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EXAMINING THE POPULARITY OF LOCAL FILMS: A STUDY OF
AUDIENCES IN ADDIS ABABA

BY

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Abstract

For decades the Ethiopian audiences had no choices except watching Hollywood's and Bollywood's films in cinema theatres. For decades the foreign product movies were consumed by the audiences in Ethiopia. In recent years, the film industry in Ethiopia has witnessed a major stride in terms of quantity and popularity of locally made films. This study under the title of *"Examining the Popularity of Local Films, A Study of Audiences in Addis Ababa"* is interested in examining the reception of the local films. The study employed qualitative method of study and participatory observation, focus group discussion, and individual in-depth interviews to gather the data.

The findings of the study showed that the local audiences choose the locally made films primarily because of the language and cultural familiarities. The audiences are eager to watch the locally made films and actively participate in negotiating with the messages of the films. Moreover, the audiences are associated the messages of the films with their day to day real life. Audiences are also in favor of the culture and norm of the society, because from their response they don't feel comfort watching the nudity, sexual scenes, kissing in the locally made films. Moreover, the movie going culture is evidently becoming very high as a result of cultural familiarity and absence of language barriers among other things. This is consistent with theories of active audiences and audience reception in which audiences give their own interpretations and understandings based on their actively participation with the messages of the films.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background

The film industry in Ethiopia has witnessed a major stride in the past decade both in terms of quantity and popularity. Most cinemas in the major cities of the country generate the majority of their income from locally produced films, especially in the capital city of Addis Ababa. In fact, a sizeable number of cinemas abandoned Hollywood and Bollywood movies in favor of locally produced films, because this is the fact that anyone can observe easily at almost all cinema theatres in Addis Ababa. The popularity of locally produced movies is evident considering the long queues one can observe with people desperately trying to get tickets before they are sold out. This is especially interesting given the fact that most locally produced movies charge more entrance fees than their foreign counterparts, therefore presenting a compelling case against some of the more popular theories of media hegemony—most notably the media imperialism thesis.

The media imperialism thesis is a discourse of domination through mediated communication that claims “authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is becoming battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States” (Tunstall, 1977, p.57). In essence, this study puts forth a phenomenon that presents an anti-thesis to the audience passivity discussions of the proponents of the media imperialism thesis such as Schiller, Boyd-Barret and others.

It was not long when Hollywood movies were the unchallenged sources of entertainment for the Ethiopian audience. How, then, in a duration that hardly makes a decade, locally produced movies succeeded in overwhelmingly reversing the status quo? Can this be explained only by superficial reasons like linguistic and cultural familiarity? What is the context within which the

audience consumes these products? How does the audience negotiate with the messages these films communicate and the images they portray? How do they relate their lived experiences with the meta-narratives of the movies? In essence, why do they like what they see?

The discourses of homogenization and domination, at least in light of the studies that focused on local audiences in Ethiopia, haven't gone unchallenged. Assefa (2005) looked at reasons for the attraction of American action movies shown in video-viewing houses in Addis Ababa amongst the urban unemployed youth. The findings of the study emphasize the capability of local audiences in Third World countries like Ethiopia to construct their own meanings and thus their own local cultures and identities, "even in the face of their virtually complete dependence on the image flows distributed by the transnational cultural industries."

Tewodros (2007) in his thesis *Disney Kids: A Study on the Reception of a Global Media Giant by upper Middle Class Children in Addis Ababa* explores how Ethiopian upper middle-class children make sense out of global texts and images as represented by Disney in the context of their everyday life through focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews. Tewodros concludes local culture, values, and interests have a significant role to play in the interaction between the global and the local. He also notes intricate responses of respondents reveal that there is no easy way of establishing a definitive nature of the global's penetration to the local.

Dilalew's *An Investigation into the Appropriation and use of Bollywood Movies by Ethiopian Youth from a Poor Family Background in Addis Ababa* (2008) examines the web of meanings that arise from the viewing of Bollywood amongst Ethiopian youth. According to the study, local audiences in their interaction with media messages produced in settings far removed from theirs, actively interpret them in light of the subjective values, aspirations and concerns within their lives.

What the youth's own responses reveal is that the plurality of meanings they make when viewing Bollywood movies represent a challenge to the premises of the media imperialism thesis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

“Popularity” can easily signify a lot of factors. But for the sake of this study it is employed to indicate the growing preference of urban Ethiopian audiences, particularly young people in Addis Ababa, to follow and watch locally produced Amharic films in favor of formerly dominant Western and Indian movies. A number of factors attest to this situations. There is at least one movie produced and made available to the cinemas in a short period of time. Even at a superficial observation like this, one can deduct that a trend is on the making—a steadily growing local movie production and consumption culture.

Whereas the pervasiveness of the phenomenon is apparent from the discussion of what it mean by “popularity”, equally important and central to this study is the question of why these films are popular. The studies which briefly discussed earlier represent a critique of the media imperialism thesis, and have focused on the consumption, negotiation and appropriation of foreign films by local audiences. The critique of media imperialism thesis as put forward by these studies is common in that all emphasize the significance of lived experiences of audiences and thus the consumers' ability to resist the media messages. This study, on the other hand, presents a unique perspective in that it focuses on the popularity of locally produced movies and how well and why they are received by local audiences.

1.3 Research Questions

In exploring the popularity of local films by audiences in Addis Ababa, the following research questions are outlined:

- Why are locally produced films more popular than their American and Indian counterparts amongst local audiences in Addis Ababa?
- How do local audiences negotiate with the messages these films communicate and the images they portray in the midst of their everyday lived reality?
- How do lived experiences affect the film watching habits of audiences?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are to:

- Explore how locally produced movies succeed in becoming popular among local audiences in Addis Ababa in the midst of the abundance and cheap availability of Hollywood and Bollywood motion pictures;
- Examine how local audiences negotiate with the messages these films communicate and the images they portray in the midst of their everyday lived reality?
- Investigate whether lived experiences of the audience help as an urge for the popularity of locally produced movies

1.5 Significance of the Study

Whereas understanding the popularity of locally produced movies in the midst of the plethora of global media products is of a tremendous importance in the theoretical and academic sense, the significance of this study cannot be limited to a mere intellectual input. With the Ethiopian film industry rapidly growing in quantity and diversity, it is just a matter of time before the nation finds it pertinent to introduce a policy on aspects of the production of motion pictures. The discussions of this study can be of great significance in this regard given the lack of relevant empirical literature in the area of audience consumption, appropriation and negotiation of locally produced motion pictures.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the major theoretical underpinnings that are important to conduct the reception analysis are covered. It reviews different scholar's work on different theories. The theories are used to build the framework of the research. It begins by defines the uses and gratification theory. The second section looks at the active audience. The third section deals with the reception theory. On the fourth section the media/cultural imperialism thesis is discussed. The fifth section looks the critique of the media imperialism thesis. The sixth section gives a brief historical development of Ethiopian cinema. The last section concludes the chapter.

2.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

Limited effects research in the 1960's abandoned the focus on opinion leaders and concentrated on the uses made by people in general of the media. The uses and gratifications approach to media effects assumed the audience brought their own needs and desires to the process of making sense of media messages. Needs and desires structured how messages are received and understood by the audience. The focus shifted from what the media do to people to what people do with the media. Katz (1959, quoted in McQuail, 1984) provides a mission statement for approach.

Such an approach assumes that even the most potent of mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no 'use' for it in the social and psychological context in which he/she lives. The 'uses' approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent and that people selectively fashion what they see and hear to these interests.

While there are several versions of the uses and gratifications model, it is possible to identify three basic assumptions on which the approach rests. First, people actively use the media for their own purpose; second, people know what these purposes are and can articulate them, and third, despite the variation between individuals in their use of the media, it is possible to identify some basic patterns in uses and gratification. (Williams, 2003: 177)

Jay G. Blumler and Katz published a collection of essays on gratifications in 1974 which were entitled *The Uses of Mass Communication*. They took a more humanistic approach to looking at media use. They suggest that media users seek out a medium source that best fulfills the needs of the user and they have alternate choices to satisfy their need. They also discovered that media served the functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission for both society and individuals (Blumler and Katz, 1974).

Five basic assumptions were stated in a study of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974. They provide a framework for understanding the correlation between media and audiences:

1. The audience is conceived as active, i.e., an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal oriented ... patterns of media use are shaped by more or less definite expectations of what certain kinds of content have to offer the audience member.

2. In the mass communication process much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member. This places a strong limitation on theorizing about any form of straight-line effect of media content on attitudes and behavior.
3. The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction. The needs served by mass communication constitute but a segment of the wider range of human needs, and the degree to which they can be adequately met through mass media consumption certainly varies.
4. Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves- i.e., people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation.
5. Value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms.

The roots of such research can again be traced back to the war years. Herzog (1994) wanted to know why so many women listened to radio soaps, what were their motivations and what satisfactions did they derive. Drawing on interviews with 100 listeners, Herzog's study went well beyond the categories of being informed, educated and entertained to include the promotion of a sense of belonging, acquiring insight into self and others, providing the opportunity for wishful thinking and experiencing emotional release (Curran, 1996:127). Nearly three decades later, McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) argued soap operas such as *Coronation Street* fulfilled the social need some people had for companionship. From their examination of five types of programme - a radio serial, and from television a soap, a quiz show, the news and two adventure series - they concluded there were four types of uses and gratifications (1972: 155-61). First, the media provide diversion. They are able to do this in different ways. They allow people to escape from the constraints of routine that make up everyday life. They can help

people to escape from their worries and personal problems, and they can provide emotional release. Second, the media provide personal relationships for some people in the form of companionship. McQuail et al. (1972:157) argue 'the characters may become virtually real, knowable and cherished individuals, and their voices are more than just a comforting background which breaks the silence of an empty house'. The content of the media can also be used as a source of conversational material in people's lives – what the authors label as a 'social utility' for viewers and listeners. Third, the media play a part in the development of *personal identity*. They can act as points of personal reference for individuals, to reflect on aspects of their own lives or personal situations. The content of programmes can provide people with information to develop ideas about the problems they are facing in their lives—a process of 'reality exploration' – as well as reinforce their views and values. Finally, the media offer the opportunity for *surveillance* of what is going on in the world, to keep abreast of issues and events. (Williams, 2003: 178)

2.3 Active Audiences

Croteau and Hoynes, (1997: 230-1) describes new audience research focuses on how audience members generate meaning from the media in the broader context of the exercise of power in society. The approach is interested in what audiences do with the media. However, the new audience research is more interested in understanding how audiences actively engage in the process of generating and the factors outside the media that shape the sense they make of media messages. This line of research is attractive to many scholars as it emphasizes the intelligence and capacity of people to make decisions for themselves. People are not the pawns of the media industries; they have some power and freedom in their use of media. (Williams, 2003: 193).

Media audience is a group of people who participate in an experience or encounter a work of art, literature, theatre, music or academics in any medium, audience members participate in different ways in different kinds of art; some events invite overt audience participation and others allowing only modest clapping and criticism and reception.

The active audience model is based on a simple idea-that no text has one meaning. The meaning has to be extracted (decoded) by the receiver. In other words the transmission model of communication is rejected and is replaced with the idea that reality is socially constructed. As receivers we are constantly trying to make sense of information we receive the media message does not have a monopoly on meaning. Texts are viewed as polysemic. A text may have a preferred reading - the meaning intended by the person producing it but that meaning can be undermined when decoded by the audience.

Frank Biocca (as cited in LittleJohn, 1999) discussed five characteristic of the active audience implied by the theorist in this genre. The first is selectivity. Active audiences are considered to be selective in the media they choose to use. The second characteristic is utilitarianism. Active audience are said to use media to particular need and goals. The third is intentionality, which implies the purposeful use of media content. The fourth characteristic is involvement, or effort. Here audiences are actively attending, thinking about, and using the media. The last characteristic is impervious to influence, or not very easily persuaded by the media alone (Littlejhon, 1999).

2.4 Reception Theory

The central research questions of this study—exploring why locally produced films more popular than their American and Indian counterparts amongst local audiences in Addis Ababa and how local audiences negotiate with the messages these films communicate and the images they portray in the midst of their everyday lived reality—are consistent with the foundational philosophical underpinnings of reception theory of media studies. Reception theory provides a means of understanding media texts by understanding how these texts are read by audiences. Theorists who analyze media through reception studies are concerned with the experience of cinema and television viewing for spectators, and how meaning is created through that experience. An important concept of reception theory is that the media text—the individual movie or television program—has no inherent meaning in and of itself. Instead, meaning is created in the interaction between spectator and text; in other words, meaning is created as the viewer watches and processes the film. Reception theory argues that contextual factors, more than textual ones, influence the way the spectator views the film or television program. Contextual factors include elements of the viewer's identity as well as circumstances of exhibition, the spectator's preconceived notions concerning the film or television program's genre and production, and even broad social, historical, and political issues. In short, reception theory places the viewer in context, taking into account all of the various factors that might influence how she or he will read and create meaning from the text (Jensen 1988).

This current theory on audience reception in media studies takes into account the individual members of the audience. It realizes there is a preferred meaning in the text, but also places emphasis on the audience in the process of constructing a meaning. Hall's encoding/decoding model draws upon two extreme ends of a spectrum, what Abercrombie (1996) refers to as the dominant text view and the dominant audience view. Researchers who give the text priority support the dominant text view, wherein the text is monolithic, there is a well marked preferred meaning and is difficult for other meanings to be read. The audience is seen as passive and

heavily influenced by the text. Hall and his colleagues took the dominant audience view, which acknowledges the presence of a strong preferred meaning, but also saw texts as polysemic—they have a number of possible meanings, and that is up to the audience to analyze and interpret the text.

The advantage of the Encoding/decoding model is that it realizes that the meaning made by the audience is affected by various other factors – including socio/economic frameworks and past experiences, but also involving the context in which the media message is consumed. Meanings constructed by the individual watching televisual news at home with two distracting siblings will be different to meanings constructed while concentrating on the television alone. These meanings will be different to those formed when the individual is reading news articles in the newspaper in a quiet room (Hanes, 2004).

However, reception theory is not without its criticisms. As David Morley (1989) notes: The extent to which the model tries to conceive of language merely as a conveyor belt for preconstituted meanings or messages; the way in which it tends to confuse textual meaning with the conscious intentions of broadcasters; and the tendency to blur together under the heading of "decoding" what are probably best thought of as separate processes along the axes of comprehension/incomprehension, as opposed to agreement/disagreement with the propositional content of messages. Furthermore, the concept of the preferred meaning, which is of course central to the encoding/decoding model has a number of criticisms (Seiter 1989).

The preferred meaning is a difficult concept to understand, and is simpler to identify in factual texts, such as newspaper reports, television news and documentaries. In fiction-based texts there are more likely to be different readings of the preferred texts. Additionally, it is unclear whether the preferred meanings are embedded in the text, or whether it is something agreed on by the majority of the texts audience. By considering the audience in the interpretation of the media

text, it is clear to see that the process of media communication is not a simple concept. Meaning is considered to be what the audience makes of the text, taking away most of the power of the producer and the text.

2.5 The Media/Cultural Imperialism Thesis

The popularity of the media imperialism thesis dates back to the 1970s during which much concern about the penetration of western media was felt by then developing countries that were at the wake of independence. The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) brought the theme of the way the media of the richer world operated towards the domination of world public opinion or a source of moral and cultural pollution, after which the much acclaimed movement towards a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) propped up. NWICO strived for the promotion of a fairer and more balanced exchange of information among nations (White, 1994: 21).

The term appears to have emerged in the 1960s, and has been a focus of research since at least the 1970s. Terms such as "structural imperialism", "cultural dependency and domination", "cultural synchronization", "electronic colonialism", "ideological imperialism", and "economic imperialism" have all been used to describe the same basic notion of cultural imperialism.

If imperialism is the dominance of one nation of another, media imperialism is the dominance of one nation's media system by another and cultural imperialism the dominance of one nation's culture by another. The problem is that the media are the main vehicles for transfer of cultural values from one nation or society to another. The term 'culture' or 'way of life' is also fraught with definitional problems. Some scholars choose to use media imperialism in a

narrow way, examining only the transfer of media products and media practices, while others see the term as synonymous with cultural imperialism. (Williams, 2003: 218)

Ogan saw "media imperialism often described as a process whereby the United States and Western Europe produce most of the media products, make the first profits from domestic sales, and then market the products in Third World countries at costs considerably lower than those the countries would have to bear to produce similar products at home." Ogan (1988).

The media are a 'foreign cultural influence grounded in economic and political domination' (Sincer, 1990: 287) and according to the first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, act as a crucial informal means by which the values and structures of neo-colonialism are accepted. If colonialism is a form of imperialism – that is the direct control of one nation by another – neo-colonialism is cultural imperialism, with the media one of the vehicles for the transfer of western values and attitudes. The global television music of MTV, the global news of CNN, the global box office hits of Hollywood films and the global television soap operas shape the cultures of the nations of the global South, ensuring their 'westernization'. These values conflict with local cultures, often leading to the erosion of local values, and threatening national and cultural identity. According to Tunstall (1977: 57), the cultural or media imperialism thesis claims that 'authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States' (Williams: 217).

2.6 Critique of the Media Imperialism Thesis

The faults of media imperialism theory are many and have been pointed out on a number of occasions. In the 1980s and 1990s, media and cultural imperialism theories become a target for criticism by many media and cultural studies scholars, most notably Boyd-Barrett (1982), McQuail (1994), Schlesinger (1991), Tomlinson (1991) and Golding and Harris (1997). Most of the criticism was influenced by audience studies and cultural studies, both of which gave attention to the independent role of culture. This is clearly something which media/cultural imperialism theorist had missed, and the criticism has been largely approved (Rantanen 2005: 78).

One of the most comprehensive critiques has been that of Boyd-Barrett (1998), one of the authors of the original concept. He admits that the original media imperialism thesis was wrong in several respects:

1. It assumed that nation-states are the basic building blocks within the field of global media activities, and that there is a simple association between particular media and particular countries. In fact, media systems are often complex hybrids of different agencies and actors, and thus it is not advisable to make a simple identification of whole corporations with particular national identities. This is precisely why we need to make account of the multidimensionality of media activity.
2. It further assumed that it is in the interests of the country to reject or oppose media imperialism on the part of another country in the name of national interest. However, there is often no single national interest but separate media enterprises, which compete against each other both nationally and globally.

3. It did not consider the strategic social structural position of the individuals and interest groups who benefited from facilitating US market entry or even from taking their own initiatives.
4. It did not take into account the question of the audience, but concentrated solely on the production process.
5. It tended to identify the USA as the single centre of a process of media-centric capitalist influence, which flowed outward to the rest of the world in the form of television programmes.
6. It assumed that these programmes had an inevitable and self-sufficient ideological effect upon their helpless audiences on the periphery.
7. It considered experience of media to be beyond the scope of research, or to be simply a homogeneous phenomenon (Rantanen: 2005: 79)

While the cultural or media imperialism thesis came to exercise a great hold over the policy makers and peoples of the so-called Third World, many scholars reject the thesis for being too pessimistic. Tracy (1985) attacks the failure to provide empirical evidence in support of the thesis. Tracy stated the thesis, by focusing on texts and company reports rather than the 'realities of individual lives', fails to address the cultural meanings of these flows (Tracy, 1985:45). The media imperialism thesis lacks an explanation of how particular values and practices associated with particular media products are reproduced in the consciousness of 'dependent people' as well as within the structures of dependent societies (Reeves, 1993: 63).

Research that has been done into audience responses to globally popular TV programmes *Dallas* challenges the media imperialism thesis. Studies of *Dallas*, once described by the French Minister of Culture as a 'symbol of American cultural imperialism', indicate how a simple, direct and uniform ideological effect from exposure to an imperialist media product is improbable (Tomlinson, 1991: 47). The active engagement of audiences around the world in making sense of *Dallas* casts doubt on the thesis. According to the Dutch academic Ien Ang, people actively make their own meanings and create their own culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed on them.

Katz and Liebes (1990) conclude that it is almost impossible to understand how American products are perceived around the world. They argue the thesis rests on three dubious assertions: that there is an American message in the content and form of the media, that the message is perceived by viewers and that it is perceived in the same way by viewers in different countries. By neglecting audiences, cultural imperialism underestimates the challenges to Americanization or westernization in different parts of the world. There are many vital currents of opposition or resistance from local communities to cultural dominance. (Williams: 2003)

2.7 The Development of Cinema in Ethiopia

The development of Ethiopian cinema is highly intertwined with recent historical events that shaped the country in the past two decades. Unique among African countries, the ancient Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from colonial rule, one exception being the Italian occupation of 1936-41 (Flimbirth, n.d.). In 1974 a military junta, the Derg, deposed Emperor Haile Selassie (who had ruled since 1930) and established a socialist state. Torn by bloody coups, uprisings, wide-scale drought, and massive refugee problems, the regime was finally toppled by a coalition of rebel forces, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), in 1991. A constitution was adopted in 1994 and Ethiopia's first multiparty elections

were held in 1995. A two and a half year border war with Eritrea ended with a peace treaty on 12 December 2000.

Temesgen (2008), on the other hand, traces the historical development of cinema in Ethiopia his thesis: *Analysis of the Local Amharic Movie-viewing Audiences and the Media*, the advent of film/cinema to Ethiopia goes back to 1898 during the reign of Emperor Menelik II. By this time, the art was still on a cradle stage even in Europe or in the USA. It was almost soon after its invention that film become so magical to Ethiopians. The first cinema hall, Cinema Terrace, was built in the city of Addis Ababa by a Frenchman called Mr. Terrace. Nevertheless, the public then named the place 'House of Satan', for cinema/film was perceived as some sort of sorcery or magic. After Emperor Menelik's curiosity to the civilization of the other world nothing much happened with regards to film exhibition, perhaps until the invasion of the country by Italians during the Second World War. With the Italians' occupation for about five years, Ethiopians were unguardedly exposed to Italian films of the earlier time of neocolonialism. The films were naturally meant for propaganda purpose.

Films have been very popular despite the fact that former president Mengistu tried to nationalize existing commercial cinemas into People's Cinema with extreme censorship in place. Before his ruling (1974-1991) no information is available about the cinematic history. During the Haile Selassie ruling a filmmaker managed to shoot footage about the poverty and starvation of the Ethiopians and all Western TV's showed these shocking images. Under Mengistu's rule the film industry became extinct. In the last 10 years Ethiopian cinema has made tremendous progress. Haile Gerimaa is without a doubt the most acclaimed Ethiopian director. Toady working as professor in the USA, he made his first film Harvest - 3000 years already in 1976. Since then he directed several other films. He is Ethiopia's most proficient director and exporter, who has made seven films including Sankofa (1993) and Imperfect Journey (1994) (Flimbirth, n.d.). The thread that runs through Haile Gerima's Harvest: 3000

Years (1976) and Imperfect Journey (1994), Salem Mekuria's *Deluge* (1995), and Yemane Demissie's *Tumult* (1996) is a project to revision the foundational narrative of a 3000 year Solomonic Ethiopia in light of the experience with feudalism and a failed revolution and their legacies. "Harvest: 3000 Years" casts a critical glance at the ways the feudal state under Haile Selassie, especially, manipulated legend and myth to perpetuate allegiance to a glorious past that was able to keep the vast majority of Ethiopian peasantry under feudal control (Flimbirth, n.d.).

Made at a moment of transition between the end of the feudal regime and dawn of the revolutionary regime of Mengistu, *Harvest* contests and subverts the reigning feudal narratives and also anticipates, the still unfinished struggle against the post-feudal era. *Tumult*, for its part, revisits the 1960s failed attempts by students, in alliance with segments of the military, to topple Haile Selassie's regime. The film eloquently provides a solid foundation for better understanding of the continuing struggles in contemporary Ethiopia. This is also what Salem Mekuria accomplishes in *Deluge*, which revisits, from a more personal point of view, a more recent moment in 1970s and 1980s Ethiopia under the reign of Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Mekuria's second major work, *Yewonz Maibel* (*Deluge*, 1995), is a moving personal journey back to the post-Haile Selassie Ethiopia and the 1978-79 bloody moment of the Red Terror campaign of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia against his opposition. The human tolls of the conflict in the 90s when the film was shot in Ethiopia are highlighted in the film. Using her first person voice as the narrative vehicle, Mekuria reconstructs the events of the moment with the aid of personal correspondence with and memories of her brother and her best friend, photographs, archival footage of the period, paintings and music. Through this

personal and self-reflexive narrative, the recent history of a whole nation and region is laid bare and reinterpreted, and its implications for the future of the region are made explicit (Flimbirth, n.d.).

The history of resistance to foreign domination, particularly the fact that Ethiopia is one of two African countries that were never formally colonized, is a central theme in Ethiopian history, and it is one that has imposed itself in different ways in most Ethiopian films. Theo Eshetu's *Il Sangue Non E Acqua Fresca* (1998, *Blood Is Not Fresh Water*) uses the filmmaker's grandfather, Tekle Tsadik Mekouria, a historian in his own right, as the principal narrative vehicle for re-telling the story of Ethiopia across broad time spans, events and achievements. An impressive mosaic of images, archival footage, personal testimonies and humor is mobilized with great skill and imagination to speak about Ethiopia of Solomonic origins, her ancient and proud heritage of culture, religion and art, and the experiences with Italian fascist invasion in 1936, seemingly to avenge their defeat half a century earlier in 1896 at the Battle of Adwa. This is the same glory moment in Ethiopian history that Haile Gerima retells and claims not just for Ethiopia, but the whole of Africa, in his recent film, *Adwa: An African Victory* (1999). Lucy Gebre-Egziabher and other young directors delivered some promising work in recent years. Gebre's received acclaim at the fesfaco film festival. One of her latest works *At The Second Traffic Light*, was screened at the Raindance festival in the UK (Flimbirth, n.d.).

Further in Temesgen (2008) stated historical documents indicate that film production has almost no history in Ethiopia; perhaps, it is at its cradle stage. Scanty productions of films were made by producers from France, Britain, USA, and Canada between late 1950s and early 1960s. These productions were tailored as teaching materials for Haile Sellassie I University. Moreover, two films with the standard of motion picture [35mm black & white film] were made in late 1960s- *Gumma*[Agreement] and *Hirut Abatua Manew*. [Who is Hirut's Father]. *Gumma* was produced by Mitchel Papatakis. *Hirut Abatua Manew* was the first feature film produced in 1966 by the Ethiopian Ilala Ibsa.

Currently, film exhibition is growing as scores of movie theaters were opened in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Gondar, and Jimma. As to historical sources, during the time of Emperor Haile Sellasie I were opened Ambassador Cinema, National Theater, and City Hall of Addis Ababa for film and theater shows. With the change of the political atmosphere in 1991, the EPRDF-led government came up with free market economy and a constitutional clause in freedom of expression. It then dissolved the EFC by cabinet decision and a new guideline was implemented for film exhibition. The new guideline ordered regional states to administer their own cinema halls and assume full control of film exhibition.

Following the liberalization of the market, access and utilization of video technology and foreign films has been made possible. This gave way to the production of VHS films for home viewing purposes before 10 years. During this time, films were not viewed in cinema halls. Now local films are viewed in Ambassador, Alem, Edna Mall, Ampher, Sebastopol, and Agona cinema halls and Hager Fikir, National, and City Hall movie theaters.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature review has provided an essential presentation on the conceptual frameworks, scholarly writings and perspectives of the important themes of uses and gratification theory, active audience, reception theory, the media/cultural imperialism thesis and the critique. Moreover, the Ethiopian cinema history in brief was discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study attempts to examine the popularity of local films reception in Addis Ababa. In order to carry out this research, a qualitative research methodology was employed. This chapter describes the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research methods. This chapter includes the data collecting method namely the participatory observation, focus group discussion, and individual in-depth interviews. This chapter is also including the data analysis procedure.

3.2 Qualitative Research

The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research are consistent with and crucial in carrying out this research that attempts to explore why locally produced films are more popular than their American and Indian counterparts amongst local audiences in Addis Ababa and how local audiences negotiate with the messages these films communicate and the images they portray in the midst of their everyday lived reality. The qualitative researcher, consistent with the goals of this research, seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behavior, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues.

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that: seeks answers to a question, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, and produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate

boundaries of the study. Qualitative research shares these characteristics. Additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack et al. 2005).

Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 2)

Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. That is to say, it aims to help us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are. It is concerned with the social aspects of our world and seeks to answer questions about: why people behave the way they do, how opinions and attitudes are formed, how people are affected by the events that go on around them, how and why cultures have developed in the way they have, and the differences between social groups. Qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: Why? How? In what way? (Hancock, 1998)

As Flick, Kardorf and Steinke describes; qualitative research claims to describe life-worlds 'from inside out', from the point of view of the people who participate. By so doing it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features. Qualitative research, with its precise and 'thick' descriptions, does not simply depict reality, nor does it practice exoticism for its own sake. It rather makes use of the unusual or the deviant and unexpected as a source of insight and a mirror whose reflection makes the unknown perceptible in the known, and the known

perceptible in the unknown, thereby opening up further possibilities for self-recognition. (2004: 3). Thus, the researcher used this approach because it could help him to use data collection methods that ignite the researcher to develop an open attitude in order to understand how others perceive their situation.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher chooses 'snowball' sampling to select the participants for the group discussions. 'Snowball' sampling used in which initial contact with an informant generates further contacts (Jensen 1982: 239). The sampling method used to find out audiences with experiencing of watching locally made films quite several times. Moreover, in the focus group the target groups are gathered by snowball sampling method, therefore they know each other and these leads to free and comfortable zone during the discussion.

In carrying out the snowball sampling techniques, the researcher originally had six individuals that he recruited from personal relationships and relationships established following participant observation. These six individuals were then requested to invite friends and significant others that have habits of watching locally produced movies and going to the cinemas. Once others joined the research, the same process was repeated until the required 5-6 individual per each focus group was attained.

The researcher used a three-stage approach to examining consumption of local films in the process of identifying construction. These are:

- I. A participant observation, which examined, amongst other things, local film viewers' social attitudes, media usage, and their preferences for local films in a natural setting,

i.e. cinemas. A total of six cinemas, namely Cinema Ethiopia, Ambassador, Empire, Sebastopol, Alem, and Edna mall cinemas were selected based on their differences in the genre of films they show, entrance fees and audience profiles. The researcher attended a total of 11 non-randomly selected movies in all the 6 cinemas (see appendix for details).

- II. A series of six follow-up focus group interviews with a total of 32 individuals were conducted in order to further explore the participant observation findings.
- III. A series of six semi-structured in-depth individual interviews were conducted. These interviews probed film viewers' local film consumption practices over time.

3.3.1 Participant Observation

This method involves participant observation in some of the more frequented and popular cinema theatres across Addis Ababa. This practice was particularly significant in gathering data that deals with the profiles and social context of the audiences, features of the settings, and issues beyond consumption like the peculiar cultures of audiences before, while and after watching the movies. A total of six cinemas, namely Cinema Ethiopia, Ambassador, Ampire, Sebastopol, Alem, and Edna mall cinemas were selected based on their differences in the genre of films they show, entrance fees and audience profiles. In doing so, the researcher attended eleven non-randomly selected movies in all the above mentioned cinema theatres. (See appendix)

Mack et al. (2005) describes, participant observation is a qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by study populations. As qualitative researchers, we presume that there will be multiple perspectives within any given community. We are interested both in knowing what those diverse perspectives are and in understanding the interplay among them. Qualitative researchers

accomplish this through observation alone or by both observing and participating. Participant observation always takes place in community settings, in locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions. The method is distinctive because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having the participants come to the researcher. Generally speaking, the researcher engaged in participant observation tries to learn what life is like for an “insider” while remaining, inevitably, an “outsider.” (2005).

Moreover, the main advantage of participant observation is data obtained through participant observation serve as a check against participants’ subjective reporting of what they believe and do. Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviors and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom (Mack et al. 2005).

3.3.2 The Focus Group

Since the early 1980s, the use of focus group discussion as a qualitative research method gained popularity for analyzing media audiences (Deacon et al. 1999: 55). According to Lunt and Livingstone, focus group research involves bringing together group or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects, to discuss issues in the presence of a moderator (1996: 8). In other words, focus group discussion research entails conducting discussion of particular media texts by the participants. This method becomes useful in understanding the differentiated meaning audiences advanced when watching or consuming global media. Gamson (1992) usefully outlines the advantages of focus groups over interviews and surveys as a method for understanding how people socially construct meanings about public issues. The advantages are three-fold: focus groups allow the researcher to observe the “nature vocabulary with which people formulate meaning about the issues” and participants are forced to become more consciously aware of their perspective when framing an issue (Gamson 1992: 191-192).

Focus groups arguably provide researchers with more surprises than other types of research. Individuals who participate in focus group sessions are not restricted by the “A, B, C” choices. Participants generally are allowed to say anything they would like in focus groups sessions. Focus groups therefore are considered to be naturalistic (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The researcher listens not only for the content of focus group discussions, but for emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions. This enables the researcher to learn or confirm not just the facts, but the meaning behind the facts. This is simplistic, but conveys a major advantage of focus group method (Grundens-Schuck et. al: 2004).

As noted earlier, the focus groups are organized selected by the snowball sampling. The participants were chosen because they have watched quite number of locally made films. During the discussion some individuals dominated the discussion and other members were silenced. Hence as it noted by Hansen et al (1998: 263) that participants in the group discussions tend to move towards ‘consensus’ and dissenting or different views might be marginalized. Therefore, I made sure to include, and gave due attention to, those who were silent during the discussions.

3.3.3 Individual In-depth Interviews

Indeed as with most social research, focus group data should as far as possible be combined and juxtaposed with a range of data gathered from different sources and using various research techniques, in the interest of as complete and reliable an answer to the research question as possible (Macun & Posel 1998:132). It is for this reason that individual in-depth interviews were deemed important as a follow-up to focus group interviews.

Individual in-depth interviews are essentially a hybrid of the one-on-one interview approach, a commonsensical justification for their wide usage in media studies being that “the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them” (Jensen 1982: 240). Individual in-depth interviews have affinities to conversation and are well suited to tap social agents’ perspective on the media, since spoken language remains the primary and familiar mode of social interaction (Jensen 1982: 240). Schroder et al. further contend that:

The individual interview also avoids the ‘spiral of silence’ effect that may prevent...controversial views and experiences from being expressed in a group context. The individual interview may thus be the best choice for a researcher who wishes to illuminate a sensitive issue, located beyond the discursive range of the socially acceptable or the politically correct – or an issue that is felt by the individual to be too sensitive to talk about in the presence of others, other than a researcher who grants the informant full anonymity. (2003: 153)

In terms of sampling, as Wimmer and Dominick (2000:181) note, in one-on-one interviews respondents are selected based on a pre-determined set of screening requirements hence candidates for individual interviews were purposively selected from the participants in the focus-group interviews. Particular attention was given to the most articulate and enthusiastic participants.

The decision to conduct individual in-depth interviews arose from a series of focus group interviews which conducted with regular locally produced film consumers. I was particularly prompted to do this with the emergence of some unexpected themes and findings in the focus group discussions that called for further probing. The decision to conduct individual in-depth interviews was also influenced by the writings of a number of theorists who have pointed to the need to understand the interplay between the individual and the social in any theorizing of media consumption.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The data from the participant observation is thematically categorized and reported as visually as possible. All the interviews were transcribed and translated into English, with an attempt made at maintaining the sense of meaning which emerged in the conversations. The data was interpreted and analyzed further. In other words, as Jensen (1988: 4) suggests the in-depth interviews were not considered finished accounts of the audiences' experience of locally produced films. Given that the interviews produced data in the form of verbatim transcripts, it was the researchers' task to interpret the meaning of these data and present their most salient features in critical and coherent form (Jhally & Lewis in Ruddock 2001: 138-139). The analysis essentially progressed by way of undertaking what Fiske (1987) calls 'ethnography of discourse' - an analysis of talk about the experience of watching locally produced films. Thematic coding was used as the mode of analysis. As Jensen (1982: 247) aptly explains, the approach is:

[A] Loosely inductive categorization of interview...extracts with reference to various concepts, headings or themes. The process comprises the comparing, contrasting, and abstracting of the constitutive elements of meaning.

The researcher's task therefore was to report those sections of interviews that shed most light on the research question at hand. Thus, in analyzing the interview transcripts, it was seen proper to take into consideration the multi-dimensional character of the viewers' signifying practices, noting particularly the their motivation towards the content of the newspaper, their individualized appreciation of the content, their attitudes to the content *vis a vis* their socio-cultural and political lived circumstances and the extent to which particular movies appear to be of communicative value to the viewers-impacting on their everyday practices (see Jensen & Rosengren 1990:218). As Ruddock (2001: 139-140) points out, within reception research data analysis involves assessing the degree of fit between the languages of text and audiences. The data was then written in narrative form with pertinent quotations used to illustrate major findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the presentation and interpretation of findings of the study by examining audiences' reception of the local films in Addis Ababa. The findings are discussed and illustrated in combination with selected quotations from the interviewees obtained from six focus group discussions and six individual in-depth interviews. Notes from participant observations will also be employed when appropriate. The findings of the study are classified in to three major sections, namely *The Cinema: a space beyond entertainment*, *The Triumph of the Local*, and *The Local: Hollywood's Surrogate*.

4.2 The Cinema: A Space Beyond Entertainment

As outlined in the research methodology, six cinema theaters were choose for the study. Before conducting focus group and semi-structured interviews, data are gathered through a series of participant observations in each of the six cinema theaters. What became evident during my observation is that the locally produced movies are highly demanded by the audiences. This is contrary to some of the more prominent and usually negative constructs of the Ethiopian society towards movies. As Temesgen (2008) cited in his thesis, hundred years back the history of cinema in Ethiopia was different. When the cinema technology was introduced, the public named the cinema theatre "House of Satan". Cinema/film was perceived as some sort of sorcery or magic.

During the observation, I noticed people were standing in a long line for more than an hour on harsh weather conditions and fighting to get tickets. Nowadays a lot of people are choosing to go to cinema theatre like it never before. The cinema theaters are now a favorable place especially by the youth generation.

In the post-cinema scenario, I have observed that it is common practice for couples or group of couples to go for tea or coffee in a cafeteria and reflect upon their experiences of the movie they have seen. I was able to make friends and join a couple of these post-cinema dialogues. It is intriguing to see how the audiences reflect upon their interpretation of the movies in different ways. Most discussions are dominated by dialogues related to themes and plots of the movie as opposed to technical and sound quality.

4.2.1 Space for Couples and Love Affairs?

It is common practice in Addis Ababa for cinemas to be considered as spaces of dating for couples; or at least my observation suggests likewise. This is true during my observation on the six cinema theatres, but this doesn't mean all the audiences are couples. What become clear during my observation is that the majority of the audiences who visit the cinema theatres are young people. The cinema is not only for couples, but there are quite number of them though. Most of the audiences during my observation were coming in groups of two and above. Only few audiences were alone in all cinema theatres. The following quotes are cases in point o show this:

Biruk: most of the time me and my friends are hanging together over the weekend. We do different things for fun but there is nothing more we like than going to the cinema theatres. We call each other and we go in groups to a cinema we choose. It is fun being in groups because nobody will feel bored waiting in the long lines.

For Biruk and his friends cinema theatres are favorable place for enjoyment. He also enjoys going with his friends. This shows the cinema is becoming a highly demanded place by the people. During my observation most audiences came in groups of three or more with same sex and mixed sex. Like I suggested before, there were also couples among the audiences.

Kibrom: I like to go to cinema theatre at least with someone. I don't have the habit of going alone. I usually go to the cinema with my friend and most of the time with my girlfriend. I can say I watch more movies with my girlfriend than my friends. There are different recreation centers that we visit in different times with my girlfriend. But if I am supposed to mention recreation center that binds my need and my girlfriend's almost equally, I guess it is cinema theatres.

As can be seen from the above statement, the cinema theatres attract many couples. I visited six different cinema theatres during my observation, and I can conclude that couples occupied many seats in every cinema. One of my observation day was February 14—*Valentine's Day*. I went to one of the cinema theatres and the majority of the audiences were couples. Even in random days there were enough of them. This indicates the cinema theatres are a place of enjoyment and dating for couples. The following two excerpts, however, suggest otherwise:

Lilti: If I want to watch a movie at cinema theatre, I go by myself. I don't mind to go with my friends, but if there is no one around me, I went alone and enjoyed myself. I will not sit at home if my friends don't want to go to cinema or if they are busy. Of course it is better if I enjoy with my beloved friends. But when I want to watch movies my attention overwhelmingly directed to thinking about the film thereby don't mind whether I am with my friends.

Muluken: My friends are amazed most of the time. I have the habit of going alone to cinema theatres. There are few times which I went with my friends. I like going alone and enjoy the movie.

This suggests that the cinema theatres are also a place for the audiences who prefer to come alone. However, during my observation their number is few compared to the couples and with those who come in groups. What I can conclude from my observation is that the cinema theatres are not only the place for couples rather they are a place for different kinds of audience.

4.2.2 Post-movie Discussions

The use and gratification theory indicates that audiences use the media to satisfy their needs. “...there is a plurality of responses to media messages, that people are capable of making their own minds up, accepting some messages ,rejecting others using the media for a variety of reasons and using them differently at different times”(Watson,2003:62).

Croteou and Hoynes describe the individual interpretation of media products as:

This interpretative activity is crucial because it is in the process of audience reception that media texts take on the meaning. Producers construct complex media texts, often with a very clear idea of what they intend to say but this intended message is not simply dumped into the minds of passive audiences. Instead, audiences interpret the messages assigning meanings to its various components. (1997:267)

This is because media messages tend to have multiple meanings. And interpretation of media messages does not stop at the individual level people talk about the program with their friends, families and try to send a message on how they interpreted or understood the message. (Croteou and Hoynes, 1997). The following three excerpts seem to illustrate this particular theme.

Kalab: I am not a professional, but I give my own comment or suggestions about the movie I watch and I discussed it with my friends. On some movies there might be some scenes that I don't like or my friends do not like. But to criticize or to discuss on them I or my friends may not expected to be professionals in movie making. We have our own feelings and understanding of our situation and the movie we are watching. Therefore, we interpret and discuss in a way that we understand the film.

Biruk: When I was watching with my friends, it is a must that we talk about the movie after we watch it. We talk about the story and the characters. If we don't like the ending, we give our own ending opinions based on our observation and interpretation of the movie. We also discuss about the technical procedures of the movie, especially the sound and image quality. We don't discuss deeply about other technical procedures because our knowledge restricted us.

Kedir: When I discuss about the movie with my friends, it seems we are in a classroom arguing each other. Sometimes I and my friends have the same opinion sometimes different. Sometimes it seems we officially participate in the movie and decide about the story and the character. We also talk about the weak and strong side of the movie we watched.

The above quotes describe how they actively follow the content of the movies. The audiences are not just received the message of the movie and walk away. The extract from the above respondents shows they actively negotiate with the messages of the movie. They give their own idea and opinion about the story and characters of the movie. An important concept of reception theory is that the media text has no inherent meaning in and of itself. Instead, meaning is created as the viewer watches and processes the film. That in other words meant that, it is not usually the source that determines the meaning of a given message rather it is the destination (receiver) that is the most important component to do so.

4.2.3 Movie Going Culture

For many years Ethiopian audiences have only two options available in cinema theatres: either Hollywood or Bollywood movies. Starting from the past few years, this image is changing particularly because the foreign movies are almost replaced by the local movies. During my observation, I visited six different cinema theaters. Among those six cinema theatres four of them have a dual program both for the foreign and locally made cinemas. The rest two cinema theatres have full locally made movies program. What I observed is that the number of audiences for the foreign and local made movies is not the same. The number for locally made cinema is much more than the foreign movies.

The Hollywood movies in cinema theatres are available in four times cheaper than the locally made movies. The Hollywood movies are far better in terms of production quality compared to the local ones. However, what I observed is that the audiences are still in favor of the locally made movies as shown in their resistance of the evening sunlight and exhausted long line. The movie going culture has changed. The following excerpts support my observation:

Lilti: If I have time, I wouldn't mind watching three or four times every week. But most of the time I go to the cinema theatres at least once in a week.

Abdi: I become free most of the time on Friday and I choose to go to cinema theatre to watch the local movies.

Yitayal: I went at least twice in a month.

Most of the respondents during the focus group discussions respond they went to cinema theatres if it is rare once or twice in a month. As it become clear during my observation, audiences are rushing to the cinema theatres. I observed three times in three different cinema theatres that tickets were sold out before the movie start. I also observe the audiences fighting

to get a seat inside the theatre. As the media/cultural imperial theorists advocated, the audiences are not only exposed to the western movie product. What can I conclude from my observation is that the audiences are choose the locally made movies to watch in cinema theatres.

4.3 The Triumph of the Local

Living in a country that is categorized as one of the least developed countries in the world, it is not surprising if there is lack of entertainment places in Addis Ababa. There are only few choices of entertainment places for the people. The young generation here in Addis Ababa spent their time for the most part by chewing chat while other chill in a café, pub or restaurant. Significant others go to the cinema houses and those who can afford they went out of the city and enjoy themselves. As I mentioned it earlier and observed during my observation, the cinema theatres are become highly demanded place by the young people, and most people are ignite for the locally made cinemas.

4.3.1 Cultural Familiarities and No Linguistic Barriers

Moreover, the cinema theatres are more crowded by the audience for the past few years and still the demand of locally made movies becomes high. Such kind of crowded and long line is not available for the foreign movies. During the focus group and semi-structured interview all the respondents choose to watch the locally made movies because of the language and cultural familiarities.

Hibiti: most of the time when I watch the foreign films, I couldn't understand fully about each and everything of the language. I can understand some of it but I may miss some points. When someone watches a movie, at the end he/she has to understand the gist of the movie. That's why I spend more than one hour to watch a particular movie. On the other part, when I watch the locally made movies, I can understand the language and it is easy for me to follow every flow of the movie.

Elias: In the past years I don't even give much attention for the locally made movies. I believe a movie is the reflection of our world. In foreign movies they always show their culture and their ways of life. Even though our country's movies are on their infant stages, they don't try to show you what is around you. Hence, I want to watch local movies because they can show me my lived reality.

Kalab: It has been a while since I start watching the locally made movies. Before that I was watching the Hollywood movies. In Hollywood movies, there is not much I can learn. Their way of life and culture is not suitable with our culture. I can just watch their movies, but there is not much I take from their messages. After I start watching local movies, I start to like it because they are familiar with our surrounding. They represent the society and the system around us.

A point derivable from the arguments forwarded by the media/cultural imperialism scholars is that the West as an imperial center imposes its culture on the periphery. Because Western civilizations have the money, as well as the means, to produce the majority of the media (film, news, etc...), the rest of the world has been left to take the subordinating position when they purchase and watch those productions. Thus, Third World countries are caught up in the predicament of consuming media filled with the Western World's way of life, which will culturally swamp their own culture. In short, the media imperialism thesis proposes that the whole process of production and distribution of Western media products and their subsequent consumption by different people all over the world results in cultural homogenization (McQuail, 1983; Rantanen, 2005)

However, the above three excerpts from the focus group discussion totally contradict with the idea of the media/cultural imperialism thesis. The audiences here are not only the advocates of the foreign movies. According to the respondent's statements, they want their own product which they can fully understand and are familiar with everything in the movie. As we can understand from the respondents they are urged to watch local movies because they are familiar with the messages of the movies in terms of languages as well as cultural settings. This concept

is also the ant-thesis of media imperialism concept that argues the so called underdeveloped nations are overwhelmed with the civilized nations' media products like Hollywood movies.

4.3.2 Symbolic Distancing

One of the points which are raised by the critique of the media imperialism is symbolic distancing. Symbolic distancing represents one of the ways in which we can understand how local audiences actively appropriate the media products in light of their lived culture. According to Thompson (1995: 175), one of the critics of the cultural imperialism thesis, local audiences make meaning out of the media messages they receive within the context of their lived social conditions. He also argues, such experiences of symbolic distancing enables individuals "... to make some distance from conditions of their day-to-day lives—not literally but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously" (1995: 175)

What becomes understandable in my study was that part of the pleasure derived from watching the local films lies in the active role played by the viewers to evaluate aspects of what they see in the films on the basis of their subjective life experiences. As I mentioned it earlier, the language and culture familiarity plays a huge role for the audiences to choose the locally made movies, because they believe the movies try to reflect the image of the society.

Tiku: I saw many locally movies and there is one movie which inspires me a lot. The movie is about hiding the real identity to find and know the person you love. You see nowadays it is becoming difficult to know the real identity of a person, especially your beloved ones. In my opinion, in relationship knowing and understanding your love partner is the key for happiness. You know what makes her happy and what makes her sad. That movie inspires me how to know the person who is special to me.

Beside the language and culture familiarities, the locally made movies have sensible meanings for the audiences. Tiku's excerpt shows how helpful are watching the local movies, because the movies are circulated around the real society. The movies are the reflection of the society and they show for the audience what is around them. For Tuku finding a true and honest person in his life is important.

Another point emerged during the course of the interviews was that the locally made movies often times help viewers distance themselves from their everyday lived reality.

Lilti: As long as we live here in this world, problems or mistakes may make disagreement between us. When disagreement happens, we should not rush into fight with each other. The movie *Siryet* is the movie that inspires me a lot. I always picture our society, neighbor and family to live peacefully. I think we should be a people that are ready for forgiveness because we all are not perfect. That movie talks about forgiveness. There are so many problems in our society and I will be happy if our society adapts and practices forgiveness.

Lilti's believes the world is full of grievances. The movie she mentioned is about revenging and forgiveness. She reflects upon how we can make our way of life suitable and to live peacefully, it is a must to forgive each other for the mistakes it has been done. She also believes hatred will never make the living condition of the society suitable. In other words, if two families had some disagreement and continue like that, it will pass on their children. But if they solve it by forgiving each other in the first place, they will live peacefully and happily. Hence according to Lilti, local movies propose such and other solutions for different kinds of conflicts that happened in the society. And the solutions are usually feasible because the movie makers are part of the society thereby they know the problems of their society.

4.4 The local: Hollywood's surrogate?

It's been discussed in both Chapter One and Chapter Two that media imperialism is based on the idea that 'Third World' developing countries are being culturally dominated by powerful nations of the West, especially the United States of America, through their communications system (Watson and Hill, 1984: 173). This theory proposes that being caught up in the predicament of consuming media filled with the Western way of life, Third world countries' cultures will eventually turn out to be nothing but swept away. In other words, the outcome of this form of cultural influence is likely to be one of cultural homogenization (McQuail, 1983; Rantanen, 2005).

A problem often associated with cultural imperialism thesis is the notion that texts, no matter where they are consumed or by whom they are consumed, will have more or less uniform meanings. This seems to be what is meant by cultural homogenization, which refers to the weaker nations' culture getting swamped by the more dominant culture of the powerful nations. One of the ethnographic critiques suggests that individuals experience with foreign media is characterized by subjectivity and that meanings derived from such media are polysemic in nature. According to Thompson, what is at the heart of this subjective experience of interacting with the media is individuals' ability to "...draw on material and symbolic resources available to them, as well as on the interpretive assistance offered by those with whom they interact in their day-to-day lives" (1995: 172).

As indicated previously in this chapter so far point to the fact that individuals' sense-making experience of media messages is marked by their active role in relation to their lived reality. The following examples are taken from the in-depth interviews conducted with Lilti, Elias, Muluken and Kalab. Four of them are found between the age 26 and 30 years.

Lilti: To be honest, I'm not supporting the sexual scenes and nudity in our local movies. They can pretend they kiss or have sex instead showing the real activity. In Hollywood movies, they actually show naked women and men, sexual scenes and the likes. When they have sex in the movie, I always ask myself that how they convinced their mind. I think it's difficult. I may understand the nature of art and acting. For example, if my husband is an actor and have sex for the sake of acting, I will not accept it. It is difficult for me to accept and live with him.

Kalab: I choose if they could not include the sexual scenes and nudity in our movies. I think our society picture such kind of sexual scenes and nudity as rude. These kinds of activity always stay in private in our society. Let us say I rent or buy a local movie and watch it with all my family. I don't think everybody will feel comfortable when they watch a naked woman or sexual scenes. My parents definitely will be angry with me for bringing the movie. If we see a kissing scene in Hollywood movies, no one will give much attention like the local movie, because it been common for them for long time. For us I don't think so.

Elias: I don't think it is necessary watching the sexual scenes and nudity in our movies. I will not be amazed watching kissing and sexual scenes in Hollywood movies, because for them it's common even in their real life. For example, in Chinese movies, they try to show their own culture. Sexual scenes, kissing and nudity are not that much. The same is true in Bollywood movies even better than the Chinese movies. The Bollywood movies also try to show their own culture and way of life. You will see in their movie that the nudity, sexual scenes and kissing doesn't have a place. Watching sexual scenes, kissing and nudity in our movies doesn't give me a comfort. I like our movies to reflect the real image of the society and the culture not the foreign cultures. Every nation has its own culture. No one can escape from accepting the norms and values that his or her culture dictates. This is because it is impossible to defying the cultural practices of the society while living within that society.

As Williams (2003) describes the media/cultural imperialism thesis the dominance of nation's culture by another. The media/cultural imperialism thesis claims that authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick media products mainly from the United States (Tunstall,

1977:57) Williams (2003). In Hollywood movies watching sexual scenes, kissing, nudity and the likes are common in their movies. This is not a secret for the audiences all over the world.

However, the respondents' statement shows that even though they have experiences watching the sexual scenes, kissing and nudity on the Hollywood movies, they don't support to watch it on the local movies. As Kalab mentioned it the sexual scenes, kissing and nudity considered by the society as a unacceptable. Still after globalization expands all over the world, the mentality for the local culture is the same. If sexual scene in one movie appears, it will definitely be a hot issue among the audiences or the society. The society has its own culture and they want to stay like that although the local production is clearly following and employing some of the typical Hollywood movie features like explicit sexual scenes, nudity, violence and bad language.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the data that was gathered through participatory observation, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interview. Moreover, I have highlighted the salient of the study's findings in three main themes. The respondents' was transcribed and discussed and guided by the theoretical frameworks of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes some of the most important issues and findings that come up in the discussion so far.

5.2 Summary

This study under the title of “Examining the Popularity of Local films: A Study of Audiences in Addis Ababa” aimed to explore how the locally produced movies succeed in becoming popular among local audience in Addis Ababa and examining how local audiences negotiate with the messages in their everyday lived reality. The attempt to explore how the audience negotiates with the messages in their everyday lived reality, the study employed participatory observation, focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews. The methods used have allowed the researcher to understand the reception of the audience from their own perspective.

The investigation into the local films reception reveals the cinema theatre become a place of entertainment especially for young people. Moreover, the movie going culture is evidently becoming very high. Cultural familiarity and absence of language barriers are among the basic reasons for the increment of local movie viewers. According to the participants since the themes of local movies are familiar with their day to day practices they have the opportunity to grasp the messages of the films easily and almost fully. In addition, the audiences are negotiating with the messages of the film actively. What this means is the audiences give their own interpretations and understandings based on their actively participation with the messages of the films.

To understand how the impact of globalization can be felt in Ethiopia, the fact that came out from the findings is that the audiences are not doomed to homogenization as the media imperialism thesis argues. All of the participants in the focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews were young people. They have the experience of watching Hollywood films and exposed to their way of life from their films. However, the sexual scenes, kissing and nudity are not supported by the audience to watch such kind of scenes in the local films. The main factor for the above point is because, as they aptly state, those parts of the movie are not congruent with their cultural values hence they do not want to see such practices overwhelming their cultural practices in the local films.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussion

- Why are you interested in watching locally produced movies? What is special about them?
- Do you also watch Hollywood movies? Why or why not?
- Do you watch movies outside cinemas? Do you have the habit of buying them or renting them? Why or why not?
- What kind of movies you like? Why or why not?
- What is your favorite movie? Why?
- Who are your favorite characters? What makes them special?
- When do you go to cinemas?
- Do you prefer to go alone or with somebody else? Why or why not?
- Do you go to cinemas by friends influence or by your own desire?
- Do you have the information about the movie before you go to the cinema hall?
- Do you discuss about the movie after it finished? About the characters, technical, story of the movie?

Interview Guide for Semi-Structured In-depth Interview

- Do you favor locally produced films from foreign ones? Why?
- Who is your favorite actor/actress?
- Which actor/actress do you dislike most? Why?
- What is the best local film you ever watched? What is special about it?
- Would you like to see sexual scenes, nudity and kissing in locally produced films? Why and why not? Do you think our culture has effect on this?
- When and where do you watch the movies? Why?
- Do you prefer to watch the movies in cinemas or at home?
- Do you have the information about the movie before you go to the cinema?
- Do you pay the same amount of fee for foreign movies like you do for locally produced movies?
- Do you walk away in the middle of the movie if you don't like the movie?
- Do you stand and wait in a long line to watch locally produced movies? What about if it is a foreign movies?

APPENDIX II: Participatory Observation Checklists

Participatory Observation 1

Thursday February 3, 2011

Time: 6 PM

Location: Alem Cinema

Movie Title: LAM ALEGN

Genre: Comedy

Entrance Fee: 30 Birr

There was quite long line outside several minutes before the movie starts. In this cinema, the audiences are expected to get a ticket first and then stand on the line to get inside. Some of them are seen confused by this system because they think they stand on the line first before getting the ticket.

Most of the audiences are coming in groups of two, three and above. There are few couples seen on the line. Of course there are few audiences who came alone. Among the audience, males have the dominant number. In addition, it can be concluded that the majority of the audiences are found in their twenties and thirties. There are also few audiences beyond that. We can categorized most of them have middle class level. Few of them are above and few of them below. The audiences besides me were talking about the movie. They said to each other that they never heard about it and they were wondering how the movie is going to be.

When the audiences get in the hall, they grab popcorn and soft drinks then they get inside and looking for seats. In this cinema, the audiences are sitting in a place wherever they want, because there is no number on every seat. After they have their seats those who came in group talking with each other and other listen the audio music which is released from the hall. The cinema hall was full and the movie starts. The genre of the movie was comedy, and most of the audiences were responding by laughing when a something funny scene or dialogue appears. The audience follows with full attention because most of them didn't do anything except focusing on the screening.

Participatory Observation 2

Friday February 4, 2011

Time: 4 PM

Location: Ambassador Cinema

Movie Title: LAGEBA NEW

Genre: Rom/Comedy

Fee: 15 Birr

There was quite enough long line outside. It's around 4 PM on the afternoon; it's hot and the sun strikes so badly to the audiences whose are standing on the line. The audiences are expected to have a line in order to get a ticket first then they get in immediately after they get ticket. The number of males is greater than the females. And most of them are coming in group of two and above and there are some of them who came alone. Majority of them are found in their twenties and there are quite number of teenagers under twenty. Two friends who stand in front of me are grade 8th and 10th student. There are several audiences seen on the line whose ages like the two students who stands in front of me. The class of most of the audiences seems middle classes and below.

Because of the high temperature and the power of the sun heat, the audiences are talking about getting inside quickly. After the door opened, the audiences start to get in. while they get their ticket, two friends who were behind me were talking about the Amharic movies posters which was posted inside the cinema theatre. Before getting inside the theatre, most of the audiences were grabbing soft drinks, beers, cakes and sandwiches.

Inside the theater, the audiences are taking their seats. In this cinema, the audiences have to look and find a suitable seat for them, because the seats don't have number. There is an audio music playing in the theater to entertain the audience until the movie start. Those who came in group are chilling with each other, and those who came alone are just sitting and listen the audio music. Others playing game by their cell phone and others were reading newspapers.

When the movie starts, there was a sound problem. The sound was too much and the audience complained by making a sound by clapping their hands. The same situation happened after several minutes when the sound decreased. The audiences are following the movie attentively. They don't seem they are bored or hate the movie. The movie was comedy and the audience totally seems enjoying it, because they respond for the funny scene by laughing. There were few audience received a phone call by their mobile in the middle of the movie. After it ends, the audience seems happy about the movie.

Participatory Observation 3

Saturday February 5, 2011

Time: 11 AM

Location: Ampire Cinema

Movie Title: HAMAWI

Genre: Drama/Crime

Fee: 15 Birr

Number of seats: Around 1100

It's weekend and the time is 11 AM around mid-day. There is no line outside the cinema. In the beginning, there were only 14 people who get their tickets without any problem. Among those 14 audiences, half of them are in group and the rest are alone. There were two couples, but later on there were several of them. One man in his sixties is sitting alone and there were three kids between the age 14 and 16 years old sitting together. The rest are between 18 and 50 years old. People start came slowly in group as well as alone, but not that much. When the movie starts, there were only around 50 audiences in the theater. A little domination of males over females was there.

The cinema hall was very quiet and empty. The audiences were sitting in different seats. There was an audio music playing. Those who came in group were chilling and those who came alone listens the audio, read newspaper, and doing nothing. Two females came and sit beside me. They directly came here from college. They are students of private colleges and there are holding handouts in their hands. I ask them how the movie is going to be or whether they heard it before. They said there are famous actors in it and it might be interesting. I ask them if they came here after class, because their college is near to the cinema. They said yes and most students came here after class especially during day time. Some students doesn't want to go to their home immediately after class and they came here and watch a movie then went to their home.

The movie's genre was drama and crime. There are emotional and pity scene in it. Four girls who are aged under 18 came and sits behind me. There was this emotional scene came and one of the girl behind me laughed and the college girl who sits beside me turn behind and get angry. This means how come she laughed in this kind of situation? Most of them were responding emotionally for the scene. Around the end, the wife of the protagonist get shot and one audience stand up emotionally and said is shot is shot twice. There was happy ending and most of the audiences appreciate that and clap their hands. When the audiences out from the theatre, they were not more than hundred.

Participatory Observation 4

Saturday February 5, 2011

Time: 6 PM

Location: Ambassador Cinema

Movie Title: RODAS

Genre: Drama

Fee: 15 Birr

It's 6 pm on the evening and its Saturday. The line starts at 5:40 pm, but there were few people standing outside. In this cinema, the audiences must have a line in order to get a ticket. The audiences are exposed to the sunset when they are standing on the line. The audience start arrives in group and alone. There were quite number of couples seen on the line. We conclude that most of them are young and found in their twenties and thirties. Domination of males over females is here as well. Most of them are found in low level.

While we are standing in the line, I ask a man who was behind me whether he heard about the movie, and he said he has no idea and never heard about it. He just came to watch with his girlfriend. I ask another couples and they told me that they heard people talking about the movie and they say it might be interesting. The audiences get their ticket based on their line without any problem, because there was not much crowded. After they get their ticket, most of them grab soft drinks, cakes and sandwiches. The audiences took their seats they prefer. It was not a problem choosing a seat, because there were few people in the hall.

Starting from the beginning, the audiences start complaining for the sound quality. It becomes better after a while. Most of them start following attentively. There were few audiences who answer a phone call by their mobile. After several mint, few audience seen get up and leave the hall. Some audiences start losing their focus from the screen. It can be seen from their activity that they don't like the movie. Other few audiences also left the hall after a while. At the end, there was a scene which the audiences suppose to become emotional or be happy by the protagonist, but it was not happen rather one audience make fun of it and others laughed about it. There was not positive response for the movie by most of the audiences.

Participatory Observation 5

Sunday February 6, 2011

Time: 2 PM

Location: Sebastopol

Movie Title: Ye ADAM GEMENA

Genre: Drama/Crime

Fee: 15 Birr

Number of seats: 400

The time is just after the lunch, and a lot of audiences were standing on long line. All of them had to resist the mid-day sun heat. All the audiences must have a line in order to get a ticket. We can conclude almost the majority of them were coming in group of two and above. Several of them were couples. Also there were few audiences who came alone. Majority of them are males and most of them are found in their twenties. There were also quite number of teenagers. There were several audiences who found in their thirties and few beyond that. Audiences keep coming and there were a shocking gesture on their faces when they saw the long line. The long line won't them leave rather they prefer standing on the last. The main door opened and audiences start gets in. I heard one audience calling to one of his friend to reserve him a seat. The main concern of the audiences was getting a seat. After they get in, most of them grab soft drinks, juices, popcorn and cakes. Inside the hall, most people were going here and there to find a suitable seats because in this cinema it's how things going on. The cinema theatre becomes crowded, and most of the seats are taken. Some audience who came in group faced a problem in getting seats together. In this regard, they forced to sit in separate seats. After all the seats become full, extra chairs came and given to several audiences who doesn't get seats.

There was an audio music played, most people doesn't give attention to it because they were chilling with each other. Those who came alone were just sitting and others reading newspapers. The movie starts, the movie have funny, romantic, and crime scenes. The audiences were responding to all the scenes. They were laughing, happy and angry. It can be concluded that all of them were following the movie attentively. Some audiences were clapping their hand several times appreciating the dialogues. There was a scene at the end when the protagonist and antagonist faced each other, and two audiences in different seats raise their voice and said "kill him!" The rest of the audiences were agreed with them. There were also some audiences who said the same thing, but it heard only around my seat. At the end most of them gave their appreciation to the movie by clapping their hands.

Participatory Observation 6

Sunday February 6, 2011

Time: 6 PM

Location: Cinema Ethiopia

Movie Title: SISIT

Genre: Drama

Fee: 15 Birr

Number of seats: Around 1130

A Sunday evening, audiences are start form a line before 1 hour around 5 pm. Audiences start coming in group as well as alone. The cinema is located in high populated area and it's not suitable for the audiences. Beside those who stand on the line, there are so many people passing in front of the cinema. The line become longer and longer. In this cinema the audiences have to have a line in order to get a ticket. One audience said, they should sell the ticket earlier and let the audiences in without a line.

The audiences are standing in group of two and above. There are quite number of couples seen on the line. There are also some kids under 18 with their parents. Majority of them are males and most of them are in their twenties and thirties. Most of them are found in low level class. The crowd was too much when the door opened. The audiences start to get in, but there were some audiences cheated and break the line around the main door, and those who were behind were complaining. Inside the theatre, the audiences rushed to get tickets and then running for the seats. Those who came in group did a team work. Half of them get the seats and the others went to grab soft drinks and sandwiches. The hall is full of crowd and it becomes like rush hour. Most of them were going here and there looking for suitable seats. There was also a huge line in getting the soft drinks and sandwiches. The audiences start chilling with each other and others listened audio music. The movie supposed to start at 6 pm, but half hour passed and the audiences start making some noises by whistling and clapping their hands. The movie starts after 45 mints than the intended time.

The movie's genre was family drama, and there were a lot of emotional scenes. Most of the audiences were emotional and several of them were crying. They were responding quiet well for every scene of the movie. After it ends, it can be seen on most of the audiences' eyes that they were emotional about the movie. They seem they enjoyed the movie. One person told to his friend that he will repeat the movie again. And one girl told to her friend that how the main character makes her sad.

Participatory Observation 7

Monday February 7, 2011

Time: 4:15 PM

Location: Edna mall Cinema

Movie Title: Abbay Vs Vegas

Genre: Rom/Comedy

Fee: 30 Birr

Number of seats: 196

Edna mall is one of the recently opened cinemas with modern technology and suitable for movie goers. The cinema is found inside building and the audience wouldn't expose for the sun heat and doesn't have to stand in line to get a ticket or to get in. All the seats have number and the audiences are selecting their seats on computer screen while they are paying for the tickets. The time is 4 pm in the afternoon and there was not that much crowded around the cinema. There were two cashers and the audience get their tickets without any line. Since all the seats have their seat number, no one has to have a line in order to get a seat.

People start gather around the cinema's door to get in. Some are grabbing popcorn and soft drinks. Most of them came in group and there are only few who came alone. In this cinema, the number of females has majority than the males. There are few parents with their kids, number of adult women, couples and others in group of two and above. We can categorize their class around middle and above, and few low levels.

The audience start gets in and there is one employer who helps the audiences to their exact seat based on their seat number. There was a movie highlight shown before the movie start. Most of them are watching that and others chilling with their friends. The cinema hall has around 190 seats and all of them starts filled by the audiences.

After the movie starts, the audiences are following attentively. The movie is romantic comedy and there were a lot of funny scenes and dialogue and most of the audiences were responding by laughing.

Participatory Observation 8

Tuesday February 8, 2011

Time: 6 PM

Location: Sebastopol Cinema

Movie Title: SIBIRAT

Genre: Action/Thriller

Fee: 20 Birr

Number of seats: 350

Sebastopol cinema has two cinema hall and show two Amharic movies at the same time. They also have three programs everyday at 2 pm, 4pm, and 6 pm. The audiences start coming before one hour to watch the 6 pm movie. There is cafeteria beside the cinema and there were several audiences waiting until the line begin. The numbers of the audiences are starting to increase; around 5:20 pm the watchman came and told to the audiences to form a line. There was a little bit crowded to stand on the front. The audiences get in and pay for their tickets then they get out again to form a line. In this way, those who came behind get their tickets first and went to stand on the line.

Most of the audiences came in group of two and above. There were also few audiences who came alone. The number of males and females is almost equal. There were few couples seen in the line. Their class is somewhat middle level, and most of them on low level. The program of the movie was at 6 pm and they are expecting to get in on time, but that doesn't happen. The time is passed and most of the audiences were complaining. There were many audiences standing and frustrating. The problem was the 4 pm movie was not over. The time becomes 6:40 pm. I saw one audience went to the front and sold her ticket. Her reason was it will be late later and she might not get a taxi to home if she saw the movie. At 6:50 the audience start gets in. Most of them grab soft drinks, juices, cakes and popcorns. The audiences were starting to take their seats. They are expected to find a seat which is suitable for them. The cinema hall was around 80% full.

The movie starts at 7:05 pm. The genre of the movie was action/thriller. The audiences start following the movie attentively. There were several action and thriller scenes and the audiences were responding for that. When the protagonist is in danger, there were two girls behind me emotionally said, do this and do that before the scene. And most of the audiences were clapping their hands and whistling in most of the scenes when the protagonist took priority against the antagonist in fighting. The clapping went on until the movie ends. The movie end around 9 pm and everybody rushing to go to home because they know it they will face a problem getting transportation.

Participatory Observation 9

Thursday February 10, 2011

Time: 4 PM

Location: Alem Cinema

Movie Title: FBI

Genre: Comedy

Fee: 25 Birr

Number of seats:

FBI movie has highly demanding by the audiences. It's on at Alem cinema every day the whole week. The other movies have maximum twice show time in a week. The audiences start forming a line around 3:30 pm. In this cinema, the audiences must pay for the ticket first then standing on the line. While I was paying for the ticket, I ask the person who was beside me which movie is going to be shown now, and he said he doesn't know. Another person also gave me the same answer. After I get the ticket, I went to stand on the long line.

Most audiences were coming in group of two and above. There were several couples. Majority of them are found in their twenties and thirties. There were also some adults. The majority of the audiences' class is found in middle and several in low level. Two friends who were in front of me were talking about getting the ticket first. He said to his friend that he was confused before. He stands on the line without having ticket. After long stand he said, he reached to the cashier and ready to pay, and the cashier said the tickets are sold out. Starting from then he knows how this cinema work and learn from the misunderstanding. He also said there might be some people in this line who don't know this. After standing for several mints, the door opened and the audiences start to get in. Most of them grab soft drinks and popcorn. After that the audiences have to look their own seats, because there is no seat number in this cinema. The audiences were going here and there looking for seats. Most of them were chilling with each other and others were watching the advertisement on the screen. The theatre hall becomes almost full and the movie starts. Even after the movie start, some audiences were facing problem finding a seat. By the help of the cinema employer, they finally get seats.

The movie was full of funny scenes and dialogues. I never saw such kind of laughing from the audiences. The girl who was besides me was laughing none stopping. They respond it very well. They were even laughed while the main character walked. They start by laughing and finished it by laughing. I heard one audience saying I can't laugh because she become tired by laughing a lot. There was a happy face seen at almost all of the audiences while they walk out after it ends.

Participatory Observation 10

Friday February 11, 2011

Time: 4 PM

Location: Cinema Ethiopia

Movie Title: SEBATEGNAW SEW

Genre: Drama/Comedy

Entrance Fee: 15 Birr

Number of Seats: Around 1130

The line start around 3:30 pm, but there were few audiences standing on the line. Most of them were in couples and there were several audiences who came alone. The number of males is more than the females. Majority of them are found in their twenties and the rest beyond that. Majority of them are found in low level. After the door opened, the audience get their tickets without any crowded.

After they got in, most of them grab soft drinks and sandwiches. Then they went to their seats. Finding a seat wasn't a problem because the cinema hall was empty and there were only few audiences. The movie supposed to start at 4pm, but it delayed. Some audiences start murmuring for the delay. The movie starts finally around 4:30 pm. The movie was a drama comedy and there were some funny dialogues and scenes, and most of the audiences were responding by laughing. An hour passed and some audiences seems losing their interest. Few audiences start walking out. After the movie ends, some audiences were joking by the ending because they were not impressed by the ending. One audience raised his voice and said "is it a documentary or a movie?" and others laughed by his words. There was not an exciting gesture red on the faces of the audiences while they are walking out.

Participatory Observation 11

Thursday February 14, 2011

Time: 4 PM

Location: Empire Cinema

Movie Title: ARATU SHAMAWOCH

Genre: Romance

Entrance Fee: 15 Birr

The line starts around 3:20 pm. The audiences must stand in the line in order to get a ticket. Most audiences who stand on the line were exposed for the sun heat. The cinema is not suitable for the audiences because the surrounding is full of crowded and most people are moving around the cinema. Most of the audiences are young and found in their twenties and few beyond that. The number of females and males were almost proportional. The number of couples were several more than any cinema among those I visited. Majority of them are found on low level status and few in the middle. Outside the cinema, there were posters and those who were around me were talking about the posters.

The door opened and the audiences start gets in based on their line. They get their ticket and most of them grab soft drinks and sandwiches then went to take seats. Finding seats was not a problem because there were not much crowded. But later the audiences came slowly and the cinema hall was more than half full. The cinema hall was dominated by couples and there were group of friends and few who were alone. The time passed than the intended time and the audiences start complaining by clapping and whistling. Then the movie starts. The movie was romance and the audience start watching attentively. There was no movement by the audiences except one and two audiences were looking at their mobile phones. Most couples were watching the movie by hugging each other. There were few funny dialogues and most audiences were responding it by laughing. After the end, they seem they enjoyed the movie. The show they appreciate by clapping at the end of the movie.

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Ridwan Berihu

June 2011