



An investigation into the popularity of Latin soap operas among Zambian viewers: a reception study of Lusaka women

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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January, 2017

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For my late parents
Mr. Frederick and Mrs. Grace Mushambatwa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Particular appreciation and thanks to my supervisor Professor Larry Strelitz for his great patience, support and guidance.

Many thanks to my friend Korir Kiplimo who read through some of the chapters of this thesis, and special thanks to my respondents who made this research possible.

Last but not the least, financial assistance from the Zambian government towards the attainment of this degree is hereby acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the way Zambian women make sense of the representations and discourses in the Latin soaps that they watch daily. The study seeks to find out what pleasures and values Zambian women get from these soaps given that the Latin and Zambian cultures are very different. This is in the context of Zambia being a socially conservative patriarchal and Christian nation, where the legal and traditional practices focus on the authority of the man in relationships, particularly in marriages.

The lens through which this study is conducted is provided by the media imperialism thesis and its critiques. The study explores the underlying proposition of the thesis that global media are uncritically received by people in the Third World which contributes to global cultural homogenisation. Drawing on ethnographic critiques of this position, my study provides a close examination of actual viewers in actual contexts in order to understand the complex relationships that often exist between global media and local audiences.

Using qualitative methods rooted in reception analysis, the study explores the pleasures women get from these soap operas and in particular, the symbolic means that these soaps provide for what has been referred to as ‘symbolic distancing’. Symbolic distancing foregrounds the way local audiences use global media to distance themselves from the cultural confines of their local environments, exposing them to other worldviews and understandings from which they can critique their own lived conditions of existence. In line with this, the study evaluates whether the viewers’ perceptions and values have been changed by the viewing of these Latin soaps.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The moment of reading is when the discourses of the reader meet the discourses of the text...To be popular with a diversity of audiences television must both provide its readers to the production of meanings and pleasures and must provide the textual space for these meanings and pleasures to be articulated with the social interest of the readers. (Fiske, 1987:82-83)

This study examines the popularity of a Latin soap opera, *The Face of Destiny*, amongst Zambian female viewers. It particularly explores how the representation of discourses in this global text produced within the Latin American culture industries are appropriated in the everyday lives of these Zambian viewers. In attempting to understand the reasons for the popularity of *The Face of Destiny* amongst the viewers and to probe the meanings and identities that the Zambian viewers make from this telenovela, this research will draw on African audience studies that have engaged the media imperialism thesis and the ethnographic critique of this thesis. Of particular significance is that it analyses the viewing of this soap in order to establish whether it leads to the undermining of local traditional values as proposed by the media imperialism thesis, and if so how do we assess these cultural changes. This study is located within the media and cultural studies.

1. Background to the study: A personal note

There are three incidents that motivate this research. The first one is my recollection of a work field trip that I undertook in October 2014, to monitor Zambian education projects in Western rural parts of the country. After a day's recap of activities, my female colleague and I were interested in viewing a Latin soap that was being broadcast on TV, but the male colleagues suggested that we switch to a different channel. This led to a discussion amongst the male colleagues about Zambian women's preoccupation with the viewing of these soaps. The men particularly talked about their wives' intensive viewing habits of these programmes. One of the men narrated how his wife was so glued to the soaps that she did not seem to even notice when he arrived home from work. The men questioned what pleasures Zambian women were getting from these soaps especially given that according to them, these programmes were "very scandalous" and full of steamy affairs. Their concern was that the

Zambian women would end up having unrealistic expectations of their relationships, especially given that the Latin men were mostly very handsome and wealthy, and that Latin women had very liberal gender attitudes and expressed their needs and desires. This is in the context of Zambia being a conservative and patriarchal society where the legal and traditional practices place the man at the centre of relationships (Mushibwe, 2014; Zulu, 2011; Milimo, 2004; Byrne, 2003; Rude, 1999).

As this interest in Latin soaps or telenovelas grew, I started to interact with its viewers in salons or other social places to discuss what we liked or disliked about these programmes. Of particular note was a song released by a popular local musician, “J.K.” called *telemundo loving*, which is about a man who fancies a woman and tells her he will love her forever like in telenovelas. This song was regularly played on popular radio channels of Lusaka and provides the second reason for my interest in this study.

The third comes from my observing the popularity of Latin soaps amongst women within my social circle. I was watching a particular soap when my sister joined me in the living room. She spoke of how her work colleagues were preoccupied with the watching of telenovelas and that they discussed the unfolding events daily at her work place. Given my own interest in this form, I inquired from her which particular telenovelas they liked. As I thought about my own interests and reactions to these programmes, I wanted to know which particular characters and issues interested these women so that I could establish whether we had common interest. From my sister I established that the *Face of Destiny* was popular then. These incidences preceded initial stages of this research.

As already noted, I was aware that telenovela viewership seemed to be popular among middle class women in my social circle hence my focus of this class in my research. There being no internationally accepted definition of the middle class in academic or popular culture, my definition of this term is based on Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR), which defines this class as the social group that is:

In-between-someone who earns a salary and has significant autonomy in the work place. That would include many mid-level workers in large companies, teachers, retail managers and many professionals. They are considered to be the movers and shakers of the economy... Those who run their own businesses belong to the upper class and do not fit in this class. (ZIPAR, 2013:3) (For a similar definition see also Kharas, 2010 who examines the middle classes in developing countries).

At the end of 2015 when I was a Journalism and Media student at Rhodes University, I wrote an essay on the popularity of *The Face of Destiny* programme owing to my immense interest in telenovelas. My current research has developed out of that essay.

1.1. Objectives to the study.

The specific aim of this study is to examine how middle class Lusaka female audiences interact and negotiate meanings from the popular telenovela *The Face of Destiny*. I attempt to understand how the cultural values expressed in the telenovela are read, interpreted or played out among Zambian viewers. In other words, I intend to find out the particular telenovela attractions that appeal to the women and how these link to their everyday discourses within their larger social environment. Furthermore, I intend to find out whether the watching of these soaps is an attempt to resist the dominant patriarchal order as Radway (1984) found in her study of American women's reading of romance fiction. In line with the theory of symbolic distancing, I analyse whether or not the viewing of these soaps enable women to think critically about their own relationships and circumstances. The study seeks to answer the following questions: What values and pleasures do the Zambian women get from these soaps? How are the meanings they take from these programmes appropriated into their everyday lives? How do these soaps shape their local identities? What elements of this telenovela do they engage with?

1.2. Statement of the problem and the significance of the study

Media imperialism theorists propose that global media erode the cultural values of local audiences (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Fourie, 2007; Barker, 1997; Ang, 1996). The scholars state that this is because Western global media and culture industries, are globally dominant and that this has resulted in global cultural synchronisation. A limited number of African audience studies have engaged with this claim with two such studies focussing on Zambia (Komakoma, 2005; Phiri, 2006). Of significant note is that Zambia has an undeveloped cultural industry and that a consequence of this is the flooding of its market by international media products (Banda, 2003; Phiri, 2006). Among the products available are telenovelas that have resulted from the increased availability of privately owned television and radio stations as well as satellite television (Abdi et al., 2010).

It is within the context of the claims of the media/cultural imperialism thesis, and the critiques of this thesis, that I locate my exploration of Zambian women's attraction to telenovelas, the values and pleasures they get from these soaps, and what identities they construct from these media products.

1.3. Thesis outline

This study has six chapters. Chapter One presents the background to this research. It highlights the research aim, the relevance of the study and provides the outline of the whole thesis.

Chapter Two looks at the social context in which the Zambian women consume telenovelas. This chapter first looks at the origin of a soap opera and its narrative genre - telenovelas and then briefly explains the popular Latin soaps among Zambians, *The Face of Destiny*. What follows is a discussion of Zambia's broadcast media in order to provide a context for telenovela consumption among its viewers. Lastly, Zambia's conservative and patriarchal society is discussed in order to bring to the fore the social and cultural environment in which the viewers live and make their meanings out of these programmes.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical underpinnings of the study by examining the literature that informs the text/audience encounter of global media by local audiences. Theories of media imperialism are briefly outlined by focussing on Herbert Schiller as a primary scholar within this tradition and who argues that the domination of global media products results in global cultural homogenisation (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Strelitz, 2005; Barker, 1997). In presenting a critique of the media imperialism thesis, multi-directional cultural flows, cultural proximity and ethnographic audience studies are discussed. Theorists of the active audience and symbolic distancing are presented, who argue against the passiveness of local audiences as they consume global texts as proposed by the media imperialism thesis (Takahashi, 2010; Kim, 2008; Strelitz, 2005). These scholars argue that the social contexts of audiences have a bearing on how they consume or interpret international media and that viewers actively make meanings from these texts.

The fourth chapter begins with a discussion of the justification of using qualitative research in this study: its epistemological base and relevance, and the appropriateness of reception analysis as a data gathering technique for this type of study. It concludes with a discussion on the research procedure and sampling, which has a three-stage design: qualitative thematic content analysis, focus groups and individual interviews.

Chapter Five presents the findings and analysis of this study. This chapter speaks to the issues noted in the Introduction to this study. The theoretical framework and literature review outlined in Chapter Two, Three and Four are drawn upon to interpret, explain and analyse the findings. First, the chapter presents the findings of qualitative content analysis; second, it

presents findings from in-depth interviews (both focus groups and individual) which mainly point to symbolic distancing in explaining the attraction of telenovelas to middle class female Zambian viewers. The findings are subdivided and listed into six themes as:

- i. The Zambian women's viewing habits of telenovelas
- ii. Watching of telenovelas as a desire for romance and unending love
- iii. Dissatisfaction in patriarchal traditions and the desire for partnership in relationships
- iv. Media and foreign culture as situated cultural resources used in meaning making
- v. The admiration for Latin people's way of parenting
- vi. The tension between Zambian women's desire for independence and upholding local culture

These findings are written narratively with quotations that amplify and highlight the discussion.

Finally, Chapter Six provides the summary and conclusion of the research and suggests some recommendation for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATING THE TELENVELA AND ITS CONTEXT OF CONSUMPTION AMONG ZAMBIAN FEMALE VIEWERS

.... local responses and negotiations, culturally diverse and geographically dispersed needs to be taken into account if we are to understand the complex and contradictory dynamics of today's 'global culture'. (Ang, 1996:153)

2. *Introduction*

My aim in this chapter is to examine the Zambian social and cultural practices that constitute the environment into which telenovelas are consumed. Of particular interest is how the representations and discourses of telenovelas would seem to be at odds with Zambia's dominant culture of patriarchy. Given this, my interest is in what exactly draws the Zambian female audience to this genre. What is important is to identify the pleasures the Zambian female viewers obtain from these programmes. Firstly, a summary of the origin and features of soap operas is given since telenovelas are a sub-genre of these programmes. Secondly, telenovelas are described in terms of their distinctive features in order to give the reader an overview of this genre. Thirdly, my study was widened to include other telenovelas which are popular amongst Zambian viewers and have typical features as *The Face of Destiny*. The features of these programmes are described in terms of their primary themes and subthemes. Reference is also made to the Zambian broadcasting media landscape in order to locate the popularity of telenovelas in Zambia and its audience within this broad context. I end this chapter by discussing patriarchy in Zambian society. This is exemplified by the social and cultural practices in patrilineal families as well as the political sphere, which reflects how men have primary positions of moral and political leadership in society. It is important to highlight these social and cultural norms as they constitute the environment in which the female viewers live and consume telenovelas and, as I will argue, they help explain the attraction of these programmes to these viewers.

2.1. *The origin of a soap opera and its features*

This section provides an understanding of soap opera features of which telenovelas are a subgenre. According to scholars, to analyse representations or discourses in a text, it is important to understand its genre and narrative principles (Prinsloo, 2009; Fiske, 1987; Hall, 1997). Texts can have either fixed or moving images such as gestures, drama or television genres like soap operas (Fiske, 1987). Fiske says the “cultural analysis of television texts can provide evidence of the ways that the various meanings of these texts are activated and appropriated into the culture for various audiences or subcultures” (1987:285-286).

Soap operas started in United States (US) in the 1920s on Radio Chicago as “15minute creative dramas” which were adapted from successful serial newspapers and magazines (Allen, 1995:34-36; Matelski, 1999:16). The producers of these programmes attracted companies such as Colgate Palmolive and Procter & Gamble, which advertised detergents in order to promote their products (Allen, 1995:35; Matelski, 1999; 17; Barker, 1997:75). That is how the term “soap” in soap opera was coined (Allen, 1995:4). According to Allen (1995:4) the name “opera” was an ironic term which made fun of the features of these programmes which revealed “dirty” secrets and acts of characters. The name “soap opera” referred to the storyline promoted by these detergent companies (Allen, 1995:4; Matelski, 1999:16; Barker, 1997:75). Allen puts it this way:

The soap in soap opera alludes to the use of the serial form from its earliest days to the present as an advertising vehicle for laundry detergents and household cleaning products. The opera in soap opera signals a travesty: the highest of dramatic art forms is made to describe the lowest. (Similarly Western movies were called horse operas in the 1930s). As a soap opera the serial is a drama about two kinds of dirt. (Allen, 1995:4)

Subsequently, these radio dramas became a success and what made them popular were the regular sponsorship by the advertisers and the creative skills of radio producers displayed in the productions (Matelski, 1999). Eventually, criminal plots emerged in early 1950s and the soaps were introduced on television in late 1950s (Matelski, 1999; Allen, 1995). Additionally, the duration of the radio soaps was extended from 15 to 30 minutes. More creative productions were made to appeal to American daytime audiences so that by 1970s and 1980s business moguls, fashion designers, middle and low income families were featured in these soaps (Allen, 1995; Matelski, 1999). The core features of television soap operas are that they focus on family and personal relationships (Allen, 1995; Barker, 1997; Geraghty, 1991). It can however be observed that soaps differ from telenovelas due to the

former's meandering and unending storylines that can run daily on television (Allen, 1995; Geraghty, 1991; Allen 1995; Matelski, 1999). In contrast, the telenovela storylines have definite endings (Tufte, 2000; Matelski, 1999; Allen, 1995).

I will next discuss the telenovela, a sub-genre of soap operas. I will limit the description of the features of telenovelas to what is pertinent to my research analysis. I will particularly focus on the features found in *The Face of Destiny*, a popular telenovela among Zambian female viewers and the focus of my research, and which is typical of other telenovelas popular amongst these viewers.

2.1.1. The origin of Latin soaps

Soap operas are the most exported forms of television that are watched in diverse social settings (Barker, 1997). Many scholars regard telenovelas as “Latin form of soap operas” (Barker, 1997:87, Matelski, 1999: 27). Telenovelas have captured audiences on all continents, especially in Latin America where they command extremely high viewership (Ascosta-Alzuru, 2003; Tufte, 2000; Aldama and Rojas, 2013). Most telenovela theorists note that the programmes originated from European newspaper stories and novels that were introduced as pamphlets in Latin America in the 1930s to promote theatrical performances (Matelski, 1999; La Pastina et al, 2003). These print novels, were transformed into electronic versions in Cuba as “radionovelas” from early to mid-20th Century and became “an immediate radio hit” (Miller, 2010:200-201; Matelski, 1999:27). The Cuban radionovelas were influenced by French theatrical drama and Latin customs (Matelski, 1999; Miller, 2010). The Latin customs comprised traditional Latin tales, songs of heroes and heroines, tales of mystery and terror which were featured in the radio serials (La Pastina et al, 2003; Miller, 2010). Later, in the 1950s, these programmes were introduced in Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico (Matelski, 1999; Tufte, 2000). They subsequently spread to the whole Latin American region, including Spanish speaking areas in US, making Cuba a pioneer of these drama programmes (Matelski, 1999). These programmes became popular in US and were extended to TV serials in the mid-1950s (Miller, 2010; Tufte, 2000; Matelski, 1999; Allen, 1995).

Scholars point out that this genre initially depicted the American soap opera features but have recently changed to a different style, identity and format (La Pastina et al, 2003; Barrera and Bielby, 2001). The modern genre, they argue, is a combination of rich Latin

traditions¹ and topical global social and cultural trends (La Pastina et al, 2003). This genre, as noted above, comprises expressions of the cultural beliefs of Latinos and their lived realities of everyday life (Barrera and Bielby, 2001). The visual representations of this culture is illustrated by Latin (melodrama) style, such as the way Latinos comb their hair, dress and live in modern Latin society (Barrera and Bielby, 2001). The telenovelas I examine in my research are no exception in that they depict characters who dress extravagantly and fall in love passionately (Mytvnews, 2015). Moreover, the characters in these telenovelas are often exceptionally attractive, glamorous, passionate and rich (La Pastina, et al, 2003; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). This is characteristic of the telenovela that I investigate and is typical of the other telenovelas popular amongst Zambian viewers (Mytv news, 2015).

The Face of Destiny is produced by Telemundo, a large television company based in Miami, US (Piñón, 2014; Aldama and Rojas, 2013). Telemundo is one of the biggest suppliers of Spanish-language content with its programmes broadcast worldwide to more than 100 countries in over 35 languages (Piñón, 2014; Cornejo 2016). This television company produces most of its programmes in its studio facility and it is owned by Argos Comunicación from Mexico and Caracol TV from Columbia (Piñón, 2014; Cornejo 2016). The majority of telenovelas produced in US have Mexican titles (Piñón, 2014). Telemundo initially imported telenovelas from Latin America but later it started relying on its own American actors of Hispanic descent to produce its own programmes (Aldama and Rojas, 2013; Piñón, 2014). By the 1990s, the company started competing with Globo TV from Brazil, the largest television company engaged in telenovela production and distribution to 130 countries around the globe (Miller, 2010; Matelski, 1999; Piñon, 2014). Other big companies that produce telenovelas include Televisa from Mexico, Venevision (Venezuela), followed by Columbia's RCN and Caracol TV (Miller, 2010).

2.1.2. *The narrative discourse of telenovelas*

As noted earlier, telenovelas and soap operas generally have similar features but they are distinct in content, style and narrative (Miller, 2010) (see also Acosta- Alzuru, 2003; Barker, 1997). As noted above, I will limit the description of the distinctive features of telenovelas to what is relevant to my study. Scholars of telenovelas note that the primary features or themes

¹ I searched through google scholar and found that there is no single definition of what Latin culture is. Therefore, with regard to this study I will point out values that come through telenovelas (watched by Zambian viewers) which are in contrast to the patriarchal Zambian traditions, as what may be Latin culture in Mexico or the Hispanic community in USA maybe different from that of Brazil or Argentina.

of these programmes are their depiction of strong, independent and liberal women characters (Artz, 2015; Werner, 2006; Barker, 1997; Hamburger and de Almeida, 2001). Telenovelas illustrate women as having strong heroine characters who are expressive in relationships (Hamburger and de Almeida, 2001; Artz, 2015; Barker, 1997). The men in these films are also very expressive in terms of their emotional needs in relationships (Mytvnews, 2016, 2015; Tvsa, 2015). This is a contrasting feature to the Zambian social environment, where women and men are not that liberal but are governed by conservative and patriarchal norms (Zulu, 2011; Byrnes, 2003). I will expand on this point in the subsequent sections.

In contrast to conventional soap operas with their unending story lines, telenovelas have a limited number of episodes, ranging from 100 to 200 and consequently audiences can expect a firm conclusion to the story (Allen, 1995; Barker, 1997; Acosta- Alzuru, 2003; Miller, 2010). *The Face of Destiny* Telenovela has 173 episodes (Mytvnews 2015 & 2016; Tvsa, 2015). Telenovelas vary in types but they all generally tend to cast the middle class as people with good virtues in life whereas the rich are often depicted as bad characters who are rarely happy (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Barker, 1997). For example, Ezequiel Alvarado, the wealthiest man in the *Face of Destiny* is cast as a man who dominates his wife and has no scruples (Mytv news, 2015).

2.1.3. *The popularity of Latin soaps in the world*

Scholars note that the success of this genre is a result of planned marketing strategies targeting geo-political regions (Ribke, 2015). For example, Telemundo is a US based Spanish language network aimed at Hispanic communities (Ribke, 2015). However, telenovelas like soap operas “share the paradox of being successful and disdained at the same time” (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003:193) (see also Allen, 1995:3). At times these products are despised for their lack of depth and having morally questionable characters (Acosta- Alzuru, 2003). Some theorists state that telenovelas are regarded as substandard genres in relation to Hollywood film productions but are successful because they capture viewers’ attention in the way they mix world events with everyday lived realities of viewers and Latin cultural or social life (Ribke, 2015; Miller, 2010). Therefore, it is this infusion of Latin culture and everyday realities of viewers with topical social and cultural positions in the world that have given telenovelas a transcultural appeal (Ribke, 2015; Barker, 1997). The topical issues covered include, for example, political corruption (Ribke, 2015; La Pastina et al, 2003).

2.1.4. *The Face of Destiny, Telenovela*

As noted earlier, *El Rostro de la Venganza*, *The Face of Destiny* is a telenovela produced by Telemundo (Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015; Mytvnews 2015 & 2016; Tvsa, 2015). This programme is produced in Spanish (Miller, 2010; see also Tvsa, 2015; Mytvnews 2015).

The Face of Destiny conforms to the main features of telenovelas since it is about a love triangle of the wealthiest man in the city, Ezequiel Alvarado (Saul Lisazo) and his son Luciano (Jonathan Islas) who are in love with the same woman, Mariana (Elizabeth Guitierrez) (Everyday novelas blogspot; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003). Other themes include Ezequiel 's wife faking her death because she could not stand being married to him as he was overbearing, manipulative and controlling (Tvsa blogspot, 2015; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). She later appears in the subsequent episodes to confront Ezequiel about certain experiences that were unbearable to her (Mytvnews 2016).

Other themes of popular telenovelas viewed by Zambian viewers such as *All Roads Lead to Love* foreground a strong woman who is independent, liberal and successful in her company, and overcomes challenges in her love life (Mytvnews 2016; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2016). Other popular telenovelas such as *Someone is Watching* centres around women who are expressive with regard to their desires in relationships or family (Tvsa blogspot, 2015; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). Furthermore, the characters in *The Face of Destiny* and the popular telenovelas watched by Zambian viewers are exceptionally attractive, glamorous and wealthy which is a typical feature of most telenovelas as noted earlier (La Pastina, et al, 2003). An example of this is seen through the leading character of *The Face of Destiny*, Diego Mercado, the man who seems to be loved by the female characters (Tvsa blogspot, 2015; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). The dressing and life style of the female characters is very liberal and extravagant as opposed to that of the conservative Zambian women (Mytvnews, 2016; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). In these films, male and female characters in relationships love each other passionately and have unending love (Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015). The men in these programmes go out of their way to make women happy and no one dominates the other (Mytvnews, 2016). This is in contrast to the way couples relate in Zambia in that men appear to dominate in relationships, family or marriage (Zulu, 2011). Another common feature of telenovelas is that Latin fathers have close relationships with their children and are affectionate whereas Zambian fathers are distant (Simpson, 2005; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015; Mytvnews 2016). This, as earlier noted, is a distinctive feature to Zambian social relations where men for

example are distant fathers and do not easily display their affections to their children or loved ones (Simpson, 2005). In order to understand how *The Face of Destiny* and telenovelas in general are consumed by Zambian viewers, it is important to locate this programme within the wide Zambian broadcasting media landscape. This will describe the broadcast media context into which viewers consume the product. I will expand on this in the next section.

2.2. *The context of consumption: Locating the popularity of telenovelas in Zambia's broadcasting media*

The discussion that follows briefly looks at the historical background of the broadcasting media in Zambia with the view of locating the telenovela programmes and their audience.

From the time Zambia gained its independence in 1964 until 2003, there was only one television broadcasting station, Zambia Broadcasting Services now Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) (Abdi et al, 2010). The re-introduction of multiparty politics in Zambia in 1990, led to the liberalisation of broadcasting media policies (Banda, 2006; Kasoma, 1997). The liberalisation of media policies was done in line with the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and largely in the interest of the ruling party at the time (Banda, 2003). This is because 80 percent of Zambians are Christians and during campaigns, political leaders make Christian declarations to win the hearts of Zambians (Gifford, 1998). It is believed that the church played a pivotal role in bringing down the first Zambian President's government (Gifford, 1998).

Subsequently, the liberalisation of the broadcast media policies gave way to the establishment of foreign based satellite channels such as M-NET, BBC world service and private radio stations such as Radio Christian Voice (transmitted on short wave in central Africa) (Banda, 2006, 2003). The availability of telenovelas in Zambia, coincides with the liberalisation of broadcasting policies which has resulted in the increased availability of privately owned television and radio stations as well as satellite television (Abdi et al, 2010). Muvi TV is one of the privately owned television stations that emerged in 2005 while ZNBC

expanded its channels and remained a state broadcaster (Banda, 2003 & 2006). Muvi TV was given nationwide broadcasting license in 2009 and became the first private television to go national, and it has been transmitting telenovelas since 2005 (Banda, 2003 & 2006; Muvi TV, 2005). Consequently, Multichoice, a digital satellite television (DStv) company from South Africa, obtained a license to set up the subscription of satellite television that resulted in 70 percent shares for DStv and the state broadcaster ZNBC securing 30 percent (Banda, 2006). This partnership has resulted in DStv reaching most parts of the country and making all programmes, including telenovelas, accessible to all in society through its various small bouquets (Multichoice Zambia, 2016). These bouquets have lower subscription rate and are affordable to most Zambians (Census, 2010; Multichoice Zambia, 2016). Therefore, the availability of these affordable bouquets and television stations such as Muvi TV and ZNBC have resulted in increased number of programmes such as English soccer, American movies, Chinese, Phillipino, Indian, South African soaps and West African movies, including Telenovelas (Multichoice Zambia, 2016; IPSOS Zambia, 2014). Furthermore, the popularity of telenovelas in Zambia is mirrored in their growing international popularity (Aldama and Rojas, 2013).

According to Zambia All Media Product survey conducted in 2014, Telenovelas in Zambia are popular among Zambian women and are mostly shown on DStv (IPSOS Zambia, 2014). Although viewership figures are not available, they are ranked seventh among the top ten programmes shown on Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), the most popular being News and Current Affairs, followed by African movies (IPSOS Zambia, 2014). Ranking third is sport, followed by American movies. Telenovelas are primarily shown during peak viewing time on ZNBC TV2 and Muvi TV, apart from the Telemundo and Eva channels on DStv (IPSOS Zambia, 2014). The next section describes the Zambian patriarchal society which constitutes the local context of consumption of telenovelas by Zambian female viewers.

2.3. The context of consumption: Zambia's conservative and patriarchal society

This section looks at the social and cultural practices of Zambians in order to describe the environment in which these texts (telenovelas) are consumed and interpreted by the Zambian female audience in their daily lives. As Ang notes, “audiences make active negotiations with media texts and technologies in the context of their everyday lives” (1996:140). Liebes and Katz also state that to understand the way viewers interpret texts, it is important to analyse

how they interact and interpret these messages through their culture and "those of fictional characters from symbolic culture" (1993:4).

Zambia is a landlocked Southern African country with a population of 13 million people (Zambia Central Statistics, 2016). Zambians have seven main languages and 73 ethnic tribes that have mostly patrilineal families with English being the official language (Zambia Central Statistics, 2016; Zambia Census, 2010; Mushibwe 2014). In this country, urbanisation is one of the contributing factors to the ever changing lifestyles of Zambians with rural to urban migration figures of 65,000 annually (Zambia Census, 2010; Ijiri, et al, 2005). Zambians hold blood ties in high esteem and their patrilineal² family system reflects the fact that men hold primary positions of moral authority in society (Mushibwe, 2014; Milimo, 2004). This same authority held by men can be observed in the country's political system which seem to be entrenched in Zambian customs (Zulu, 2011; Rude, 1999). It is these customs and traditions, which constitute the Zambian patriarchal society (Zulu, 2011; Molokome, 1997).

The Zambian legal system comprises both customary and statutory laws (Rude, 1999). This legal framework or the constitution guarantees all citizens protection from discrimination on the basis of gender (Byrne, 1994). The bill of rights stipulates rights to life, security, freedom of conscience, association and movement (Milimo, 2004; Mushibwe, 2014). This however, is contradicted by a clause in customary law that allows men to predominate in areas of family law, including marriage, divorce and property inheritance (Mendenhall, et al, 2007; Rude, 1999). In terms of inheritance, the customary law states that in the absence of the will, the widow and her children should have 50 percent of the property that belonged to the deceased (Mendenhall, et al, 2007). In addition, 20 per cent of the same property is for the deceased husband's siblings, another 20 per cent is for the surviving parents of the deceased and 10 per cent is allocated to dependants (Mendenhall, et al, 2007). The constitutional review of 1996 did not revoke this customary clause even with the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation (Rude, 1999). Furthermore, the 2015 constitutional amendments did not address this anomaly (Constitution of Zambia, 2016).

For women, this customary clause propagates gender inequality, despite constitutional guarantees of equality because the customary law states that men are the owners of land,

² It can be noted however, that there are some tribes that are matrilineal in Zambia although not as widespread as patrilineal families (Mushibwe, 2014).

property and they predominate in the family or marriage (Byrne, 1994:3) (also see Milimo, 2004; Molokomme, 1997; Rude, 1999). Traditionally, men control most of the family income which has a bearing on the distribution of money and inheritance when they die as noted earlier (Mendenhall, et al, 2007; Agha, 1998). Additionally, females throughout their lives are more than likely to be under the control of male figures, be it a father, brother or husband (Zulu, 2011:24). Traditionally, the lives of many Zambian women revolve around marriage and child bearing, which is what signifies the importance of a woman in society (Mushibwe, 2014; Agha, 1998). A woman can be divorced if she does not bear children, and statistically 70 percent of Zambian women are either mothers, or are pregnant with their first child at 19 years (Rude, 1999; Campbell and Kelly, 1995; Mushibwe, 2014). Of particular note is that these Zambian traditional practices appear to be in contrast to the Latin themes depicted in telenovelas in that Latin women are increasingly shown to be independent and have successful careers or run their own businesses (Barker, 1997).

In Zambia, customary law has consequences on the women and their participation in education, as women are often accorded low positions in society (Mushibwe, 2014). Women lag behind men in all professional fields and are poorly represented in politics, land and business ownership (Rude, 1999). This is the result of traditional norms that continue to impact on the education of the woman (Geisler, 1995). In the past when a girl got pregnant she was excluded from school but the boy continued with his education (Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) Re- entry policy, 2002). It can however, be noted that there is substantial effort to redress this trend through the GRZ Re-entry policy that enables girls who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy to continue with their education (GRZ Re- entry policy, 2002).

At initiation ceremonies (when a girl reaches puberty), girls are trained how to appreciate and value men in marriage as primary leaders and providers in the home (Mushibwe, 2014; Kapungwe, 2004). The girls are taught that it is their responsibility to meet the needs of men (husbands) otherwise the men will wander from the home and find comfort elsewhere (Campbell and Kelly, 1995; Kapungwe, 2004). Although this practice is not so pronounced in modern urban areas, it is dominant in rural areas (Mushibwe, 2014). Furthermore, kitchen parties often held in urban settings are a fusion of initiation ceremonies and bridal showers (Hansen, 2003). Most Zambian women hold these parties weeks before their wedding and at these parties the same teachings as highlighted above are taught (Hansen, 2003). This view of men in the family demonstrates the dominant positions men

hold in Zambian society (Agha, 1998). Contrastingly, telenovelas show men and women relating in a different way in that there is as much attention placed on the man as the woman in relationships, marriage or family sphere (Mytvnews 2016; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015).

Examples of patriarchy in social and cultural relations in Zambia are demonstrated by women's tendency to marry at a young age, which gives a husband authority over the wife and the household (Rude, 1999). This is because the woman becomes economically dependent on the man, in that she may not have acquired the necessary skills to be in formal employment, or she may have dropped out of school (GRZ Re-entry policy, 2002). The average age at first marriage in Zambia varies between 18.5 and 19.9 years (Kapungwe, 2004; Campbell and Kelly, 1995). Additionally, the payment of "lobola" (dowry or bride price) is common practice among the 73 ethnic tribes (Rude, 1999:12). Although the payment of lobola is an act of appreciation for the bride by the groom, this practice enables the husband to have rights over his wife (Rude, 1999). It appears that the traditional understanding is that the husband is the primary leader in the home, makes all the decisions and it is socially acceptable for the man to have girlfriends (Mushibwe, 2014) (see also Rude, 1999; Campbell and Kelly, 1995). It seems that the wife is expected to be submissive at all times and persevere even when her husband is a philanderer (Mendenhall, et al, 2007; Rude, 1999). These cultural practices have resulted in marriage being called a "shipikisha" (perseverance) club and men who do not seem to be in control of their households are scorned by their counterparts as being under "petticoat government" (Rude, 1999:12). Furthermore, Christianity exerts a powerful influence on the woman, marriage and society as a whole (Rude, 1999). It appears to be common practice for religious leaders to inculcate patriarchal notions in marriage through their teachings of the special primary position men have in the family (Rude, 1999; Hansen, 2003). This is in sharp contrast to telenovelas where women are strong, liberal and manage their own families and are seen to be bread winners (Arts, 2015; Werner, 2006). These traditional expectations of Zambian women in relationships are depicted as old fashioned models of women by telenovelas (Hamburger and de Almeida, 2001).

The Zambian patriarchal system can be observed in the political sphere and marriage, for customary law still defines women's rights and puts limitations on their ability to participate in politics even with constitutional guarantees of gender equality (Byrne, 1994; Geisler 1995). According to this law, marriage renders a woman a "*de facto*" or "*de jure*"

implying that a woman is a minor who might be unable to access a loan from the bank, or a business contract without authority from a husband (Geisler, 1995: 547). This law deems a married woman unfit to own or dispose property (Geisler, 1995). Additionally, for a woman to climb up the political ladder, it is evident that she must start with the women's wing of the party which is characterised by patriarchal notions (Geisler, 1995; Zulu, 2011). However, professional and educated women find this difficult since older women resent them for being young and educated, and claim that the older uneducated women are wiser based on age (Geisler, 1995). These women in political parties often sing praises to the male leaders, and their appointments are usually endorsed by the same men (Geisler, 1995). Moreover, women who have managed to be in politics say they work twice as hard as men, largely because their behaviour and dressing is scrutinised no matter the level of education (Zulu, 2011). These women are expected to have a different moral code from that of men (Zulu, 2011; Geisler, 1995). As noted earlier, in telenovelas men and women appear to have the same moral code as no one dominates the other, women seem to act without traditional restrictions. (Mytvnews 2016; Everyday novelas blogspot, 2015).

The re-introduction of multi-party politics in Zambia in 1990 gave rise to the promotion of women's rights and many women were adopted in the main wings of party structures (Zulu, 2011; Geisler, 1995). However, these efforts were disrupted after some years due to traditional beliefs about women in political leadership as noted earlier (Zulu, 2011; Geisler, 1995). Therefore, the political system in Zambia is filled with patriarchal concepts and practices illustrating how men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership and society in general (Zulu, 2011:26) (see also Byrne, 1994; Geisler, 1995). How such traditional and legal frameworks impacts on love relationships between men and women is that men in marriages often do not emotionally or publicly express closeness to their partners as they would not want to be viewed weak or mocked by their friends or family members (Byrne, 1994; Rude, 1999; Hansen, 2003). This leads to restrictions in displays of affection and expressions of love to their loved ones and children. These are the patriarchal norms that make up the environment in which the telenovelas are consumed in Zambia. It is important to establish what attracts the Zambian women to this genre, especially that the Latin programmes are filled with Latin traditions which seem to be foreign to Zambians.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter placed the research analysis into perspective by having highlighted the local context of consumption of telenovelas by Zambian female viewers. A brief background of Zambia's broadcasting media landscape was given, in order to locate the telenovela programmes and viewers within this broader context. Zambian patriarchal society was discussed by providing examples of the patrilineal family and the political sphere (Mushibwe, 2014; Zulu, 2011). It was important to highlight the Zambian patriarchal society as it constitutes the environment in which the female viewers live and consume the telenovelas because audiences make meaning from texts within the context of their consumption (Liebes and Katz, 1993). In the next chapter, I look at the culture imperialism thesis and the critique of these theories as they constitute the theoretical framework for analysing the representations and discourses of the text (*The Face of Destiny* and other popular telenovelas) viewed by Zambian viewers.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONTEXT - MEDIA IMPERIALISM THEORIES AND ETHNOGRAPHIC AUDIENCE STUDIES

Theories are meant to help you develop systems of interpretations and explanations, which you use in the analysis when you present your findings. (Furseth and Everett, 2013:74)

3. Introduction

This chapter provides a framework for making sense of the relationship between globally distributed texts, in this case the telenovelas and Zambian female viewers. The chapter is divided into two main sections comprising a discussion of the media imperialism thesis within the context of globalisation and the ethnographic critique of this thesis. This chapter ends with an engagement with literature on African audience studies on the consumption of global media texts by local audiences, conducted over a decade.

3.1. Theories of media imperialism

This section sets out the arguments for the theories of media imperialism by explaining the effects of globalisation on the media. According to Barker viewing worldwide television genres such as telenovelas, “in countries other than the originators raises all questions of potential cultural imperialism” (1997:118). This discussion primarily draws on Herbert Schiller, one of the key theorists of media imperialism, who explains that the apparent popular consciousness or one global culture and identity in the world today stems from the effects of globalisation (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Barker, 1997). Significant to note in these theories are the analyses of the domination of Western media on world market and its claimed effect on national or local culture resulting in homogenisation of cultures and the development of a one-world economy (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Barker, 1997; Ang, 1996).

3.1.1. Globalisation

Globalisation can be said to be a process of crafting a “one world economy” that is imbalanced (Barker, 1997:17). Theories of globalisation can be traced to the 19th Century when European countries “scrambled” Africa for its resources (Barker, 1997:17). The colonial powers determined what could be traded in particular African regions (Fourie, 2007; Barker, 1997). Barker notes that the colonial control was accompanied by “military dominance and cultural ascendancy that gave way to “economic dependency” of African states on the West (1997:17; see also Fourie, 2007:394). Consequently, most African

countries adopted Western religion and clothing styles (Fourie, 2007; Barker, 1997). Scholars of media imperialism state that this cultural ascendancy still exists today and is promoted by Western countries not only through media content but through ideological and technological advancement (Barker, 1997; Barker, 1999; Stevenson, 2002; Fourie, 2007; Kim, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2015). This is exemplified through the evident American lifestyles in most countries, which can be observed by the existence of fast foods such as Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), MacDonald's, drinks like Coca Cola, jeans clothing shops and computer software such as Microsoft and Apple (Kim 2008; Boyd-Barrett, 2015). The core argument of this approach is that "global media are dominated by American-owned multinational corporations which disseminate pro-capitalist and pro-American values" (Barker, 1997:184). The theorists argue that media imperialism is maintained by these powerful transnational corporations in the world that have eroded traditional communication systems and national boundaries through technological advancements in electronic communication such as fibre optic cable, satellite and digital migrations (Boyd-Barret 2015; Kim, 2008; Barker, 1999; Barker, 1997). These technological advancements are what has led to "interconnectedness and interdependence" in the world today and have fashioned one global identity and culture or popular consciousness (Barker, 1997:23).

3.1.2. *Cultural homogenisation*

One of the arguments of media imperialism thesis is that the imposition of Western media on local cultures has led to the eroding of local cultural production capacity and diversity of the Third World cultural industries (Barker, 1997:183; see also Straubhaar, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991). As such, this has effected cultural homogenisation or "sameness" in the world today (Fourie, 2007:394; Barker, 1997:185; Barker, 1999:37). This is also known as cultural synchronisation (Fourie, 2007; Strelitz, 2005; Barker, 1997). Put in another way, Fourie points out that:

If foreign media content dominates the output (content) of national and / or local media, then it can contribute to the homogenisation of culture. This may happen to the detriment of one's own culture and (own way of looking at and experiencing reality, life and meanings). (2007:394)

Fourie points out that media imperialism is regarded negatively by media theorists who argue that the global imbalance in the flow of mass media content leads to the undermining of local cultural autonomy and hampers the growth of cultural industries in the periphery (Fourie, 2007; see also Barker, 1997; Barker, 1999). These theorists argue that this dominance of global media flow in the Third World "hinders the growth of an appropriate national identity

and self-image” (Fourie, 2007: 394). Furthermore, Western media are argued to be “carriers of meanings” which penetrate Third World cultures (Barker, 1997:183). The media’s primary role in globalisation is what has led to media imperialism theorists interchanging the term “culture” and “media” (Strelitz, 2005:35). In this chapter therefore, the terms will be used synonymously.

To expand on the point of cultural homogenisation, the media imperialism scholars maintain that through global media texts, cultures and identities of peoples in the world are erased and recreated so that Western values and beliefs dominate the cultures of peoples, especially those in the periphery (Ang, 1996; Barker, 1999; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Strelitz, 2005; Fourie, 2007; Kim, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2015). This happens through hegemonic media texts that are disseminated to the defenceless minds of viewers worldwide in order to serve the economic ideologies of the West (Seiter et al, 1991; Ang, 1996; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Kim, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2015; Barker, 1997). Underpinning the argument advanced by the media imperialism thesis is the belief that Western media texts have the ability to shape the views of the readers (Liebes and Katz, 1993). It is through these texts that the American culture seeps uncritically into the lifestyles of audiences leading to homogenisation of all cultures in the world (Barker, 1997; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Barker, 1999; Stevenson, 2002; Kim, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2015). These homogenising tendencies of transnational corporations are facilitated through commodities such as entertainment and news (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Fourie, 2007; Strelitz, 2005; Tomlinson, cited by Ang, 1996). In my analysis, I attempt to examine these underlying assumptions and study the effects of global media consumption - telenovelas on Zambian female audience. My quest is to analyse whether the Zambian women uncritically adopt the values, beliefs, identities or lifestyles portrayed in the global media which they consume.

3.1.3. Western media as carriers of modernity

Another fundamental assumption of media imperialism is “the role of mass-mediated popular culture as a carrier of modernity” by people in the Third World (Morley, 1997 in Strelitz, 2005:98). The scholars’ proposition is that the desire for modernity by people in the periphery, stem from industrialised countries which lead to “modern world views” (Burger et al. in Strelitz, 2005:98). These scholars state that:

Like other fully developed worldviews, the worldview of modernity takes on a dynamic of its own. Similarly, both Tomlinson and Drotner believe that the attraction of Western media has to be seen in the context of the

attraction and subsequent spread of capitalist modernity.... Modernity is an attempt to combine the diverse and apparently disparate processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation and mediation, and to see these processes as expressions of a common intrinsic logic. (Strelitz, 2005:98)

This is further explained by Nielson who posits that cultural modernisation is essentially demonstrated through the “processes of individualisation, the expanding degree of separation of the individual from his or her traditional ties and restrictions” (Strelitz, 2005:98; see also Berman, 1982 in Ang, 1996:156). These processes often lead to traditional ties and restrictions disintegrating, the effects of highly developed capitalist countries in the world (Strelitz, 2005; Ang 1996). Furthermore, Strelitz (2005) stresses that the move from tradition to modernity has an imperialist element. Therefore, modernisation in developing countries leads to Westernisation of the local people’s social, political and economic views (Strelitz, 2005).

3.1.4. Supremacy and dominance of Western (American) media

Relevant to this discussion, is what is stated by Schiller regarding USA dominating the international media market through Hollywood movies, television entertainment production and global music recording industry (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Stevenson, 2002; Barker, 1997; Ang, 1996). To exemplify this powerful American domination, it is worth noting that although there is extensive advancement in computing hardware in China and India, the USA tops hardware computing in the world through corporations such as Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Intel among others (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Stevenson, 2002). In 2010, China introduced the fastest computers in the world but most of the components and chips were made by Intel (Boyd-Barret, 2015). By 2014, USA represented the largest concentration of all international communication corporations as most of these corporations were based in that country (Boyd-Barret, 2015). Furthermore, theorists of media imperialism argue that USA remains the most powerful nation judged by its military strength and its global economic dominance in the world (Liebes and Katz, 1993; Barker, 1997; Kim 2008; Boyd-Barret 2015). Other countries such as United Kingdom, Germany, China and Japan are also ranked as economically powerful globally but USA surpasses them all hence being referred to as the “imperial centre” by many media imperialism theorists (Boyd-Barret, 2015:138; Kim, 2008: 27, 85; Barker, 1997:184).

For that reason, Schiller defines media imperialism as ways in which “the global media system is subjected to the interests of powerful countries in the world” (Schiller, 1969

cited by Boyd-Barret, 2015:139). Significant to note is the unequal media power relations in many countries that have become very noticeable as the market supremacy of Western media dominates that of the less powerful resulting in media imperialism (Fourie, 2007; Boyd-Barret, 2015). Schiller argues that currently media imperialism is taking place through news and information services that flow in one direction from the Western countries to the Third World via international news agencies such as BBC, CNN or Reuters (Schiller, 1969 in Boyd-Barret, 2015). Barker amplifies this by noting that:

News is gathered, selected and controlled by Western transnational corporations who treat news as a commodity to be bought and sold.... This is detrimental to developing nations because the news coverage supplied by the transnational news agencies has emphasised negative news values (for example disaster and corruption) and promoted Western cultural and political interests... they are thus important agenda setters of world news. Only a handful of news agencies have the economic resources to maintain a world news service and these are Western owned and controlled. (Masmoudi, 1979 cited by Barker, 1997:101-102)

When this current global trend first became noticeable to the Third World in the 1970s, it led to the formation of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Fourie, 2007; Strelitz, 2005). The NWICO was created in order to address the challenges resulting from Western domination of global media (Fourie, 2007). Thus media imperialism is exemplified through these global news agencies whose international framing of news is in line with USA's capitalist ideologies and have information and news monopoly (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Barker, 1997). Additionally, this works in practice through ideological support for capitalism in general by countries globally especially developing nations (Barker, 1997).

This support is promoted by the "World Liberal Economic Order", a global free trade system which favours Western economic and political ideologies especially that of USA at the expense of the Third World (Boyd-Barret, 2015: 120; see also Barker, 1997; Liebes and Katz, 1993). In his work on globalisation, Schiller (1969) in Boyd-Barret (2015) states that international multimedia corporations are members of the World Liberal Economic Order (Boyd-Barret, 2015; Kim, 2008; Barker, 1997; Tomlinson, 1991). Thus Schiller argues that cultural imperialism is promoted in the world through strategies that extend capitalism (Golding and Harris, 1997; Tomlinson, 1991).

To advance the claims of USA dominating the international entertainment industry, media imperialism scholars stress the way this country dominates the music recording industry as well as the movie business (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Barker 1999). American music groups dominate the international music recording industry (Boyd-Barrett, 2015). Furthermore, six big distributors of Hollywood movies and multinational conglomerates that own them dominate the international movie industry (Boyd-Barrett, 2015). These corporations include 21st Century Fox, Time Warner Brothers, Walt Disney among others. Boyd-Barrett (2015) stresses that Nollywood in Nigeria and Bollywood in India have larger audiences than Hollywood yet nearly half of the international revenue for movie production and distribution is produced from North American audiences.

The media imperialism thesis however, has received criticism from ethnographic audience studies that focus on how actual viewers read global media texts in particular local contexts of consumption (Ang, 1996; Liebes and Katz, 1993). I must make mention that the media imperialism thesis is text-based and the ethnographic approach is audience/reader based.

In his studies of audiences, Moores (1993) argues that in order to understand the viewers' standpoint, it is important to engage with the situational contexts in which the media are used and interpreted. This is because the text has power to propose and prefer particular readings but importantly readers are active decoders who will not necessarily accept the encoded meanings and positions which are on offer (Moores. 1993).

Another example is Liebes and Katz's audience studies of Dallas, an international popular soap in the 1980s, which portrayed a diversity of interpretations by demonstrating the activeness of audiences (Liebes and Katz, 1993; Livingstone, 1998). To illustrate this further, the Israeli viewers had very different interpretations of Dallas from the American viewers within Israel and these different interpretations were dependant on ethnicity (Liebes and Katz, 1993).

In her studies of audiences, Ang (1996) demonstrates a range of reasons as to why audiences are drawn to transnational texts. More importantly, she emphasises that to study audiences, one needs to analyse what meanings local audiences in actual social and political contexts make from global media texts (Ang, 1996). Ang argues that:

The transnational dissemination of mass mediated culture is, given the hegemonic strength of global capitalism in today's world economy, an

irreversible process that cannot be structurally transcended at least not in the foreseeable future. But this does not mean that it is not actively and differentially responded to and negotiated with in concrete local contexts and conditions. These local responses and negotiations, culturally diverse and geographically dispersed, need to be taken into account if we are to understand the complex and contradictory dynamics of today's 'global culture'. (1996:153)

These criticisms will inform my research in that they shift the focus from the ideological readings of texts by theorists to the readings actual audiences make from actual texts in actual social contexts (Moore, 1993; Fiske, 1987; Fiske, 1989). Next, I look at the cultural proximity theory as a possible explanation as to what attracts the Zambian audience to the Latin American media texts especially that these global artefacts are foreign to the Zambian customs. Prior to this discussion, I summarily discuss the multi-directional counter flows which have disputed the one-way direction of Western cultural products to the Third World as proposed by the media imperialism thesis.

3.2. Critiques of the media imperialism thesis

3.2.1. Multi-directional counter flows

Media imperialism scholars argue that globally there is a one-way flow of television, news, music and film from the countries in the North to the South (Boyd-Barrett, 2015; Miller 2010; Fourie, 2007; Straubhaar, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991; Nordenstreng and Varis, 1974). Other scholars of media imperialism however, have challenged this claim (Miller, 2010; Straubhaar, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991). These theorists argue that there is now a complex and counter-flow of cultural products owing to great technological advancements in the world today (Straubhaar, 1991, 2003). Against the claim for a creation of global homogeneity of cultures, these theorists point to an increased divergence of cultures as a result of globalisation. It is these points that I will build on in this section. The term North and West will be used synonymously to indicate the First World while the term South refers to the Third World (Miller, 2010). Furthermore, while the multi-directional counter flows refer to all cultural products, my focus is on television programmes.

Some media theorists have argued against the notion of one-way flow of television programmes as "Mexico, Brazil and India produce successful global media products" (Miller, 2010:207; Straubhaar, 2003:79). An example of this is the success and popularity of *Betty la Fea* (*Ugly Betty*) produced in Columbia and penetrated the English speaking US market and

was reproduced in European countries such as Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, as well as the Orient (Miller, 2010). The companies that have reproduced their own versions of this product have distributed it in a multi-directional way thereby undermining the cultural imperialism view of one-way flow of media products (Miller, 2010).

Focussing on television, technological factors underpin the multi-directional flows of programs (Straubhaar, 2003). New advancements in modern electronic communications have led to the creation of cheaper and easier production centres leading to more studios with cheaper special effects and lower production costs globally (Straubhaar, 2003). This has resulted in producers gaining skill in production and getting a sense of their viewers' preferences (Straubhaar, 2003). For example, Nigeria through Nollywood produces African movies and exports them to nearby African countries as they seem to be on demand but it does not have a state of the art production effects as Hollywood (Phiri, 2006). Furthermore, communication technologies have enabled new patterns of audio-visual flow emerging around geo-linguistic regions and physical locations around the world with similar languages, specifically Spanish, Indian, and Arabian speaking countries (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006). An example is India's Zee TV the satellite channel provides diasporic markets to Mauritius, Fiji, Bahrain, Kuwait, Singapore and other similar countries. The same applies to Egypt, which serves its surrounding Arabian countries (Sinclair et al, 1996). Thus, the current media environment has a diversity of media flows from emerging and developing nations which are huge exporters of media products globally including India, Brazil, Egypt and Mexico (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000). These new global trends therefore, question the proposition of the media imperialism thesis regarding the one-way flow of media leading to the creation of global cultural homogeneity (Straubhaar, 1991; Sinclair et al, 1996).

It is important to note that although poor countries continue to import cultural products, these no longer flow one-way from USA but from nearby locations or regions (Straubhaar, 1991; Straubhaar, 2003; Phiri, 2006). For example, Zambia imports products from Nigeria and other African nations such as South Africa due to the cultural linguistic closeness thereby creating a much more complex flow of cultural products (Straubhaar, 2003; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005; Phiri, 2006). Another example, is Brazil which currently "dominates the television programming of its former colonial powers, Portugal, leading to an interpenetration of cultures both by migration and by media" (Straubhaar, 2003:79). This has resulted in the "reverse flow" of television programmes from South to the North as a result of the consumption of non-Western media cultural artefacts by the West (Barker, 1999:42). In

this regard, Barker (1999) points to the consumption of reggae, hip-hop, world music and the Latin American soap opera exports to Western countries, which disrupts the creation of homogeneousness of cultures. These media products expose the audience to other ways of living in terms of religion, food, and dressing from the East, South or West, thereby dismissing the cultural imperialism notion of Western media domination globally (Barker, 1999).

Next, I look at the cultural proximity theory, which explains that audiences have preference for local content and cultural products that they can relate to in terms of culture, language, religion and ethnicity (Straubhaar, 1991 and 2003). This theory helps us make sense of the counter-flow argument.

3.2.2. Cultural proximity theory

This section draws on Joseph Straubhaar's work on what he refers to as 'cultural proximity'. Central to his argument is that audiences have a variety of preferences and that emerging regional production centres counter hegemonic Western media (Straubhaar, 1991). Straubhaar further argues that there is a class dimension to audiences' preferences, limited by a viewer's economic and cultural resources (Straubhaar, 1991; see also; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005; Straubhaar, 2003). He suggests that poor audiences prefer products that are locally produced, close to their culture, or nearby and directly relevant to them in linguistic terms as opposed to hegemonic global media products (Straubhaar, 1991 and 2003). Straubhaar argues that in contrast, the elite have the economic wealth to choose global media products of their choice and that even in developed countries, it is possible to establish that the elite and the upper middle class are the only ones that have the economic resources at their disposal and often choose to consume global television channels (Straubhaar, 2003; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005; Straubhaar, 1991).

According to Straubhaar's (1991 and 2003) analyses of audiences, when people who prefer nationally and locally produced products cannot access them on the local market, they choose cultural artefacts that are similar to theirs in terms of ethnicity, religion, language or nearby areas geographically. The audiences' preference for local programmes is evidenced by most countries that seem to produce their own programmes during primetime television viewing such as local news that feature local topical issues (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005). Straubhaar argues that to this date, such programmes are still dominant because many nations give great importance towards "cultivating a sense of national identity through the media"

(La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005:276). At the same time, the relative expense of producing local cultural products results in relatively undeveloped cultural industries in developing economies. As a result, local audiences turn to both regional markets in search of cultural products that reinforce their identities as well as the relatively cheaply-distributed US products (Straubhaar, 1991; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005).

Cultural proximity theorists argue that extensive exports of cultural products in emerging regional markets such as Nigeria, China, India, Arabian countries and Latin America, are as result of the audiences' attraction to common language and culture (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Straubhaar, 2003; Sinclair et al, 2002). While not established as competitors of Western media, these cultural industries have proved to have large markets. (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Sinclair et al, 2002; Gates and Funnell, 2012; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005). Thus, the current growth of regional media markets globally offers an alternative to hegemonic Western media products and points to an increased importance of emerging production centres (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Straubhaar, 1991). This study explores the cultural artefact, the telenovela consumed by Zambian women which is not anywhere close to their culture and languages. Part of my research is to explain this seeming anomaly.

The core of this argument lays emphasis on local audiences having a variety of preferences for media other than Western texts, thereby disputing the overwhelming attraction to Western values as proposed by the thesis on media imperialism (Straubhaar, 2003).

It should be noted that the media imperialism thesis has also been criticised for its failure to explain the existing cultural relations between Third world states in relation to media imports among these countries (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1992 in Stevenson, 2002). For example, Phiri (2006) in her analyses of the popularity of Nigerian movies in Zambia, points out that Zambians turn to Nigeria for their media products because of not only being culturally proximate but easily accessible. Thus, the cultural proximity theory demonstrates that audiences do not necessarily prefer imposed media messages from the Western countries but that local people are drawn to programmes they can relate to through similar cultures and identities (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000; Straubhaar, 2003; Sinclair et al, 2002).

Next, I discuss ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis by stressing the active audience theories. I will also consider African regional research that has engaged with this literature.

3.3. *The ethnographic or qualitative audience studies*

Qualitative audience studies (sometimes used synonymously, although incorrectly with the term ethnographic audience studies) draw on Hall's encoding and decoding model that describes audiences as active meaning-makers who can provide hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional readings of the texts they encounter (Hall, 1980; Ang, 1996). The focus of these studies is on the interplay of discourses between that of the text and those of the reader (Fiske, 1987). Contrary to the media imperialism thesis, these audience studies argue against textual influence and illustrate that viewers have varied readings in relation to their particular culture, political and personal contexts (Fiske, 1987; Hall, 1980; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Strelitz, 2005; Kim, 2008; Takahashi, 2010).

3.3.1. *The active audience*

According to Hall's model, when readers engage with texts, they employ the "connotation of codes" which refers to text messages whose meanings are not fixed but rather changeable and clearly vary from one moment to another (Hall, 1980:133). Hall amplifies this by noting that "meanings are open to wider ideological discourses" meaning that when reading a television text, viewers may not only get the literal meaning in the message, but can also interpret them in many different ways (1980:133). Hall calls this the "polysemic value" of texts (Hall, 1980:134; Fiske, 1987:64-65). Furthermore, Hall explains that although television texts have dominant meanings, the viewer can resist the hegemonic messages and have their own negotiated meanings (Hall, 1980). This insight shapes those audience studies that have disputed the ideological claims of media imperialism theorists (Hall, 1980; Fiske, 1989). They point to the fact that viewers are not necessarily passive victims of the media but they actually have a diversity of interpretations varying with their social and cultural contexts (Liebes and Katz, 1993; Strelitz, 2000; Takahashi, 2010).

Fiske argues that television texts can provide multiple, potential meanings and pleasures that can offer resistance to dominant ideologies of the West and possibly "evade the popular forces in a text or fracture its homogeneity" (Fiske, 1987:79 Strelitz, 2000: 41; Livingstone, 1998:185). This is proposed by qualitative audience studies, which demonstrate that in as much as Western cultural industries dominate the international market, they cannot

control or predict that audiences globally will automatically find their products pleasurable, thereby serving their interests (Fiske, 1987; Fiske, 1989; Strelitz, 2000; Strelitz, 2005; Boshoff, 2005; Phiri, 2006; Kim, 2008; Jiwaji, 2010; Takahashi, 2010). Qualitative audience studies take Hall's (1980) initial formulation further by exploring how the viewers' context of consumption impacts on the interpretation made of texts (Moore, 1993; Fiske, 1987; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Kim, 2008; Takahashi, 2010). These audience studies are opposed to the media imperialism thesis as they argue that people will only be drawn to particular texts if they find them pleasurable (Fiske, 1987). Significant to note is that reading not only involves "a garnering of meanings from a text" but the interplay between the discourses of the reader and those discourses of the television text (Fiske, 1987: 82; see also Morley cited by Fiske, 1987; Corner, 1985 cited by Livingstone, 1998; Moore, 1993; Liebes and Katz, 1993). Qualitative audience studies refer to these social experiences as "situated resources" that viewers apply in the reception process (Livingstone, 1998:178; see also Abruzzese et al, 2012:181; Takahashi, 2010).

Other scholars of audience studies have argued that rather than the television consumer being passive and unwitting, the viewer is active and subversive (Takahashi, 2010). In his studies of audiences, Michel de Certeau (1984) cited by Takahashi (2010:35) argues that "in the face of the overwhelming power of the media" and in resisting such strategies, viewers often "poach" certain features of the media for their own purposes and advancement of everyday life. Audiences therefore, resist the Western dominant power in the text by engaging with the imposed products in the way that was unintended by the producers of it (Takahashi, 2010; Fiske, 1987). The result Takahashi notes, is that the media products end up serving the viewer's own and often "subversive interests" (Takahashi, 2010: 35). Put in another way, Takahashi points out that viewers only appropriate media products that serve their quests in everyday life or possibly provide an alternative to their own daily lives (Takahashi, 2010).

3.3.2. Symbolic distancing

Some audience scholars note that audiences are not passive consumers of dominant global texts but actively use them as reference points to evaluate and compare with their own lives (Kim, 2008; Strelitz, 2005; Takahashi, 2010). These scholars note that "the appropriation of these materials enable them to take some distance from the conditions of their day to day lives – not literally but symbolically" (Thompson, 1995 cited by Strelitz, 2005: 35; Takahashi, 2010: 34). These theorists propose that global media messages can

provide “tactical spaces” or “a resource” for individuals to think critically about their own lives and conditions, which is called “symbolic distancing” or “reflexivity” (Strelitz, 2005:79; Takahashi, 2010: 35; Kim, 2008:28). The scholars note that such critical analyses by audiences enable them to “imagine new possibilities of freedom within the multiple constraints of their social contexts” (Kim, 2008:28; Strelitz, 2005:79; Takahashi, 2010: 35). What the above scholars point out is that the consumption of Western media does not have a homogenising effect on audiences globally but instead they lead to intensified self-formation as viewers actually reflect on their actual circumstances and lives (Takahashi, 2010, Kim, 2008; Strelitz, 2005). This also signals that the practice of symbolic distancing involves “learning to deal with life conditions in a new light, by attempting to expand the sense of self-fulfilment” (Kim, 2008:42). Thus, scholars see globalisation as not necessarily promoting domination of Western products, but as supplying a rich stream of cultural resources for people to extract some cultural fragments for self-recreation (Lull, cited by Takahashi, 2010; Strelitz, 2005; Takahashi, 2010; Kim, 2008). This is because as Kim argues, “not every Western image of freedom is randomly taken in as fuel for the imagination rather a particular imagined world is socially constructed in which certain aspects of the West are ruled out” (Kim, 2008:43). In a word, people have a reflexive relationship between self, culture and society as they recreate their own “preferred image of reality” (Takahashi, 2010:37, 42). Furthermore, Strelitz notes that:

the insights into symbolic distancing are part of a theoretical claim that the artefacts produced by the culture industries provide the resources for cultural resistance to dominant or hegemonic society meanings. (2005:80)

Arguments for cultural homogenisation as the dominant effect of media and cultural imperialism, are thus disputed by these research findings.

An example of symbolic distancing is provided by Kim (2008) who examined how Korean women through television, were imaginatively transported from their limited disadvantaged lives (socially and materially) to a new world of opportunities and change. This process led to their transformation as they shifted from the conditions of local life and evaluated their lives, they were plugged in to new possibilities of freedom (Kim, 2008:36). The significance of this critique of media imperialism is that it allows one to challenge the notions that local audiences’ consumption of global media is restricted to singular and expected readings whose main purpose is to strengthen Western ideologies (Moore, 1993). In my study of the avid soap opera viewing by Zambian women, I attempt to establish

whether these women also turn to their own situations and think about them vicariously and critically as a way of recreating themselves.

3.4. African audience research

The above analyses of qualitative audience studies have been reinforced by African research studies, which point to the multi-varied relationship that local African audiences have to global media products (Jiwaji, 2010; Phiri, 2006; Aseffa, 2005, Strelitz, 2005; Boshoff, 2005 and Davis and Davis, 1995). These studies have been conducted in Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Morocco respectively.

A study by Jiwaji (2010) of how Kenyan women negotiated meaning from global media texts, Latin soaps revealed that Kenyan women neither embraced nor rejected the Western media culture and their African values. The young women instead questioned and destabilised both Western and African definitions of what a woman or a man should be in society, and reconstructed this and applied it to their lived experiences (Jiwaji, 2010:111).

Additionally, Boshoff (2005) in her study of South African Indian youths and the meaning they make of Indian films, demonstrated that South African youths negotiated and recreated their identities in relation to the Western cultural identities from Bollywood and the local Indian culture, implying that audiences are not passive but very active readers (Boshoff, 2005). Boshoff (2005) argues that the ethnographic critique speaks more of audiences in terms of difference, polysemic meanings, and diverse forms of identification which nullifies all concerns of Western hegemonic texts as proposed by the media imperialism thesis.

Similarly, Davis and Davis (1995) studies of adolescent's consumption of global media in Morocco, shows that the youths re-imagined and redefined their culture in relation to their fast changing gender roles. The youths did not get rid of their local culture but embraced both the traditional Arabian culture and some individualised aspects of Western culture (Davis and Davis, 1995).

Strelitz (2005) in his studies of media consumption and identity formation among homeland viewers at Rhodes University in South Africa, demonstrated that the social location of viewers impacted on how they make meaning of the television texts they regularly watch. This questions the spread of global culture as argued by the media imperialism thesis.

Phiri (2006) in her studies of the popularity of Nigerian movies in Zambia, argues that the circulation of media within and between non-Western countries is an aspect of transnational cultural flows that has been ignored by the media imperialism thesis. Her findings are that regional imperialism counters arguments of the cultural imperialism thesis because the thesis ignores regional domination of cultural products and other non-Western producers of globally consumed media products (see Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006). Phiri (2006) demonstrates that the popularity of Nollywood movies in Zambia can be explained by the cultural proximity theory of Nigerian and Zambian social values. This does beg the question as to the popularity of Latin telenovelas amongst Zambian viewers – two countries existing on different continents, the focus of my study.

Assefa (2005) in her audience studies of the popularity of American action movies in Ethiopia argues that although the hegemonic global media – in this instance American movies - penetrates the Ethiopian culture, the meanings that Ethiopian youths get from them are varied according to their particular social contexts or lived realities.

These African audience studies clearly show that hegemonic Western media texts do not necessarily have singular and predictable readings; in as much as they can penetrate local cultures, viewers extract what is relevant to their social environments (Moore, 1993).

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sketched a theoretical framework for analysing the various ways in which viewers' appropriate global media in the context of globalisation and the theories of media imperialism. Pointing to what has come to be known as the ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis, I have argued that audiences are active consumers of dominant media messages. They do not necessarily receive the hegemonic Western media messages passively, but instead they constantly negotiate meanings. These meanings can sometimes be used to symbolically distance the viewer from his/her material lived circumstances. In the next chapter, I discuss reception studies as the dominant qualitative method I employed to gather data for my research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

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 the everyday lives of the audiences, or how the 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)

4. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and data-collecting procedures employed in conducting the study and its relevance to this particular study. In obtaining data on the popularity of Latin soaps among Zambian female viewers, this study uses a qualitative research design rooted in reception analysis. Firstly, the philosophical base of qualitative research and its relevance is discussed. Secondly, reception analysis, which seeks to examine the discourses of the telenovelas and those of the Zambian women audience, is discussed. Thirdly, an explanation of the sampling procedures and justification of the methods used in data collection is given. Lastly, the data analysis procedure is explicated.

4.1. Research design

4.1.1. Qualitative research: its epistemological base and relevance

Bryman (1984) explains that the choice of the epistemological base or tradition used in any research determines the appropriateness of a particular method employed. Scholars further posit that the research design used in any study is underpinned by the researcher's views on how "social reality" is constructed (Deacon et al., 1999:4; Bryman, 1984:71; Babbie and Mouton, 2001:270, 278). For example, according to the positivist social facts or social reality is already "out there" and can be discovered with correct experiments whereas the interpretivist say social reality is socially constructed (Deacon et al., 1999:4; Babbie and Mouton, 2001:271; Bryman, 1984:73). In my study I seek to understand the Zambian audience's "actual talk" of telenovelas as "raw materials" for my analysis rather than basing my evidence on statistical analysis which quantitative research entails (Lindlof, 1995:21). As Lindlof notes:

Qualitative research methods are distinguished from quantitative terms, methods in that they do not rest their evidence on the logic of mathematics,

the principle of numbers, or the methods of statistical analysis. Actual talk, gestures and other social action are the raw materials for analysis. (1995:21)

It is for this reason that positivists differ from interpretive researchers who emphasise that all social knowledge is co-produced from many encounters including conversations and arguments the researcher has with research participants (Deacon et al., 1999). As such, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to interact with the social actors as a way of exploring and evaluating their views on particular subjects (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This study is located within the phenomenological or interpretivist paradigm, which looks at the actor's viewpoint as the "empirical point of departure" (Bryman, 1984:73). This study's purpose therefore, is to analyse subjects from the viewpoint of the actors themselves in order to get the "insiders or emic perspective" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 270). The suitability of qualitative research to my study is that I intend to analyse the creation of meanings Zambian female viewers make from Latin Soaps by extensively exploring their own perspectives on these programmes (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Deacon et al., 1999). This detailed understanding, is facilitated effectively by the use of qualitative methods that provide an extensive methodological approach to the examination of social action (Bryman, 1984; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This is because the researcher in qualitative research is concerned with analysing human behaviour in terms of beliefs, opinions or values in order to "capture" the process of interpretation (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 28, 271; Deacon et al., 1999:4, 5).

Unlike the quantitative approach which sometimes controls the normal course of events by applying "artificial settings" in order to get the desired results, as a qualitative researcher I attempted to be non-intrusive to my social subjects as well as tried to understand their viewpoints or beliefs from their patriarchal contexts (Deacon et al, 1999:4; see also Bryman 1984; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This was in line with the interpretivist view that actual social and cultural life, is constantly re-created and modified through various everyday activities in particular social contexts (Deacon, et al, 1999; Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

It is worth noting that qualitative research entails a holistic and inductive approach resulting in new hypothesis, theories and interpretations (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Bryman, 1984). These interpretations are usually detailed or in-depth (Bryman, 1984). The relevance of this to my study is that it allows me to understand the interpretations that Zambian viewers make from telenovelas in-depth. It is also relevant to note that qualitative research is very fluid and flexible. The reason for this is that the questions in qualitative interviews allow

research participants to express their personal experiences freely in their own ‘voices’ and ‘languages’ which result in rich data (Byrne, cited by Seale, 2004:182). This was appropriate to this study as it focused on interpretations made by viewers about the telenovela genre. It is also worth mentioning that this research sought to uncover meanings made by a particular group of people - middle class Zambian women which made qualitative studies appropriate due to its stance on understanding particularities rather than generalising results to larger populations (Deacon et al., 2010; Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Litosseliti, 2003).

It must be noted that epistemological differences and philosophical foundations between qualitative and quantitative studies do not make one approach more superior or scientific than the other but rather, one technique is likely to be more useful in some contexts as opposed to the other and at times, both methods can be complementary to the other (Bryman 1984; Strelitz, 2002).

4.1.2. Trustworthiness in research

In qualitative research in order to ensure validity and reliability of research findings, clearly detailed step-by- step methods are used in arriving at the conclusion of the phenomenon under study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Jwan and Ong’ondo, 2011). In this study, the use of triangulation and member checks enabled the research process to be rigorous (Jwan and Od’ongo, 2011).

As to the question of triangulation, since triangulation entails a combination of research methods, qualitative content analysis was employed to get the themes of the telenovelas in terms of dominant images and representations to add depth to the inquiry (Bryman, 1984; Schreier, 2014; Jwan and Od’ongo, 2011). I corroborated different sources of data by cross-checking the features derived from qualitative content analysis with the data obtained from in-depth interviews. As such, triangulation was used to tease out the experiential knowledge of telenovelas from the opinion and preferences of participants (Jwan and Od’ongo, 2011).

4.2. Reception analysis: its appropriateness

Jensen (1988:3) states that it is the “qualitative empirical methods of data” gathering which are often associated with reception analysis. The appropriateness of reception analysis to my study was that it was suitable for analysing the discourses of the media text (telenovelas) as well as the discourses of the subject – the Zambian women (Jensen, 1988). Since my research focused on how telenovelas were received by Zambian women, my aim was to “explore how

the talk in a telenovela” and the “talk about the telenovela became linked” to everyday lived realities of the Zambian women (Tufte, 2000:51; see also Lindlof, 1995; Jensen 1988). It is important to note that reception analysis explores the process of how meaning is made on culture by specific groups of people and how the media has impact on people or their culture (Jensen, 1988:5). As Tufte explains, the idea of reception studies is to explore “social and cultural consequences of this (media text), in terms of the articulation of identity, social relations, social actions, and opinions” (2000:51). Fiske (1989:66) also notes that the way a television programme is talked about provides us with “clues” on “social formations” and how these texts are interpreted, and also clues on which meanings are preferred by the viewers. Reception analysis therefore, was applied to examine the telenovelas watched by Zambian women in order to get the actual perspectives, opinions, expressions of identity and meanings that Zambian female viewers made and how such meanings were appropriated in their everyday lived realities.

Furthermore, in order to investigate, why telenovelas were popular among Zambian women, I employed reception analysis in my research as it focuses on what people do with the media and how they use it (Jensen, 1988). It also “combines a qualitative approach to media as texts, producing and circulating meaning in society with an empirical interest in the viewers as co-producers of meanings” (Jensen, 1988:3). Hence, the imperative need to examine the viewers of these telenovelas as well as the contents of these programmes. It is for this reason that Jensen calls it “audience-cum-content analysis” (Jensen, 1988:3). Of particular importance is that reception analysis promotes the view that the media and their contents are not literally taken as accounts of reality by people but as resources that they can turn to in their everyday life (Jensen, 1988). Television therefore, is seen to have an impact on people’s lives in modern times as it can re-structure ways of life (Jensen, 1988). It is these accounts that I sought to explore. The suitability of reception analysis in my study was that it examined the impact of Latin soaps on everyday lived realities of Zambian women with particular reference to their conservative and patriarchal society. Techniques such as focus groups and individual in-depth interviews were helpful in exploring the viewers’ accounts on the meaning they made from telenovelas.

Reception analysis considers reality through mass communication as socially constructed and that viewers contribute to the creation of this reality (Jensen, 1988). Jensen (1988) notes that the most important element of television in modern culture is not its images of reality but rather how it shapes daily life, conversations and other aspects of life. This is

key in determining the impact that global media has on local people in terms of the values, beliefs, identities or meanings they obtain from them. This is because reception theory views the reception and social uses of the media by audiences as ever changing (Jensen, 1988). Jensen (1988:4) notes that reception is an “open activity of making sense” and that audiences can reconstruct or resist the dominant messages in the media text. Thus reception analysis enables the researcher to explore the preferred meanings made from texts by the viewers (Jensen, 1988). Through this analysis, I explored what watching of Latin soaps signified to Zambian women and whether the act of watching these programmes was a way of declaring certain aspirations or desires in their lives (Radway, 1984). For example, Radway notes in her book *Reading the Romance* that women turned to romantic fiction books as

an activity so engaging the readers’ attention that it enables them to deny physical presence in an environment associated with responsibilities that are acutely felt and occasionally experienced as too onerous to bear. (1984:158)

Radway (1984:158) notes that the women resisted the patriarchal order in their lives by turning to romance fiction as it offered them emotional comfort and pleasure, to the extent that it was a way of escaping the “unmet needs and excessive demands” of patriarchal marriages. A reception study therefore was suitable in enabling me analyse whether the act of watching telenovelas by Zambian women was similar to Radway’s accounts of escapism and pleasure that American women sought in their patriarchal society. Through such analysis, I was able to investigate what telenovelas stimulated in the lives of Zambians. The appropriateness of reception analysis is that it identifies the features and particular ways that audiences are attracted to certain television programmes, and it provides the strategies for the analysis of these genres and their attraction (Jensen, 1988:5). It is these particular aspects of audience appeals that were the central point of my analysis among the Zambian female audience.

The next section explains the data collection methods used in this study.

4.3. Research procedure and sampling

As highlighted in Chapter One, the study had a three-stage design, firstly the qualitative thematic content analysis, secondly focus group discussions and thirdly individual in-depth interviews. These are discussed in sequence.

4.3.1. *Qualitative thematic content analysis*

Since reception analysis' focus is on studying the discourses of the media and those of the subject in order to make an empirical comparative analysis, I first undertook a qualitative thematic content analysis of the telenovelas watched by Zambian women. The appropriateness of this method is in the way it enables the researcher to focus only on certain aspects of the text that are significant to the study (Schreier, 2014; Hansen et al, 1998). This technique therefore, enabled me to look at only the thematic features of the Latin soaps in line with my overall research question (Schreier, 2014). A theme refers to specific patterns found in the data in which one is interested (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). These can be words, meanings, images, representations, ideas or messages (Deacon et al. 1999). The main aim of thematic content analysis is to understand the underlying meaning of the apparent themes observable within the data, which requires interpretation (Joffe and Yardley, 2004; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2014). This is done by analysing the meanings in these images and representations in the text rather than counting the number of times in which they are used in a text or image as any quantitative content analysis would demand (Joffe and Yardley, 2004; Schreier, 2014). In attempting to understand why telenovelas were popular among Zambian women, I examined the images of the Latin soaps including its characters, how relationships were represented, these comprised my thematic features.

It should be noted that content analysis provides no pointer as to what particular features of the text should be studied or "how these dimensions should be interpreted" (Hansen, et al. 1998:99). This is one of the reasons why qualitative content analysis is viewed as flexible, as it "reduces data and is systematic" (Schreier, 2014:170). The flexibility of this method was suitable to my study since my ambition was to familiarise myself with the thematic content of the telenovelas in readiness for the subsequent in-depth interviews. The familiarisation was done in order to appreciate the dominant messages, images and representations in these texts. As Hansen et al note:

The researcher needs some familiarity with the content, structure and general nature of the material to be analysed in order to be able to set up categories that will be sufficiently sensitive to capture the nuances of the texts. (1998:107)

This is further explained by scholars who state that content analysis offers ways of "quantifying textual and thematic features across a large number of texts and allows the researcher to examine messages, images, and representations of texts relevant to a particular

study” (Hansen et al, 1998:95; Deacon et al, 1999:131; Schreier, 2014:170). Qualitative content analysis therefore provided me with an understanding of the meanings decoded in the general content of telenovelas.

The sampling frame for the qualitative thematic content analysis totalled 18 evening programmes from July 16th to August 5th, 2016. The period was short owing to the limitation of resources. A simple random sampling was chosen to systematically sample the telenovelas on Telemundo, Eva channels, ZNBC and Muvi TV. Telenovelas broadcast in the first one whole week were chosen, with a random date of 16th July, 2016. I followed this up with a “rolling or composite week” - that is Saturday 23rd July, 2016 of one week, then Sunday 31st July, 2016 - of the following week (Hansen et al., 1998:103). I could not systematically carry out the same strategy on Muvi TV and ZNBC because at the time of this study, the programmes on these two broadcasting stations were disrupted due to the intensified electoral campaign period. That being the case, only ten telenovela programmes (this includes episodes) on DStv were sampled and considered sufficient and manageable for the study.

My exposure to these programmes allowed me to sufficiently familiarise myself with their contents. This familiarity then shaped my interview-guide for my subsequent focus group and individual interviews (Hansen et al., 1998). I must make mention at this point that validity and objectivity in content analysis, is maintained by a systematic process of coding the findings of the research (Deacon et al., 2010).

Next, I discuss focus group interviews as a data collection technique.

4.3.2. Focus group interviews

The appropriateness of focus group interviews in my research is the way they are particularly used in analysing and understanding interpretation of fictional television programmes made by viewers (Jensen, 1988). This is in line with my research aim which was to examine the interpretation of meanings Zambian female viewers make from telenovelas. Significant to note is that focus groups which are a qualitative method of data collection, allowed me to particularly explore in detail the Zambian female viewers’ understandings of telenovelas and how they linked these to their everyday discourse of culture (Byrne in Seale, 2004; see also Tonkiss in Seale, 2004; Jensen, 1988; Jensen 1987). The in-depth interviews allowed me to be “flexible”, and enabled participants to express their experiences freely in their own ‘voices’ and ‘languages’ (Byrne in Seale, 2004:182). In one of the focus groups the participants preferred using a local language although they were fluent in English which

resulted in detailed expressions and meanings the Zambian women made from these programmes.

Its suitability as a technique in my study was in the way it probed audiences' experience of the media, to get their interpretations of the text (Jensen, 1988). Another point pertaining to its suitability is how it enables the researcher "to capture and compare the social and individual constructions of meanings" in a group context (Deacon et al. 2010:57). Underpinning this method is the understanding that "opinions, attitudes, and accounts are socially produced - shaped by interaction with others - rather than being discretely formed at the level of the individual" (Tonkiss in Seale, 2004:194; see also Krueger and Casey, 2014; Tronkiss in Seale, 2004; Morgan 1996). These views are what make focus group interviews distinct from survey questionnaires and individual interviews as the group discussions' "focus can take different forms and are less structured" in terms of interviews (Seale, 2004:194). In other words, focus group interviews provide a method for describing the way participants naturally rationalise with regard to specific issues, topics and events from their social and cultural contexts (Moore, 1993; Hansen et al., 1998). For example, Liebes and Katz (1984 and 1993) were able to use focus groups to probe viewers' interpretation of the television series *Dallas* among various groups of viewers in Israel, Japan, Russia, and USA. They found out that audiences made different interpretations in relation to their individual and collective social and cultural contexts. The suitability of focus groups as a data collection technique is the way it helps the researcher to "operationalise their core concepts, that is to define and clarify the main themes that the research aims to investigate and how these might be studied" (Tonkiss in Seale, 2004:195). Thus, I was able to clarify the main themes that resulted from the thematic content analysis of telenovelas and reflected in the interview guide.

In accordance with what has been noted above, my intention was to organise four focus group discussions but I only managed to have three groups of women who regularly watch telenovelas in Lusaka due to a limited budget and time constraints. The data collection took place between 16th July and 19th August, 2016. My aim was to get in touch with the male work colleagues (from different organisations as stated in the Introduction) who expressed discontentment at their wives who regularly watched telenovelas. My intention was to ask their wives to participate in my research. Unfortunately, this effort was not successful as many of them were not available at the time of data collection. Using snowball sampling I purposively gathered women from one organisation upon being informed by a source of their

preoccupation with telenovela viewing. Seven women told me they would willingly participate and I considered the number of women sufficient as noted by scholars who state that a focus group can vary in size from approximately four to twelve people (Deacon et al., 2010; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Tonkiss in Seale, 2004; Hansen et al., 1998). As Krueger and Casey note:

... focus groups are composed of 5 to 8 people, but the size can range from as few as 4 to as many as 12. The group must be small enough for everyone to have opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to share diversity of perceptions. (2014:15)

The first focus group had four participants even though seven indicated that they would be available, however two of these women turned up at the end of the focus group interview and another showed up the next day. I decided to include the three women in the individual interviews. The second focus group discussion had five women instead of the initial six, the third had four participants. Most of the women who never showed up on agreed times were included in the individual interviews which increased the number considerably. Altogether, I had 20 participants - 10 from individual interviews and 13 from focus groups. The initial number planned for individual interviews resulting from focus groups was three. The interviews were done on different dates but most of them were held during the last 14 days of my research period.

Purposive sampling was used to select the first group of participants because the sample was deliberately targeted for the study (Deacon, et al, 1999). I used snowball sampling to identify the second group of women to interview who would generate further contact (Deacon, et al, 1999). Furthermore, when I was at my work place, a work colleague seemed interested in my research and told me she regularly watched telenovelas. She then told me about other female colleagues at work who watched telenovelas - this led to the formation of another focus group. As such, I conducted a convenient sample as I did not intentionally plan to meet this group of women but they were more of “a product of expediency, chance and opportunity” (Deacon, et al., 2010:56). Furthermore, homogeneity was maintained in the focus groups as participants exhibited the same characteristics in line with my research goals (Krueger and Casey, 2014; Deacon et al, 1999). They were all middle class Zambian women who regularly watched telenovelas. Thus purposive, snowball and convenient sampling were used to collect data.

The women said it would be convenient for me to interview them during lunch-hour as they stayed in different parts of Lusaka city and most of them were not keen on being interviewed at weekends. There was a possibility of conducting a fourth focus group but due to limited time, I could not proceed as some of the women in this group kept changing dates of meetings or would show up at different times. I decided to include the ones who turned up, to be in the individual interviews.

Physical location of the study

The study was conducted in Lusaka Zambia at three different locations; namely Ministry of Education, Public Service Commission and at a convenient public place. The discussions were held in one large office, the conference room, and near a Pizza Joint respectively. As such, a neutral and comfortable environment in focus group discussions was maintained (Krueger and Casey 2014; Hansen, 1998). This was in accordance with research scholars who state that qualitative research is usually held in a natural setting and not in a laboratory or artificial setting (Seale, 2004; Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Bryman, 1984). I provided lunch for all of the groups as a compensation for participation (Umaña-Taylor and Bámaca, 2004).

My role as a research moderator

As a moderator, I used thematic features from the thematic content analysis and interview guide to facilitate the discussion (see appendix). The guide was used to ensure that the discussions were in line with issues relevant to my research so that similar issues were discussed in various groups (Byrne in Seale, 2004). Open-ended questions were used to generate rich amounts of data by probing or seeking clarity on responses (Litosseliti, 2003). At the beginning of the interview, I sought the consent of participants to record the conversations with a tape recorder, which happened to be my phone. In order to minimise bias and risk of manipulation on my part as well as participants, I did not explain in detail the nature of my research in fear that participants would have told me what I wanted to hear (Litosseliti, 2003). I told participants beforehand that there were no right or wrong answers and that I did not expect them to reach consensus on any issue (Litosseliti, 2003). I employed reflexivity in that I was not neutral as such during the discussions, but I approached the discussion from a “specific position” (Byrne, cited in Seale, 2004:182). What is implied by ‘specific position’ is that I had to ensure that the participants did not wander from the research topic and that the discussion was focused (Krueger and Casey, 2014; Litosseliti, 2003). As Morgan notes the “reliance is on interaction within the group based on topics that

are supplied by the researcher who takes the role of the moderator (1995: 2). For example, some participants talked about their attractions to Zee world – an Indian channel although I allowed them to talk about this, I deliberately made them focus on Latin soaps.

Generally, the women seemed very enthusiastic about certain features of these telenovelas and stressed their areas of interest. As Liebes and Katz note, “group context induces the expression of latent thoughts.... the generation of group views and free analytic statements” (1993:28). However, the limitation of focus groups is that “the method does not give equal weight to every individual’s reactions” to programmes, since some participants tend to dominate others (Liebes and Katz, 1993:29). In order to avoid this noticeable trend during the discussions, I deliberately probed those participants who seemed quiet in group discussions by specifically mentioning their names and asking their views on topics (Hansen et al. 1998). The interview process started with simple questions leading to the main themes of my research interest. This was done to make the participants talk freely and naturally as my intention in these focus groups was to promote “self-disclosure among participants” (Krueger and Casey, 2014:35). This explains why I was not keen on getting their demographic profiles because my interest was in getting insights into their everyday media interpretations that are collectively socially constructed (Deacon et al.,2010). It is worth noting that I obtained the same information from all the focus group interviews but I cannot state that I reached saturation point given my limited resources in gathering data as noted earlier.

Validity in focus groups can be maintained if the “focus groups are used carefully for a problem that is suitable for a focus group inquiry” (Litosseliti, 2003:23). Focus groups have limitations on handling complex and sensitive issues, therefore, a combination of other methods with focus groups in qualitative research works well (Litosseliti, 2003). Hence the use of individual in-depth interviews.

In the next section, I discuss individual in-depth interviews.

4.3.3. Individual in-depth interviews

Individual in-depth interviews complement focus groups because the researcher builds on the issues raised by previous participants to get detailed understandings (Ritchie et al., 2013). Individual interviews as a qualitative research technique are suitable for exploring individual perspectives intensely on a particular situation or topic (Boyce and Neale, 2006). As Jensen (1988) posits, it is the in-depth interview in different varieties which has most frequently

been employed to probe audience experience of the media. Jensen (1988) further states that in reception analysis, individual in-depth interviews are particularly used for identifying features and ways that audiences are attracted to the media programmes and it is these identified attractions that should be examined in detail. Hence, my use of this technique, I employed in-depth individual interviews to get clarification on particular issues that the Zambian audience raised in the focus group discussions (Tonkiss in Seale, 2004).

When the focus group interviews were concluded, I identified the most interactive and conversational participants in the groups for the individual in-depth interviews for further investigation (Tonkiss in Seale, 2004). As Ritchie et al notes, the essence of such data collection methods is based on the “belief that participants are individuals who actively construct their social world and can communicate insight about it verbally” (2013: 56). Whereas focus groups provide a chance for participants to refine what other participants say, individual interviews provide a chance for complex experiences to be addressed because of the depth of focus, opportunity for clarification and detailed understanding (Ritchie et al., 2013). Ritchie et al. further explains that:

Understanding people’s motivations and decisions, or exploring impacts and outcomes, generally requires a detailed focus that one to one interactions allow...topics which people are likely to see as confidential or where social norms predominate are less conducive to group discussions, unless what is required is a display of those social norms. (2013: 56)

In individual interviews therefore, the researcher goes beyond what may be seen as “socially acceptable” and the private location of an individual interview is useful in this regard (Ritchie et al., 2013:57). The research instruments used to collect data were follow up questions to focus groups, which were semi-structured. The in-depth interviews took the form of a one-to-one interview approach and which at times appeared to be conversations (Ritchie et al., 2013).

I took note of the key information, strengths and limitations of individual interviews (Boyce and Neale, 2006). During individual interviews, most participants were elusive and defensive with specific regard to questions about how a man is perceived in a relationship in relation to Latin men and other thematic features from telenovelas. I only managed four lengthy interviews from the ten individual interviews; the rest did not generate the much-needed depth. This was particularly common among the participants that were supposed to be in focus group discussions but turned up late or never took part in the group discussions. In

focus groups however, the women talked freely without reservations as the sense of the group made them feel like they were not disclosing personal issues. This is in line with Litosseliti (2003) who argues that focus groups present more natural environments for participants than individual interviews which focus on individual beliefs and attitudes. This is because participants in one-on-one interviews “might not want to say things that are too personal and too embarrassing” (Litosseliti, 2003: 23).

4.4. *Data analysis procedure*

Attempts were made by the researcher to ensure that threats to validity and objectivity in data analysis were avoided (Caudle, 2004). This was accomplished by obtaining accurate and complete data, and sufficiently documenting the chain of events during data collection by using a tape recorder. The stages that were adhered to during data analysis included transcription, organising data, coding and familiarisation (Jwan and Ong’ondo, 2011). For one particular group I had to transcribe from a local language into English. I transcribed all interviews with the view of analysing this data further in order to get meanings. Jensen emphasises that in reception studies “audience interviews constitute another text to be decoded analytically” as viewers do not “give finished accounts” of their media experiences (1988:4). The information gathered therefore was further analysed and interpreted. I coded emerging themes from the interview transcripts into different sections since my interest was in identifying emerging themes and ideas from the interviews (Jwan and Ong’ondo, 2011). My focus was on how emerging issues or themes from telenovelas were affecting the everyday life of Zambian women. The data was then narratively written with quotations from the research participants to shed more light on important findings of the research.

4.5. *Limitations to the study*

I conducted the data collection before and after Zambia’s 2016 Presidential, parliamentary and local government elections held on 11th August. There were threats and incidents of violence in isolated places during this time which made people confined to their homes especially after elections. Eventually it led to the fourth focus group not being held as most of participants who initially indicated their availability never turned up for the discussions.

4.6. *Ethical considerations*

It was my responsibility as a social research scientist to ensure that no harm would come to my interviewees as a result of their participation in my research (Ali and Kelly cited in Seale, 2004). I obtained informed consent from the participants when I approached them to take part

in the interviews (Ali and Kelly cited in Seale, 2004). I explained to them why the research was conducted and how the participants were chosen for the research. I advised the participants that they had the right to discontinue the interview if they so wished and that the information gathered would be for the sole purpose of the research. For ethical reasons pseudo names of research participants are used in this study (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011).

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, a qualitative research design was discussed as an appropriate approach to this study. It was followed by a discussion on reception studies and finally data collection techniques. The data collection technique had a three-stage design, which included thematic content analysis, focus groups and individual in-depth interviews. I then highlighted the limitations of the study after analysing the data collection process.

The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study in line with the theoretical overviews in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Cheswa: We love the romance of course! And the way they express their love for each other and how they keep on loving for years and years with passion, the way they dress I try to imitate that but not provocatively because of our culture. (Focus groups 01/08/16)

Selina: They are nice stories in these films, it's not every telenovela that is very scandalous but scandals are part of life I guess they just keep the film interesting. (Focus group, 04/08/16)

5. Introduction

The main goal of this study was to find out what makes the Latin soaps popular among Zambian middle class women who regularly watch these programmes. As any reception study requires, a comparative empirical analysis of the telenovela discourses with audience discourses on the programmes was conducted (Jensen, 1988). My intention was to get the audience's perspective on the meanings they make of Latin programmes in their social environment and how they interpret them in their daily lives. Of particular significance is that my ambition was to investigate why *The Face of Destiny* was popular among Zambian women due to the earlier observations I made as noted in the introduction. However, when I interviewed the women, there were variations as to what each participant considered their favourite telenovela. I then decided to look at telenovelas in general during interviews. The interviews therefore, did not begin with watching a video clip of telenovelas a requisite of reception studies. This study contributes to the debate on the popularity of global media in the periphery, Zambia, by drawing on the cultural imperialism thesis and qualitative audience studies that critique this thesis.

The findings are as a result of the qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews (both focus groups and individual). The findings and analysis are informed by the theoretical underpinnings and literature review discussed in Chapter Two, Three and Four. Firstly, findings from the content analysis are presented and lastly the in-depth interviews are discussed. Three focus groups and ten individual interviews were organised totalling 20 interviewees aged between 29 and 59 of middle working class women. The findings are written narratively with quotations that amplify and illustrate the discussion.

5.1. Findings of thematic content analysis: a brief overview

This section presents findings of the qualitative content analysis. At the time of data collection, *The Face of Destiny* programme the focus of my research, was no longer showing on telemundo, and since my intention was to generally familiarise myself with the contents of this programme, I selected two telenovela programmes that seemed to have similar themes as *The Face of Destiny* for the purpose of conducting a thematic content analysis.

As outlined in Chapter Four, a simple random sampling was done before carrying out the in-depth interviews. A total of 18 episodes of the two telemundo programmes known as *Someone is Watching* and *All Roads Lead to Love* were selected for the analysis. I then identified the key themes, features or images, resulting in thematic questions. The thematic issues I identified were explored in the schedule I used for my interviews.

In line with what is outlined in Chapter Two, the findings of the telenovela thematic features were that the Latin soaps revolve around the family and marriage sphere. Other dominant features of the two programmes were: the unending love that people have for each other in relationships, passionate romantic relationships, the way male and female characters openly express their desires and feelings for each other, the way men affectionately treat their women, the liberal spirits of women, affectionate fathers and the close bond they have with their children, colourful background scenery, very beautiful women and handsome men and elegantly dressed women. These themes are typical of many Latin soaps including *The Face of Destiny* telenovela. These images contrasted heavily with the Zambian social environment outlined in Chapter Two. I will expand on these points as I discuss the findings of in-depth interviews.

For the purpose of clearly outlining the analysis, thematic features were listed in the table below:

Table 1. Key themes/images

Number of episodes	Name/title of telenovela programme	Key themes /images
9	Someone Is Watching	• Unending love • Passionate romantic relationships

		• Affectionate men and fathers • Very beautiful and elegant women, very handsome men, Stylish homes • Women and men openly express their desires and feelings for each other • The liberal spirits of women and their independence • Family sphere • Serial killer, betrayal, scandal, affairs
9	All Roads Lead to Love	• Representation of men and women in relationships and the way they openly express their feelings for each other. • Independence of women • Passionate romantic relationships • Affectionate men/fathers • Beautiful men and women • Affairs, betrayal

This was followed by thematic questions in line with the research goals as noted:

- What are the specific Latin soap attractions or appeals that Zambian women are specifically drawn to?
- What do Zambian female viewers make out of these images and representations, and how are these appropriated in their lived experiences?

Do they watch telenovelas:

- for pleasure or escapism?
- Symbolic distancing?
- Are global media shapers of local culture?

These thematic features were captured in the interview schedule that guided the focus groups and individual interviews.

From the findings of in-depth interviews, both focus groups and individual, the issue of symbolic distancing emerged as an explanatory theme and seemed central to understanding the popularity of these programs amongst my respondents. I broke this down into six subthemes. The first subtheme is the Zambian women's viewing habits of telenovelas. The remaining five that illustrate symbolic distancing are: watching of telenovelas as a desire for romance and unending love, dissatisfaction in patriarchal traditions and the desire for partnership in relationships, media and foreign culture as a cultural resource, the admiration for Latin people's way of parenting and the tension between Zambian women's desire for independence and the upholding of local culture.

Next, I discuss the findings according to the above highlighted themes in sequence.

5.2. *The Zambian women's viewing habits of telenovelas*

As discussed in the Introduction to this study, telenovelas draw many female audiences globally, hence my ambition to analyse the contents of these programmes and the Zambian women's responses to them. The Zambian female viewers were asked questions which sought to find out their viewing habits. They were also asked to explain how much they enjoyed telenovelas and what cultural understandings these cultural artefacts provided. Similar to Radway (1984)'s account of American women's reading of romance fiction in a patriarchal society, the women expressed great emotional involvement with the telenovela viewing such that when they seemed preoccupied with other pressing demands of daily life, they would record the missed episodes. Some participants expressed great involvement by stressing that at times they wake up as early as 05:00 am to watch and catch up on the missed episode.

Viola: When I miss my favourite programme *Two Faces* I wake up early morning at 5:00 to watch and catch up. It is very interesting I want to know all the details.

The women did not want any distractions when viewing the programmes. This was not necessarily because they were detached from their present circumstances, but rather because of their desire to concentrate. Most of the women interviewed watch telenovelas in their homes and in the company of their children or friends and they discuss telenovelas with their friends and work colleagues. Three women spoke of how they regularly watched Latin soaps with their husbands, however most of the married participants said their husbands did not approve of the programs. They said their partners did not find them interesting and that the men would rather leave the room or switch to other channels. Such attitudes from their husbands resulted in one of the interviewees preferring to view telenovelas from her bedroom.

Chiwanza: Whenever I tune in to telenovelas my husband leaves the sitting room so I watch from the TV set in the bedroom.

Most of the women started watching telenovelas in 2006 on Muvi TV but it was in 2013 when their interest was heightened owing to the introduction of telemundo channel on DStv³. Apart from one woman who watched her favourite telenovela programme *Two Faces* on ZNBC, the rest of them viewed telenovelas on telemundo channel.

Since this study sought to understand the reasons for the popularity of telenovelas amongst Zambian viewers and to examine the values and pleasures they got from Latin soaps and how these were appropriated in their lives, I sought to understand what these pleasures were. For many of the women the pleasure they got from watching telenovelas was related to the way the programme was because they were provided with a vantage point from which to think critically about their own lives and situations. This is the essence of what Thompson (1995) in Kim (2008) and Strelitz (2005) refers to as symbolic distancing and it is to discussing this concept that I will now turn.

³ The majority of viewers also regularly watched Zee World (Indian channel) and South African soaps such as *Scandal*, *Rhythm City*, *Isidingo* and *Generations* as it was easy to relate to South African soaps because of their closeness to Zambian culture. Only few of the participants watched American action movies, American true stories and were regular cinemagoers.

5.3. *Symbolic distancing*

5.3.1. *Watching of telenovelas as a desire for romance and unending love.*

Scholars have put forward the theory of symbolic distancing to argue against the media imperialism's proposition of imposition of Western values and the obliteration of local traditions by global media (Takahashi, 2010; Kim, 2008; Strelitz, 2005). These theorists argue against the notion of a passive audience and propose that foreign media act as a point of reference for people to make sense of their life situations, exposing them to other worldviews beyond the limitations of their social contexts. Furthermore, Radway (1984)'s studies of American women's reading of romance fiction books in a patriarchal society illustrated that the women turned to these novels as a desire for something that was missing in their lives. The women idealised relationships with characters in the books because of unmet needs in their relationships and it was a way of resisting the dominant patriarchal order they found themselves in (Barker and Beezer, 1992). Strelitz (2005) provides other examples of symbolic distancing in his studies of African students. His studies illustrate how global media helped the students to redefine what the 'reality' of being black in South Africa meant. Global media gave them a new sense of freedom beyond the limitations of their traditional backgrounds. The African students symbolically distanced themselves from the oppressiveness and traditional practices of their culture as well as the oppressiveness of white culture (2005). Furthermore, Davis and Davis (1995) in their study of Moroccan youths demonstrated that the youths used global media to re-imagine and redefine their culture in relation to their fast changing gender roles. Global media provided a space for them to desire more autonomy and independence in their lives (Davis and Davis, 1995).

When I asked the interviewees what particular images of Latin culture they admired from telenovelas, almost all of them laughed and replied in unison, "the romance". It was the 'talk of romance' that made the discussions lively in all the focus groups. Tufte explains that the aim of reception analysis is:

to explore how the talk in a telenovela and the talk about the telenovela become linked to every day communication of audiences, exploring how the social and cultural consequences of this in terms of the articulation of identity, social relations, social action, opinions. (2000:51)

In line with Tufte's explanation one of my ambitions was to examine the representation of romance and relationships in telenovelas and the 'talk of romance' by the Zambian female audience: how this was being appropriated or linked to their everyday discourses particularly

about relationships, and what impact it was having on their social relations or expression of identities or opinions. In trying to analyse this, it is important to revisit the issue of patriarchy in Zambia as it is the dominant shaper of social and cultural relations. As outlined in chapter Two, Zambian society is patriarchal and conservative. The legal and traditional practices place the Zambian man at the centre of relationships particularly in marriages (Zulu, 2011; Banda, 2003; Rude, 1999). Fathers are distant and unaffectionate to their children and in relationships men do not easily express their feelings owing to patriarchal norms (Simpson, 2005). No area of male domination is more evident than in decision making in a family. This is in sharp contrast to the representation of relationships, Latin men and fathers in telenovelas, and it is these very representations among others, that attract Zambian women to Latin soaps.

Violin: Romance! Ehe! It is the reason we watch these programmes, we want that kind of love. We admire the way they kiss, hug and show affection. The Latin men take their women out and spoil them. I also love the trust that couples have for each other. We want to be loved like the way the Latin men love their wives. That's why we watch those programmes. In short, we just want to be loved. The Latin men know how to love and they can make you feel content you wouldn't even wonder from the house or wish for something else.

Waza: We admire the way the Latin men love and express their love "tikalibe kufikapo" (we have not reached there). Their love is treasured and open for all people to see. Our culture is reserved and conservative. You cannot kiss your partner publicly; you only do that in the bedroom. But we admire the way Latin people express themselves because they are liberal, there are no inhibitions in expressing yourself. Even people can see that you are truly loved, the Latin men have fun with their wives but in our Zambian case the man goes out alone. Our Zambian men are still lagging behind in such things. You find that their love is reserved and they can't even express it publicly. They would rather treat you like a *ba pongoshi* (your in-laws) such that the man is even afraid to touch you in public. Kulibe ku kumyana iyayi (no touching affectionately whatsoever) as if doing so is a crime hahahaha. So we greatly admire the love we see in these telenovelas.

Ketiwe: You know an African man, our Zambian men, they take it for granted that they married you and that you know that they love you. But with Latin men they buy you presents, roses, you know those things that are not considered important by our men here. To our friends those are very important, I think as women we really need that.

Musonda: The Latin romance is good! the romance from our Zambian men is poor hahaha. It is poor because sibaziba ku konda mukazi (they don't know how to love a woman) but these Latinos say sorry even when it is the woman's fault but in Zambia no! that doesn't happen. When our men see that you are upset or they are at fault they will even go out for a while hoping that when they get back you won't be upset anymore – your anger will just vanish. They don't care enough to calm you down it is like you are a bother.

The participants focused on how the Latin men treated women in relationships. It must be mentioned that in all the focus group discussions the researcher got similar responses. Zambian women symbolically distanced themselves as they used telenovelas as a reference point to evaluate and compare the Latin romance and relationships with their own patriarchal ones. This led to great dissatisfaction in their relationships due to the lack of romance and affection by their partners - their unmet needs. This validates Radway (1984)'s account of American women's reading of the romance as a way of resisting patriarchy in their relationships. Similarly, the Zambian women idealised Latin men, their way of relationships and love because that is what they wished for in their relationships. They wanted their partners to love and cherish them just like the way the Latin men expressed their love in relationships. Their understanding of Latin love compared to that of Zambian men was that the Latin love is passionate, true, unending and advanced. What makes it advanced according to these viewers, is the way Latin people liberally express themselves without traditional restrictions. Participants were of the view that the way Zambian men expressed their love was not progressive due to their observance of traditional customs. The significance of the telenovelas it seems is that they act as 'carriers of modernity' a term coined by Peter Berger in his discussion of the role that Western media play in promoting the culture of modernisation (Morley, 1979 in Strelitz, 2005). This is in line with those scholars who state that local audiences are sometimes drawn to mass mediated popular culture because of their desire for modernity (Berger et al. and Schou cited by Strelitz, 2005; La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005). The theorists argue that the impulse for modernity by such audiences often comes from the most industrialised countries in the world leading to modern ways of seeing the world (Berger et al. cited by Strelitz, 2005). In this instance, it can be noted that media technology such as DStv, particularly telenovelas in Zambia have led to a modernist view of relationships by the female viewers. As such, a set of discourses was presented to the women that enabled them to have other ways of seeing their relationships or issues. Furthermore, Nielson, argues that cultural modernisation should be examined by looking at the processes of individualisation, "the expanding degree of separation of the individual from his or her

traditional ties and restrictions” (Nielsen, cited by Strelitz 2005:98). Furthermore, in line with what Berger et al. argue regarding global media as carriers of modernity, it is evident that Zambian women through telenovelas have been exposed to cultural modernisation hence their desire to be freed from some traditional restrictions in relationships that put limitations on the expressions of love. What is also noticeable from the interviewees responses is that the women point to traditional restrictions in the way the Zambian men express themselves in relationships. It can be said of Zambian women who watch telenovelas that while entrenched in patriarchal relations their desire is for a non-traditional view of relationships hence their dissatisfaction in their relationships.⁴

As a result of watching telenovelas some of the women hint to their partners about their wishes for romance by watching these programmes with them. As noted earlier only few of these women watch telenovelas with their partners with a hope of seeing change in their relationships.

Violin: (Laughing) Sometimes we watch with our partners together so that they can see how other men love, hoping that maybe afterwards someone may start calling you honey or sweetie not by my child’s name. Often my husband calls me *ameke Tina* (The mother to Tina) hahaha sure! Sometimes when we watch together with our husbands we hope they would see that, that is how a woman should be treated, tenderly and lovingly calling sweet names like darling, sweetie, not the mother of so and so ah! no hahahahaha. We really admire the love we see in these programmes such that we stop and think that if only I could be loved like this, I would be very happy.

Of the three women who watched telenovelas with their husbands, they explained that it was not easy to let their spouses know about their wishes for romance. They attributed this to the strong Zambian cultural influence that shaped the men’s thinking.

Violin: Eh! when you want to apply these ideas from telenovelas you don’t tell him directly you say it jokingly because you don’t want to offend him. You say your friends do so and so hahahaha. Sometimes my husband laughs and at times he doesn’t like it.

⁴ In November 2016, Zambia Daily Mail carried a story stating the high divorce cases in the country with over 8500 divorce cases in nine months, in the *Boma* courts of Lusaka city alone. Almost 15, 000 divorce cases were heard in September, 2016 with 17 divorce cases disposed daily which totalled 340 per month. According to records the average age of couples seeking divorce is 28 and 45 years on the grounds of negligence and unfaithfulness.

In his analyses of South African youths and their experience of global media, Strelitz cites Ang who argues that the watching of international soap operas by women can sometimes help in illustrating disapproval to “patriarchal traditional constructions of femininity” (Ang cited by Strelitz, 2005:97). Strelitz also points out that the viewing of soap operas by women with their partners may be an indication of the women’s desire to sensitize these partners to patriarchal relations in society (Strelitz, 2005). My studies therefore, reinforce Strelitz’s analyses on the educative role of American soap operas consumed by South African youths. Television particularly Latin soaps in this regard, are seen to arguably play a progressive role in educating Zambian men on not only women’s needs in relationships but providing them with anti-patriarchal awareness.

Waza: I think upbringing has influence. That is how they (Zambian men) saw their parents relate so it is hard for them. Maybe hugs just used to be in the bedroom so our men can’t hug or touch us in public because they never used to see that among their parents. (Laughing) you see the love we see in telenovelas is unending, I am watching one that is showing a man who loves a woman and continues loving her even after an accident. She got involved in the accident and her legs were broken but the man did not change his mind. His parents dissuaded him from marrying the woman saying they would not have children because the woman was crippled but the man married her anyway. Later on, they even had twins. So it teaches you that when you love someone you go for it and you don’t succumb to pressure from parents, friends or society, follow what your heart tells you.

Furthermore, the audience’s perceptions were that Latin men are sincere and that when they stop loving the woman they show it. Zambian men, however, tend to hide the fact that they have stopped loving their partners. The men, according to my interviewees, only cherish a woman when they are dating but once they wed they stop showing affection.

Tina: The Latin relationships symbolise true and undying love, they don’t pretend to love their spouses. In Zambia there is pretence in the way a man loves a woman. The Latin men are devoted, faithful, affectionate, when they say they love you they mean it. You see the Zambian man can say I truly love you but the next day you find the same man with another woman, so they mostly pretend they don’t truly love.

Ivy: When Latin men don’t love you anymore they will show you. They don’t pretend to love. When they love you they do things to keep the relationship bonded which doesn’t happen in our culture. When you are married you are just dumped at home. That’s why we are seeing many marriages breaking because there is nothing to keep the fire burning because what the men do in

the telenovelas keep their women. You know they wake up in the morning to prepare breakfast, or cook even when their spouses are housewives which doesn't happen here. In our case this is the man who goes in the morning comes in the night. When he comes home he just sleeps and wakes up in the morning. So there is no attachment there, why should I wake up in the morning to prepare breakfast for him? Although Latin soaps look very fictitious, the fact is the love received is the love given you see so that is what I pick from there. The Latin men are different when they mean to love they mean it hahaha, so that if that kind of love was to be demonstrated in our Zambian relationships many homes wouldn't be broken. The Latin women's husbands are always home, it rarely happens here, men are all over the show and they are never home.

Musonda: You see our men have a problem because they can express love like that to a girlfriend but not to the wife! It is just not possible, no hugs, no taking you out.

The views expressed by these participants resonates with those of Strelitz who argues that foreign media usually “plays a subversive and potentially progressive role by undermining the certainties of established national or local hierarchies” (Morley,1979 cited by Strelitz, 2005:97). This seems to apply to Zambian women in that the watching of Latin soaps has caused dissatisfaction and resistance to patriarchal marriages and relationships. Therefore, one cannot entirely dismiss the cultural influence caused by global media on Zambian women nor can one say unequivocally that the influence is always something to be deplored. If, as it seems to be in this case telenovelas provide the cultural resources for women to critique patriarchal power relations then surely this is something to be welcomed.

This is in line with what scholars state about how global media offers a space for audiences to make sense of their life conditions in highly critical ways and “imagine new possibilities of freedom within the multiple constraints of their social contexts” (Kim, 2008:28 also see Strelitz 2005:79; Takahashi, 2010:35). While Radway (1984) writes about romance fiction reading by American women in patriarchal society and how they idealised relationships with characters in the books, the concept applies to Zambian women in that they wish for the Latin way of expressing love, relationships and romance hence their idealisation of Latin men. For most Zambian women, watching telenovelas signified a desire for a different kind of relationship with their partners.

5.4. *Dissatisfaction in patriarchal traditions and the desire for partnership in relationships*

Nearly all responses from the female viewers assert that Latin relationships are about partnership and that it is this kind of partnership that is earnestly desired by the Zambian women. They have great admiration for Latin men who treat their partners as equals. The women expressed frustrations over the imposition of ideas by men in relationships and that they do not usually sit down together as a couple to agree on important issues. Only two women however said to the contrary, they pointed out that their partners regarded them as their equals.

Ivy: The Latin men do not dominate in relationships, it is about partnership they work together no one is above the other. If they want to work on something, they sit down together. In our Zambian culture, when a man says yes it is yes for the woman, you just have to follow. Imagine the man maybe building that side and the woman has no idea what the man is doing but the telenovelas show that relationships are about partnerships. Being the head of the house means the man should be seen to live up to that position, it also means submission and respect. Decision-making should not just be made by one person as this is what causes tension. So what I have picked myself is partnership in marriage. In telenovelas the man may not have money, the woman may be wealthy but it will not be so obvious to outsiders because of the way they relate and consider themselves as partners, they all live like both of them worked for it.

Cheswa: What I have learnt from these programmes is that relationships are about partnership and should not be the way we see them as Zambians were men dominate all the time and even when you are not happy, you just do what the husband says so it causes me to think of my own relationship.

It can be noted that global media has exposed the women to certain Western or foreign values such as partnerships in relationships. This consumption of global texts has stirred dissatisfaction and has destabilised their traditional understanding of the position of man in marriage or relationships and has caused them to redefine the man's position and theirs. The women are seen to have a modern view of relationships in that their understanding is that they should be regarded as equals in relationships and not the way men dominate all the time. Furthermore, the participants considered progressive the incorporation or imitation of Latin cultural ideas into their lives. Some of the women explained that after watching how Latin women openly communicated their feelings with their partners, they also decided to do the same in their relationships with their husbands despite the teachings of traditional pre-marriage counselling.

Ketiwe: When you are being prepared for marriage as a woman you are told not to complain when your husband does something wrong or you are not happy. You are told not to discuss whatever goes on in the home with others. You are to keep it to yourself but in the end that kills you because you bottle up a lot of things. It is good to share when you have problems, you can learn something from others. In telenovelas you learn that one is able to share with the sister in case something happens, the sister is able to take it up she can mention this and that. Unlike with us you just die with whatever you are going through and no one would even know the problems you had, which is a very bad tradition actually.

Jocelyn: You see the man's ego, the African Zambian man, they wouldn't want to accept even when they are wrong and that hurts us a lot, yah. Then ah! for me what I have started doing is that when am not happy about something, I communicate. Our culture expects us not to complain or express such feelings to your husband but I have learnt to communicate. I wouldn't want to die inside and not let my husband know that if he had to do it the other way I would be happy. There is nothing wrong in applying foreign ideas to your life if you end up improving in life. Anyway, I can't say I have learnt such things from telenovelas only but through interactions and experiences in life and I learn from other people's cultures as well.

The views expressed by these women indicate their resistance to forms of traditional hierarchies which also supports Strelitz views that foreign media are not necessarily culturally regressive but at times play a progressive role (Strelitz, 2005). It is also worth noting that these views of women validate Terry Lovell's thesis that "soaps can actually subvert the values of a male dominated society (Lovell in Moores, 1993: 40). Furthermore, the women stated that the men expected their partners to be content as long as they provided for the family but watching telenovelas helped them see that their partners were neither romantic nor affectionate. The men valued their friendships and traditional customs more than their own partners which was very frustrating to the women.

Ivy: Most Zambian men from what I have seen don't know what real love is. Most of the times when a man loves a woman they will be influenced by their friends who will tell them how to love a woman. They are taught these bad traditions that you are not a man if you stick to one woman, a man should have another woman by the side. The men fear being mocked by their friends for doing the right thing because of culture, there are names that men are called when they are loyal to their wives. So you see that even when someone is good in the beginning they begin to change and start listening to their friends. They will treat you like they don't care and yet they care, now how does a

woman know that this man cares? When everything about you says ‘I don’t care about you?’

The women explained that at times they incorporated the Latin ideas of romance in their own relationships but these ideas were resisted by their partners who would complain of imitating foreign ideas. Furthermore, the women expressed discontentment at the way a man is placed in relationships traditionally by promoting the wellbeing of the man more than that of the woman, calling it a bad custom.

Cheswa: Most times our husbands are always out with friends, drinking and they value their friendships more than their spouses. When you tell your husband to change and stop being absent from the home as in coming late every day, he will say you are nagging him. The men expect you to just be content and not say anything especially if they provide for the home. In their hearts they think that that is enough. But we need more than that, there is need for a relationship. Also cheating has become acceptable in society. They expect you to understand when they cheat. In fact, you are taught during traditional pre-marriage counselling that no matter how good you are, your husband will cheat one day – this is a very bad teaching. Such things should not be taught and when you look at Latin relationships they are very different; their way of love is advanced.

Chiwanza: The Latin romance is good except that when I try to apply it in my culture someone will say, “are we imitating what we see on TV?” Anyway I don’t know to be true whether what these Latin films portray are an exact representation of what goes on in their culture but whenever some of those ideas on romance are applied they are given a cold shoulder.

It has been demonstrated that the consumption of global media texts, in this case telenovelas, is changing the mind-sets of Zambian women with regard to how they perceive relationships, themselves as women, and some traditional Zambian customs. This is because global media is offering new possibilities of freedom or ways of looking at relationships.

5.5. *Media and foreign culture as situated cultural resources used in meaning making*

Darling-Wolf notes that there are large cultural environments in which texts respond to each other and these texts create a pool of cultural meanings that audiences draw from in their interpretations (Lull, 1995 cited by Darling-Wolf, 2000). This pool of cultural resources has been attributed to the current age of intense media saturation. Furthermore, Darling-Wolf questions the imposition of global media texts on local audiences stating that this effect cannot be known without actually talking to audiences (Darling-Wolf, 2000). Most of the respondents referred to a programme called *Married Again*, an Indian programme on Zee

World channel on DStv, and radio programmes as cultural resources that they use to make sense of the meanings they get from telenovelas. The researcher probed the audiences to get their understanding of these texts that they frequently referred to during discussions. I will return to this point below. Furthermore, most of them explained that Zambian men lacked exposure to other cultures and that is why their views on relationships were limited to the Zambian way of life. The women's views were that most men were afraid of being laughed at by their friends and that this stopped them from acting from their hearts in relationships. The women's understanding was that the men's upbringing and peer pressure from their friends influenced their actions. They emphatically concluded that the Zambian men had not reached the level of love that Latin men have. Most of the women questioned certain cultural practices that shaped the men's values. Of particular significance was the view that generally the men lacked exposure to other ways of living that women had including their exposure to foreign media. The women explained that should many Latin men come to live among Zambians, most of the Zambian men would change their views on relationships and how they treated their partners.

Musonda: Hahahaha our men lack exposure to other customs that's the main problem. Sometimes men want to show affection but they hold back for fear of being scorned but they are missing out on special moments and times that such acts bring to a relationship. If only they knew that when a woman is treasured she becomes very good to him and that when the man is bad, they will never get to see that good part of the woman.

Ivy: My brother is very loving and caring because he has lived in Cuba for almost ten years. If most of these Latino men could come and stay in Zambia, I tell you these Zambian men could change like my brother. He even went back there for a holiday and had fun and you can tell that he really loves this culture and it has taught him to embrace the family so much. Latinos treasure their family so much and friends come second, our Zambian men treasure their friends more than their wives. They would rather spend time with their friends and when they are tired that is when they go home to spend time with their family.

The women's views were that their lives were changing not only because of the impact of global media but because of mixing with people from different cultures such as Europeans, Indians, and West Africans. They explained that foreign cultures influenced their understandings of telenovelas. Furthermore, references were made to a radio programme that featured relationship issues and a news item about a woman who shot her husband six times in the chest that made headlines in the media. One interviewee referred to a radio discussion

programme in which elderly women were advising younger ones that they should always act lovingly towards their husbands but the radio callers wondered how that was possible if they didn't feel appreciated by their partner. Furthermore, Zambian women explained that they make meanings of Latin relationships not only through telenovelas but by using knowledge of Latin people such as Italians who live in their communities and by making sense of radio and foreign television texts that represent relationships. This resonates with what the scholars of intertextuality state that "a reader may read a text with memory of another text (visual, spoken or written text) and he or she may also bring to a target text personal experiences and knowledge that are useful for interpreting the text" (Bloome and Hong, 2013:2; see also Riffaterre, 1994: 781). Furthermore, Riffaterre points out that "what the text does not say or says obscurely the intertext spells out" (Riffaterre, 1994:781).

Ivy: I was just listening to a radio programme in which elderly women were saying if your husband comes from work you do small things to show you appreciate him and welcome him home. So you give him something in bemba they say "*katemba chupo*" (what keeps a marriage). It can be a small piece of chicken or some peanuts and you tell him you left the small piece for him or you roasted nuts for him. But the callers on the programme asked to say how do I do that if the man does not show that I am important to him? Because if the man is good to me I will be driven to do good to him. Zambian men do not like expressing their love or affection because they think they will be seen to be weak and they cannot be seen with their wives all the time because they fear that their wives will 'take advantage of them'. You see they have a high regard for our culture rather than their own happiness. So when a man sticks to the wife and is always with her, people will laugh at him to say the man has been charmed or they cast a spell on him or he is under petti-coat government. Now these Latin men do not care about what their friends would think or say. My brother spent most of his time in Cuba and I was telling my husband that my brother is very romantic because of the environment (Latin culture) he was exposed to and even the way he treats his wife is very different from the way the Zambian men treat their wives. He spent ten years there and he is always with the wife. He embraces the wife so much that the wife does not get bored and they have lived over 15 years in marriage, he has been doing that for all these years in their marriage. Actually, I watch Latin soaps with my husband, even when I want to watch something else he switches to telemundo and Eva channels.

Some viewers understood media texts as well as foreign culture such as Italian or European - foreign people that live among them as having power to influence one's thinking in the positive and negative sense. Their understanding was that in as much as Zambian culture was

changing due to advancement in technology and globalisation, other people's cultures were also causing this change.

Jocelyn: You can say that what Latinos do on TV is not real, it is just fictitious but we have seen how foreigners live in our neighbourhood their way of life is similar to Latin culture, the Italians.

Ethnographic audience studies refer to these social experiences as “situated resources” that viewers apply in the reception process (Livingstone, 1998:178; see also Abruzzese et al, 2012:181; Takahashi, 2010).

Chishimba: Nowadays we have seen that those traditional marriage lessons about shipikisha (perseverance) are leading to disastrous endings. So when you are fed up its better you leave the man instead of persevering, he can make you do things you will regret if you stay on. You cannot say TV is teaching us everything. We live with foreigners who are our neighbours we see good things from them we learn one or two things. But again TV can teach you wrong behaviour like the woman who shot her husband six times in the chest because she couldn't stand him where did she learn that from? TV of course!

Furthermore, as earlier noted when viewers started explaining the meaning they make of telenovelas they kept making reference to an Indian programme *Married Again* on Zee world and explained how Indians live. This particular programme was used to interpret the meanings of some social relations in telenovelas. They mentioned that the extended family system promoted in Latin families was also common among the Indian people. Especially how one joins a big family and stays with them when they just get married regardless of their status in society. The Zambian women got this understanding of the Indian way of life through their viewing of Zee World a channel on DStv, which shows various Indian programmes.

Ivy: What you notice about Latin people is that they live together as a family, they value families, and they treat their maids as family members. You find a maid who has worked for them for many years becomes part of the family, the maid helps in bringing up their children, they eat and stay with her but not in our case where one wakes up, grabs breakfast off they go. For them whoever marries comes into the family, like Indians they live together even when they are rich and I see this a lot on Zee world. So I capture that and say I too will treat my maid differently because these people are sometimes lonely and you become family to them so that is what I do with my maid.

Priscilla: Latin programmes are entertaining, I like the way they live traditionally they value extended families as Zambians we have started

running away from that. We just stick to our father, mother and children. You don't care much about your extended families but in telenovelas like Zee world they value blood relations. You see in Zee world family ties are strengthened.

It has been illustrated that audiences draw from a pool of cultural resources such as radio, TV and other foreign cultures to make meaning of Latin texts. It has also been established that the Zambian female audiences, in line with understandings of intertextuality, bring their understandings of European and Indian cultures as well as other foreign radio and TV to bear when they make meaning of telenovelas. This validates the argument put forward by some scholars that the theory of cultural imperialism ignores the role played by the audience and the cultural environment in which texts are received (Lull, 1995 cited by Darling-Wolf, 2000). These scholars stress the importance of larger cultural environments in which texts respond to each other and many cultural resources that audiences draw on as they interpret texts. Intertextuality is the way texts are “juxtaposition” in order to make meanings, people may use these juxtaposition texts to re-formulate social relationships, social institutions and social or cultural ideologies (Bloome and Hong, 2013:2). Scholars of intertextuality state that “what counts as a juxtaposition are features of a text that explicitly mentions other texts or references, cites other texts” (Bloome and Hong, 2013:2). It can clearly be noted that the Zambian women used radio and television texts to reformulate how a man and woman should relate in a relationship or marriage. They also turned to foreign culture such as that of Italians to help them in their interpretation of Latin texts. This resulted in the resistance to patriarchal practices. The conclusion is that even though Zambian tradition is changing with advancement in technology globally, viewers do not automatically absorb all that they get from global media but employ other people's culture and other texts in making sense of Latin texts. The end result is that global media does not lead to homogenisation of cultures or sameness in the world but cultural forms are recreated as Zambian women adopt some features of these foreign cultures in their lives.

5.6. The admiration for Latin people's way of parenting

In Zambia most fathers are distant from their children owing to traditional norms (Simpson, 2005). The Zambian female audience admired and imitated Latin way of parenting and they questioned some traditional concepts that were held in high esteem (See Chapter Two on the position of man in Zambian society). The women's views were that men generally were absent from the house most of the time and had no time to bond with their children. They expressed dissatisfaction that in Zambian society it was the woman who seemed close to her

children and had a close relationship with them. Their assertions were that Latin men treasure the moments they spend with their children. The women explained that they were dissatisfied with this cultural notion and that it needed change. Of significance is that the Zambian telenovela viewers appreciated the way Latin parents bring up their children, a practice, which they tried to imitate.

Cheswa: The Latin fathers are ever present in their children's lives, they treasure their children and have good parenting ideas. In our case, men are absent in their children's lives, they relate at a distance.

Ivy: When Latin people have children they really embrace them and take care of them which rarely happens here. In these soap operas they are really concerned with the education of their children, what they eat, the Latin parents want to know what's happening to their children, their friends and what kind of family they come from. If it is a bad family, they tell their children to keep away from them. In our case its only women who remain with children at home and spend time with them. There are really parenthood concepts that I am learning from telenovelas. I like their way of parenting, in my case I have started infusing these ideas.

5.7. The tension between Zambian women's desire for independence and the upholding of local culture

Apart from being exposed to different ways of looking at relationships and parenting through telenovela viewing, the Zambian women's views were that Latin women have free spirits and independence to do what they want in life. Latin women are not held back by culture with regard to how they express themselves in relationships, the choices they make and how they live their lives. The women asserted the Zambian culture to be too restrictive to females especially during adolescence and when dating in that females have little or no freedom. The respondents' views were that as Zambian women they should not be restricted in the way they express love to a man. They emphasised that there was need for progressive ideas in relationships as the Zambian way of relationships still lagged behind. The women mentioned that tradition allowed men much freedom to do whatever they wanted and yet there were restrictions on women, which should not be the case. Although Zambian women desired liberation in their social structures, what was noticeable was the tension between their desire for independence or modernity and the expectations of their local culture.

Chama: I greatly admire the women's free spirits, the liberation they have, to do whatever they want to do and obviously, their dressing - they are not

restricted. They are very liberated in their culture but I cannot apply their liberal dressing for example bum shots and minis where can I dress them? My culture does not allow that kind of dressing and when you dress like that its uncomfortable because of reactions of people. Generally, I like my Zambian culture, but I admire the liberation the women have in these films.

Chiwanza: I think the Latin women are liberal and more open than the women here in Zambia. As a woman I wouldn't tell a man that I admire him or that I am attracted to him because in my society that is not acceptable. But in Latin culture it is acceptable, the women are simply open they will tell the guy "okay I like you and can I be in a relationship with you". It is their culture so the men are used to that and it is ok for them. They don't see anything wrong with that. For us the minute you approach a man the men will say "ah! this woman must be loose or something how can she do that?". They will look at you differently which shouldn't be the case because we are just as human as they are, so those feelings shouldn't be any differently expressed because of one's gender. As a female, I shouldn't be restricted in the way I express myself.

Jocelyn: Another thing is even if it's a woman who has fallen in love, Latin women don't hide it, even if the man may not love the woman she would be able to let the man she loves know how she feels. The woman may continue expressing her love hoping that one day the man will fall in love with her so there is that undying love

Chiwanza: I think we need to do more in order to make our men understand that actually I could like and love a man and let him know how I feel. I should find it easy to love and complement him. Men shouldn't have that line of thought - of looking down on the woman when she tells them how she feels; it is very unfortunate actually. So I don't know how long we will take to be there...advance in those lines... because people die of depression, you know. It is not good to be denied or rejected, you ask yourself what is wrong with me, because I am a woman I shouldn't have told them that I like them? No it shouldn't be like that.

Chiwanza and Jocelyn's views validate Fiske's explanation of how viewers not only consume media texts but rework them as cultural resources in a progressive and positive way to resist or evade dominant ideologies or local traditions (Fiske 1989 in Brooker, 2003).

Chiwanza: I love the independence, before I got married for instance, I was not allowed to be as independent as in to live alone. Maybe it was because I didn't have a job after obtaining my degree but I couldn't make certain decisions over relationships. I was told not to be in any relationship but then I wondered how I would get married because my father would say I don't want to see you with that one and that one. So in Zambia the women are not

independent, they don't have their own free will to make their own decisions. Unlike in those telenovelas the women are given the freedom to do what they want

Tina: Yes, we are not that independent but again it depends. There are parents who have been exposed and treat their daughters differently but generally, there are restrictions.

Nalukwi: Latin people are free to express themselves compared to our culture. Personally, I would rather keep it to myself if I fancy a man and he is not aware of my feelings because of the reactions of these men, there is lack of trust when you do that. Sometimes when you act on your feelings – tell the man you love him -- he keeps quiet or doesn't respond. It's not encouraging at all. That's why the general feeling among women is that in our culture when you are in a relationship you don't put in everything, you don't give yourself wholly. For Latinos it's the opposite, so our culture is restrictive. So when you watch these programmes they tend to make you think and you see other ways, how you can live your life better and improve your situation - you learn a lot.

The watching of these telenovelas therefore signified the desire for Zambian women's liberation in dating, love, and marriage. The independent choices a Latin woman makes and the liberation they have to date and express themselves freely symbolised progressiveness to the Zambian women. Put in another way, some foreign values were imparted in the lives of Zambians as they critically reflected on their situations. The women were of the view that although one cannot imitate everything they watch from telenovelas, there was need for people to embrace progressive and liberating ideas in society. Although the programmes entrenched a sense of difference in the women's lives, the viewing of these programmes did not make them look down on their culture or get rid of it. They explained that appropriating certain foreign elements did not imply that they were condemning their local culture.

Nalukwi: When we say some certain traditional practices should be done away with we are not saying we are doing away with our culture. We are not condemning our values because even these telenovelas can impart wrong ideas to you. See, there was this issue in the telenovela I was watching *Under the Same Sky*, in which it was fine for the man to have affairs. When the son was 11 years old, he found a phone number of the father's lover and the father confessed to him that he was having an affair. But when the mother had an affair they separated, the man couldn't stand it. The son was made to believe that it is okay for a man to cheat but not a woman, he was told that what the mother did was bad and unacceptable. You see even here in our society it is like that. A man can have an affair but the woman doesn't leave but when the woman has an affair everyone gets to know about it. So this is bad you can't get anything out of that.

Chiwanza: I understand that what happens in the telenovelas does not depict our culture, because their set up is different from ours. Some things they do I cannot do, that's why I say I learn certain things - lessons from there. You know I am living in a different generation from that of my parents I will make it easy for my children because of what I have seen in my own life, am not going to have them locked into a home or something. I know that with time tradition will change and in fact it is changing because of what we watch and see.

While one can assert that modernity is a dynamic and complex issue, what is demonstrated is the tension between the women's aspirations for modernity or progressiveness and the desire to uphold Zambian traditions. This contradicts the proposition of media imperialism theorists who propose that global media causes the obliteration of local audiences' values and beliefs leading to cultural homogenisation (Strelitz, 2005; Fourie, 2007; Kim, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2015). In as much as Zambians desire progressiveness in relationships or independence as women, they are very conscious of their conservative cultural contexts. This is demonstrated in the way the women imitate the latest fashion trends from Latin women, but quickly point out that they only imitate fashion ideas that are acceptable in Zambian society.

Chiwanza: I check the latest fashion trends apart from following the story I want to check what clothes the woman is wearing and I pick ideas on how my wardrobe can be changed. Fashion stands out, the dressing of Latin women is good, there is no nudity, I used to buy magazines to check fashion trends sometime back but now I don't have time to do that anymore because of my immense work pressure. Telenovelas keep me updated with fashion trends but still I choose the fashion ideas that would be acceptable in my culture.

Ivy: I love the beautiful house designs I see in telenovelas; I was telling my husband few days ago that the house we are building; its doors must be just like in the telenovela I was watching ha-ha, so I can think of many things apart from latest fashion. Another thing is that they show scenes of what to do when you want to apply make-up and everything, it helps to say "okay this is how am supposed to walk as a lady". On the part of dressing I can't condemn them, I have not seen anything inappropriate in their dressing and I like their office wear. You know these are Latinos they can wear short things but even when it is something short it is fashionable. Sometimes I just pick a stylish jacket or top because you know in our culture it's not acceptable for a woman to wear very short things. They are just very beautiful people and have great body shapes.

Of particular note are the women's views that not everything shown in telenovelas was good and admirable, some elements of Latin culture were rejected by viewers as they rationalised issues. The viewers explained that explicit and sexual scenes in telenovelas made them very uncomfortable to watch with their children or their in-laws. Other storylines that the audience

did not like included that of drug addicts, watching scenes of a woman giving birth in detail and images of unruly children.

Priscilla: Of course not everything about Latin culture is good or perfect and we don't admire everything because these Latinos can be quite scandalous and have affairs but we learn about family values, how to stick and bond together in a relationship or family. You can't just get everything; you watch telenovelas with a rational mind.

The views expressed by these women are similar to Jiwaji's findings about Kenyan women who were preoccupied with Latin soap viewing (Jiwaji, 2010). Jiwaji found that Kenyan women did not get rid of their customs but adopted certain elements of the Latin culture that destabilised some of their traditional practices. This also validates Takahashi's argument that "in the face of the overwhelming power of the media" and in resisting such strategies, viewers often "poach" certain features of the media for their own purposes and advancement of everyday life (Takahashi, 2010:35). From this account, it can clearly be noted that local people do not necessarily accept preferred messages in dominant global texts as proposed by the Media imperialism theorists. These views expressed by participants validate what Strelitz (2002) states that the social location of viewers impacted on how they make meaning of the television texts they regularly watch. Similarly, Zambian viewers illustrate that their local culture impacted on how they make meaning of some elements of Latin culture and appropriate them in their daily lives. This is because global media enables audiences to critically reflect on their own lives and situations by "vicariously" imagining new possibilities of life and life situations (Thompson, 1995 cited by Strelitz, 2005: 35; Takahashi, 2010: 34). This contests the argument put forward by the media imperialism theorists that if foreign media dominates local content, local values and cultures of people are obliterated (Boyd- Barrett, 2015; Fourie, 2007; Kim, 2008). As such local audiences do not uncritically absorb all that hegemonic global media texts prefers.

5.8. Conclusion

It is clear that global media is influencing the way Zambian women view relationships, marriage, and the position of men in society thereby causing them to redefine the role and position of men in Zambia's patriarchal society. However, the Zambian audience do not automatically accept what is preferred in these texts; they use a pool of cultural resources to make meanings of these texts as they are symbolically transported to other world views by telenovelas (Darling-Wolf, 2000; Takahashi, 2010; Kim, 2008; Strelitz, 2005). In line with

Hall (1980)'s theoretical insights on active audiences and similar to Boshoff's (2005) studies on diasporic Indians in South Africa, it has been demonstrated that the Zambian viewers have polysemic value to telenovela texts (Hall, 1980; Fiske, 1987). Furthermore, Zambian women are seen to be active meaning makers who appropriate texts in the context of their social and cultural environments (Liebes and Kartz, 1993). In contrast to Radway (1984)'s findings, the Zambian women have idealised the Latin romance and love not necessarily as a way of escaping from their daily lives but they use global texts to destabilise and resist certain patriarchal traditions. While one can assert that modernity is a dynamic and complex issue, what my studies indicate is the tension between the women's aspirations for modernity and the desire to uphold Zambian traditions. The women desire a modernist view of relationships, as they extract cultural values from foreign Latin culture into their lives. Therefore, the attraction to global media by Zambian women does not completely dismiss the cultural imperialism thesis because of their attraction to the progressiveness in relationships that the media offers. The issue is that accepting foreign/Western values is not necessarily a bad thing if it helps undermine local relationships of power and domination.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6. Introduction

This chapter summarises the main findings in my study. The focus of my research was to explore how Lusaka's middle class women, interact and negotiate meanings from the popular Latin soap opera called *The Face of Destiny*. I attempted to understand how the Latin cultural values expressed in the telenovela were read, interpreted or appropriated by female Zambian viewers. Furthermore, my ambition was to find out whether the watching of these soaps was an attempt by Zambian women to resist the dominant patriarchal order as Radway (1984) found in her study of American women's reading of romance fiction. In line with the theory of symbolic distancing, I explored whether or not the viewing of these soaps enabled women to think critically about their own lives and experiences.

The media imperialism thesis and its ethnographic critique provided the systems of explanation and interpretation that were used in this study. In analysing the interpretations of meanings that local audiences make of global texts, I employed qualitative research methods rooted in reception studies that looked at the contents of the texts and the audiences' responses to them. I used qualitative content analysis, focus groups and individual in-depth interviews to help me understand how audiences consume and view global media.

6.1. Summary

Although my intention was to look at particularly one popular telenovela, *The Face of Destiny*, the results demonstrate variant popular Latin soaps watched by Zambian women, hence my analysis of the telenovela genre. This study mainly demonstrates how most of the viewers are transported by telenovelas to a space where they imagine new possibilities of freedom and other worldviews beyond their cultural constraints (Thompson, 1995 cited by Strelitz, 2005; Kim, 2008; Takahashi, 2010).

Qualitative thematic content analysis and in-depth interviews indicate telenovela attractions to Zambian women as: the representation of men and women in relationships and the way they express their feelings for each other, the liberal spirits and independence of women, passionate romance and undying love, affectionate Latin men and fathers, beautiful Latin women, handsome men and fashion trends. These Latin soap appeals are interpreted as:

The Zambian women's desire for romance and unending love, the dissatisfaction in patriarchal traditions and the desire for partnerships in relationships, the admiration for affectionate Latin fathers and men generally, and the tension between Zambian women's desire for independence within the perceived constraints of local culture.

It is primarily the watching of romance that attracts Zambian women to these programmes. Similar to Radways' findings of American women's reading of the romance, the telenovela attractions to Zambian women are an attempt to resist the dominant patriarchal relationships in their lives. The women have idealised the Latin men and relationships leading in some cases to dissatisfaction in their own relationships. This has led to the questioning of certain Zambian patriarchal traditional practices regarding how men are seen to dominate relationships or the family at the same time as social restrictions are placed on women. The viewing of these soaps have in some instances contributed to female viewers redefining their roles in relationships and have led them to express their desire for more progressive attitudes amongst Zambian men. Importantly, their definition of progressiveness is the appropriation of some ideas not only from global texts but also through their cultural interaction with foreigners living in Zambia. My interviewees believe that their exposure to other people's culture, either directly or through the soaps, provides them with new visions of social freedom.

My interviewees were often dissatisfied with the way Zambian men are generally distant and unaffectionate fathers to their children. They admire the way Latin men closely relate with their children in contrast to their partners who they view as absentee fathers. The women are also dissatisfied with the lack of romance and affection in their relationships. Furthermore, the women's understanding is that men should not dominate in relationships but consider women as their partners as portrayed in telenovelas. They seem dissatisfied by the fact that the majority of men are content in providing for the family saying this alone is not sufficient in maintaining happy relationships with women and children. This destabilises the patriarchal view of men in Zambian families.

My interviewees admired the independent and liberal spirits that Latin women have but were quick to admit that they would only appropriate concepts that fit the Zambian social and cultural context. Therefore, it is evident that there is tension in their lives in embracing that which is modern and sticking to local customs.

Media imperialism theorists propose that one of the reasons global media dominates local audiences in the periphery stems from their desire for modernity (Strelitz, 2005). Strelitz (2005) argues that culture imperialism should not only be seen to be culturally regressive since at times it can perform an educative or progressive role in people's lives. My argument is that while it is apparent that global media has impact on Zambian women's views on some traditional practices, it is also clear that local people do not absorb everything that dominant media prefers but they extract what is appropriate to their daily lives within their social contexts. This is demonstrated by the Zambian women's rejection of some elements of Latin culture in telenovelas such as the wearing of mini-skirts by Latin women. The women point out that dressing in such clothes is not culturally acceptable in Zambia. Therefore, the proposition put forward by the cultural imperialism theorists that dominant media obliterates cultural values needs to take into account the very uneven penetration of global media values into local cultures. This supports the African audience studies conducted over a decade that critique the media imperialism theorists. The African scholars argue that the social contexts of audiences impact on their interpretations of global media texts (Aseffa, 2005; Boshof, 2005, Davis and Davis, 2005, Jiwaji, 2010; Strelitz, 2005; Phiri, 2006).

6.2. Scope for further research

When I was researching on media, patriarchy and gender relations in Zambia, I noticed that there were very few African perspectives on this matter, especially on distant patriarchal fathers, which is an issue that came out strongly from the women's responses. Most of the scholars were Western even though I tried as much as possible to cite African scholars.

There is also need to explore global media impact on traditional values of Zambians by specifically looking at men and their social relations. It would be interesting to find out whether international media has had any impact on the values of Zambian men given their resistance to the viewing of Latin soaps.

APPENDIX

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

THEMATIC QUESTIONS

I. Television viewing

1. Kindly give me your name, age and what you do?
2. Are you a regular TV viewer?
3. What are your viewing habits?
4. What programmes do you watch on TV?
5. What are your favourite programmes?
6. What are the names of the Latin soaps that you watch?
7. When did you start watching telenovelas?
8. Where do you watch them?
9. Who do you watch them with?
10. Who do you discuss them with?
11. How often do you watch telenovelas?
12. How do you find telenovela viewing, compared to other programmes on television?
13. What does this cultural space provide to you?

II. Themes, character(s) and reasons for popularity of telenovelas

14. Do you all watch *The Face of Destiny*, if so what do you like about it?
15. How would you describe Latin soaps generally?
16. Why did you choose to watch these soaps and not any other programmes?
17. What do you enjoy about them?
18. What do you dislike about them?
19. Are telenovelas far removed from realities of your daily life?
20. If so why do they appeal to you?
21. If these programmes are part of your everyday life, could you explain how?

III. Relevance or ability to relate, escapism, symbolic distancing, cultural imperialism

22. How relevant are the themes or features of these programmes to your life, given that the Latin culture is very foreign to yours?
23. Do you switch to a space detached from the world as you watch these programmes?

24. Do the programmes provide an imaginary space to you?
25. What images of Latin culture do you dislike?
26. What images of Latin culture do you admire?
27. What kind of perceptions do you have of Latinos from telenovelas?
28. How do you feel about the way Latin men and women express or portray themselves in relationships?
29. Do the programmes have any impact on your life at all?
30. Do you uncritically imitate whatever you see in these programme into your Life, If so how?
30. Do you distance yourself from your present situations as you view these programmes?

Are you exposed to new possibilities of viewing the world as you watch these programmes?

31. Does watching telenovelas entrench a sense of difference in your life?

How does watching such programmes impact on the way you view yourself as a Zambian woman in the context of patriarchy in society?

32. Has this made you change the way you view Zambian culture?
33. Do you think your culture is strictly Zambian or it is being influenced by the viewing of these programmes?
34. Have telenovelas taught you any lessons?
35. Are there any issues in this interview that you would like to comment on?

Thank you very much for your time

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