as ‘thinking’ human beings who realise that soccer is a sport and they cannot take the enmity too seriously. It has been argued that although viewers get emotionally involved with the characters, it is a playful, light-hearted interaction (Pitout 1998). Hence, as a result of these fans being able to avoid fighting and limiting their teasing of one another, they construct a group identity that portrays them as ‘sports’ men and women who understand the need to solve problems amicably without the use of violence.

As pointed out in chapter 5.3.2, one of the signs of exhibiting that someone is a soccer fan is to acquire a soccer shirt. In an individual interview with Munkamba, she revealed that she has a Manchester United soccer shirt with her name inscribed on the back. Asked why she had to personify her shirt, she responded:

Munkamba: Ha Haa (she laughs) ... To me, it’s a sign of how much I love my team ... but ... I am me ... you know ... it’s like ... I am a Man U fan ... a performer ... a winner ... but **I am still me** ... and I am not ashamed of my name.

The action such as the one above of inscribing one’s own name on a team’s soccer shirt indicates that the supporter is using the situation of being a fan for her own benefit in a patriarchal society. Thus, the interviewee uses the shirt to boost her confidence when she is in public. This goes in line with the argument that through fan knowledge and appreciation, fans acquire an unofficial cultural capital that is a major source of self-esteem among peers (Fiske 1992). Further, the action taken by the above interviewee

helps support the argument that audiences are more active, complex and critically aware in their readings than the media imperialism thesis allows (Tomlinson 1991). She has chosen to use the material used in the developed countries for her benefit in a third world country, whilst acknowledging that she knows who she is, even as she adopts ‘foreign’ paraphernalia, hence the personalising of her shirt.

In another individual interview with Gabriel, the following is how he describes the way he feels as a result of being a supporter of the English soccer Premier League:

Gabriel 1: It makes me feel good, but guilty too because our league is not as advanced as the English one. Here, there are poor facilities for our clubs. The stadiums are in shambles ... even finding things like a soccer shirt to wear when a local team is playing is a non-starter. They don’t even show the games on TV. If you go to the stadium to watch a game, there is no chance that you can catch up with the other matches of the day because they are not shown on TV. It makes you feel lazy. Our teams are not recognised ... aaah (he sighs). I don’t feel too good about the local soccer.

When asked if the rate at which he follows the English soccer Premier League has affected the rate at which he follows the Zambian league, he replied:

Gabriel 1: No. I try...**but the conditions don’t make it easy.** I just rely on seeing the log in the newspaper on Sunday and Monday ... aaah (he sighs) ... I wish they could just bring more of these games on TV.

The above response reveals that it is difficult for fans to follow the local Zambian league due to its under-development. However, the supporters of the English soccer Premier League are not ‘brainwashed’ into following this league, as media imperialists would have it. Nevertheless, drawing on Wiza’s earlier comment of how fans buy imitations of their team’s paraphernalia, this study neither rejects nor totally accepts the Media Imperialism thesis. Instead, meanings should be understood within the context of the lived reality of the fans.

6.2 The soccer fan and other identities

In the above section, the fans' opinions of the processes that take place in the viewing spaces, as well as how some responses from the interviewees help problematise the Media Imperialism thesis were interpreted. Here, I endeavour to analyse the responses received from the interviewees, regarding how their identities as soccer fans relate to the other identities they may assume in Zambia. The section has been divided into four sub-sections, namely class, gender, politics and religion. I begin with the issue of class.

6.2.1 Class

During the interviews, the question of how identities of English soccer Premier League supporters are perceived in relation to other identities was asked. Given the situation that for the average Zambian, there is a disparity between income on one hand and cost of living on the other, thereby leaving the majority of the population living under the poverty datum line, it was prudent to explore the class background of the interviewees.

Significantly, the process of meaning construction and the place of television in the routines of daily life alters from culture to culture and in terms of class within the same cultural community (Barker 2002). Hence, it was vital to know the class backgrounds of the fans interviewed. It has also been argued that, "Until fairly recently, people knew their class and therefore effectively knew who they were ..." (Gauntlett and Hill 1999). Interestingly, the interviewees were reluctant to admit that, for a person to be a follower of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka and watch the games from public places or have a DSTV connection, one has to have disposable income for leisure activities. However, even through this reluctance, such opinions were implied. One of the responses provided to answer the question regarding class was:

Gabriel 1: In modern times, I don't think there are such things as class ... okay ... I don't know whether it's got more to do with the Zambian situation. I don't know whether its got more to do with our standards of soccer or something like that ... but everyone is into it.

The other interviewees made a similar response. The people interviewed all have tertiary education. In Zambia, reaching this level of education is synonymous with people that

have a middle or high-class background. Thus, when it was observed that the interviewees perceived that ‘all sorts of people’ follow the league, an attempt was made to tease out the ‘class’ issue by means of asking if education determines what kind of person becomes a fan. See interview excerpt below:

Wiza: To tell you the truth, it is only **access to DSTV** that is limiting people. Things such as education don’t come into play because the game itself is one that people here already understand and the rules can be applied to any league.

Gabriel: Yah! I mean ... at the market ... even a kaponya [call boy] can tell you quite a bit about soccer ... you know.

Twaambo: Having said that, I find that the people who frequent places like O’Hagans are **people you or I were in school with** ... or those before us ... so to me ... it **depends on which bar you go** to because I think in some bars it is people with at least ... okay ... even a grade twelve certificate.

The above responses indicate that the Zambians who follow the league at least belong to the middle class. Twaambo’s response narrows the class debate to the question of the type of bar where one watches the games. Even though she does not admit that the types of bars where most viewing of the games occur are frequented by people from middle/upper class, educated people like her – a lawyer – she latently admits the need to have disposable income for leisure.

The lack of a prestigious local league creates disillusionment in the viewing spaces, where the fans of the English soccer Premier League have created a local space that affirms their material position. Hence, the fans may be found utilising and showing each other their ‘latest’ and expensive mobile phones, designer jeans and sneakers and sometimes, even expensive alcoholic beverages such as whiskey. Some of the fans’ successes are connected to the sporting success of their teams. Among the people interviewed for example, Gabriel Kabamba revealed how he bought his JVC television and video in 1998 when Arsenal – the English soccer team that he supports – topped the league. In that year, JVC sponsored Arsenal’s sporting kit; hence the soccer shirts had JVC inscribed on them.

Soccer watching among Zambians is a social activity that is carried out amidst alcohol and food consumption, though mainly alcohol. Consequently, there is need to have more than an average income. The following conversation ensued when the participants in one of the focus group discussions debated the issue of the cost of alcoholic beverages:

Wiza: ... I think it's probably more to do with the cost of beer than anything ... I think that the beer in places like O'Hagans is expensive, so some people watch from the market.

Ngusso: A pint there is 7 pin [seven thousand kwacha] ... and in the market it's three-five [three thousand five hundred kwacha] ... that's why some people don't watch from O'Hagans¹⁹.

Gabriel: And ba 'some of us' ... you end up spending more money for nothing...when at the end of the day the league is the same ... no matter where you watch it from²⁰.

Twaambo: I disagree. It's not a question of us thinking we are 'apamwambaz' ... its just that we are **entitled to some comfort** ... and like for me ... being a girl ... I cant be seen drinking from the market ... it would tarnish my image²¹.

The above discussion signifies that consuming alcoholic beverages is an important part of watching the games, but prices differ from bar to bar. Nonetheless, regardless of the location of the bar, a fan has to have disposable income when he/she goes out to a public place to watch the games. The comment made by Twaambo signifies that for some supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, the physical locations are tied into class identities, thus the need to watch from certain types of bars, and not others.

At the time of conducting the interviews, out of the twelve interviewees, five had DSTV while seven did not. The ones without DSTV said they had no choice but to view the games from the bars, while the interviewees with DSTV had a choice, but preferred to

¹⁹ 'Pin' is used to measure 1000.

²⁰ Ba 'some of us' is a phrase used to describe people who think that by virtue of having been to school, they are above other citizens.

²¹ Apamwambaz is a phrase used to describe the rich.

watch from the bars as well. Access to DSTV was perceived to be crucial and one of the interviewees pointed out that class or education do not inhibit people from following the league, arguing that it is only access to DSTV that is important. While pointing out that access to DSTV is a major constraint for ‘would be’ supporters, the interviewee struggled to admit the need to belong to middle or upper class in order to effectively follow the English soccer Premier League. This can be deduced by his argument that a fan need not purchase beverages, though at the same time he is also of the view that the fan can buy something ‘really cheap’. Perhaps the problems encountered by the fans in admitting that they too belong to middle or upper class stem from arguments such as the one below, which was expressed by one of the interviewees – Munkamba – when she made reference to Arsenal football club, which is a ‘winning’ team, despite its relatively poor status compared to Manchester United – a team that Munkamba supports:

Munkamba: ... it’s good to know that money doesn’t necessarily solve all the problems ...

Looking at the responses given by the interviewees concerning class, one may argue that whether a fan watches the games from home or from the bar, a fan has to have access to disposable income to spend on leisure activities. This argument is in line with the need to put certain logistics in place in order to have DSTV. For example, not only has one got to purchase the satellite dish and the decoder, one has to have it connected and pay a monthly subscription of US\$65 or ZMK 310 700, an amount not affordable by the poor Zambians. Alternatively, if a fan decides to be watching the games from the bars, then he/she must have money to spend on drinks – even the really cheap ones. Consequently, the ritual of following the English soccer Premier League is one that is carried out by people that in some way fall between the middle and upper class in society.

Since the supporters of the English soccer Premier League have proven the need to have disposable income, thereby showing that they come from middle/upper class backgrounds, the group identity that these fans portray is that the members of this fandom are comfortable. Thus, when an individual is clad in one of the English soccer Premier League team’s soccer shirt, he/she is considered by the other people who are not part of

this fandom as being well to do. Within this group of well-to-do people are a few women who support the league. Hence, this leads to a discussion on gender divisions among the fans.

6.2.2 Gender

Above, it was concluded that the English soccer Premier League fans in Lusaka are people who have disposable income for leisure activities. In this sub-section, the role that gender plays in the construction of identity among the supporters is discussed. It has been argued that women are allowed entry into sport in subordinate positions, thereby leading to a situation in which most viewing of sport is predominantly done by and in the presence of men (Clarke and Clarke 1982, Horne 2001, Rowe 1999). Given this argument, therefore, I endeavoured to have some women interviewees in order to acquire insights from a female point of view. Among the interviewees, there were eight men and four women, and thus, one may take this as an indication of the imbalance of gender among these soccer supporters. Asked what their entry point to the fandom of English soccer Premier League was, some of the women responded that:

Munkamba: Initially, I would just hear about the league. Back when I was still at my parents' home and they were connected to DSTV, I knew such a league existed. They were times when my uncle would want to watch some games but my sisters and I would tell him that we wanted to watch another program coming on another channel starting at the same time as the game ... ha haa (she laughs reflectively) then he would leave. When I went to college, I met bashi James [James's father – her husband]. During the weekend, he would always talk about going to watch the league on Saturday and Sunday. When I thought of how many hours he would be gone to watch soccer, I just thought, eeh ... there is no way I am going to be seeing someone who will spend almost the entire weekend elsewhere ... besides, I thought ... **I would be better of getting to know and possibly enjoy what my boyfriend** [then] enjoys ... I mean ... if you are going to have a meaningful relationship, you must share interests. So, I started going to watch the games with him.

Sekwa: It was the 'in thing' for me ... haa ha haaa (she laughs). Everyone was so interested in the league. Anyway, **my better half** is a true soccer fan who happens to follow the league, that is how I started ...

Nambula: ... I can't say that I am a true fan, and I, for instance only watch Liverpool and hope that it will win because of the **spill-over benefits of a good mood from my boy-friend** ...

The above responses indicate that the reason these women follow the league is because their husbands/boyfriends follow it. Thus, men introduced these women to the league, though it should be observed that the men had to be in a romantic relationship as can be noted from Munkamba's case, where the fact that her uncle followed the league seems not to have been enough to turn her into a fan. For these women, following the league became and is one of the ways that they 'bond' with their spouses.

Besides the 'spill over benefits of a good mood' described in the interview by Nambula, there also appears to be an element of delayed gratification for these women. This comes to light in the statement made in the interview by Sekwa when she revealed that when her team (Manchester United) plays against her husband's team (Liverpool), 'there is a temporary rivalry and tension that we both know we have to neutralise at some point if we are to be partners, and this neutralisation comes with a lot of romance'. Thus, these women hope that for the sake of their relationships, their spouses' teams should continue winning. In this regard, it may seem senseless at face value that the women support different teams from those of their spouses, for the simple reason that they continue hoping that their husbands/boyfriends' teams keep on winning. However, the women have made deliberate decisions to support different teams, in a quest to empower themselves. It is argued that some of the benefits that come with belonging to a particular fandom include confidence and self-empowerment (Fiske 1992). Examples of how the women who were interviewed have used their places in the fandom to empower themselves emerged in the interview responses. For example:

Interviewer: Does your husband also support Manchester United?

Munkamba: Ha haaa (she laughs). He supports Arsenal. I made a deliberate move to start supporting Man U. I didn't want a situation where he would think that just because he had introduced me to the game, then I should follow in his footsteps. After learning the rules, I chose a different team. At that time, if I had let him influence me into supporting his team ... aaah (she sighs) ... who knows

what he could have been treating me like now? ... You have to set your ground early in a relationship. He actually appreciates me more, knowing that **I am independent.**

Thus, Munkamba's comment discloses how she deliberately chose a different team from that of her spouse to prove her 'independence'. Other forms of empowerment were illustrated in a comment she made alluding to how she is able to disagree with her husband in public, and not suffer negative consequences. This was revealed when she was asked what happens when her team plays against her husband's. She answered:

Munkamba: First and foremost, that is one game that we cannot afford to watch separately ... unless one of us is out of town ... we sit together, but have friends that either support with me or with him. It is the one thing that we can **publicly disagree about ...**

The above point signifies empowerment in the sense that in traditional Zambian life, it is disrespectful for a married couple (women) to argue or disagree in public. Hence, the public viewing space in which the English soccer Premier League games are watched may prove to avail the women a 'level' playing field, though this is not entirely the case. Significantly, Munkamba's comments indicate that the audience make their own interpretations of media texts, thereby reminding us that making sense of popular television is the process of activating meanings from it (Fiske 1989b).

The ritual of watching the games from public places is something that poses some challenges for women. These limitations were expressed as such:

Nambula: ... the bar needs to be proper ... clean bathrooms and polite waiters/waitresses. I like to watch soccer from bars where there are decent men ... who won't think you are weird to be a woman soccer fan. You need to be in a place where there are civilised modern men who will just treat you as a fellow fan.

Munkamba: ... If a bar is located in a dingy place ... you know ... like Lu Miere [a bar at Olympia market] then there are no women at all because of the dangers associated to these places ... you know ... **to just be seen at the market ... in a bar ... a woman ... it's not good.**

Twaambo: ... it's just that we are entitled to some comfort ... and like for me ... being a girl ... I can't be seen drinking from the market ... it would tarnish my image

The above limitations expressed by Nambula, Munkamba and Twaambo pertain to the bars, which are the viewing spaces. The bars that are located in 'dingy' places seem to offer situations where stereotypical comments are made regarding the belief that a bar is a man's place and that sport is a masculine activity. Reference by Twaambo regarding how a woman's image can be tarnished, as well as the comment by Munkamba that it is not good for a woman to be seen drinking from the market, highlight the value embedded in a patriarchal society where such boundaries are expected to be crossed by men, thereby making such behaviour a taboo if carried out by a woman. However, the bars are by no means the only issues limiting the rate at which these women can follow the league as much as their spouses do. Others were expressed as shown below:

Sekwa: I still try as much as possible to watch the games from the bars, of course accompanied by Brian. But of course, being a woman, it's sometimes difficult to always find time to be in bars on both Saturday and Sunday ... so ... aaah (she sighs) ... sometimes, I stay home, **cook, clean** and all that ... because even though we have a maid, I feel some things are better done by me ... sometimes I just feel like its important to let him [Brian] go alone with his friends.

Munkamba: ... I still go to watch the games from the bars. Nowadays though, I have to make sure that there is someone to remain home with the kids or take them to their granny for the weekend ... I understand that my husband can sometimes go without me because **I don't want him to be an outcast at work** when all the guys are discussing the weekend's games.

Thus, it can be argued that the expectations developed in the process of socialisation – where certain chores and behaviours are reserved for men and women respectively – pose limitations for women who support the English soccer Premier League in Zambia. The belief that couples need to 'give each other space' also appears to be a reason for these women to let their spouses go and watch the games while they remain home to do the household chores and look after children, as though the women are the only ones in these relationships that are meant to 'save' them. Such actions are present because women are

taken to be givers and carers in the homes of a patriarchal society. Despite the limitations however, the women use the English soccer Premier League to empower themselves, as well as using it as a leisure activity that makes their relationships with their spouses ‘interesting’. Thus, in the Zambian society, the female supporters of the English soccer Premier League, while proud and confident about being in a new enclave in society, with its own rules and practices, face the challenge of merging this strong independent soccer fan identity with that of submissiveness constructed in patriarchal societies.

During the interviews, some of the responses were ‘political’ in nature. Hence, below is an outline of the Zambian fans’ relationship with politics.

6.2.3 Politics

It is argued that, “It is not when politics is close to the surface and easily recognisable that it is at its most popularly powerful, but when it is strongly absent, myths work on emotions and ideologies to represent interests of the privileged few as a natural order for the many” (Barthes in Rowe 1999:92). Though this argument pertains to the ruling class and how they naturalise their actions, there was an interaction of sport and politics in the responses received from the subjects during the interviews conducted to gather data for this research.

Dawson: These shirts [soccer shirts] ... it’s just ... **let me use an example of elections.** Look, politicians go round giving people their party T-shirts, but that doesn’t mean that you will vote for that party. You can accept a UNIP shirt and still vote UPND²², see?

Above, Dawson was trying to illustrate how wearing a team’s soccer shirt does not necessarily mean that one is a supporter of that team. Importantly, it is how he arrived at using examples involving politics that is interesting and it can be argued that politics is alive even in the subtlest situations such as sport. Other responses that had political connotations emerged in the following conversation when the interviewees were asked to discuss the local league:

²² United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) are opposition political parties in Zambia. UNIP governed the country for 27 years between 1964 and 1991.

Gabriel: It lacks seriousness.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Gabriel: How many countries do you know, who don't show their local league on TV ... even within Southern Africa? ... This poverty....

Nguesso: Ahhhg (he sighs) ... sometimes it goes beyond poverty I am telling you. It's just **a question of setting priorities right**. FAZ is just full of crap. They can organise for the games to be on TV ... if they are serious.

Wiza: I don't know the logistics with FAZ and ZNBC²³ ... you know ... how many cameras they have ... money ... whatever ... but I can tell you this ... we need the league on TV.

In view of the above, the interviewees are latently saying the government lacks political will to improve the local league and as such the Zambian league is underdeveloped. The responses indicate that certain limitations that are a result of poverty can be overcome if only the people who are ruling can set their priorities accordingly. Thus, one would argue that there are poor policies put in place and/or implemented by the Ministry of youth, sport and child development. By logical extension the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD – ruling party) government is therefore taken to be under-performing. Hence, the argument here is that the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League, when identified as a group, represent people that have little faith in Zambian politicians, though these supporters fail to ignore politics completely, thus their reference to it, albeit instinctively.

6.2.4 Religion

It is argued that the social assertiveness that can be demonstrated by, for example, fans that wear their team colours, exhibits a deliberate challenge of the more normal social values, thereby meeting adult disapproval (Fiske 1992). Such adult disapproval was shown by a priest at a catholic church in the town of Kabwe, when he banned soccer fans from wearing their soccer shirts in his parish. Therefore, in trying to explore how the

²³ Football Association of Zambia (FAZ) runs soccer affairs in Zambia and the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation – ZNBC – is Zambia's state owned television and radio broadcaster.

soccer fan identity mixes with other types of identities, I asked the interviewees what their thoughts were on the issue of the above named ban, to which they replied:

Brian: It is a backward way of dealing with people, because **you go to church for a specific reason, regardless of what you wear.**

Nambula: Yah! It's not like ... coz you wear a soccer shirt to church, then you enter the church and start playing.

Gabriel: It's not like you go there to worship your jersey.

Sekwa: The ban was irrelevant.

Thus, the soccer fans have managed to meet adult disapproval, though such disapproval has only been publicly bemoaned and enforced in one parish. The dilemma that is exhibited by the fans in the above discussion also falls in line with the argument that fans deny that they portray behaviours that meet adult disapproval (Fiske 1992). The Zambian fans of the English soccer Premier League can therefore be said to be 'proud' to have caused such a stir in the church, though they will not admit this. It is even possible that the fans who attend mass at this parish probably discuss the ban when they later meet to watch the games. This is an assumption however, because the research was not conducted in the town where the ban has been enforced. The interview excerpt above also signifies that the fans understand the reason why they go to church, hence, regardless of the clothes they wear when they go to worship; they carry out their religious functions accordingly.

Another response that had religious connotations was made by Wiza et al when he narrated how the relationship between a fan and his/her team is about loyalty and that the fan must take this relationship as a marriage and not change teams anyhow. Such a revelation signifies a religious discourse. For the fans to draw similarities between their religion and their participation in their following of the English soccer Premier League represents how seriously these fans take this participation.

The above four sub-sections outlined how identities constructed around class, gender, politics and religion inter-relate with the soccer fan identity formulated by supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I began by discussing the reasons why English soccer Premier League fans in Lusaka view the games from such places as bars. These supporters find that viewing the games from public places is exciting as it allows them to compete with fans of other teams through fan talk. The fans also appear to utilise group viewing as a way of concealing their own fear of losing, provided they watch the games with people that understand the game. Watching soccer in bars offers the supporters of the English soccer Premier League a chance to feel as though they are at the stadium. Through group viewing, the fans discuss the games via fan talk and as a result of such discussions, construct identities of how strong or weak a person is depending on the team that he/she has chosen to follow.

In this section the fans revealed that as they watch the game, they are immersed in a certain mode of thinking, which they abandon as soon as the games are over and move on with their lives. As such, the analysis here is that much as the fans are symbolically distanced into a foreign mode when watching the games, they clearly understand that soccer is a game and as such the fans may be argued to be thinking human beings who understand why they follow the English soccer Premier League. The fans' knowledge that they can make sacrifices in their economic situation in order to acquire their team's paraphernalia, as well as the knowledge that they can purchase such materials on credit, or buy imitations of the real items demonstrates that the fans understand the economic situation of their country. Further, the fans' capability of starting friendships with people that support rival teams is an indication that these fans know when and where to draw the line when it comes to rival enmity. Consequently, the argument advanced by the Media Imperialism thesis that third world countries adopt first world country practices by virtue of exposure through global television has been problematised.

In the section that followed, the manner in which the fans' soccer identities engage with other identities in society was analysed. Here, it was revealed that some women have been introduced to this fandom by their spouses, though they have made use of these popular cultural materials as empowerment tools. With regards to class, it appears that the people who support the English soccer Premier League are those that belong to the middle or upper classes, and they are therefore considered by those outside this fandom, who cannot afford to join the fandom, as well to do people. When it comes to politics, the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League are perceived as people that doubt the capabilities of their government. Finally, when the interviewees discussed the issue of religion, it was expressed that the fans know what their religion entails and they are able to mix their soccer fan identity with their religious identity, though the religious leaders may not take the fans seriously.

Based on significant quotations from the interviews conducted for the purposes of this study, this chapter attempted to reveal how meanings should be understood within the context of the lived reality of the fans. The next chapter will conclude the study, by summarising the research process and the salient points which emerged from it.

Chapter seven Conclusion

7.0 Report summary

This study presented an investigation into fan identity among supporters of the English soccer Premier League in Lusaka, Zambia. The goals of the research were to find out (1) why the Zambian supporters of the English soccer Premier League follow this league; (2) what pleasures they derive from following this league; (3) the meanings they make when they are watching the games; (4) how these meanings are appropriated in their daily lives; and (5) why these supporters engage in a ritualistic nature of viewing the games in public places.

In writing up the findings that arose from the above questions, the report was divided into seven chapters. In the literature review – chapter two – the theoretical framework informing the study was discussed. Here, the sociology of sport was first outlined so as to provide the themes such as masculinity, nationality and politics, within which sport is understood and discussed. Following this was an outline of the technological development of western industrialisation that is argued to have led to the development of the media, which, through the process of globalisation spread to other parts of the world. This discussion was followed by an overview of how sport, in the age of mass media has evolved from recreational participation to spectator centred technology.

Due to mediated sport being a form of popular culture, this concept was discussed in the fourth section of the literature review. This was followed by an overview of Fiske's (1992) theories of fandom, which inform this study. This section discussed what fandom entails. The sub-sections titled discrimination and distinction, productivity and participation and capital accumulation provided the understandings that create imagined boundaries of inclusion into fandom.

As mentioned above, it is through the process of globalisation that global media spread between countries. Efforts to investigate global media effects on local audiences in the 1970s and early 1980s made use of the Media Imperialism thesis as the main explanatory

framework. The Media Imperialism theorists perceive the media pessimistically, arguing that global media helps corrupt local ways of life. Alternative ways to explain the global effects on local audiences developed in the 1980s. These made use of ethnographic audience studies and argued that audiences are active in their reading of media texts and as such, adopt the first world cultural milieu only after putting their local conditions in perspective. It is this practice of reception analysis that this study adopted – using theories of fandom - in order to evaluate claims made by the Media Imperialism thesis.

In chapter three, the context of the research was outlined. Here, the chapter proceeded by first providing an overview of how the English soccer Premier League is organised. This was followed by a description of the geographical position of Zambia, so as to help situate where Zambia is, hence illustrate that the ritual of consumption of the English soccer Premier League that the Zambians engage in, originates from beyond the geographical borders of Zambia. In the next section, the economic context of Zambia was discussed because class background is an important determiner of the kind of Zambian supports the English soccer Premier League. This was followed by an overview of private television in Zambia, because it is only through the private DSTV that the games can be watched. The next section described the physical location of the observation and the places where the interviews were carried out.

Chapter four of the report discussed the qualitative methods of observation, focus group discussions and individual interviews used in gathering data for this study. The first section explained the research design. In the study, observations were conducted in three pubs in central Lusaka, namely O'Hagans, Times Café and Smugglers' Inn. These observations were conducted on the weekends between 2nd and 17th April, a total of six days. Here, the fans were found clad in their team colours and discussing the games loudly, while imbibing some alcoholic beverages. The study also made use of three focus group discussions of between three and five people. From each of these three groups, an individual was selected for an individual in-depth interview.

The discussion on the research design was followed by an explanation of the sample selection and size. After this, an explanation of the research procedure was provided. The next section discussed the role of an interview guide in a research, as well as my role as moderator. The study had its challenges and these were acknowledged in the 'limitations of the study' section.

After the data was gathered, recorded and transcribed, it was analysed and presented in chapters five and six under the headings 'Defining the English soccer Premier League fan in Lusaka' and 'Lusaka fans as active consumers of the English soccer Premier League' respectively.

7.1 Summary of findings

Overall, the English soccer Premier League fan in Lusaka is an individual that belongs to the middle-upper class within the Zambian society. A few women follow the league. These have been introduced to the fandom by their spouses.

The fans in Lusaka revealed that they follow the English soccer Premier League because the teams and players of this league represent success. This is why it is important among the fans to be able to support a winning team, as the strength of such a team is also bestowed upon its follower. It is vital for the fans to have one's teams' paraphernalia and even though the economic context of the country as a whole is poor, the fans of the English soccer Premier League manage to get these items, for example soccer shirts.

Since the fan can only show how well informed that he/she is when games are watched among people that understand the rules of the games, these fans watch the games from public places where such an audience is guaranteed. The shared viewership offers the fans an exciting frame from which to operate.

7.1.1 Challenging the Media Imperialism thesis

The women use their participation in following the English soccer Premier League as an empowerment tool used to secure their romantic relationships. Also, these women have

deliberately chosen different teams from those of their spouses in order to show their independence in a patriarchal society. I would recommend study among women supporters, preferably to find out how they engage with fellow women who are not fans.

During the times of watching the games in the bars, the fans are availed a chance to feel as though they are at the stadium. However, these fans keep all rivalry to the level of verbally teasing one another, and when the game is over, 'life goes on'. With a history of a sub-culture of hooliganism among supporters of English football in England, one would expect members of the different teams to fight, but the fans interviewed for this study revealed that they do not. This illustrates how these fans bring their own interpretative schema and sets of meanings to decoding global media texts (Sreberney-Mohammadi 1991).

Thus, the argument by media imperialists that global media content that originates from the first world countries and spreads to third world countries brings with it ways of thinking that are adopted by the people in third world countries (Schiller 1976, Tomlinson 1991) is challenged. However, the failure by the Zambian fans of the English soccer Premier League to watch their under-developed league from the stadia as well as their need to purchase their team's paraphernalia may help demonstrate that these fans have adopted some of these behaviours as a result of following the globally mediated league. Hence, the argument by the Media Imperialism theorists that the cultural milieu of the first world countries is passed on to third world countries by multinational corporations may stand.

Nevertheless, the Zambian fans' own interpretations of the league and the meanings they make of it revealed that they negotiate the meaning making process. As such, it can be argued that meanings should be understood within the context of the lived reality of the fans. Hence, this study neither completely rejects nor accepts the Media Imperialism thesis.

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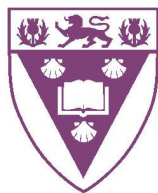
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23 May 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as confirmation that Ms Leah Komakoma is a Master of Arts student in the Department of Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University.

Ms Komakoma is researching audience reception of the English Premier League football on digital satellite television in Lusaka, Zambia. For the purposes of her research, she will observe the viewing of premiership matches in restaurants and bars in Lusaka, and conduct interviews with fans and supporters of the English Premier League.

We would appreciate it if you would assist her research by participating in either one-on-one or group interviews.

Yours faithfully,

Mr E.D. Prince

Lecturer in Radio / MA Supervisor

Department of Journalism & Media Studies

Rhodes University

PO Box 94, Grahamstown 6139

+27 46 603 8684

Thematic questions

Discrimination and distinction

1. How would you describe a supporter of the English soccer premier league?
2. How would you classify the kind of people that support the league?
3. Are there any people among your fellow supporters whom you consider to know a lot about soccer in general and the league in particular?

Viewing space

4. Where do you watch the league games from?
5. Do you have DSTV at your home?
6. Why do you view the games from there?
7. What kind of interactions happen when your team is playing a rival team?

Pleasures

8. Why do you follow the English soccer premier league?
9. What kind of pleasures do you derive from following the league?

Media Imperialism

10. Has your following the English soccer premier league stopped or reduced the rate at which you follow the local Zambian league?
11. Have you ever observed fans of the league that have adopted such things as hairstyles, dress code etc of the players in the league?
12. Do you follow the local Zambian football league?