

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF 'SHAI
BUNA' TALK SHOW**

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List of Acronyms

FGD	Focus group discussion
II	Individual in-depth interview
FGD 1	Unemployed male and female ages range (25-50)
FGD 2	Employed male and female ages range (25-50)
FGD 3	Female employed and unemployed age range (30-40)
FGD 4	Male employed and unemployed age range (30-40)
FGD 5	Employed and unemployed female and male Age range (17-26)
FGD 6	Employed and unemployed female and male Age range (55-65)
Numbers 1, 2, 3...	Participants of each focus group

List of Appendices

Appendix I.....	Interview guide for Focus Group Discussion
Appendix II.....	Amharic version of Interview guide for Focus Group Discussion
Appendix III.....	Interview guide for In-depth Interview with the Producer of ‘Shai Buna’ talk show
Appendix IV.....	Amharic version Interview guide for In- Depth Interview with the Producer of ‘Shai Buna’ talk show.

Abstract

The talk shows as a media genre emerged in the western media around the 1960s. But in Ethiopia, this genre has been on air since 1999. There are now four talk shows aired on the national television, ETV, and their number is increasing. Since the talk show is a new genre introduced to Ethiopian audiences it is essential to know what the genre is accomplishing in the society and what the audiences' reception is.

This study is conducted to find out how audiences of 'Shai Buna' talk show understand the talk show and the factors that account for their reception. Active audience theory was used as a framework to conduct the research. Audiences do not simply accept a message. They have the ability to accept or oppose a message.

Qualitative research methods, specifically focus group interview and individual in-depth interview were used to undertake this study. The sample was categorized into: occupation, gender and age.

Generally, most of the respondents agreed that the show is about Ethiopian problems and their solutions. Respondents regardless of their differences seemed to understand the talk show similarly.

The results of the study revealed that live contexts play a major role in interpreting messages. Respondents make meaning depending on what is relevant to their daily life. Occupation, gender and age are among the factors which shape interpretations.

However, there can be a complete understanding of the intended message by some respondents depending on the similarity of opinions that both the producer and receiver of the message have on specific points of discussion.

Though it can not be generalized, one factor alone can contribute to help in meaning making as it was found out with respondents with one similar factor in their lived context the other factor that is not the same among them can be a factor for differences of meaning.

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Chapter One

1. Background of the Research

Talk varies from one-to-one conversation to group discussions. In more recent times, with the emergence of broadcast media, this trend has continued - ranging from news, interviews and talk shows. In particular, talk shows have become a new genre to discuss ideas and opinions. Another reason why talk shows have become popular is the audience can relate with the host and the people who participate in the shows as well.

Talk show has been in the media starting the 1960s in the western countries. According to Manga "... the talk show as a distinctive television genre originated with the Phil Donahue show in 1967" (2003:24). With the existing global flow of information Ethiopian media has incorporated the new genre into its component. But, even though talk shows date half a century in other countries it is only ten years old in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian television which is the only station in the country has out sourced these programs to individuals who are capable of bringing a finished program and air it. The first talk show to have a format of a host and a studio audience was 'The Alebe Show' which was aired in 1999. It was popular among audiences as it was the first show to invite famous people. It discontinued when the producer died. Currently there are four talk shows broadcasted on ETV that discuss various issues: 'Hamsa Lomi' that deals with social issues, 'Shai Buna' which deals with social and economic issues. The recent ones are 'Fegegta' that focuses HIV/AIDS and 'Debo' which deals with musicians.

Since these programmes are increasing in number, it is essential to know how the local audiences are reacting towards them. As it is not plausible to study all the talk shows thus I have chosen one talk show namely ‘Shai Buna’. I find people discussing about the talk show in one way or the other. Among the remarks that I have encountered some are extremely positive and others negative. In this research, I assessed the reasons to what made the audiences like or dislike the show and how this is reflected on their reaction towards the message.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is among the list of the least livable countries of the world (Human Development Report, 2006)¹. And it is among the poorest nations of the world. Lots of discussion has been held to improve this condition at the government and society level. Development plans are being designed to be implemented.

The media is among the means in which these plans are being transmitted to the public. At the same time the media is a place where the public express their concerns and demands as it is among the functions of the media. Jensen states “...rather than assuming that the media are invariably repressive, deforming, destructive and evil, we can listen to those who participate in them to discover the multiple ways in which they are enjoyed and understood as well as the ways in which they are disliked and deplored” (cited in Servaes, 2002:87).

The focus of this research is ‘Shai Buna’: a talk show that discusses the effect of social issues on the development of the country’s economy. It demonstrates the role of media in aiding social development and improvement. According to the producer of the talk show, the show has the intension of bringing about attitudinal change in the society which ultimately will change the economy.

¹<http://hdr.undp.org>

In developing countries like Ethiopia such media program that participates the public in discussion, can be seen as one way of communication model. But this does not imply that participation is limited to studio audiences. Audiences at home will also listen to the discussion and take their own stand on the topic. This does not mean that they will take in every message they get from the show and use it. Corteau and Hoynes argue that “we prefer to think of audiences as active readers rather than passive recipients. We see the meaning of media texts as something that these active audiences construct rather than something that is prefabricated by media producers” (2003:266). Audiences have the power to accept or reject a media message. This brings in light to what Ethiopian audiences are seeing this new genre of media that is the talk show.

The reason why this talk show is different from others is it deals with economic situation of Ethiopia and what should be done both at the individual level and at the government level to improve it. And if the message is perceived well and, or constructed well it can change the way the economy is run both at the individual and government level. Thus, I believe it is important to know how the audiences make sense of the messages of the talk show and whether they are using it in their daily lives.

1.2. Objective of the Research

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to find out how audiences of 'Shai Buna' talk show make sense of the messages transmitted in the Shai Buna talk show.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

1. How do audiences understand messages of the 'Shai Buna' talk show?
2. What are the factors for such meanings to be derived? (Both from the show or their life style)
3. How is it related to the message transmitted by the producer of the talk show?

1.3. Scope of the Research

The scope of this study is to explore how audiences of Shai Buna talk show derive meaning from the show. It also will cover the factors that are involved in shaping the meanings. It also sees what the audiences do with the message in their lives. However it does not see the content of the talk show in detail.

The sample of the research is limited to thirty two participants of the focus group and an in-depth interview. Also due to shortage of time the sampling categories that I used are only three, which are occupation, gender and age which I think are more significant although there may be other factors as well.

1.4. Application of the Results

The study will be applicable in that it will give an insight to how audiences see the new type of genre in media .It also shows how they incorporate developmental messages from the show into their daily lives. It will also lay the foundation for the

understanding the genre itself. It gives other journalists who are planning to host or produce a talk show to understand their audience. It will allow development communicators to check whether talk show is a good medium to disseminate developmental messages.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

For lack of time I analyzed only what meaning audiences make from the show. And the population of the study is only limited to Addis Ababa due to the shortage of resources. The study would have been more detailed if more samples from other parts of the country were taken by comparing the factor of location into consideration.

I also used only six focus group discussions with a total of thirty two respondents. If there was more time and financial resources, more data could have been collected by using both qualitative and quantitative research methods that would make the result more generalisable.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2. Introduction

In this chapter the major theoretical and philosophical underpinnings that are important to conduct the reception analysis is covered. It reviews different scholar's work on audience reception and the critics it encounter. However this does not mean the research is bound to the referred theories only. The theories are used to build the framework of the research. The chapter also covers the origins of talk shows in the western media and how it is introduced in the Ethiopian context.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with how active audience research developed after the previous effects theories. Under the active audience research this chapter investigates major works such as encoding and decoding theory and reception analyses which focuses on how audiences make meanings.

In the second part of this chapter, the history of talk show is discussed. Then different views on talk shows' importance in the society and the roles of the host and the studio audience is examined.

2.1 Audience Reception Research

Livingstone et al note four theoretical developments that have led to audience reception research. Firstly, “research is increasingly interdisciplinary, with a convergence across a range of approaches to audience research.” Livingstone et al (1994:350)¹. It is important to see all the angles when doing a research and it is not enough to use only one method or discipline especially when it comes to media studies.

Secondly, “it can no longer be assumed that audience reactions and perceptions are predictable from the textual analysis of media content” Livingstone et al(1994:350)¹ The message in the text may not reach the audience as it was intended due to different situations that different audiences are in.

Thirdly, “the supposedly mass audience can no longer be seen as passive and mindless in their engagement with television, but rather as active interpreters of what they see, sometimes even as resistant or subversive audiences” Livingstone et al (1994:350)¹.

Audiences can interpret a message that is polysemic in nature and they can form meaning depending on their prior experiences. Fourthly, “mass media also are not homogeneous there is no general audience reaction to television as a whole.”(Livingstone et al ,1994)¹

¹<http://ejc.sagepub.com>.

Before the audience research came to focus, scholars concentrated on studying the effects of media. And they believed that media has a total and direct effect on the audience. One of these theories was the Magic Bullet theory. According to Biagi it is “the assertion that media messages directly and measurably affect people’s behavior. The theory holds that the media could inject ideas into someone the way liquids are injected through a needle”(2001:268).

This theory has been used by different names like hypodermic needle and transmission. Williams states “whatever its label, the basic idea is simple, media messages are received in a uniform way by every member of the audience and that immediate and direct responses are triggered by such stimuli” (2000: 171).

Though this theory does not exist in its initial definition, it did not disappear totally. In the 1960s and 1970s scholars started believing that media has limited effect on its audiences and later cultivation theory emerged. The theory involves the cumulative impact of media, which was developed by Gerbner as “Television viewing cultivates a commonality of perspective among otherwise different groups with respect to overreaching themes and patterns found in many programmes” (cited in Williams, 2000:179).

Also Croteau and Hoynes states, “Television plays a homogenizing role by its tendency to erode traditional differences amongst divergent social groups” (1997:212). But lately the debate has become audiences are not passive to take the kind of effect these theories say that media has on its audience. Williams states:

The notion of a captive audience forced to digest a daily dose of what media practitioners think is good for them has been superseded by a more promiscuous and powerful audience who can decide what they want to consume and when. What audiences think and what they do is more central to understanding the influence of the media (2000:190).

Recent scholars have focused in developing a theory that will enable communication and media researchers study about audiences. Thus, a new theory was constructed that focuses more on the audience and began to be known as new audience research.

2.1.1 Encoding and Decoding

Encoding and decoding model is the first model to diverge from the previously established effects theories. This theory has been re-constructed by many scholars, but it was originally constructed by Hall in 1980. The model states

The lack of fit between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the asymmetry between the codes of 'source' and 'receiver' at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form. What are called 'distortions' or 'misunderstandings' arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange (cited in During, 1994:94).

Hall categorizes the different meanings formed while decoding media messages. This category is the preferred reading theory, that distinguishes three kinds of meanings; the dominant, negotiated and oppositional. The dominant or hegemonic reading accepts the preferred meaning encoded in the text; the oppositional reading occurs when people understand the preferred reading, reject it and decode meaning according to their own values and attitudes, and a negotiated reading is where people rather adapt than completely reject the preferred reading (Williams, 2000).

Hall elaborated more on the television codes that are bound to different meanings by using the concept from linguistic in which words have the literal denotative meaning and the deep connotative meaning. "... the so called denotative level of the television sign is fixed by certain, very complex (but limited or 'closed') codes. But its connotative level, though also bounded, is more open, subject to more active transformation, which exploit its polysemic values" (Hall cited in During, 1994:99).

Rivers and Schramm states,

A person who accepts a message will interpret it as his stored -up experience and his built-in values dictate, for he can interpret only in terms of the responses he has learned. We tend to interpret new experience, if possible, in ways that fit with old experience and accepted values. This, of course sometimes leads to distortion—often to selecting the parts of a message that fit comfortably and discarding the rest. (cited in Casty ,1973:8)

But Hall emphasize that social background rather than individual self determine the formation of meaning out of media messages. Morley tested Hall's preferred theory by taking and analyzing the corrected 'Nationwide' television news magazine and interviewed people from different social background to see how they make meaning of the encoded preferred meaning. But the results were deferent from Halls theory.

Morley discovered that social background and experiences did not necessarily determine peoples understanding of the content of the media. Social class alone was not an adequate explanation for different audience responses. Respondents who shared a similar class background sometimes produce different responses (Williams (2000).

Cantril as cited in Biagi (2001 :267) also states “high critical thinking was the key to have a different interpretation of a message after she studied how people from different background interpreted a show” war of the worlds”... broadcast of Oct 30, 1939 “people with different personality characteristics interpreted the broadcast differently a show ‘war of the worlds’”.

Thus it can be argued that the message alone does not stand as the factor for audiences to accept it. Other factors like the social background ,personality ,class has to be incorporated when one tries to look at audiences and the meaning they take form a media.

2.1.2 Reception Analysis

The history of reception studies begins at the moment speakers attempts to figure out what listeners might understand about messages. Staiger (2005:1)

Reception analysis started developing around 1980s and deals with how audiences understand popular media, the entertainment. McQuail (2000:367) describe reception study as “it emphasizes media use as a reflection of a particular social-cultural context and as a process of giving meaning to cultural products and experiences in everyday life.” The most researched type of popular media was the soap opera. Ang in 1985 studied an American soap ‘Dallas’, and how women viewers make meaning. She found out that women were interested in the soap not because it was the exact copy of the reality but because it appealed to their emotion (cited in During ,1994).

Such reception studies introduced the notion of pleasure into the discussion of what audiences obtain from popular media and cultural forms. “these gain of pleasure and as a whole lead to what the notion of reception analysis refers to, the ability of audiences to appropriate the meaning they wanted form popular culture”(Williams,2000 :199).

2.1.3 Resistance

Mills cited in Casty (1973:187) pointed out three ways in which one can resist media.

1. If media is not monopolized one can resist a message by comparing contents with the messages from the other media
2. The individual can compare what is said with his own personal experience and direct knowledge of events
3. Individuals may gain points of resistance against the mass media by the comparison of experience and of opinions among themselves.

Rivers and Schramm show how one can change a tightly held opinion,

For example, suppose if (a persuasive message) says that some admired individual or group holds a position that is inconsistent with the person's present position or that a new position is not really in consistent with his own but rather a development of it. Then there is some reason to hope that the individual may recognize and change some of his more strongly held positions in order to attain consistency (cited in Casty 1973:12)

To sum up, the basic underpinning of active theory it can be summed up as in Williams

the attention paid in reception studies to the differences between people in their understanding of the media messages, on the basis not only of class but also gender, race, ethnic identity, age, sexual identity, nationality and disability. Presets a more complex and differentiated picture of the audience (2000:205).

2.2 Audience and Meaning

In many respects, audience is an unfortunate term. It evokes the image of a mass of passive receivers ingesting their daily dose of media products (Croteou and Hoynes 1997:212).

The above statement is usually true when producers of media messages want to constructs a message that can address a mass people. But this is not the case usually. Williams states "audiences can be defined by the kind of media products they use, by their social type and other divisions that are usually used to categorize a society. Such factors also apply to categorize media audience" (2000:190).

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). The theory states audiences use the media for different needs of gratification. That is to divert from their problems, to develop personal

relationship with some characters, to experience what others are going through and to get some information (Watson, 2003).

McQuail gives the way an audience can be active

By definition, the audience as a mass is passive, because it is incapable of collective action, while any true social group has the means and may have the inclination to be active. Individuals act of media choice, attention and response can also be more or less active in terms of degree of motivation, attention involvement pleasure, critical or creative response, connection with the rest of life (2000:369).

Thus it is the individual action of each audience that can collectively become active still with different degrees. Croteau and Hoynes state that audience are active and this state of being active can be expressed in three ways. That is through, individual. Social and active political action. They 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 component. (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. And further, people can demand together to change or improve a media message. (Croteau and Hoynes,1997)

Hobson states “the message is not solely in the text but can be changed or worked on by the audience as they make their own interpretation of a programme (cited in Fiske 1987:66). ”On this regard Hall described this difference of derivation of meaning as:

to clarify a ‘misunderstanding’ at the connotative level. We must refer, through the codes, to the orders of social life, or economic and political power and of ideology further,... Rules of competence and use, of logics-in-use which seek actively to enforce or prefer one semantic domain over another and rule items into and out of their appropriate meaning-sets (cited in During 1994:99)

Williams states “Audiences interpret media messages and their ability to do this is determined by a range of individual, social and cultural factors. They are no longer seen as an undifferentiated mass of passive recipients of messages but a multitude of different groups with their own histories, habits and social interactions” (2000: 190).

This interpretation of media message is wide. Interpretation includes the way an audience understand what is spoken or written by the media, how they relate with the people involved in creating the message. In other words interpretation requires a way to receive a message in a accordance with ones prior experience. This calls for the notion of subjectivity in interpreting media messages.

One way of understanding our subjectivity is that it is composed of the variety of discourses that we use to make sense of the social domains that constitute our social experience. Because our social experience has varied, and does very, so much , our subjectivities are likely to be composed of a number of different , possible contradictory discourse, each bearing traces of a different scientific ideologies (Fiske:1987:66).

Thus, each one interprets a message in accordance to his/her subjectivity. But this does not mean there is no common meanings that can be derived form a message.

some meanings will be easier to construct because they draw on widely shared cultural values and sets of assumptions about the way the world works. Other meanings will be less commonly derived because they require substantial retting or depend on the use of alternative informational resources . As a result, meanings may be actively constructed by audiences. But in most cases one interpretation is likely to be most common and fit with the underlying values of the culture (Croteou and Hoynes, 1997:213).

But there seems to be a point where interpretation is commonly based on a certain factor. As I mentioned earlier social class has been regarded as one factor. "... social position affects interpretation. It acts as a central mediator of the interpretative process not as a determinate of meaning but as a key provider of the resources we use to decode media messages" Croteou and Hoynes (1997:215).

Interpretation of a media message can be seen as making sense of programs. Regarding audiences of talk show, making sense is seen as. "An attempt to fix representation and privilege certain understanding as unproblematically true " Manga (2000:96). Classifying can be a form of classifying the shows in one way or rather than another is a function of the discourses available. The discourse provide the terms though which one can make sense .

Audiences uses the discursive resources as in Croteou and Hoynes (1997) the language, concepts and assumptions with a particular subculture or political perspective to help them classify shows in a certain category. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler define discourse as "the articulation, voicing or putting forward of a point of view" (2002 :189).

As audiences classify programmes they will assign a certain labels to these programmes . They will come to a decision whether they like the program ; whether they are going to relate with the people in the media such as a presenter or a participant that will determine whether they are going to watch the program

constantly. Manga on her study how women make sense of various talk shows states:

the more a woman explicitly or implicitly situates herself as being different from, better than, and /or morally virtuous than the guests or others she sees on the show, the less likely she is to engage with a show as legitimate. Conversely, the degree to which a woman identifies with a show's guests at least seen herself as having the same status the more likely she is to find a show legitimate (2000 :131).

Rivers and Schramm also states "If a receiver attends to the message, he must decide whether to accept it. His acceptance will depend largely on the apparent validity of the message and on his judgment of the sender's credibility or prestige" (1997:12) .

2.3 Critics on Active Audience Theory

Active audience theory is not without flaw. It has been criticized by scholars of the field. The major critic is active audience theory has given more power to the audience that question the notion of media power. Williams states

Active audience theory by stressing the ability of audience to make their own meanings from what the media pump out, to use media technologies for their own purposes and to take their own pleasures from what they see, hear and read undermines or even invalidates the concept of media power (2000:207).

Braker and Brooks criticize the view of celebrating resistance of media messages. If audiences reject messages of campaigns that encourage safer sex or discourage violence against women it is not something to encourage. They also question the term activity in that sometimes audiences become passive with choice by giving examples of people who watch movies just be scared or to have a good weep(cited in Williams ,2000).

Kitzinger pointed out the lack of clarity on what the word 'meaning' refers to. She identifies a difference between how people react or respond to a media text and their interpretation of the meaning of that text people can agree on the meaning but

simply refuse to accept or believe what is conveyed she concludes diverse response can not be equated with diversity of meaning (cited in Williams ,2000:207).

Another point that audience theory is accused of is the method that it uses critics comment on the subjectivity of interpretation that can be too narrow to rely on, Stevenson as cited in Williams (2000:207).

However, active audience research took another direction to media and attempts to look at audience in a more closer and elaborated way than previous theories. It looks at audience in a more closer and elaborated way on than previous theories and tries to understand the factors that affect the interpretation media texts .

2.4 Communication for Development

Development is a term that is usually used when something better is strived either from the public or the government of a country. In developing a nation, there is the government and the society at large involved for achieving development. There are efforts on both sides to improve the living standards of the society. And this is usually done through a communication process. Such communication has taken different stages and techniques through time.

The first kind of communication is modernization which is formulated in developed countries .The modernization paradigm considers under development in terms of visible, differences between rich and poor countries. “Development means bringing the gaps by means of imitation process between traditional and modern, retarded and advanced, or barbarian and civilized sector and groups to the advantage of the later” (Servaes, 1999:19).

And despite other factors that are used to determine development according to modernization paradigm economy is the major one.

A modern society is characterized, among other things, by a comparatively high per capita income extensive geographical and social mobility, a relatively high degree of commercialization and industrialization of the economy, an extensive and penetrative network of mass communicator media, and in general, by wide spread participation and involvement by members of the society in modern social and economic processes. (Almond & Coleman cited in Servaes 1999:20)

The take off model is a way of explaining how the modernizing theory saw development process in the under developed countries: strive to close there gap between modern and traditional .Servaes outlined five ways through which this can be achieved:

- a) demonstration, where by the developing world the to catch up with the more developed by adopting to catch up with the more developed by adoptions more advanced methods
- b) fusion-the combination and integration of distinct modern methods
- c) compression, whereby the developing countries attempt to accomplish the task of developed world in less time than it took the developed world
- d) prevention- that is learning from the “errors” made by the developed countries, and
- e) Adaptation of modern practices to the local environment & culture.

(Servaes, 1999)

Thus, it was more of imitating what the already developed countries had done which is can also be represented by a one way (sender-receiver) communication process that transmit the important information of such kind of development to the receiver .

But later in the 1950 the notion of personal influence in communication was recognized and the two step flow of communication was formulated “Mass communication is important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practice, but at the stage at which decisions are being made about whether to adopt or not to

adopt innovations, personal communication is for more likely to be influential” (Servaes, 1999:24).

On this regard Schramm states “mass media performs at least three functions...watch dogs, policy makers and teachers for change and modernization” (cited in Servaes, 1999:25). But this type of one way communication model is criticized for neglecting the social context where the communication takes place. Brown states “The one way flow of information establishes a hierarchical relationship between the source (the communicator) and the receiver object, since contemporary mass communications technology does not allow for immediate feedback” (cited in Servaes 1999:29).

A contrary ideology from the modernization theory is the dependency theory. It is formulated by the developing countries starting by Latin American countries. It is defined as:

Dependence is a conditioning situation in which the economics of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others...Dominant countries are endowed with technological, commercial, capital and social political predominance varying according to the particular historical moment and can therefore exploit them, and extract part of the locally produced surplus(Servaes, 1999:34).

One difference between the modernization and dependent theory is their framework. Modernization takes the nation as the center for developments action while dependency sees the process as more of international. In this regard the media theory that was assumed to be implied was the media (cultural) imperialism theory. Boyd-Barret defines it as:

The process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressure from the media interests of any other country or countries with out proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected (cited in Servaes 1999:39).

This is the reflection of the idea of dependency theory where developing countries depend on the developed countries for media use and its contents. And the developing countries are influenced and lured into developed countries culture while the developed countries are not affected.

However, the dependence theory is not without a critique. One of the core points is stated in Servaes as “A lack of internal class and state analyses within the periphery that inhibit productive forces. It is impossible to develop explanatory models without looking at the development of the global framework of power relations as a whole” (1999:42). This is because putting the blame only on the other side will not allow the subject to investigate other ways of problems that could be emanating within the subject itself.

There is one thing that both modernization and dependency have in common: they both use a top down type of communication, both did not involve the society and looked for their opinion of the matter. But the recent development of theory toward communication and development makes the society the center of the message to be communicated.

This notion of development is known as another development. It states “there is no universal path to development it must be conceived as an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from one society to another (Servaes, 1999:78). That is why the society has to be the center of communication of development to find an integrated method that can suit the society. And if the society is involved in the process of development better results may be achieved as the strategy is designed to fit that particular society.

Among the many requirements for another development is, “structural and sustainable changes are required, more after than not, in social relations, in economic activities, and in their spatial distribution, as well as in the power structure, to realize the conditions of self-management and participation in decision making by all those

affected by it, the rural or urban community to the worked as whole” (Servaes, 1999:79).

Participation of the society in the decision making process-require a communication process that is participatory. Carey states “Communication is defined in terms of sharing and participation ,increasing the commonality between sender and receiver rather than in terms of changing receivers in line with the purpose of the sender” (cited in McQuail 2000:378).

Servaes (1999), states that participatory communication has three important components. These are, access of media to public service, public involvement in the communication systems and public exercise of the power of decision making by having self management.

Servaes puts the participatory model of communication as “Listening to what the others say respecting the counterpart’s attitude, and having mutual trust is needed. Participation supporters do not underestimate the ability of the masses to develop themselves and their environment” (1999:89).

And media programs that are participating the public are essential for the society to exercise their right in being involved in the decision making process. And ‘Shai Buna’ talk show falls under this category because it involves the society in discussing issues that are the concerns of both the government and the society.

2.5 Origins of Talk Show

Talk shows primarily emerges in America. Manga states,

The talk show as a distinctive television genre originated with the Phil Donahue show in 1967, a Talk/ variety show have been a popular daytime programming form since the early days of television. All had a standard format featuring a celebrity host, various entertainment acts and celebrity interviews (2000: 924).

The talk show has got a distinct feature that can separate it from other genres and it can be defined according to Gill as “talk show is a place where ordinary people talk about private and emotional matters in front of audiences of many millions” (2007:154). According to her there were few ordinary people that appear on TV before this arena was established . And it was preceded by a radio talk show that started around 1930s. Gill categorized the broad talk show genre into three.

... I am going to present a three way classification of talk shows that differentiates between the audience discussion programme, usually organized around debates about public and political issues: issue oriented show or the therapeutic genre which focuses on personal problems and dilemmas ; and confrontational talk show often dismissed as trash TV, where the emphasis is less up on problem solving than on the spectacle of emotional conflict (2007:157).

Deacon et. al .defines these talk shows as follows:

In the new common populist TV discussion programme, a panel of interested participants interacts with a live audience and an actor person who mediates between panel and audience including the audience at home, in a debate about topically sensitive or topic provocative issues (1999:281).

Thompson as cited in Deacon et. al. writes:

...we should note that the vocal and visual communicative channels of radio and TV permit a much closer approximation of everyday conversation or talk than do previous media [(print media) my

emphasis], for electronics media and especially TV make communicating individuals into 'personalities' with a voice, a face, a character and a history, personalities with whom recipients can sympathize or empathize whom they can like or dislike, detest or revere (1999: 285).

Ethiopian Television talk shows are not distinct enough to be categorized in these types of show especially the second and the third one. This is because the culture of the society is more discreet than western society. People are not encouraged to talk about their personal experience even among friends and relatives let alone on television.

This does not mean that Ethiopian talk shows do not have similarities with the western talk shows. There is a start in some episodes of talk shows in which audiences encounter their own personal experiences (like in 'Hamsa Lomi', and 'Fegegta' talk show)'. Also, there is audiences and a host in every talk show. But general talk dominates the talk shows. And most of the issues that are discussed are more serious topics like poverty, HIV, and not weight issues or fidelity like western talk shows.

This paper's focus is the 'Shai Buna' talk show which is an example of audience discussion type as it deals with social issues like poverty ,population growth, entrepreneurship and other public issues where a hot debate is held between studio audiences. Livingstone et. al . states:

In relation to the more serious examples of the audience discussion programme, this genre challenges traditional categories of programme and audience, producer and subject, and of expert and laity, by providing a cultural forum for the television audience in which experts are held accountable and the public is allowed a voice. They thereby contribute to the reformulation of the rules and conventions of public debate by offering new opportunities for ordinary people and representatives of established power to argue and debate topical issues in public"(1994:354).

Livingstone and Lunt explain more on the issues that are discussed on audience discussion programmes and how they operate:

In the audience discussion programme as is the romance we start with a social problem which directly affects the studio audience, who represent the inhabitants of the kingdom... the host plays a central role as the hero who undertakes to solve the problem affecting the kingdom (the public) and restore social order (through advise, understanding or validation of experiences). Consequently, he or she studies through the mythical kingdom(studio)(cited in Gill 2007:158).

This is possible because of the aid of television. It gives visual and audio picture to make people's opinion visible and credible. Curran states "TV has eclipsed parliament as the central forum of national debate. It is now the principal channel of communication in the public space between the state and the home, the main means by which citizens engage in a collective conversation that influences public opinion and direction of society" (cited in Livingstone et al 1994: 353).

This usage of media as a public sphere is a result of the shift in communication strategies from modernization theory that focus on top-down approach to participatory approach that involves the community's opinion at the grass root level (Servaes ,1999).Public sphere is defined by Habermas cited in Servaes, "citizens can meet to discuss and debate issues of common and public opinion is formed through critical ,rational and disinterested debate"(2000:76). Also Landes describe the use of public sphere as "private persons joined together to exercise their reason in a public fashion"(cited in Manga,2000:139).

Livingstone et al describe what the role of these audience discussion programmes as a public sphere as:

The growth of the audience discussion programme may be seen as part of a move form elite to participatory social and political arrangements, resulting in changes within the broadcasting industry from the paternalistic 'auntie' of elite programming to a potentially more responsive and open medium with ever more open access and audience participation genres (1994:358).

2.5.1 Role of the Host in a Talk Show

There are different communication that are involved in a talk show. Morizumi states,

levels and kinds of communication which take place in a TV talk show are quite complicated. Interpersonal communication, small group communication, large group communication mass communication are simultaneously on -gong. This often makes it difficult to define who the addresser is and who the addressee is(1997:66).

This is because the communication or the message of released from both the host and the audience. The audience has the right to disagree to what the host is saying and also they can raise alternative idea for discussion. Each part has both a receiver and a sender role to play. And each participant performs a certain role as they all perform in the studio. Goffman defines performance as “all the activity of a given occasion which serves to influence in any way of the other participants” as cited in Morizumi¹ (1997: 64).

In a group communication each part has a role to perform. “In group communication, the notion of role is more significant than in interpersonal communication. It is because a group assigns its members certain roles to play along so that the group can function as an organization”(Morizumi 1997:61).

¹<http://search.yahoo.com/search?ei=UTF8&p=managing+%2Bdistances+discourse+strategies+of+a+tv+talk+show+host>

Talk shows from developed countries have hosts who are known for bringing controversial issues and others produce shows that revolve around them. The host besides many things function as facilitator of the communication.

Morizumi (1997: 65) states the roles of a talk show host as the following

- 1.choosing a topic
- 2.knowing where the discussion is heading
- 3.Selecting the logical flow of a discussion .

Besides, the host has to be a skilled presenter and friendly to people. He/she has to be a good listener and reads peoples facial expressions . This will enable him/ her to register peoples feelings and catch key word that can be used as a linking point between discussion. To achieve this, one has to prepare well and has to be flexible according with the situation. He or she has to introduce the subject honestly and converse the participants respectfully to encourage audiences to participate (Morizumi,1997).

The role of studio audience in talk show is as well important. Caripigno et al states“ the role of the public in the audience discussion programme as protagonist, active, participating, conversing, debating” (Cited in Livingstone1994: 365).

2.5.2 Debate on Talk Shows

There are controversial ideas on the role of talk shows in a society . Some say talk shows promote citizens to participation and others categorized it as a trash talk

where people talk private and obscure experiences about themselves and they do not promote cultural growth.

Scannell states, “those who argue that talk shows are the contemporary equivalent of salons and coffee house, forums in which free and open debate takes place, and where people gather to discourse on the matters of importance”(cited in Gill ,2007 :164).

Also, some argue that these talk shows are a place for emotional and personal accounts to share widely and as a place where those ideas that are normally not heard are given importance. Livingstone et al states, ” In psychological terms audience discussion programmes offer a sense of community where everyone belongs ; people are connected to each other, common sense is valued, and there is consensus about what constitutes social, political and psychological problems” (1994 :358).

Shattuc summarizes this point as , “The shows not only promote conversation and debate but do away with the distance between audience and stage. They do not depend on the power of expertise or bourgeois education. They elicit common sense and everyday experience as a mark of truth” (cited in Gill ,2007: 105).

Livingstone et. al. elaborate this idea more as a place where elites of a society facing challenge by the ordinary people which is more applicable to audience discussion programmes :

In audience discussion programmes especially, the narrative and conversational format poses problems for the experts in managing his or her image and in presenting complex arguments or scientific evidence resulting in an inevitable loss of expertise. Experts who participate in television programmes (e.g. politicians. academics, pressure group representatives) are placing themselves in new, more

accessible relationships with ordinary people(Livingstone et al (1994: 359).

But others argue that these talk show are not as such a free space for ideas to transfer. Gill states “The talks are highly controlled and confrontation is orchestrated by talk show staffers selecting people on opposing sides in any debate so as to make dramatic

TV” (2007: 165).Boggs and Dirmann cited in Gill state,

even in audience discussion- style shows only a very narrow range of topics is discussed and that many issues such as poverty or the environment are regarded as too dull and/or complicated(2007:165).

Gill continues “the structure of talk show favors superficial banter and quick responses rather than a balanced exchange of views or a more critical reflection on issues” (2007: 165).

And Bennett took an extreme side of such television shows that are more personal than the audience discussion programmes “The objects of our criticism are not close calls. They are shows that typically cross way over the line. We have described their contents as cultural rot“(Cited in Manga 2003:1).

Nevertheless, the talk shows can be considered as a media where people exchange ideas and opinions whether the ideas seem trivial or important .

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter ,theories that see audiences as active is discussed. Models that helps to see how audiences construct meaning is investigated. Moreover ,types and application of talk shows were discussed in relation with Ethiopian talk shows and the critics of talk shows were presented .

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3. Introduction

To find out how audiences of Shai Buna talk show make meaning out of the messages of the programme qualitative research method is appropriate for the study. This chapter describes the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research methods that gives the reasons for choosing the methodology for this study the chapter focuses on the sampling procedure and the methods of data collection. This chapter also, highlights the data analysis procedure.

3.1 Qualitative Research Philosophical Underpinnings

... the qualitative researcher normally takes inductive approach to his/her object of study rather than beginning with an existing theory or hypothesis, the researcher begins with an immersion in the natural setting describing events as accurately as possible as they occur or have occurred, and slowly but surely building second order constructs a hypothesis and ultimately a theory that will make sense of the investigation (Babbi and Mouton, 2001:273).

This kind of approach to is rooted in the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research which is quite different from quantitative research. Deacon et al has put the difference as:

Positivists talk about 'producing' research 'findings' as though the social 'facts' they are interested in were always there, waiting to be uncovered by the correct methodological procedures. In contrast, interpretive researchers insist that all social knowledge is co-produced out of the multiple encounters, conversations and arguments they have with the people they are studying (Deacon et. al. 1999:7).

They claim that, this difference is caused by how the two approaches see reality as for positivists reality is out there and for interpretive it is constructed (Deacon et.al, 1999).

The aims of qualitative research are:

1. Describing the actions of the research participants in great detail and then
2. Attempting to understand these actions in terms of the actor's own beliefs.
History and context. (Babbi and Mcuton ,2001:271)

This kind of approach is also linked to phenomenology. Bogan and Taylor describe phenomenologist as:

The phenomenologist views human behavior as a product of how people interpret their world. The task of the phenomenologist, and for us, the qualitative, methodologists, is to capture this process of interpretation. In order to grasp phenomenologist attempts to see things form that person's point of view (Cited in Babbie and Mcuton, 2001:271).

There are many ways to make a qualitative research objective. Guba and Lincoln mentioned several ways to ensure objectivity by making the research trustworthy. These include making the research credible by having a prolonged engagement with the issue of the study and having a persistent observation while engaging with the subject. Transferability of the study to other contexts can be attained by thick and detailed description of all the data and by having a purposive sampling of the informants (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

Based on the established foundation for qualitative study, the next section will see the methods that enabled this study to acquire a detailed description of how the audiences of 'Shai Buna' talk show make meaning from the program in relation to the preferred meaning that is initially constructed by the producer.

3.2 Research Procedure and Sampling

The study used two methods to carry out the research.

1. Focus Group discussion
2. Individual in-depth interview.

The first one is used to find out how audiences decode the message from the program. And in-depth individual interview is used to triangulate the data that is gathered by the focus group interview. It is also used to further investigate the themes and ideas that are mentioned in the focus group interview in a more detail by having a one to one interview with the participants of the focus group. It is also used to describe how the producer encodes the preferred meaning.

3.2.1 Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion as stated by Hansen et. al. is governed by "the design to examine through a more 'natural' setting and frame than that of the survey or experiment, how media audiences relate to, make sense of, use, negotiate and interpret media content" (1998:261).

Wimmer and Dominic define focus group as "The focus group, or group interviewing, is a research strategy for understanding audience / consumer attitudes and behavior from 6 to 12 people are interviewed simultaneously with a moderator leading the respondents in a relatively free discussion about the focal

topic”(1991:145). Since the subject of the study is a talk show where people discuss issues in a group discussing with the audience a group setting will also make them relate to the studio audience who are discussing on the issues.

Morgan states “the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group” (Cited in Hansen et al 1998:262).

There is one disadvantage of focus group in which one person may dominate the discussion in a way it might affect the group interaction. But Hansen et. al. indicates that this can be minimized by a skillful moderator (1998). In the focus group discussion I was careful to give each participant a chance to raise their opinion. But Liebes and Katz point this condition as a more real setting for generating meaning:

Group dynamics are such that opinion and participation are not equally weighted; some people have disproportionate influence. But real life is like that: opinions are not as much the property of individuals as public-opinion polling would have us think opinions arise out of interaction and opinion leaders have disproportionate influence (cited in Hansen et al 1998:263).

The population of the study was residents of the capital Addis Ababa. This was because there are around six televisions set per thousand households (Ong, 2005) and there is more television set in the capital and thus there are more viewers in the city. As mentioned in 3.1, to ensure objectivity the sampling method has to be purposive. And for getting the respondents, this study used two non random sampling.

1. Theoretical sampling
2. Snowball sampling

Deacon et. al. defines theoretical sampling as” the researcher deliberately seeks out respondents who are most likely to aid theoretical development by extending and even confounding emerging hypothesis” (1999:52). In this study this sampling method is used to categorize different focus groups.

The study had six focus groups that are assumed to have different background which may lead respondents decode different meanings from the talk show. But this is by no means to say that these are the only factors that can affect meaning differences among audiences.

1. Occupation -
 - a) unemployed- (Unemployed male and female ages range 25-50)
 - b) employed- (Employed male and female ages range 25-50)

Since most of the episodes involve the economic and social problems, status of occupation that is being employed or not may have an impact on how they interpret such message.

2. Gender -
 - c) men (Male employed and unemployed age range 30-40)
 - d) Women (Female employed and unemployed age range 30-40)

McQuail states that “one can say in summary ,that differently gendered media culture ,whatever the causes and the forms taken ,invokes different responses ,and that differences of gender lead to alternative modes of taking meaning from the media”(2000:176) .Thus I assumed there will a possibility that there will be some differences from the responses of the women and men.

3. Age
 - e) young (Employed and unemployed, female and male
Age range 17-26)
 - f) old (Employed and unemployed female and male
Age range 55-65)

Livingstone et. al. on their study of audience discussion programmes state “Age is a major stratifying variable for the television audience a; it is known that amounts of viewing and broad programme or genre preferences vary greatly in relation to age” (1994: 375).

The focus group was organized in such a way as to have as one similar factor in one focus group as possible. This means if the category is ‘unemployed’ the participants could be male, female, young or old but they all are unemployed. This was done to find out how that similar factor is expressed among the group and to see if the responses were differentiated because of other factors .This different opinions will be further investigated in in-depth interviews.

After, initial contacts were established with people in each group snowball sampling was used to find out other respondents. Deacon et. al. defines it as “snowball sampling is mainly used where no list or institution exists that could be use as the basis for sampling initial contacts suggest further people for the researcher to approach who in turn may provide further contacts”(1999:52).

The respondents were further screened by whether they had seen at least two episodes of the talk show. The number of respondents in each group varied from six to nine depending on the number of people available in the group. The age of the respondents varied from 17-65. And I gathered most of the respondents with snow ball sampling .But the employed focus group was formed from one organization namely Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation. This is because my initial contact was from the person who worked there and he had brought together his colleagues who watched the show.

The discussion was held on a particular place according to the consent of the participants. The employed focus group discussion was held in a conference room at the office which the manager has agreed to let me use. The discussion with the unemployed and the older people was held in one of the participants' home. The discussion with the women, men and the young people was held at a restaurant, where there was a television and video CD player, since they prefer talk in a more public area. Before each discussion began clips from different episodes of the show was shown to the respondents to help them recapitulate the essence of the show.

I used an interview guide (see indices) to have a semi-structured discussion and to see whether the participants are responding to the points I was intending to find out. I was the moderator of the discussion but I had an assistant moderator to help me with noting down important ideas and their emotions while I was engaged with asking the question and maintaining the atmosphere. The interview was conducted in Amharic as it is the first language of the respondents. Thus the interview guide was translated in to Amharic.

During the discussion I asked the respondents to write their personal information that is their educational status, gender and their occupation if they have any except their name in a sheet of paper I have given them before the actual interview has taken place. The reason I did not ask their name is to make them comfortable to say whatever they feel with out the fear of being recognized. The information I gathered would later help me understand who was speaking in a tape.

The approximate time for the duration of the interview was about one hour and thirty minutes to two hours depending on the type of the discussion and whether there were interesting discussions among the participants. The mood of the participants was engaging and there was a lot of discussion especially among FGD1 (Unemployed male and female ages range 25-50) and FGD3 (Female employed and unemployed age range 30-40).

3.2.2 In-depth Interview

This study used in-depth interview to further investigate the themes and ideas that are mentioned in the focus group interview in more detail by having a one to one interview with the participants of the focus group. The individual interviews explore in more depth interesting issues that have arisen in the focus group interviews. In other words, these interviews will not discover completely new material but rather to deepen the understanding of what has already arisen.

The participants for in-depth interview were selected by their articulation and ideas they raised in the focus group discussion. In-depth interview was also used to collect data from the producer of the show to find out what his reasons for selecting his message. Thus, by using an in-depth interview, the producer could give out reasons and methods for encoding his preferred meaning.

This method was chosen because there were only few people in this category and an in- depth interview is effective in a smaller sample, “In depth interviews provide very detailed information about the reason why respondents give specific answers: elaborate data concerning respondent’s opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences and feelings are obtained” (Wimmer and Dominic, 1991:148). The in-depth interview was held in participants their offices and homes.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Before analysis of the data began all the information gathered is transcribed and translated into English. After the transcribed material was read carefully eleven themes were chosen that is used to organize the data. Then each interview response was assigned in these themes. Then a possible relationship between these themes was explored. I was also aware of the exceptional responses in each focus group that may have aroused due to the differences in the focus groups and each exception was studied separately to see in which thematic category the responses fit. Then an explanation of the responses in relation to each theme is discussed.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research and why it was chosen to conduct this study. It also mapped the methodological structure that is going to be used to collect the data and the method of data analysis is pointed out. In the next chapter, results of the data collection and the analysis will be discussed.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Interpretation

4. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the major findings of the study. I will combine findings from the individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The findings will be presented, illustrated and corroborated by the narrations of the discussion from the in-depth interviews, as well as the focus group discussions with the participants. The analyses will point out the factors involved in generating meaning from the show.

Since meaning formation is shaped by the existing context in which the audiences are situated, the analysis will begin by describing the economic and social situation of Ethiopia. Then, I will begin by describing the features of ‘Shai Buna’ talk show from my observation and from the interview I get from the producer of the show. Then, all the themes of discussion will be analyzed and the factors that are significant for the reception will be discussed.

These findings will be discussed and illustrated and corroborated with selected quotations from the interviewees obtained from six focus group discussions and six individual in-depth interviews which constituted of a total of thirty two interviewees between the ages of 17-65.

4.1 Background of the Analysis

4.1.1 Contextual Background of the Respondents

The current Ethiopian political and economic situation can only be explained by its previous history. There are more than eighty different ethnic groups in the country but the dominant are few. An ethnic based government has existed in the country for many decades and by now it seems normal for the government or a party to be established mainly by one dominant ethnic group. This ethnic division was prevalent even in the 17th century and the country started its modern history after the country was consolidated. “Under the emperors Theodore II (1855-68), Johannes IV (1872-89) and Menilik II (1889-1913), the kingdom was consolidated and began to emerge from its medieval isolation”¹. But the feeling of separation between different ethnic groups has started then.

In recent history Ethiopia has also experienced dictatorship (emperor Hailesillase and the Derg). There is also a tendency of avoiding authorities from a previous government which is the beginning of polarization between different parties: “The Derg summarily executed 59 members of the royal family and ministers and generals of the emperor’s government ...in 1975”. Likewise, ministers and generals of the Derg were arrested and tried for genocide by the current government.

In the recent election of 2005 labeling and enmity between different political parties reached its peak where different parties accused one another on public television and

radio. “Public debate in Ethiopia seems polarized to a first time visitor. Events and statements are easily interpreted to fit into the pattern of old conflict, and few people seem willing to engage in constructive dialogue with their adversaries” (Aaadland and Fackler,1999)²

¹<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107505.html>

²<http://www.pressreference.com>

Then in November 2005, members of the opposition parties were arrested for treason, and attempted genocide, and sedition. Ever since, politics is a tough topic to discuss and there is a strong fear among the public to express themselves openly. After the election of 2005, most of the private press was shut down and government monopolized the media. “It is our impression that the Ethiopians have developed a sophisticated ability to interpret anything that emerged from the government quarters .Their basic assumption is that what they hear is not true”(Aaadland and Fackler,1999).

What then the public think of the media message is related to this political thinking that is established through these conditions. Abel conducted a research to find out the satisfaction of ETV audiences and majority of the people interviewed for the research were not satisfied with what they watch from the government media. He states; “it was found out that 76.7% of the respondent are not satisfied the transmission that are aired by ETV (from which 50.33% express their strong dissatisfaction only 8% seem to be satisfied with it)” (2005:56). [The research was conducted at the time of the election so the results may not be as strong as they were then. But as it will be discussed in analysis the dissatisfaction still exists.]

An economic situation of the country is also a reflection of the government’s policy. During the Derg, the economy was a command system which was mainly controlled by the government and the private sector was not encouraged and most of the urban population if they are going to find jobs it was mainly in a government institution.

Being employed implies a person is educated at least with a diploma. It also indicates that one is usually better than many of the people who has no work or those who live in subsistence. The more educated one is, one would get a better job and better salary .In other words; if a person is not educated he or she is less likely to get a job: at least a satisfying one. But work experience has value in which the more experienced one is the better position he or she might get in the years to come.

But the current government uses the policy of privatization and has attempted to create a market driven economy that encourages the private sector. “The current government has embarked on a cautious program of economic reform, including privatization of state enterprises and rationalization of government regulation” (Aadland and Fackler, 1999).

This has led to the decrease of people working in the government institutions and the unemployment rate has increased in urban areas. Currently, the living condition of the cities has worsened. Also education has more value to get a better job and experience does not guarantees to get a promotion .The government is promoting education as part of development .People are educating themselves to survive in the work environment.

Thus, older people are experiencing change of the economy since they knew both kind of economic system. And the young are just facing their life with what exists right now. The role of the women in the economy is also increasing. The idea of women being equal to men is expressed in different direction of their lives. A woman has to earn her income and the idea of being a housewife is becoming an old habit.

This is how the audiences are at their live context. And being in one of these conditions has an impact in how they see the message of any media message.

4.1.2 Brief Description of ‘Shai Buna’ Talk Show

The name of the talk show is ‘Shai Buna’. It means tea and coffee respectively. It mainly discusses economic and social issues that are assumed to enable the society

alleviate poverty, where the studio participants engage in the discussion on the issues. There is no primary target audience for 'Shai Buna' talk show unlike other western talk shows that maybe targeted to certain demography of the society, According to the producer of 'Shai Buna', people from all walks of like women, men old and young except children under 14 years are assumed to be the audience of the talk show.

The show is produced by an independent producer who has bought air time from ETV. The show is transmitted for an hour every Sunday noon and it is repeated on Wednesdays night after the English news. It is not a live show so it gives the producer a chance to produce more episodes and a time to edit the film.

The producer has a bachelor's degree in Economics. And he has prior experience in dealing with economic issues in media. He first started producing a television program known as 'Wulo' in the year (1999-2000) that dealt with work culture society's problem and societies improvement. Then, he produced 'Gebi', a television program that discussed issues like taxes and revenues.

The producer chooses a talk show format to get all sides of opinion that is from the government and the people. He also states that when all the stake holders are involved in the discussion it will enable him not to impose his ideas only. It also creates an opportunity to bring all the stakeholders face to face and look for solutions together.

The producer chooses the topic by himself .But he has voluntary advisory boarded that help him:

1. Include points that have to be included in the topic
2. See the topic broadly
3. Evaluate the aired program
4. Bring feedback from the audience

On average the number of studio participants is from 50 to 70. These participants are selected on two ways. The first one is the group of expertise that is invited to the show from different institutions based on their knowledge on the issue that is to be discussed. The second group is volunteers who are interested in talking part on the show. These people are not selected with any criteria like the first group as any opinion from them is welcome on the show.

The producer is also the host of the show he described his role as a moderation who sets out the agenda and see the flow of the discussion. He also inject ideas and also participate like the audience and express his own opinions. According to the producer this will bring a reasonable challenge to the participants.

The participants are seated together. That is the experts and the ordinary people are seated together. The producer states this will:

1. Enable him to see participants equally regardless of their status
2. Will create a comfortable environment to speak up people's opinion
3. Prevent the experts from being interrogated and be expected to know everything

Steps- (flow of the discussion)

Entertainment- the show starts with singing with the help of traditional musical instrument. This is used to attract the attention of the participant and not to jump into the discussion. Participants are also encouraged to give lyrics to the singer. This will open up the willingness to participate in the formal discussion.

Discussion- after the music is over the host raises the topic and deal with it thoroughly. It starts with definition of the term, agree on the basic concepts and entertain different ideas from different points of view. At this stage the discussion is hot and usually the host is stopping participants either when they went out of the point of if he thinks they talk too long.

Goal-the primary goal of the talk show is to trigger both participants of the studio and home audience to think about the topic and listen to different opinions before they make their own decisions.

The discussion is accompanied by serving coffee and tea to the participants. Coffee is the Ethiopian traditional beverage where neighbors meet and discuss different kinds of issues. And this encourages people to discuss important issues while they drink coffee or tea. It is also this reason that the producer gives the name of ‘Shai Buna’ to the show: to encourage people to talk about issues that matter. It also makes the participants to feel at home and be comfortable with the discussion.

According to the producer, the discussion is not a time where one listens to an opinion with out a critique rather one has to be able to give critics and oppose opinion reasonably and develop a democratic exchange of opinion. He also believes the society need to develop expressing opinions in a clear, brief and straight way which as well not used to the Ethiopian society. He believes this not only promotes a clear communication it also saves time.

4.2 Media Use as a Way of Finding Meaning

There are two kinds of responses to how frequently the respondents watch the talk show. First, those who like the show see it week by week and those who expect the next episode if they find the topic of discussion interesting.

FGD 4 – (5) “I love the show (excitement) I can’t wait to see the next episode”.

FGD 5 – (2) “It is a good program I watch it especially if the topic is interesting.”

The second is those who do not watch the show frequently and those who see it by accident. These respondents give two reasons for this:

1. Generally younger people from most of the FGD think ‘Shai Buna’ lack entertainment. Assael states “young people seek information that deal with

entertainment, sex and events that are related with their age. On the other hand, adults, when they become older, passions are no longer important. They seek for information that provide emotional satisfaction and self realization” (1998:31).

2. Some respondents generally do not think ETV has a relevant program for them to watch.

Even those who like the show do not think ETV has many interesting programs but ‘Shai Buna’ is among the few interesting programs that include drama and ‘Ethiopian idol’[a reality TV that holds a competition among singers]. There were three respondents who associated not watching ‘Shai Buna’ because it is aired on ETV.

FGD1-(5) “because ETV is uninteresting station I don’t like any program aired in it”.

FGD6-(5) “there is nothing to be chosen from ETV .And there is no program that I prefer... If I must say, I prefer ‘Africa journal’ (a television program syndicated from Reuters)”.

FGD3-(3) “At first I did not like the talk show because I thought it was the government who was sponsoring him. But later I noticed he was touching subjects against the government”.

Audiences do not just look at a particular program .They tend to look at other factors like the media and the presenter. Thus for those respondents who do not generally watch ETV because they are not satisfied with the station their media use has decreased and their participation lowered. Therefore, the station that this talk show is aired has an influence on how frequently they watch the show.

Generally, Female respondents in all the focus group prefer to watch drama. Morley (1986) argues that there are differences of media usage in audiences’ everyday lives depending on their gender.

One respondent from FGD 5 associate not watching the talk show with the inconvenient time that it is aired. Another respondent from FGD 1 said he does not watch the show because educated people try to show off their intelligence on the show.

Education turned out to be the main factor for the responses of the unemployed focus group as it is also reflected on their other responses as well. McQuail argues; “Social structure refers to factors such as education, income, gender, place of residence, position in the life cycle and so on which have a strong determining influence on general outlook and social behavior” (2000). This is because the education level of most of the participants in this group is below grade ten. And the fact that they are not educated further makes it difficult for them to relate with the educated speakers.

I also noticed that there is a paradox in how the older and the younger respondents classified as to whom the show is suited for. The older respondents believe it is suitable for the younger people because the topics are about ways to have a better livelihood. On the other hand the younger respondents think it is good for older people because the show is very serious and lacks entertainment. This is as a result of not having a definite audience in mind by the producer. The producer wants to have as many audiences as possible the message he sends out is not targeted to anyone directly.

Majority of the respondents said they talk about the talk show within the family, because there is usually only one television set in the house so they watch programs together. Their discussion is during the program. It is rare that the respondents talk outside their houses. Usually, the discussion is about the host’s character and some talk about the issues that are discussed in the show. This discussion in the family usually involves argument where one takes a side on the issues. This supports what Croteau and Hoynes states about interpretation of message not being only the result of individual thinking but also shaped by the discussion with friends and family (1997).

Thus , their satisfaction in the media can be seen as a factor for some respondents in how they see specific programs in the media even if they know that the media is not the producer of the program. This also affect how frequently they engage with the media .

4.3 Arrangement of the Stage Shaping Interpretation

The respondents had expressed feelings of superiority and inferiority by looking at the way the stage is constructed. The responses indicate that the fact that the host appears alone (without a guest or a co-host) make the talk show look like a class room in which the host is a teacher and the participants students.

FGD 1-(1) “He handles the discussion well but the way they sit is not attractive. He looks like a president”.

FGD 6-(1) “He follows class room kind of sitting arrangement. This will make him appear magnified. It is like a master and slave relationship. If it was circular it would have created a friendly atmosphere”.

FGD 3-(5) “He doesn’t like to share his power. He speaks with pride and he want the people who watch him on TV to know that he is the leader of the program”.

The seating arrangement has made these respondents, who felt he is acting as superior, think that the talk show host is looking down on them and he is trying to appear as the only person in charge of the discussion which is also associated with the way he leads the discussion.

The other theme that emerged from many respondents from different FGD is the seating arrangement creates a sense of equality among the participants. But FGD 3(female

employed and unemployed 30-40) argued on making a choice of either facing the guests talk or have quest speakers on the stage:

- (3) “It would be better if there were two hosts but I agree that the participants sit together. If few guests are separated in the stage the others might feel embarrassed to talk”.
- (5) “No it doesn’t make you embarrassed for instance do you remember in ‘Hamsa Lomi’ there was a topic on these women who married foreigners it was delivered more by the guests”
- (3) “She can sit among the other participants and still can give her opinion. Since it a discussion they can still talk together”
- (5) “For instance the show about street kids each guest make a good point at the stage and made the viewers give more attention to the topic. It is also looks good on the camera.”
- (4) “I want to look up to the person who I’m listening to”
- (3) “If the guests are sitting on the stage if means that they have a higher status.”

Whether they chose to see the guests or the stage or not, one thing is certain that sitting arrangement do matter in creating sense of relation or departure from what the participants are saying.

4.4 Interpretation of Meaning

4.4.1 Understanding of the Talk Show

Though the respondents did not always use the same words in describing the show, they did consistently invoke similar classificatory categories. The general understanding of the respondents about the show is that ‘it is about Ethiopian problems and their solution’. And people who watch the talk show were able to see the show as pointing of Ethiopian problems and there was a general agreement on this. Croteou and Hoynes states television brings a common thinking by decreasing traditional differences amongst different social groups (1997). FGD 6(employed and unemployed, male and female, 55-65) see it as the show they should have watched when they were young as they were watching a clip of the talk show about entrepreneurship.

FGD 6- (4) “When we were young, after finishing school we were only seeking job from the government. And we wanted to retain our pension. We were not willing to look for other opportunities to find work by ourselves. We did not even know it was possible. But now the situations have changed it is not easy to find a job. So the show encourages young people to stand on their own.”

For younger respondents the similar show is seen as a hope that they too can reach to some where if they are creative even if they do not have money initially:

FGD 5 _ (1) “It encourages working hard and it shows one can start from little to get something big.”

The common adjectives used in the narratives of the respondents include words like ‘important’, ‘crucial’, ‘indispensable’ ‘useful’. These words indicate how much the situation of the country is very important in the lives of the respondents. They believe that something has to be done regarding the existing poverty and all other problems in the country. And the fact that someone has taken a step in bringing forth the problems to the public attention is appealing to them. The respondents were quoting from previous shows as they gave their answer which shows me that they actually remember the topics because they think it was important which is shown in the coming narratives.

4.4.2 Comparison of ‘Shai Buna’ to other Talk Shows

Another way of evaluating how they see the talk show is their responses of the comparison of the Shai Buna talk show to other talk shows. Almost all respondents from all FGD grouped ‘Hamsa Lomi’ and ‘Shai Buna’ on the same category that can be summed as important for the society economically and socially. But Shai Buna ranked higher in the level of importance.

FGD 2-(5) “You leave out ‘Fegeeta’; then ‘Hamsa Lomi’ is liked by many people because the hosts are good but I believe ‘Shai Buna’ is useful for us.”

Generally, more women across all the focus group did like 'Hamsa Lomi' Better .Three reasons were given for this:

1. They liked hosts of 'Hamsa Lomi'. They refer to them as journalists and who know what they are doing. McQuail states "It is also a familiar idea amongst audiences that the personality and values that the author for instance of a novel or a film will give the work a primary meaning despite being processed in a media industry" (2000:267).
2. They liked the topics of 'Hamsa Lomi' because they are down to earth.
3. The discussion is chaotic in 'Shai Buna'.

This shows that in order to classify one program better than another the audience has to think that the show is legitimate in a sense the program has to be presented by someone who is appealing to the audience. Also what they watch has to relate to their lives and presented in the way they like it. And when they have a satisfaction result then they can regard the message as useful.

But the participants do agree that 'Shai Buna' is different from the usual program in the media and they like the fact that people are participating in the show. When I asked them if they were going to watch it if it did not have people taking part in the discussion, almost all said they would not. This is because one does not usually see a hot debate about issues that matter to the society in the media.

FGD2-(1) "I think it is different from other programs we see on ETV. The discussion you see is different. They are very emotional".

Also this indicates that participatory communication attracts the viewers more than if it was not. The respondents felt related to the show because there were ordinary people with no journalistic profession taking as much part in the show as the host of a program.

4.4.3. Description as a form of Showing Meaning

The description I get about “Shai Buna’ from the responses of FGD1 (unemployed male and female, 26-40) was rich and detailed.

FGD1-(5) “I see it as an opening day of a parliament as in September ... you know where the host acts like the spokesman and the participants are the parliament members”

FGD1- (6) “It is a place where the host invited educated people and he sees who is better than whom?”

The first response corroborates what I mentioned in the review of literature in which television has eclipsed the parliament as a place of discussion. As he compares the show with the parliament he implicitly understands that discussion as relevant as the parliament discussion. And the second quote reflects as I mentioned earlier education being the factor for understanding the meanings. As mentioned in chapter two, the more audience relate to the people in the show the more they will accept the message. Older people from all the focus group say the talk show is ‘educative’ and ‘encouraging’. The dominant negative description of the show is ‘the host interrupting the discussion’:

FGD 3 – (II) “I do not like the show; even if I arrive while he (the host) is talking I switch the television off”.

The above quotes describe how they judge the show. If the respondents have a positive description, they expect to be informed by the talk show and look for new ideas. It even encourages them to think of experts they know to participate in the show. They also think the show can bring about some change in the society. For those who have a negative description about the show to either to the extent of hating the show: they consider the host using the time to say what ever he wants.

4.5 Participation in ‘Shai Buna’ Talk Show

Participation in the show is also dependent on whether they have a positive approach to the show. A respondent who has a positive attitude about the show agreed to appear on the show but she was not willing to speak on the discussion:

FGD 2-(4) “I want to attend the show simply to watch it in the studio. But I do not want to speak and participate because I will be angry if he stops me while I am speaking”.

The other response is the feeling of not being listened by the host:

FGD 1 – (1) “I think it is through acquaintance that you get to appear on the show. Even if I get the chance I’d rather talk amidst people who listen to me”.

This is also related to the concern of being interrupted by the host. And this is so because the audiences feel that their ideas may not be heard in the show. As Servaes (1999) states listening to others, respecting the counterpart’s attitude, and having mutual trust is essential to achieve participatory communication. Since the show is participatory, they do not think the show fully achieves that.

The respondents do not think it is easy to take part in the TV shows but FGD1 has felt that their own status does not fit for appearing in television. One respondent among them stated:

FGD 1-(1) “I do not see people from lower class. And I don’t have the protocol to appear in such show.”(Others nodded in agreement).

As I mentioned earlier, for the audience to understand the message they should feel related to the person delivering the message.

Thus, what is indicated in chapter two as the media being used for a forum of a public debate is not fully exercised. This is because the program environment does not appear to be encouraging that much for the respondents. But, the show has opened the forum for people to see people participating in the media for discussing issues that matter to the public.

4.6 Content of the show as a way of Deriving Meaning

4.6.1 Relevance of Topics Discussed

The general understanding among the respondents of what makes a good topic is whether it addresses the concern of the society. And they did not think it should be personal problem. But, two respondents from different group think that it is not the topic that makes the show important it is how it is presented .It also has to be important enough that it deserve media attention, it shouldn't be irrelevant and that could be discussed at the family level.

There was a debate among the FGD 3 respondents whether Ethiopian Millennium was an important issue:

- 3- "Why do we care whether millennium celebration is postponed?"
- 4- "There is a lot of discussion about the millennium on the media so he should also discuss it"
- 5- "I don't have a problem with talking about the millennium, but millennium by itself is causing us another problem. Merchants are increasing every price thinking many people from abroad will come for the millennium".

This brings to light the issue of talking about the real and immediate concern of the society even though the topic is relevant. According to Abel "Audiences are most probably dissatisfied with media products when they unmeet their social and psychological need" (2005: 57).

For instance, in the FGD 1 what was important was the angle, from which the topic is discussed,

- FGD 1- (6) - "They only invite the successful and the rich ones...they do not invite those who are not successful and ask them why".

Reaching to a conclusion on a certain issue is also another criterion.

FGD 4 – (II)” I think a certain topic is good if the participants reach to a certain conclusion.”

On the other hand there is a general agreement among the respondents that the debate in ‘Shai Buna’ is worthy and it let them view different options in the media. One comment that was raised is though the debate does not reach a certain conclusion, it has made the show interesting. And reaching to a conclusion has created a sense of getting something out of the discussion. By getting something from a message a sense of usefulness towards the show is created.

After I found out what the respondents regard as a good topic I asked them how they value the content of the discussion of ‘Shai Buna’. When I asked the respondents whether the problems and solutions raised in the show exist in reality or the solutions are applicable, each group answered it according to its real life situation. The FGD 1 generally focused on the solutions and whether they were really changing the home viewers:

FGD 1- (4)“I am amazed when people appear on television and state that they have become successful just by doing poultry...what if they (the chicken) die...I have seen such things on television and no one I know has done the same thing and I am tired of it..”

FGD 1-(3)-“the show usually points out solutions. But I haven’t seen anyone who says the program has changed me”.

This kind of response is the reflection of their life in which they try to create something and did not succeed and they could not get satisfactory jobs because of their education level. And this has affected them in not fully believing a media message that is telling them they can change their live.

The major focus for the FGD 2 (employed male and female 26-40) is just the existence of the problem in the country.

- FGD 2-(5) “we may never feel it...but not only have we known it...we all are involved in the problems”.
- FGD 2-(2) “The issues raised are the reflection of the Ethiopian social and economic problems...Moreover it gives information on what we do not know”.
- FGD 2-(4) “It is good...they educate people and some problems are really happening on people”.

This indicates that if people have not experienced the problem is around them, they use the message as a form of getting awareness about the problem and they use it as an additional knowledge in to what they already know which supports what McQuail, states “media provides information about events and conditions in society and the world ...”(2000:79). Thus, the employed respondents were not directly related to the issue as they do not face any significant social or economic problems. This is because they have a monthly salary which is a good resource. So they are using the message just to get information.

In FGD 3, the respondents were concerned about the kind of topics that were mention when the reality of the topics was put for discussion.

- FGD 3-(5) “I am too tired of listening to the River Nile (an episode from the talk show on how Ethiopia can benefit from the river and the question of to whom it belongs) and what could be done. Because nothing is happing on how we use it and what will I get from talking about the Nile?”
- FGD 3-(1) (Anger) “He talks about thing that can not be applied in the Ethiopian context. How could he ask a woman who sales injera (traditional food of Ethiopia) to pay taxes?”
- FGD 3- (3)-“I think he started this program just as an opportunity to present his feeling. If he thinks a certain issue is important he will air it...What is important right now is begging and the prices of goods that are too high for us to bear”.

So the women are more looking for issues about things that relate to the day to day activities even if the problem does not directly affect them. And they seem to relate more to the issues discussed than the male employed respondents.

4.6.2 Applicability of the Solutions in the Talk Show

There was a specific question whether the solutions mentioned on the talk show are applicable by the respondents and again each group saw it in relation to their lived context. FGD 1 strongly feels that the solutions are not applicable in their situation. But regarding this question most of the focus group discussants from all focus group agree that at least the solutions are not going to bring an immediate change.

The FGD 1 focused on the solutions given by the participants who say their lives have improved:

FGD 1-(3) “The solution usually is not appealing...any one can borrow money...but how could any one change his life by borrowing 1500 birr. This would be a miracle in the current situation. Also, these days the youth want to prosper quickly”.

FGD 1-(1) “the solutions are about helping family to improve oneself, but those who use these solutions are the rich ones”.

Respondents from FGD 1 have felt that the message from the talk show or television in large does not apply to their lives themselves in a way that their lives are not going to improve just by watching a successful person on television. And even if their lives improve in the future, they think it is going to be by their own luck. Rivers and Schramm state “We tend to interpret new experience, if possible, in ways that fit with old experience and values. This, of course sometimes leads to distortion-often to selecting the parts of a message that fit comfortably and discarding the rest.” (Cited in Casty (1973:8).

FGD 1-(6) “...it is not from what they experience that your life is going to change. You may have your own way. But the advices may be helpful and there might be people who may follow them”.

FGD 1- (4) “I don’t look for the advices and other solutions. What I think and believe is I will get a job after I finish my education. If it doesn’t work like that may be I will use these solutions as an alternative”.

Even those who believe that the solutions are applicable think it is not an immediate one. And there was a consensus among the young people that there might be a long term effect.

FGD 5-(4) “He usually invites policy makers and he gives these people an opportunity to find out what the public is saying. Therefore, even if the solution is not immediate there will be a solution”.

FGD 5-(1) “The show might influence our thinking but I don’t think it can solve the problem from the root”.

The respondents from FGD 3, who have got higher education, thought there would have been more solution if the host has let the participants finish what they were saying

FGD 3- (3) “The solutions are his own. I don’t think he is acting as a media person. I believe that the people he chooses to participate are qualified .And he doesn’t let them deliver all the issues they are prepared for”.

FGD 3- (4) “the participants are intimidated by the host and I think what they talk about is to please him”.

They think the host has limited the amount of information that they might have received if the host was not interrupting the discussion. They also believe he is not a good host and does not look good on television. This has equality affected their opinion on how the discussion is held, and because of this they do not think a tangible benefit would be acquired from the show. This brings what Manga has referred as ‘bourgeois imagery’; that indicates discussion to be not in line with emotion. “This bourgeois imaginary and the public sphere associated with it as being fundamentally based on exclusion. That which was actually white, *male* (my emphasis) and bourgeois was passing as universal...” (2003:139). She presented the feminist theorist challenge to this idea as:

The idea of the civil public as expressing the special interest the important part of view of reason itself results in exclusion. By assuming that reason stands opposed to desire affectively and the body. This concept on of the civic public excludes bodily and effective aspects of human existence. In practice this assumption forces homogeneity upon the civic public, excluding from those individual and groups that do not fit the model of the rational citizen capable of transcending body and sentiment (2003:139).

They are referring to this idea as they oppose how the host leads the discussion. This is because the method he uses resembles the rational, feeling free, straight way of communication which is not in line to how female are used to communicate.

This is also common among females in other FGDs who are educated and working. They tend to question critically about the host and try to resist the message. But if the women are less educated whether they are employed or unemployed or young or old they watch the show more and like the host better than the educated women. An example is women from FGD 1 and FGD 3:

FGD 1-(5) "I like 'Shai Buna' a lot I can't wait to see the next episode."

FGD 3-(1) "I like the show and I don't agree with my kids."

This is because their education is low they are not as confident as the educated women and they seek for information from the show. And they do not have the reasoning method to disagree with what is delivered as they think since the show is serious it is useful. I have observed this kind of attitude in their other responses as well.

FGD 1-(5)"I watch 'Shai Buna better because he tells us how to improve ourselves. And he is serious when he handles the participants. I think the program is useful.

The men respondents in FGD 4 on the other hand focused on whether the solutions are practical or not.

FGD 4-(2) "I believe the topics are very broad and focus on the government intuitions".

FGD 4- (5) "you talk as much as you can with all your energy and the discussion will be concluded but I do not think it is going to be practical and I don't think this is the purpose of the show".

They think that to find a solution will be just by chance and they see the show as a place of expressing thoughts and feelings whether there is a solution or not. To them the show is a medium to set out to release grievance and problems.

The discussion among FGD 6 was whether the host is able to work freely in the government station. The following narration is an extract from one of the arguments they had.

FGD 6- (5) “does the show really touch the core problems of the public I doubt it”.

FGD 6-(4) “I don’t connect it with the government I see it as an educative program and I think his suggestions are good”.

FGD 6-(1) “As long as the media is under the monopoly of the government the programs can only touch the surface of the problem”.

FGD 6- (5) “what can be agreed on is though the problems are the reflection of the reality, I am sure he could have done better if he was free”.

The basic understanding among the respondents is, it not easy to find solutions for the problems of the society. This is associated with what has been stated in section 4.1.1. One reason is the economic situation of country is worse than before. And there is a reasonably big dissatisfaction with the government media. Thus, respondents who have doubts about the government media freedom tend to look at the topic and solutions lacking the real demand of the society.

4.7 Speaker of the Message as a Factor of Meaning Differences

Whether the speaker is an expert or a victim is one way of associating it whether the respondents accept media message. Most of the respondents agree that hearing from the victims is more credible or at least equal to what the expert says. Participants from FGD1 describe this notion of preferring the victim as the experts being proud of their knowledge.

FGD1- (4) “When experts talk I get angry. They boast about their knowledge it is better to hear about the sergeant who

- improved by doing poultry . . . it is better if the educated people don't show off their education statues "(regretfully).
FGD1-(3) "the people who share their experiences have something to share. . But those who sit down, and give their expertise . . . they don't even know the benefit of their education. It is really better if the victims talk".
FGD1-(4) "Educated people may also speak something bad while they try to show off".

Again, whether they relate to the people speaking in the media has affected whose message they accept. They feel that these experts talk down to them. And the fact that they are not educated makes them feel inferior to the experts. They think of the victims as people who had a similar situation as they have now.

There is a different opinion to what the FGD 1 respondents said among FGD 6 and the FGD 4 discussants:

- FGD 6-(1) "I support the expert. A single experience is too narrow and individual based. But the expert can show us the way. For example if a man says I am going to invent something he should know the method".
FGD 6-(3) "The expert knows the beginning and the end of a situation so it is better to consult the expert".
FGD 1-(1) "If the topic is something I don't know I want to hear about facts from the professional. If it is something I know I want to hear from the victim".
FGD 1-(2) "First it is good to know the science then you can listen to the experience".

The younger respondents from all focus group in general tend to prefer the victims. This is because they have their lives ahead of them and the improvements of other people give them hope for a better life which is explained in section 4.3.1. The older respondents have already lived most of their lives and knowing the facts and bases of issues will make them realize what they have missed and what they should have done. So they prefer to hear from the professionals.

4.8 Character of the Host as a Factor of Differences in Meaning

Formation

FGD 1-(II) ‘‘His role is beyond leading the discussion. If there is something he wants to talk about he will stop you and start speaking. It is if he stops them when they jump off the subject, if they are on the subject think he should let them speak’’.

Most of the respondents are not aware of why the host stops participants from talking. He wants an idea to be spoken in a short time which is referred in section 4.1.2. As it is stated by Hall the lack of similarity of meaning between the transmitted and received message could be due to structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences (cited in During, 1994).

Another reason could be the talk show gives more time for the participants to discuss. So the host is careful in managing the time well to give all studio participants chance. In this process the host has become rigid in not tolerating participants going out of the topic or talk too long.

The role the host takes has made the respondents give him different opinions. ‘He comes already reaching to a conclusion’, ‘he is doing as he pleases’, ‘I don’t ever know his role he is neither the moderator nor the participants’. These are some of the responses that tend to be more personal toward the host’s character. One respondent labeled the host a ‘dictator’. This indicates that the character of the host has an effect and supports McQuail’s claim ‘‘the personal characteristics of those most directly responsible for media production will influence content’’ (2000:266).

There is a tradition in Ethiopian oral communication to speak with examples and anecdotes that make a talk longer. With this background people take it personally when the host tries to stop them while they are talking. They consider it public humiliation as it is aired on television. The way the host stops a person also affects how the respondents see the interruption.

FGD 3-(II) "...he could have said 'please' when he stops them".

By Ethiopian tradition if someone is assumed to be rich, educated or elderly he/she is respected and is not interrupted while talking. This kind of interruption to such people is the first of its kind. The host took a bold step in doing this. This is expressed in the following response.

FGD 3-(3) "People that are invited on the show are educated and there are not lesser than him. If he says before the show use only five minutes they can clearly understand . . . the show is not live, right? He can edit it rather than stopping them while we watch".

But this does not mean that the participants do not go off line but the respondents prefer to listen to them rather than see them being stopped by the host. One respondent said 'the host interferes a lot. I thought in a talk show guests are supposed to talk more than the host'.

There was one respondent who totally understood the intended message of the host among the young people.

FGD 5-(4) "He demonstrates how to communicate in a clear and precise way. As a moderator he should not just see them wander from topic to topic. His role is beginning ideas, comment on those ideas and stop people when they leave the point of discussion and these days the participants are getting used to speaking shortly".

I have conducted an in-depth interview with respondent five and I have put it in a separate section 4.10 as it is interesting to discuss his other responses also.

4.9Entertainment

The last point to be discussed is entertainment in the ‘Shai Buna’ talk show. As mentioned in section 4.1.2, entertainment is part of the show. It helps the participant relax. One respondent from FGD 6 thinks it takes more time for the real discussion. But the general understanding of entertainment among the respondents from all focus group is it grabs attention of the participants and refreshes them and gives a humanistic touch to the show’s serious debate. And they also like the instrument because it is traditional. The part of the song where the participants give the lyrics is fun. It also made it different from other talk show.

Part of the entertainment is coffee and tea is served to the Participations. Coffee is Ethiopian traditional beverage where people drink it together and discuss their issues.

FGD5-(6) “Drinking coffee creates atmosphere to talk. It will motivate them (the participants) to talk”.

FGD2-(3) “He has changed the topic of coffee time talks in some thing productive”.

FGD6 – (2) “The coffee ceremony makes them feel at home”.

But there are those who did not like the coffee ceremony. One idea is that the ceremony is not visible and not given proper coverage. One respondent posed a question that if the idea of talking over coffee and tea is to relax then why the host would interrupt the participants and challenge them. There is also a misunderstanding of the purpose of coffee and tea.

FGD 2-(1) “I only see the ceremony not people drinking I even thought that the ministry of coffee and tea was sponsoring the talk show”.

Coffee in Ethiopia is ceremonial and people discuss problems and other trivial stuff. According to the producer, this is why the talk show is given such name to encourage people talk relevant issues while they drink coffee or tea.

The responses from the respondents show that audiences have the ability to decode their own meaning from what they receive from the media whether it is what the encoder had in mind or what the audiences have decoded by them. And each message whether as big as the issue of the discussion or a coffee ceremony that accompany the discussion has a different meaning for the audience that may be a result of different factors that the audience encounter.

4.10 Discussion of an in- depth Interview

Since the other in-depth interviews are similar to what has been discussed on the focus group, I chose to present the one that is different from the other in depth interview with FGD5-II. The respondent has a bachelor of arts in foreign language and literature and he is currently working in an individual business firm.

1. In the focus group discussion what do you mean when you said ‘Shai Buna’ encourages dialogue?

Answer: Ethiopia has an extremist society. Starting in the earlier society there is a tradition of not speaking directly... there is a use of words that have double meaning. The local judiciary systems like ‘Awchachign’ [Probing suspects of a crime in an indirect way] encouraged conversation to be indirect and complicated. As you know even in recent time there is no encouragement to solve problems by discussion. When I come to ‘Shai Buna’: one it encourages talking in short. And two, different ideas will be heard and it shows how to treat controversial ideas in short I say it shows how to speak and what to speak.

2. In the focus group discussion you said ‘Hamsa Lomi’ follows a socially accepted approach, what do you mean by that?

Answer: yeah they raise soft issues... and when they talk about them it is not in assertion... they don't call a spade a spade. They are typical Ethiopians they understand and appreciate the problems they don't take a stand.

3. How about 'Shai Buna'?

Answer: The host is positive...he believes he can make a difference. He tells what he support and support his believe. Have you seen the advertisement of Siemens that says 'One inspired person can change the world...imagine what 265 people working with us can do?' He knows his potential and he is telling us how to get out of poverty one thing I'm afraid is for him not to be too away from the society if you are very different no one will accept you.

4. How do you place yourself when you watch 'Shai Buna'?

Answer: I'm very much involved. I think of the issue. Sometimes I agree with what they are saying some times I don't .I listening to something new to me. I am pretty much engaged when I watch the show.

5. What is the thing that worries you about Ethiopia?

Answer: Basic problems like the economy, political... tolerance you know we don't respect people's idea. We don't look things that we agree on if we know how to tolerate each other we have lots of potential for development. You know politics is a very sensitive issue everyone is afraid to talk about it these are the things that I worry about.

6. What do you think of Solomon?

Answer: I think the guy is motivated. But I do not think he has a journalistic background. And I think that he has charm but not attractive. And the show lack same entertainment. He prepares for the show but he needs more preparation. And I think he should find an accepted way of stopping a person from talking.

Generally he has decoded almost similar message as what the producer has encoded in the talk show. This implies that the preferred meaning can be read by audiences.

This is because the respondent feels the same way as the producer on issues like expressing thought in a short sentence, problems of the country. And yet it is not possible to say that if he decodes some preferred meaning he will understand every message like that. There was an instance where this respondent thinks the host does not have to be different from the society and when he recommends other ways of stopping a talk.

Therefore, as mentioned in chapter two media messages are interpreted subjectively. This subjective interpretation is influenced by the lived context in which audiences are situated into. And since the lived context is shared by other people too, there is common interpretation of meaning as seen by some common responses derived because respondents share something common. At a larger level some messages are decoded in the same way across different focus groups due to the other similar factor they find common to them.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the data that was gathered through focus group interview and in-depth interview. The data was analyzed in relation to the response of the producer of 'Shai Buna' talk show stated as the encoded message in the show. Then the factors that shape message decoding were discussed in themes. In the process the similarity or differences of the respondents was taken into consideration.

Chapter Five

5. Summary and Conclusion

This study is conducted to find how audiences make meaning out of the ‘Shai Buna’ talk show. It also examines the factors that contribute meaning formation. To find a detailed explanation from the respondents qualitative research method, specifically focus group interview and individual in-depth interview was used. The sample was categorized into three major groups that were based on occupation, gender and age. Though the results from these interviews can not be generalized, the findings will give an understanding of how the reception process is carried out. In this chapter key issues of the research findings are summarized and conclusion is drawn.

5.1 Summary of the Research Findings

1. The first thing one has to consider in message reception is the general environment for the consumption of media products. In the result of the study it is found out that audiences are not satisfied with the outlet of the programs, in the case of 'Shai Buna', TV they tend to have a negative attitude towards the talk show.
2. Also, the way the stage is organized affects how the respondents look at the people delivering the message. Two points arose from the discussion. The first one is the fact that all studio participants sit together regardless of their rank has created a sense of equality among the people. Second, the host sitting alone made him look superior, or appear as a teacher among the respondents.
3. Generally, most of the respondents agree that the show is about Ethiopian problems and their solution. This implies that, the respondents regardless of their differences understand the talk show similarly.

4. The study identifies that respondents differ in interpretation of the message. Each focus group describes it in a way it shows their lived context. This is revealed in accordance with the closeness of the question to the specific factor. Education has emerged as another factor to have affected meaning formation.
5. However, there are some exceptions in each group, that may have occurred due to the other factors being more significant to the individuals even though they share similar factors with the group. For example the female respondents regardless of their age and occupation prefer to watch drama.
6. Similarly, the results indicate that whether topic is relevant or the applicability of the solutions mentioned in the talk show is also seen differently by the respondents. How they evaluate the topics and the acceptability of advises is determined by their lived context.
7. Relating to the speaker or the topic is one way of accepting or rejecting a message. And respondents refer their prior experience to do so.
8. However, there can be a decoding of the preferred meaning by some respondents depending on the similarity of opinions that both the sender and receiver have on issues

discussed. But it does not guarantee a complete decoding of the preferred meaning through out the message as the respondents actively select a message they are going to agree with and the one that they do not.

9. In the focus group discussion ,education turn out to be another factor for either relating or departing from the person delivering the message that affects how they receive the message.

5.2 Conclusion

As stated in chapter one the major objective of this study is to find out how audiences of ‘Shai Buna’ talk show understand the message and the factors that account for such reception. Active audience theory is used to lay down the framework for conducting the research. But it does not mean the research is bound to this specific theory. This means audiences do not accept a message simply. They have the ability to accept or reject a message.

Based on this, the research is conducted using focus group interview and individual in-depth interview was used. The results of the study reveal that lived context plays a major role in interpreting messages. Respondents make meaning depending on what is relevant in their daily life. Occupation, gender education, age are among the factors which shape respondents interpretation.

But it can not be generalized that one factor alone contribute to help in meaning making as it was found out with respondents with one similar factor in their lived context the other factor that is not the same among them can be a factor for differences of meaning.

Therefore, in designing a message a producer has to think of to whom the message is targeted to and what is the current lived context of the audience. Also in delivering the message it is better if it is sent in a generally accepted way of delivering the message as each contribute to whether an individual accept a certain message or not. Also it is found out that messages that have issues of society and economy or any relevant issues for the public can be heard more if the media is participatory.

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Appendix I

Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions

1. What is this talk show about?
2. How do you see the program
3. Do you like it?
4. Why if yes?
5. Why if no?
6. What are the most peculiar characteristics of the show?
7. Probe –how do you see this character affecting your opinion about the show?

8. How do you evaluate 'Shai Buna' comparing with other talk shows in ETV (like 'Hamsa Lomi', Fegegta...)

9. Probe-Why do you prefer Shai Buna?
10. Why do you prefer others?
11. Why do you watch the show? (Do you watch it more regularly than other talk shows?)
12. Give reason

13. Who do you watch the talk show with?
14. Do you discuss about the program with others after you watch the show?
15. What constitute good or bad topic?
16. Do you think the issues raised in the show are experienced in reality?
17. Have you experienced such problems or do you know someone with such story?
18. How do you see the solutions or conclusions presented in the show, do you think that they are applicable?

19. How do you see the role of the host and the studio audiences?
20. how do you see the debate in the show (useful or worthless-why)
21. Do you prefer the opinion of experts (including the host) or lay men to get ideas from?
22. What do you think of the setting of the studio?
23. the serving of tea and coffee during the discussion
24. the host sitting in front with out being accompanied by other experts on the issue
What do you think of the music (a singer takes a lyric from participants)?

25. What do you think of participating in Shai Buna talk show, why?

Appendix II

Amharic Version of Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussion

SÖÄp K}d[ö-<

1. ÄI „i j“< eK U“É” Á“^M U““ ¾}SKŸ}”“<;
2. ÄI““ „i j“< [“Ç=f >Á<G<f Ø\ S“ŸK— SØö KU” ;
3. ¾²=I „i j“< ÑAM, ¾T>[;f vI` Áf SÓKŸ-< SKÁ-< U“É” “†“<;
4. [²=I vI` Áf ¾[“”>e)Á¾f [“Ç=f >Ä'f jî°• ÁXÉ^K<; Ä•^†°M;
5. ŸK?KA< „i j-< ðÑÓ[‘ 5® KAT@ Ò` e[‘ÇÉVf [“Ç=f fS’<[L<G<; [í\][L<G<;
6. ¾f—“< ÄhK—M; KU” ;

7. KU" hÃ u<" "ÃL<G<; ÝK?L ¾,K?{»" -aÓ^U ¾uKÖ "Ãe Á'c "'< ¾UÛ;f ; KU" ;
8. ÝT" Ò` "'< ¾UÛ;f;
9. ÝK?KA< W-< Ò` hÃ u<" "Á<G< u%EL f"ÁÁL<G< "Ã ;
10. >"É" [°e Ø\ "ÃU SÖö CT>ÁewK"< U"É" "'< ;
11. „j j"< ¾T>Á'X†< `°f< uÑGÆ >KU ¾T>Ñ-< "†<
12. ["] [²=I >Ã'f <Ó` >ØØS>xG< "ÃU ÁÖÖS"< W"< [<nL<G<;
13. u„j j"< LÃ [rÁ SöfH@ ¾T>k`u<f GXx< e^ LÃ ¾T>"<K< ÃSeL<l%>M;
14. ¾>p^u="<" ¾e~Ç=¿ }X[ö-<" T>" [rÇ=f [¿ [L<G<
15. ¾T>[¾4"< " j` [rÈf fS'< [L<G< (ÖnT> "Ãe ö_ u=e)
16. ÝvKS<Á >e)Á¾4f" Ý}^ W"< >e)Á¾4f ¾4f—"<" fS`xL<G< KU" ;
17. >p^u="< w%ö"<" SkSÖ<" [rÈf [¿ [L<G< ;
18. hÃ [r u<" K}X[ö-< Sp[u<" [rÇ=f [¿ [L<G< ;
19. Ý-aÓ^S< SÈS]Á LÃ ¾T>k`u<"<" uTc="q ¾[ÈU ²ð" ÓØS< Ý}X[ö ¾T>k`u<"<" [rÇ=f [¾4 [L<G<;
20. uhÃ u<" q; h"< LÃ KSX}ö [levLGfG< "Ã ;

Appendix III

Interview Guide for the producer of Shai Buna talk Show

Qualification

- 1) What is the purpose of the talk show?
- 2) Who is your target audience?
- 3) Based on what criteria do you chose the studio participants?
- 4) What is you reason for not having guests on the stage?
- 5) Why do include the singing at the beginning of an episode?
- 6) What is the purpose of serving tea and coffee during the program?

Appendix IV

Amharic Version of Interview Guide for Producer of ‘Shai Buna’ Talk Show

SÖÃp KhÃ u<" >²Òì

1. ¾fUI`f <KA¶¶" wf'Ó[- ;
2. ÝhÃ u<" uóf K?L ¾T>Ç=Á -_Ó^U LÃ }Xfðl `ÃU >p`ul ¶`<nKI;
3. KhÃ u<" KU" ¾„j`< >Ã'f TÉ`Ó >eðKÑI ;
4. >=LT ÁÁ[Ñ`< }SM"< >K;

5. U" uSse[f "' < ¾e+Ç=¿ }Xlô-<" ¾UfS`Ö"<;
6. ¾Ullj[" < W" < >KI "Ãe w%oG" "' < „j" <" ¾UllPÖE" <;
7. Sê[ÿ< LÃ }Òv» l"ÓÊ< ¾K?KI KU"É" "' <;
8. -aÓ^S< c=ËU` uTe"q ¾T>ËU[" < KU"É" "' <;
9. K}Xlô-< hÃ u<" ¾T>k`u" < KU"É" "' <;

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged

Name Frehiwot Yilma

Signature _____

Date of Submission July 16, 2007

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