Ethnography of Production Practices in Kenyan Television Entertainment Programmes: Imagining Audiences

Submitted By:

George Ngugi King'ara

Student Number: 208502318

Final Clean Copy

Submitted in fulfillment of the total requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Centre for Communication, Media and Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban

Supervisor: Prof Ruth Teer-Tomaselli

Table of Contents

Chapter Four: Role of Entertainment Television Programmes in the Real Lives of Viewers

Chapter Five: Moments of Audience Production in Television Programming, a Theoretical Perspective

Chapter Six: Audience Concepts: Who Watches Television Entertainment Programmes?

Chapter Seven: The Audience's View of Itself

Declaration

I, George Ngugi King'ara, do hereby declare that this is my work, and that all other work has been fully acknowledged. I further declare that I have never submitted this work for the award of a degree to any university.

Signature…………………………………………. Date:…………………

George Ngugi King'ara

Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to all my colleagues at Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS) for their contribution to the completion of this research. Particularly, I would like to thank Senior Professor Keyan Tomaselli, Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and Professor Richard Collins (The Open University, United Kingdom) for their guidance during the completion of this research. Special thanks go to Prof. Teer-Tomaselli for enrolling me in CCMS to complete this project even though it commenced at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Other persons who significantly contributed to the completion of this research include Mary Onyango, acting Programmes Manager at Channel 1 KBC Television in February 2005; Catherine Wamuyu, Producer-Director of *Reflections* and Elizabeth Kamwiri, Producer-Director of *Vioja Mahakamani*. To them I say, Thank You. I would also like to express my utmost gratitude to Stephano Ngunyi, Stan Darius and Muriithi Wamai for allowing me to work freely in their Eagles Media Agents Ltd as a Production Assistant-Researcher. I am also grateful to the many people from the casts and crews of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* who were very forthcoming with their time and patience for my questions. Although it would be difficult to mention everyone, a few of them require mentioning for sitting with me in long conversations and interviews about the role of television in society and audience issues. Wafula Nyongesa, Christopher Singila, Derrick Amunga, Monica Abok, Charity Mwala, Naomi Kamau and Zuhura Asman require my utmost gratitude for their special contributions in this respect.

Finally, I would like to thank Senior Professor Mark Hobart, SOAS, University of London for having been the first person to guide me in finding initial footing toward what this study would become. The first year of a PhD candidate is a most difficult one, but conversations with Professor Hobart helped me believe in the productive outcome of a study into Kenyan television producers and their audiences.

Abbreviations

Alternating Current (AC)

Big Brother Africa (BBA)

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

Cable Television Network (CTN)

Centre for Media and Film Studies (CMFS)

Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK)

Culture, Communication and Media Studies (CCMS)

East African Community (EAC)

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Entertainment-Education (E-E)

Global Competitive Index (GCI)

Independent Television (ITV)

Information Services Department (ISD)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Kenya African National Union (KANU)

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC)

Kenya Broadcasting Service (KBS)

Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC)

Kenya News Agency (KNA)

Kenya Television Network (KTN)

Legislative Council (LEGCO)

MultiChoice Network (M-NET)

Namibia Press Agency (Nampa)

Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)—1

Nation Media Group (NMG)

Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)—2

Pan American Satellite (PA-SAT)

Portable People Metre (PPM)

Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS),

Television Network Ltd (TNL)

Television Programmes Manager (TPM)

Union of Radio and Television National Organisations of Africa (URTNA)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

United States (US)

Voice of Kenya (VOK)

Abstract

How television entertainment programmes producers in Kenya conceptualise audiences is the primary objective of this study. It begins with a brief examination of how the operations of broadcast media institutions in Kenya have been historically linked to government and commerce. Throughout the history of television in Kenya, producers have conceptualised audiences in line with the political, economic and socio-cultural factors that were paramount in the instituting of broadcasting in this society. This historical background continues to shape the character of television entertainment programmes, and therefore how producers conceptualise audiences for these programmes. During their production practices, producers are also influenced by particular communication dynamics within which television programmes are produced and viewed. The dynamics of 'being the audience of television' include that the 'active audience' is autonomous in its various relationships with programmes content, yet the subjectivity of viewers to the institutional systems within which broadcasting happens constrains the audience's freedom in how it relates to entertainment programmes. Programme content hails and guides the audience into 'attending' to given shows in specific ways.

This study reveals that the audience multi-facetedly relates with entertainment programmes, but the degree to which the audience can exercise its 'will' over the television text is limited. This is because television programmes are constructed meanings, framed and constricted by the elements that constitute them. Also, structures of culture constrain the plurality of the resources audiences have at their disposal as tools for 'reading' the programmes. The research-participant producers conceptualised the audience from a 'value-based' socio-cultural perspective. Therefore, they attached a kind of magnanimity to television as an institution for influencing in specific ways the segments of society they imagined watched it. Hence, producers of the particular entertainment programmes considered in this case study intended them to represent quality socio-cultural values for the social development of Kenyan society. In agreement with the producers, the audience respondents cited in this study appeared to consider entertainment programmes as important narratives capable of helping them better understand the social world they live in. They saw entertainment programmes as stories that authenticate their world by reflecting that world back to them.

Overall, the findings of this case study established that Kenyan producers of television entertainment programmes technically operated within the political economic conventions of

television production. However, a strong philosophical, moral-value code appeared to guide the producers' sense of purpose and duty to their audience. Apparently, the producers' resolve to embed in programmes meanings that propagated particular socio-cultural ideals was as prominent as the institutional political economic objectives for which they were hired to fulfil. This 'extra' sense of purpose catalysed the producers' unique regard for entertainment programmes as functional narratives, whose primary objective it should be to elevate society's moral fabric. Conclusively, the research-participant producers employed an old-fashioned approach to conceptualizing the audience. They saw the audience as congregated in masses of social categories cemented together by a tangible cultural-national identity.

Preface

Ethnographic research into the cultural practices of television production is plagued with issues of the subjectivity of the researcher. The involvement of the researcher in 'lives' of the researched at the site of study is a problematic that needs to be addressed at the earliest stage of the research. For this reason, I begin this thesis by addressing my subjectivity during my research and write up. I acknowledge that my personality and professional background as producer of television programmes, and the roles I played as a participant-observer in programme production environments, directly affected the outcome of the research and its reporting. This brief acknowledgement focuses on the problems of my identity in the research site and in the reporting of data in this thesis. It attempts to declare that data collection in this study was achieved by 'human hands', that my complete detachment from the object of study was impossible (LeCompte, 1987; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Hence, I address the problem with 'I' in social research as the first order of business in this thesis. This task is meant to emancipate me (the researcher) from the shackles of a 'scientific objectivism' that shies away from acknowledging the inherent partisanship of the researcher in every study. Only after going through this process will I feel comfortable to present this research report in the subjective first person, pronoun 'I'. The use of 'I' allows the researcher to be able to properly account for his/her positioning in the site of research by elevating the history or baggage that s/he brings to the site of the study. The reader of the research report can then follow the movements of the 'personalised' researcher in his/her situatedness in the site of the research—according to all his/her identities (Dalrymple, 1987). The fact that the methodology of the study was ethnographic in nature, is all the more reason for me to acknowledge that my being within that which I studied influenced everything that happened in the field site and in the reporting of the data in this thesis.

Use of 'I' in the research report calls attention to the 'person' of the researcher, and is therefore seen as problematic in expressing objectivity about what is being studied. 'I' speaks of subjective attitudes. 'I' is loaded with:

- questions of the performance of the person (of researcher) in social circumstance—the site of research. 'I' asks, "Who I'm I, really, whenever, wherever?"
- questions of the personal (not professional) resourcefulness of the individual conducting research. 'I' denotes personalised ways of seeing, of interpreting, of understanding phenomena.
- an intruding presence of the researcher at the site of research.

- politics of perception and interpretation due to biases and alliances 'the person' of researcher (not scientist) forms with what is being studied.

- questions of the researcher's rationality—that is, the level-headedness about what is being studied, since the person (of researcher) may form personal, emotional attachments with what is being studied.

Although the use of 'I' in the research report might be seen as problematic, 'the personal involvement' of the researcher in social research processes constitutes research data. Therefore, the subjectivity of the researcher should be accounted for in the research findings. In other words, the researcher should acknowledge that the findings were not 'out there' to be found (Steier, 1991).

In light of the above, the use of 'I' can be liberating in the writing of the research report because 'I' challenges "the traditional objectivist and rationalist views of inquiry, which keep the world, both physical and social, at a distance, as an independently existing universe, and which hold knowledge as reflecting, or even corresponding, to the world" (Steier, 1991:1). 'I' recognizes that what the researcher describes in his/her research "is in no way existent apart from the researcher's involvement in it—it is not 'out there'. [The researcher's] claims are not ontological, in the traditional sense [of positivistic/scientific research] that reveal an existent universe that might be known apart from [the researcher's] knowing activity and its entailments" (Steier, 1991:1). The researcher is always part and parcel of the social world s/he studies. In this thesis, therefore, the use of 'I' constantly reminds the reader of my orientation as the researcher and television programme producer at the same time (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Silverman, 2001).

Organisation of the thesis

In the introductory chapter, I present a brief examination of the historical and contemporary contexts in which television broadcasting has happened in Kenya. This chapter suggests that the legacy of the history of broadcasting in a country influences the production of broadcast media programmes, and therefore how producers view the audiences for these programmes. It illustrates that throughout the history of broadcast media in Kenya, producers of radio and television have conceptualised audiences in line with the political, economic and socio-cultural factors that were paramount in the instituting of broadcasting in this society. The historical framework within which this phenomenon happened linked radio and television. Indeed, it appears that the success the colonial government had achieved with radio heavily

influenced the government's decision to implement a television service in Kenya. The chapter concludes that the political economy of public and commercial television in Kenya continues to shape the character of television entertainment programming, and therefore how producers conceptualise audiences for these programmes.

In Chapter Two I explain the relevant particularities connected with the key questions of this study. The chapter 'lays out' the methodological approaches used in the study and further expounds on the 'researcher's identity' and issues of subjectivity beyond the discussion presented above. Hence, the chapter deals with the issue of 'self-reflexivity' as a way of locating the positioning of the author of the research amongst the 'actual subjects' and objects of the research. In Chapter Three, I examine the dynamics of 'being the audience of television', beginning with the notions that gave rise to the 'active audience' paradigms. Later in the chapter, I discuss the subjectivity of the viewer within the institutional concept or definition of the audience. The chapter closes with a look at how the programme content hails and guides the audience into 'attending' to given shows. It highlights notions that point to the problem of the essential nature of the audience. Hence, it explores the disparity between how television producers would like to imagine or conceptualise the audience and what researchers have discovered is the ingenuity of audiences in emancipating themselves from the producers' control with programmes content.

The television audience is problematic; it is not a stable entity that can be isolated as a single object, as it exists as a "multiplicity of situated practices and experiences" (Ang, 1991: 165). Though active, however, the 'power' of the audience, that is the degree to which the audience can exercise its 'will' over the television text, is limited. This is because the programmes the audience watches are constructed meanings, framed and constricted by the elements that constitute them. Also, cultural structures that constrict the plurality of the resources audiences have within their grasp at the moments of 'reading' the programmes restrict audience power over programme content. The chapter suggests that producers of television entertainment programmes utilize the said cultural resources in constructing programme meanings capable of attracting particular types of audiences.

A logical follow up on the issues concerning how the audience responds to television entertainment programmes appears in Chapter Four. The overall theme of this chapter is that entertainment television programmes have utility value. Viewers engage in watching television because they want to boost their mood, alleviate the negativity that comes with

feeling bad. Viewers of television hope that in the activity of viewing, they can enhance their lives for the better. Television entertainment programmes help audiences to escape, or be diverted from their problems; allow them to relax by acting as a channel for emotional release and in general provide the audience with the aesthetic enjoyment that comes from visual presentations. In the discussion about soap operas as entertainment programmes, the chapter reveals how dynamic these programmes are in promoting audiences' social interactivity and locating them within their socio-cultural-political networks. In this respect, soaps facilitate in the audiences' self-reflexivity as they negotiate socially ascribed subjectivities, hence allowing them to view their world from more personalized perspectives. For this reason, the chapter concludes that entertainment television programmes, especially soap operas, are far from a mundane affair. Indeed, they now constitute important narratives that many people are looking to in order to make sense of the social world they live in. They are the stories that authenticate the audience's world by reflecting that world back to the audience.

In Chapter Five, I explain the key theoretical frameworks used to analyse and evaluate the research data. Furthermore, I sketch the layout of the factors that make up the machinery involved in the production of meaning for both television programme makers and audiences. The chapter details where and how television producers' acts of conceptualising audiences are positioned within the dynamic communication process (chain) that happens during production, transmission and viewing of television entertainment programmes. Hence, in this chapter I provide a theoretical consideration of the 'moments of production' of 'televisual' meanings at the 'studio' level and at the 'reception' level as they might have related to *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. How producers of television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audience is influenced by particular communication dynamics within which television programmes are produced and viewed. The character of these dynamics is in turn defined by the pervading political economic climates in these environments. As such, theoretical models of analysis applicable to this study show the links between politics and economics via television. They include the reception theory—encoding/decoding of messages; the political economy of media theory as it relates to television production and Foucault's subject and power notions as they relate to the manufacture of discipline in people, whereby they are turned into subjects of powerful institutions (such as are broadcast media organisations).

Chapter Six features an analysis and discussion of the field data on research-participants practices in producing *Uhondo*, *Reflections*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*. Overall, it presents that for the research-participant producers the processes of conceptualizing their audience involved a delicate balancing act. Producers had to negotiate the political economic dynamics underpinning the entertainment programmes production processes within Channel 1, KBC and NTV. The bureaucratic politics of the production environments played out between producers and their bosses, and the demands to produce popular programmes within a socio-cultural moral code of decency, strained producers as they tried to create 'safe' but socially useful programme content. For this reason, the producers appeared torn between acting as surrogate audiences for the 'real' audience, in which case they aspired to create programme content that interested them as viewers, or treating viewer commentary as raw materials for future programme content. Hence, it appears that producers were sometimes ambivalent about their role as 'social education teachers', particularly when their bosses loomed large as their priority audience. Primarily however, producers conceptualised the audience as society, though basically categorised as The Family and The Youth in conformation with an imagined Kenyan cultural-national identity. Using this identity as a foundation, the research-participants could essentialise the nature of their audience. They hoped to appeal to each of the social categories of the audience by embedding in programme content what they perceived as the relevant meanings capable of meeting the needs of this audience.

In Chapter Seven, I present and analyse audience commentary in order to juxtapose the research-participant producer's audience concepts with audience respondents' concepts of themselves as viewers of entertainment programmes. The overall theme of this chapter is that audience members were preoccupied with a search for moral lessons in the realism depicted in entertainment programmes. Audience respondents regarded entertainment programmes as functional tools for guiding them toward moral actions directly related to their real life experiences. They also seemed to perceive themselves as part of a society plagued with problems that needed solving. Hence, their engagement with entertainment programmes was utilitarian and at a level deeper than mere entertainment. They looked to the programmes as a resource for improving their plight, and in this respect concurred with the research-participant producers about the role entertainment programmes should play in their lives. However, audience members sometimes found television entertainment programmes irrelevant, particularly in imparting the right social-moral education to the youth. Apparently, audience

members expected programme content to represent ideal cultural values that they could identify with, or those that addressed the aspirations of their society.

In closing the thesis, Chapter Eight presents a summary and conclusions of the study. Overall, the findings of this case study established that Kenyan producers of television entertainment programmes technically operated within the political economic conventions of television production. The research-participant producers' production practices were unique only in accordance to the particularities of their stations' operations policies and their 'personal touch' in producing. Nevertheless, a key finding that could be considered 'new knowledge' is that a strong philosophical, moral-value code appeared to guide the producers' sense of purpose and duty to their audience. Apparently, the producers' resolve to embed in programmes meanings that propagated particular socio-cultural ideals was as significant as the institutional political economic objectives for which they were hired to fulfil. This 'extra' sense of purpose catalysed the producers' unique regard for entertainment programmes as functional narratives whose primary objective should be to elevate society's moral fabric. Conclusively, the research-participant producers employed an old-fashioned approach to conceptualising the audience. They saw the audience as congregated in masses of social categories cemented together by a tangible cultural-national identity.

Chapter One

A Political Economic Overview of the Beginnings of Broadcasting in Kenya

Introduction

How television entertainment programmes producers in Kenya conceptualise audiences is the primary objective of this study. It would be difficult however to understand this phenomenon without understanding the history of the circumstances under which television broadcasting arrived in Kenya. This history reveals that the operations of broadcast media institutions in the country have been historically linked to government and commerce. Indeed, programmes emanating from broadcast institutions have been used to recruit subjects in whom the goals and aims of such institutions could be realised. This happened as radio (early on) and television (later on) recruited audiences for their programmes by presenting broadcasting as socio-culturally necessary for fulfilling people's vital day to day needs. Overall, the political, economic and socio-cultural factors that were paramount in the instituting of broadcasting in Kenya established a legacy that would continue to control television producers with regards to how they conceptualised their target audiences.

When the liberalisation of media in Kenya arrived in the 1990s, television producers thought they had found a space for the free flow of information and exchange of diverse opinions on all manner of subjects. However, this was not to be as government lashed out and attempted to silence critical media in several instances. Ironically, censorship encouraged private television stations to look to foreign content for their programming needs. Inadvertently, these programmes gathered a following that would eventually include former Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) television viewers. The success of the commercial stations also enticed veteran KBC television producers to jump ship and enter the more lucrative private television stations. Constrained by an unaccommodating media law and political environment, the new television stations (initially Kenya Television Network (KTN) and Nation Television (NTV) focused on commercial goals—conceptualising their audiences as 'a market'. On the other hand, KBC producers struggled to cater for the needs of 'citizens'.

In order to contextualise the historical background upon which the television entertainment programmes considered in this study were produced and viewed, it is important to understand the recent trends in Kenya's economic profile and the state of the media law under which

television broadcasting in Kenya has existed and continues to expand. This background is meant to familiarise the reader with the socio-economic and political conditions that have influenced people's lives as the television institutions in the country continue to grow. This history should also indicate the kinds of factors that have shaped how people in the country defined their relationships with the media, including television. Subsequently, I present a brief history of the early days of radio in Kenya as it is against the success of radio that the instituting of television was weighed. This broadcasting history, and the milieu and circumstances under which producers of television operated during Kenya's recent history provide a contextual background of the problems investigated in this study.

Kenya's economic background in context

At independence in 1963, Kenya was already an important world exporter of tea, coffee and sisal. European settlers had converted most of the fertile land in the country into plantations of these and other cash crops using cheap and sometimes forced labour. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Kenyan government introduced new policies aimed at making the country economically self-sufficient. It hoped to reduce Kenya's dependence on revenue garnered from the export of cash crops, and therefore encouraged foreign investors to start up industry. At the same time, government encouraged small-scale farmers to practice productive farming methods. These efforts were rewarded as the country's economy grew at an average of 6% in the 1960s and 6.6% in the 1970s. However, Kenya's economy declined to a 4.2% growth in the 1980s (Jubilee Research, 2003). Although foreign investment into the country increased to over $42 million in 1999, the same year foreign investment in Tanzania and Uganda totalled to $183 million and $222 million, respectively. This amount of investment in the neighbouring East African countries meant that they no longer needed to import many products from Kenya. Uganda, for example, could now produce most of the products it imported from Kenya in the 1980s (Obonyo, 2007). By the mid-1990s, Kenya faced a recession. External factors such as the fall in commodity prices in the international market contributed to this decline, but most of all poor governorship and corruption were to blame (Jubilee Research, 2003).

Government was directly involved in the collapse of the financial sector by sponsoring and protecting unregulated banks owned by people with close links to the president. As most of these banks soon collapsed, investor confidence diminished, and so did trading at the Nairobi Stock Exchange. By 2001, 140 investors had pulled out of Kenya, 106 had shut down their

investments, 15 had sold their assets and 20 were in receivership. In addition, donor funding into the country dried up, thus reducing Kenya's purchasing power for imports and seriously affecting the service industry which normally comprises 60% of the economy. As a result, the media industry suffered a direct blow as advertising revenue fell (Obonyo, 2007). Due to the poor economy and declining social development, by 2003 almost 15 million people lived in extreme poverty, and fifty percent of all households had no access to clean drinking water. At the same time, the HIV/AIDS epidemic contributed to the decline of the country's life expectancy at birth to just 46 years (Jubilee Research, 2003). According to the National Aids Control Council, Kenya (2006), as many as 1.2 million people were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003. However, the prevalence rate of infection dropped to 5.9% by 2006. The Council estimated that the socio-economic impact of the epidemic was pervasive, touching all areas relevant to the country's development as many people affected by the disease could not work.[i]

Nevertheless, Kenya had achieved remarkable improvement in several economic and social development areas by 2006. Her population had grown to 37 million people, yet overall poverty levels had fallen to 46%. However, this was comparatively above the levels of Tanzania and Uganda at 38% each. Despite the fact that external development assistance to Kenya equaled to only 5% of government spending and 1% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the economy grew from 5.8% in 2005 to 6.1% in 2006. Kenya's GDP in 2007 was estimated at $29.3 billion (US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, 2008). The same year, the World Bank pledged to continue supporting Kenya so long as it prioritized strengthening public sector management and accountability; reducing the cost of doing business and improving the investment climate (World Bank Country Brief, 2007). These projects are in line with the government's 'Vision 2030' plan which aims to improve economic growth and maintain a stable political climate.

As the financial hub of the East African region, Kenya also hopes to utilize its advantages in transportation linkages, communications infrastructure and trained personnel to assert its economic position in the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). An under-sea fibre-optic cable project under construction since 2007 recently connected Kenya to the rest of the world through the United Arab Emirates, hence reducing the cost of Internet communication in the country (US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, 2008). The project should also help in

improving Kenya's 2007 Global Competitive Index (GCI) position which stood at 97th in the world, and 10th in Africa after Tunisia, South Africa, Mauritius, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, Botswana and Namibia (Blanke, 2007). The GCI considers factors that are important in driving productivity and competitiveness, whereby the most competitive economies are those with comprehensive policies that efficiently interconnect and coordinate public and private institutions, infrastructure, the macro-economy, health, education and training, market efficiency, technological readiness, business sophistication and readiness (Blanke, 2007).

The International Telecommunication Union basic indicator[ii] showed that there were 31 telephone subscribers per 100 people in Kenya in 2007. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of people with access to internet services grew from 200, 000 to 3, 000, 000, representing a growth of 1400%. This growth places Kenya 6th out of the top 10 countries with the highest number of internet users in Africa after Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa and Algeria (Internet World Stats, 2008). Television ownership dramatically increased from 23% of households owning a television set in 1998, to 34% in 2004. Today, about 50% of the people who own television sets live in the rural areas (Media Focus on Africa Foundation, 2006).

Statutory protections and regulation of broadcasting in Kenya

For many years, media law per se in Kenya, as reflected in the country's constitution, did not specifically address how press and broadcasting institutions should conduct themselves. However, media freedom could be inferred from Section 79 of the constitution[iii] which touches on the freedom of expression. It states:

> Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.

Nevertheless, fundamental rights and freedoms relating to the media were always restricted under certain circumstances. For instance, according to Section 79 subsection (2) paragraph (a) of the Constitution, the freedom to communicate without interference could be withdrawn "in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health" (The Constitution of Kenya; Odhiambo, 2002: 296). According to Peter Mbeke (2008: 2), due to this "weak, irresolute and inadequate legal, regulatory and policy framework [. . .] The mass

media and communication sectors in Kenya remained vulnerable to system-wide pressures such as the recent post-election violence and the resulting ban on live broadcasting". This factor also negatively affected the growth of mass media and communication sectors.

In 2005, the first government of President Mwai Kibaki was involved in highly contested efforts to address the flaws in the Kenyan Constitution. In the proposed, revised Constitution[iv], Chapter Six, Part Two, covering Bill of Rights, the following sections stipulated specific rights: 48 on rights to freedom of religion; belief and opinion; 49 on freedom of expression and 50 on freedom of the media and access to information. However, the new constitution was never implemented but is subject to review under the recently signed National Accord and Reconciliation Act, 2008 (Mbeke, 2008: 7). Other positive steps toward better media policy include the creation of the Media Council of Kenya[v] in 2007, which is a mechanism through which media practitioners can exercise self-regulation. In January 2008 President Kibaki signed the Communications (Amendment) Bill 2008 into law after Parliament had passed it late in 2007. A furor erupted with journalists and media owners dubbing the amended bill as the 'anti-media law'. They feared that the law gave government power to interfere with television and radio content and to seize and destroy broadcast equipment. The law also authorised the Communication Commission of Kenya and the minister in charge of media to seize and destroy broadcast equipment (*Saturday Nation* January 2 2009). However, the media practitioners' petition paid off as the President instructed the Attorney-General and the Minister for Information and Communications to review the 'anti-media' law and make recommendations on the necessary amendments (*Daily Nation* January 8, 2009).

Previously, broadcasting activity in Kenya was regulated by the Communication Act (1998) which did not address content but rather the technicalities of broadcasting. The most important criteria an aspiring television broadcaster had to meet was the financial capacity to operate a station and a security clearance from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. No licence fee was required although the broadcaster had to pay for frequency allocation. Hence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs processed the application for the broadcasting licence upon which the minister of the said ministry issued a permit. The new broadcaster then forwarded the permit to the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) which allocated available frequencies on a town-by-town basis (Kenya Communication Act, 1998; Maubert, 2006: 12).

Within the new media law, it appears that CCK's mandate now extends to regulating broadcast content.

The control of broadcast media content has been the basis of the consistent antagonism between media practitioners in Kenya and the government. Producers in broadcasting institutions fight for the freedom to create programmes that enhance the purposes of their existence. Government on the other hand has always understood the power of broadcast media to sway listeners and viewers toward the interests of the broadcasters, which it fears are not harmonious with its own. The historical foundations of some key broadcast media institutions in Africa and the West illustrate that the political economic factors involved in the instituting of such institutions left lasting legacies that continue to shape programming. In addition, these factors heavily influenced the nature of relationships governments in particular countries have with television institutions, for example. Below are some examples that should help in contextualizing the said political economic dynamics in terms of how they relate to television broadcasting in Kenya today.

Political economic legacies and formation of broadcasting systems

The entry of commercial television in Africa in the 1990s caught some governments completely off-guard. They seemed unable to handle the aggressiveness with which private broadcasters tackled for example critical news and political debate (Heath, 1992). Consequently, from the beginning several new commercial television stations across Africa faced hindrances from government regarding producing and broadcasting news. For example, in Tunisia legislation prohibited the private channel Canal Plus from covering local news (Paterson, 1998). In Benin the autonomy of the private station La Cellule 2 was compromised when its owner, a former football star, was co-opted into President Mathieu Kerekou's government and given a post in the cabinet. His station's news department had been recently applauded in the United States (US) for objective coverage.

In Kenya, Kenya Television Network (KTN)—the first commercial television station in the country—found itself in trouble from the beginning for its aggressive news reporting on matters relating to government business and political figures. In 1993, the KTN news programme was scrapped. Despite viewers' complaints, management explained that commercial television news was not profitable for KTN as the public broadcaster, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), and the Kenyan newspapers were already covering the news market adequately. However, this development appeared linked to the fact that KTN had

been acquired by prominent businessmen with close ties to President Moi. Indeed, the station and its sister paper, *Standard*, were said to be formerly owned by Kenya African National Union (KANU), a long time monopoly government party (Heath, 1992).

The knee-jerk reaction by the governments cited above against 'free', private television in the 1990s begs the question, why all this government antagonism? The most likely answer to this question relates to the history of broadcasting in these countries. Historically, African governments controlled media content because in this way, they could use broadcasting for example to mould citizens in manners that suited the aspirations of the kinds of states they wanted to create—totalitarian (Bourgault, 1995). Elsewhere in the world, the structure that the broadcasting institutions took was also heavily influenced by the interests of government but also by private commercial enterprise. For instance, the political economy of media and the role government played during the formative stages of radio and television broadcasting in Britain and the US illustrates this proposition (Engelman, 1996).

In Britain, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) operated quite differently from the broadcast institutions it had helped set up in the British colonies. The founder of the BBC, Lord Reith, insisted that the state should assist in funding broadcasting, but it should stay clear off the business of the corporation in order to allow citizens to use the medium as a productive means of engaging with government (Engelman, 1996). Thus, public broadcasting was meant to serve the individual and encourage active participation. Reith's success in keeping BBC independent of government control defined how public broadcasting in Britain would function in the future. At the same time, it created the benchmark against which latter day broadcasting institutions in Britain constituted themselves. Indeed, the first commercial television station (ITV) in Britain aspired to be what BBC was not (Scannell, 1996). This legacy continues to instigate British media houses' policies of operations, hence the shape of the content of their programmes and their audiences.

In the US, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover became instrumental in defining the future of public broadcasting in that country. He believed that the role of the state was to regulate a free market place for the media. Thus, he appeared to support commercial broadcasting rather than public broadcasting. In addition, the aggressive lobbying by commercial broadcasters against a state funded media created a solid foundation for commercial broadcasting in the US (Engelman, 1996). Commercial broadcasters argued that by funding the media, the state would not only compromise advertising but democracy as well. Due to this history, public

broadcasting only arrived in the US in 1967. Although the enactment of the Public Broadcasting Act was seen as a legislative victory by the proponents of public broadcasting in the US, public broadcasting in that country remains marginalised to this day. Also, due to their great influence, commercial companies have the upper hand in defining the relationship between government and the broadcasting institutions in the US (Engelman, 1996).

In light of the above, the legacy of the history of broadcasting in a country influences the production of broadcast media programmes, and therefore how producers view the audiences for these programmes (Cantor and Cantor, 1992). The dynamics of the relationships between producers, their institutions, programmes content and the audience are clearly explained in Chapter Three. Beginning with the era of the British colonial government, public broadcast media in Kenya served as the mouthpieces of government agenda. In practice, audiences for this media were subjects of the state. Commercial broadcasting however had different interests, and these were not necessarily congruent with what the government intended broadcast media's functions to be.

In examining the beginning of radio broadcasting in Kenya, the above contentions are explicated in the following sections. This should facilitate an understanding of the factors connected with the history of broadcasting and their impact on the practices producers engaged in conceptualising audiences during the stages of television development in Kenya. In turn, this insight should illuminate how contextual instigators of television programme production function within the public service and commercial television institutions considered in this study. This history provides a contextual background within which the processes of producing television entertainment programmes at NTV and Channel 1, KBC television should be understood.

Radio and the beginnings of broadcasting in Kenya

Broadcast media in the British colonies had a political purpose. Like in other colonies, the colonial government in Kenya established radio broadcasting primarily to enhance the tasks of administration and weaning the natives toward allegiance with British interests. By the 1930s, the British Colonial Office and the African colonial governments had realised the political and educational potential of mass media (Gadsen, 1986: 402). Indeed, in 1936 the government-sponsored Plymouth Committee[vi] met in London and decided that the primary role of broadcasting in the colonies would be 'enlightenment and education' of the more backward sections of the native populations (Head, 1979: 39-40). For this reason, it "strongly

recommended that wherever possible broadcasting activities should be developed in the colonial territories as a public service by the governments concerned" (Wilkinson, 1972: 172). However, given the African colonial governments' need to maintain their 'ruler' position in the colonies, once established, radio broadcasting was run directly by the government for the tasks of administrating the natives. Considered to have immense propaganda potential, it could be used for government administration in ostensibly indirect ways through programmes that carried British culture and ideas. It can be argued therefore that from the beginnings of radio, programming would be heavily influenced by government policy. Nevertheless, the BBC was involved in setting up broadcasting systems in the colonies, and so it had a significant role in the designing of broadcasting policy in Kenya (Wilkinson, 1972).

By 1939, an elaborate African language broadcasting organisation with a translation bureau and a panel of African newsreaders was in place in Kenya. Indeed, the British government was able to use this service to recruit the natives to fight in World War II. In order to reach the widest African audience possible, the government provided wireless radios for African audiences and set up three public address systems in Nairobi. Another 26 radio sets complete with public address equipment were distributed to schools and mission stations in 1940. By 1943, the Ministry of Information had distributed 65 sets to rural stations. Africans could now listen to radio broadcasts at district headquarters and at listening points in towns and farms (Gadsen, 1986: 403). In War time, a lot of radio programmes were dedicated to encouraging Africans to side with the British. These programmes counteracted enemy propaganda, publicised information about the war, and strengthened loyalty to Britain and the Empire by creating confidence in the ultimate victory of the Allies (Gadsen, 1986). Using the African language radio organisation, the Information Officer for the war was able to disseminate information to the 250,000 African soldiers who served in the War Command, 75, 000 of whom were Kenyan (Gadsen, 1986).

With the thousands of African men fighting in Europe and other fronts, it was also important for the African colonial governments to keep the relatives of these soldiers informed about the war. For this reason, in Lusaka, the capital of Northern Rhodesia, the British government's Information Department funded the installation of a 300 watt transmitter and set up one of the first 'proper' radio stations in black Africa.[vii] In West Africa, the ZOY Station was founded in Accra to produce special programmes for members of the West African Frontier Force.

Around the same time, the BBC also started 'war' programmes such as 'Calling West Africa' through its Empire Service (BBC World Service today) (Wilkinson, 1972: 178).

Influence of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on radio in Africa

Primarily, the Kenya colonial government's need to use radio in furthering the War causes led to the rapid development of the medium in the country (Armour, 1984). After the war, this need shifted slightly. The focus in broadcasting for the colonies switched to addressing an emergent trend of communism and African nationalism. For this reason, the British government had to invest more in the further development of broadcasting in Africa (Armour 1984: 362). On 1st July, 1946, Oliver J. Whitley of the BBC was appointed to the Colonial Office and given the specific responsibility for developing broadcasting in Africa within the Information Services Department (Armour, 1984: 360). With Whitley's stewardship, BBC began setting up new broadcast institutions in West Africa because, in political terms, it had the highest priority among the other African territories (Armour, 1984: 373). In the 1950s onwards the BBC was involved in setting up the dynamic Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). Following the recommendations of the Plymouth Committee, the colonial government decided that the broadcasting service in Nigeria should be formed along the lines of the BBC model of public service broadcasting. A Director-General was appointed to head the independent corporation, but he would be answerable to a Board of Governors representing different political and other interests. For five years, however, the corporation would be run by the BBC under a licence after which it would be transferred to a local corporation. In a similar approach, the BBC was involved in setting up broadcasting stations in Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana and Lesotho (Wilkinson, 1972: 181).

In Kenya, the Kenya Broadcasting Commission commenced work in 1954. Following the BBC model, it drew up the Kenya Broadcasting Service (KBS) as a public broadcasting system. KBS was to be an independent corporation that would produce and transmit programmes; gather news and be in charge of its own engineering and administration. The corporation would be headed by an independent chairman and governors under a minister. A director appointed by the government would be in charge of daily departmental responsibilities and the day to day business of the service. His successor would be appointed by a Board of Governors comprising of eight members: four Europeans, two Asians and two Africans (Armour, 1984). Responding to the growing African nationalism and a possible

revision of the constitution to allow African participation in government, the Commission highlighted the power of broadcasting in uniting the country. It conveyed that broadcasting would help to bring political stability and facilitate in furthering the education of the masses. It also recommended the formation of a credible news department that would provide accurate and objective news. Along the same lines, the service should report on controversial issues and do pre-election broadcasts (Armour, 1984).

Nevertheless, KBS immediately focused on safeguarding the current priority interest of the government. The British government was engaged in a war with the militant Mau Mau[viii] freedom movement. The media was put under strict government control, operating as a counter-insurgency tool with entertainment programmes directed to the African population as a measure of pacifying them against joining the Mau Mau or the African nationalists. To the European settler population, radio programming assured them that the colonial government indeed protected their interests (Armour, 1984).

So far it is clear from the brief overview of the significant moments in the development of radio broadcasting in colonial Kenya that proliferation of government interests facilitated the consideration of Africans as a viable audience. A tradition had been established in 1928 with the launch of a marginal commercial broadcasting service in Kenya, that radio was a reserve for the European settlers who used it to 'connect' with the home country (Heath, 1986). However, the need by the British central government to recruit African support in the war and by the Kenyan colonial government to solidify its political hold on the African population significantly defined how the audience of this medium was conceptualised. Hence, it appears that when time came to consider implementing the more dynamic medium of television in colonial Kenya, the decision to do so was heavily influenced by the success the colonial government had achieved with radio.

Introduction of television in Kenya

The character of radio programming and the impact it had on its audience clearly influenced how the government regarded television early on. The colonial administration needed assurances that television would be a better, more dynamic medium of addressing the development and educational needs of the African population. Most of all however, television should boost government's administrative goals. There was no apparent indication that the European settlers in Kenya wanted to abandon the colony despite the increasing African

nationalism and marginal participation in government towards the end of 1950s (Armour, 1984).

Nonetheless, the dream that television would be better than radio in accomplishing the above objectives would not easily come true as expected. The effective performance and affordability of radio broadcasting became the yardstick upon which the establishment of television was considered. For this reason, the colonial government did not initially favour instituting television due to its limited potential in reaching the African population. Primarily, only whites and Asians owned television sets in the late 1950s (Natesh, 1965). If the new medium was to be viable, it would have to reach the African majority and be affordable. In this context, television broadcasting for the African population appeared doomed from the beginning. However, a Commission headed by Commander J. C. R. Proud was appointed early in 1959 to review and report on advantages and disadvantages of a television service for Kenya and the impact it would have on radio broadcasting (Nimer, 1966). The Commission concluded that television could be financially self-reliant if it was designed as an independent commercial outfit.[ix] A year later, the government agreed with the Proud Commission's findings and announced that it would set up a television service using capital finances from commercial sources (Nimer, 1966: 5). However, the television service should be free from the control of commercial interests. On 14th November 1961, the Legislative Council (LEGCO) passed the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) Act of parliament, thus committing KBC radio and television to providing impartial information on controversial issues, education and entertainment (Mak'Ochieng, 1995).

Viewed as complimentary to development projects on education, the television project was quickly supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and foreign private enterprise. These 'development partners' saw the critical audience for television as the ignorant, backward African majority, that are subjects of development (Bourgault, 1995). With its capacity for the spoken word and interpersonal interaction between characters, the visual medium was viewed as an effective way to reach Africans as most of them could not read or write. Proponents of television like James M. Coltart (1963: 202), a former managing director of the Thomson Organisation,[x] felt that television would open up the literate world to the illiterate African population, particularly through programmes on good farming practices, motherhood and hygiene. Consequently, the Television Network Ltd[xi], a consortium of eight East African, British, Canadian and American

entrepreneurs, was formed and empowered to set up the national television broadcasting system as an autonomous public organisation (Nimer, 1966).

In 1963, the year of Kenya's independence, television was officially launched. The inauguration of the state television station at the birth of the nation was seen as a 'marker' of new and better things to come. However, since the television service primarily had to rely on meager revenue from advertising, annual license fees on receiver sets and government subventions, it was unsustainable. In its first year of operation, KBC television lost 104, 086 British Pounds. The newly independent government had to step in with loans and supplementary appropriations to keep the service afloat (Nimer, 1966: 10). Nevertheless, the government worried that the foreign companies which still owned the broadcasting apparatus could step in to salvage the failing station. Such a move could put the country's national sovereignty under threat.[xii]

In a bid to save KBC television, Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, appointed a commission to look into the financial problems of the corporation. Benna Lutta, the then Deputy Legal Secretary of East African Common Services, was assigned the chairmanship of the commission. In spite of the Lutta Commission's recommendations for private radical reforms of the KBC, the government nationalised the corporation in June 1964, renamed it Voice of Kenya (VOK) and converted it into a department under the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, later renamed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Nimer, 1966: 7). The first minister in charge of broadcasting, Achieng Oneko, declared in parliament that VOK was now a trusted partner in nation-building; it would no longer remain on the sidelines with unknown loyalties (Mak'Ochieng, 1995). Specialised training for all radio and television producers, technicians and journalists destined for positions at VOK would be done under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC), the first journalism school in Kenya founded in 1963.[xiii]

Television and the nation-building project in post-independent Kenya

Apparently, by nationalizing broadcasting the newly independent Kenyan government had used 'colonial moves' to take away the autonomy of the formerly independent Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. In itself, this act was a symbolic beginning of the government's nationalism project. Oneko's utterances in parliament during the nationalizing of the corporation into VOK were an indicator that government needed to closely control broadcast media. The legacy of radio broadcasting in colonial times might have taught the post-

independent government patriarchs how a carefully controlled broadcasting service could be effectively used in mobilizing citizens toward government interests. Since the priority for the new government was to unite the different ethnic groups in the country into a unified nation, it needed to have a good hold on broadcasting (Armour, 1984). Furthermore, it can be argued that government feared that the formerly independent public broadcasting service, though modeled after the BBC, was vulnerable to manipulation by private enterprise that sponsored it. KBC could have been easily used to sway the citizens toward oppositional interests. Consequently, the medium of television, because of its prestige, was rigorously monitored and controlled by the government from the beginning.

To government, television was the revolutionary broadcast medium of the day, an important symbol of development. It could be harnessed toward representing the various 'development' aspirations of the new government if not for rallying the different groups within Kenya into a nation. Indeed, many newly independent African governments believed that once established, the visual medium of television would not only become a symbol of modernisation for their citizens, but also "a potentially powerful tool for national development" (Boyd, 1984: 380). The mere setting up of television stations was so important that it consumed most of the monetary resources expended on the national television project. Little thought went into the future of programme production after the initial tests had gone off the air (Boyd, 1984; Heath, 1986; Mytton, 1983; Bourgault, 1995). The new Kenyan political elite believed that mass media, including television, once introduced would transform the poor population by making available to them the technical and cultural capacities of the elite sector, thus reducing social inequalities. Television would thus become the channel of transmitting the revolutionary techniques, methods, and attitudes of the modern sector to the 'backward' traditional sectors in the hope of weaning them into modernisation (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988).

Modernising in the developmentalist approach meant that progressive change in a country came from the centre and trickled out to the periphery as communication reduced the gap between an urban elite and the poor population at the periphery. A connection between the rich and the poor would efface the latter's parochial practices and the sentiments that were hitherto a barrier to development (Hallin, 1998: 160; Pye, 1963: 13). In Daniel Learner's (1958) understanding, mass media enabled individuals to empathise with situations of others. By so doing, they inclined their audiences into taking an interest in matters that did not necessarily bear on their every day lives. Mass media, the Kenyan political elite hoped, could

make available to the marginalised population "a vast array of experiences that otherwise would have been unavailable to them" (Thompson, 1995: 189). These experiences could cultivate individuals' faculties of imagining themselves in places of others, the well off. Television, it was thought, was the better suited medium to 'show' the marginalised African population (the new target audience in theory) how to modernise (Natesh, 1965).

However, public television broadcasting in Africa fell short of the aspirations of the Reithian model of 'good' public service broadcasting from the beginning. Ideally, this type of broadcasting was aimed at creating 'good citizens', through 'good programming' (Murdock, 1991: 78). It aspired to give viewers access to "the range of information, insights, arguments, and explanations that enable people to make sense of the changes affecting their lives, and to evaluate the range of actions open to them as individuals and as members of a political community". Nevertheless, the post-independent African governments' act of nationalising broadcasting services constrained the capabilities of television in the name of nation-building (Nyamnjoh, 2005). In Kenya, television became a government mouthpiece for the furtherance of political agendas and therefore could not provide for its 'target audience' equitable access to the public sphere (Mak'Ochieng, 1995).

Factors influencing VOK/KBC television programming and audience reach
Immediately after independence, two important tasks lay ahead for the new Kenyan government: nation-building and the consolidation of the dispersed ethnic groups in the country into a nation. A Kenyan identity that could unite the different ethnic groups into one was urgently needed (Mak'Ochieng, 1995). Broadcasting was meant to play a significant role in the achievement of these tasks. Hence, VOK conceptualised its audiences along the lines of the state's national-cultural and economic goals. These goals are clearly articulated in the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's operations policy to this day:

> *Guiding principles*— Kenya Broadcasting Corporation provides the audience with innovative, high quality programmes. The Corporation enhances development of local cultural values by facilitating the dissemination, preservation and conservation of authentically indigenous values. The Corporation contributes to the economic, educational, cultural and social well being of Kenyans. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation promotes the "Universal access to information for all" through provision of free to air services.
>
> *Aim and Objectives*— To inform, educate and entertain the public through radio and television services and thereby propagate all that consolidates national unity, peace, love and development.

Specific Aims – Increased understanding among the people on the government development policies and strategies. Impart knowledge on the process of effective communication with key publics. Promote an effective approach to the use of radio and television as tools for National Development.[xiv]

In the post-1970s, the Kenyan government, like others in Africa, was engaged in formulating cultural policies aimed at promoting "culture, tradition, heritage, and identity in the contemporary society" (Opondo, 2000: 1-6). A Ministry of Culture was formed, and it attempted to create a national-cultural tradition through radio and television programmes. The government hoped that increased local content in broadcasting would achieve this goal. Under this vision, television programmes such as *Vioja Mahakamani,* a situation comedy set in the courtroom, and *Vitimbi*, a situation comedy set in the home, were popularised. These comedies focused on imparting knowledge on laws pertaining to crime and punishment and socio-cultural values since the mid 1970s and 1980s, respectively.

Other factors influencing VOK television programming resulted from the continued strict control that the Office of the President exerted on the media in general since independence. This situation worsened after a military coup attempt in August 1982 against Kenya's second president, Daniel Arap Moi. Although Moi survived the take-over, this was the turning point in his presidency. He became a dictator as he could no longer trust those around him. Every government institution was virtually turned into an agency under the mandate of the Office of the President in order to keep a vigilant eye on dissention from any quarter (Mbeke, 2008). The media were censored, and the Presidential Press Unit elevated to an authority on news about government business, which simply meant 'what the president said'. According to the veteran Kenyan journalist Phillip Ochieng (1992: 43), "the [media] received only one interpretation of what the President was supposed to have said or done on any particular occasion: that of the Presidential Press Unit, relayed to [them] through the Kenya News Agency (KNA)".

In this type of environment, producers working in VOK television conceptualised their audiences in line with the president's vision and aspirations for the Kenyan citizen. Most importantly, it had become clear to practitioners in television since the coup attempt that programming was required to emphasize the president's authority and wisdom in leading the country. They now saw their audiences as subjects of the state, primarily as the president himself would have wanted the individual citizen to subject him/herself to him. To this end,

the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting doubled its efforts in spearheading the television service toward a clear political initiative, the representation of a nationalistic outlook (Heath, 1992). Hence, VOK constantly aired programmes that carried themes of patriotism, such as key speeches by the president; information, education, cultural entertainment programmes and documentary films on development from the Union of Radio and Television National Organisations of Africa (URTNA) and UNESCO (Reeves, 1993). By mid-1980s however, VOK television was only able to achieve a 40% local programming content against the target of 70% local content. Hence, the station failed to become an authoritative national medium. Studies in 1985[xv] showed that only 17% of electronic media audience regarded television as the best source of information, compared to 86% who rated radio as their prime news source.

Apparently, heading towards the 1990s Kenyan television had failed to adequately contribute in the achievement of the government's nation-building goals set at independence. The potential of VOK television to modernise the sectors of the population that the post-independence government political elite conceptualised as 'backward' was compromised for two reasons: i) television's marginal reach and ii) the economic and political performance of the country.

i) Television's marginal reach

Television sets were for many years expensive so only the rich could afford them. Furthermore, most of the Kenyan population was (and still is in 2009) not connected to the national electricity grid line. Since electricity is a prerequisite for 'television watching', particularly with the older models, only a small segment of the population could use the Alternating Current (AC) operated television sets. In addition, over the years Kenya had only 55 transmission booster stations that generally covered small areas as their weak signal was obstructed by the country's rugged terrain. For this reason, most of the country's television audiences could only be found in the urban centres, in large rural centres served by electricity and near a booster station (Odhiambo, 2002). Wedell and Tudesq (1996: 12) found that about 47% of the Kenyan population lived within the range of the television network. But in total, only 11% of Kenya's households had a set in 1996; 30% of these were in the Nairobi area. Nevertheless, by 1996, KBC had managed to improve the signal coverage across the country to 80% and 60% for radio and television, respectively (Njeru, 2005). Below is a map of the broadcasting signal coverage across the country as of 2005.
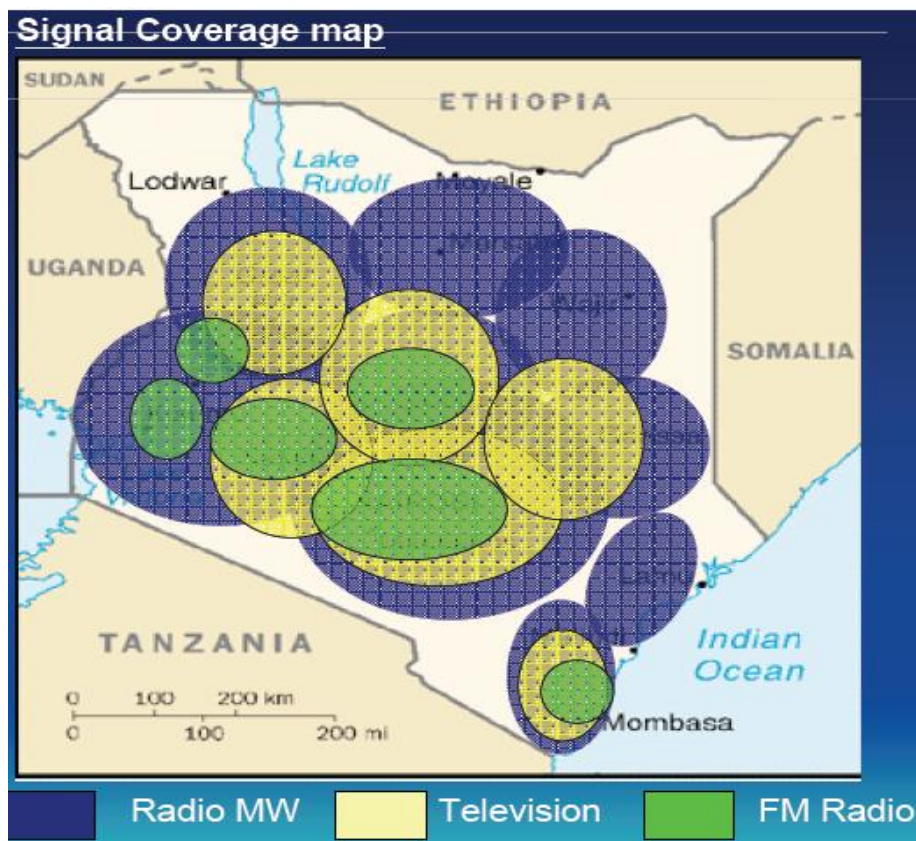
Source of map: Njeru (2005)[xvi]

Njeru (2005) estimated that although the medium wave transmitters installed in the country in 1993 could cover the area shown on the signal map, they are very expensive to run. They require a lot of power to beat the rugged terrain and the increased 'noise' produced by the numerous FM transmitters that have recently mushroomed in the country. For instance, a monthly electricity bill for a single 100kW transmitter was $12, 500 in 2005. Consequently, when the transmitter power was reduced in order to shave costs, the signal coverage area shown on the map above reduced from 80 % to about 50 %.

Besides television's marginal reach due to electrical power and limited signal coverage, the language of television broadcasting in Kenya continues to alienate potential audiences. Broadcast media have until recently privileged English over other local languages, and this implies that only a small percentage of the population effectively understands this media. Particularly, television broadcasts only in English and Kiswahili even today. Although Kenya has around 40 diverse ethnic groups, there is hardly any institution in the country today that can train aspiring media practitioners to work in the electronic media industry using major indigenous languages besides Kiswahili. This factor isolates a significant audience base of both print and broadcast media, although the recent arrival of the vernacular commercial FM

radio alleviated this dearth somewhat. In the light of the above reasons, it can be argued that television in Kenya remained for a long time a reserve for a minority class whose realities aspired towards the realities projected by the many foreign television programmes that they watched (Reeves, 1993).

ii) The economic and political performance of the country

In the 1980s, Kenya's budget spending was regulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Helleiner, 1983). [xvii] These two organisations forced structural adjustments in government institutions, requiring that the country downsize state corporations if it was to continue receiving loans from them. In order to improve the management of the country's budget, the government laid-off several civil servants and suspended the servicing of the state institutions' infrastructure (Bourgault, 1995). VOK's limited budget was cut further forcing the television service into a crisis that compromised programme production. In order to 'fill up' airtime, the news programme featuring the president's daily routines of national tours; church attendance; national events and the school quiz show became the common features on national television (Reeves, 1993: 78-79). Cheap foreign imports supplemented the remaining programming line up. Furthermore, VOK television continued to rely on advertising in order to fund its in-house productions. According to Heath (1992) however, VOK's 'technically sloppy' programmes failed to attract the lucrative trans-national advertisers that could boost the station's revenue. The station had to change its programming content again in order to attract bigger advertising revenue (Reeves, 1993: 77). Hence, about three quarters of the VOK's programming line up in the 1980s and 1990s was filled with foreign programmes, most of which came from Western Europe and the US. In turn, these programmes attracted advertisers from foreign corporations (Bourgault, 1995: 126), earning VOK 70% of its budget while the remaining 30% came from the government (Wedell and Tudesq, 1996: 13).

Due to the escalating budgetary constraints and the government's need to curb inefficiency in state corporations, VOK was converted to a quasi-governmental institution under the Broadcasting Corporation Act, *Laws of Kenya,* Cap 221 and renamed Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in 1989 (Mak'Ochieng, 1995; Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Act, 1989[xviii]). Currently, KBC is required by Section 38 of the KBC Act to "conduct its business according to commercial principles". However, the corporation is governed by a board of directors whose chair is appointed by the president. Other members of the board are appointed

by the minister in charge of broadcasting. In addition, KBC is authorised by Section 14 of the KBC Act to make "announcements or air programmes of national importance, whether by sound or television" (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Act, 1989). In this respect, the corporation is never free from the control of the government.

Indeed, the historical legacy of broadcast media in Kenya and the trends in the broadcasting policy of KBC television (outlined above) continue to place producers at the institution in a dilemma. Apparently, their autonomy in how they produced programmes or conceptualised the audiences of those programmes has always been constrained by this fact. In 2005, Mary Onyango, then acting Controller of Programming at Channel 1, KBC television reflected on the impact of the situation at KBC and its relationship with the government of the day, vis-a-vis the legal mandate that dictated the station's responsibilities. She noted that although KBC had been somewhat deregulated into a para-statal corporation, the fact that it was still connected to government influenced the overall practices of programme production at the station. In fact, any autonomy the KBC television producers might have inherited when the station became a para-statal did not guarantee them enough freedom in connection to programming. Onyango felt that the reorganisation of the station allowed KBC

> *leeway to do what [it] should do on [its] own. But with strings attached. We can't actually say we are commercial. At the moment we are 30% commercial, 70% public. So, unless we do the reverse, we become 70%, 30% public. . . then it is easier for us to manipulate and say, 'we are now making our own money, we can employ people, we can pay them from us, and really do anything that we want, and also give returns to the government'. They [government] will not make noise. But at the moment the way it is, we remain a civil service. . . a public servant. We have to serve mwananchi [citizen] (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).*

Onyango indicated that perhaps in utilizing the commercial policy warranty that KBC enjoys, the station might turn around for the better, albeit with sacrifices. It might have to compromise some the important roles that the station plays in society:

> *It will have to compromise. And that is the 'catch 22' situation that we are in. Yeah? We remain a national broadcaster as the BBC. . . or do we go commercial, and do our own thing? And have our own content as we see it? Because right now at the end of*

the day we are trying to. . . to serve the public [read, the government] (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

Apparently, Onyango's frustration regarding the performance of KBC television is that she felt too much is expected of the station, in terms of its capability to address all the needs of the audience. Clearly, government's hold on the station and the limited budget producers of particular programmes have at their disposal are a significant hindrance. This culminates in poor quality products that make the station 'lose out' to the commercial television stations in terms of popularity with the audience (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Also, the fact that KBC television relied on foreign programmes for many years cultivated its audience toward favouring such programmes instead of the 'low quality' ones that it produced 'within-house'. Indeed, by the time Nation TV arrived in the late 1990s the 'audience monopoly' KBC television had retained over the years had eroded. The audience now judged the quality of the station's programmes against that of foreign programmes coming out of KTN and the newer commercial stations (Naomi Kamau, September 2005, Interview). At the same time, better salaries and working conditions at the new stations saw KBC television lose some of its veteran producers to Nation TV, for example (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

Television in the era of liberalised media

As the 1990s began, the IMF, World Bank and donor countries continued pressuring governments in Africa to democratise and liberalise the media in order to allow more transparency and accountability. Media practitioners and civil society organisations also vigorously demanded for private radio and television that could serve wider interests than the state owned media did (Karikari, 1994). In Kenya, President Moi accented to a repeal of Section 2 (A) of the Constitution of Kenya in 1991 thus ending the 'one party' rule regime that the government had adopted immediately after independence (Mbeke, 2008). This move also ushered in the liberalisation of media and communication sectors, hence allowing substantial freedom of the press. Government also began looking into abolishing restrictive media laws and harmonising Kenya Post and Telecommunication and Kenya Broadcasting Acts. In 1993, the Attorney General set up the Task Force to review the Press Law in order to provide a legal framework that would guide the freedom of the press and responsible media practice (Mbeke 2008: 5).

Liberalisation of media in Kenya opened doors for the founding of commercial broadcast media. However, when commercial television arrived in Kenya it faced oppressive and restrictive government regulations that prohibited it from broadcasting beyond Nairobi and the immediate environs. Consequently, KTN, early on, and Nation TV (NTV), later on, affiliated themselves with foreign content. For instance, foreign television entertainment dramas were regarded as 'safe' unlike their local counterparts, which the government was likely to censor for sedition or contravention of Kenyan moral-cultural values. Nevertheless, these foreign programmes appeared to be in line with the interests of the private companies that owned the commercial television stations (Heath, 1992). NTV's beginnings illustrate how the legacy of its founders influenced the station's programming. It can be argued that NTV's programming and the targeting of audiences are not arbitrary undertakings. They are influenced by the commercial foundation of NTV which dates back to the origin of the largest newspaper in Kenya.

NTV is a product of the *Nation* newspaper which was founded by a Nairobi newspaperman named Charles Hayes and his London counterpart, Michael Curtis in 1959. A year later, the *Nation* was acquired by the Agha Khan Group (Hachten, 1971; Abuoga & Mutere, 1988). Currently, the paper circulates over 200,000 copies, making it the most widely read newspaper in Kenya. It is part of the Nation Media Group (NMG) which also operates *Taifa;* a small Kiswahili paper with a circulation of around 35, 000 copies; the *East African*, a weekly covering the region; the *Monitor* of Uganda, *Mwanainchi* of Tanzania and *The Citizen*. In 1997, NMG also launched the Nation FM Radio (Easy FM today) and recently opened FM radio stations in Uganda and Tanzania. NMG is traded in the Nairobi Stock Exchange though the Agha Khan Group still owns the majority shares in the company.[xix]

According to Louis Odhiambo (1989) the privately owned English press such as the *Nation* is historically biased towards the hegemonic values and interests of the industrialized countries:

> The history of . . . these newspapers . . . is very closely linked to business interests and also political interests, furthered by business enterprises from countries where the business came from. [For instance], the Maxwell Group... bought considerable shares in a party newspaper [*Kenya Times*], thereby ensuring that some business interests are very well implanted at the political level (Odhiambo, 1989: 35).

In circumstances like these, programme content from privately owned television stations affiliated with the foreign owned newspapers leans toward perpetuating particular interests of

the corporations that run them. In turn, these interests act as direct factors that can shape the policies of the said television stations. Hence, production of programmes and the conceptualisation of audiences are therefore heavily influenced and sometimes dictated by the political and economic discourses pertaining to sustaining the said patriarch corporations. The case of NTV is a good example as it is located well within the discourse of the privatisation of media in Kenya.

The process of media privatisation in Africa in the 1990s normally involved Western media conglomerates and Western governments. Through their propaganda bureaus (United States Intelligence Agency, for example), they pressurised African governments to liberalise and privatise the media (Paterson, 1998). The liberalised media environment in Africa created channels through which foreign investors can stake claims in the once exclusively government controlled industry. For instance, South Africa is now covered by the US PanAmSat's PAS-4 satellite, a commercial satellite launched in 1995 to compete with the European INTELSAT. PAS-4 was designed with transmission capabilities that covered the southern Africa region. As a result of the US commercial input in satellite broadcasting in Africa, South African satellite television provider DStv has become a node from which commercial satellite broadcasting has expanded in the region and in East Africa (Paterson, 1998).

Commercial television networks such as M-Net may have increased the selection of programme content available to South African and other viewers in the region, but it is within the narrow spectrum of Western sports and entertainment (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Nevertheless, the premium foreign programmes and movies pervasively shown on commercial stations such as NTV and KTN compelled former KBC audiences to tune in to 'something new' (Maubert, 2006). Never again did the audience have to endure the boring government inclined or poor quality in-house dramas and talk shows made at KBC television. Indeed, Onyango's frustration (highlighted above) about Channel 1 KBC's under-performance can also be attributed to the success of the new commercial television stations. On top of this, producers who could not stand the production constraints at Channel 1 KBC left to join NTV and new television stations whenever they were launched. As of 2007, over 110 television channels and 264 FM frequencies had been assigned countrywide to 23 television and 62 FM sound broadcasters.[xx] Today, KBC television stations, Channel 1 and Channel 2 (commercial), have to compete with several new dynamic commercial stations. They include: Kenya Television Network (KTN); NTV; Citizen TV; Family TV (religious); Stellavision (STV); Cable

Television Network (CTN); M-Net (satellite television); East African TV (music television); K-24 (an exclusively 24 hour news channel, launched in November 2007).[xxi] As Western conglomerates dominate in the ownership of private media, programme content produced in commercial media organisations will push pro-business ideologies and be supportive of any 'stable' political environments that facilitate the success of the commercial broadcasters (Heath, 1992). Hence, commercial television programmes have tended to be 'non-threatening', opting to ignore controversial issues or those concerning government. This kind of television may never fully reflect diverse public opinion (Karikari, 1994).

Conclusion

According to Nyamnjoh (2005: 44), while the British government might have accepted media in Britain as a vehicle for the free flow of information from the beginning, it instituted broadcast media in Africa primarily for administrative purposes. For this reason, the state control of media was the norm. The Ministry of Information in conjunction with the Information Office in respective colonial governments ensured that the press and broadcasting services disseminated the message the government in London wanted heard. Only till late (during the war) did the British government relinquish some of its stranglehold on broadcast media by allowing governments in the territories a bit of leeway in the production of programmes for the indigenous populations using indigenous personnel. This legacy of state control of the media continued to influence the operations of broadcast media in Kenya in the post-independence era, the period when television was launched.

Examining the history of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation television in the light of radio broadcasting, it is clear how crucial finance and politics can influence the structure and operations of broadcasting organisations. In turn, these factors influence the relationship between production of programmes and the defining of their audience. One can argue that the measures KBC television took to remain afloat affected the nature of its 'cultural product', and this in turn affected the station's ability to properly fulfil the state's aspirations of nationalising Kenyans through television. How the KBC television audience was conceptualised within the circumstances discussed in this chapter appears to have been predetermined by the forces that sustained the station over time. On one hand, government regulation of the broadcast sector pushed producers at the public station to acquiesce in government's demand to produce programming that educated, informed and entertained the citizenry in line with the national-cultural aspirations the government wanted to achieve. On

the other hand, lack of finances for production of locally relevant programmes made KBC television import foreign content in order to fill air time.

The arrival of commercial television with the liberalisation of media in Kenya promised to provide the public with new programming. It could also enable the exchange of diverse opinions about development and local cultural matters. However, government restriction on commercial television forced producers in the new stations to resort to self-censorship through the airing of 'safe' foreign programmes. More importantly, nearly all the pioneer producers in commercial television had trained at the government-run KIMC and had worked at KBC television. I will argue that these producers transferred some of the ideological practices of public television to commercial television, particularly as they pertained to defining the role of television in society.

Given the above, it appears that the dynamics surrounding programme production and the profiling of 'audiences' in both public and commercial television are complex. Apparently, producers may always be in a dilemma about which criteria should guide how they conceptualise their target audience. Should they consider finances, government regulation, personal moral ethics, legacy of the history of television broadcasting in the country or audience's needs? Such is the producers' predicament that forms the basis of this study. In the next chapter, I outline the design of the research into how producers conceptualise their audience using entertainment programmes as the entry point into this problem.

Chapter Two
Research Design: Direction and Methods

television viewing provides a prominent occasion for viewers' construction of culture. That occasion—watching television domestically—often with a family, during an evening prime time, for entertainment, primarily as an engagement of fiction [...] is a highly particular kind of institutional arrangement, one that has become, by social convention, strategically important in audiences' construction and accommodation of their culture in general. Watching television, indeed, institutes a persistent social practice through which the audiences carry out considerable rhetorical, political, poetic cultural work [...] People inscribe portions of that knowledge into their lives partially and selectively, by their subsequent actions.

Michael K. Saenz, 1992: 573

Introduction: background to the study

Kenyan television production in the environments of liberalised media presupposes diverse implications for producers as well as viewers. In this context, Kenyan television production priorities appear more focused on market pressure and economic aspects than on cultural and educational purposes (Maubert, 2006). The national KBC television service now competes directly with the new commercial television, because as a para-statal corporation it is no longer funded by the government. Also, former KBC television producers continue joining commercial stations, and now compete with their former colleagues for a share of the 'same audience'. In this context, television represents commercialism. At the same time, television programming in Kenya is seen as inconsistent with the country's national values and aspirations. According to the former Kenyan minister for information and communications, Mutahi Kagwe, "[t]he challenge is to ensure that the television stations increase the broadcasting of programmes whose local content is geared towards the attainment of [Kenya's] national goals and expectations" (Maubert, 2006: vi). Within this framework, television is seen as the epitome of the aspirations of nationalism. Television is expected to teach (Tufte, 1999). In the light of the above dynamics, television's position in the socio-economic-political culture of today's Kenya is shrouded with ambivalence.

Indeed, beginning in 2003 a tug-of-war emerged between the government and television stations (particularly commercial ones) regarding the percentage of local content seen on

Kenyan television screens. Soon the unrelenting debate on how much of it was adequate for television culminated in an unexpected climax. In August of that year, Tourism and Information Minister Raphael Tuju announced that local radio and television stations must broadcast at least 20% and 30% local content, respectively. These quotas were expected to rise to 60 % in the coming years. However, the Media Owners Association and the Kenya Union of Journalists opposed the minister's move claiming that it went against the provisions of liberalisation, and could even force television stations to close down due to the high cost of producing local programmes. The minister defended his ultimatum and said he wanted to guarantee that Kenyans enjoyed the economic benefits inherent in broadcasting as a national resource. He complained that foreign programmes are detrimental to the creation of jobs for Kenyans (http://www.apsattv.com/history/august2003.html). These were the political economic circumstances in which the entertainment programmes considered in this study were produced and broadcast on Channel 1 KBC television and NTV (a commercial station) in 2005. In such a scenario, how did producers of these television programmes imagine their audiences, faced as they were with realities of government policy and the uncertainty of whether or not local content was economically viable for production? One important genre of local television programming worth studying in order to gain an understanding of how producers conceptualised their audience is the entertainment programme, particularly television drama.

Television as an entertainment medium can have similar characteristics of such traditional forums as the village square, the community market and the age-grade gathering (Okigbo, 1998). All these forums are community situations that facilitate the common exchange of information and sharing of values. Hence, the production of television entertainment programmes involves diverse considerations regarding these socio-cultural aspects as they might relate to target audiences. In this context, it may be considered logical to think that all producers need to do in order to appropriately cater to these audiences is to understand the socio-cultural diversity of the people they expect would view the programmes they make. However, the economics and politics of production of these programmes have far reaching implications into the social-cultural realities of the environments of their production (Allen, 1995). Debra Spitulnik (1994: 8) argued that communication with a broadcasting medium such as radio, or television, carries with it a social, historical and political 'context'. "Thus, . . . participation in [television] communication—i.e. how people produce, interpret and use [television] broadcasting—is structured by more than just [sounds and pictures—or the mere

technological aspects of television] but by, for example the economics of [television] ownership and the politics of media control".

Looked at in another way, television entertainment programming entails a communication process with several stages. There is the production of meaning through packaging of programming content; the transmission and distribution of that meaning through the televising of the content and the reception of the content by the audience. At this point the original meaning of the programme content may be altered or appropriated to suit the needs of those who viewed it. For this reason, in considering how producers conceptualise audiences, it is necessary to explain the said stages and factors involved in the whole process of producing television programmes.

Reasons for choosing the topic

Much of what has been written on television production per se in Africa (Heath, 1992, 1999; Bourgault, 1995; Wedell and Tudesq, 1996; Maubert, 2006; Mosime, 2007) focuses primarily on the process of 'instituting' television or its development. Significant research in this area has focused mainly on the quality of production values. For example, Louise Bourgault (1995) studied television production in Nigeria and the expansion of television in West Africa. This research however did not analyse complexities of producing commercial television nor did it critically analyse the meanings audiences of television are able to draw from the television programmes they watched. Recently, Tsepho Mosime (2007) studied the cultural production environments of the Newsroom, in-house productions, commissioning and procurement of foreign and local content in Botswana Television. Her study reveals how state ownership of the media in Botswana compromised the freedom of television producers in packaging and disseminating programme content. Although the study explores how issues of power are implicated in the production of cultural products within a television institution, it did not deeply delve into the practices of producing particular programmes.

In the past, ethnographic television studies have examined how audiences read television messages against the grain of the preferred meanings 'injected' into such programmes during production (Morley, 1980, 1986; Liebes and Katz, 1990). However, studies investigating the practices of production and how they bear on formation (construction) of television audiences are rare. For this reason, my study examines television production practices as a way of retracing the process of 'the formation of the audience' back to the site of programme production. By focusing on the processes of production, the study examines how meanings

are encoded into television programmes through the packaging of different content. It also examines whether certain elements of production practices acted as anchors that constrain 'reader' audiences, restricting their capacity to negotiate the meanings encoded into the content of programmes. This aspect is explained later on with the theoretical approaches used in this study.

Issues investigated and the questions tackled in the study

The liberalisation of television in Kenya influenced producers' decisions during the packaging of given television programmes. Commercial television stations struggled to gain footing in the unchartered territory of privately owned commercial broadcasting. At the same time, the faltering KBC television struggled to shed its poor image of 'the president's private Public Address System' in order to compete with commercial television. Agencies that determined how producers went about producing entertainment programmes and conceptualising their target audiences were dependent on prevalent social, cultural, political and economic discourses. These key discourses were bound to predetermine future dimensions and the profile of television in Kenya. Field research primarily focused on *Uhondo* (NTV, 2003 - 2006) a soap opera drama, and *Reflections* (Channel 1 KBC, 2003 - 2005), a one-off serial drama. However, matters relating to other entertainment programmes mentioned by the research-participant producers at NTV and Channel 1 KBC were investigated depending on their relevance to the research on the primary focus shows of this study. These shows included *Vioja Mahakamani* (KBC, 1986) and *Vitimbi* (KBC, 1975), two of the longest running entertainment programmes on Kenyan television with a history of about 58 years combined. To carry out this task, the study aimed at answering the following questions:

- How do producers of television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audiences?
- How do institutional routines and professional ideologies inform Kenyan television production practices?
- How do the criteria for 'packaging' programmes content bear on the targeted audiences?
- How do television production practices account for the profile of the Kenyan television audience?
- What are the socio-cultural sites utilized by Kenyan television producers to target audiences for particular entertainment programmes in commercial and public television stations?

- Who determines the agenda of Kenyan television stations in the targeting of an audience?

Broader issues investigated in the study

According to the many cultural traditions thriving in Kenya, stories have a role to play as every story told has a moral lesson (Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview). Storytelling, therefore, is never vain entertainment. Narratives, as agents of culture, can be used to comment on and assess the 'realities' of life in terms of how they could be lived (Ong, 1982). Assuming that television entertainment drama shown on Kenyan television screens constitute important narratives that many people can refer to when making sense of the social world they live in, it can be argued that they now act as agents of culture. In this context, it can be hypothesised that the value of production and viewing of entertainment programmes in Kenya might be predicated by the quest for lessons worth teaching or learning.

Field data collected for this study between 2004 and 2005 reveals that producers and audiences alike felt that television programmes had lessons to teach, or that they failed in representing 'the Kenyan culture', for example through their portrayals of behaviour and dress (see Chapter Four). This expectation for lessons in television programmes points to 'a given' presumption that they have a purpose, to teach a lesson of some kind. Hence, are television entertainment programmes functional stories? In answering the questions outlined above, this study explores whether producers of television entertainment programmes regard them as stories serving the same purposes as folk tales. It also examined whether television producers expected these television stories to pass on values and traditions of a given culture, and how this expectation related with audiences who watched these stories.

Overview of narratives of *Reflections* and *Uhondo*, the focus programmes of this study

Reflections was based around the idea of a functioning 'ideal' Kenyan family—a good husband, a good wife and well behaved children living in a single and 'warm' household. The family also had resourceful relatives and neigbours who all seemed to support each other. The subjects of this family respected each other and had aspirations that reflected ambition and a will to succeed and improve their social standing. As a perfect picture of perhaps what every Kenyan family ought to look like, the plot line presented characters in the pursuit of their positively set goals. However, conflict emanating from a changing society appeared to attack and unsettle this family. Particularly, the children in the family were most affected, and they could be seen wrestling with all kinds of problems affecting contemporary youths in Kenya.

The climax of these young characters' 'social predicament' was represented as the unwanted pregnancy of one of the daughters of the family, followed by her ill-advised contemplation of abortion and follow-through. The boys in the family eventually experimented with drugs and towards the collapse of the show in 2005, the family patriarch had had an affair and his wife was contemplating divorce. Ostensibly, *Reflections*' schema was faithful to the traditional story structure aimed at reflecting that sometimes changes that come our way need to be monitored, because these usually upset our established ways of doing things ('our status quos', as in the perfect family), and not always with the best results. This structure presents that change is usually the cause of conflict, and therefore must be adequately dealt with if the story characters are ever to get back to their desired normalcy (Lucey, 1996).

Uhondo on the other hand began with acknowledging that there were problems with the modern family in Kenyan society. Billed as the first true local soap opera to be aired on commercial television in Kenya (according to the Directors of *Uhondo* and Nation TV's production manager), *Uhondo* (Feast) became the pioneer in a new brand of Kenyan television melodrama (Field Notes, September 2005). In advertisements featured in *Daily Nation*, the sister newspaper of NTV, the show was described as "A soap opera about life though 75% of the characters live a life of utopia. Deceit is a main weapon which causes a lot of trouble and havoc in everyone's life. For the young and old with language that's light and easy to understand" (*Daily Nation*, May 10 2005).

In *Uhondo*, the patriarch in the family is a business tycoon, apparently living a glamorous life that many viewers could envy. Nevertheless, the stasis of this family unravelled every week as the plot line presented new surprises about the contradictions of this family's success. For one, its patriarch is an infidel with various mistresses all over town. In addition, his wealth comes from drug peddling, smuggled vehicle imports and illegal land grabbing. Indeed, out of fear that his only son might be in danger because of his criminal activities, he sends him away to Australia for further studies. However, the boy cannot not cope with studies abroad and eventually returns home to run his father's crime empire when the old man is forced to flee the country when the police move to net him in. His ever lonely wife is however elated for the return of a son whom she has not seen for many years. Soon however, her son drives her into depression when he uses corrupt lawyers to shut her out of the family's wealth. Nevertheless, the premise of the drama clearly took on a 'cautionary tale' schema. It presented a flawed family and the tribulation that arose from immoral living. It showed that riches gained through

deceit, illegality and infidentility that trashed the traditional institutions of the Christian marriage only reap trouble for anyone involved in them.

Participatory research and issues of self-reflexivity

My initial aim for doing this project was prompted by a need to do a study on practices of production and how they bear on audiences from an 'insiders' point of view. I had noticed that much of the research done on television (cited above), particularly on audiences, was conducted by scholars who are not media practitioners. Given my background in television/film production[1], I felt that my approach to researching television would contribute a richness that lacked in work done by the academics who have studied television in the past. Through participatory research, I would have the unique opportunity to study the practices of television programmes production in the capacity of 'TV director-researcher'. In this respect, I would be both 'subject of study' and 'author' of the research report, which would give me a highly nuanced understanding of the contexts of programme production (Aziz and Salvesen, 2008). Nevertheless, carrying out this study being so closely embedded onto the object of the study was problematic for the following reasons.

My participation in the activities of television production, which entailed carrying out some duties of a director and production assistant, point to the entanglement of my 'researcher role' with 'being the subject of study'. For this reason, I needed to emancipate myself from the inner sanctums of what constituted the 'subject' of the study, so that I could stand at a peripheral site of 'objective' observation. Unfortunately, in participatory research, 'the conflicts of interests' that arise from the researcher's direct involvement or engagement in the activities being researched deny him/her any such objective positions. The most practical alternative for the researcher to achieve more credible data collection, therefore, is to go through a thorough ritual of self-reflexivity accounting for his/her positioning at the site of research. Only then can the researcher elevate himself/herself to a position where s/he can be able to effectively analyse the research data in the post research phase of writing the study.

In their study on the practical uses of entertainment-education (EE) documentary, *Voice Out*, involving producer-participants directly connected with the subjects covered in the film, Lisa Aziz and Veslemoy Salvesen (2008) showed why mapping the positioning of authors

---

[1]Prior to commencing field research, I had worked as a documentary filmmaker and script writer in Kenya beginning in 2003. In addition, although I entered the site of research as an intern/researcher in 2004, by the end of September 2005 I had edited, scripted and directed scenes of 26 episodes of *Uhondo*.

(television producers) and readers of the research report is important. Aziz's acknowledgement of her dual roles as television producer/director and researcher indicated that positioning of the projected author of research at a credible location from where s/he could observe the research site is not automatic. The research process required a matrix of sorts that mapped out distinctively how Aziz, the producer/director (author) of the television programme, and Aziz, the researcher per se, were positioned during compiling and reporting of the research findings. For this purpose, Aziz and Salvesen (2008) established a matrix that traced how producer Aziz was inserted into the research as "the author and EE researcher, after the making of *Voice Out*, interrogating her own work". This situatedness provided her "a unique opportunity to analyze author position in at least two ways: 1) as author of the TV insert [*Voice Out* episode] prior to learning EE techniques, a kind of "before" position; and 2) as author of a critique of this "before" condition, "after" having learned about EE theory and methods" (Aziz and Salvesen, 2008: 221). This enabled "Aziz, the producer … to provide contextual background to the "before" element, and also arrive at an after critique, of her own work, thus investing the analysis with a highly nuanced explanation" (Aziz and Salvesen, 2008: 221).

Due to the ever present problem of the objectivity of researchers in reporting their findings, social research needs to locate both "authors" and "readers" in the communication and evaluation of the research process (Sless, 1986). This is certainly relevant regarding situations where the researcher is a direct participant in the 'happening' of the 'object' being studied, for example the practices of television programme production. Ethnography is said to allow the researcher a less subjective position, a 'more neutral pose', since he/she "begins by acknowledging that his/her own position is one of ignorance" as s/he 'reads the objects of study through direct contact with the community participating in the study. Nonetheless, ethnographers also "report on their findings using the conventional rhetoric of science which entails the creation of a deputy" (Sless, 1986: 123-4). Indeed, this problem is particularly pressing when the researcher is engaged in a study of his/her own 'backyard'—so to speak. A *deputy* in this context means an observer who is capable of operating outside the processes of the happenings of what is being studied and is merely in charge of communicating the findings of the research, which s/he did not partake in 'constructing' as one of the research participants. Hence, the deputy is not a participant-researcher but the 'pure' observer. According to Sless (1986: 121) "in order to distance themselves and adopt the vantage point of the outsider, to stand back and 'observe' the text [producers and their practices of

conceptualising audiences in this case], [researchers] have to generate a reader to take the place that they have vacated. This reader is the *deputy*".

Given the immersion/encapsulation problem that locates the researcher inside the object of study, what the researcher describes in his/her study "is in no way existent apart from the researcher's involvement in it—it is not 'out there'. [The researcher's] claims are not ontological, in the traditional sense [of positivistic/scientific research] that reveal an existent universe that might be known apart from [the researcher's] knowing activity and its entailments" (Steier, 1991: 1). This predicament denies the researcher an automatic, privileged position from which to stand and be able to make 'detached' observations on the site of the study, yet be part of the happening of the socio-historically lived moments that research participants engage.

Like in the case of Aziz and Salvesen (2008), issues of the positions of the projected author and readers relevant to this study require a sophisticated explication. Due to my capacity as television producer before commencing field work, I occupied, first, the position of a practitioner with an 'insider's' awareness of the processes of television programme production. Afterwards, during the field research activities, I was a participant-observer of the practices producers engaged during the production of the entertainment programmes considered in this study. Later, I occupied another position, that of a critic of how producers go about producing programmes. The first position of practitioner imbued me with particular presuppositions/assumptions based on my know-how regarding the production of television programmes. The second position gave me an 'after the fact' platform that enabled me to evaluate in a more nuanced manner the diversity in approaches to producing television programmes.

In many circumstances, my preconceived notions concerning 'the way' to go about the production process were invalidated, tested and new ways learned as the research-participant-producers of the programmes covered by this study revealed 'their ways' of producing. Thus, the baggage of my professional background and my research participant capacity had a direct impact on the research encounter and the reporting of the findings (Tomaselli, Dyll and Francis, 2008). The advantageous impact of this baggage was that I did not have to appoint a *deputy* in the reader because of my two positions—the one representing the fact that I had worked as a producer of television programmes and film and that of a participant producer-researcher engaged in a pragmatic study of how 'other' producers went about making

programmes and conceptualising their audiences. Hence, in writing the research report, I was in a good position to author a critique of the producers I had encountered in the production environments based on the emergent differences in 'our' approaches to producing. In the light of how 'I assumed' programmes production and conceptualisation of the audience happened prior to commencing fieldwork, I was able to author a credible critique of the research-participant producers' overall practices of producing the programmes covered by this study based on my (research-participant's) experience of producing with them.

Methodology, the ethnographic approach

Production of television programmes is a socio-cultural engagement involving teamwork of several people who have to work together at several stages of this process. Hence, these processes involve collaborations of different people with varying interpretations of the objectives of producing programmes. According to Paddy Scannell (1996: 11), "It is not *necessarily* the case that the programmes are for audiences. They might be made for profit. They might be for the powers that be. They might be for those who make them. They might be for those who take part in them". In the light of this, television programme production practices involve interaction, dialogue and negotiation. Individual members in the production teams always have to exchange ideas on how to go about making specific programmes based on their understanding of the purposes of such programmes. Programme production, hence the conceptualisation of target audiences, are socio-cultural experiences. Individuals engaged in them exchange meanings as they endeavour to reconcile differing 'interpretations' of the objectives involved in the actual activities of production. For this reason, a qualitative methodology such as is ethnography, because of its consideration of the inherent subjectivity of the practitioners of television production, was useful in studying how producers of the television entertainment dramas covered by this study engaged the production process.

Particularly, through this enabling methodological approach, I was able to participate in the socio-historically lived moments and the varied particularities involved in the production of *Uhondo*, *Reflections*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*.

According to John Fiske (1987: 63), "ethnographic research engages its subjects of study as socially and historically situated people" through in-depth interviews with small numbers of people and participant observation. These methods are seen as the best "way to learn subtleties of [research subjects'] interaction with television" (Ang, 1996: 36). The ethnographic methodology therefore "enables us to account for diversity both within the

social formation and within the processes of culture" (Fiske, 1987: 63). Previous work in television studies using the ethnographic approach has extensively examined how television audiences as social subjects negotiate television messages to create meanings corresponding to their various social structures. Such studies include the works of Hobson (1980, 1982); Ang (1985); Palmer (1986); Morley (1980, 1986); Liebes and Katz (1990); Roome (1998); Strelitz (2002); Tager, (2002) and those in the realm of Entertainment- Education (Nariman, 1993; La Pastina, 2001; La Pastina, Patel, Schiavo, 2004). Although these studies mainly focus on how audiences interact with television programmes content, the ethnographic approach could apply in examining the diversity of the particularities involved in the processes of packaging the programmes content before it ever reached the audience—that is at the 'studio' level during production.

By participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, the researcher is able to watch what happens, listen to what is said and ask questions about the research subjects' activities. This way the researcher is able to collect the data that eventually sheds light on the important questions that the research aspired to answer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:2). Although critics of the participant observation method might suggest that the situations observed and recorded in the field could have been prearranged just for the researcher, Phillip Elliot (1972: 7) notes that:

> deliberate distortion is much less likely to occur if an observer is present over a period of time, than it is, for example, in responses to a questionnaire or interview. Moreover, other goals, such as getting the work done or the programmes produced, inevitably take precedence over any aim to mislead the researcher. Participant observation is not so much a single method as a battery of methods, including most of the other research techniques in embryo. For this reason it [… enables] a wide range of research questions and interests to be handled continuously.

Indeed, as a participant-observer the research may easily blend-in with the subjects being studied. In this respect, s/he can remain inconspicuous hence be able to collect data without drawing attention to him/herself.

Entry into the field, an empirical experience

This research project began at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. I enrolled at the Centre for Media and Film Studies in 2003 and was advanced to PhD degree candidacy towards the end of 2004. On the basis of this status, I was allowed to

commence fieldwork soon after. My work in the field began in late November, 2004 and lasted till late September 2005. Field work started in Nairobi, Kenya with an application for a three months internship at the commercial television station NTV (then known as Nation TV)[xxii]. As a former lecturer in the Communication Department at Daystar University in Kenya between 2001 and 2003, I had learned that the university was able to place students in the television production studios of NTV and KBC television for practical training. These two organisations had established internship programmes that allowed students to enter programme production environments as understudies in the respective areas of their interest. Knowing this, I decided to exploit NTV and KBC television's existing interest in students by applying for practical learning within the production sets of any television dramas produced at these stations. Consequently, I drafted an application letter[xxiii] for internship positions at NTV where I hoped to begin my research on the production set of *Wingu La Moto* (NTV, 2003), a soap opera. I had already identified this show as a good site of research through my 'scout-viewing' of NTV's programming.

The letter was successful and in late November, 2005, the programme manager from NTV called and offered me the opportunity to work as a production assistant in a new soap opera drama called *Uhondo* (NTV, 2003 – 2006). He was regretful that production of my choice drama, *Wingu*, had been halted as the show was off-season. Should I so wish, I could work in *Uhondo* as the show resumed shooting episodes 14 - 26 for the second season in early January, 2005. I accepted the offer. Meanwhile, I appropriated the same copy of the internship application letter I had used for the position at NTV to apply for a three months internship at Channel 1 KBC TV. In less than two weeks, Mary Onyango, the acting Programmes Manager at Channel 1, called me with a positive result. She had accepted my request to work as an intern the following year in March 2005 in *Reflections* (Channel 1 KBC, 2003 – 2005), a television drama.

On January 10, 2005, the first meeting in preparation of the production of the second season of *Uhondo* was held in Nairobi. The cast, crew and the executive producer of the show were in attendance. Kimaita Magiri, then production manager of programming at NTV, also the person in whose auspices I would work in *Uhondo*, introduced me to the production personnel. He told them I was there as an intern who was interested in learning how they produced the soap opera, but since I also had experience in television production I would assist in production duties wherever possible. On my part, I introduced my purpose for being

on the show as related to a PhD course. I told the cast and crew that observations I made during my stay in the show and contributions they relayed to me might be included in this thesis. It appeared that the group had no objections and was delighted to work with me. Indeed, I would be immersed in the production duties sooner than I expected because two weeks later after arriving on the set of *Uhondo*, I was invited to direct a scene on the show when the director of the programme was held up at the Channel 1 KBC news studio where he worked full time as a news director. He was also part-owner of Eagles Media Agents, from whom NTV had outsourced *Uhondo*. Ironically, the executive producer, production coordinator of the show, also the set designer at *Uhondo*, all worked at Channel 1 KBC TV and moonlighted as private producers of television programmes as Eagles. Kimaita of NTV had also been an understudy of Stephano Ngunyi (the executive producer of *Uhondo*) at KBC television news department only a few years earlier. Since the director of *Uhondo* and the production coordinator/set designer and one camera person in the crew of *Uhondo* still held their television jobs at KBC, my assistance in production duties became more frequent and involving as time went by. By the time I terminated my research with *Uhondo* in September 2005, I had been involved in directing and production assistant duties in many scenes of the 26 episodes shot for the second season during my fieldwork term with the show.

Research work at the public television Channel 1 began in March 2005 on the production set of *Reflections* in Studio B. Unlike other researchers who have had to contend with vigorous gate keeping and secrecy when they ventured into researching government media institutions (Mosime, 2007), my reception at KBC television was pleasant and very productive from the very beginning. Mary Onyango, the acting programmes controller of television welcomed me to KBC[xxiv] and introduced me to key production staff at the drama department. These people answered directly to her and were in charge of expediting the programming requirements as Onyango dictated them. They included then head of Drama Department, Wafula Nyongesa; the directors of *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* and Catherine Wamuyu, the director of *Reflections*, and also head of Youth, Education and Women Department. Immediately, Ms Wamuyu invited me to observe the recording of three episodes of *Reflections*. Although I planned to intensively study the production activities of *Reflections* as a participant-observer, I had to change my plans because in the second week after arriving on the show production was halted. Ms Wamuyu informed me that actors in the show had been contracted to work on a foreign production where they hoped to earn better income. Since she had several episodes ready to run in subsequent weeks, she did not mind halting production for a month or so. The

break in the production of *Reflections* gave me an opportunity to observe production activities of *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani,* the two other shows that were usually shot in Studio B.

At this point, it is important to reiterate that I chose *Uhondo* and *Reflections* as the ideal focus programmes to study for expediency reasons. The two programmes happened to be in production at the time, and I easily secured permission to enter their production sets for the purposes of conducting ethnographic research. Also, the dramatic genre was ideal because its 'series/serial' structure provided extended opportunities to study casts and crews that had been working together for an extended period. This fact meant that the production personnel of the two programmes had established 'production traditions' that could be observable. Nevertheless, the choice of type of programmes selected for the study was less important than the observation of the process of production—the central concern of this study.

Audience interventions

The latter stage of the field research included 'audience interventions', whereby I organised semi-structured and impromptu screenings of four episodes—that is two episodes each of *Uhondo* and *Reflections—* at two bars and a tertiary college classroom. The bars were deemed appropriate venues for such screenings because they had pre-existing television sets where video taped Nigerian and local television dramas were commonly screened to an enthusiastic clientele. I had been introduced to the owners of these places by a step-brother who was well acquainted with the bar as a television screening environment. One screening happened at a bar in Nairobi city on a Saturday afternoon. The other screening happened on a Wednesday evening in Kiambu, a satellite town 16 km north of Nairobi. Both events were attended by at least 10 people who sat through the whole screening till the end. Not all patrons participated vocally in the discussions that followed. However, it was clear that even those patrons who did not speak were interested in these discussions as they could be seen listening, smiling or laughing whenever something interesting emanated from the discussions. Other patrons flowed into and out of the bars only briefly stopping to find out what the screening activities were about.

The last screening was presented to a class of 12 diploma broadcasting students in a small tertiary college in Nairobi city where I had taught broadcast writing in 2002. In each screening venue, I played one episode of *Uhondo* and one of *Reflections* at a time and then requested the viewers to comment on what they had just seen. There were no specific questions that had

been set to rigidly guide these audiences on how they were required to respond on the appeal of the dramas on them. However, whenever necessary I asked respondents questions in order to elicit clarification on what they had said or why they had said it. In nearly all the screening sessions, I allowed the respondents to freely engage in discussions and arguments with each other over what they had just watched. Although I refrained from interrupting the respondents as they engaged each other, I would arbitrate the discussion whenever I felt that it veered off the course of the purpose of the screening interventions, that is, to capture the spontaneous meanings that these audiences garnered from the screened episodes. In some cases, the audiences' responses were recorded on tape while in other cases they were noted in a field notes diary. In order to ease the respondents' nerves in contributing to the discussions, I occasionally presented my view about the episodes just screened. By so doing, the audience respondents 'warmed' up to me as they felt I was 'one of them' in voicing opinions about the television programmes they had just watched.

For ethical purposes and privacy of the research participants, I opened each of the screening sessions with an introduction that the researcher participants' contributions might be used as research findings in this PhD thesis. I also advised the research participants that they could abstain from airing their views about what they had just watched if they so wished. For those who aired their views publicly and a recording of their voices made, I assured them that what they had said would be transcribed into written form and their names would not be featured in the thesis when the final report had been written down.

Other audience commentary on *Uhondo* and *Reflections* was collected from relevant letters and emails audiences sent to the respective television stations where the two soap operas were produced. As a way of maintaining a link with their audiences, the directors of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* had opened email accounts for their respective shows. The email addresses were screened with the end credits of the shows every week. In all, I managed to collect 71 viewer commentaries on *Uhondo* and 67 on *Reflections* mainly from the respective email addresses set up for this purpose.

Criteria for selecting research-participant audiences

It is important to note here that there was no specific criteria controlling the type of audience profiles assembled in selected viewing venues. Conditions under which the audiences watched episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*; whether audiences were 'expert' or 'lay' viewers; whether they viewed the episodes in communal settings or whether individual

members of the audience were regular viewers of *Uhondo* and *Reflection* did not matter. All these criteria were irrelevant, as the most important element presented by these 'communal viewings' was that they offered me the convenience of accessing the variety in audience members' responses to *Uhondo* and *Reflections'* content in single seatings.

The assembled groups also provided me with situations of temporary but 'natural' settings where audience members could have, by chance, watched and responded to these programmes, after being exposed to them. I assumed that similar viewing situations could happen, even outside the context of a study such as mine. Indeed, such viewing settings might not restrict the same audiences congregated in the research context from responding to the episodes screened to them in other 'real' life contexts, whether as experts or lay-people. Also, just as there were no specific questions posed to the audience members who chose to comment on *Uhondo* and *Reflections* through emails, about anything on any random episodes that they had watched, commentary elicited from the public audience interventions was voluntary. Audience members were free to comment on anything they deemed important. Had I used a set of specific questions to guide audience responses, I would have constrained audience members to commenting only on things related to my questions.

Given the above reasons, audience responses to the episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* elicited during the three 'public' interventions are merely illustrative of possible meanings that an audience could make of the two episodes. When juxtaposed with the central meanings that producers of the two programmes hoped audiences would garner from *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, this data merely revealed whether disparities existed between how the producers and audiences 'saw' these programmes. Research on audience responses to Kenyan television programmes similar to *Uhondo* and *Reflections* is therefore needed in order to cover the many dimensions of audiences' interactions with entertainment dramas such as these. Since the overall study was concerned with how producers conceptualised their audiences, it had to focus on the practices that producers engaged (within institutional cultures guided by dominant policies) to produce programmes that they hoped would accomplish certain goals when they were watched by 'receptive' viewers. For this reason, further research is needed to examine how audiences of entertainment television programmes in Kenya appropriated the meanings they received from programmes to suit their own circumstances. At the same time, such a study should strive to examine how audiences defined themselves vis-à-vis their

understanding of the role of producers and television institutions in producing programmes that are targeted to them.

Data collection methods

Primarily, all research at Channel 1 KBC TV took an observation approach. However, in-depth interviews were also conducted with the directors, and writers of *Reflections*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*. I also had informal conversations with the production staff in charge of lighting, floor management and set design concerning their work in Studio B. This crew was the same for nearly all the shows that were shot in this studio. In contrast, research on *Uhondo* was intensive and took on a proper participative-observation approach as I was fully immersed in most of the programme's production activities such as writing, shooting, directing, editing of the show, and driving the cast and crew to and from shooting locations. These moments afforded me ample time with the cast and crew at which point I was able to listen to them discuss the undertakings of production as well as the day to day programme production problems.

Purposive sampling was used to select the subjects of the study. As highlighted above, my smooth entry into the sites of research under the patronage of key and senior people in the two television stations was a great asset. For this reason, most of the cast, crew and producers involved in the production activities of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were always very willing to assist me in accomplishing the tasks of research in these organisations. For instance, both Kimaita and Onyango introduced me to the executive producer of *Uhondo*, head of Drama at KBC television and directors of *Uhondo, Reflections, Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahamakamani*. In turn, the directors of these shows introduced me to the cast and crews of their respective shows.

Given that I was stationed at the production sets of specific programmes in two media houses, the diversity of required research participants for this study was easy to achieve. The population size of each production team studied was small, and so it was possible to target every available person involved in the production process of the entertainment programmes covered by the study. In addition, this population was diverse enough for assessing the characteristics of these producers and their approaches to producing the said programmes. The Kenyan television industry is small, and broadcast media practitioners have tended to migrate from one television station to another since media liberalisation (Maubert, 2006: 32). As such, it was easy for research participants to refer me to other potential participants who

would enhance the overall sample of the study. For instance, during a planned interview with Naomi Kamau, the writer of *Reflections*, I met Lucy Shikuku, the script editor and sometimes writer of *Uhondo* and *Wingu La Moto*, and Odhiambo, a key actor in *Reflections.* Ms Kamau had invited Ms Shikuku to meet with me for a talk about her experience in writing for *Wingu*, while Odhiambo joined us on spotting his two 'colleagues in television' at the coffee house where we were meeting in downtown, Nairobi (Field notes, September 2005). Although the sample size was not restricted to a certain number of individuals, sampling was discontinued when the researcher felt that the targeted research participants did not provide any new information (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999: 380).

Data collection instruments

Impromptu unstructured interviews; in-depth semi-structured interviews; written ethnography and viewers' responses emails and letters were used to collect data. Impromptu unstructured interviews were conducted with minor actors in *Uhondo* and *Reflections*; camera people on *Uhondo*, *Reflections*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Vitimbi*; production assistants; costume designer for *Uhondo* and set designer for KBC drama programmes. These interviewees' responses were either noted down on the field notes diary or tape recorded.

In depth face-to-face interviews[2] were carried out with the research participants affiliated with particular programmes and television stations as indicated in the **Table** below:

Research Participant by role	Television Station where employed	Television show associated with
Programme Manager	Channel 1 KBC TV	Reflections, Vitimbi & Vioja Mahakamani
Head of Television Drama	Channel 1 KBC TV	Reflections, Vitimbi & Vioja Mahakamani
Director	Channel 1 KBC TV	Reflections
Head, Youth, Education and Women Department	Channel 1 KBC TV	Reflections
Script Writer	Channel 1 KBC TV	Reflections
Director	Channel 1 KBC TV	Vitimbi
Director	Channel 1KBC TV	Vioja Mahakamani
Production Manager	Nation TV	Uhondo
Executive Producer	Eagles Media	Uhondo
Director	Eagles Media	Uhondo
Production Co-ordinator	Nation TV	Uhondo

---

[2] All interviewees' responses were tape recorded.

Script Writers	Eagles Media & Nation TV	Uhondo
3 Lead Actors	Channel 1 KBC TV & Eagles Media	Reflections & Uhondo

Table: Research Participant-Producers According to their Job Positions and Production Institutions.

Extensive conversations on post-production activities relating to *Uhondo* were also conducted with the personnel of Forefront Communication regarding their roles in the production of this programme. These people included: Managing Director of Forefront; Senior Programme Editor; Director of Videography; Lighting Manager; Location Manager and Costume Designer and two regular camera operators. Their contributions were recorded in my field notes diary.

The aim of all the above interviews and conversations was to establish which factors guided and motivated the research participants in their programme production work. Hence, I asked them questions relating to this aspect. The questions (which were not asked in any strict order) might have varied in wording depending on the unique circumstances of the research participants but not in aim. An outline of the questions is presented in the End Notes[xxv]. Questionnaires were not used because I felt these would constrain the subjects' spontaneous reactions and descriptions of their experiences with television, either as workers on the actual production sets/studios or as heads of the departments where those programmes were produced. In addition, given the participative-observational nature of this study, I felt that surveys and questionnaires might have hindered a natural engagement with the research subjects by drawing attention to my 'researcher' status. Hence, I would have distanced myself from the people I was researching, and therefore they might have considered me not truly one of them during the activities of producing the programmes. Indeed, they might have felt that I was there to probe and judge them.

Interviewees' responses to the above questions could ascertain whether the practitioners involved in producing the programmes covered by this study solely relied on the stated policies, goals and aims of their particular television stations during production. In addition, I hoped that the responses might indicate whether other factors determined the processes of producing these entertainment programmes, and if so how these manifested themselves in the programme production processes.

Data collection and storage

Ethnographic, or any type of social research, is an extensive undertaking. The researcher is presented with an enormous bulk of raw materials in the form of social subjects' activities, words, written documents, or artefacts (Elliot, 1972). All these materials could form important data that the researcher may need in compiling the final report. For this reason, data collection and storage requires several methods. In this study, field notes were extensively used in order to record the researcher's participant-observer's point of view. A written ethnography on observations made during the production of given entertainment programmes under study and of the interactions of the actors, producers and crews was kept. However, all data resulting from the long semi-structured interviews with key production personnel of *Reflections*, *Uhondo*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* were tape recorded.

Validation of data and methods triangulation

Environments of the production of culture, as are television studios, involve social interactions between individuals. These phenomena do not necessarily have consistent, formulaic patterns to be found or established in a manner that can be 'measured' (Du Gay et al, 1997). For this reason, research into these environments usually entails gathering the narratives of the research participants because these provide a "unique perspective" on how individuals at the site of study intersected with the collectivity, the cultural and the social aspects relating to their lives (Lasslett, 1999: 392)—say programme production and the conceptualising of audiences. However, the combined methods approach into researching the said sites, and the individuals operating within them, enhances the researcher's chances of discovering the multi-layeredness of the texture of the cultures of production (Du Gay et al, 1997). Clearly, participant-observation, interviews and conversations with the practitioners involved in the production of programmes covered by this study served this purpose. They revealed that the process of conceptualising audiences entails many factors ranging from social, economic, political to cultural ones. Responses by viewers who responded to episodes of these programmes on the other hand pointed out aspects relating to the nature of 'being' the audience that only it could have revealed. This contribution hinted at the 'autonomy' of the audience that perhaps should have been accounted for in the conceptualisation of audience, a dimension producers struggled to pin down as the findings in Chapter Seven reveal.

In this study therefore, the methods used to gather data were not meant to test a specific hypothesis. Indeed, as Chapters Six shows, the hypothesis relating to answers to the key

question of this research emerged only after the data had been gathered and analysed. As such, the findings of the research reveal the 'character' of the hypothesis that best describes the experiences of conceptualising the audience of the programmes covered by this study. The written ethnography on activities of programmes production and interview responses analysed in relation to the stated philosophies under which NTV and Channel 1 KBC TV operate serve this purpose (Chapter Seven). In order to assess whether readers of television programmes content could be constrained in their reading of such content, the elicited commentary from viewers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* is analysed. The feelings (frustrations) of the viewers on how these soaps appealed to them and what meanings they made out of them is evaluated against the stated aspirations of NTV and Channel 1 KBC.

Audience commentary is also analysed against the stated goals and aspirations of the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* in terms of what they hoped the audience would gain from these shows. Interviews with the producers of these shows, their organisations' policies on entertainment programmes and the actual packaging of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* show how the said institutional aspirations dictated how *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were meant to appeal to their audiences. Any disparity between what the audiences made of these shows and what the producers hoped they (audiences) would make of the two shows hints that audiences either 'under-read', 'over-read' or 'accurately read' these shows within their producers' expectations. In addition, the audience commentary points out reasons why viewers understood the shows in the way they did. These reasons in turn reveal factors relating to how they arrived at 'meaning-making' when reading the television programmes content. These factors include: the composition of the texts of the two shows, socio-cultural values and the subjectivities of the audiences as determined by their demographics. Eventually, an assessment is made of how these same factors shaped the meanings the audiences made from the two shows using the literature on the operation policies of NTV and Channel 1 KBC. Literature on the said policies is available on the official websites of NTV (http://www.nationaudio.com) and KBC (http://www.kbc.co.ke/info.asp?ID=1). Other relevant literature concerning policies of operations not cited on these websites was obtained from the public relations offices of these stations as deemed necessary.

Furthermore, the producers' narratives of their experiences in dealing with the institutional policies under which they produced the entertainment programmes covered by this study also constitute useful data. This data points out how traditions and the cultures of television

production inform institutional policies on programmes production. Indeed, narrative "is a very commonly used way of making sense of people's lives and giving a logical sequence of meaning to their activities: we might narrate our life 'story' in relation to a particular occupation (or career) …" (Du Gay et al, 1997: 45). These "accounts are often given of the production history of particular programmes. Such accounts must be understood as situated within the overall context of production—the totality of output. For it is the meaningfulness of the whole that always structures in advance the meaningfulness of any particular part of the whole (i.e. any individual programme)" (Scannell, 1996: 2). Current newspaper articles on Kenyan television broadcasting were also useful as they provided insight into the operations of Kenyan television from a political-economic perspective. Their insight enabled me to see the research data in the broader context of the discourses within which Kenyan television is located.

Limitations in the research approach

Participatory research requires the researcher to engage in tangible relationships with the subjects of the study, to immerse him/herself in the activities of 'living' their lives (Kelly and van der Riet, 2001: 159). However, due to this immersion I might have been distracted as I, 'subject of research', worked hard to maintain the meaningful relationships forged with people involved in producing the television entertainment programmes under study. For instance, immediately after I had accepted to enter the production set of *Uhondo* as a production assistant in training, there was no turning back whenever demands of assisting in whatever production work needed to be done. Indeed, I had a feeling that I owed the producers of the show a favour because they had accepted me into their world, an exclusive world of professionals. In positively responding to their requests of assistance, I concretised my relationship with the production team and was hence seen as one of their own. In particular, once when transport for the cast and crew broke down, Ngunyi (Executive Producer of *Uhondo*) requested me to ferry the team home using my car. Since I was on the shooting location with the team and had participated in the activities of production up to that day, he hoped I would not leave my 'team-mates' behind. On my part, I felt that it would be irresponsible of me to leave the cast and crew behind without a means of transport home. It would have been out of order to leave them in the field yet returned to the production set the following morning and asked them how they made it home.

For this reason, the relationships I developed with the producers, the cast and crew were sometimes hinged on obligation, and sometimes guilt. As a researcher, I felt as if I owed the production team 'favours' because it provided me with the data I would need to complete my research. Indeed, I felt obligated to respond to their requests for assistance because they had made me an integral part of their project at two levels. First, as a researcher interested in their work, I had validated for them that their work was important. In fact, this was illustrated by the forthcoming nature in which they interacted with me and their willingness to answer my questions. Second, my involvement in the production duties per se—for example driving the crew home, and later my role as director of scenes in various episodes of *Uhondo*—made me somewhat indispensable to the production team as I spent a lot of time with it in production. Despite the pressure to maintain the distance required of a researcher, I needed to cultivate and manage the relationships I had established in the field in order to create the right impression to the research participants for the sake of successfully completing the study (Walsh, 1998: 226).

Another limiting factor related to participatory research is that it is too 'involving'. As a participant-researcher, I lacked enough time to allocate to the several sites of study which I needed to cover given the multifaceted objectives of this research. For instance, when I became involved in directing scenes of *Uhondo*, my engagement as 'director' in this show compromised my role as 'researcher' somewhat. I found myself with fewer opportunities to make data entries about production activities as they happened, and so sometimes I had to recall these at the end of each day for documentation. In addition, my capacity as 'Director of *Uhondo'* occasionally detained me at the production set of this show, thus removing me from the sites where the production practices of the other entertainment programmes I wanted to study happened.

Initially, the objective of this field research was to devote an equal amount of time participating and observing the production processes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. In the end, because of the suspension of *Reflections'* recordings at the KBC studios as previously explained, I spent most of the fieldwork time on the production set of *Uhondo*. For this reason, most of the empirical accounts given in this thesis relate to the production of a commercial television soap opera that had been out-sourced and not produced in-house at the NTV studios. Another study, therefore, may be required for the purposes of gathering details

regarding how the socio-cultural undertakings involved in all the steps that a soap opera produced at the public television station, Channel 1 KBC happened.

Nonetheless, using the research design explicated in this chapter this study managed to examine the particularities involved in particular entertainment programmes production. The study revealed that producers' production activities, their cultural ideologies and the political economic dynamics of the production environment influenced the packaging and character of programme content. In turn, the programme content's character implied how the audience responded to it. Producers hoped to match programme content with the right audience based on their presupposed knowledge of the nature of this target audience. Yet, it was not always clear that the producers truly understood the audience's interests nor its configuration as a diverse population. Since this study is concerned with how these producers conceptualise their audiences, it is important to establish the dynamics that define the relationships between television producers and their audiences. The next chapter therefore examines the nature of 'being the audience of television' inside and outside the Commercial and Public Service (institutional) definitions. The aim of this task is to contextualise the treatment of the entertainment television audience within the scope of this thesis. Therefore, Chapter Three first revisits the notions that gave rise to the 'active audience' paradigms and later discusses the subjectivity of the viewer within the institutional concepts of the audience.

Chapter Three
The Dynamic Nature of 'Being the Audience'

Introduction

Television producers always hope to reach a target audience. But it is not guaranteed that their programmes will be watched by the viewers for which they were intended, nor in the way that they might have imagined. For this reason, programme content is designed to hail and guide the audience into 'attending' to given shows. However, 'being an audience' is complex as it involves many factors, the most significant of which is the agency of the viewer, which is dependent on given socio-cultural values and parameters of meaning-making. Hence, the gap between the imagination of television producers about the nature of their targeted audience and the true nature of this audience cannot be easily bridged only by the choices producers make. Nevertheless, producers seem to have the upper hand in controlling what the viewer watches on the television screen, which somewhat reduces the producers' need to truly 'know' their audience. Indeed, producers would rather view audiences of given programmes as categories, such as the young, children, men, women, or better yet, as citizens or consumers (Ang, 1991). As I shall show later in this chapter, it is crucial for television producers to conceptualise audiences as collectives in order to minimise the fragmentation of the processes involved in the manufacturing of the most appropriate audiences, those designed to propagate and enhance the profitability or the mere existence of the television institutions.

To illustrate the above supposition and also show how some producers of entertainment television programmes in Kenya construct or view audiences, I will cite examples relating to the production and viewing of *Reflections* (KBC Channel 1, 2003 - 2005) and *Uhondo* (Feast) (NTV, 2004 - 2006). Other examples relating to production and viewership of entertainment television programmes concern *Vioja Mahakamani* (Mischief in the Court Room) and *Vitimbi* (Deceptions). The reason for referring to the latter two shows here is because they were constantly mentioned by the producers who participated in this research, particularly with regards to the production of television entertainment drama at KBC television. A complete description of the plots and other story elements of these shows is provided in Chapter Seven where I also comprehensively discuss how viewers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* responded to these dramas. Illustrations of how the institutional frameworks of NTV and Channel 1 KBC, within which *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were produced, illuminate how particular political and economic discourses determined how these television programmes were produced, hence the

nature of the emergent relationships between their producers and audiences. While *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were both produced for entertainment purposes, each drama was also designed to meet the objectives of the production houses where it was made, which in turn compelled the producers of either programme to conceptualise their audiences accordingly. NTV had contracted Eagles Media Agents to produce *Uhondo* as an outsourcing strategy so that the station could prioritise the production of news and current affairs programmes within-house. In contrast, *Reflections* was an in-house production of KBC Channel 1 in the department of Youth, Education, Women and Children.

What is the nature of the 'audience'?

Any study that attempts to research television audiences has to contend with their dynamic nature, the uncertainties surrounding how audiences are conceptualised, how they manifest themselves as active, socially and historically placed people. Although the television audience is now understood to be active, its freedom in interpreting the content of television programmes may be constrained by various factors. According to Mosco and Kaye (2000: 44), "Audience members, we must constantly remember, exist not only in relation to the media text itself but are constituted out of the entire set of social production relations". This implies that the interactions that viewers of television have with people in the social spaces where they live significantly impact the way they respond to television programmes. Such interactions increase subjectivity in how people interpret what they see on television as their points of view and outlook to life are constantly prompted by socially lived experiences.

Nevertheless, in television production, the concept 'audience' connotes boundaries, a framing. As Hartley (1992) suggests, there is no television audience outside the discourse of television. Indeed, the term 'audience' as it is understood today was invented by media institutions for their own purposes (Mosco and Kaye, 2000). In the earliest stages of radio broadcasting for example, producers 'drafted' (recruited) the audience because they quickly realised that radio was useless if it did not have someone to listen to it (Stamps 1979: 22-23). A good example of the desperate measures that early radio broadcasters had to take in inventing the audience is the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company case. In 1920, Westinghouse established KDKA Pittsburgh, one of the first commercial broadcasting radio stations in the United States of America. Faced with the reality that it might produce programmes that no one was listening to, the company had radio sets manufactured and distributed to its personnel and their friends as a way of creating their first audience. Public radio broadcasting too had

similar concerns early on. For instance, Val Gielgud, Director of Drama at the BBC in 1930, worried about a situation whereby the corporation would spend a lot of time and money yet no one was listening to its broadcasts (Silvey, 1974: 14; Mosco and Kaye, 2000).

In colonial Kenya, the British Information Office set up loud speakers in market places and distributed radio sets to rural missions and administration centres thus recruiting the first audience for their propaganda radio (Chapter One). Ostensibly, broadcast media producers created the first broadcast media audience, and by default the audience was relegated to existing under their control to a certain extent. For this reason, at the onset of the modern industrial society broadcast and other mass media were thought to have absolute power capable of manipulating or corrupting their audiences (Williams 2003: 25). Consequently, a trend of audience research began focussing on the effects of mass media messages on audiences, and how these messages were reflected in their behaviour. In order to get a better understanding of how the audience has been figured and refigured, it is important to revisit some of the historical trends that shaped how audiences were considered before they became 'active'—at least as researchers of television audiences regard them today.

Early models of reception research

The early message/effect type research models treated the audience as a 'mass', totalisable as socially atomised individuals (e.g. Lasswell, 1948; Gerbner, 1956; Shannon and Weaver, 1963). However, Robert Merton (1946) challenged such studies for assuming that content in a message could be equated directly to a particular effect in the audience that receives the message. Merton concluded that 'message' contributed a great deal in how people respond to media content, but it was not the only determining factor of those responses. Indeed, as Katz (1959) contended, mass media content, no matter how powerful, could not in the ordinary sense influence any individual who receives it if s/he did not have any "'use' for it in the social-psychological context in which [s/he] lives. The uses approach assumes that people's values; their interests. . . associations. . . social roles, are pre-potent, and that people selectively fashion what they see and hear" (Morley 1992: 49). These notions helped to discount once popular mass communication models such as the 'hypodermic needle model' that explains that a message can have a straight, unmediated effect; and the 'magic bullet model', which assumes the direct impact of media messages.

Other work in audience studies (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Klapper, 1960) seconded Merton's findings and concluded that a message can act as an agent and influence change in its receiver,

for instance in opinions about political candidates, but it could not be the sole determinant of such a change. Other agencies, such as opinion leaders, had to be at work in the process of change of opinions, for example. In the 1960s, research followed the stimulus-response, imitation and learning - theory psychology approaches (Bandura et al, 1961; Berkowitz 1962), which focused "on the message as a simple, visual stimulus to imitation or 'acting-out" (Morley 1992: 50). These studies appear to have sided with a 'modern' functionalism that saw television as a technology capable of containing "the centrifugal tendencies of spatial dispersion and social privatisation which went along with the suburbanisation of modern life, because it could, so it was assumed, cement the isolated households together in a symbolic 'imagined community' of the nation" (Ang, 1996: 6, citing Anderson, 1983). For this reason, these theories had a narrow perspective on how viewers of television related to the content they viewed vis-à-vis their lived experiences in this 'modern' world.

In the 1970s, audience research shifted from behavioural analysis to cognitive analysis models (e.g. Elliot, 1972). At the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University, James Halloran engaged in analysing the communication process as a whole, from the production process, to presentation of media content to the reactions of the viewing public (Morley 1992: 51). Halloran et al (1970) argued that the audience should not be taken as 'empty slates' waiting to soak up all the messages beamed to them, because in the event of viewing, an interaction or exchange between television and the viewer happened.

The 'active audience' research paradigm

The work at the Leicester Centre shifted the focus of audience research to the 'active audience' trend. Halloran, as director of the Centre at the time, highlighted the direction future audience studies should take. He pointed out that researchers should abandon the habit of always thinking in terms of how the media affect people but should consider how people utilize the media in their lives. This was a clear recognition that mass media audiences, as diverse as they are, use and interpret media content perhaps quite differently than the communicators of the content intended. This 'functionalist approach' to audience studies leaned toward the 'uses and gratification' model (Blumler et al., 1985: 272) that conceives of a society where individuals (audiences) are seen as ideally free, unhindered by external powers when garnering meaning from, say television programmes. However, this is too liberal pluralist a conception (Ang, 1996: 41), because truly independent, 'plural', meanings of the audience's own invention are rare, if not impossible. Indeed, as Morley (1992: 47-48)

argued the "message cannot be adequately interpreted if it is severed from the cultural context in which it occurred", implying that interpretation of received messages is relative to socio-cultural foundations within which the interpreter of the message is immersed.

Empirical research, audience ethnography

In the 1980s, audience research began to value more how people live with their culture as researchers realised this had bearing on the meanings people garnered from media texts. A new approach to audience studies appeared, and it became the 'critical' method to understanding how socially and historically positioned subjects of media negotiated for meaning in the practice of watching television. At this point, empirical/ethnographic research, because of its value on how people live their culture, was validated as a credible method of researching television and its viewers. This approach shifted emphasis away from the ideological construction of the subject, as was popular with the quantitative mainstream studies that seemed to deal in 'abstracted empiricism'. Research of this nature, traditionally positivist, tends to isolate the certain factors in the communication process seen as having effects on different people under different circumstances (Morley, 1992: 174), and is therefore centrally "concerned with 'mere establishment of a relationship among variables'" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 20). For example, quantitative audience research relating to the institutional rating discourse treats viewers as "numbers—as equal units of equal value". It suppresses the individual and subjective differences of viewers into regularities and generalisable patterns (Morley 1992: 175). By ignoring who viewers 'are', how, when and where they watch television, this research framework regards the role of the viewer as that of taking particular subject positions inscribed in the television text. Viewers must occupy these positions if they were to understand the meaning of the text. Hence, the source of meaning is understood to be the text and no dialogue takes place in the contestation and negotiation for meaning between the text and the viewer. This however goes against the historical and social nature of all human beings in terms of how they arrive at understanding things in life (Ang 1996: 38-39).

In contrast, ethnographic research, such as Morley's *The 'Nationwide' Audience* (1980) proved that there exists differences in 'real people' who watch and enjoy television regardless of their social construction, and that they garner varying pleasures and meanings from their television experiences. In so doing, this type of research contradicted "theories that stress the singularity of television's meanings and its reading subjects" (Fiske, 1987: 63), and therefore

invalidated the idea that the viewer is a prisoner of the text. Indeed, contemporary scholars of television and audience research in Africa have illustrated that the occasion of spectatorship per se in the African context for example is quite dynamic, laden with a latent 'activity charge'. According to Harding (2003: 83),

> Among the spectatorships for all sorts of performance in different countries of Africa, there is little in the way of passive acceptance of performance. The ethos of critiquing, sharing, participating, taking responsibility for performance has found a fertile new ground for articulation in the new genre of dramas that are video-movies [and television]. Just as the participant-spectator at most performances in Africa is articulate, vociferous and participatory at the appropriate times, so the spectator, […] does not absorb message and medium in one gulp, but operates as a critical spectator, adjusting, altering and reinterpreting both medium and message as they are received.

Nevertheless, there are still limits in terms of 'how' and 'to what extent' the audience may act on the meaning embedded in programme content.

Active audiences constrained

Although newer models of audience research have demonstrated that the television audience is anything but passive, recent criticism contends that the active audiences' cultural creativity is constrained. According to Bird (2003: 167), "yes, as audiences we are (or can be) creative, taking images and ideas provided by the media, and doing many unexpected things with them. Yet we are also constrained by the boundaries placed around the [meanings] of those media products, and by the choices that are actually available to us". Indeed, production of cultural products such as television programmes involves pragmatic processes of careful and deliberate actions requisite in the construction of specific meanings. These processes utilize relevant cultural raw materials existing inside and outside of the socio-cultural realms of the potential viewers' lived experiences. Depending on how such raw materials are packaged into meaningful programmes' content, viewers are either invited to interact with the content, as in 'active' viewing, or relegated into passive viewing because such content presents them with no entry points for interactive viewing. Audience members relate with each programme depending on the relevance of implicit meanings in the programme content. How they respond to such content depends on socio-cultural factors that define their lived experiences (Moore, 1993). For instance, in her research on audiences of American mainstream media, Bird (2003: 168-9) notes that mainstream American media culture (of cinema and television)

alienates and marginalises minorities (whether defined by ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation etc.). Consequently, 'minority' audiences "have to "work" harder to share the pleasures of the active audience, since the mainstream media mirrors dreams and ideals they do not necessarily share"[xxvi].

Although the audience is now seen as liberated from the television producers' stranglehold, it has limited clout in influencing producers' decisions regarding programmes content or line ups. Television 'fandom' nowadays may illustrate high degrees of audiences' active engagement with television programmes to the extent of censuring producers or petitioning for the kind of content they would like to see on the screen, but it too is compromised. Such active fans have often times been ignored by producers as the political economy of television stations dictates that 'what a particular audience wants' is not necessarily the determining factor in 'what gets produced' (Bird, 2003). This is because advertisers, who have greater clout in swaying decisions regarding production of programmes in commercial television, for example, may not consider the 'most active fans' a viable audience. On top of this, fan activism does not necessarily redefine the priorities of producers and programme managers. For instance, fans of *Uhondo* who emailed the producers of the drama hoping to influence them into prolonging the programme's play-time from 20 minutes to close to an hour were disappointed when the producers failed to respond to this request (See Chapter Seven) (Viewer Commentary, October, 2005). *Uhondo* could only run for 20 minutes on Tuesdays from 7.30 PM to 8.00 PM, but in between advertisement breaks occupied at least 10 minutes of the total programme slot. These breaks were structured into each episode during editing and measured to fit the length stipulated by the programme manager at NTV (Field notes, 2005). To this extent therefore, the active audience was constrained in exercising fully its will over the amount of programme content it received at each screening of *Uhondo.*

Another example of the audience's lack of power in swaying television producers' decisions regarding programme content is the case of the Channel 1 KBC drama, *Reflections*, whereby the director was forced to change the principal actress mid-season. In 2003, the most popular actress in this show was recruited and retained by the KBC Channel 1 news department, albeit to the regret of the producer/director of *Reflections,* Catherine Wamuyu. Mail poured into the 'traffic' department where commendations and complaints by audiences are received. The audience wanted their favourite actress back. However, given that she went on to become a popular prime time news reader, it was impossible for Wamuyu to recall the actress back to

Reflections despite numerous pleas from the audience (Catherine Wamuyu, February 9, 2005, Interview). The fact that the news programme airs at the peak hour of Channel 1 KBC's programming schedule, and is also the most important programme in the station's line up (Maubert, 2006), there was nothing the department of Youth, Education, Women and Children could do to reclaim the cherished actress. According to Wamuyu, although the new actress who took over was equally prolific, fans of the show continued to complain that they could not see her as part of the 'television family' portrayed in *Reflections*. Simply, the new face appeared out of place, contrived (Catherine Wamuyu, February 9, 2005, Interview). Wamuyu believed that the reason for the audience's discontent was that in television drama, character and player sometimes merged in the audiences' eyes to the extent that the fictional characters were sometimes regarded as 'real people'. Hence, to the audience, the new actress was 'fake'. Nevertheless, the show had to go on as the director had no recourse but to employ her in order to keep the show running. The audience, therefore, had to acclimate itself into seeing the new player as the former one (Catherine Wamuyu, February 9, 2005, Interview).

Television production and the positioning of active 'reader' audiences

The constraints of the audience occur within the processes of the creation, distribution and interpretation of television programmes. Primarily, "Television produces socially constructed texts using the specific meaning of the producers even if later the audiences provide unpredictable interpretations" (Michaels, 1990:11). Nevertheless, a relationship of interdependence develops between the institutions of television and the television audiences. This relationship is hinged on the ability of the producers to create valid reasons that compel the audiences to have a need for television programmes. In order to illustrate this proposition, I shall borrow from Christian Metz's (1975: 19) *Screen* theory notions about how the institution of cinema wins over the cinema audience so that it faithfully sustains this institution. Although the *Screen* theory's position on the nature of the audience has been censured for its reductionist view on the power of the text over the audience (Hall, 1980c: 159; Moores, 1993: 13-14), Metz's (1982: 6-9) articulation of the relationship/contract between the cinema audience and the cinema institution is rather fascinating, and relevant in considering how television and its viewers relate. He suggests that there exist within the social system arrangements which provoke a spontaneous desire in the spectator to visit the cinema and actually pay for a ticket. In the event that there is a breakdown in the systematic 'give and take' that happens between cinema institutions and the audience of the films they produce, the film industry would collapse.

Likewise, the arrangements that transform 'television watching' into a way of life for some people have to fit into the patterns of the general way of life that 'people' lead. Viewers of television or spectators of cinema have to feel that their involvement with television or film is "not only sensible and acceptable, but also attractive and pleasurable" (Ang, 1996: 22). For this to happen, television must attend to "distinct aesthetic (visual) forms to suit the circumstances within which [audiences watch television]" (Ellis, 1982: 111). Hence, "it recruits the interest of its [targeted] viewers by creating a complicity of viewing" (Ang, 1996: 20). For example, it assumes the role of 'seeing' the world on its viewers' behalf. Through 'direct address' presenters, newscasters, talk-show hosts, and so on, speak directly to the viewer at home, explicitly inviting him/her "to join [them] in . . . looking at the world" (Ang, 1996: 23-24). In entertainment television dramas such as *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, plot realism creates spaces for audience identification with the story world and the characters that live in it. The story world parallels the real world, and time and space in the diegesis are sometimes synchronised with the same in the real world thus creating a credible channel through which the audience can enter the fictional world without reservations. According to Fiske (1987), this audience relationship with the televisual text involves 'interpellation', which refers to the way the discourse of television constructs subject audiences, creating in them a sense of the individual in a network of their social relations—as represented in television programmes content. Audiences, in this respect, are

> necessarily part of a relationship between addresser and addressee, and . . . any such interpersonal relationship is, in turn, necessarily part of wider social relations. Interpellation refers to the way that any use of discourse "hails" the addressee. In responding to that call, in recognizing that it is us [the audience] being spoken to, we implicitly accept the discourse's definition of "us", or to put it another way, we adopt the subject position proposed for us by the discourse (Fiske, 1987: 53).

In this regard, television acts as a model of discourse, as a system of representation that creates and circulates meanings socially (Morley, 1992: 77). Television becomes a discourse when the social sense represented in its programmes meets the viewers' social sense derived from lived experiences, at which point the discourse of the television text and that of the reader (viewer) negotiate for the most appropriate meaning (Morley, 1992: 83). By seeming to serve the interest of society from within it, television as discourse is able to propagate ideology that naturalises the meanings emanating from it (Roome, 1998: 122). For instance, "television is able to construct subject positions for the viewer only because other agencies

relating to class, gender, race, education—or other demographics have been working all our lives to construct subjectivities in equivalent ways" (Fiske, 1987: 48).

In the practice of television production, audiences' designated subject positions are conceptualised during scripting, that is at the on-set of the production process. Producers have to imagine the profiles of their target audiences as accurately as they can. They have to 'size up' the scope of the audiences' capabilities in understanding programmes or identifying with them. According to Howard and Mabley (1993: 23), "it is no more sensible, or even possible, to write effective drama [or other types of programmes] with the audience's experience in mind than it would be to design clothes without the wearers in mind". Hence, it is necessary that producers (writers) of television drama, for example, understand people in order to 'know' the characters of their stories. The producers' understanding of people in their real life dimensions enables them to encode the story with certain subjectivities of the audience, because these subjectivities are not too different from those of the people one comes to know or contemplate in a life time. Indeed, as Victor West (1995: 1) suggests, a good way for the writer

> to get to know people is to make use of all [his/her] life experience: while growing up, at school, at work, enjoying recreational activities, or even in the 'dead time' of commuting, shopping or doing similar routine chores. [The writer's] basic tools of research are no farther away than [his/her] own senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, or sensations and feelings of fatigue, exhilaration, invigoration, cold, pain and pleasure.

Hence, the processes of imagining and constructing fictional characters require the writer's experiential understanding of the worldly forces that propel such characters to function. In turn the writer's knowledge of people connects or disconnects him/her from the audience through story-character portrayals. Television audiences only establish strong relationships with characters they can fully identify with, and so do audiences of other types of stories. For instance, Janice Radway (1987) demonstrated that the reason why some women were more likely to read romance novels than men is because these stories represented in a wholesome way issues and aspects of being a woman. These women readers may never have experienced such 'wholesomeness' in their real life lived experiences in a patriarchal society that devalued their desires, imagination and aspirations. Thus, the characters in these romance stories empowered the women readers because they were 'real' and relevant to them. The writer's ability to represent accurately all the dimensions of story characters spawns from his/her

experience in life—or from intensive practical research that enhances a deep understanding of the characters that he/she attempts to write. The following example from the case study illustrates this notion.

In August 2005, the writer of *Uhondo* was accused of presenting naïve depictions of the villains in the story. Characters whose storylines were intended to constantly engage them in adulterous and criminal behaviour appeared too shallow, unfleshed. For this reason, the NTV programming manager complained that after episode 13 the characters in the show became too thin, unrealistic, and that viewers had emailed the station commenting about this issue. He chastised the production manager, who in turn sent the production supervisor to the Eagles Media Agents studios where *Uhondo* was actually produced to correct the problem. He was supposed to advise the director on how the characters could be fleshed out. However, by the time the supervisor arrived at Eagles scenes for three subsequent episodes had been shot, yet it was impossible to reshoot them for improvement given the minimum budget allocated to the show. Frustrated, the production supervisor just sat at the editing bench and attempted to direct transitions between scenes and the music score. However, it was clear his efforts were misplaced. His presence in the studio did little to improve the quality of the characters in *Uhondo*. Hence, the problem of poor character representation persisted for the next three weeks, and the managing director of NTV threatened to take the show off air. Fearing for his job, the production manager recruited the writer of *Wingu La Moto*, another NTV soap drama, into editing the *Uhondo* scripts. After this action, the subsequent few episodes improved in the said problem area, at least in the short term (Kimaita Magiri, August 2005, Personal Conversation).

When I asked the director of *Uhondo* why the scripts were usually not to par, he explained that there was no way the show's young writer could have been able to accurately write the 'flawed' characters in *Uhondo*, as she had not experienced life enough. She had never experienced the nightlife and bars such as those frequented by the characters in *Uhondo*. In addition, the director reflected that the writer was naïve, and had been a Muslim all her life until she abandoned her faith a year before the shooting of *Uhondo* commenced. There was no way she could have been able to research the flawed soap opera characters that she had been required to write (Stan Darius, August 2005, Personal Conversation).

It seems then that in creating fictional characters, the writer needs to bring out the universal three dimensionality of human beings (their ability to feel, think and act within their

capabilities). Thus begins the chain-link that connects the writer through the fictional characters and terminates at the audience. This umbilical cord of sorts facilitates the audience's ability to identify with story characters by providing them with the human spirit that in turn makes them identifiable as real people by the audience. The writer/producer of fictional characters must therefore breathe 'life' into the characters if s/he were ever to capture this universal three dimensionality of being human. Otherwise, the spirit that connects the audience to the story world disintegrates, and so does that between them and the producers of the show. In addition, mediating fictional 'reality' to the audience requires accurate representation of social settings in the diegesis (Ytreberg, 2006), and therefore producers/writers of drama for example have to be able to borrow actively from real life environments where activities like those they want to represent in their stories happen—for instance the bars and motels in the case of *Uhondo*.

Rein in the audience

Audiences are also prefigured or indexed in the choice of "programme content, code, stylistic nuances . . . or through the construction of 'participation frameworks'" (Spitulnik, 1994: 44). They can be signalled "through several metapragmatic devices which frame the communication event. . . Programme titles, promotional slogans, and scheduling time periods, exhort the [viewers] and define a mood" (Spitulnik, 1994: 44). In this respect,

> The relationships which are established between programme and audience, which set the viewer in place in a certain relation to the given discourse—here, a relation of identity and complicity—are sustained in mechanisms and strategies of the discourses of popular television themselves, but also by the presenters, who have a key role in anchoring those positions and impersonating—personifying—them (Brunsdon and Morley 1978: 22).

These relationships are, nevertheless, temporary because television audiences exist only within the discourse of television. For this reason, audiences "need constant guidance and hailing in how-to-be-an-audience" (Hartley, 1992: 117-118). Such guidance is placed in strategic segments within programmes content and between programmes, as well as in meta-discourses relating to television in general. For example, 'TV Guides', newspapers and other magazines featuring matters pertaining to television programming and the industry in general serve this purpose most effectively. This meta-discourse has significant impact particularly when there is a cross ownership of media outlets in a single market. These outlets allow the major media institutions to have a pervasive sway in popularising a worldview that is inclined

toward their interests. For instance, in Kenya audiences of NTV are most likely to come into contact with other Nation Media Group's (NMG) outlets such as the *Daily Nation*, *East African, The Citizen* and several other newspapers and magazines operated by this organisation[xxvii]. At the same time, the same audiences are most likely to be exposed to NMG's popular Easy FM radio. Since all these media are operated under the commercial philosophy of the NMG, they may consistently guide the viewers of NTV programmes to read such programmes in a biased way. Hence, the audience of *Uhondo*, for example, may be constrained to adopt a particular perspective regarding the programme in line with NTV's outlook. Such viewer prompting and guidance may appear as declarative information about given programmes (*Uhondo* in this case) in the newspapers affiliated to NTV. For instance, the following declaration appeared on the *Saturday Nation*: "There is something new and exciting in the air. *Uhondo*, the Kiswahili soap of Nation TV, which takes viewers through the lives of ordinary Kenyans, is a must watch" (Muganda, 2005). This piece of persuasion appeared in an article titled 'Meet the Real Woman Behind *Uhondo*'s Tina' which also explored the life of the lead actress in *Uhondo*, paralleling and contrasting it to the life of the character she played on the show. The show was two months old at this point having premiered on NTV (then Nation TV) on the 23rd of November, 2004. It appears that the NMG hoped to cue the readers of the *Nation* toward their television station's programming strategically at the beginning of the year. In the same year, the *Nation* newspaper also featured similar exposes of two other major actors of *Uhondo*. In this manner, dynamic media institutions such as the NMG have the ability to self-promote and polarise the public toward their interests. Within such an environment, the extent to which the 'active audience' is able to 'subvert' the 'control' message codes indexed within certain television programmes content and meta-discourses relating to commercial television is rather constrained.

Television audiences therefore do not see in the television programmes "only what they want to see, since [television] is not simply a window on the world, but a construction" (Morley 1992: 245). Ostensibly, television is an apparatus of power (influence), capable of manufacturing discipline and habits in viewers. It is a powerful agent in the formation of culture. Suffice to say, norms such as merely 'watching TV', now a socio-cultural activity, clearly illustrates this aspect. Through the cultural activities of watching television, the audience is articulated as subjects of institutional objectives. This is a hegemonic practice that involves the production of a specific outlook in the audience through television programmes as these seem to address relevant social-cultural needs. Hence, the meaning in both the

television text and the activity of viewing are seen as important for a greater good. The consequences of this phenomenon are such that the 'mental machinery' of the audience learns to respond to television content in that 'expected' or 'plausible' way—because the 'form' of television programmes is likely to determine the audience's response to such programmes. For instance, the history of government control of broadcasting in Kenya, and the preponderance of radio and television messages geared toward teaching audiences about national unity and development shaped the disposition of KBC and commercial television audiences. Indeed, when television is grantedly seen as 'teacher' the audience comes to expect that television programmes are always meant to teach something. This attitude was reflected on the email commentary on both *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, whereby respondents complained that characters' behaviour or language were teaching wrong things to their children (Chapter Seven). Or, respondents singled out characters that they thought should be emulated for representing Kenyan culture or values. Overall, the majority of these respondents alluded to the fact that both commercial and public television drama should teach positive Kenyan cultural values and language. It should always tell the audience: *What is the message of that programme and morality? In the real Kenya? In our society?* (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

Through calculated repeated routines, for example in advertising and media commentary, institutions of television can maintain a circumventing hold on the audience through teaching it 'a way of understanding things'. This creates a 'public' institutional rationale which then becomes a common sense in the audience, for example about the role of television programmes. In the particular event where this happens, the audience use their "new common sense" to respond to television messages and to network with people in their social spaces, "normatively experienced as the source of free will and rational agency" (Abrahamsen 2003: 199). Nevertheless, these spaces are themselves predisposed to the hegemonic influence of television and other media institutions. Hence, in the relationship between the audience of television and producers of television programmes, an imbalanced 'power partnership' prevails. Indeed, television institutions categorise the audience as totalities based on the objectives they aspire to achieve, say commercial or political ones.

The audience-as-market and audience-as-public disparity
In the institutional view, the television audience is a definite category. Considered this way, "the television audience becomes an object of discourse whose status is analogous to that of 'population', 'nation' or the masses" (Ang, 1991: 2). These are totalities whose closure is

evident. Therefore, they exist as 'taken-for-granted' truth. Both public and commercial television define these totalities within the frameworks of their business.

Audience-as-market primarily applies to commercial television broadcasting. Commercial television philosophy is based on the "intertwined double principle of the making of programmes for profit and the use of television channels for advertising" (Ang, 1991: 26). In this respect, the audience is regarded as a market, as potential consumers of television programmes and of the products advertised through those programmes (Ang, 1991: 28). Since audience-as-market is a construction of the discourse of commercial television and does not exist for all times, the 'television audience rating system' was invented and standardised as a method of producing and illustrating the factual stasis of the audience. In the political economy of commercial television, audience measurement is indispensable because it is used as an instrument for quantifying the audience into a saleable product for advertisers to buy. The higher the number in the rating measure of a television programme the better, as this translates into an appealing size of the audience market share for advertisers to purchase. The most successful programmes in commercial television therefore are those that reflect the highest ratings (the largest number of the implicit head count of potential viewers). Thence, commercial television is essentially 'audience-supported' (Meehan, 2000: 77), and therefore has to consistently find ways of manufacturing 'more' audiences whether through viewership of programmes or by engaging their potential audiences in socio-cultural events organised around the television industry. Examples of such events include football matches, political campaigns, presidential addresses and interviews with newsmakers and television actors. Indeed, coverage of stories in newspapers about actors' lives in the manner the *Saturday Nation* featured the story of *Uhondo*'s actress (cited above) is a good example. It is a powerful way of legitimising the value of entertainment television in the everyday lives of the public—as it suggests that such matters are news too.

Within the framework of commercial television, advertising is the most effective and controlling factor in how the producers of television drama conceptualise their audience vis-à-vis programming content. Programmes are designed to create the link between the commercial interests of television stations (that is earning the revenue that sustains the stations) and the interests of the audience which keep them watching. In essence then, producers write their scripts partially as dictations of advertisers who sponsor their programmes solely because they want to reach potential consumers of their products. If audiences are constrained in their

reading of television texts because of the meaning producers inject into the programmes content, producers are constrained by advertisers' requirements that they appropriate programmes content into 'carrier' stories on which are subliminally embedded advertising messages for various products. In this context, television drama stories are not just stories in and of themselves, they are vehicles that transport the advertisers' message to the audience (Laden, 2003). The following anecdote collected from field research on the production of *Uhondo* clarifies this suggestion.

In February 2005, Stephano Ngunyi, the executive producer of *Uhondo*, was worried that a potential production sponsorship deal with Samsung, the cell phone maker, would collapse. According to Ngunyi, for the 56 episodes of *Uhondo* projected to run on NTV, he would have received about seven million Kenya shillings[xxviii] from Samsung who were keen to boost their Kenyan presence by advertising on commercial television. However, there were delays in the sealing of the deal. Ngunyi was concerned that the General Manager (GM) in charge of marketing at Samsung Digitall, the marketing outlet for Samsung in Kenya, was stalling. So he decided to by-pass the GM and had a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Samsung Digitall in order to speed up the deal. However, the CEO told him that sponsoring *Uhondo* was the marketing department's decision to make. Ngunyi had no recourse but to petition the GM for help again. To his dismay, the GM told him that Samsung was not ready to sponsor television drama production for advertising benefits as Eagles Media was hoping for. Instead, Samsung projected to sponsor the airing of the American long running soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, which was then showing on Kenya Television Network (KTN). Although Ngunyi concluded that the GM of marketing at Samsung Digitall killed the potential deal between Eagles Media and Samsung out of spite, it appears that Samsung (the mother company) might have suddenly become interested in associating its television advertisements with the well established and internationally acclaimed *The Bold and the Beautiful*. Far more people might be interested in *Bold* than they would be in *Uhondo*, a barely known, exclusively local Kenyan show. Sponsoring *Bold* on KTN would also be much cheaper (Stephano Ngunyi, February 2005, Personal Conversation).

Nevertheless, Ngunyi was persistent in his pitch about the benefits Samsung could gain by sponsoring *Uhondo* if only in a small way. It was then that he was promised sponsorship in the form of a HG model Computer—which Eagles were yet to receive as of end of February 2005. What is interesting here about the relationship between Eagles Media and Samsung

(through Samsung Digitall) is that *Uhondo* had aggressively tried in a few episodes to seduce Samsung into sponsoring the show. At first things looked very promising that by the time I arrived on the set of the show after Episode 13 (end of first season), Samsung Digitall had already provided *Uhondo* with dummy mobile phones for props which were featured as part of the story content. Indeed, Stan Darius, the director of *Uhondo*, emphasized that Ngunyi had insisted that the Samsung logo on the dummy phones be naturally displayed during the course of the story sequences as much as possible. The Samsung name had to be made a 'happening' of the story world. For example, when characters received phone calls the actors/actresses were to make sure that they held the phones 'properly' so that the camera person could take close-ups of the phones clearly showing the Samsung logo. In addition, a caption advertising Samsung Digitall appeared at the end of each episode of *Uhondo* in rolling credits saying: "Cell Phones Provided by Samsung Digitall". Soon on receiving the news that Samsung was no longer interested in sponsoring *Uhondo* for its advertising campaign in Kenya, Ngunyi ordered the editor of the show to remove the caption and a recently designed Samsung logo meant to be screened for two seconds during the rolling end credits of *Uhondo*.

In public service television philosophy, the audience is positioned as the public. **Audience-as-public** implies 'citizens', who are seen as people in need of public television for information, education and entertainment in order to improve their lives (McQuail, 1986: 220). In this respect, television relates to the audience in a manner that emphasizes "a sense of cultural responsibility and social accountability" (Roome, 1998: 58). Ideally, since the public service television's goal is to communicate culture and principles of democracy (and national development) through its programmes, it aspires to reach the entire citizen population. High programme ratings therefore reflect how successful the broadcaster is in executing its civic responsibility. In this context, producers conceptualise their audiences within the framework of providing a service that enriches the lives of citizens along lines of established policies, particularly those originating from public trusteeship philosophies and government. This most likely happens in cases where public service broadcasting (PSB) is not independent of government. Therefore, educating and informing the public are primary roles of PSB so that even entertainment programmes are seen to have utility value in accomplishing these two tasks. Mary Onyango, former acting Programmes Manager at Channel 1 KBC, revealed this fact when speaking about the television situation comedies *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*:

> *Yeah. Sometimes actually we. . . we pay more attention to education of the public as opposed to just stand there. But also we strive to. . . Our bottom line is also—we have*

to educate. We remember at the end of it, 'yeah, this is a situation, but what is the message'. There should be a message at the end of it all. It's not just fun for fun's sake, you see. . . There should be a message for whoever is watching it. He has to laugh but at the end of it, there is this for him (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

PSB producers also seem to operate under the assumption that they understand the fundamental structure of the public and its values. For Onyango, the family structure in Kenya determines how she sees the audience, which in turn influences the decisions she makes when guiding the heads of different production units under her control: Current Affairs; Drama and Music; Sports and Youth Education, Women and Children. Regarding this issue, she asserted the following:

Okay . . . the first question, how do I know them [the audience]? We have in our business a clause that says we shall follow—or shall commit our programming to family viewing. Once we [know the] set up of our family, then you will not go beyond what a mother, a father, a daughter and whatever—son . . . cannot watch. You know those generals. . . 'cause if you look at the family set up that we have in Kenya, people have one [TV] set. So that set is shared among family members. You have to look for something comfortable for the whole group, so that you don't go beyond what a family cannot accept. So that is our guiding principle in terms of these programmes that we are delivering (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

Both public service and commercial television utilize the rating system as a mode of concretising the audience to suit their institutional goals. For this reason, it is in the general interest of all the people who benefit from these institutions for their own material survival to reproduce the system and to coordinate their actions in order to maintain it (Garnham, 1997). The introduction in 2005 of the Portable People Metre (PPM) in Kenya through the social research organisation Steadman Group is testimony that there is a growing need in the Kenya television market for stations to prove just how popular they are. An electronic pager-sized device, the PPM was developed by Arbitron Incorporated of America for recording all the programmes the viewer respondents normally watch on television. This meter is an improvement from older models which are said to have achieved high 'compliance rates' of 90 per cent in Europe, thus eclipsing the performance of the traditional audience diaries which

achieved estimated rates of 40 to 50 per cent (Ang, 1991: 178). Respondents can wear the PPM on their clothes or carry it in their pockets or purses and it detects and records all the programmes the viewer tunes to on television, or on radio, thus enabling the researchers to find out how many people watched television or listened to the radio at a particular time (Mohammed, 2005). Currently, all the major television networks in Kenya (NTV, KTN and KBC) subscribe to the rating system as a means of ascertaining their popularity or that of their programmes (Maubert, 2006).

Contrasting 'Audience-as-market' and 'audience-as-public' in Kenyan television

Any type of institutional view of the television audience is stimulated by the goals and aims of the television institution that propagates it. How audiences are conceptualised in this context is attendant to the philosophies under which the television institution was founded; these determine what role the audience should play in promoting the institution's existence. However, these philosophies are influenced by prevailing discourses of economics and political power. For instance, the government's overall view on broadcasting, particularly the stance that shaped the genesis and development of television broadcasting in the country in question, is significant in this regard. In turn, these discourses generate concrete attitudes and perceptions in the country about both commercial and public service television. In Kenya the government has always been ambivalent regarding the role of public service television vis-à-vis the role commercial enterprise should play in facilitating the success of public service television. The Proud Commission which had been set up to examine and report on the advantages of a television service for Kenya created room for this kind of atmosphere. The Commission had emphasised that television could play an important role in the education of the Africans and in presenting to them the significance of development. It could "induce a quicker turn over of money and create among the people a greater incentive to possession" (Report of the Television Commission, 1958: 4, cf Heath, 1986: 163), hence stimulate economic growth. Television could also bring about the mutual understanding of the races in the country through entertainment programmes (Heath, 1986: 163). There was a problem of finances however, and the commission knew that the government could not solely operate the service. It recommended that the television service be run as a commercial outfit, but it also recognised that private enterprise might compromise government's aspirations of using television as a national development resource. Hence, the commission pointed out that in order for the television service to function as it had envisaged, it required proper planning and government control (Heath, 1986).

Indeed, later in 1964 the Kenya government felt that the private enterprise (Television Network Ltd—TNL) had set up the television institution in a way that benefited foreign interests more than the country. Achieng Oneko, then Minister of Information and Broadcasting regretted that "the government [had] considered that it was a mistake to have a structure like Kenya's broadcasting organisation so that it became more or less a commercial enterprise for foreign financial interests. This... tended to give the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation a character which [was] not fully in keeping with the nationalist spirit of Kenya..." (Official Report, House of Representatives, 1963: Col 520, cf Heath, 1986: 192). The minister's complaint clearly disqualified TNL's agenda in the television service as one not in line with what the new government had in mind about the role of a television service for Kenya. Apparently, TNL needed the television service to propagate the interests of the West even after Kenya had become independent. Revenue garnered from television advertising was sent abroad, and the 20th Century Fox Group (part of TNL) had in KBC television an outlet for showcasing imports of foreign movies and television programmes. At the same time, the foreign owned East African Standard newspaper group, which also had a stake in KBC television, monopolised the provision of the local news while the BBC associated Visnews provided the service with foreign news (Heath, 1986). Concerned about this domination of the public television service by commercial interests, government decided to assert its institutional view of what the audience of public service television in Kenya meant when it decided to nationalise the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, hence wrenching it off the hands of TNL. There was suspicion that the colonial government was in collusion with the foreign commercial interests of this consortium. Its keenness to set up KBC as an independent organisation just when the country was about to become independent appeared to prove this ulterior motive.

In speaking of the role of the new organisation to be henceforth known as Voice of Kenya (VOK), Oneko said:

> Our primary objective is not profit making but rather that these powerful [broadcasting] weapons should become instruments for the constructive development of our country. We want to use them to educate our people, to popularise our government's programme and our peoples' activities and generally to keep the people of this nation adequately informed (Official Report, House of Representatives, 1963: Col. 535, cf Heath, 1986: 193).

It appears that in nationalising the VOK, the Kenyan government also 'nationalised' the framework within which future commercial television would be seen. The government's attitude was that commercial interests in broadcasting were less interested in the national development projects that government wanted to accomplish. Nevertheless, nationalising the public television service meant that the government would have to follow the Commission's recommendations that the service should be financed by the people of Kenya, or that it continued relying on some commercial funding albeit within the control of the government. The second alternative appeared more practical because the young, newly independent government had no money to run the service nor could the Kenyan citizens afford to pay for it. Recognising its dilemma, but being resolutely confident that television was a powerful tool that it could utilise in fulfilling the objectives of nation building, the government invited commercial enterprise back to the service (Heath, 1986).

Clearly, KBC television's loyalty has always been divided between adhering to government conditionality about how it should target the 'citizen in need of development' and observing the stipulations set for it by the commercial enterprises from which it earns much needed revenue. On one hand, the service cannot do without the commercial advertising, hence its reliance on foreign programmes that attract the advertising revenue that keeps the television service afloat. On the other hand, the government wants the television service to adopt a more nationalistic look, which means that the station must air more local programmes, yet it does not have the funding to produce such quality programmes. Foreign advertisers have in the past stopped advertising through KBC television because they felt that the local political and other programmes produced locally failed to complement the quality of their products whenever they were advertised through the service (see Chapter One). Hence, KBC television was doomed if it adopted the nationalistic look that was conceived within the view that the audience of the service was the Kenyan citizen in need of national development, peace, love and unity. At the same time, it was doomed if it did not comply with the programming interests of the advertising institutions that saw the audience of KBC television as a market of the products they needed to promote through the foreign programmes.

Paradoxically, the Kenyan government initially accepted the Proud Commission's view that public service television could work only if it was set up as a commercial outfit. Seemingly, the government might have considered the commercial approach to running public television as another way of inducing economic growth along the line of the country's aspirations at the

time. The television consortium was expected to generate revenue that would benefit local interests and therefore stimulate the growth of the local economy. It also appears that the government underestimated the true intentions of the TNL, which, as a business enterprise, had agreed to set up the public service television institution with the intention of recouping its investments and garnering profits after all was said and done.

Knowing how TNL had nearly 'hoodwinked' it into 'licensing' the commercial domination of television in the country, the Kenyan government seems to have acquired a bitter taste for commercial influence in television broadcasting. Apparently, it has since then been wary that commercial television might be used to promote anti-government propaganda, or that commercial television could recruit in its viewers a sense of discontent with government hence a disregard for its nation-building philosophies in favour of western or foreign values (Paterson, 1998). For this reason, the government kept the door shut against the entry of commercial television until the 1990s. Although it is not clear why the government allowed the entry of commercial television in the country at this point, it appears that it stood to gain a new channel for telecasting its objectives. Indeed, it was not a coincidence that Jared Kangwana, a one time senior director in the ruling party (KANU[xxix]) controlled KBC, was among those who acquired (with British Thomas Maxwell) the first licence to open a commercial television station in Kenya. The fact that Kangwana managed to impress the government enough to be licensed for commercial broadcasting raises many questions. However, it also suggests that the government had found a proxy in him as he could continue propagating the interests of KANU through the new commercial television station, KTN. Nevertheless, KTN appears to have conceptualised its audience as 'citizens in need of the truth', including about government business. For this reason, the KTN news department became very critical of the government, airing stories that the KANU controlled KBC did not dare to touch. As a result, the department was censured and soon forced to close down (see Chapter One). Kangwana was bought out and KTN acquired by powerful men with close links to the government (Heath, 1992).

Given the above history, emerging commercial television institutions in Kenya were for a long time apprehensive about declaring that their goals of establishment were merely the making of profits as would be expected of any commercial enterprise. In order to illustrate this claim, I would like to cite the case of NTV as it once engaged in a protracted battle with government regarding the licence to broadcast nationwide. NTV had been restricted to

covering only the Nairobi area since its launch in 1999 until 2003[xxx]. In campaigning for the cause of its sister television station, the *Daily Nation* newspaper published editorial activism petitioning to the government that NTV be granted a license to broadcast nationwide. An excerpt from one of these editorials reveals that NTV considered its purpose of existence very much along the same lines with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Act's view on the purpose of television broadcasting in Kenya. Though an independent commercial enterprise, NTV was relegated to conceptualising its target audience in a manner that it felt might impress the government. Nevertheless, it appears that even in 2001, the government was still sceptical about the impact of nationwide commercial television. For this reason, the NMG needed to prove that its television service would not exploit the public—'citizen-audience'— for ulterior motives, hence the following petition:

> Hitherto, the ministry [of information and broadcasting] has tended to issue and act on unilateral policy statements without the stakeholders' inputs. Moreover, such statements have been seen by those media as an attempt to frustrate their very reason for existence, namely, to inform, educate and entertain fully and freely [...] The two interests of a media house – information and business – are, in fact, one. No businessperson can thrive where he or she offers the customers persistently shoddy goods. That's why we – at the Nation Media Group at least – seek to offer ou**r** customers the truth as much as we are lucky or hard-working enough to come by it.

> But to maintain what poets call a "sympathetic contract" with our listeners, watchers and readers, we must strive to offer this truth in an attractive and tasteful package, that is, by observing all the rules of aesthetical, linguistic and social propriety, avoiding everything that might threaten the collective interests of all Kenyans. We believe that, here, the Nation Media Group and other upmarket [media] houses, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Government have an identical interest and role. That is why it never ceases to baffle us, at the Nation Centre, that the Government continues to deny us, year after year, our right to sell the relative truth nationwide and thus help to inform Kenyans fully about their rights as responsible and law-abiding individuals and groups. The democratic ideals and institutions, to which the Government affirms it is committed, can be realised only when the people – who are both its instrument and its intended beneficiaries – are well educated on their objective conditions, objective aspirations and objective ability to realise those aspirations [...] (Editorial**,** *Saturday Nation*, April 28, 2001)

As 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (Althusser, 1976), the media, the political system and government in Kenya have "historically set out to foster a positive image of a united and progressive country" (Ligaga, 2005: 109). These institutions of power propagate the ruling class' ideology—which is primarily about holding onto State power for a long time. Ideology, in Althusser's understanding, is a "matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world [...] In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence " (Althusser, 2005: 233). Hence, through hegemonising the above and other Ideological State Apparatuses (Churches, Universities, Private and Public Schools, The Family, etc.) (Althusser, 1976: 17, 20), the ruling class is able to sustain "*the reproduction of the relations of production*" (Althusser, 1976: 22).

In this context, the variedness of the television audience's nature diminishes. The audience is seen as homogeneously united in subscribing to the cultural and economic products 'prescribed' by broadcasting institutions and the State. Consequently, the distinction between audience-as-public and audience-as-market in Kenyan television blurs, as all television broadcasting has occasionally been compelled to project 'national harmony' and forge alliances between government and the private sector in the quest for national development. Ostensibly, both public service and commercial television in this context are driven toward 'inviting/summoning' the audience into assuming the role of 'normal citizens'. Therefore, they promise to offer them ideal programmes designed to enhance the ideals of citizenry; that is, programmes that educate, inform, entertain but above all those that assist the citizen in their primary objectives of nation building—which should be every citizen's responsibility. Television viewing in this respect is portrayed as useful and pleasurable because it provides the audience with programmes that complement or provoke feelings of 'security' in the viewer's prescribed role of citizen (Ellis, 1992: 169-170). However, I propose that such an integrated institutional view of the audience by public service and commercial television institutions, which are essentially founded upon disparate operational philosophies, is discursive. It is a convenient unity of ideologies that is constantly fleeting.

Indeed, four years after the above NMG petition to the government, the media environment in Kenya had changed considerably. The number of commercial television stations had increased, and NTV, KTN and Citizen TV had been awarded licences to broadcast beyond the Nairobi area. On May 13, 2005, NTV re-launched with a 'new' outlook. At this point, the

public demeanour of the commercial broadcaster appeared to change slightly. The Chief Executive Officer of NMG highlighted this new attitude, describing "NTV's target with the re-launch as providing a product that was second to none in terms of news and information, entertainment and education to viewers, giving advertisers value for money by delivering to the audience and to significantly increase the shareholder value by delivering on profits" (Bosire, 2005). It appears therefore that NMG's previously postured acquiescing in government's ideals of television broadcasting was a convenient strategy for self-preservation. Ironically, the managing director of KBC, David Waweru, recently complained that his organisation could not effectively compete with its counterpart commercial stations because of financial constraints. He said: "We need to have an autonomous commercial outfit with a complete new programming that can attract best talents and compete for business in an open market" (Okuttah, 2008). Waweru previously facilitated the launching of Channel 2 KBC in 2007, an exclusively commercial entertainment television service. The goal of Channel 2 is to target a specific category of the audience, one Waweru considers as "not driven by the usual content of news and sports... the youth and women who are young with upward mobility... driven by feature documentaries, soap operas, music and comedies" (King'ara, 2007). It is hoped that through these measures KBC television can compete with the major commercial television stations in the country, at least in the area of entertainment. This display of ambivalence by KBC television and the shifting public rhetoric by NTV (highlighted above) proves the proposition that in Kenya the institutional 'views' of the television audience by both public and commercial television are a lot similar than they are different.

Conclusion: what to say about the audience then

Throughout this chapter I have echoed notions that point to the question of the essential nature of the audience. I have attempted to show that there is a disparity between how television producers would like to think of, imagine and conceptualise the audience and what researchers have discovered is the ingenuity of audiences in emancipating themselves from the producers' control through programmes content. Indeed, as Shaun Moores (1993: 1-2) for example also argues, "there is no stable entity, which we can isolate and identify as the media [or television] audience, no single object that is unproblematically "there" for us to observe and analyze". Rather, the audience of television exists as a "multiplicity of situated practices and experiences" (Ang, 1991: 165). Audience members have not only become very skilled in how to 'read' and use television to suit their real life lived circumstances, but they have acquired an understanding of how the institutions of television work toward achieving their

objectives. For this reason, audiences of television are more active and powerful than ever before.

However, the 'power' of the audience, that is the degree to which the audience can exercise its 'will' over the television text, is limited. This is because the programmes the audience watches are constructed meanings, framed and constricted by the elements that constitute them, and the structures of culture that constrain the plurality of the resources audiences have within their grasp at the moments of 'reading' the programmes. In other words, before the audience makes anything of a television programme, the television programme has to appear before them containing a limited set of raw materials from which they can 'extract' different extra meanings than those the producers of the programmes embedded onto them. While audiences' relations to given shows depend on the meanings implicit in each show, their responses to such shows also depend on their social-historical experiences as determined by gender, race, class or culture (Mosco and Kaye, 2000). These agencies clearly demarcate the subjectivity of the audience and its general capacity in meaning making.

In addition, the 'local', dominant ideologies that naturalise the role of television in its meaningfulness in the lives of the audience emerge from the body of institutional rules which in turn motivate the production of the programmes content that appears on the television screen (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). In Kenya, these rules are concerned with how television institutions disseminate their products to the public for the purposes of attaining the goals and aspirations of commercial enterprise and those of the state. Since television uses cultural raw materials to manufacture its meanings, producers embed dominant (local) ideologies on seemingly innocuous programmes content. Nevertheless, the content appeals to the audience because of its familiarity and cultural relevance. The impact of such media influence may pervade across common cultural lines, thus reducing the autonomy of individual members of the audience at the moment of interpreting meanings of television programmes. The next chapter should clarify these suggestions further as it discusses entertainment television programmes and how they appeal to people who view them.

The institutional view of the audience by both commercial and public service television in Kenya exemplifies producers' ambivalence with regards to how they should conceptualise the audience vis-à-vis the discourses of national unity and development, and the political economy of sustaining the television institutions. On one hand, the government wants to see the audience of ALL types of television as subjects in development (audience-as-public) along

the lines of its nation-building aspirations. On the other hand, the government (in KBC television) has had to come to terms with the fact that by operating within the framework of 'audience-as-market', commercial television is taking away the coveted audience of the public service (national) television. Recently, the top director of the KBC confirmed this crisis by intimating that the PSB should be given the autonomy to operate as a commercial organisation so as to be able to compete in the 'audience' market place. Economic constraints have therefore pressured the national broadcaster to rethink its strategy of winning audiences away from the popular commercial television stations. Thus, KBC television services wish to adopt "the discourse of the marketplace in their approach of the audience: defining 'television audience' as a collection of consumers rather than citizens, thinking in terms of 'what the audience wants' rather than 'what it needs'" (Ang, 1991: 166). Every year both public commercial and television organisations in Kenya now spend a lot of money in identifying and defining their market share, that is the number of people who view their programmes—their audience share.

So far I have established the complexities surrounding the relationships between television institutional objectives and producers' basis for packaging programme content, and some of the dynamics involved in the audience's interaction with television programmes. The next chapter picks up where this chapter leaves off by focusing on entertainment programmes as a way of illustrating how a specific type of programme content appeals to audiences. Hence, Chapter Four closely examines the characteristics of entertainment drama (particularly soap opera) and how the audience is able to make meaningful use of this drama. Given that this case study concerned examining how producers of entertainment programmes conceptualise their target audience, Chapter Four furnishes the reader with insight into the criteria entailed in packaging entertainment programmes vis-à-vis the political economy of television production discussed in this chapter. In so doing, the chapter further elucidates how producers aspire to meet their obligations and desired objectives with soap operas—as functional narratives for social development.

Chapter Four

Role of Television Entertainment Programmes in the Real Lives of Viewers

Introduction

Television viewing "is a purposeful act, one laden with intent, guided by rationale, and fraught with the search for personal gratifications that need to be satisfied" (Abelman and Atkin, 2002: 72). One such gratification is the viewers' need for entertainment value in programmes. Television production too is motivated by the rationale and purpose of producing and reproducing socially constructed texts whose intents are meaningful. The 'meaningfulness' of such texts for example, is that they have utility value as entertainment for audiences, and as means of accomplishing desired institutional objectives. The most important objective for producers is to make television a significant asset in the lives of the people who come into contact with it, for "the more important television is viewed to be, the greater the role the medium, its programming, and its characters will play in our lives" (Abelman and Atkin, 2002: 76). Hence, the relationship that develops between viewers of television and the producers of television programmes in this context is one of mutual interdependence. It is a relationship underpinned on purpose; therefore, production of programmes satisfies targeted needs and so does the viewing of those programmes. For this reason, entertainment television programmes have utility value for both television producers and the television audience.

This chapter explores some of the general conceptual and theoretical issues relating to entertainment television programmes and their supposed implications on the real lives of people who view them. It specifically leans toward television drama, namely the soap opera, although examples of different types of entertainment television programmes that have been produced and broadcast in Kenya and elsewhere are also discussed. Illustrations of how the entertainment programmes have been produced, viewed and for what purpose relate mainly to the historical and contemporary experiences of the production and viewing of public service and commercial television in Kenya. As discussed earlier in this thesis, government control of television has had a great impact on the nature and role television programmes are designed to play. Entertainment television programmes produced in Kenya, for that matter, have no doubt reflected this fact. Indeed, in the early 1970s, Kenya, like most newly independent African countries, formed a Ministry of Culture whose purpose was viewed as reclaiming and teaching the African traditions that had been eroded by years of colonization. The ministry

called for prescriptive cultural programmes, for example coverage of music based events, national events, drama festivals etc., and dispensed them through national television and radio (Opondo, 2000). Indeed, two of the oldest television programmes in Kenyan television, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Vitimbi* were first produced around this period and have acted as public 'culturising' tools through KBC television. *Vitimbi*, *Uhondo* and *Reflections* (the latter two dramas were the focus of this study's field research) will be discussed later in this chapter in order to demonstrate relevant aspects regarding entertainment programmes in the Kenyan television context. In addition, examples relating to the institutional dynamics surrounding the production of entertainment programmes are drawn from KBC television and NTV, the production houses where *Reflections* and *Uhondo* were produced, respectively.

In theory, what is entertainment in television?

The phenomenon of entertainment via television is hard to define. It is determinable only as an individual's experience on the one hand, and on the other "it may refer more specifically to a certain type of content produced with specific communicative and experiential intentions by specific sender organizations" (Frandsen, 2008:135). This second approach to entertainment refers to cases where programme content is designed to contain entertainment value but also serves other purposes such as information or education. Furthermore, television in and of itself connotes entertainment. The act of viewing television per se is pleasurable (See Laura Mulvey, 2003). Among terms associated with television watching, the following stand out: activity, amusement, hobby, leisure, distraction and diversion (Abelman and Atkin, 2002). The same terms are associated with the word 'entertainment'. Entertainment can also be defined as a way of amusing people, especially by performing for them, and as the amount of pleasure or amusement one gets from something (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2006: 475-476). Pleasure means happiness that arises from the satisfaction one gets when he/she enjoys something. Apparently, one has to enjoy something in order to be entertained by it. In light of the foregoing, something entertaining has to evoke a psychological response (as in satisfaction). For this reason, media that provide pleasure and enjoyment appeal to the psychological senses of the audience (Zillmann and Bryant, 1994). According to Prabu et al, (2006), being in a state of enjoyment has to do with someone's attitude, cognition, emotions, and behaviour. Indeed, manifestations of enjoyment are reflected in one's emotional and psychological dispositions. Hence, it can be argued that these same dispositions trigger the motives for actions that lead people to seek entertainment, not least from television.

One reason that people watch TV is for pleasure. . . most human beings seem to be motivated to terminate harmful, aversive stimuli and reduce the intensity of such stimulation. Similarly, most humans are motivated to perpetuate and increase the intensity of gratifying, pleasurable experiences, and to the extent they are capable, are inclined to arrange conditions to maximize aversion and maximize gratification (Abelman and Atkin, 2002:73).

The assumptions and conclusions above emerged from research work concentrating on American commercial television networks' activities concerning programme distribution methods, and how audiences have related to specific popular television programmes. Hence, their universality may be limited, particularly because they are based on the attitudes and views of a select number of American television critics, researchers and practitioners. However, Abelman and Atkin's (2002) notions are fundamentally relevant to this case study because they suggest that the viewers' search for pleasure in television entertainment programmes is based on deeply seated motives. The fact that entertainment programming in Kenyan television takes the highest percentage of all programming time (Maubert, 2006) is testament to the fact that entertainment programmes are widely and highly sought after for 'important' reasons. Abelman and Atkin's (2002) suggestions (above) therefore establish a credible playing field within which this study can interrogate correlations between television entertainment programmes, their impact on audience's mood and the audience's overall wellbeing. Furthermore, these same aspects resonate in other studies that sought to interrogate the impact of television entertainment programmes on audiences. For instance, Hobson (1982) found that some British viewers of the soap opera, *Crossroads*, tuned in to the programme for 'company', as a means of dealing with loneliness or 'being alone in the house'. Helregel and Weaver (1989) found that pregnant and non-pregnant women employed television as a mood management device. The pregnant women opted to view comedy programmes when they were unhappy or suffering physiological discomfort, and preferred to watch action-adventure programming when they were in a positive mood. Roome (1998) discovered that South African viewers of situation comedies dealing with issues of integration in Post-Apartheid South Africa found the humour in *Suburban Bliss* and *Going Up III* useful as a channel for racial reconciliation. Other studies, Zillmann and Bryant (1994) and Zilman (2000), showed that viewers can use television entertainment programmes to manage their mood for the enhancement of their wellbeing.

Ostensibly, the television audience exposes itself to entertainment programmes because of the following key reasons: **need for gratification**; **need to repair injured mood** and need to

engage in an **important activity** that represents a 'lived experience' which serves the purpose of enhancing good living (Abelman and Atkin, 2002). I will discuss these factors below, and thereafter attempt to show that the audience's 'use of television for gratification' approach does not fully account for all the reasons why the audience attends to entertainment television programmes. I will demonstrate that how the programmes appeal to the audience is also governed by other overriding factors such as social-cultural experiences and the boundaries that constrain the meanings of entertainment television programmes within which are deliberately circumscribed ideologies.

Use of television entertainment for gratification

People need to feel good, to enjoy life and be happy (Rojas, 2005). To accomplish these desires, people are motivated to participate in activities that expose them to things that have the capacity to provide them with entertainment. Social interactions, for example, are primary means of relieving loneliness, a state that is less likely to produce enjoyment for most people. The social experience therefore is valuable because through it, people's well-being is elevated. Being with others provides them the affirmation that they matter, and this stimulates them to feel good about themselves (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004). For this reason, social interaction, when it is pleasurable, is a space for people to perform 'entertaining others' so as to enhance their well-being. Thus, social interaction involves moments of reciprocated entertainment performances between fellow human beings. People like to be with each other because the experience entertains them; they perform for each other in ways that seek to promote good feelings in each other. Being in the state of 'feeling good' enhances life for people in general (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004). One important factor that has to be in place in order for the 'socially performed' entertainment between people to work is empathy, that is one's understanding of other people's general need for happiness, satisfaction or fulfillment, or at least for averting negative stimulation that may lead to 'feeling bad'. To be empathetic within the social interaction context, means being able to identify with others' situations through understanding their need to feel good. For this reason, social interactions between people work well only when people identify with each other and can be able to share common ideals that are about enhancing their well-being. Since "Television functions as a social context, providing sensory communion and social congregation; it also functions as a center (sic) of meaning" (Adams, 1992: 117), and thus has the potential to provide similar utility. Entertainment television works under the above principle only because it addresses the basic human need for the social experience by providing a place where this can happen. Television

as a place ". . . refers to (1) a bounded system in which symbolic interaction among persons occurs (a social context), and (2) a nucleus around which ideas, values, and shared experiences are constructed (a center (sic) of meaning). . . a social life is founded on shared meanings and meanings are created through social life; each constructs the other" (Adams, 1992: 118).

Television assumes that all human needs are social (Gitlin, 1979) because people need to reach out to others in order to propagate and sustain life. Using raw materials from the social and the cultural sites of people's every day lives, television portends a representation of reality and social interactivity. Therefore, it creates a need in the audience to attend to it by projecting the capacity to fulfil their need for social interaction. By using characters with which the audience can identify, entertaining television programmes significantly increase their chances of being seen as familiar, relevant and necessary. In Chapter Three of this thesis, I discussed how the give-and-take between television programmes and the audience happens as a relationship between addresser and addressee. Most importantly, however, it is usually the characters in the television programmes that hail the audience and guide them into attending to given shows. In this regard, the programmes arouse interest in the audience because they prompt it to seek pleasure in the familiar, in witnessing and sharing 'lived experiences' with the characters in the programmes. Therefore, in tuning to television, the audience engages in an activity, or experience, that takes them to a place where they are able to share 'life' with the characters in the programmes. Television in this respect is used as a tool for accomplishing specific social desires. Nevertheless, according to Prabu et al (2006: 5), the motives behind why the audience chooses to watch a programme determine how much entertainment value they could garner from it. This means that in different circumstances and depending on the type of gratification being sought, the audience receives different degrees of entertainment value from a television programme.

When audiences become intensely involved in the lives of the characters in a television programme, a para-social relationship between them and the characters develops. The audience becomes participants in the 'plot of life' of the characters by empathising with their situations as described at the beginning of this section. Character identification of this nature also grows stronger when the audience recognizes attributes in television characters that mirror some of their own (Liebes and Katz, 1990). In addition, characters who reflect growth in their morals and are able to reason within the audience's scope of moral values create the

most empathic connections with the audience. Indeed, audiences enjoy anticipating the good outcomes for characters they like and bad ones for characters they dislike. Thus, the greater the identification with the characters, the greater the bond between the audience and the characters, which in turn influences the degree of entertainment value that the audience receives from watching a television programme (Prabu et al, 2006). Overall**,** there is high entertainment value for the audience when the characters in a television programme behave in a plausible way—by engaging actively with the ups and downs of their lived experiences as historically and social-culturally placed beings. In other words, characters must represent who they are according to their positioning in the world in order for them to empathetically appeal to the audience (Howard and Mabley, 1993).

Consequently, it is not necessary that entertainment value in a television programme always arises from its ability to create a 'light' mood in the audience. A 'cloudy' mood may provide entertainment in terms of the anticipated relief that the audience hopes to get from the programme in the future. The promise of relief from the cloudy mood is in the next episode, or programme. This condition parallels a natural trend of real life that is familiar to the audience, that is the fact that they can always hope for tomorrow. Human nature is designed to hope that the next day brings better fortunes, or growth. In this respect, television entertainment programmes routines mirror the ebb and flow of the tides of real life, and therefore anchor for the audience a state of normalcy. In associating this natural order with television even in a general way, the audience is able to regard it as a significant asset in their lives (Chapter Seven). Entertainment programmes are therefore designed to present the fact that there are problems in life that can unsettle our status quos; that there is need to confront them and that we are endowed with the ability to overcome them if only we reinvent ourselves or seek solace from others like us (Lucey, 1996).

At another level, the experience of entertainment television serves the audience with a much needed poetic justice. The fact that life for ordinary members of the audience seems to be unfair, particularly with regard to the equitable distribution of power and wealth in society, the audience looks to entertainment programmes for the promise of a happier world. Watching comedies for example creates for the audience 'sacred moments' where a new social order is possible. Audiences can embed their fantasies of a better world on the plausibility of their characters of choice being able to accomplish for them what they cannot in the real world, at least via a virtual experience (Bastien and Bromley, 1980: 50; Browne, 1980). Thus,

entertainment programmes characters are the 'equalizers' and 'Robin Hoods' that can transcend ordinary everyday life activities into honourable lifestyles by representing them in a way that breaks the social barriers preventing poor people, for example, from living the good life. The KBC television domestic situation comedy, *Vitimbi*, projects this ideal most appropriately.

Vitimbi began in 1986 (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview) featuring the family of a hilarious, marginal patriarch known as Mzee Ojwang. His salvation is his wife, a no-nonsense, sensible and kind matriarch known as Mama Kayai. Throughout the years, Mzee Ojwang's lowly family endured life running a ramshackle food kiosk, but always aspiring to bigger things. This show is not scripted but since it features comedians who are in their own right live stage performers, each episode is an improvisation that depends on a life time investment of the real life experiences of the stage performers who also constitute the main players in the television show. The director provides the sketch of each episode, mapping out the storyline around a permanent premise but allowing the principal comedians to flesh out the incidents in the show's plot. He then guides the players according to the purpose of this show as folkloric entertainment that is also designed to send valuable messages to the audience (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview; Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview). Throughout its history, the show has depicted the lives of the Ojwangs, a working class family, as not only 'liveable' but enjoyable (as depicted by the overall humorous texture of the show). Thus, it has managed to transcend the realities of the working class into an admirable lifestyle that continues to defy and contradict the hardships associated with menial labour, such as running a food kiosk, and maintaining a stable family at the same time. Indeed, by the 2000s the *Vitimbi* family had risen in their social status and had climbed to lower middle class as they now operate a decent restaurant and live in a well furnished house with all the modern day amenities including a television set.

Use of television entertainment in repairing mood

Mood determines one's actions. As Abelman and Atkin (2002) contend, people are always in the pursuit of alleviating bad stimuli, that is things that make them feel bad. Television watching therefore has to make people feel good in order for them to receive enjoyment from it (Helregel and Weaver, 1989; Zillmann, 2000). People generally want to perpetuate the habits that enhance 'feeling good', hence if the activity of watching television proves to enrich them in this respect they expose themselves more to programmes that entertain them. The

mood factor is double edged: audiences in a bad mood will tune in to television to alleviate their bad feelings, and audiences in a good mood will want to sustain their good feelings by seeking to engage in activities that can fulfil this for them, for example watching more television. Thus, positive and negative 'moods' can influence the audience's need to tune in to a television programme; at the same time they can influence the degree of the entertainment value perceived in the programme (Prabu et al., 2006). According to Zillman (2000), people choose to expose themselves to different kinds of media, or television programmes for that matter, in order to manage their mood. A positive (happy) mood enhances good living, and therefore people who choose to use television as the means to achieve happiness will expose themselves to programmes that alleviate a negative mood (Zillmann, 2000). Although the audience may choose to watch sad or tragic programmes that leave them feeling deflated or depressed, perhaps the entertainment in such programmes lies in the reaffirmation that there are always people in worse situations than the audience's own (Abelman and Atkin, 2002).

Indeed, in spite of it all 'tragic' entertainment programmes portray that life goes on, and that there are abundant opportunities for the afflicted to come back and fight another day. In a sense then, entertainment television provides pleasure through escapism, as the audience sees this as a therapeutic way of avoiding, averting or controlling negative stimuli through ascending emotionally to a better place (Abelman and Atkin, 2002: 73). It allows the audience to escape "*into* a restructured, reformulated world in which the senseless makes sense, where the logic of feeling rules, and where resolution is not only possible but demanded" (Marsden, 1981: 121). Thus, the relationship between the audience and entertainment programmes happens within the 'uses and gratification' scheme whereby the media serves to fulfil specific desires of the audience. However, these programmes can only repair the injured moods of the audience by seeming to be relevant to the audience's priority needs at the instance of watching television. Once the audience discovers this useful asset in entertainment programmes, it may habitually view them in the hope satisfying specific needs.

Attending to the habit of viewing television entertainment

Habits are learned and routinised activities that people do because these have come to mean something important in the way people live their lives. Meaning in habits is derived from experience, from first engaging in an activity upon which a tradition of repeating the same practices develops because the initial experience in the activity fulfilled a certain need. For instance, with regard to television:

> Once we engage in viewing, viewing encourages more viewing. When people watch TV, they experience an immediate reward, an instant gratification in any or all the forms—distraction, relaxation, information—within seconds of turning on the set, and they come to associate that improvement in emotional and physical state with viewing (Abelman and Atkin, 2002: 75).

Routinised, the practice of viewing becomes 'living', at which point it becomes a habit that is hard to break. This is because breaking it would mean terminating a piece of the viewer's way of life as s/he has come to know and value it. The older the habit, the more its value for the individual viewer as it is seen as central to sustaining the quality of his/her life. When viewing television becomes such an intense habit, its value as entertainment for the audience reaches the greatest degree and is thence transformed into something more intimate to the individual audience members—a sort of their 'beingness'. Entertainment television in this regard is seen not just as a trivial and mundane pastime but as a phenomenon that can even have implications on how audience members relate to people in their society. Watching television in this context is regarded as a valued cultural activity (Gerbner et al, 1996). Therefore, terminating the habit when it has reached this level is like *cutting off limbs* (Emphasis in italics mine). When this happens, there are implications in the lives of individual audience members ranging from the emotional, psychological to physical ones, all of which can be felt by people who share the same socio-cultural spaces with the afflicted audience members.

For instance, recently a young Kenyan girl was reported to have stabbed her step-father to death because he would not allow her to watch a favourite programme (a soap opera) on television. The step-father had insisted on watching a football match in which the national team was playing a key qualifier match for the World Cup/African Nations Cup that afternoon. An argument ensued, at which point the girl fetched a knife from the kitchen and stabbed the step-father repeatedly in the chest as he sat on the couch watching the match (Mukinda and Hussein, 2008). This incident points to the fact that watching their entertainment television programme of choice was very significant for both the girl and her step-father. It also proves that they attached great value to watching these programmes at the exact time they needed to, otherwise they would not have fought over the remote control that afternoon. Perhaps it was a habit of theirs to seek gratification from viewing specific television programmes when specific needs arising from their lived experiences prompted them to do so. The international match between Kenya and Namibia could have provoked in the step-father a desire to engage in a patriotic (social and empathic) activity, and therefore his need to watch the match on television that afternoon. The girl may have desired to keep track

of the undertakings of characters in an on-going soap opera story, and therefore did not want to be left behind in the journey she 'shared' with them. Whichever the case, the experience of watching (for the step-father) and not being able to watch (for the girl) a favourite entertainment programme provoked very strong feelings in the two viewers that attending to their television viewing related needs resulted in the death of one of them.

Interestingly, responses written by newspaper readers reacting to the above story focused little on the issue of 'watching television' per se. The commentators saw the incident as an extension of the problems of a culture that is permissive for allowing children to seek fulfillment of their gratifications through television:

> *If you have been keen enough to observe how the Nairobi kids are brought up, you should never be troubled by such incidents. From their upbringing [Nairobi] kids can do such acts of atrocities or even worse. We have let the media to be our children's parents. How many hrs does your child spend on the TV? We have shred the family bond so loose that we even fight in front of our kids.* (Submitted by MUTAIELARY, Posted September 08, 2008 01:44 PM, *Saturday Nation*)

In addition, readers pointed to the irresponsibility of parents in allowing their children to make choices for themselves too often in ways that have impact on their lives in many significant ways:

> *Hey, don't blame it all on the girl. Aren't the parents the ones who allowed her to become addicted to these nonesensical soaps? Heh! Halafu, they sent her to a boarding school where they have no idea what kind of people, things or behaviors she's exposed. Parents nowadays are just careless and dump their children in high school* (Submitted by MichaOlga, Posted September 08, 2008 01:15 PM, *Saturday Nation*).

Respondents to this story seem to suggest that habits formed in the process of making decisions for themselves result in delinquency in children, and by default these are reflected in instances such as the television viewing killing incident. While this point of view may seem to resurrect the direct effectivity of television debate, it is not what I intend to point out here. I want to suggest that the meaningfulness of television viewing has become a grantedly valuable asset in the lives of people who have a habit of engaging in it. Thus, as discussed

above, motives for seeking entertainment in television programmes relate to deeply felt convictions that it does alleviate negativity or that it is capable enriching life in meaningful ways. Therefore, viewing is deemed as a necessary activity for enhancing life, which is what human beings aspire to do throughout their lives. In turn, entertainment television in this context is elevated in the hierarchy of things a society's cultural tradition includes as part and parcel of what constitutes its structure. This notion is reflected in the following comments on the above television viewing tragedy (presented without alteration):

> *This is not an isolated case but one that points to the deep rot our youth are in now. It is a reality check on how our children have developed an I-have-to-get-what-I-want-when-I-want-how-I-want-no-matter-what attitude. It is no different from a group of students burning a dormitory [or the headmistress's house] because they have told there'll be evening preps when some don't want to miss 'cuando seas mia' [a Mexican soap opera]. Seriously a massive social disaster is looming in our country like hoary, amorphous clouds; I think we need to integrate some 'mitigative' psychosocial support activities in our syllabi — something is deeply wrong!* **(**Submitted by Lilyen, Posted September 08, 2008 06:27 AM, *Saturday Nation*).

The *Saturday Standard* on line newspaper (September 8th, 2008) also carried the story under the heading 'Girl Kills Father After They Disagree Over TV' (Ombati, 2008). Below is a reader's commentary on the story, which overall seems to universalise watching television as a socio-culturally integrated activity. The comments suggest that people's experiences with television are defined 'elsewhere' (socio-cultural arena) before they enter the 'television arena' either as programmes that are said to have an impact on the audience or as the activity of viewing per se. Indeed, though responding to a story on the 'impact' of television viewing, the writer of the comments below does not actually mention television. But it is her 'exnomination' of television in her discussion of 'television as a socio-cultural phenomenon' that elevates the pervasiveness of the medium in 'other' aspects of people's lives—besides the mere entertainment they garner from it.

> *Ridiculous what our young have become. They ignore parents' advice. There is also lack of good parenting – Think the article on Mums who love to party! Marriages are breaking & [people] take on new partners who have children. Shocking that many Kenyans don't go to church! This reminds me of when I taught at schools in UK where a lot of students in sec schools don't live with their biological fathers. At one [school] we were told not to ask students about their dad unless student volunteers such info.*

Many live with single mums others are in care. Such kids are wild & abusive to teachers! One day a student said: "Why don't you go back to Africa you black bitch!" Our [government] needs to ensure society's fabric isn't eroded. Teenage girls & the-morning-after pill is reminiscent of the West. It was suggested that this pill be offered @ UK [schools]! I used to see teenage girls at FP clinics in the UK, where FP pills are NOT available over the counter! Your blood pressure is monitored when u're on the pill. The Kibera girl who killed her father might have been acting a Ninja movie scene! She & her step-dad (Submitted by Chesley Harvey, Posted September 8, 2008, 8:15 AM).

Given the above, it appears that when the audience regards entertainment programmes as extremely valuable, such programmes become transformative. At this level, the distinction between use of entertainment television for gratification of certain individual needs and use of television as prosthesis for facilitating 'good living' considerably blurs. Nevertheless, despite extremes such as those that unraveled in the above incident, motives that bring the audience to the viewing of entertainment television are linked to the audience's desire to alter not only their mood but also to change their lives, most preferably in positive ways.

Television entertainment, teleology in myth-making

So far I have established that there is no doubt television programmes are more than mere entertainment. What begins as the audience's pursuit for 'the feel good factor' through watching entertainment programmes evolves into traditions that eventually create a culture, a system that produces and reproduces meanings for the sustenance of the audience's real life, albeit not in isolation. Particularly, entertainment television programmes address viewers on their own terms and involve them in the reproduction and development of society by contributing to

> the creation, maintenance, and interpretation of essential forms of social and cultural knowledge. TV entertainment programmes presuppose and communicate insight into various social strata and life modes, everyday knowledge about the handling of domestic chores and social norms for behaviour, as well as insight into contemporary trends and tastes [...which are] transformed into knowledge through viewers' active negotiation with the subject matter. This process takes place by individual acquisition and in the exchange of insights with others through various forms of interest, support or experience in communities (Frandsen, 2008: 134).

Recognising that entertainment programmes have utility value for the audience, and that they have latent 'power' in hooking the audience through providing them with therapeutic regimes of pleasure (Ang, 1991), television producers use these programmes as vehicles for ferrying various messages that draw the audience's attention to the television stations' interests or objectives. In this context, these programmes are ideological, as they complete an objective relationship between viewers and television stations—one "arising out of the economic structure [of television programming]" (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 1985: 3). As ideological tools, television programmes appear to reflect "the way we experience life. Ideology arises out of our quotidian existence and is indivisibly part of that set of social structures which make up social activities and experience (e.g. the social practices we engage in [...])" (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 1985: 3).

Packed with 'pleasure/entertainment' value, television entertainment programmes appear less didactic, harmless. Therefore, they are less antagonistic in reaching out to the audience. They are inviting, welcoming. Hence, producers can rely on the audience to accommodate the ideological messages they encode in entertainment programmes because the audience approaches such programmes with the least amount of apprehension. Production and viewing of television programmes are therefore goal-oriented activities and tend toward the achievement of other goals. They are teleological (Hartley, 1992), myth making. For purposes of this study, I have defined myth as "a system of communication [...]" (Barthes, 1973: 117); a message loaded with specific significations (Barthes, 1973: 126). "Myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (Barthes, 1973: 126). How do the processes of production, dissemination and consumption of myth through entertainment television programmes happen?

> Because televiewing is a symbolic interaction between the audience and the manufacturers of the television programming, and because the definition of interaction implies a mutual or reciprocal influence, the audience may be extracting elements from the internal reality of a TV program and applying them to the real world [...] The shared meaning that is the symbolic interaction is a two-way street. Indeed the likelihood of fiction substituting for fact is significantly increased under a number of conditions. First is the verisimilitude of a story line or character portrayal. The more that events and people on TV appear to be similar to or useful for one's own life, the greater the ease with which fictional depictions are confused with factuality (Abelman and Atkin, 2002: 75).

The above phenomenon is most practical within the scope of cultivation theory, which proposes that when television programmes continually and consistently propound the audience with given messages, the audience might be inclined to conceive of a social reality that is consistent with the outlook proffered by such television programmes (Gerbner et al, 1996). As a powerful socializing agent, television is able to cultivate specific worldviews (Wood, 2000) because its messages enter the circuit of culture as raw materials where they are received and exchanged between people who may later transform them into the ideals of their given society through social practices (Du Day et al., 1997). Long term experiences with television in this manner can create impressions in the audience which tend toward representing the objectives of the producers of the television messages. Commercial enterprise and government, which sponsor or instigate the production of television cultural products, recognise television's ability to communicate in this way and with an immediacy that rivals interpersonal interaction. Whenever possible therefore, government regulates television broadcasting in such a way that it draws the public into supporting its causes with an affectation that evokes patriotism. Hence, programming is designed to coax the individual viewer members of the public to join in the worthy cause of nation-building. For instance, through a government-dominated PSB, whereby the Office of the President[xxxi] has an inherent mandate (whether constitutionally or otherwise) to use it for adjudicating its business, the president need only announce what the 'story', legacy and aspirations of the country are and the medium begins to mythologize them.

Presidents of Kenya for example, like some of their contemporaries across Africa, have in the past used national television as a personal public address system, thus obligating viewers to attend to their calls and also conditioning them to see television as inherently part and parcel of government (Heath, 1992; Bourgault, 1995: 106; Harding, 2003: 77). This is particularly so because in authoritarian political contexts, information about what the official agenda is, and the story of the country flows in one direction, from the rulers to the ruled (Harding, 2003). What institutions of culture come to mean is sometimes defined through literal public pronouncements by the president. The case of the entertainment reality television programme *Big Brother Africa* and former Namibian President Sam Nujoma illustrates this aspect well:

> President Sam Nujoma has told the national broadcaster, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), to stop airing the Big Brother Africa (BBA) show. The Namibia Press Agency (Nampa) reported on Monday that Nujoma said the NBC should concentrate on screening educational films and documentaries about Namibia instead. The President made the

statement at the official launch of an atlas on Namibia in Windhoek. Nampa reported that after noting the invaluable information the atlas contained for students, tourists and investors, the President cast his speech aside, wagged a finger at the NBC cameraman, Ronney Hoebeb, and told him to give proper coverage to the launch of the new atlas. He then took aim at the broadcaster for screening BBA. "I would like to call on the NBC to stop showing this so-called Big Brother Africa and to start showing the history of Namibia," Nampa quoted the President as saying' (*The Mercury*, July 30, 2003, *Edition -1*)

In some circumstances, presidential pronouncements (such as cited above) and other forms of 'authorial' speech (as in television programmes) can effectively create myths, particularly concerning societal values, morals and aspirations (Bakhtin, 1986). Myth in the context of broadcasting means that television as an institution becomes an object that embodies a particular idea. This idea varies depending on the institutional foundations that sustain television broadcasting—for example government or commercial objectives. For this reason, television serves to establish a tradition and culture, an outlook to life that best agrees with the dominant ideologies of the institutions that control and define the structure of the given society within which it is found. In myths are embedded ideologies of the institutions of power that control and manage the television institutions. The myths produced through television programmes are therefore concerned with naturalizing explanations about why the status quo of life is the way it is, how it can be sustained or made better. According to Barthes (1977: 165), the purpose of a myth is to overturn the historical into the natural using elements that constitute society as a resource for constructing ideologically based truths. Hence, myths are designed to explain that life is the way it is because of a natural arrangement of interrelated 'forces'—for example within government/citizen and producer/consumer relationships—which must constantly be validated. Myths are about hegemonising culture (Gitlin, 1979), about the process of meaning making which is designed to explain and render invisible the contradictions between social realities and the institutional ideologies that promote the interests of powerful institutions. Consequently, according to Roome (1998: 66), entertainment television programmes are laden with symbolic forms of expression, and these reflect "the thinking, values, ideology, behaviour and myths of society—or its deep structure".

In order for television to transmit myth, it has to appear to be working naturally from within society. It has to reproduce society and reveal its internal conflicts within society's cultural order, and be able to reflect the "structure of practices and meanings around which the society

takes shape" (Gitlin, 1979: 251) but without upsetting it. For this reason, television, like other media, operates

> with a set of assumptions which are rarely articulated but which are nevertheless taken for granted. In operating in this way, the media effectively confirm the truth of the assumptions. The world is defined in terms of those assumptions and it is very difficult to think outside them because they structure the debate represented in the media. The media reinforce a dominant framework of values simply because they assume it and it becomes part of the audience's everyday world […] The events, personalities or ideas raised in the media do not come innocently at the audience; they are already classified by the background assumption. Similarly, this notion of the media as the ideological implies that ideology is not so much a content as a body of rules which generate the surface statements that appear in the media (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 12).

Hence, television entertainment programmes as cultural objects facilitate the self-production and reproduction of society and create symbolic spaces for social-cultural interactions between producers and audiences but under the above constriction. However, these interactions do represent a dimension of the social reflexivity that allows the audience to contemplate their being in their world, hence enables them to actively evaluate how they 'are' and who they are as a society. Conventional soap operas (such as *Uhondo* and *Reflections*) are usually in a position to engage the audience in an effective manner as I have suggested above, and are therefore a good site for interrogating how myth-laden programmes mediate and disseminate dominant ideologies to the audience. On the other hand, entertainment-education soap operas present an interesting case for validating the fact that strategic encoding of programme content with particular types of raw materials can have desired effects on the audience. Indeed, the soap opera can sometimes be said to have a near indoctrinating hold of the audience. Nevertheless, this same powerful characteristic of the soap opera has found practical application in social education.

Soap opera, institutional myth or emancipative fora for the audience?

Forces that govern the producers' approach to the production of entertainment programmes regulate the 'mythical wealth' (ideology) embedded in such programmes' content. However, there is a likelihood that stories may convey institutional agendas in the instances of their reading by the audience. In the African contexts of government-controlled public service television for example, government-informed television stories attract little interest from

audiences when they become too obvious in their agenda to swing viewers toward established political inclinations (Abu-Lughod, 1995; 1997). Indeed, when this happens the audience opts for television programmes which appear to offer it more leverage in garnering whatever entertainment value it can from them (Harding, 2003: 70-71). Audiences, it seems, are interested in programmes that do not pigeon-hole their viewing experiences. Dynamic programmes such as soap operas are therefore very popular because they appear to offer the audience a less constraining viewing experience. The soap opera may be an example of television programmes that can exert extensive control over the audience through scripting and directing, but it also presents the audience with room for more 'freed' reading experiences. Soap opera audiences appear able to appropriate story content to suit their situations. The melodramatic framing of the soap allows the audience to experience them at heightened levels of emotional activity, meaning that the reception of messages embedded within the stories may be received at very individualized depths. To this extent the soap opera becomes a tool for rearticulating the audience's 'selves' against the audience's mainstream or socially prescribed subjectivities (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

In addition, the production of a soap opera involves diverse considerations regarding cultural aspects that could be fashioned into narratives that a wide range of potential viewers would find interesting. This type of television drama is capable of providing

> locations and settings as a visual stimulus for experiences and explanations outside of an individual's own personal experience; secondly, the actions and the conditions presented provide models for new behaviour, real or potential, socially or personally, and in these ways, work to expand the experience of the individual (Harding, 2003: 79).

Soap operas as entertainment are therefore dynamic in value for the audience at many levels, as information, education and socializing agents. They allow interactivity with cultural meanings unlike conservative entertainment programmes which have limited spaces for the audience to exercise suspension of disbelief. Nevertheless, soaps evoke dynamic and varied emotions regarding their value, some of which are based on reductionist attitudes about their cultural relevance; about the people who should make up their audiences and about the topics they should cover if they were ever going to appear relevant. In a sense, just like people say such terrible things about nudity so do they about soaps, because they reveal people's nooks and crannies, how they really are as seen by others—the true perceptible 'natural selves on display' with all the muck (Baldwin, 1995: 292-293).

Other attitudes about soaps however relate to a kind of optimism founded on the belief that these dramas are a practical tool for effecting audience behaviour necessary for curbing some of the afflictions marginalized people suffer, for example disease, illiteracy, hunger or population explosion. Indeed, the role of soaps in social education, as in entertainment-education, has been widely recognized (Tufte, 2003, 2001, 1999; Pitout, 1996). Matters concerning soap operas therefore are not static; they are active and ever changing as different people who experience these dramas feel differently about them based on their socio-cultural, historical and emotional situations—in all manner of speaking (Ang, 1985; Allen, 1995).

What's in the soap?

The history of the soap opera goes back to the days of radio. Much has been written on this fact and on how women, because of their social status as housewives in the early days of radio in the United States of America were considered the ideal target audiences for this type of drama. The genre is said to have been invented particularly to 'move' household products. Indeed, according to Robert C. Allen (1985), the word "soap" in 'soap opera' alludes to the fact that sponsorship for this type of broadcast drama was first provided by big manufacturers of house cleaning products such as the Procter and Gamble. When the American press coined this term to describe the highly serialized then radio drama in the 1930s, it was at the height of its popularity. By 1940 it represented 90% of all commercially sponsored daytime radio broadcast programmes (Allen, 1985; 1995).

Characteristically, soap operas are set in central environments where ordinary people (across the world) spend a significant amount of time in their lives. The home, the work place, the hospital and the social/public place such as the bar or restaurant commonly feature in soap operas because they also provide familiar spaces where people tend to congregate. Furthermore, such environments enhance the social interactivity necessary for dramatic relationships between soap opera characters. Since the soap opera is also underpinned on conflict, these gathering environments catalyse the actions of the characters in that direction. Stories of the interactions of these characters (usually about love, family and business relationships) are interwoven with those of other characters as each character appears to be connected with all the characters in the overall soap opera drama (Bignell, 2004). For this reason, soaps tend not to have central characters, although they may feature distinctive heroes and villains. The struggles of the villains and their allies against the heroes and their allies unravel slowly in many short scenes over an extended period of time that actually parallels

real time. Indeed, some of the most successful soap operas can run for more than fifty years having featured numerous episodes (Allen, 1995). Although there are many reasons why soaps are popular, many studies (Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Geraghty, 1991; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Miller, 1992) emphasize that identification with soap characters or their situations is central to the attraction many people find in them. This identification can range from the viewer's recognition of the familiar in the characters' predicaments, attitudes toward life, morals, cultural values and even fashion! Daniel Miller's (1992) study on how Trinidadians 'remade' the American soap, *The Young and the Restless*, as one of their own by practically appropriating the fashion depicted in that soap to represent culturally meaningful aspects of their lives is fascinating. Miller noted that for participants in his study it was almost always the clothing (fashion, styles) that first mediated identification with the soap opera's characters. Later, however, this identification translated into "direct copying of clothes, so that seamstresses [conceived] watching the soap operas as part of their job" (Miller, 1992: 223).

Ang (1985: 46) notes that "what appeals to audiences in a serial is connected to their social situations, histories, aesthetics and cultural preferences". In addition, the mythical realism of soap operas is a meta-commentary on the nature of truth itself. The melodramatic representations in soaps of characters dealing with the mundane and quotidian serve this purpose. In so far as these representations involve the psychological conflicts of characters as their lives are unsettled by their estrangement from core social institutions, particularly the family, church, school etc., they become meaningful to many viewers. The depiction of characters' movements within these institutions in soaps represents a reality that viewers recognise as it reminds them of the responsibility of living within institutions that epitomize and consolidate their sense of community. Furthermore, in Third World post-colonial countries where the socio-national community belongingness has been overemphasized by government through television (Abu-Lughod, 2002), the audience finds in the melodramatic orientation of soaps a means of realizing post-modern sensibilities of the personal. As the audience becomes intimately familiar with soap characters and their lives at an emotional level, the experience of 'feeling with the characters' personalizes, individualizes the social world and provides the audience with a new way of knowing this world (Hobson, 1982; Abu-Lughod, 2002). Thus, the soap ceaselessly offers the audience dramas of recognition and re-cognition by locating social and political issues in personal, familial-social terms. Therefore, soaps allow the audience to make sense of an increasingly complex world (Lopez, 1995). Soap operas also "allow for the viewers an emotional participation in a set of fictitious powers

that play with elemental human questions: honor (sic), goodness, love, badness, treason, life, death, virtue and sin, that in certain ways has something to do with the viewer" (Mazziotti, 1993, citing Gonzales, 1998: 11).

Furthermore, researchers have found that there is a possibility many a social interaction have grown from the shared experiences of watching soaps (Cantor and Pingree, 1983). Indeed, these dramas sometimes become a common subject of discussion between people who would have no relations otherwise. Soaps can also fulfil what seems to be an everyday need for some people as they wait on them as part of their day, and attend to them from beginning to end for specific purposes such as. . . "how it all ends up" (Hobson, 1982: 116). Once formed, this ritual of 'soap watching' is never an empty or hopeless endeavour as individuals carry this experience to the social space later. Due to this fact, and the soap opera's capacity for work in producing cultural meanings that people find useful, soaps have become useful tools for effecting positive social change.

The soap opera as entertainment-education, administrating audience response

In the African context, soaps have been found to influence cultural attitudes about education, disease, poverty, family planning and prejudice. In South Africa, the oldest local soap opera, *Egoli* (1991 -), was considered 'impact–full' in this respect (Pitout, 1996). Since the soap attracts a large number of viewers, it was said to be in "a powerful position in terms of incorporating context-specific events and utilising these to supply the audience with sufficient information. [It's] storyline regarding prejudices against AIDS, for example, heightened awareness amongst the *Egoli* viewers and so helped to conscientise viewers" (Oosthusyen, 1997: 1) *Soul City* (1994-), another South African production, has been strategically employed to raise consciousness in troubled youths. Unlike the conventional style soap opera, *Soul City*, an entertainment-educational (E-E) drama, provides a forum for exhibiting a televisual engagement with topics often ignored by the conventional soap. Yet, it is able to deliver the 'message' in the format of entertainment television thus making it accessible to a targeted audience. The programme addresses health and development issues while portraying ordinary people positively engaged in dealing with social problems that threaten productive living. At the same time, the 13-part prime time television drama runs for three months a year with each series promoting specific health education issues (Singhal and Rogers, 1999).

In mid-May 1987, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), then known as Voice of Kenya (VOK), utilized Mexican Miguel Sabido's social educational soap opera method to develop

the television series *Tushauriane* ('Let's Talk About It') and a radio series entitled *Ushikwapo Shikamana* ('If Assisted, Join In'). Both dramas aimed at 'opening the minds of men' so that they could allow their wives to seek family planning counselling. Creators of these programmes praised their success saying that by the time the two series concluded, contraceptives use in Kenya had increased up to 58% and the desired family size fallen from 6.3 to 4.4 children. Greg Adambo, the original producer of *Tushariane*, attributed the popularity of the programme to its realism. Although the programme was designed to promote specific types of behaviour change, it appealed to the audience in a wholesome way by representing a familiar, 'local' situation to which the audience could easily relate (Singhal and Roger, 1999). This facet is a primary strength of the entertainment-education soap opera because it invites audience involvement. In this context, "Audience involvement is the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and parasocial interaction with, certain media programs (sic) thus resulting in overt behaviour change. Audience involvement can be seen as being composed of two main elements: (a) reflection (critical and/or referential), and (b) parasocial interaction (cognitive, affective, behavioural (sic) participation or any combination of these) with the media" (Sood, 2002: 156). In reflection, the audience members consider the message in the soap opera and integrate it in their own lives (Liebes and Katz, 1986). In referential reflection, the audience relates the soap content to their personal experiences, usually by discussing it with others in the context of their own lives and problems. When audience members disagree with the depictions in the soap opera content, it shows that they have critically reflected on the content of the soap and found it inaccurate or unfamiliar (Sood, 2002: 157).

Indeed, seen as 'out of place', the educational Kenyan soap opera *Heart and Soul* (2000) was not well received despite its highly acclaimed production values and apparent relevance in featuring topical social issues. Some viewers, claimed the *Daily Nation* media critic, John Kariuki, felt it had "serious omissions and violations from a cultural point of view which, to a large extent, [made] it irrelevant to an African audience" (BBC News World Edition, Aug 15, 2002). According to Kariuki, one such cultural inaccuracy in *Heart and Soul* appears in a scene where a wealthy landowner who died of AIDS is buried in the middle of a coffee plantation. This scene misappropriates some facts relating to the Kenyan practice of burying the dead "always within the homestead" and covering the grave with a lot of flowers (BBC News World Edition, Aug 15, 2002). Ostensibly, *Heart* did not fit the reality of its target audience. Unlike conventional soaps, entertainment-education soaps have to be culturally

coherent, and must project clear moral distinctions between the good and bad behaviour. Indeed, unlike conventional soaps E-E dramas always attempt to address any inconsistencies that might arise in the depictions of characters' actions and dialogue (Singhal and Roger, 1999). Since E-E dramas aspire to influence specific positive behaviour change in the audience, their characters' philosophical resolve to achieve desired moral objectives must be consistent with their physical quests (actions) to achieve them. The key characters must also appear to be forthright positive role models for the audience.

Ostensibly, when conventional soaps are encoded with content that seems to reflect a high degree of social responsibility, the distinction between them and E-E soaps narrows. *Reflections*, for example, was created for the purpose of addressing the gap between the information the youth needed for their overall development and what they were getting from media and society (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Unlike E-E soaps, the programme was not theory based, nor did the producer/director, whose personal input was mostly responsible for the success of this programme, engage in intensive research to identify specific lessons that had to be addressed in each programme. Nevertheless, the programme did address critical issues that members of a family may face in their relationships inside and outside of the home, and the tribulations of the youth in dealing with puberty, issues relating to the youths' sexual conduct and their social subjectivity (Field notes, 2005). Thus, conventional soaps undoubtedly serve as commentary that possibly helps viewers to "resolve the contradictions in the contemporary [Kenyan] culture. . . between aspirations of modernity [exercise of newly found freedom of expression, thought, assembly, sexuality] and nostalgia for tradition" (Miller, 1992: 176).

Indeed, audiences of *Uhondo* seemed to look in the show for a representation of moral and cultural values, even though according to Stan Darius and Stephano Ngunyi (the director and executive producer of *Uhondo*, respectively) the show was primarily created for entertainment. Audiences also criticised this drama for lack of authenticity in depicting 'African-ness'. Some viewers felt the soap failed in representing 'the Kenyan culture', for example in characters' behaviour and their dress codes. During one viewing session organised for this research, a discussion between audience members about whether the 'right' Kenyan language and dress were featured in *Uhondo* became heated. One member of the audience asked: *"Do you think that the author of the show wants the viewer to think of the people in the play as normal Africans? Have we been brainwashed?"* (Viewer Commentary, October

2005). Ostensibly, the connotation in this viewer's questions is that *Uhondo* did not represent African-ness. To this viewer, the soap denoted a kind of space where the society's undertaking are projected back to itself for evaluation. Hence, *Uhondo* and *Reflections* as social commentary are expected to proclaim what is 'Kenyan values' and African-ness. Nevertheless, these soaps revealed the existing contradiction in the lives of Kenyans (viewers) who aspire to be 'purely' Kenyan today in their cultural attitudes (as expressed through dress, song and dance, language etc.) without ever compromising traditions that are regarded as indigenous or 'un-imperialised'. Yet, these same people live in a modern, constantly evolving world. In this category are the audience members who questioned why characters in *Uhondo* had to mix English and Kiswahili in their dialogue, "why the characters don't wear our clothes", or why the local soaps are copying everything Western (Viewer Commentary, October 2005).

When audiences evaluated, analysed or discussed matters about Kenyan soaps in the small groups convened for the purpose of this research, the issue of what it is to be Kenyan and modern came up, as an enigma. It was evident that there exists a dilemma regarding how 'natural' 'Kenyan-ness' today looks like. Some audiences said it did not look like what they had seen on *Uhondo*, yet they could not precisely define the 'natural' Kenyan look (Field notes, 2005). Perhaps the roots of this ambivalence in how a Kenyan audience feels about character portrayals in a local soap opera is symptomatic, suggesting that other aspects of Kenyan life are also tied to its colonial history and its experience with what could be considered 'cultural imperialism' through the media. The mere existence of commercial television in Kenya is a representation of this enigma and the ambivalence the audience of commercial television in particular might feel about what is truly theirs. The ownership of the major commercial media houses, the foremost being Nation Media House (owner of NTV, producer of *Uhondo*) has always been foreign, hence begging the question: just whose agenda are these 'foreign' media representing? (Ochieng, 1992). In this context, the Kenyan conventional soaps can be seen to be laden with a lot of baggage relating to the rooting of the agencies of their production, and this is manifested in story content which, in turn, is sending particular signals that the audience is picking on. Whatever the case, it appears that soaps are occupying an ever more meaningful place in the development of Kenyan culture, because they now constitute the narrative tools that are indispensable in the propagation of a Kenyan socio-cultural heritage. Indeed,

> [Soap operas] are on one hand a source of entertainment, but the recognition and the relevance that the audience accords to the narratives reveal the meaningful social, cultural and even political function that can be attributed to [them]. In many cases, television fiction proves more relevant and thus more meaningful than the evening news. The successful and deep-felt processes of identification lie at the core of this finding […] the [soap operas] manage to articulate […] active and reactive pleasure (Brown, 1994: 173).

In other words, through soap operas viewers are able to engage at a personal level with the numerous quotidian issues represented in the programmes. This engagement empowers the viewers to feel as if they are actively involved in 'dealing with' the said issues. Thus, soap operas are practical narratives rich in utility value. The next section discusses this phenomenon and soap operas' role as generators and disseminators of relevant knowledge.

Soaps as folk and functional narratives

In the absence of the grand oral narratives of old which in many African tradition societies contained and archived dominant philosophical teachings about 'how to live', broadcast media narratives could be seen as important tools for generating knowledge about how life is and should be morally lived (Okigbo, 1998; Bourgault, 1996). For instance, "Television melodramas offer distinctive constructions of the world" (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 122), some of which are no doubt based on stories that disseminate, circulate moral teachings, norms and values of a society within itself. Today, soap operas seem to be playing this role of defining the grand narratives of the day which people look to for insight on how to be or not to be. For instance, "In keeping with ideologies in post colonial nations, television drama is viewed by most of its producers in Egypt not simply as entertainment but as a means to mold the national community. Viewers, whether ordinary television watchers or critics, recognize to varying degrees the ideologies informing these melodramas and react to them—either sympathetically or with hostility, depending on their own situations and political visions" (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 117). Previous popular Kenyan soaps (*Tushauriane*, *Vituko*, *Kisulisuli*, *Tausi, Dunia*) have provided social commentary and the 'passing on' of the moral traditions from the cultural spaces within which they were set—always close to 'home' and 'family' (Elizabeth Kamwiri, February 2005, Interview).

In Kenya, a country that was not too long ago non-literate (a primary oral culture), the new orality in television, through television drama—which "has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present

moment, and even its use of the [orality] formulas" (Ong, 1982: 136)—easily appeals to audiences as functional storytelling. In this context, soap operas are symbolic stories capable of reflecting on human actions within specified frames of culture and socio-political networks. Thus, these stories "store, organize, and communicate much of what [people] know. . .", and have become particularly important because they "can bond a great deal of lore in relatively substantial, lengthy forms that are reasonably durable" (Ong, 1982: 140-141). Particularly, due to the repetitive nature and pervasiveness of the soap opera genre, this form of narrative is capable of massively and permanently bonding a society's thoughts just like the oral narratives did before television. Indeed, according to Charles Okigbo (1998) television in Africa is primarily an entertainment medium with characteristics of such traditional forums as the village square, the community market and the age-grade gathering—all of which are community situations that facilitate the common exchange of information and sharing of values.

Conclusion

The theme of this chapter has been that entertainment television programmes have utility value. Viewers engage in watching television because they want to boost their mood (Zillmann, 2000; Zillmann and Bryant, 1994), in the hope of enhancing their lives for the better. Entertainment television programmes help audiences to escape, or be diverted from their problems; allow them to relax by acting as a channel for emotional release and in general provide the audience with the aesthetic enjoyment that comes from visual presentations (Bastien and Bromley, 1980; Marsden, 1981; Abelman and Atkin, 2002). In the discussion about soap operas as entertainment programmes, I have revealed how dynamic these programmes are in promoting audiences' social interactivity and locating them within their socio-cultural-political networks. In this respect, soaps facilitate in the audiences' self-reflexivity as they negotiate socially ascribed subjectivities, hence allowing them to view their world from more personalized perspectives. For this reason, the chapter concludes that entertainment television programmes, especially soap operas, are far from a mundane affair. Indeed, they now constitute important narratives that many people are looking to in order to make sense of the social world they live in; they are the stories that authenticate the audience's world by reflecting that world back to the audience. Narratives as agents of culture can be used to comment on and assess the 'realities' of life in terms of how they could be lived.

According to the many cultural traditions thriving in Kenya, stories have a role to play as each story can be said to have a moral value to be garnered from it (Ligaga, 2005). Storytelling, therefore, is never vain entertainment. In this context, the value of production and viewing of soap operas might be predicated by the quest for lessons worth teaching or learning from the soaps. Indeed, field data collected in this research reveals that producers and audiences alike felt that soaps had lessons to teach, or that they were teaching wrong ways. This expectation for lessons in the soaps points to 'a given' presumption that these soaps had a purpose, to teach a lesson of some kind. This quality as perceived by the producers and audiences of these soaps also points to a tradition of storytelling for the purposes of teaching. Later in this thesis (Chapter Six) I examine whether producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* went about conceptualizing their audiences based on the ideal that soap operas are indeed stories serving the same purposes as do folk narratives, and whether they expect these television stories to pass on values and traditions of a given culture. In the process, I explore how these producers consider which cultural codes have significant impact on how audiences understand messages from television given that Kenya's diversity in cultural traditions defeats any conceptualisations of how it can be viewed as a homogeneous entity. Before commencing on this task however, in the next chapter I present a theoretical framework that explains the process through which audiences are generated in the production practices of television programming and the meanings in programme content. A communication model showing the factors that forge the relationships between producers, programme content and the audience illustrates the technical 'cultural-communicative' features involved in the said process.

Chapter Five

Moments of Audience Production in Television Programming, a Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Meaning making by both producers and audiences of television programmes is a pragmatic process, particularly because people's involvement with television is goal oriented. Both the producers and the audience intend to gain something from their television communication relationship. This relationship constitutes an addresser and addressee; manufacturing and structuring of meanings within messages and the receiving and re-structuring of meanings from those messages. In the previous chapters, I highlighted how these intentions apply for either members of the two types of interactionists (addressers and addressees) within the contexts of the production and viewing of television entertainment programmes. In this chapter, I provide a tangible theoretical framework capable of outlining exactly how the processes of producing messages in television programmes and those of 'reading' those messages and deriving/or not deriving relevant meanings out of them are operationalised.

In other words, I sketch the layout of the factors that make up the machinery involved in the production of meaning for both television programme makers and audiences. In doing so, I explicate where and how the conceptualisation of audiences by producers of television is positioned within the dynamic communication process (chain) that happens when television entertainment programmes, such as soap operas, were produced, televised and watched by audiences. Hence, this chapter provides a theoretical consideration of the 'moments of production' of 'televisual' meanings at the 'studio' level and at the 'reception' level as they might have related to *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. In so doing, I hope to theoretically ground my hypothesis that agencies that determine how producers go about producing entertainment programmes and conceptualising their target audiences are dependent on prevalent social, cultural, political and economic discourses, the key discourses that should predetermine future dimensions and profile of television in Kenya. The theories considered here will provide complementary perspectives to my understanding of the key factors that influence the production of entertainment programmes within the contexts of the goals and aims of the television stations considered in this study. In addition, they will shed light on how certain cultures of production influence specific production practices and particular meanings in entertainment television programmes. These practices may also be the specific ones that

define how producers conceptualise audiences for selected entertainment programmes. I show that how producers of entertainment television programmes conceptualise their audience is influenced by particular communication dynamics within which television programmes are produced and viewed. The character of these dynamics is in turn defined by the pervading political and economic climates in these environments. In light of this, theoretical models of analysis applicable in answering this study's key question include those showing the links between politics and economics in the context of television broadcasting. They include the reception theory—encoding/decoding of messages (Hall, 1980a); the political economy of media theory as it relates to television production (Williams, 2003) and Foucault's (1982) subject and power notions as they relate to the manufacture of discipline in people whereby they are turned into subjects of powerful institutions (such as are broadcast media organisations).

Reception theory on the practices of television production

In *The Making of a Television Series*, Phillip Elliot (1972: 6) proposes that

> as more and more people look to television for information and entertainment, it becomes increasingly important to ask not only what effect does it have on them, what do they make of it, what do they get out of it; but also how is it that these are the programmes made available, how is the material selected and created, how do television organizations and the 'new priesthood' working within them perform their functions, indeed how do they see their function and does their view agree with that of their audience?

In asking these questions, Elliot hoped to reveal the nature of "the relationship between culture and social structure as it is mediated through television". He also advanced the approach to thinking about the relationship between television producers and audiences as differentially and culturally positioned people within society. Indeed, Stuart Hall (1980a) found in Elliot's work a reference framework as he set out to theorise how producers of, say television programmes, load the content of such programmes with specific meanings via a process he termed encoding, and how the same content is transmitted to the audience who then re-process it by decoding it. In thinking along these lines, Hall provided the theoretical framework with which one could analyse how it is that programmes come to mean what they do to audiences in the varied circumstances of their socio-cultural experiences. His model also considered the role dominant ideologies might play in the structuring of the meaningfulness of such programmes for different audiences.

Among the many factors Hall (1980a) considered were the importance of mass media in society and how it is that they operate and survive the way they do. For one, "the media operate concurrently as interpreters or translators of social phenomena. This double function is related to the conceptualisation of the media as message carriers: a conceptualisation that constitutes the media as symbolic systems" (Mak'Ochieng, 2000: 59). In addition, whether privately or government owned, the mass media, particularly television, are primarily economic institutions that solely rely on funding for their existence. In this sense, media institutions are material systems (Murdock, 1991). At the same time, "As a result of *historical reasons* and because of *their operational nature*, the media of mass communication have become embedded in the political system" (Mak' Ochieng, 2000: 60). The media are regarded "as a source of power for those who control them. . . whoever has access to the media has access to the citizenry and can therefore use the media as a means of controlling their political beliefs and actions" (Mak' Ochieng, 2000: 61). The above dynamics are consistent with the mass media situation in Kenya as it relates to commercial and public television (see Chapter One). In essence, these dynamics play a role in the manufacturing and structuring of media messages, apparently because as material and political systems, mass media are designed for 'work', for accomplishing specific communicative goals on behalf of their owners. For this reason, the products of mass media must be laden with coded messages designed to accomplish the said purposes.

Given the above, I find value in Stuart Hall's (1980a) Encoding/Decoding model of communication because it aims at looking at the communication process with mass media as a whole in the context of culture. Established within Media Studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hall, 1980a), it aspired to move away from the 'Mass Society' way of thinking about how the media affected people. In this view, the mass media had power over people, hence they could alter audiences' behaviour in almost predictable ways. In the 'Mass Society' perspective people were seen as helpless, isolated and easily manipulable by the all powerful media because they had been alienated from the social relations characterized by 'give-and-take' personal, traditional and communal ties that were binding and kept them as members of a totality (Williams 2003: 25; De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989: 153). Individuals in the modern society, therefore, were not valued by others because of their individual qualities, but were bound together because of certain needs (Williams 2003: 25). Mass media exploited these needs, for example in advertising. Critics of mass media in this context therefore considered them a disruptive force in society, because

they could, it was thought, directly influence behaviour and attitudes of people in the modern society, thus effacing their cultural standards. For their power, media were seen as effective tools of implementing authoritarian and centrally controlled societies (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1983; Williams 2003: 29)

According to Hall (1980b: 117) however, Media Studies broke the tradition of the 'direct influence' models and began considering the 'ideological' role of the media. In this approach, the media were seen to play a significant role in defining social relations and political problems. They were an important cultural and ideological force capable of shaping how "the production and transformation of popular ideologies in the audiences [were] addressed" (Hall, 1980b: 117). Media studies did not view media texts "as 'transparent' bearers of meaning - as the 'message' in some undifferentiated way". It focused more on the "linguistic and ideological structuration" of these texts (Hall, 1980b: 117). In addition, it

> broke with the passive undifferentiated conceptions of the 'audience' as it has largely appeared in traditional research—influenced, as these had been, by the surveying needs of broadcasting organizations and advertising agencies. . . These too-simple notions were replaced by a more active conception of the 'audience', of reading and of the relation between how media messages were encoded, the moment of the encoded text and the variation of audience 'decodings' (Hall, 1980b: 118).

In contrast with the 'mass-culture' models, the work at the Centre looked at the question of the media and ideologies in terms of "the role the media play in the circulation and securing of *dominant* ideological definitions and representations" (Hall, 1980: 118b). Utilizing semiotic and textual analysis through the work of Roland Barthes, particularly, *Elements of Semiology, Mythologies* (1968), media studies at the Centre was able to reorient the mass-culture models of mass communication into a more dynamic model that was capable of problematising the manufacturing of messages, the transmission and reception of those messages in a much more realistic way. In his version of reception theory, Hall not only established a way of understanding how the products of media are 'taken to work' for their 'masters', but he also established that 'culture' interfered with the processes of production, transmission and the moments of message consumption by the audience. Indeed, the audience's autonomy and ability to appropriate media messages to suit their own situations impacted on how they read such messages. In this sense, Hall's media communication model promised to have real

advantages over the "textual determinism and aesthetic formalism of screen theory" (Moore, 1993) in illustrating the relationship between producers and audiences through the message.

For the purposes of analysing the data of this study, I treat Hall's (1980a) 'Encoding/Decoding' model of communication as the main framework within which the processes of meaning making with television by both the producers and the audiences happen. However, I also show that it is through the political economy approach can the ingredients that propel processes of production, distribution and consumption of the products of the television institutions be best understood. At the same time, I consider Foucault's (1982) notions of 'power and the subject' as a practical tool for explaining how it is that television becomes a cultural institution. Television, it seems, occupies a critical space within society from where it can create subjects of institutional goals and aspirations—which in itself is an exercise of power. These notions are critical in explaining the positioning of producers and audiences in their relationships as determined by the socio-cultural structures that influence how communication with television happens in the society considered in this study.

Encoding/Decoding television programmes' content: derivation of the audience

In television, the processes of constructing messages implicate the nature of the audience as conceptualised by the producers. Indeed, the professional code of television programmes production works to structure meanings into programmes aiming for this meaning to be found by the audience (Hall, 1973; Moore, 1993). However, the audience can only realise this 'specific' meaning if it virtually occupied the same sphere of meaning making (signification) with the producers. This means that in order for the audience to understand television programmes content, it has to be impregnated with the cultural capital that enables it to process the meaning embedded in these programmes. There are two ways through which the audience may gain this asset: one, it may be cultivated by the communicative processes of television in a way that enables it to gain knowledge on how to understand programmes. Two, the producers may encode programme content with signs and cultural symbols which they 'know' the audience would recognise once the programmes content is exposed to it. The audience is able to recognise these symbols only because it is imbued with resourceful cultural capital. This capital emanates from the television communication structure which is "produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments— production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction. . .[of television meanings. It is] a 'complex structure in dominance', sustained through the articulation of connected

practices" (Hall, 1980a: 128). Below is Hall's model illustrating the arrangement of these significant moments.
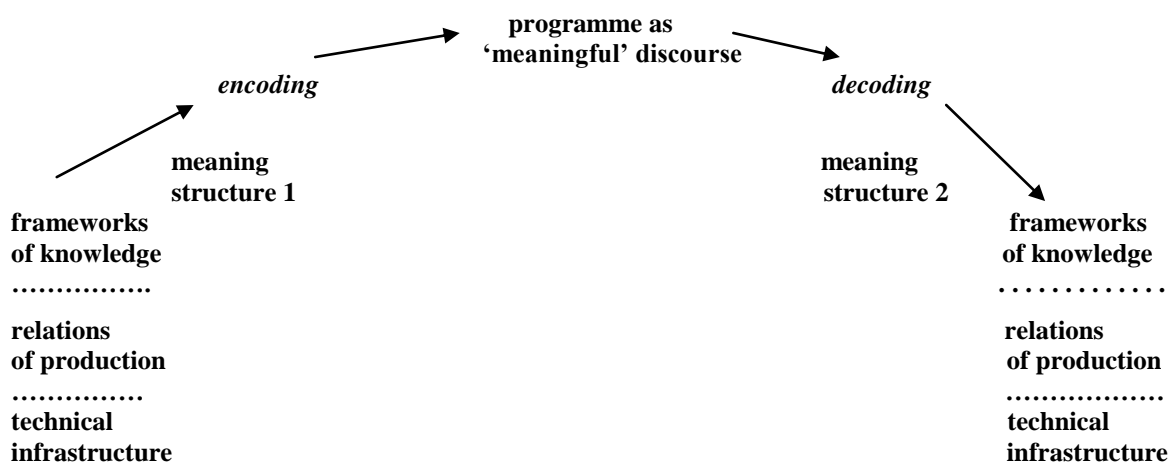

Figure 1: *Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model of Communication*
Source of Figure: Hall (1980a: 130)

I propose that although the above model does not seem to explain how the audience is 'figured in' at the beginning of the chain of communicating a message, in the manufacturing and structuring of television programming content the audience is also integrated into the encoded message at Meaning Structure 1. I use the dimensions in the key question of this thesis to illustrate this proposition.

There are two dimensions in: **How do producers of television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audiences?** First**,** the question implies the mental picture that forms in the producers' minds about what types of people constitute the individual viewers, that is people who are most likely to choose to watch certain programmes. This image of the audience is formed from the subjective notions that producers have regarding which people in society watch television, what types of programmes they watch and when they watch them. The overriding instigator of these producers' mental pictures of the audience and its characteristics is the socio-cultural value system that guides individuals in their ways of relating and regarding others within their society. Using this system, producers may engage in the structuring of programming material (through encoding it with cultural raw materials) into stories, that is message content that is most likely to be understood by the individual viewers they anticipate would view their television programmes. In other words, producers have the capability of 'seeing' the audience in the programmes content raw materials only because they

assume that the audience exists not only as matter (body/flesh) but also in narratives of their socio-cultural experiences and relationships with their environments. Producers assume that their own social-cultural experiences narratives coincide with those of the audience. Therefore, stories reflecting and representing these experiences and spaces may be used to implicate (construct) the audience. This being the case, it is possible for producers to employ codes within programmes content for the purposes of producing narratives that imply specific types of audiences—or their equivalents.

Second, 'How do producers of television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audiences?' also invokes the processes producers engage in packaging programmes content as guided by the objectives of the institutions they work for. Within this framework, producers like to see the audience as consumers of their products. For this reason, systems that enable the production of programmes are designed in a way that also has great influence in the impact programmes content has on prospective audiences. This is what Hall's model (above) represents at the communicative stages up to 'Meaning Structure 1'. The formative stages of structuring the meanings of programmes content, as it travels toward Meaning Structure 2, ensure that the resultant value in the way programmes come to mean can never be arbitrary.

This is because the 'technical infrastructure' that facilitates the formation of this meaning; how producers relate with other individuals within the cultures of television production and the frameworks of knowledge that producers use to compose programmes content all work to shape how this content could be understood by the audience at the level of reception. In addition, there are boundaries that demarcate the 'extents' of the meanings programmes content may have because, as Hall (1973) observed, individuals in any society/culture are constrained to a certain degree by their dominant cultural order into seeing the world in segments and classifications (Fiske, 1987). In practice, therefore, there are limited ranges of codes that producers can embed on programmes content during audience targeting. This means that there is a high likelihood of potential viewers being able to 'recognise' themselves in the programmes content because it most likely contains meanings that allude to who they are. The said segments and classifications of the dominant cultural order that consolidates such viewers' lives within a society they share with television producers dictated such implication.

Particularly, television producers use familiar symbols to package programmes content thus enabling the potential audiences to identify with this content at the moment of reading it.

When this happens, the producers' ability to conceptualise their audiences as people out there capable of understanding specific meanings when they are set within given codes is possible. Nevertheless, it is possible only because these codes are constricted within the perimeter of socio-cultural meanings that these audiences share with producers (Ligaga (2005) on radio drama and the use of familiar codes to appeal to audiences). This condition also allows producers to structure messages in 'dominance' of the preferred reading, meaning programmes reach the audience 'encoded' by the producer with "an 'over-determining' [semi-determined closure] effect on the succeeding moments in the communicative chain" (Hall 1973: 13).   Hence, the decoding of the messages by the audience happens within the constraints that structured these messages at the beginning of the communicative chain—much earlier before they are 'realised' at <u>Meaning Structure 2</u> through the audience.

Audiences are active and creative in reading and interpreting messages (Chapter Three) by filling gaps within the schemata of the television programmes content according to their perception of reality (Allen, 1987). In turn, this quality enables them to form whole meanings that are appropriate to their experiences. Nonetheless, how audiences concretise the meanings they garner from the television texts is also dependent on how they have been conditioned to 'see' and 'be' by the discourse of television. In this discourse, the process of meaning production happens within the political economy framework. The codes the producers use to construct audiences entail use of programme content as narratives that implicate (bring in) and shape how the audience reads messages at <u>Meaning Structure 2,</u> most preferably in a way that sustains their **need** for such (television) messages in their lives. In a sense then, these messages form part of the overdetermining structure of the political-economic discourse of television. Thus, they enhance the audience's likelihood to be swayed by the symbols embedded in the programmes content toward representing the agendas preferred by the television institutions. These symbols are proffered as 'truths' for the audience to consume through systematic regimes that involve articulation. In this context, the purposes and goals of the television institutions are connected to narratives that have socio-cultural meanings capable of turning viewers into subjects—individuals with a stipulated self-knowledge/identity. In this condition, viewers can easily be guided toward ascribing to programmes content that best serves the needs and desires of their subject categories.

In the above process of articulation, disparate elements (such as television programmes and socio-cultural values) are linked together to form a temporary unity of different distinct

elements, under certain conditions. "It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, or absolute and essential for all time; rather it is a linkage whose conditions of existence or emergence need to be located in the contingencies of the circumstance" (Grossberg, 1996: 142 - 3). Through this mechanism, the said elements (represented in Hall's (1980a) model illustrated above as '**frameworks of knowledge', 'relations of production' and 'technical infrastructure')** prefigure or index audiences "through the construction of 'participation frameworks'" (Spitulnik, 1994: 44) that "set the viewer in place in a certain relation to [a given discourse, and are] . . . sustained in mechanisms and strategies of the discourses of . . . television" (Brundson and Morley, 1978: 22). This process exists within a 'circuit of culture' (Du Gay et al. 1997: 3), one that entails production, transmission and representation of television programmes' meanings, the audience identities related to such meanings and the regulation of the audience—the consumer of programmes (Du Gay, 1997; Du Gay et al, 1997). Indeed,

> the 'object' of these practices is meanings and messages in the form of sign vehicles of a specific kind organized, like any form of communication or language, through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse. The apparatuses, relations and practices of production thus issue, at a certain moment (the moment of 'production/circulation') in the form of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of language. It is in this discursive form that the circulation of the 'product' takes place. The process thus requires, at the production end, its material instruments—its 'means'—as well as its own social (production) relations— the organization and combination of practices within media apparatuses. But it is in the *discursive* form that the circulation of the product takes place, as well as its distribution to different audiences. Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated—transformed, again—into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective. If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'. If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect (Hall, 1980a: 128).

Consequently, it appears that producers of television entertainment programmes must constantly engage in anticipating the practical appeal meanings in programmes content might have for the particular audiences they hope would view particular programmes. In the light of this, television producers of specific entertainment programmes articulate production practices vis-à-vis their station's production policies vis-à-vis their predetermined notions about the audience they anticipate to spawn at Meaning Structure 2 where the televisual narratives are consumed by viewers.

The 'Circuit of Culture' schema (Du Gay et al, 1997) however advances Hall's (1980a) encoding/decoding model by better acknowledging that producers' may encode programme content with preferred meanings for the audience to find, but that these meanings do not arise from the 'objectness' of the content itself (Hall, 1980c: 159). Rather, they emerge from the way in which the programme content as a 'cultural object' is represented in language (Du Gay, 1997: 4). Language in this case means 'how people communicate' with the tools available to them, those that are capable of carrying messages concerning lived circumstances. When released into the 'circuit of culture', a programme becomes part of the viewers' knowledge. It constitutes part of their meaning making system, whether they understand what the programme means or not (Du Gay et al, 1997). The programme in this context exists, as something knowable, and roams the socio-signification realm. Hence, it is always available as 'knowledge' for use in the lives of people who come into contact with it—though not necessarily at a set time during their everyday practices. In the 'cultural circuit',

> meaning-making is an on-going process. It does not just end at a pre-ordained point. While producers attempt to encode products with particular meanings and associations, this is not the end of the story or 'biography' of a product [such as a programme], because this tells us nothing about what those products may come to mean for those using them. In other words, meanings are not just 'sent' by producers and 'received', passively, by consumers; rather meanings are actively made in consumption, through the use to which people put these products in their everyday lives (Du Gay et al., 1997: 5).

However, in television programming practices consistent institutional measures regulate the variant uses viewers can make of the television text (Chapter Six; Chapter Seven). This aspect of the cultural circuit process defines the audience in a political economy framework, one that aligns television broadcasting operations with the socio-cultural ideals connected with the viewer's identity (Chapter Seven). Eric Michaels' (1990: 8) model of the teleported text, also known in the context of television as the Television Hermeneutic Circle (THC), best explicates how 'a meeting of the minds' eventually happens all around among producers, television station owners, audience and society in general with regards to the fact that television programmes are a meaningful cultural force (Fiske, 1987; Saenz, 1994) —no matter whether constructive or destructive.

Television's Hermeneutic Circle
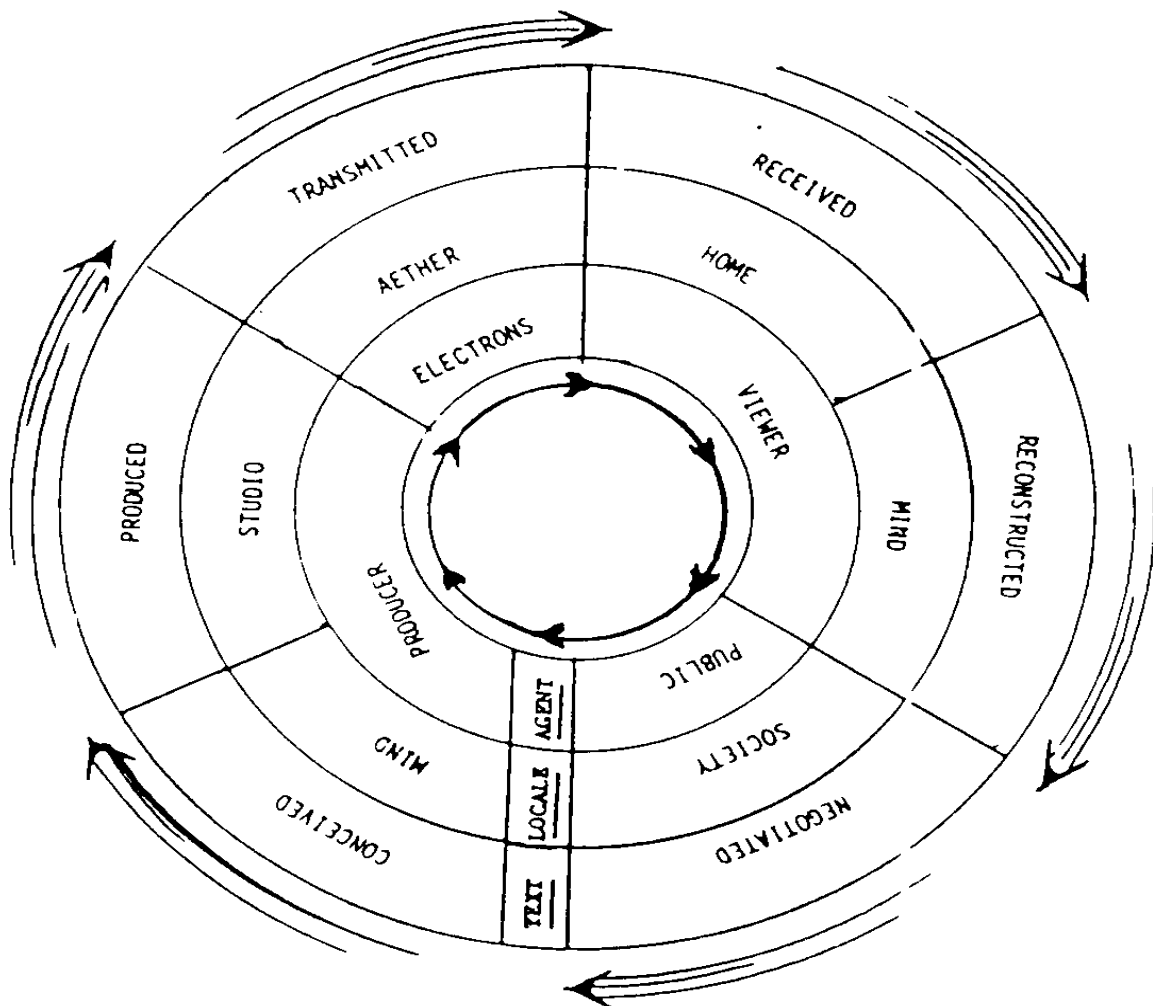
Figure 2: Eric Michaels' Television's Hermeneutic Circle

Source of Figure: Michaels (1990: 13): A Systems Conceptualisation of Television as a Socially Organised Message Transmission System

The THC model (**Figure 2**) shows that the intrinsic structures pertinent to television communication involve a negotiation of texts between producers, technology, audiences and institutions that use television to accomplish their objectives. Conflict exists among the significant features constituting the social organisation of meanings involved in the signifying activities of programmes production—that is, transmission, reception, regulation and reproduction—with regards to 'what they should all come down to mean'. The television text passes through a continuous process (Michaels, 1990: 12) within a circuit of cultural significations. The process begins/ends with the producer's conception of a television programme and ends/begins with a 'public' (institutional/audience-coded) programme. The

meaning of the 'original' programme content is formed, shaped and reshaped at various stages in the broadcasting chain. By the time the audience receives and interprets particular programme content, it is something different altogether than what the producers had 'conceived' at the earliest stage of production. For this reason, Michaels (1990) schema illustrates that a television programme is actually several texts in one: *Conceived*, *Produced*, *Transmitted* and *Received* texts, as well as *Social* and *Public* texts. The latter two texts are concretised when the audience comes into contact with the television at the socio-cultural arena.

Every programme begins as a concept, with the producer identifying 'raw materials' that could be turned into an interesting entertainment programme (text), such as *Reflections* or *Uhondo*. Since the producer is situated in an institution called the television station, the text enters an institutional discourse immediately it leaves the mind of the producer/writer (Michaels, 1990). The producer must follow the protocol designed by his/her station regarding the treatment of story ideas. For instance, before *Reflections*' story idea (**Conceived Text**) was packaged into a programme, a programme manager made sure that its 'production treatment' conformed to the set parameters for entertainment programmes production in Channel 1 KBC (Chapter Six). For this reason, at the 'conceived text' stage the producer may be influenced to change his ideas regarding the outcome of the programme by factors such as the budget, cast, crew or change in policy in the station relating to programme content in general. The conceived text is therefore a flexible and negotiable 'property' (Michaels, 1990: 12) because it differs from the production text. The **Produced Text** emerges through the production process, from the actual practices producers engage in the actual packaging of the raw materials that eventually constitute the programme (Chapter Six). After the production text is ready, it is passed (transmitted) through the broadcast technological channels and onto the television screen. During this journey, the **Transmitted Text** emerges. This text may radically differ from the produced text, "depending upon the economic infrastructure and the distribution technology of any given TV system" (Michaels, 1990: 14). For example, when both *Reflections* and *Uhondo* were transmitted advertisement inserts appeared with the story content at the allotted intervals. At the same time, Channel 1 KBC and NTV promotional content about upcoming programmes could also interrupt the smooth streaming of *Reflections* and *Uhondo*'s story content (Chapter Seven), as it were. Furthermore, technological factors such as variations in individual television receivers' audio and visual capabilities might have altered the story content in terms of sound quality and images resolution. Also, these days

television sets receive many channels, hence viewers tend to 'switch-watch' from one channel to the next during a single programme using a remote control (Michaels, 1990). Viewers may also watch programmes with the sound switched off, or may even listen to the radio while watching television at the same time. Viewers may also talk, do handwork, household chores and all manner of social interactions while 'watching' television (Hobson, 1982; Michaels, 1990).

For the above reasons, the audience technically receives a different text than the transmitted text; this is the **Received Text.** Interestingly, when people discuss watching television "they presume that they have had a common experience, that they have 'seen' the same thing. It must be, then, that the experience of TV includes some further processes by which the diversity of *Received Texts* is reduced" (Michaels, 1990: 15-16). The first process of viewing television therefore "must be a psychological one in which the stimulus of TV is perceived, decoded and interpreted in the viewer's mind so that an internally coherent text is created and may be recalled […] It may be easiest, and not inaccurate, simply to say that the *Perceived Text* is a story that individuals tell themselves about the story they have seen" (Michaels, 1990: 16-17). The viewers' mental capabilities through which they realise the 'perceived text' may be individual, and therefore could produce variant individual and unique meanings from particular programmes between viewers. However, they are also dependent on historically and socially constituted discourse and experience. Hence, the semiotic codes utilized in programme content, say music, specific images, costume etc. may represent different things but viewers may also talk about them without necessarily misunderstanding each other (Michaels, 1990, Fiske, 1987). Indeed, viewers realise (produce) the Social Text when they share the social experience and semiotic rules for interpreting television (Giddens, 1984). In this context, viewers may assume that their experience with a particular programme was the same, that they watched the same thing. In the event that this happens, a commonality of meaning emerges. This only happens because people do talk about television programmes (Chapter Seven). In so doing, they presumably negotiate and revise, "within some limits, the meanings they have ascribed to what they have seen" (Michaels, 1990: 17).

Two reasons could account for the commonality in meanings that different audience members (albeit from different social structures such as class, gender, ideology or associational divisions) find in television programmes. First, television functions as a social space (Adams, 1992) capable of consolidating people from different strata to a common realm of virtual

social interaction. For this reason, viewers of particular programmes tend to evolve similar interpretations of such programmes because their content harmonises the disparate status discourses otherwise associated with individual audience members. Second, in engaging in dialogue about television, audience members reveal to producers how they read particular programmes. Also, audience commentary through letters to television stations, critique by media analysts, programme ratings and general gossip about programmes mould a **Public Text** which producers in turn consider (utilize) when creating programmes (Michaels, 1990; Chapter Six). In a sense, it appears that the public text guides producers in defining the codes of the preferred meanings they would like to embed on particular programmes if they are ever to be successful. Nonetheless, the public text apparently aligns with the political economy of programme production within particular television broadcasting systems. This process is illustrated in the next section.

Political economy of the production of television programmes and audiences

In the political economy of media the production of media products is geared toward the making of profit (Williams, 2003). This objective is structurally constrained by economic and political factors, especially through private ownership of media industries. Even in public television broadcasting, all practices within this institution are about sustaining it. The economic element in the television enterprise is very important, but equally important is the ideological/political significance that broadcasting institutions should exude in order to create their own spaces of autonomy, hence the platforms from which they can exercise authority over cultural meanings that emanate from them. Indeed, according to Scannell (1996: 8-9),

> Any programme that gets transmitted has a complex prior history: a history of policy debates about whether it should be made (and for what reasons) and, if commissioned, of production debates about how it should be made. These two moments— of policy-making and of programming-making – are distinct. The moment of policy is when institutional *motives* are considered: 'Will it make money?' 'Will it do us good?' 'Will we run into trouble if we do this?' Such may be the reasons that programmes do or don't get made, but they do constitute the meaningfulness of programmes. . . Motives figure (on the whole) only indirectly in the meaningful organization of programmes and in the ways that they are understood by viewers and listeners. . . the profit motive is a *'by-product'* of a 'successful' programme. It may be the reason a programme gets made. It is not the reason it succeeds.

For the above reasons, the practices of producing programmes involve creating links between programme content and the significance each television station aspires to have as a socio-

culturally meaningful institution in the eyes of the public (viewers). Nevertheless, profit-making is crucial because it creates a surplus of the resources that ensure the survival of television institutions. Television programming can be used to create such resources, and stipulated goals and objectives guide producers toward engaging in practices of producing programmes that are beneficial to meeting the targets of these institutions' policies. "[T]elevision is, like nations, a construct of specific institutions; what it 'means' turns on how those institutional discourses construct it for their own specific purposes. . . [Television, hence its audiences] are not just constructs; they are invisible fictions that are produced institutionally in order for various institutions to take charge of the mechanisms of their own survival" (Hartley, 1992: 104-5).

At one level, these mechanisms are about the economics of running profitable institutions, yet at another level they are about the control and disciplining of subjects (audiences) within a social structure that encapsulates the discourse of television in a way that protects it from seeming 'out of place', hence irrelevant or foreign to the audiences who come into contact with it in their day to day social circumstances. Therefore, these mechanisms are also about power, the means of managing the environment that facilitates the survival of the institutions of television. This element of power can be best understood through Foucault's (1982) notions of subject and power (see below) as they can help explain how television as an institution of power shapes society in order to enhance its own survival—regardless of the individuals in society's ability to define their desires and wants relating to television products.

As a commercial venture, television operational practices articulate the **audience 'as market'** "in which the audience members are defined as potential consumers in a dual sense: not only of [television] programs (sic), but also of the products being advertised through those programs (sic)" (Ang 1991: 28). In the case of public television, **the-audience-as-public** model treats the audience as a 'needy mass' who require the services of public television programmes in order to improve their conditions. In the public service ethos, media houses "are suffused with an assumption of knowing better than [the audience] what they [want] or [need] (Scannell, 1996: 11).

In either case, these television institutions have to articulate the audience as a commodity (as market and public) through a process of exchange (Mosco, 1996) in order to instigate and sustain the communicative impetus needed for their functioning in Hall's (1980a) through Michaels (1990) models of communication (above). As a commodity, the audience gains

value because it can be depended upon as the surplus resource (indicated above) that television stations utilize for their sustenance. In commercial television, the audience ratings systems are used to define and illustrate the size of available audience that advertising companies can 'buy' for the purposes of creating a market for their clients' products. Within this framework, television institutions, like other mass media, are "economic entities with both a direct economic role as creators of surplus value through commodity production and exchange and an indirect role, through advertising, in the creation of surplus value within other sectors of commodity production" (Garnham, 1979: 132).

In public television, the ratings system may be used to generate proof about the popularity of the national television station with the public. In turn, the state broadcaster can exchange this confidence of the public (audience) for government funding and much needed credibility about the role of public broadcasting in the creation of an informed, educated and entertained citizenry. In addition, part of the discourse of television is to create the right emotional dispositions in the audience so that it may respond positively to the will of the television institutions. Specifically in commercial television, networks shy away from programmes that are likely to offend advertisers, for example those criticising corporations or those that have a lot of public affairs content, disturbing controversies or serious complexities. They prefer programmes that entertain the audience and sustain their "buying mood" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 17)

As a theoretical analytic framework in the context of television broadcasting, political economy is concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of the 'products' of television stations and how these relate with audiences vis-à-vis their need for survival in social life (Mosco, 1996: 17). The discourse of television is interwoven with day to day socio-cultural undertakings of people who also happen to make up audiences. However, the audience's capacity to decode television messages (on the reception side of Hall's (1980a) chain of communication) is somewhat constrained by demarcations of institutional ideologies designed to retain the audience within the zones of the 'institutionally' preferred meanings (Michaels, 1990). However, political economy exclaims that other discourses of power—also relating to the socio-cultural—are also at play in the moments of the audiences' interaction with television messages (Williams, 2003; Mosco, 1996; Garnham, 1979). When these 'other' powerful discourses momentarily sideline the exertion of power over the audience by the ideologically circumscribed television content, then aberrant readings of programmes' content

happens (Fiske, 1987). In such circumstances, any possibilities of a symmetry between Meaning Structure 1 and Meaning Structure 2 is lost forever.

In the context of the television broadcasting in Kenya, political economy can facilitate in understanding the dynamics of local television stations' current operations in light of how broadcasting in the country was initially designed and set up by the colonial metropole for administrative and developmentalist objectives. This model held that media as means of communication, together with education, urbanization and other strategic social forces were the key to development of the 'backward' peoples such as those living in sub-Saharan Africa (Thompson, 1995). In this context, the growth and proliferation of media in such regions was viewed as an index of development (Mosco, 1996: 20). For this reason, if one were to analyse how media, particularly broadcasting, functions in Kenya, for example, the political economic history of media in this country should be considered as an important force in the shaping of the relationship between media and audiences. Indeed, the formation of the broadcasting institutions in the British Colonies under the auspices of the BBC (see Chapter One) followed a Development agenda, and as the history of broadcasting in Kenya reveals the discourse of development continued to shape media in post-colonial Kenya. Hence, I attempt to analyse the data collected from the producers working at Channel 1 KBC and NTV under the spotlight of this political economic framework in order to find out what influenced the producers of *Uhondo*, *Reflections* (and the other television entertainment programmes mentioned in this study) in how they conceptualised targeted audiences.

In a sense, there are two dimensions of the political economy framework at work in the analysis of how producers of Kenyan television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audiences. One approach considers television broadcasting as an institution designed to make profits, and therefore sees television programming as creating a structure that perpetuates its endurance for commercial purposes. In this respect, production, distribution and consumption of programmes are foremost activities with institutional commercial aims, and later of socio-cultural significance for the subjects who inhabit the social spaces where television viewing happens. The second political economy model considers television as a resource that the state utilizes to develop, moderate and galvanise the individuals within society into one manageable identity. In other words, public television for example has been used by the state to foster a 'conducive' culture that facilitates the state to function more effectively. Combined, the two dimensions of political economy show that production and distribution of television

products are determined by "the wider system of values and of power in which the economy [as it pertains to public and commercial television broadcasting] is embedded" (Mosco, 1996: 65). This model hints at issues of power and the question of the subject. Power relations that shape the social exchange need to be considered in any study that deals with how major institutions (as are television networks) try to communicate with individuals in society so as to form meaningful relationships that ensure their survival. Using Foucault's (1982) 'subject and power' notions, I explain below how television can be seen to play the said role of galvaniser of individuals within a society into realising the common goals and aspirations of the state, and that of prescribing the ideals of commercialism to viewers as a way of wooing the public to attend to it (as an audience).

Foucault's subject and power notions and cultures of television production and viewing

The gist of Foucault's (1982) notions of 'subject and power' applicable to this study entail the following questions: "who are we in terms of our knowledge of ourselves? Who are we in terms of the ways we are produced in political processes? Who are we in terms of our relations with ourselves and the ethical forms we generate for governing these?" (McHoul and Grace, 1995: x). The concerns implied in these questions define people's relationships with the institutions that have significant impact in the way they live in society. After the formation of the modern state in the eighteenth century, the pastoral (church) power which had previously dominated the absolute 'beingness' of people particularly in the Western societies (Foucault, 1982) began to function outside the ecclesiastical institution but continued to define the essence of people within society in secular institutional terms. The modern state for example was developed with the consideration of individuals in society, what they are and the nature of their existence, and therefore it became a sophisticated structure designed to integrate individuals, despite their diversity, under one condition. The subjects of the state's

> individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific terms. In a way […] the state [became] a modern matrix of individualization or a new form of pastoral power […] it was no longer the question of leading people to their salvation in the next world, but rather ensuring it in this world […] the word salvation takes on different meanings: health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living/security, protection against accidents […] (Foucault, 1982: 214 - 215).

This modern matrix is today constituted in part by the media, as the media is primarily the most effective mechanism through which the state's unity is consolidated and conceptualised.

It integrates individuals (subjects of the state) under the one condition upon which the state is founded as an entity (totality)—through communicating the ideals of government, for example. Indeed, the modern state became most integrated with the advent of mass media (Garnham, 1979), therefore it is hard to adequately explain how the state exercises its power over individual subjects without considering the role of the media in this happening. As apparatuses of the state, the media, particularly broadcast media, are integral in the functioning of the modern state as it is characterised today (Althusser, 1976).

Indeed, the gospel of public television in most sub-Saharan African countries has historically been about sustaining the state (Mytton, 1983). Public television aspires to unite the citizens under the aspirations of the state, usually in the form of common values perceived as the most adequate in enhancing development. Commercial television on the other hand aspires to eliminate the problems of the audience through delivering solutions (products) that should enable individuals to cruise through life smoothly, happily and without impediments. Through entertainment programming and advertisement messages, the audience is promised salvation through materialism and virtual reality—happiness and well-being.

Chapter Three shows how the practices of producing programmes in both public and commercial television stations and the viewing of these programmes are integrated in the discourse of television. This discourse in turn constitutes the social-realities of all the people involved with television by seeming to be embedded in the happenings of their real lives. This illustration of how television functions in creating individual subjects for the relevant commercial and government institutions denotes an exercise of a kind of controlling power over individuals.

> This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1983: 212).

The process of defining the audience and setting up structures of the television discourse—through the pragmatism involved in the prefiguring and indexing of the audience (during

encoding)—is itself an exercise of power because it is a process that creates a sense of self-knowledge in the viewer. Depending on how television as an institution is articulated to socio-cultural realities of the individual viewer, it turns him/her into a subject of the discourse of television. Indeed, the realization by the viewer that it is s/he being addressed by the programme content is itself a product of the exercise of power over the viewer. According to Fiske (1987: 48), "the [contrived] sense of the individual in a network of social relations is what is referred to as 'subject'. [And] television is able to construct subject positions for the viewer only because other agencies relating to class, gender, race, education—or other demographics have been working all our lives to construct subjectivities in equivalent ways". In the light of this, television programmes ironically seem to empower the audience by endowing them with knowledge about the 'truth' of themselves (Foucault, 1983), therefore rendering them productive, active and even resistive against messages that attempt to redefine them. In other words, using raw materials from the agencies of the audience's socialization, programmes content reveal the essences of the audience members to themselves.

Nevertheless, television as part of the discourse of socializing the modern day individual in his/her society plays a significant role in influencing his/her conduct through informing and educating the individual about his/her place in society. In this respect, the audience accepts television as part of the 'truth' of their lives, as an ex-nominated resource for garnering knowledge about their conduct in society. In this form, television appears as non-threatening, powerless. However, television programmes acquire a naturalness with a new kind of authority, omnipotence about 'realities' of life and, paradoxically, acquire the power to become a sort of reference resource that the audience can go to, just like they could to other natural resources that guide their social conduct. In this form, television can easily preach the gospels of enhancing the aims of the institutions that produce it and garner many converts in the audience for seeming to be in place with the essences the audiences have come to learn are their own.

As a functional analytical tool in this study, Foucault's notions of 'subject and power', within the framework explicated above, illuminate places where the producers of the entertainment programmes found resources with which they structured television programming so that it appealed to (created) audiences in the way suggested above. In order to achieve this goal, I examine whether producers of *Uhondo*, *Reflections* and the other entertainment programmes considered in this study went about targeting particular audiences for particular programmes

within the framework considered above. In addition, I test whether Channel 1KBC and NTV's philosophies of operation assume that audiences are categorisable social subjects whose desires and needs can be met by their entertainment programmes, or whether producers of the programmes considered in this study felt that they could define certain socio-cultural 'truths' which they then embedded onto the programmes content in the hope of using them to sway potential audiences toward determinate ends. In turn, responses received from audiences should provide a critique on the position of the audience (as subject(s) of television programmes) by highlighting how members of the audience used the content of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* in defining the truth about themselves. These tasks are carried out in Chapters Six and Seven where I present and analyse the data collected in the field using the theoretical insight I have presented in this chapter. Overall, Chapter Five serves as the analytical spotlight that illuminates this data, and is therefore cited throughout Chapters Six and Seven.

Chapter Six

Audience Concepts: Who Watches Television Entertainment Programmes?

"the point of ethnography is not so much what people say as the circumstances under which they say it" (Hobart, 2004)

Introduction

The data presented in this thesis does not attempt to generalise findings on the specific case studied to suit universal ones relating to television entertainment programme production and the conceptualising of audiences. It should be understood that the study focused on examining how cultures of programme production in specific production environments were 'done' there. Unlike scientifically oriented research that tends to be in pursuit of generalisable data (Silverman, 2001; Steier, 1991; Kirk and Miller, 1986), qualitative research (as used in this case study) tends not to focus on the reproducibility of findings particularly if it pertained to how a specific culture is 'done'. Criticism against this kind of research approach asserts that "There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews […] are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. These are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness of generality of these fragments is rarely addressed" (Bryman, 1988: 77). In spite of the above contention, qualitative research need not always seek to show how findings collected from participants, say in one television production environment, would apply in other television production environments—because these are perhaps culturally unique.

However, practices and narratives by the research-participant producers regarding their programme projects may be universally meaningful but only in as far as showing how some producers in the Kenya television market have produced entertainment programmes. Since such producers tend to work in the same way, under the same policies and sometimes on one programme for an extended period of time, their stories about production can only be universally useful in demonstrating the diversity of approaches to producing television programmes (Elliot, 1972). Indeed, producers who have been working on a particular show for say, 15 years, come to think of their idiosyncratic methods of producing as the institutional formula for producing programmes similar to their own (Singila, February 18, 2005, Interview). At the same time, institutional policies guiding the objectives of programming in

television stations tend to be rigid in defining 'how television production is done' in select stations. In some cases (Channel 1 KBC for example) legislation is required before such policies can be changed. In turn, such a change could alter producers' methods of producing programmes or their attitudes about the audience for whom they make the programmes.

For functional purposes, some data analysis concerning the general aspects of producing entertainment programmes is presented with the literature preceding the 'presentation and analysis of data' in this chapter. In a sense therefore, from the first chapter to the last the thesis has aspired to present, discuss and analyse the research findings within the thematic scopes of individual chapters. Just as there were no rigid boundaries between 'data collection' and write up (Mosime, 2007) of this research report, data is presented here in a manner that allows for a flexible reading of the whole report. Thus, it parallels the unfolding of a single narrative as it were, because elements of this narrative are presented when they are 'arrived at'. This chapter should therefore be seen as a continuation of the narrative of this study.

Given that the study focused on sites of cultural production (Du Gay et al, 1997), it examined not only the interactions between producers, casts, crews and programme management but also the oral accounts by these personnel about their work. Hence, the 'personal narratives' of these research participants are treated here—in Barbara Laslett's (1999) approach—as legitimate data for social scientific inquiry. According to Laslett (1999: 392) "personal narratives provide unique perspective on the intersection of the individual, the collectivity, the cultural and the social". Television entertainment programmes production involves all three. Hence, the producers' personal narratives presented in this thesis effectively relay the intricacies involved in the practices of producing programmes and the conceptualizing of their audiences.

The process of profiling the audience revisited

In previous chapters, I have outlined some of the political economic factors that shape television programming in Kenya. In Chapter One, I highlighted the dilemma KBC television faced as it aspired to improve its programming in order to compete with the newly founded commercial television stations such as NTV. Most importantly, as the literature presented in this thesis has shown, before there were ever audiences, there was programming. Before then, producers of television programmes deliberated on reasons for making programmes. In the processes of making programmes, producers also conceived of the would-be viewers of such programmes and their expectations in the programmes (Graffman, 2004). Therefore, the

packaging of programme content says a lot about how producers conceptualised the potential viewers of that content. This process involves an interconnectivity between creating programme content capable of framing its own audience and fulfilling the overall objectives of the stations in which the content is produced. In **Figure 3** (below) this process is shown in my simplified structure of factors at play in the realisation of the audience:
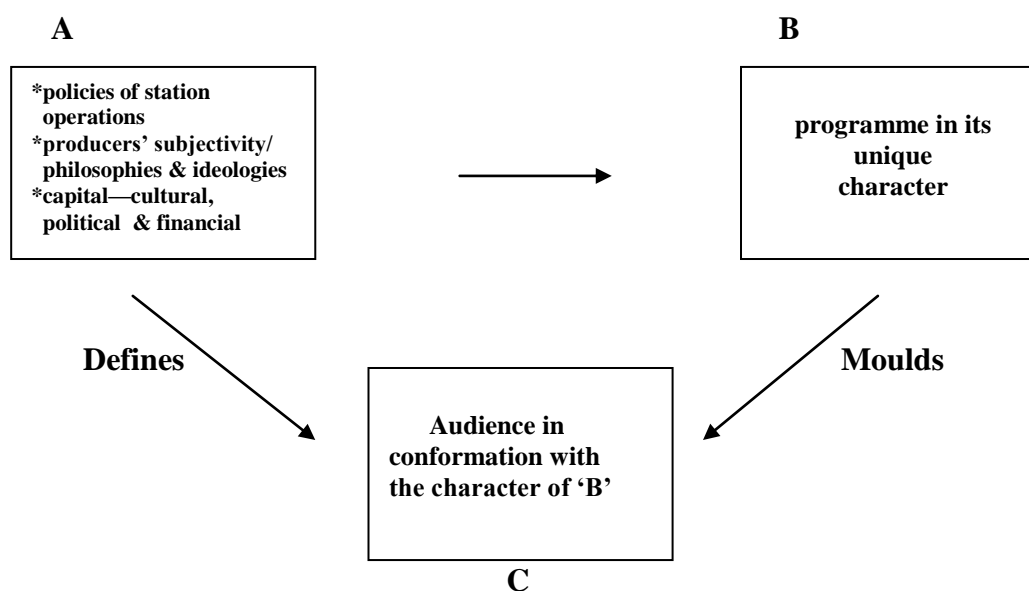
A
B

*policies of station
  operations
*producers' subjectivity/
  philosophies & ideologies
*capital—cultural,
  political & financial

programme in its
unique
character

Defines

Moulds

**Audience in
conformation with
the character of 'B'**

C

Figure 3: *The Interconnectivity Between Production Practices, Programme Content and the Audience.*

From the data collected in this study, it emerged that conceptualisation of audiences for television entertainment programmes involves many factors (Hall, 1980; Michaels, 1990). These factors mould the producers' creative faculties with which they conceive of the 'essences' of audiences. The key factors are included inside box A, Figure 4 (above) because they appeared to constitute the conventional ingredients necessary for the production of television programmes in general. Combined, they also constituted the practical regulations by which production casts and crews abided in order to 'appropriately' produce the particular programmes covered by this study. Hence, the same factors sustained the conventions of producing entertainment programmes and conceptualising audiences within the contexts of NTV and Channel 1 KBC television.

At this point, it is important to contextualise and define the term **producers** for the purposes of this study. Ordinarily, casts and some members of television production crews not directly involved in the actual packaging of programme content may not be considered as producers. However, in the appropriated definition of the term some peripheral production personnel are considered as producers. It emerged from the empirical research experience that practices of producing television involved more than the directors and their bosses (programmes

managers) and the key technical crew. Other production personnel (actors/actresses for example) appeared to have their own concepts of the audience. Hence, they sometimes influenced how the conventional producers in charge of the entertainment programmes covered by this study viewed their audiences.

Who is a producer?

The television industry definition of producer limits the title to mean a person who carries out specific duties during the production of a television programme but not others. Ordinarily, there are two types of television producers: the Producer-Director and Executive Producer. The producer-director consolidates raw materials into the programme content that forms 'a show' or programme. S/he is usually in charge of the artistic and thematic structure of the programme. Hence, s/he writes the storyline or synopsis of the programme, which s/he may then hand over to a script writer who turns this material into a comprehensive script. The producer-director also appoints and directs the cast and crew[xxxii] according to the script. In certain cases, where this type of producer works within a television station, s/he may have been assigned a permanent crew and therefore does not deal with forming the production team. However, s/he is in charge of recruiting the cast or directing other relevant personnel in the station to perform this task. This type of producer, therefore, is the overall 'director' of the show (Zettl, 2003; Cantor and Cantor, 1992). The producer in charge of *Reflections* belonged in this category (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

In contrast, the executive producer may work independent of a television station. Traditionally, this type of producer sources for the most important resources required for packaging a programme (Zettl, 2003). He recruits the director; buys scripts or commissions writers to produce them and secures the outlet television station where the show eventually airs. In the case of producing *Uhondo*, the executive producer operated from Eagles Media Agents Ltd, the production company hired by NTV to put together the soap drama. He had however conceived of the idea of the show and pitched it to NTV, who then commissioned Eagles to produce the show (Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview). The executive producer of *Uhondo* then recruited the show's director, negotiated contracts with NTV over ownership of the show and handled production budget matters and salaries for the cast and crew. However, he was not in charge of the daily aspects of managing the production activities of the show. These were left to the director who was in charge of recruiting the cast and the rest of the crew, and managing it during the actual production of the show (Stephano

Ngunyi, September, 2005, Interview; Stan Darius, September, 2005, Interview). The integral production personnel included writers, actors, camera and lighting people, the editors of the shows and a set designer. Given that these people were intensively involved in the critical activities of actual programme production, they had direct influence in how programme content emerged and was shaped. For this reason, they shall be loosely regarded in this thesis as bona fide 'producers'. Together with the traditional producers (executive producer, producer-director), all these people formed production groups (or units). Nevertheless, the individual inputs of every member in these groups played complementary roles—which included conceptualizing their target audiences. In connection to this aspect, Actor Derrick Amunga who played a principal character role in *Uhondo* emphasised the importance of the production team's cohesion, a factor which simplified the task of realising the goals of 'making the programme'. He said that

> *the simplicity of it begins from the point that each individual, as far as that project is concerned, has their role to play. They have to realize, as the production team, or as people who are [working on the same project]... they have to know that all their different roles are complimentary to each other. In the sense that you as a director, you have to appreciate the fact that I can act, and you can direct me. And within my ability, I'm able to live that which the script writer put down and even give it a bigger, larger definition. When that happens, everything else falls into place in the whole unit. It would be very disastrous for anyone to believe that they as a producer have a monopoly of knowledge... as far as production is concerned. Same to the camera man, actors... you [might] end up having small pockets of production in one whole unit. So it is imperative that [producers, directors, actors, camera people]... their roles complement each other* (Derrick Amunga, September 2005, Interview).

Within the context of 'aims and objectives' of producing programmes, it appeared that almost everyone in the production units worked with the audience in mind. Indeed, for some members of the cast it was the only reason they continued to be involved in the programmes at all (Monica Abok, September 2005, Interview). For instance, actors Amunga and Abok were very keen to know what the audience thought about themes featured in their show. By default therefore, they had to conceptualise the audience within the scopes of family and community. Firstly, they considered their immediate family members whom they saw as the primary critics of their work (Monica Abok, September 2005, Interview; Derrick Amunga,

September 2005, Interview). Secondly, they considered the opinions of people within their communities (neighbourhoods) whom they said judged their performance based on the common values they shared. Based on their fans' criticism, these actors refined their acting to suit the needs of their audience. Abok was very adamant that if she did not get this kind of feedback she would stop acting:

> *If actually no one comes to me in two weeks' time, I actually go to them and say 'what do you think about the show? What do you think we should change?' You know, because they are the ones who make us. If they don't like what we are doing, there is no point of doing it* (Monica Abok, September 2005, Interview).

Apparently, in packaging *Uhondo*'s content as 'producers' these actors aspired to represent the feedback from viewers' through the characters they played in the show. Nevertheless, at the programmes control level within NTV and Channel 1 KBC, a production manager and programmes manager, respectively, were in charge of regulating how 'producers' packaged *Uhondo* and *Reflections'* content. On the other hand, the managing directors of NTV and KBC (who run the overall business of their individual stations) influenced how 'producers' of these programmes approached their work. In light of this, content generation for programmes, distribution of programmes and the conceptualization of their potential audiences involved a lot of people collectively working together. Indeed, "It is difficult to locate an 'author' of a television program (sic) as many types of labour create the final 'text'" (Roome, 1998: 61). Each of the 'producers' had a view about the nature of the audience of the entertainment programmes in which they were involved.

In most cases however, the autonomy of the 'non-conventional' producers was dependent on the dynamics of the administrative control existing in the environments where they worked— at the Eagles' managed production sets or in Studio B at Channel 1 KBC. For instance, the creative interaction between the technical crew of *Reflections* and the producer/director of the show was very limited. Indeed, camera and lighting people, set designer, studio floor manager and production assistants always appeared to take the lead of the director without question. Perhaps the turnaround of the technical crews at Channel 1 KBC, as they moved from *Reflections* to news to talk shows, had something to do with it. Due to a shortage of staff at the station, camera crews in particular were poached from other departments to serve on the set of *Reflections* whenever the regulars of that show were out in the field (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview; Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Hence, these

'temporary hands' appeared alienated when working on *Reflections*, even though in theory they were good all-around camera people. George Koigi who had worked as a camera person and producer at Channel 1 KBC, and later as a director of *Uhondo* in late September 2005, explained the dilemma facing practitioners working at the public television station:

> *The way we do it at the public station, you are not a producer as such. You are an employee. You are given duties… 'today you will be doing this'… By the time you have tried to figure it out or give it a foundation, they tell you 'we are short of people in this other department', and so you are moved there. So basically—there are few who have been stuck in some departments for a long time. Those ones can do better programmes, let me say, because they have been there for a long time and they know the trend for that kind of—if it's a drama and they have been there for 12 years, they can tell when [one] drama is better than the other or something like that, because they have been there for a long time* (George Koigi, September 2005, Interview).

Stephano Ngunyi summed up the ramification of the 'turnaround' problem while reflecting on his own experience of working in KBC television:

> *You find some guys doing drama, and they have no interest in drama. You'll find a guy directing news, and it gives him nightmares. You will find another one directing football, going to stadiums to do football, and he has no interest in football matches. You'll find somebody else producing music and he is not interested in music. May be he is interested in something completely different. That's the way the station likes people to operate and I think it is wrong* (Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview).

Furthermore, the fact that the Channel 1 KBC programmes manager was physically present in the studio monitoring production procedures during rehearsals might have restricted the crews' freedom to voice their opinions. Indeed, even the director of *Reflections* sometimes felt creatively stifled as she could barely deviate from the expectations of the programmes manager in how to treat certain topics in the show (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Hence, except for the actors and script writer who seemed to have strong opinions on how their roles shaped the final content, the technical crew of *Reflections* was rather silent about their special input in the show, particularly regarding audiences.

In contrast, the production set of *Uhondo* had a liberated atmosphere which allowed the cast and crew leeway to voice their opinions and suggest ways in how scenes could be shot. The cast was also active in suggesting ways they wanted to perform their character roles based on their own understanding of the target audience of the show. Actress Abok confirmed this fact as follows:

> *Then again when we are shooting—that's the good thing about our directors—they give us an opportunity to discuss what should be done. They don't really put us down and say, we must do it my way or what… we have room to suggest and to do it the way that our fans have previously suggested to us* (Monica Abok, September 2005, Interview).

In light of the above, it is clear that in conceptualizing their audiences, the producers of *Reflections* and *Uhondo* had to negotiate the policy dynamics of the environments within which they produced. Producers working on *Uhondo* were shaped in their thinking, first, and for the most part, by the demands that NTV had placed on them depending on the commercial aims the station hoped to accomplish with the soap drama. Nevertheless, perhaps the fact that the show was actually shot by Eagles outside NTV's premises made the cast and crew feel freer. They were not under constant physical scrutiny by the programmes manager of NTV. In contrast, producers working on *Reflections* within the confines of Channel 1 KBC Studio B had to come to terms with a rigid policy of operations that appeared to be strictly unwavering. This policy was enforced by the station's programmes manager in a way that constrained directors and their subordinates' freedom in how they treated the content of their programmes (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). With this in mind, the following sections examine how producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, respectively, negotiated production environments when conceptualizing their audiences within the 'political economic' contexts of NTV and Channel 1 KBC television.

Conventional tendencies in conceptualising the audience

Within the political economy framework, producers (in the conventional sense) are tasked with consolidating directors, casts and crews into achieving the goals and aims of their stations (Cantor and Cantor, 1992). Programmes managers (such as Mary Onyango at Channel 1 KBC) and production managers (such as Kimaita at NTV) are in charge of making sure that the overall programming in their stations happens within such a framework. For Onyango, the audience was determined by the stipulations of the KBC Act of Parliament:

We have to serve mwananchi [the Citizen]. As long as this is the set up, we are mandated by a law, under CAP 221, the laws of Kenya, to be a public service… So KBC still remains… our main function is educating people, and informing people, so the information that we give out is all from the truth... To the people who listen, to the people who view (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

Producers of *Uhondo* on the other hand were required to make the programme attractive to an audience that NTV could use to meet its commercial objectives. Failure to do so would result, at extremes, in the cancellation of the show. This fact became very clear when a leading sugar company called off plans to place its adverts on NTV during the airing of *Uhondo*. According to Kimaita, the sugar company had reviewed a few episodes of the soap drama and found them wanting.

On April 21 2005, Kimaita ordered a crisis meeting with the key production personnel of *Uhondo* at Eagles. Executive Producer Ngunyi, Director Darius, the set designer, the chief video editor and myself, in the capacity of co-director, attended the meeting. Kimaita's primary concern was how to rescue *Uhondo* as its storyline was falling apart, according to top management at NTV. Kimaita relayed that for this reason, Mumias Sugar Company had called off potential sponsorship of several episodes of the show. They had felt that *Uhondo* was *"trashy and had no head or tail"* (Kimaita Magiri, April 2005, Conversation). Apparently, Mumias did not want to be associated with *Uhondo*'s current content. Consequently, the NTV managing director had ordered that if the show did not improve, it would be dropped from the prime-time slot between 7.35PM and 8.00PM on Tuesday, to a new slot from 6.53PM to 7.25PM on Sunday. Apparently, Ngunyi, Darius and Kimaita knew that when a show is moved to this Sunday slot it means that it is about to be cancelled.

While NTV management blamed the non-performance of *Uhondo* on a weak storyline and poor production values, it was possible that their threat to cancel the show originated elsewhere. The miniscule budget and Eagles management's divided commitment[xxxiii] to the production of *Uhondo* usually paralysed scheduled shoots and demoralised the cast and crew, sometimes adversely affecting their performance on the set. In addition, NTV appeared reluctant to invest in the show in a way that could improve its standards. Even after running for 39 weeks, the budget of a single episode of *Uhondo* was about 95, 000 Kenya Shillings ($1= KSH 78.04 in mid-January 2005).[xxxiv] This was hardly enough to meet all the production expenses, salaries of the cast and crew and the script writers' fees.[xxxv] On top of this, while

NTV had been running television and newspaper 'promotions' for their new in-house produced soap, *Wingu La Moto*, they had not extended similar commitment to publicising *Uhondo*. In fact, whenever NTV published their weekly programme line-up on their sister newspaper, *Daily Nation*, they attached old pictures of former *Uhondo* stars to describe the show to readers. Such pictures included that of an actress who had left the show because her acting was in conflict with her teaching job at a kindergarten in the city (see below). At the same time, the new NTV Managing Director, Ian Fernandez, was said to have been convinced that with the budget he paid to produce one episode of *Uhondo*, he could buy four prime foreign movies (Kimaita Magiri, April 2005, Conversation). Fernandez's business attitude projected a poor future for *Uhondo* on NTV. Indeed, NTV did not want to increase the production budget of *Uhondo* until the show was able to attract lucrative advertising again. *Wingu* had managed to do just that, hence it was afforded better funding and promoted on NTV and *Daily Nation* (Kimaita Magiri, April 2005, Conversation).

It is clear that commercial and public service objectives notwithstanding, producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were mainly influenced by their immediate bosses in terms of how they packaged the content of these programmes. Hence, it can be argued that these producers first conceptualised the bosses as a 'key audience' of their programmes, because the bosses had the authority to decide whether a programme went on air or not. In the next section, I examine the foundation of this claim.

Television stations' top management bosses as audience

The politics of the television production environments determine how producers deal with their bosses, and this has a great impact on the attitudes producers bring to their work (Mosime, 2007; Heath, 1992; Bourgault, 1995). Indeed, how producers treated the content of their entertainment programmes vastly depended on the 'promotion' they received from their immediate bosses and stations' heads. Hence, uncertainty within a station's bureaucracy concerning the success of a programme apparently demoralised producers. Sometimes they were utterly confused about the purposes of their programmes in relation to the audiences they were expected to target as per their stations' overall goals and aims. The letter below written by then Head of Drama Department (HDD) at Channel 1 KBC to his Managing Director (MD) shows the depth of the latent power struggle between producers and their bosses. Apparently, this power struggle concerned programming and therefore directly affected producers' concepts of their target audiences. In the case cited below, the HDD was

apparently protesting reassignment because he had produced what he considered a successful programme only to be punished for it. According to him, the Television Programmes Manager's (TPM) office had consistently frustrated his production efforts yet his programmes had attracted much needed revenue for KBC, and were popular with the audience. He noted the following:

Sir, this re-assignment is a replica of what the former TPM did to me in November 2002 *(attached copies 2 and 3)*. I was by then producing Kinyonga comedy, which was a household name. The programme was sponsored by TUSKER, paying airtime totaling Ksh 633.600.00 (six hundred and thirty-three thousand and six hundred shillings only) per month. That change just like the current one, was a mere smokescreen.

It was preceded by frustrating me professionally, hate-campaign and maligning the programme by calling it substandard even with the sponsorship on. Consequently, the programme was killed thus denying the station the money. This was a deliberate move to consign me into oblivion *(attached copies 4 and 5)*. I have got all the facts, the same campaign has started in earnest. The ultimate aim is to ward off the *Mumias Sugar* sponsorship.

The HDD thus highlighted that sometimes KBC top managers were inconsistent in defining successful programmes. By questioning his superiors about the limited autonomy he had over programming decisions, the HDD revealed that he was relatively powerless in making key decisions on his own. He was mandated to serve a system that could be quite abstract in defining its institutional goals from time to time. Below in the same letter, the HDD lamented the apparent indecision by the KBC top managers in defining successful television programming and the role the Head of Drama Department should play in fulfilling it:

Je, huu ni ungwana? Programme may look simple but its production calls for perseverance, tact, dedication and creativity. However, the begging question is: **Why should the programmes I produce get sacrificed every time we get a sponsor?**

There are no rules of convention that must be applied to a drama of particular kind to ensure its correct performance. The only fundamental consideration to be borne in mind is the nature, reality and the means suited to convey the drama. This is what I precisely do in **Je, huu ni ungwana?** Having been trained in drama with an experience spanning more than a decade as drama producer, it allows me to apply rule of thumb.

Nevertheless, if one programme out of ten fails to attain the desired standards, it cannot render the rest of the episodes sub-standard. Our point of reference here is the audience and sponsoring client. Do they appreciate the product? Yes, they do and are happy.

Sir, I am quite sure the TPM would like to work with a team of dedicated and result-oriented personnel. The success of a manager is measured by the extent to which he/she succeeds in achieving results through them.

According to Max Weber, the theorist of the nineteenth-twentieth century, highly specialized work roles for all employees are created through firmly established rules. This includes selecting, promoting and discipline to achieve optimum performance and competence.

Although the HDD appeared to blame his TPM for his demotion, the TPM's autonomy in making programming decisions was swayed by powerful forces. Onyango, who was acting TPM in 2005, pointed out that since the station's operations were controlled by an Act of Parliament, the definition of the target audience it was meant to serve was inadvertently 'determined' by government. Members of the board that governed KBC were appointed by the president (Maubert, 2006), and they in turn were in charge of selecting the top management that decided how the audience of KBC television and radio would be conceptualized. In this context, sometimes the managing director's arbitrary decisions about which programmes were produced was final; hence, they were capable of undermining the TPM's authority in determining the viability of programmes (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview; Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). For this reason, the programmes manager might be rendered conservative in making programming decisions.

Naomi Kamau, the writer of *Reflections*, also pointed out that the conservativeness of the TPM can sometimes shape the professional beliefs of a programme producer, because the TPM always has to okay the type of content featured on a programme:

NAOMI: So what she says, it goes. I can only argue up to a point. But beyond that… Like for instance, one day we wrote something about guns—we have never felt good like that, you know? I got the guns—I was writing a story about how university students have guns. [Then we were told] that programme was to be removed from the air immediately… by Murema. Murema would rather have sex than guns…
GNK*: What was the argument? What was his argument about removing them?*

NAOMI: It was in the papers. No argument. 'Just remove those guns from the studio!' We had already shot it… simply because we put guns [the episode was cancelled].
GNK*: What was his position?*

NAOMI: *He was the TPM—the television programmes manager* (Naomi Kamau, September 2005, Interview)

Although thinking of their bosses as 'an/the audience' was an unorthodox concept, producers did mention several times that what their bosses thought of the programmes they made was very important. The endorsement of programme content by the executive producers, programmes managers, the production managers and ultimately the managing directors of the television stations was critical because it meant that the content could be aired. According to Onyango (MO), at Channel 1 KBC for example:

MO: The structure is such that you have different people in different units: Current Affairs, Drama and Music. And then I have sports, and then I also have Youth Education, Women and Children… So they [producers] have been empowered actually to look at the treatments of their programmes. But you [TPM] have to come on as the overall, because they may not see what you [TPM] may see. Yeah, and the buck stops here. So I rely on them to do the ground work, and then eventually I have to see—like you saw me in the studio. I really have to see that rehearsal and make sure it is really going the right way…
GNK*: So the director's autonomy is limited to… what your expectations are depending on… the bigger picture… which you get from…?*
                    (both laugh)
MO: *From the other boss...[xxxvi]* (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

If the programmes manager did not approve of how a programme was packaged, s/he demanded rewrites, revision, new approaches to character portrayals or else the errant

programmes could be moved to less favourable broadcast slots, suspended until the correction had been made and verified or pulled off the air altogether (Wafula Nyongesa, March 2005, Conversation).

Nevertheless, the degree of authority the bosses had over the final programme content varied depending on their seniority. This meant that directors had immediate impact on how programmes were packaged and for whom (the ultimate audience), but only in as far as their vision agreed with that of their programme managers. In turn, the programme manager's autonomy in determining the suitability of the content for a particular audience was determined by the managing directors of the stations. In this respect, producers were likely to see programme managers and the managing directors of their stations as their number one audience (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview; Lucia Shikuku, September 2005, Interview; Naomi Kamau, September 2005, Interview).

Uncommon tendencies in conceptualising audiences

Besides the political economic deliberations they undertook in conceptualizing their audiences, the research-participant producers also approached this task from a 'moral value-based' socio-cultural perspective. They attached a kind of magnanimity to television (as an institution), and therefore regarded their programmes as powerful, capable of influencing in specific ways the segments of society that watched them. Since there were no concrete ratings to configure the audience as a neat collective for them, producers relied on their positioning in the world as social beings (their own socio-cultural values and wisdom) to conceptualize the characteristics of their audiences (Graffman, 2004). Hence, to the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* audiences were the men, women and children they were likely to encounter in their daily lives. In this context, the producers' cultural biases and idiosyncrasies shaped their overall attitudes about these audiences. "The supposition in this case is that what interest[ed] them should interest the audience" (Gans, 1979: 230). In this respect, the producers acted as the surrogate audience for their programmes (Dornfield, 1998: 238) because, as they attested, they too watch television and have lives just like the 'real' audience does.

Producers as the audience

According to Katarina Graffman (2004: 2),

> The strategies used by producers to create an image of and establish a relationship to the audience include the construction of the *average person* based on […] reference persons […]

and general knowledge of the TV institution, experience of earlier shows and of themselves as surrogate viewers (Espinosa, 1982: 85). These strategies are the result of the producer's habitus and of the social circumstances they encounter in the field of television production, which hopefully lead to a 'feeling for what is right'. The conception of the audience is right for how producers make their choices and formulate them into programme content and approach.

Apparently, producers who participated in this study believed that by following certain moral-cultural codes, particularly in the packaging of programme content, they could accomplish a 'bigger' purpose with television than merely entertaining audiences. Indeed, nearly all the 'producers' of all the programmes considered in this study viewed television as an important communicator of culture. Obviously, they had to respect the policies of their stations which stipulated that the primary purposes of both NTV and Channel 1 KBC were to inform, entertain and educate, in accordance with the specific political economic framework of each station (Chapter One). Nevertheless, it appeared that individual producers applied their 'own' cultural-moral codes with regards to defining their audience. According to the research-participants' sentiments, entertainment programmes should include very specific things about social conduct. Apparently, sometimes the research participants saw the audience as ignorant and morally corruptible. Respect for the elderly, proper dress code, and the manners in which characters in stories addressed each other (particularly keeping to the requirement for their age group) were regarded as important. Citing culture as a motivating factor, producers saw that given their positions of professional authority and their statuses as elders and parents, they were obligated to select what was right for the audience. They were obligated to teach. Set Designer Wamai reiterated the importance of producers as 'educators' in the following way:

> *we can popularise something through television. Like I was saying before, we can even [make the audience] to be an immoral society... depending on the shows we are producing and transmitting. So really we should play a big role here in giving direction* (Wamai, September 2005, Interview).

Indeed, knowing their audiences (therefore their needs) producers indicated they had the responsibility of deciding what suitable programme content was. Lucia Shikuku, script editor of *Uhondo* and writer of *Wingu La Moto*, clearly asserted this notion:

you know, it's not up to the audience to decide. We decide what to show to the audience. I think we should decide. I'm the entertainer. It's up to you [audience] to like me or hate me, you know. Either way, the way I see it is that I'm teaching you something (Lucia Shikuku, September 2005, Interview).

The producer-director of *Reflections* also emphasised her authority in making choices for the audience in terms of content selection:

a producer is also a person who is a kin of several people, places, and events. And out of that, I mean, you are able to decide... which genre will be more effective than the other when dealing with this particular kind of a topic (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

Nevertheless, the conservativeness of individual producers and their idiosyncratic beliefs on the role of television in society greatly influenced how they actually treated programme content and perceived audiences. Indeed, junior production personnel occasionally felt stifled by their producer-director bosses who often constrained their freedom with regards to the variety of 'lessons' they could encode in programme content:

When you argue and he feels he is losing he will tell you, 'Hey, I am your boss. I have say'. It ends. That and 'I don't want to talk about it'. There is nothing you can do. It is not your show, there is nothing you can do. You just let him do whatever he wants…
(Lucia Shikuku, September 2005, Interview).

In light of the above, producers' adherence to stations' policies coupled with their individual aspirations to serve society in a noble way through entertainment programmes pre-determined how they imagined their audiences. Hence, producers used themselves as yardsticks for testing the type of content that would appeal to viewers, based on the belief that they shared similar moral-cultural values with the audience. At the same time, due to their experiences of dealing with the bureaucratic systems upon which their stations were founded, they 'knew' which subjects (topics) were untouchable and how they would treat sensitive ones so as not to unsettle their supervisors. In a sense, as a surrogate audience the research-participant producers acted as 'gatekeepers', and "[made] use of both published regulations and guidelines about programme content, and of their own internalized sense of what it is right and wrong to broadcast" (Bignell, 2004: 231). Apparently, to the producers television was a

tool for enhancing social development, and therefore appeared to support the notion that some regulation of entertainment programmes content was necessary. The content must be 'useful' for enhancing the wellbeing of the Kenyan society (audience). [xxxvii]

Television as a social force and society as audience?

Overall, the research-participant producers considered television an important tool for enhancing the growth and maintenance of society because of its ability to mould viewers' behaviour and thinking (Interview with Wamai, September 2005; Interview with Darius, September 2005). According to Ngunyi (2005):

> *[Television is] Very very powerful. Television is very influential… it influences people in a magical way. If you want to change their thinking, make everybody to be a positive thinker, television can do that very easily. You only need to give them shows tailored towards that route. I have seen TV being used by the state here… when KBC was a monopoly, the producers and the government were using television to tell the society what they wanted them to be told… viewers take TV very seriously. When TV has said something, that something is like the gospel truth* (Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview).

The 'gospel truth' in the above context implies messages that appear to be loaded with socio-cultural values that appeal to the audience in meaningful ways by reflecting the audience's aspirations in real life. Television entertainment programmes (as gospel truth) are aligned with the tradition or system that produces and reproduces meanings that appear to enhance audience's real lives (Chapter Four; Chapter Five). In this context, the programmes become part of the system that assures the audience that "[their] dominant ideological practice (the politics of what is right or wrong in social practice), apparently works: the meanings of the world and [their] subjectivities that [the system] produces appear to make sense" (Fiske, 1987: 51). Television (as gospel truth) operates as a system that emphasises ideal subject positions for the audience to occupy. It is successful in doing so because the audience's subjectivities,

> [are] the product of social relations that work upon [individuals]… through society, through language or discourse and through the psychic process through which the infant enters into society, language, and consciousness. Our subjectivity is not inherent in our individuality, our difference from other people, rather it is the product of the various social agencies to which we are subject, and thus it is what we share with others (Fiske, 1987: 49).

It can be argued that the reason the research-participant producers regarded their roles in television as significant for social development is because as practitioners they were part of the said subjectivising system. The producers seemed to essentialise the audience as social groups defined by particular socio-cultural values and morals, and so considered it their job to propagate the same through their entertainment programmes. Apparently, television programmes were connected to what Ngunyi referred to as the 'real life' activities of people in Kenyan society. Hence, the content in a programme such as *Uhondo* reflected pieces of the different lives many Kenyans lived, that is:

> *how they do things, how they behave. At the end of the day, it is like another movie; it is like another soap. Actually they are very interesting soaps. Even in the house, in family units, those are soaps. I look at those things, I come up with an idea and I decide to teach those things… [I] try to change [people], change their thinking so that being honest is better than acting all your life. There are guys who have been cheating their wives all their lives… I have seen those characters… there are very many characters in this town who fit in [Uhondo's characters'] shoes. Now, I had all those characters because I witnessed it with my own eyes—and every time I see it with my own eyes… It is very satisfying when at the end of the day, when you see that show, and you hear people talking about it and you think they are learning…*(Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005 Interview).

According to Actor Derrick Amunga (*Uhondo*), television producers (conventional and non-conventional ones) 'deal in' raw materials pertaining to the 'lived' circumstances of real people. For this reason, television viewers consider makers of television programmes as useful 'knowledge banks', rich with relevant and practical socio-cultural lessons:

> *There are people who look up to [us] for something… that only [we] can give… we have young people to teach, we have the whole public to actually educate… and such things. Therefore at the end of the day, depending on how well a performer like me interprets my role, and the way I am going to give it out, I think I have something to prove to either myself or the fans… or may be just everybody else, you know?... I ask myself what is it am I going to do that is going to make somebody tune off from other channels and choose to watch me? … When I ask myself that question, I think I have a real major role to play in terms of—other than entertaining, disseminating information* (Derrick Amunga, September 2005, Interview).

By conceptualizing the audience in this manner, it appears some producers believed that particular programmes could address the specific 'problem areas'/needs of the audience based on the social categories within which its members belonged. Despite the implied diversity in its characteristics, society as audience, which is made up of all genders, social classes and age groups, has an identity that producers imagined is distinguishable by clear-cut Kenyan customs. Producers indicated they could utilise these customs (as characteristics) to decide which lessons could be disseminated to whom through particular programme content. Such customs as appropriate dress code, behaviour and language expected of a decent 'Kenyan people' were considered parameters for framing programme content, so that it served the purpose of 'educating' the audience in the way the producers intended (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview; Viewer Commentary on *Uhondo*; Catherine Wamuyu, February, Interview; Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview). This is because dress, language and physical behavioural expressions by people within a particular culture are part of "a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meaning in and for that culture" (Fiske, 1987: 4).

In a sense then, the ideal Kenyan customs conformed to the social powers to which producers and the audience were subjects. To producers, reiterating the value of social customs in programme content represented adherence to particular socio-cultural laws of Kenyan society or to the dictates of valued authorities (such as family, government or religion). This type of subjectivity is important because it is what imbued producers with concepts of 'acceptable' behaviour becoming of Kenyans (audience). Certain types of attitudes complement this type of behaviour, but also reflect an "identity that originates from outside rather than inside the individual… [since] subjectivity is the product of social relations" (Fiske, 1987: 45). In the social dimension, Family and Nation (for example) are important in the construction of people's said (Kenyan) identity (Fiske, 1987: 50)—as the producers covered in this study might have imagined it.

In light of the above, entertainment programmes not only contained particular topics, themes, stories and meanings as governed by the stations' policies, but they were made to target the established audience subjectivities. Hence, producers had to stratify 'society' into categories of social groups that were easy to address due to their commonalities. These categories of viewers were also convened by the 'rules' that define particular social groups in any society.

Consequently, the producers' objectives with each entertainment programme had to correspond with the political economic objectives of their stations but within the said framework of the identities of society as the audience. Furthermore, the individual producers' attitudes concerning their ideal society influenced their concepts of 'audience as society'. Ngunyi's attitude (above) about the relationship between programme content and the characteristics of the Kenyan society illustrates how producers' idiosyncratic notions shaped their overall approach to producing *Uhondo* and other entertainment programmes. In targeting particular audiences based on their belongingness to the said categories of society, producers expected specific programme content to appeal to the specific audiences whose needs were most appropriately addressed by such content. For instance, according to the director of *Vioja Mahakamani*:

> *The audience of Vioja depends on the programme itself, on the topic… Because sometimes you—if you are talking about corruption…definitely you know what kind of people you are targeting. When you talk about rape, then you are targeting almost everybody because everybody should be aware that these things can happen to them… So you are targeting the parents, you are targeting the young people, you are targeting… the target audience of Vioja will depend on the theme of that production* (Elizabeth Kamwiri, February 2005, Interview).

It can be argued, therefore, that "producers make cultural assumptions about their viewers' cultural assumptions about cultural codes and their contexts" (Ruby, 1996: 185), and also about how these should be represented in programme content. In addition, "Through the hypothetical assumption of what the reference person would appreciate, understand and like, the producers make their choices" (Kottak, 1990: 43). Consequently, the research-participants appeared to compartmentalise their target audience into key social categories within which 'reference persons' operated. Apparently, to the research-participant producers the existence and significance of such categories in the structure of Kenyan society was undeniable.

Audience in social categories

Whenever producers addressed issues relating to whom their programmes were targeted; why they made the programmes or how they imagined viewers would receive these programmes, they mentioned **The Public** (or Kenyan Citizens**)**, **The Family** and **The Youth** several times. Depending on their individual professional positioning, producers either used the term 'the Public' or 'Citizens' to describe audience as society. The programmes manager of Channel 1

KBC television for example conceptualized audiences as Citizens because she was obligated by law to uphold specific public service policies (in accordance with the Act of Parliament stipulating the station's mandate). On the other hand, directors, writers, or the producers involved in the actual creative tasks of manufacturing content and packaging it into programmes rarely used the term 'citizens' to refer to the audience. It also appears that to the production personnel in charge of the artistic aspects of programme production 'audience' meant people within social categories (groups) who were united by core interests—as in the family and the youth. Hence, particular programmes, or episodes of such programmes, focused on the needs of specific 'addressee audience categories' (Elizabeth Kamwiri, February 2005, Interview).

However, producers also saw television as capable of communicating to each viewer in his/her own terms (Scannell, 1996: 11), although individual viewers were bound by 'perceived' societal commonalities they shared with other Kenyans. As such, producers believed that how programmes appealed to the interests of individual viewers was representative of the interest of the Kenyan society (as audience). Hence, producers spoke of aiming to address a **'reference person'**, one representing the overall audience they had in mind. The terms *common mwananchi* (citizen) or *ordinary Kenyan* were used to define the ideal member of the 'audience society', because through him or her producers would be able to sketch the characteristics of their audience within their specific social categories, namely The Family and The Youth. Using their knowledge of members of their own societies who fitted the profiles of the said groups, producers could then create story ideas capable of addressing the priority needs of these target audiences as they imagined them (Graffman, 2004).

Indeed, the audience as a society included producers, and therefore their social relationships inadvertently became a source of raw materials for relevant programme content. Several times, the producers of *Uhondo*, *Reflections*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja* indicated that they had relied on the 'ways of society' and audiences' feedback in understanding the type of content that was most appealing to the viewers of these shows. This happened in two ways. First, during the formative stages of the programmes, as was the case with *Reflections*, producer/directors and writers observed social life and had direct personal interactions with people within various segments of society. From these observations and interactions, they gathered the raw materials needed to create sketches of *Reflections* and *Uhondo*. The materials then became

scripts and later were fleshed out into thematic lessons and entertainment elements, all of which constituted the final programmes. According to Writer Kamau, producers need to know what is happening 'on the ground' in order to understand what to put in a programme and who to target as potential viewers of the programme:

> *I think if you are doing television you need to know 'everything'. I mean… there is no way you can do [a show,] especially if you are targeting the Kenyan Market, if you are not on the ground, if you don't know what is happening on the ground… If you aren't here, you would never know 'anything'. I mean, who are your target?* (Naomi Kamau, September 2005, Interview).

Director Wamuyu seemingly seconded Kamau's claim that society served as a resource for *Reflections'* content, and as a barometer for what would appeal to the target audience of the show:

> *I have worked with young people for a long time, and ever since I came here I have been dealing with young people. And I noticed like there is a… a gap, yeah? They are not getting proper information, like even when you talk about Valentine's [Day] they take it from other people and not their parents or the teachers. So… about many many issues… small issues… I think all out, there is that information gap…* (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

It can be argued that because the audience is society, topics emanating from what it knows, wants, and needs can serve as the most resourceful raw materials for composing the programme content capable of attracting it (Hobson, 1982). In turn, this content can be used to profile audiences for particular programmes— as in the manner Director Kamwiri of *Vioja* articulated above, that the audience of *Vioja* is dependent on the theme or topic of each episode.

The second approach to using society as a source of raw materials for programme content and ideas about potential audiences involved the producers' active study of viewer response to their programmes. Such viewer response was in the form of commentary through letters sent to the 'Traffic Department' at Channel 1 KBC. In addition, viewer emails sent to the producers of *Reflections* and *Uhondo* provided vital insight with regards to the reception of these programmes (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview; Stan Darius, September

2005, Interview). Viewers also telephoned the public relations department at Channel 1 KBC with advice on how producers could improve the content of *Reflections*, *Vitimbi* and *Vioja*. They also called the stations' top management with complaints about programme scheduling or production quality:

> *You find people write to say' this was very good'. Or, people even write to tell us, 'we would want you to come over we discuss a certain…' ah, you know—they call and they say they've got material, they've got topics that they think we can tackle. Ah, so it means that they watched and [saw] the way we tackled a certain social problem. Then it means that we can be able to sort out another one which falls in their, you know— their docket… The viewers will always write and tell you, I mean, 'you should even repeat that production'… So with that in mind— in fact I think that kind of writing and, you know, the comments, the calls by the viewers, is the one that makes even the bosses or, you know, the supervisors say 'Vioja should be retained'* (Elizabeth Kamwiri, February 2005, Interview).

According to Zuhura Asman, *Uhondo*'s writer, audience response was integral to the creative process of manufacturing relevant programme content and understanding the audience of *Uhondo*. Indeed,

> *if you want to understand how the programme should progress, you are not the one who knows. It's the viewers. You may think you have written very well but when the viewers see the play they may say, 'it's nonsense'* (Zuhura Asman, September 2005, Interview).

Consequently, Zuhura always immersed herself in the viewers' social world, and even participated in watching *Uhondo* in social situations. This way she was able to gather important feedback that enabled her to write the show more effectively:

> *You know, if you want to become a good fisherman, you should associate yourself with fishermen. And if you want to become a good writer, you should listen to what other people [read viewers] have to say, even though you may not keep it all. You should take what you feel will benefit you and leave out what you think will not be useful to you* (Zuhura Asman, September 2005, Interview).

Apparently, in order to get a better sense of their audience, some writers and directors sought to observe firsthand how their programmes appealed to viewers. Zuhura watched the show anonymously with fellow residents at her housing estate as they crowded by doorways of neighbours who owned a television set. Watching with her neighbours gave her the opportunity to listen in on their commentary about what they liked, disliked or understood about *Uhondo* (Zuhura Asman, September, Interview). Singila and Kamwiri, the producer-directors of *Vitimbi* and *Vioja*, respectively, indicated that they too placed themselves in situations where they could watch their shows with other viewers in order to assess whether they made the audience laugh or not (Singila, February 2005, Interview; Elizabeth Kamwiri, February 2005, Interview). By actually placing himself in public viewing situations such as bars or halls where *Uhondo* was screened to clients, Executive Producer Ngunyi was also able to gather important notes on the reception of his show (Stephano Ngunyi, September 2005, Interview).

From the above examples, it is safe to conclude that the research-participant producers aspired to reflect society back to itself. The entertainment programmes acted as "a relay system through which the society as audience [was] presented with an image of itself" (Elliot, 1972: 17). Hence, producers hoped for a close congruence between programme content and the 'life ways' of viewers who eventually watched that material. Apparently, these producers understood that "Popular fiction should connect with life and reality, indeed it is meaningless if it does not achieve this end, for fiction has always grown from experiences in life..." (Hobson, 1982: 136). This aspect of the relevance of entertainment programmes to 'life and reality' is directly linked to the fundamentals that constitute the important social categories of audience considered in the next two sections. Beginning with the family, the rest of the chapter examines how producers conceptualized viewers depending on what they understood to be important 'life values' as defined by particular social categories.

Audience as the traditional family unit

According to David Morley (1992: 138) "Television viewing may be a privatized activity… but it is still largely conducted within, rather than outside, social relations", and the family/household rather than the individual viewer could be considered the basic unit of consumption of television (Morley, 1992: 138). Though changing in structure from the traditional nuclear family (always determined by the customs of the given society in question), the family "retains its ideological centrality in the culture. It is still to a large extent,

a picture of that traditional nuclear family that constitutes the principal image that broadcasters (and government) hold of the domestic audience for television and which, correspondingly, informs much of broadcasters' scheduling practice and of government policy in this area" (Morley, 1992: 164). In the context of this study, the family emerged as a core social institution, one considered as critical for safeguarding the moral-cultural values that unite the Kenyan society as the research-participant producers understood it. Based on the essence of an ideal Kenyan family, producers seemed to have an established template of fundamental morals, cultural values and aspirations for an ideal Kenyan society. It appears that they assumed these fundamentals comprised their own socio-cultural aspirations, which they saw as similar to those of the potential viewers of their programmes. Hence, 'audience as the traditional family unit', because of its well defined value system, was considered a primary model for conceptualising the target audience of television entertainment programming. Indeed, according to Mary Onyango (February, 2005), Channel 1 KBC aspired to air only what the whole family could watch together. The stations' policy was based on the assumption that the Kenyan family remains a traditional unit constituting of a Mother, Father, Children and sometimes a Grandparent, all living in the same household. This family watches television together, and it has only one set on which to watch programmes (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview; Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview). Therefore, according to Onyango *"You have to look for [programme content that is] comfortable for the whole group, so that you don't go beyond what a family cannot accept"* (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

In the African context, the traditional family can be considered an important social category because it consolidates members of society into primary social groups in a 'natural', lasting way for two reasons: 1) Family implies household—a place where a group of people united by bloodline and also by particular values, which could be considered a code of conduct, are congregated naturally prior to the arrival of television in their lives/presence. At the same time, 2) the family or household is meant to be a source of material and cultural 'wealth' that sustains the members of this important grouping (Agesa, 2004). Hence, the research-participant producers regarded television as an important tool for communicating life enhancing knowledge within the framework of 'family'. In this context, Family is the basic institution that cultivates the 'right' conduct and values for promoting the lives of its members (Arinze, 1986). In turn, producers used these basic familial-based socio-cultural foundations as a 'yardstick' for conceptualizing audiences. For this reason, producers hoped that by

delivering programmes ingrained with 'family values', they could propagate the ideals of good living to the audience (as society).

With the above in mind, producers worked hard so as not to transgress the highly regarded 'family code' that apparently determined the aesthetic quality of successful television entertainment programming. Indeed, failure to abide by this code could jeopardize the 'welfare' of a programme and its production crew. Stan Darius, the director of *Uhondo*, illustrated this fact by citing an incident that saw him lose the principal actress of *Uhondo* and alter the content of the show. According to Darius, in 2004 viewers of *Uhondo* complained that the show was offensive because it consistently featured material they felt was in bad taste and immoral for prime time.[xxxviii] Charity Mwala, the former principal actress who played an 'immoral' character named Tina, had been censored for appearing as a skimpily dressed prostitute in a few episodes of *Uhondo*. Mwala, who was also a kindergarten teacher, was castigated by her teaching colleagues who had witnessed her performances on the show. At the same time, parents who had children at Mwala's school complained that she might corrupt their children and therefore was not fit to teach them. Consequently, the headmistress of the school threatened Mwala with suspension lest she quit acting in the show (Charity Mwala, September 2005, Interview; Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview).

In an attempt to redress this crisis, Mwala promised the headmistress that she would stop playing the provocative role, and hence asked Darius to water down the exploits of her character, Tina. Darius agreed. According to him, he respected the viewers' complaints and felt that if the show was too offensive for parents to watch with their children, then he needed to improve it to suit their needs (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview). In agreeing to alter the show, Darius had respected the 'family' moral code by which these viewers abided. He explained that he understood where they were coming from, because according to Kenyan culture certain 'things' are taboo in local television programmes, particularly drama:

> *If that would cost a whole soap [opera] on the screen, then I would rather not go that way. Not because I am scared as a producer but there are some values that we really want to preserve. And again I want to look at it from another angle, television here in our country and in Africa is such that it is an expensive gadget. Every room may not afford a television set, and therefore most of the shows are actually family shows. And with our kind of living, where we have extended families—grandpa is there, grandmom is there, mom is there, dad is there, grandchild is there; it is the whole set*

up of the family situation. And therefore there will be people offended by some of these overtures, and therefore it may not be very good television viewing (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview).

Apparently, as a family show *Uhondo* could not feature things that appeared to be outside the acceptable 'Kenyan' society's, moral-cultural agenda. The representations of prostitution through a skimpy dress, and the overall conduct becoming of prostitutes, were seen by some viewers as not fitting for prime time television. More so, it was seemingly out of order for a kindergarten teacher to play such a taboo role especially when it was likely that her pupils and their parents could be part of the audience of *Uhondo*. The fact that Mwala's moral values were construed as those of the character she played on the show, hence jeopardizing her teaching career, was proof for Darius and Mwala that they constantly needed to conform with the audience's family values and moral code. This code sometimes forced producers to resort to self-censorship (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview). Curiously, it was not clear why Darius had featured the controversial material in *Uhondo* in the first place knowing, as he claimed, that it contravened the Kenyan society moral-value code. Perhaps he felt obligated to 'teach' the audience to view the show as social commentary about society's taboos for honest/respectable reasons.

The gravity of Mwala's problem made Darius and NTV's general manager at the time to take the initiative to encourage the parents and teachers at her kindergarten to see the benefits and significance of her participation in *Uhondo*. Darius's initial view was that the parents and teachers considered television as a teaching tool. Hence, he hoped that Mwala's participation in the show could motivate the parents to see that the television industry is a productive career path even for their children (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview). To Actress Mwala's aid, NTV's production manager persuaded the *Daily Nation* to feature an article covering her in favourable light (Muganda, 2005). It sought to distinguish the actress from her character role, and show that she was not a 'bad' person at all. Furthermore, the managing director; the production manager and programmes manager of NTV all paid a visit to the headmistress in an attempt to save Mwala's job at the kindergarten. They also sought permission that Mwala be allowed to continue playing the role of the prostitute, albeit in a toned-down manner. Nevertheless, the headmistress stuck to her decision that Mwala quit acting or else her contract with the kindergarten would be terminated (Charity Mwala, September 2005, Interview).

Given the incident above, it appears that 'family as audience' directly connected parents and their children as a unitary category. In fact, producers appeared to recognize this dynamic, and therefore aspired to create programmes that focused on matters relating to the family, with the youth being considered as part of this social category. Indeed, Wamuyu (*Reflections*) framed this connection as follows:

> *I keep on seeing that you cannot have a youth show specifically, because how do you divorce them from their family—their parents, from their teachers. Because the issues that concern them also concern their families, they concern their other siblings, and they concern teachers in general* (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

Nevertheless, given that producers felt obligated to impart the 'right', useful and socially acceptable knowledge to 'specific' audience categories, they considered the youth as an important separate target audience for specific 'lessons' embedded in their entertainment programmes. In general, producers considered the youth as the most vulnerable social group and therefore in need of guidance in how to live productively.

Audience as the youth

Whenever research-participant producers talked about educating society through entertainment programmes, they mostly mentioned the youth as their target audience. Producers such as Wamuyu indicated they felt obligated to use television to supply this group with the 'right' information that could enhance its social development. According to Wamuyu, there was a gap between the information the group needed and what it was getting from media and society with regards to its overall development. The group was also currently being inundated with misleading information from the wrong sources, such as foreign television programmes (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Given that Wamuyu, like the other research participant-producers, considered television an important tool for the development of society, she hoped to use *Reflections* to enhance the future of this important segment of society (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview).

Coincidentally, in 2005 mediated socio-political discourse (media talk) in Kenya—for example in the *Daily Nation*—portrayed the youth to be in a precarious state, in terms of its socio-economic and political wellbeing.[xxxix] Just three years earlier, the repressive period of President Moi's 24 year rule had come to an end. The 'old guard' of Moi's generation had proved politically and morally incompetent (Chapter One) in enhancing the aspirations of

Kenyans. For this reason, a new generation of leaders was needed; these would be leaders with a fresh vision capable of rescuing the country from the enormous societal turmoil brought on by years of corruption and rampant crime. Hence, the youth gained a social platform of sorts in the imagination of many Kenyans as 'the leaders of tomorrow' (Kagwanja, 2006). It was sensible, therefore, for producers of *Uhondo*, *Reflections* and the other entertainment programmes produced at Channel 1 KBC to view the youth as a significant audience for their programmes. Those particularly outspoken about promoting the youth through their programmes included: Directors Wamuyu (*Reflections*) and Darius (*Uhondo*); Executive Producer Ngunyi (*Uhondo*); Actors Abok, Amunga and Mwala (*Uhondo*) and Writers Zuhura (*Uhondo*) and Kamau (*Reflections*). Interestingly, these practitioners were either parents or young people themselves, and each of them consistently mentioned that television could have both a positive and negative impact on young people. Indeed, much of their framing of the issues of programme content, as it related to the audience in general, always reverted to how their programmes influenced the youth. Unemployment and crime in Kenya were high, and the population of the youth large.[xl] It appeared therefore that as a social group the youth should be at the top of the media practitioners' minds, more so because as television producers they regarded themselves as social commentators—as playing *"a big role here in giving direction [to society]"* (Wamai, September 2005, Interview).

For the older producers like Ngunyi, Singila and Darius, and mothers like Wamuyu and Kamwiri, societal loss of morals and African traditions was a primary concern. Nearly all of these producers mentioned that the youth as a group was most vulnerable in this context. As citizens and leaders of tomorrow, the youth needed to be informed and educated particularly because they are usually resistive and tend to experiment with foreign and exotic ideas (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview; Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview; Singila, February 2005, Interview). With media liberalisation in Kenya, at least seven new commercial stations had entered the television market by 2005. Most of these stations concentrated on foreign entertainment programming (Maubert, 2006), a fact that seemed to worry the veteran producers. They believed that as impressionable as the youth are, they could be negatively swayed by this new programming. For this reason, even the producers working in *Uhondo* (an 'all entertainment' soap) indicated that they had a responsibility to embed lessons in the programme capable of cautioning the youth about immoral influences. To the research-participant producers, the youth as audience were in need of lessons about sexual behaviour, drug abuse and social responsibility. Indeed, it appears that the Channel 1 KBC Youth,

Education, Women and Children Department had been set up for this reason, and as a matter of government policy (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview). Wamuyu, who was the head of this department in 2005, created *Reflections* for the purpose of addressing issues that enhanced the development of the youth. To her, such issues had been shunned not only by other types of television programmes but by the societal trustees of the youth such as the family. In fact, she cited her experience growing up as a young woman ignorant about her sexuality because her mother was too reluctant to educate her on this subject. To prove that *Reflections* was providing a desperately needed service, Wamuyu cited viewer mail showing that indeed her target audience was benefiting from the show as a universal tool for the social education of the youth as well as adults.[xli]

Other KBC producers (Onyango, Kamwiri and Singila) also appeared to be very conscious of the need to educate the youth by showing it the 'right' programmes. Singila, the director of the dramatic comedy, *Vitimbi*, emphasised the negative impact of 'wrong' programmes on the youth, and therefore the need to discourage them:

> *...and that is why [at Channel 1 KBC] we are being controlled by the government. But it is good because it is for our own—it's for our own youth education. Here at KBC, we can't do that type of programme and then air it. Tomorrow or before the end of that programme you will hear the complaints from the viewers. Everybody would be calling… [asking why we produced such a show]. You see now? The language—in fact here [at Channel 1 KBC], we control our language because of public education, such that the entertainment is limited also so as not to offend the different communities who watch…* (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview).

In light of the above, the research-participant producers perceived the breakdown and corruption of traditional societal values as the primary problem facing the youth. Producers also appeared to romanticize 'the purity' of African traditions and moral values, particularly as they pertained to sexuality and the decency of dress. Indeed, Singila was adamant that entertainment programmes that featured sexual overtones and indecent dress codes were offensive and corrupting the moral fabric of the youth. He sought to impart, through *Vitimbi, "our traditional African cultures"* to the audience as best as he could:

> *You see, when I record these girls in my show—there is no way I can use   somebody on the set wearing that type of dress [mini skirt]. Unless [it's a topic of the show].*

Two weeks ago I recorded a show on the micro-mini [skirt] and these types of trousers they wear… This programme hasn't gone on air yet. So I consulted with the MD [Managing Director]—'what does he think of it?' The MD agreed it is a moral programme… exposure to [foreign culture]—and this is not our culture. These are things they copy from television, and then designers who just want to make money start businesses selling such clothes. So to me I was discouraging it. I was discouraging it— [me] as a parent (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview).

Likewise, Wamuyu (*Reflections*) indicated that the Kenyan cultural code of decency was undermined by shows that were filled with titillating sexual innuendos. She criticised music television East Africa TV for its presentation of underdressed youths interacting in sexually 'explicit' ways; and *Wingu La Moto* and foreign soaps for portraying 'explicit' sexual overtures. Wamuyu defined this type of content as having no utility value at all in enhancing the wellbeing of the audience (read as the youth). Therefore, she was determined that *Reflections* should be useful in moulding the audience to behave responsibly. In addition, she made sure that the content of the show was not too explicit about sexuality, and that the show was always within the acceptable code of decency of the Kenyan culture as she understood it (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). Apparently, Wamuyu understood that television, per se, and its programming are tangible cultural products in themselves, and also vehicles for the dissemination of a range of other cultural practices and beliefs. They embody and carry meaning and social relations (Beetham, 1996: 2; Laden, 2003; 194). Indeed, Director Darius (*Uhondo*) reiterated Wamuyu's position on the role of television entertainment programming in the enhancement of Kenyan cultural values in general:

We actually need to preserve our cultural values, and media is supposed to be the tool to conserve some of these cultural aspects. Because whereas there is modernity and Western influence—kissing and intimacy has become the norm like in the Bold and the Beautiful, Days of Our Lives *[soap operas from USA] and all that. And even possibly knowing that our viewers find that today is quite a normal thing, there is still that feeling that when you are doing an African local soap, you really need to still be conservative* (Stan Darius, September 2005, Interview).

Apparently, producers Singila (*Vitimbi*), Wamuyu (*Reflections*) and Darius (*Uhondo*) linked the breakdown of 'African' traditions to modernity. For instance, according to Singila modern education and professional careers remove many Kenyan men from rural areas ('traditional

havens of culture') and from their parents (Christopher Singila, February 2005, Interview). Thus, modernity breaks down the bonds that careerists and their families ought to share, consequently terminating the linkages between elders and their off-springs. As a result, elders are no longer able to bequeath the younger generation with vital 'African' indigenous knowledge, customs and values. In the long run, the loss of identity particularly in the youth is imminent (Agesa, 2004). In relation to this aspect, Wamuyu pointed to the pervasiveness of the products of modernity in Kenya, particularly the importation of foreign cultures. She emphasized that Kenyans have been 'brainwashed' to believe that everything produced abroad is better than anything produced in Kenya, despite the fact that such things may retard their development. This preference ranges from consumer goods to cultural products such as the music television she accused of subjecting Kenyan youth to immoral attitudes about dance and nudity. According to her, the youth, being the most impressionable and culturally precarious of all social groups, immediately absorbs new foreign ideas such as those emanating from television (Catherine Wamuyu, February, 2005). Hence, both Channel 1 KBC producers and those contracted to produce *Uhondo* for NTV appeared to align themselves with the 'developmental approach' to producing programmes for such an audience. They sought to subvert the detrimental influences of modernity that they saw as hindering the youth's social-economic development. Indeed, Writer Zuhura (*Uhondo*) concluded that as active members of society, the audience tuned in to entertainment programmes in order to be reminded of the good and 'other' ways of living their lives. In this context, *Uhondo* functioned as a practical cautionary tale for the audience; hence, the soap opera's entertainment role was secondary to its social-cultural one (Zuhura Asman, September 2005, Interview).

Conclusion

Interestingly, the research-participant producers rarely articulated the heterogeneity of 'the public', 'the Family' and 'the youth' as the audience. For instance, while the 'family' phenomenon is varied from one community to the next, and occasioned differently in different contexts (Gubrium and Holstein, 1987), producers treated it as a constant template for conceptualizing their ideals of the Kenyan society. They regarded 'family' as a model for formulating their target audience's interests by treating the socio-cultural attributes associated with the 'traditional family' as a homogeneous representative of the Kenyan community of audiences. Rarely did producers indicate that due to their different demographic backgrounds, viewers might have varying ways of relating with the television programmes (Morley, 1992).

Nevertheless, some of the producers did appreciate that communities in Kenya were diverse, but at a superficial level because entertainment programmes were meant to please all the different communities. For instance, Onyango (Channel 1 KBC Programmes Manager) viewed entertainment programmes as targeting the 'least common denominator' factor in the audience, and therefore emphasised that they should be 'politically correct':

> *You can't just mimic, yeah? You can't just make fun out of it and leave it. It is— you control that content. At the top of my mind I know it is— this is a national broadcaster… So, I'm not just going to put things on air that can affect other communities. You have to look across and see, harmonize the communities through your programme. So, if you know this is deliberately a Maasai[xlii] culture, I know how to go about it. I'll not just want to expose [it] and say— and dismiss the matter, you know. For they live as a community. That is what I believe in. And even if I am making fun of it, there must be a certain level… of consensus and— say I'm not ridiculing them too much…* (Mary Onyango, February 2005, Interview).

Political correctness notwithstanding, producers rarely considered the fact that the viewing situations of the audience were not necessarily domestic based, that the family paradigm could not universally configure the audience of their programmes. Public space viewing, for example at the bar, restaurant or even at the supermarket as Writer Asman had experienced, apparently did not apply in the producers' approaches to conceptualizing the varied characteristics of their audience. Yet, the social-public viewing sites convened different types of people as viewers who were not necessarily consolidated by profiles of their families or youth. While some producers indicated that they had visited such public viewing sites to learn how the audience responded to their programmes, they did not seem to consider viewers they encountered in these 'special' viewing venues as separate audience categories.

Overall, it emerged that for the research-participant producers, the processes of conceptualizing their audience involved a delicate balancing act. Producers had to negotiate the political economic dynamics underpinning the entertainment programmes production within Channel 1 KBC and NTV. The bureaucratic politics of the production environments played out between producers and their bosses, and the demands to produce popular programmes within the moral code of decency, strained producers as they tried to create 'safe' but socially useful programme content. For this reason, the producers appeared torn between acting as surrogate audiences for the 'real' audience—in which case they would aspire to

create programme content that interested them as viewers—and treating viewer commentary as a kind of guide for sourcing raw materials for future programme content. Hence, it appears that producers were sometimes ambivalent about their role as 'social education teachers', particularly when their bosses loomed large as their priority audience.

In light of the above conclusions, the next chapter presents data on audience response gathered from the audience interventions conducted in the field, and the viewer emails sent to the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. The purpose of this task is to juxtapose the audience's concept of itself against the producers' concepts of their audiences as presented in this chapter. The audience's response on episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflection*s reveal the consciousness of viewers engaging with entertainment programmes content, and also their consciousness of the producers who made these programmes. The responses also hint that the audience yearned for a kind of relationship (albeit virtual) with the producers, particularly based on the value of the entertainment programmes in society.

Chapter Seven
The Audience's View of Itself

Introduction

Toward concluding this thesis, an overview of the 'addressee' side of the relationship between research-participant producers and members of their target audience is appropriate. Given that "A television programme is a three part development—the production process, the programme, and the understanding of that programme by the audience or consumer [...,] it is false and elitist [...] to ignore what any member of the audience thinks or feels about a programme" (Hobson, 1982: 136). Be that as it may, a disclaimer is needed here to remind the reader that while viewer commentary or responses were considered in this study it did not focus on the audience's reception of television entertainment programmes. Rather, the study concentrated on how producers (in their various manifestations as described in Chapter Six) understood or imagined what was the nature of the audience of their television entertainment programmes. For this reason, this chapter does not aspire to examine in a comprehensive way how members of the research-participant audience engaged with the content of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*—that which was screened to them during the public interventions or what they watched during the weekly televised episodes of the two shows. Nevertheless, by considering what some members of the audience said about particular episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, the study sought to acquire some insight into the viewers' attitudes about the shows and their producers. Audience perspectives on these two shows, and soap operas in general, were received either through email commentary or presented in the discussions that happened during the public screenings of episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. This data is meant to juxtapose the research-participant audience's understanding of itself against the research-participant producers' understanding of the audience and its expectations in the same programmes. Hence, this chapter also explores, in a general way, the correspondence between how producers conceptualised the audience of their programmes and how some audience members regarded these programmes in terms of their applicability to their lives. It also considers how the structuring of 'the audience as society' (Chapter Six) is reflected in the audience commentary.

Looking at the overall audience responses on *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, it appears that viewers did not distinguish the two shows based on where they were produced. In fact, although *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were produced under different sets of policies (commercial and

public/national broadcasting), audience members seemed to treat the content of the two shows in similar terms. For this reason, here I present and analyse the audience commentary on the two shows under the same parameters. Primarily, my concern is the two programmes' general appeal on the audience as entertainment drama.

When the audience owns the programme

According to Ien Ang (1991: 2), "[…] whether television is considered as a profitable economic venture, a powerful educational apparatus or a symbol of cultural decline, the ordinary viewers' perspective is almost always ignored. Instead, the television audience is spoken for or about from a position of distance—by […] television producers". The reality however is that viewers of television understand who they are in terms of the 'personalised' benefits they gain from watching television programmes. As active viewers, they interact with programme content, appropriating it to serve their needs (Chapter Four). Gathering from how individual viewers responded to the content of some of the programmes covered by this study, these needs are not necessarily shared as 'group needs'. However, viewers did agree on certain things with regards to how the programmes impacted their lives. It can be argued that since the respondent viewers were likely to share a common cultural-value system (Fiske, 1992), they were also likely to find similar value in the same programmes (Chapter Five). When individual audience members conceptualised themselves as part of a group (as indicated by their use of 'our' or 'us' when referring to how entertainment programmes appealed to them), it does not mean that they necessarily saw themselves as part of a unified collective of viewers, united by the common cause of watching television. Instead, they saw television as providing a socio-cultural resource for meaningful knowledge that 'real' people, like them, could utilize in enhancing their lives (See audience comments below). Hence, by using the generalising terminology, these viewers acknowledged that as social beings they were connected to those with whom they shared the particular resources (television entertainment drama in this case) that satisfied their socio-cultural needs. Since the aspects that define many viewers' identities or individualities are social-culturally based (Fiske, 1987), television entertainment programmes become unifiers of viewers when they represent the socio-cultural values that viewers share. As reflected in audience commentary, *Uhondo* and *Reflections* proved that they were functionally useful to their viewers. For their varied representations of 'socio-cultural' phenomena, these soap operas attracted a diversified audience. Although they conformed to 'the purging of the emotional self' format characteristically associated with traditional soaps (Brown, 1994), the two soaps also tackled

social problems by realistically representing a quotidian familiar to a variety of audience members. For this reason, as soap operas *Uhondo* and *Reflections* defied the stereotype associated with soaps as being primarily produced for female consumption (Brown, 1994).

Indeed, soap opera watching for the research participant-audience was not a gender based occupation. Data collected from this audience indicates that equally men as well as women emailed commentary on *Uhondo* and *Reflections*. Both men and women also equally participated in the discussions regarding episodes of these programmes during the public screenings held for the purpose of this study. Unlike in the Western world where the soap has sometimes been devalued as a cultural form in general (Brown, 1994), audience respondents on *Uhondo* and *Reflections* appeared to hold these and other local soap operas in high regard. Apparently, local soaps are expected to depict relevant and utilitarian lessons that could be useful in enhancing the lives of the viewers in a 'real' way (Chapter Four). Given this attitude, several audience members complained that foreign soaps were usually offensive for showing what one audience member called 'pornography'—i.e. kissing, partial nudity or explicit sexual overtones. Audience members seemed to agree on the fact that soap opera as a form of television entertainment should always act as a socio-culturally relevant tool for disseminating knowledge, and therefore should consistently depict situations that happened daily in the audience's lives. Indeed, audience members demanded that entertainment programmes be creatively packaged to appeal to their individual senses of culture. In fact, what producers sometimes considered appropriate programme content for the social development of their audiences was lost on the viewers. For instance, although *Reflections* was primarily designed to educate the youth even as it entertained them, some audience members considered it slightly irrelevant and not educational at all:

> *It's just good entertainment. But it is not giving any theme—any educative themes… it's just good entertainment… A bigger percentage of Kenyans understand the local language— the national language, Swahili. So if you want to show anything that is educative, the national language— Swahili, is appropriate[3]* (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

Furthermore, other audience members expressed concerns that the show might be detrimental to the viewers' moral wellbeing. While such members might have respected television

---

[3] *Reflections* was an English language drama.

programmes as 'culturizing' tools (Laden, 2003), they also saw them as capable of 'inciting' viewers into engaging in immoral conduct. Regarding *Reflections*, some of the research participant-audience members noted: *"it is inciting some people [viewers] to become immoral— to become adulterers"*, and that *"It might even make someone steal his friend's lover..."* (Viewer commentary, 2005).

Significant characteristics of the audience members such as "norms, values, beliefs, degree of interpersonal interconnectedness and selective interpretation" (Singhal and Rogers, 1999: 207) usually determine how audiences respond to entertainment programmes. For this reason, some viewers make 'oppositional' or unintentional reading of the programme content (Singhal and Rogers, 1999) in accordance with its perceived accuracy or relevance to their social and cultural circumstances. The respondents cited above for example seemed to disagree with the producers of *Reflections* that the show was indeed educational because it failed to address them in the 'proper language' and moral trajectory. Nevertheless, audience members could not consistently produce oppositional readings of the programme's content because it was framed within the historical and material influences of television (Morley, 1992: 39) in Kenyan society. However, it appears that audience members are imbued with a keen sense of picking out the 'polyvalence' inherent in programme content (Morley, 1992). Such polyvalence allowed individual members of the audience some freedom to roam beyond the specific codes that producers embedded on programme content.   In this context, audience members 'engaged' with the programmes by assuming many 'viewing positions'. The audience members adopted personalized ways of putting programme content to work in their lives, but also within the general scope of the culture they shared with producers. For instance, in one of the public screenings, one respondent chose to react to the episode of *Uhondo* he had just watched by directly relating it to a sensitive domestic problem that he was dealing with at the time. He said the programme contained *"a very big lesson to my household, to everybody. For anyone with a household, it's a very big lesson…"* For him in particular, the episode he had just watched 'counselled' him, in a very personal way, on how to deal with being separated from his wife:

> *The lesson touches me— I saw as if it is talking about me… Many houses have broken [because of such things as they have shown]. Your child comes and tells you one thing, and then the mother comes and tells you another thing—it's very very painful.*

I'm really feeling it because [my situation was like that]. I'm sorry... I never knew that would happen right in front of my eyes (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

In light of the above, audience members were able to see television in general as a social-cultural institution, and therefore were in a position to recognize the multiple benefits to be gained from active engagement with entertainment programmes. This type of 'engagement with television content' locates viewers at positions where they relate to the medium through 'niches' of personal interests. Hence, viewers find personal use for entertainment programmes particularly in terms of how they could directly enhance their individual social lives (Askwith, 2007). Indeed, it can be argued that viewers of television pay a 'fragmented' attention to programme content because their perspectives on how television in general appeals to them are quite varied. Suffice to say that sometimes viewers 'see' television how they want to see it. Consequently, this phenomenon has equally fragmented the concept of 'audiencehood' as it has been traditionally understood (Askwith, 2007). I propose, therefore, that the term 'viewers' may come to replace 'audience' as the idea of 'the mass audience' is consistently disqualified by the fact that people now engage with television in a more 'hands-on', personal approach. In this respect, individual viewers may be considered the 'owners' of television programmes. In spite of the producers' aspirations and control over programme content, entertainment programmes ironically seem to empower viewers by endowing them with knowledge ('truth') about themselves (Foucault, 1983). In turn, this 'truth' renders viewers productive, active and even resistive against messages that attempt to redefine them, because the raw materials that create programme content are part of the viewers' foundations (Chapter Five). The 'empowerment' of the audience in this manner happens only because "Television-as-culture [has become] a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction: meanings, popular pleasures, and their circulation are therefore part and parcel of this social structure" (Fiske, 1987: 1). Hence, viewers of entertainment programmes see themselves as completing the circuit of socio-cultural significance that television and all its 'attributes' are meant to project.

Indeed, according to Hobson (1982: 152-153),

> Television programmes are made by their creators, producers and performers, but a programme only really exists as a process of communication when it is watched or 'consumed' by the audience. Producers and the audience may differ about the content of a

programme, but 'ownership' of a programme does not normally become a subject of conflict between the production team or broadcasting institutions and the audience.

However, the audience may assert 'ownership' of a programme through consistent criticism of the content and producers of the programme. For instance, while the producers in this case study anticipated viewer criticism over programme content, they did not always anticipate that viewers could also 'direct' and 'produce' the shows, as it were. Indeed, one hand written letter to the producers of *Reflections* reminded Director Wamuyu that she should not make arbitrary changes in the programme, such as removing things the audience had come to love. The viewer asserted that the show was for the audience, not the producer:

> *I am not pleased by you dismissing some of the good actors and actress like the original Sophie... She acts so well and confidently. She is able to imitate characteristics, and she acts real. So please remember you bring this programme not for yourselves but for the audience and [fans]. Therefore please let her come back to the programme and act, and if she is not going to come back, let her declare her stand regarding this. We are looking forward to seeing [her] in the screen next tim[e]. Otherwise I appreciate you[r] efforts. Thanks a lot...* (Viewer Mail Commentary, 2004).

Another viewer advised the producers on the right times to present *Reflections* after it had been shifted from its original prime time evening slot to Sunday afternoon:

> *...then the programme changing form Sunday to Friday, not a good idea coz it's a family show...* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Several viewers of *Uhondo* also requested that the programme's length be extended time-wise. Apparently, none of them seemed concerned about the ramifications of such a drastic change on programming, particularly with regards to advertising that sponsored the show (Field Notes, 2005). In fact, some viewers were frustrated by 'advertisement' breaks, because they 'killed' the flow of the story and interrupted their concentration during viewership:

> *My request is that if [it] could be possible that you add some extra 10 minutes, because [almost] ¾ of the programme is advertisement hen[c]e making us bored it kills the moral of the play. Please consider my request for the betterment of the play* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

> *Why do you like to leave us in great suspense? I mean you should at least increase the time for your episodes so that at least you don't leave us in that kind of "great" suspense. I hope you'll try to do something about that* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

> *Would you please adjust that time of yours to at least 45 minutes or do away with the adverts. Please* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Other viewers appeared well versed with the overall narrative structures of their favourite dramas enough to suggest how their story lines could be developed. For example, one fan of *Uhondo* suggested that new characters be created to serve as assistants to particular existing ones, as this was a plausible development to *Uhondo*'s story line. In addition, the viewer also wished to play one of the new character roles!

> *First I would like to congratulate the creators of Uhondo. I am requesting to join you if it is possible. Every time I watch this show I see that there are a lot of roles that would require someone like me. For example, Stella, the writer, has no assistant. Timo has moved from Majengo an[d] now lives in a nice neighbourhood. Could I be his servant in the show? [...] I used to be an actor in my school. It's my goal and dream to be an actor even on television. Peter from Kayole* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Apparently, the writer of the letter above had his own future projections for *Uhondo*, because there were things he saw as fitting additions to the show. As a 'creator/producer', he devised a way to 'improve the show' but also as an attempt to improve his personal, real life. By attaching his life to the fictional development of *Uhondo* in a creative way, this viewer revealed *Uhondo* meant much more to him than mere entertainment. He understood the fictional story world of the programme, but also appropriated the overall 'happening' of the show as something that could really benefit him financially. Indeed, many other viewers wrote to the producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* seeking employment opportunities in the two shows as actors or production personnel (See comments below). Such viewers indicated a wish to participate in the programmes because, according to them, the shows were doing a lot of 'moral' good for the country. However, given the economic situation in Kenya in 2005 (Chapter Six), it was possible that many young viewers in particular would be keen to seek work opportunities wherever these could be found. Nevertheless, the fact that no adverts for job opportunities in any of the shows had been placed on the programme content of *Uhondo*

or *Reflections*, it was very curious that producers received about a third of the emails from 'job seeker-viewers'. Certainly, many of these people were able to separate fiction from reality, and so could see the programmes also as opportunities for employment. In this context, the audience sometimes watched the programmes as 'producers', a fact that the research-participant producers might not have anticipated when packaging the programmes. As multi-faceted individuals, viewers commented on the shows first as critics, before requesting the producers to give them work in the shows. This strategy showed that viewers understood the creative purposes of the shows as 'culturally' viable entertainment, but also the role it might play in their socio-economic development.

As an industry, television is seen as an employer, a business and a valid occupation in society (Cantor and Cantor, 1992). For this reason, viewers may engage with it on a personal level but also respect its political economic attributes. Hence, some viewers may try to create channels through which to develop a beneficial relationship with their favourite television programmes or the personnel who produce them (Hobson, 1982). For instance, during one of the public interventions where I screened episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, some viewers became aware of my association with the production personnel of *Uhondo*. At the end of the discussion session, they made an appeal for employment to me in the following manner:

> *Personally I feel this is a good opportunity for those of us who are here, because some of us would like to participate. So if you want to engage us in the show, there are some who are willing to participate somewhere* (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

> *The other thing I would like is to make a passionate appeal. Here in Kiambu, I have got a lot of unemployed youth and a lot of them are talented, so don't go looking very far. I am making an appeal for you to come and look for that talent here. Those who come to my place asking for jobs every morning could get an opportunity to probably earn a living and develop themselves into responsible citizens* (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

Other audience members apparently wanted to participate in *Uhondo's* production as contribution to a noble cause, although it was also possible they viewed the show merely as an employment opportunity:

Am a keen fan of your programme. It really tackles today's issues concerning youth and their parents. Am 21 yrs of age and am convinced I've got what it takes to become part of that programme. By either helping in script writing or even acting. Please tell me more about it. Thank you (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

In light of the above, it is clear that viewers were not culturally dopey and necessarily at the mercy of the producers of their favourite programmes. They were capable of understanding the business of television production and its purpose in their world (Hobson, 1982). Indeed, it appears that the research-participant audience members, and other viewers who commented on the entertainment programmes considered in this study, were well aware of the 'real life' place of television entertainment programmes in their society. They viewed them as a practical occupation for sustaining the real lives of the people connected with them in different ways.

When the audience and producers concur

Elsewhere in this thesis, I have established that the research-participant producers aspired to inject materials into their programmes that they hoped would appropriately serve audience's needs (Chapter Six)—which they saw as located in the cultural foundations of Kenyan society (Yaple and Korzenny, 1989: 308). Producers emphasized that imparting the right cultural values to their audience was a priority, and therefore their shows needed to educate the audience in this respect. Overall, producers considered television a tool for enhancing the socio-cultural wellbeing of their audience. I have also argued that broadcasting as a socio-cultural institution in Kenya has a formalized aura that portends educating and 'developing' the public (Chapter Three). Due to this history, the television audience has long been 'acculturated' to look upon television programming as 'lesson-filled' and projecting the ideals of Kenyan society. In this context, the audience expects television to present "a set of meanings and values which are experienced as practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of the world… which as they are experienced as practices become reciprocally confirming" (Williams, 1980: 38). In turn, television content becomes a hegemonic force that facilitates the natural meeting of the minds between producers and audience at a virtual-social space. According to Mary Ellen Brown (1994: 40)

> Hegemony theory explains the formation of dominant culture by a shifting coalition of elites who make use of complex cultural elements to maintain a power base. The coalition first incorporates elements of a subordinated group [as in audience] then recognizes some of their

identity in the very culture that exploits them, and it is the recognition of their own identity that draws the subordinates to use and experience pleasure from dominant mass culture.

The reason for invoking Brown's framework of hegemony here is for the sake of arguing that a hegemonic relationship exists between Kenyan television producers and their audiences. Research-participant producers for example appeared too impulsive in conceptualizing the true nature of their audiences. Apparently, their attitudes of how the audience is constituted emerged from the legacy of television broadcasting in Kenya (Chapter One), and from their idiosyncratic approaches to executing their production duties. The producers considered themselves part of the professional elite 'officially' tasked with the responsibility of 'improving' the public's lives. For this reason, they thought of themselves as sitting on a dais of knowledge, a knowledge they felt obligated to bequeath to the public (audience) (Chapter Five). Due to their assumed positions of authority, producers appeared to have a blanketing attitude about the composition of the audience of their entertainment programmes. The only distinctions the producers could see in the audience is that it was either young, familial based and a Kenyan society/citizenry. However, the producers appeared to disregard class and gender issues and how these distinguished their primary target audience, namely the 'ordinary Kenyan' (Chapter Six). It can be argued that by setting a rigid framework within which they conceptualized the audience, the producers operated within the historical, hegemonic scheme of television programming policy that saw the audience as either subjects of the state or development (as in the education of the illiterate Kenyan masses).

As hegemonic tools, television entertainment programmes attract a particular type of audience and build the loyalties of this audience. To do this, the programmes first need to articulate the interests and aspirations of this audience; understand the context in which the audience uses television and need to appear to respect the constantly changing conditions of this audience (Brown, 1994). For example, the soap operas considered here needed to address current and relevant social problems such as drug peddling (as featured in *Uhondo*) and teen pregnancy and its associated problems (as featured in *Reflections*). Indeed, the state of 'the Kenyan family' was featured in all the entertainment programmes covered by this study as either in peril or at the verge of complete erosion. For this reason, it is no accident that the synopses of both *Uhondo* and *Reflections* were premised around interrogating, reconstructing or projecting the decline of the local moral fabric of Kenyan society via the family. According to these programmes, the socio-cultural development of Kenyan society is ultimately dependent on the salvation of the family. Hence, through these soaps the research-participant producers

appeared sanctimoniously and ideologically driven to show that the family, as the most basic institution on which society's survival is anchored, was under constant threat (Chapter Two).

Through presenting characters constantly plagued with conflict in various plot incidents, producers of the two shows were able to highlight the social problems they predicted their audience could identify with. The producers also seemed to understand that since the characters represented societal predispositions regarding coping with life's uncertainties, the audience would emotionally respond to the characters' weekly quests to solve their problems. In this context, "It is simply assumed that programming will be about social conditions—and by implication, about social change. Rather a lot of advice is given by one character to another, and also by the [shows] to [their audiences]" (Berman, 1987: 8). Producers (addressers) and the audience (addressees) agree on the said role of entertainment programmes, but only because television uses the socio-cultural agencies to which people are subjects throughout life (Chapter Five).

Indeed, a majority of the research-participant audience commented on the issues of social education or lessons they expected to 'see' in the entertainment programmes they watched. During the public screenings where audience members related their experiences of watching episodes of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, some respondents spoke at length about the educational purposes of soaps even without being prompted to speak on such matters. Like the producers, the most vocal of the respondents clearly articulated the shows' relevance to social development:

> *it's quite similar to the scenarios that we normally experience in life—or either experienced by our friends [...]But since we are unable to reflect on ourselves, we always think we are on the right. You know, such an event happening on the screen and you hear it, it helps you reflect on yourself properly. It helps you to place yourself wherever you are [as portrayed in the show], or may be wherever your friend is. And with that kind of thing, may be you can be able to place yourself [in scenarios shown] and you can be able to correct yourself through these things* (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

According to another respondent, television brings into the social arena individuals' private stories for the benefit of the public:

if it was not on television, [the issues] would remain as the untold story— the story that happened and was not told to anybody, or it was told to very few people— being the preserve of very few people. Now being brought to the open for everyone to see, [it] broadens the whole society. And you open up these things and— it is subject to criticism from all the corners of society. So the society would be able to open up and see what is there, what is wrong and whatever— and this is where people do come out together and see they are having a common— a certain problem. And this is where [through the show] we identify the problem. And that is when people come together and they sit down and consult once they realize, 'Now, this is a prevalent problem, it's been living with us, what can we do about it?' People do come up with solutions and at the end of the day you find that, you know— such kind of a thing is plucked off from the society. And you know, these are some of the diseases that exist in our midst. And then a solution is found and society becomes better (Viewer Commentary, 2005)

Apparently, audience members subscribed to the producers' 'philosophies' (vision) regarding the utility value or objectives of particular programmes. Thus, they conformed to the producers' conceptual idealism about the audienceship of the entertainment programmes in question (Chapter Six). For example, a lot of audience commentary cited that *Uhondo* and *Reflections* should properly appeal to the youth in order to enhance the group's socio-moral conscience:

The reason as to why I like it most than other programmes is that you always have themes that focuses on the youths and alway[s] leaves me with something (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

your way of bringing morality back to our youth and social life in general is applaudable (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

In addition, whenever the audience members called for *Uhondo* or *Reflections* to feature content with the 'right' lessons, they were aligned with the producers' view that these entertainment programmes were practically effective tools for enhancing the development of society. Indeed, audience members occasionally requested the producers to intervene, through programme content, in correcting current 'real life' problems that they had witnessed:

There is this issue of church youth groups misbehaving, smoking and doing other bad things that are not pleasing at all. As I'm talking to u i'm a group member and I've seen th[ese] things happen so y don't you u reflect this thro reflections…(Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Hi Guys,

We thank you for putting some Kenyan stuff [Uhondo] into the nation TV programs. The play depicts what we all go thru in Kenya. I commend those efforts guys. I am concerned about the attires. I guess that the actors dress to depict local situations, I agree with that. It should be so. But remember much of your audience is not adults but teenies [teenagers] who I may say have not the moral power to differentiate between right and wrong. They get influenced more by what they see. I beg that you strike a balance between depicting the local situation, and teaching the right morals. If showing us the local situation is the ultimate end, I think we expect more…(Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

Other audience members were also pleased with *Uhondo* for improving viewers' familial-social and moral values, particularly those of the youth—the presumed target audience of this particular show:

What I would like to say is that the show is good because sometimes it has lessons about the home—for example in the case where the man is talking about his daughter, a young girl who is dating a man who is too old for her. I notice that children [read as youth] notice such issues. Even matters concerning abortion, the youth still understand such things, right things and wrong things. So it's alright for it to be screened in the household (Viewer Commentary, 2005).

The show is useful because sometimes the parent may not have time to teach children such things. But when they watch the shows they can learn a lot from them, particularly because children love watching television. Also, the programmes assist the parents because the same things they show are similar to what the children encounter outside the home (Viewer Commentary, 2005)**.**

Given the high expectations the above audience members appeared to have in *Uhondo* and *Reflections* as 'teaching tools', it was not surprising that other viewers commented on the issue of appropriate language (as cited earlier) that should be used in the shows**.** Audience members seemed to expect that since these shows ostensibly represented culturally Kenyan ways of life, they should always incorporate the 'right' language in depicting local situations. The following email expresses a viewer's frustration with *Uhondo* regarding this issue:

> *Hi,*
>
> *I am a fan of your program Uhondo, I like the characters and the way they act, but the main question is, is it supposed to be acted in English or Kiswahili? Why do you mix the two languages? It makes the program look more or less a she[n]g [slang] which is not healthy to our siblings [read as youth]. I hope it was meant to be a Kiswahili programme, why don't you use Kiswahili only? Please be proud of our language.*
> *From a concerned fan* (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005).

The complaint above seems to highlight that if television entertainment programmes were indeed to be effective in communicating and reflecting the ideals and aspirations of society (Berman, 1987), then they must address the audience in their 'own' language. Language is pertinent in establishing cohesion between society members, because it communicates meanings that culturally and politically unite people (as in a nation). A common language authenticates the sense of communion in the sharing of cultural meanings between people in the same society. Hence, narratives (such as entertainment programmes) meant to disseminate the said meanings through the media must draw such a society together through the mainstream language—or the national language in the case cited above. Indeed, since "Television dramas are ideological and cultural products that project a point of view about our society and [the] nation through their narrative ideology" (Castelló, 2007: 51), the audience expects them to speak 'their language'. By doing so, television qualifies as an indigenised part of the audience's system of understanding, reflecting and contemplating itself (Castelló, 2007: 52).

In the above audience member's concern that *Uhondo* appeared to be 'slang' for mixing languages, a hint of wariness that such a presentation reflected a fragmented society is evident. To this audience member, lack of the show's use of the national language (Kiswahili) meant a kind of failure by *Uhondo's* producers to project nationalistic aspirations—the

common understanding between all members of the Kenyan society. In the Kenya social and political situations, issues of language have historically been sensitive, given the fact that the country has around 40 ethnic groups, most of which speak different languages. The wish of many Kenyans and government is that the country be united through a common language. However, the situation in the country with regards to language is schizophrenic. Kiswahili may be considered the national language and may be used in parliamentary debate but bureaucracy favours English, and sometimes Kikuyu or one of the other more pervasive ethnic languages (Githiora, 2008; Oduori, 2002; Laitin and Eastman, 1989: 52-53). On the other hand, Sheng, an urban hybrid of English, Kiswahili, Luo or other main ethnic languages, is used by the youth in urban circles as a language of rebellion—as a political statement about their aspirations and expression of autonomy (Sebba, 2002; Githiora, 2002).

Overall, it appears that most viewers engaged with the entertainment programmes considered in this study not only as leisure but also as a way of addressing problems they had previously experienced, or were aware existed in their society prior to watching the shows. By choosing to comment on these shows, audience members attempted to engage socially with others like them about conflicts concerning shared commonalities. As Brown (1994) points out, television drama becomes a medium through which viewers can address the social problems they see around them. For instance, through engaging with soap operas' multiple, flawed characters and their various problems, viewers could reflect on their and other people's 'real life' social situations. From interpersonal dialogues about the problems and situations represented in the soaps, viewers generated relevant meanings concerning their lives (Brown, 1994). Indeed, meaning making from television is a "participatory, social activity: the meanings which circulate with everyday discussion of television are 'read back' into individual responses of the medium, thereby generating a dynamic interplay between 'social' and 'individual' readings" (Buckingham, 1991: 229).

Interestingly, the dialectical engagement between producers, the content of the soaps and the audience parallels/mirrors the 'discord' dynamics prevalent in the situations that characters in soaps normally deal with in the 'diegesis'[4]. Indeed, the first rule of soap opera is that "No one should suffer in silence. Not to express all of one's anxiety would be an unthinkable deviation. […] no one ever hides the sources of his or her own discontent. They are talked out" (Berman, 1987: 70–71). The characters in the social world of soaps are from the

---

[4] The fictional social-cultural world.

beginning in turmoil, and therefore are always looking for solutions of some kind. 'Change' consistently compounds their lives into problems of all manner and proportions. Whether it is the youthful characters in *Reflections* facing the consequences of liberated sexuality, or the family in *Uhondo* experiencing the ramifications of ill-gotten wealth, characters in these types of entertainment drama are hinged on conflict. From the dramatic trials and tribulations of the good and flawed characters in their quests to solve this interminable conflict, the audience learns 'caution' with regards to the problems of their society. Hence, it can be argued that the framing of the para-social interactions that audience members developed with the various story elements of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, for example, were a direct effort toward sorting out particular problems in their lived experiences.

Apparently, much of the conflict represented in *Uhondo* and *Reflections* implied the dynamic changes happening in modern Kenya, at least as of 2005. Multiparty politics and the liberalization of the media had triggered a sense of freedom in Kenyan people hence catalysing them to speak out about social inequities (Abdi and Deane, 2008). Public debate could now tackle the precariousness of the youth, crime and the decline of societal morals in Kenya. Indeed, audience responses data reflects that many viewers' presuppositions held that the society was in a crisis. Therefore, they saw the representations of the characters in entertainment programmes as commenting on how real people were dealing with the social strife in the country at the time. Hence, audience members also seemed to expect the shows to offer remedies, or at least highlight what needed to be done to alleviate some of the problems society was facing. The programmes should also predict for the audience future moral trends and the right local traditions. It can be argued therefore, that audience members viewed entertainment programmes as a form of 'news of the week' since they appeared to reconstruct their everyday realities in a dynamic way (Berman, 1987: 78).

'Emotional' reality links producers, audience, actors and fictional characters
Due to television entertainment dramas ability to reconstruct the quotidian by routinely projecting the viewers' social conditions, aspirations and human characteristics, it is easy for the viewers to develop/feel a high degree of emotional connection with fictional characters. In this case study, the emotional link between audience members and the fictional characters of *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, for example, was completed through the letters viewers sent to the actors of these characters. Apparently, some audience members assumed they could 'merge' the fictional characters with the actors, and therefore be able to penetrate the fictional world

by having a real interpersonal relationship with the actors. The need to link the fictionality and reality embodied in the actors was testament that indeed 'fictional reality' for the audience members had acquired a hybrid equivalence with 'true reality'. In fact, a number of viewers took the fictional representations by *Reflections'* characters as a reconstruction of a reality equivalent to that of the lives of the performers featured in this show. Hence, in their commentary on the programme such viewers discussed particular characters as if sharing their experiences with the shows' actors. By directly advising the fictional characters in *Reflections* on how they should conduct their 'lives', viewers had 'breathed life' into them and turned the characters into their 'friends', for example:

Dear Friends

I greet you again and I hope you are all fine. The episode of 14-11-03 was very good. Whereby aids should be discussed from the family level first. To James & Anne it is good that you realized the mistake of not counseling mum son Kim who had a lot of pain & regrets. Sophie was very firm despite Brian advances keep up Sophie true love wait. To you Brian its good you realized your mistake and took that bold step to apologise to Sophie. To Kim pole sana [I'm very sorry], You will recover but remember VCT [Voluntary Counselling and Testing]. To the producer you are doing a wonderful job keep it and God bless you.

Yours faithfully

Martha. . . (Viewer Email Commentary, 2003).

Thanks for the program, it's very interesting as well as educative to the young generations. Kim's mum has a behaviour which is very wrong, she should make sure she brings up her children in the right track. She is also trying to help Kim run away from the police which shows she is encouraging the behaviour. She also portrays a negative attitude to the children towards their dad. But according to me the father is doing the right thing.

The mother should know that when Kim's behaviour is not cut short before it grows up she will be the first to suffer as he will come to rob her.

Secondly do you have video cassettes out in the shops which has all your past programs? I would like to have one. Thanks. Simon (Viewer Email Commentary, 2005)**.**

In light of all the above, it appears that the entertainment programmes considered in this study, especially *Uhondo* and *Reflections*, were able to portray 'true-to-life psychological situations' that invited audience members to experience 'emotional realism' from them (Ang, 1985: 45). By doing so, the soaps allowed viewers to engage with the internal psychology of their characters, hence enabling viewers to see the fictional characters as 'real' people. The actions and events in which the characters participated enabled viewers to sympathize with the fictional characters, who in turn became 'real' by mirroring the anxieties and problems of audience members (Ligaga, 2005).

Conclusion

What clearly emerges from the overall theme of this chapter is that audience members were preoccupied with a search for moral lessons in the realism depicted in entertainment programmes. Indeed, audience members appeared to expect that each entertainment programme presented details of everyday life as the "inevitable outcome of preceding sequences of moral action" (Barber, 2000: 266). In this respect, entertainment programmes should be functional tools, for guiding the audience toward moral actions that directly relate to their real life experiences. Audience members seemed to perceive their realities as plagued with problems that needed solving. Hence, their engagement with entertainment programmes was utilitarian and at a level deeper than mere entertainment. They looked to the programmes as a resource for improving their plight, and in this respect concurred with the research-participant producers about the role entertainment programmes should play in the lives of their viewers. Entertainment programmes should assist audience members in their obligated responsibility in social development.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that audience members' approach to engaging with television in general was differently nuanced than how the research-participant producers conceptualized it. The reason for this is because "People are exposed throughout life to various discourses that are capable of influencing how they interpret television messages for example, or how they regard socio-cultural meanings that they encounter in day to day lives" (Murdock, 1989). For this reason, audience members criticized producers on programme content because their points of view about life in Kenya, and their aspirations emerged from slightly different predilections than those of the producers. This variation notwithstanding, it appears that a majority of the audience members who commented on the entertainment programmes covered

in this study concurred with the producers of these programmes in several respects, particularly with regards to the role they played in the social-moral education of their viewers.

Chapter Eight
Conclusions: Summary of Thesis and Closing Remarks

Introduction: aims and objectives of the study revisited

The objectives of this study were based on the need to understand how producers of television entertainment programmes in the era of liberalised media in Kenya conceptualise their audiences. Hence, it examined particular producers' production practices within the political economic frameworks of their stations' operations policies, and the producers' narratives about their work. These practices and narratives covered the range of factors influencing how producers packaged programme content capable of fulfilling stipulated institutional and idiosyncratic objectives. In addition, they revealed how producers applied individuated perspectives to determine what should be the purpose of entertainment programmes; who should view them and how the targeted viewers should relate to these programmes.

The programme production processes per se are complex. Various socio-cultural factors impact on how producers work in the production sets, research for raw materials for programme content and contemplate the viewers of their programmes. Hence, I used several questions as tools to explore the dynamics of the relationships between the different factors pertinent to the totality of what is entailed in 'conceptualising audiences' as producers of *Uhondo* and *Reflections* practiced it. The following questions proved useful for this purpose: How do institutional routines and professional ideologies inform Kenyan television production practices? How do the criteria for 'packaging' programmes content bear on the targeted audiences? How do television production practices account for the profile of the Kenyan television audience? What are the socio-cultural sites utilized by Kenyan television producers to target audiences for particular entertainment programmes in commercial and public television stations? Who determines the agenda of Kenyan television stations in the targeting of an audience?

Summary of key findings

In 2005, Kenyan television production priorities appeared to be focused on market and economic pressure. At the same time, it appears that television production in general was also obligated to meet cultural and socio-educational goals. Hence, producers of *Reflections* and other Channel 1 KBC programmes sought to teach their audience society's ('national') values and aspirations according to the KBC Act of Parliament. On the other hand, *Uhondo*'s

producers were constrained by NTV commercial principles to produce profitable programmes. However, nearly all the research-participant producers believed that television in general should be a propagator of moral, socio-cultural values that were beneficial to the growth of society. Based on their idiosyncratic interpretations of the values of Kenyan culture, producers believed that 'society as audience' should learn from programme content for the enhancement of its overall well-being.

In theorizing 'how do producers of television entertainment programmes conceptualise their audiences?', I have argued that this phenomenon is nestled within the producers' (personal) moral rationale and practical work capacities as guided by what they perceived as dominant societal values, and the political economic demands of their stations' operations policies (Chapter Five). How producers developed their approaches to 'constructing' audiences is reflected in their narratives about how audiences are socially constituted, and their expectations (needs) from entertainment programmes. Producers had to specifically define the audience as real people in society in order to be able to tailor programme content toward the specific needs of such people. Also, conceptualizing the audience entailed practice or the 'actual doing' of production activities during the packaging of the programme content. Furthermore, specific practices within the 'business' frameworks of the individual stations where these producers worked shaped how the content of the programmes manifested itself as meaning capable of appealing to/hailing specific socio-cultural attributes of the audience (Chapter Four). Overall, programmes production policies in NTV and Channel 1 KBC significantly influenced producers' notions about television entertainment programmes in general. Nevertheless, producers also appeared to base entertainment programmes 'meanings' on the imaginary moral fibre and cultural codes unifying their target audience. Later on I draw conclusions on the findings relating to these cultural codes, as embedded in an imagined 'cultural identity' that research-participant producers seemed to treat as a foundation for their audience concepts. First, however, I present below conclusions relating to how political economic factors pertinent to television entertainment programmes production processes influenced the producers' overall regard for audiences.

Political economy of programmes production and producers' audience concepts
The history of instituting television and the medium's development in Kenya always impacted on the producers' conduct during programmes production. Early on, the primary objectives of broadcasting in Kenya concerned national development and education of Kenyan society via

radio and television. The government's command over television for this purpose cultivated the television producers' understanding of the audience in terms of their 'supposed' needs—as stipulated by the government's 'development agenda'. In addition, government policy historically has had strict control of KBC television programming due the president's ability to manipulate top management into adhering to arbitrary policies designed to promote his personal political aspirations (Chapter One). At the same time, government has often been wary of liberalised media and therefore has consistently monitored commercial television through strict media regulation. Apparently, in this kind of atmosphere both public and commercial television programming leans toward projecting the government's political agenda or assumes a socio-developmentalist role. Consequently, some producers see television as an 'official' informer and educator of the public according to the wishes of the government. In turn, viewers may look up to television for moral and ideological guidance owing to the fact that television in this capacity may be seen as society's trustee (Chapter One). Hence, entertainment programming is expected to facilitate society in becoming self-sufficient from within in order to achieve desired aspirations. Indeed, all the research-participant producers claimed to listen to their audience in order to understand how to create shows for this purpose (Chapter Six).

In the above context, the research-participant producers conceptualised the audience as a 'society' based on the national/political objectives for which television broadcasting in general was instituted. The government's goal to create national cohesion through television programmes influences the producers to regard entertainment programming as serving a noble cause. Programme content in this context is meant to propagate a definite national (cultural) identity. In turn, producers utilize this identity as a framework for conceptualising the audience's identity. Hence, relevant programmes should represent crucial meanings capable of elevating a concrete cultural/national identity into existence—thus projecting it as a plausible 'reality' that the audience could not only identify with but one they aspired to 'live' as well. As of 2005, producers still considered entertainment programmes content as generators and propagators of narratives (myths) that could guarantee the stability of an established 'Kenyan' cultural identity. Popular drama (such as *Uhondo* and *Reflections*) in this context represented values and morals reflective of the overarching cultural identity of the society of audience. They acted as some sort of unifiers of members within the society of audience as per the vision of producers (and their stations). Furthermore, practices of

producing and viewing popular entertainment drama have developed into quotidian routines of maintaining the established cultural identity.

Besides the national-cultural ideology's influence on the producers' overall production practices, finances significantly determined how entertainment programmes were produced or whether they were produced at all. Indeed, it would be negligent not to point out that *Reflections* and *Uhondo* folded because the producer-directors of both shows moved to Citizen TV for better pay from Channel 1 KBC and Eagles Media, respectively. Each of the two principals had carried a lot of weight in the overall production of the two shows. Shortcomings in production resources (money, personnel, equipment) therefore shaped the essence of the programme content, which in turn influenced how potential audiences looked at particular programmes. Capital for production shaped how producers thought about their projects in terms of whether they were doable first and foremost. Indeed, the amount of available resources allocated to the production of particular programmes contributed to particular types of programme content being produced. In turn, specific types of programme content appealed to/framed particular audience members.

In this case study, findings relating to the political economic factors and their influences in the production of entertainment programmes, and therefore how producers conceptualised audiences of these programmes, parallel generic television production conventions. Primarily, this study found that government policies concerning television programming—which in turn influenced the KBC's policies on programmes' production and concepts of audience—and commercial objectives (maximization of profits) in the case of NTV, pre-determined how producers conceptualised audiences. Hence, I have argued that the case study did not really find new 'production models' distinguishing how Kenyan television entertainment programmes producers technically differed from other television producers in their approaches to programmes production. The research-participant producers' production practices were unique only because producers had to adhere to the particularities of their stations' operations policies during production. Also, based on varying ideological considerations about the function of entertainment programmes in society, each research-participant producer applied a 'personal touch' to the actual activities of packaging programme content which was unique to him/her.

Indeed, the key finding that could be considered 'new knowledge' concerning the production of television entertainment programmes in Kenya is the philosophical moral-value code that

appeared to guide the producers' sense of purpose and duty to their audience. Apparently, the producers' need to embed in programmes meanings that propagated particular moral-cultural ideals was as strong as the institutional, political economic objectives for which they were hired by their individual stations to fulfil in the first place. This 'extra' sense of purpose catalysed the producers' unique regard for entertainment programmes as functional narratives, whose primary objective it should be to elevate society's moral fabric. Below I draw conclusions on the foundation of the said code and why it compelled producers to work the way they did and relate to their target audiences the way they did.

Cultural-moral fabric and identity of 'audience as society'

The latter parts of the thesis (Chapter Six and Chapter Seven) have established the importance of the research-participant producers' sense of a definite code of societal moral values in determining the choices they made when packaging programme content. I have argued that producers of *Uhondo*, *Reflections* and the other entertainment programmes considered in this study saw entertainment programmes as 'people's stories', as folk tales with similar objectives as traditional folk tales in teaching. Entertainment programmes as modern folk tales contained lessons for the audience meant to be tools with which viewers could improve their lives. Indeed, Chapter Seven illustrates that both the producers and audience sometimes had a 'meeting of the minds', as it were, in perceiving television entertainment drama's primary roles as propagation and conservation of the right societal moral fabric. Due to the entertainment dramas perceived ability to represent the ideals pertinent to the correct moral fabric of society, members of the audience who commented on the shows featured in this study concurred with how the producers sometimes conceptualised them.

In light of the above, I conclude that the research-participant producers' branding of entertainment programmes as propagators of a pre-determined societal moral fabric was hegemonic. By naturalizing entertainment programme narratives as stories always enriched with moral lessons for society to learn, the producers institutionalized the subjective ideologies upon which such narratives were based. Such ideologies concerned the socio-cultural, moral values producers wanted members of the audience to garner from *Uhondo* and *Reflections* for example. In this capacity these programmes were not merely entertainment; they were designed to parallel members of society's particular ways of thinking about central things that were important in their lives as Kenyans. For this reason, producers considered entertainment programmes as necessary for guiding and cautioning society (audience) against

influences that could contravene its aspirations in morality and cultural ideals. This type of developmentalist tradition of television programming in Kenya predisposed the audience to 'seeing' entertainment programmes in particular ways—as lessons.

Conclusively, the framing of this tradition must appear to be culturally rooted in how society understands itself if the audience were to endorse it. For this reason, "[television entertainment programmes] are constrained by the 'definitions' and associated expectations as to what they are 'good for' in general and what sort of content they can best offer and in what […] standardized formats which are rooted in traditions (media-made or culturally inherited), […] ideas about the audience taste and interest…" (McQuail, 2005: 331). By incorporating things of the popular culture (of the quotidian) television entertainment programmes such as *Uhondo* and *Reflections* can touch the common pulse in the people who share 'everyday' things such as those represented in these entertainment programmes (Roome, 1998). These things speak to a common identity that viewers share. Indeed, the research-participant producers expected that the audience was endowed with cultural 'capital' that could enable it to read from programme content things that were 'in place' or 'out of place' with its overall cultural identity (See Chapter Five on how 'social' and 'public' texts emerge from television programmes).

Cultural identity, subjectivity of television producers and audiences

The research-participant producers feared that modern (foreign) cultural ways were overriding Kenyan traditions, yet they shied away from contemplating the cultural diversities of society in conceptualising their audience. Clearly, it was also evident that these producers were apprehensive to represent programme content that could unsettle the 'family', the 'youth' or the 'community' of audience in general (Chapter Six). In light of this, what exactly constitutes the essential identity the producers perceived as uniting the audience as cultural subjects? According to Castoriadis (1987: 146-147),

> Every society up to now has attempted to give an answer to a few fundamental questions: who are we as a collectivity? What are we for one another? Where and what are we? What do we want, what do we desire; what are we lacking? Society must define its 'identity', its articulations, the world, its relation to the world and to the objects it contains, its needs and its desires. Without the 'answer' to these 'questions', without these 'definitions', there can be no human world, no society, no culture-- for everything would be an undifferentiated chaos. The

role of imaginary significations is to provide an answer to these questions, an answer that, obviously neither 'reality' nor 'rationality' can provide. . .

In line with the above notions, the research-participant producers seemed to believe that television entertainment programmes provide viewers with imaginary significations relating to their identity. The programmes draw attention to the commonalities viewers share, beginning with the simple act of viewing. By attending to the same programme content, viewers gain a sense of 'belonging to one society'—at least of viewers. In 'hailing' the audience toward the national-cultural ideal, entertainment programmes may "seek the common personal ground that unites diverse and often directly antagonistic groupings in a given population…" (Hartley,1992: 111). In other words, entertainment drama narratives seek "to unify [the different members of society] into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great national family" (Hall, 1992: 296).

Such a sense of 'national family' relates to the public persona of a society of individuals. I have argued that the moral-cultural values that the research-participant producers would rather propagate pertained to the public persona(s) of viewers because it was easier to realize, but also because it portends harmony. Producers projected a need in viewers to be part of an audience that identified in common cultural artefacts (programmes) because these reflected the values they aspired to see as uniting them as 'one people'—of a common understanding about right and wrong, for example. In this context, the identity projected in entertainment programmes should not be private—not ethnic but national. Private persona reflections in these entertainment programmes could connote 'difference'. Difference is divisive. Indeed, assertion of tribal differences has occasionally revealed the fragility of Kenya's national-cultural cohesion (Wrong, 2009). Since multiple (ethnic) cultures are not easily controllable, the tendency for the ideological apparatuses of the state is to emphasize ideological stability. For this reason, television programming perpetuates the idealism of a cultural identity that projects harmony between the diverse social and ethnic groups in the country. This type of identity is seemingly in line with the national political economic goals of those in power (Kivikuru, 1995). In fact, the legacy of the history of television in Kenya makes the medium a national-public forum for teaching the essences of the 'national culture' (Chapter One). It is part of the meaning making system engendering unity among subjects of the nation. As part of the national-cultural identity, television entertainment programmes may be used to "construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can *identify*; these are

contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it" (Hall, 1992: 293).

Hence, in entertainment programmes the research-participant producers endorsed a particular identity whose values they understood as recognizable by members of the Kenyan society. It was the code by which they could define the usefulness, aesthetic value and audience appeal of their programmes. In this respect, these producers proclaimed that social interactions between people (for instance via television entertainment programmes) happened within similar codes, and that there was a certainty about them—as represented in the cultural meanings viewers shared. Therefore, one could tell for example when programme content was 'out of line' or 'out of order' in addressing issues of cultural significance that both the audience and the producers ascribed to.

Final remarks on the study's contribution to knowledge

This study reveals that there are still places in the world where television producers conceptualise the audience as 'essential masses'. Interestingly, it appears that all the research-participant producers of the television entertainment programmes covered by this study imagined their target audiences as existing in mass categories, totalisable by their social grouping, national-cultural identity and their special 'group needs' in particular programme content. For this reason, these producers conceptualised the audience in a rather 'old fashioned' manner. Furthermore, producers never seemed aware of looming changes in television technology in Kenya (Chapter One), nor did they seem to realize that digital television developments will have a great impact on production, transmission and consumption of television content (Chapter Five). Audiences of entertainment programming will change, as the relevance of traditional types of programme content, such as television drama, shifts with the audiences' styles of interacting with the 'new' television set (Arango and Carter, 2009).

As such, the research-participant producers' approaches to television programming and conceptualising of audiences beg a lot of questions. For instance, in the face of digital television, how will the old-fashioned approaches to conceptualising the audience impact on producers' ability to appeal to a complex audience? With digital television, 'narrow-casting' instead of 'broadcasting' paradigms will apply in communicating through television. How will the political economic systems of television entertainment production change in order to accommodate the changing needs and viewing conduct(s) of the audience? Digital television

has changed how viewers relate to programme content and where they are located during their viewing moments. Indeed, the objectives of entertainment programming will have to change depending on the changes in audiences' approach to consuming programme content. The fragmentation of the audience's 'group' social identities is imminent as the television set becomes more 'personalised' to suit individual audience members' needs in an intimate manner.

For this reason, another study on television producers' production practices may be needed to interrogate how Kenyan producers will have to reconceptualise their audiences given the arrival of digital television—and the evolving definition of the television set. Mobile television (as in the cell phone) for example is now available in Kenya, having been launched in 2008. The fibre optic cable has connected Kenya to the rest of the world. These new telecommunication systems will revolutionalise television content and how it is transmitted from production points to consumption points. In addition, the convergence of the television set, the computer, and the mobile phone will forever change the relationships audiences have with television content and its producers. Seemingly, with digitalisation the audience has shifted positions in the production-transmission-consumption-distribution chain of communication. It has gained more power to choose programming content at will, and even to create programmes through which it can express wishes, complaints or simply reach out directly to other audiences with similar interests… having by-passed producers.

Bibliography

Abdi, J. and Deane, J. (2008) 'The Kenyan 2007 Elections and their Aftermath: the Role of Media and Communication', Policy Briefing # 1, BBC World Service Trust, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya_policy_briefing_08.pdf (Accessed on 7/08/09).

Abelman, R. and Atkin, D. J. (2002) *The Televiewing Audience: The Art and Science of Watching TV,* Hampton Press: Cresskill, New Jersey.

Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. (1998) *Audiences*: *A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination,* Sage: London.

Abrahamsen, R. (2003) 'African Studies and the Post Colonial Challenge', *African Affairs*, Vol. 102, pp. 189-201.

Abu-Lughod, L. (1995) 'The Objects of Soap Opera', in Miller, D. (ed.) *Worlds Apart: Modernity Through the Prism of the Local*, Routledge: London.

Abu-Lughod, L. (1997) 'The Interpretation of Culture(s) After Television', *Representations*, No. 59, pp. 109-34.

Abu-Lughod, L. (2002) 'Egyptian Melodrama—Technology of the Modern Subject?', in Ginsburg, F. D., Abu-Lughod and Larkin, B. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.

Abuoga, J. B. and Mutere, A. A. (1988) *The History of the Press in Kenya,* ACCE: Nairobi.

Adams, P. C. (1992) 'Television as Gathering Place', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 82, No. 1, pp. 117-135.

Adorno, T. W. and Horkheimer, M. (1993) "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in Boyd-Barret, O. and Newbold, C. (eds.) *Approaches to Media*: *A Reader*, Arnold: London.

Agesa, R. U. (2004) 'One Family, Two Households: Rural to Urban Migration in Kenya', *Review of Economics of the Household*, Vol. 2, pp. 161–178.

Allen, R. C. (1985) *Speaking of Soap Opera*, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill.

Allen, R. C. (1987) *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, University North Carolina: Chapel Hill.

Allen, R.C. (ed.)(1995) *To Be continued: Soap Operas From Around the World*, Routledge: London & New York.

Althusser, L. (1976) *Essays on Ideology*, Verso: London.

Althusser, L. (2005) *For Marx*, Verso: London.

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso: London.

Ang, I. (1985) *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, Methuen: London.

Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately Seeking Audiences,* Routledge: London.

Ang, I. (1996) *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*, Routledge: London.

Arinze, F. (1986) 'Values of the Family in African Culture', *International Review of Natural Family Planning*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 185-207.

Armour, C. (1984) 'The BBC and the Development of Broadcasting in British Colonial Africa 1946-1956', *African Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 332, pp. 359-402.

Askwith, I. D. (2007) 'Television 2.0: Reconceptualizing TV as an Engagement Medium', published MA Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Aziz, L. and Salvesen, V. L. (2008) "'Voice Out': An Entertainment-Education approach?" Seminar Project, in *Visual Anthropology*, Vol. 21, pp. 217-230.

Bakhtin, M.. M. (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, University Of Texas Press, Austin.

Baldwin, K. (1995) 'Montezuma's Revenge: Reading Los Ricos Tambien Lloran in Russia', in Allen, R.C. (ed.) *To Be continued: Soap Operas From Around the World*, Routledge: London & New York.

Bandura, A., Ross, D., and Ross, S. A. (1961) 'Transmission of aggressions through imitation of aggressive models', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* Vol. 63, No. 3, pp.575-582.

Barber, K. (ed.) (1997) *African Popular Culture*, James Currey: Oxford.

Barber, K. (2000) *The Generation of Plays: Yoruba Popular Life in Theatre*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis.

Barthes, R. (1968) *Elements of Semiology*, Hill & Wang: New York.

Barthes, R. (1973) *Mythologies*, Paladin Books: London.

Barthes, R. (1977) *Image, Music, Text*, Fontana Collins: Glasgow.

Bastien, W. J. and Bromley, D. G. (1980) 'Metaphor in the Rituals of Restorative and Transformative Group', in Browne, R. (ed.) *Rituals and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, Bowling Green University Popular Press: Ohio.

Beetham, M. (1996) *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800–1914,* Routledge: London and New York.

Berkowitz, L. (1962) 'Violence and the Mass Media', *Paris Stamford Studies in Communication*, Institute for Communication Research: New York.

Berman, R. (1987) *How Television Sees its Audience: A look at the Looking Glass*, Sage: Newbury Park, CA.

Bignell, J. (2004) *An Introduction to Television Studies*, Routledge: London.

Bird, E. S. (2003) *The Audience in Everyday Life: Living in a Media world*, Routledge: London.

Blanke, J. (2007) 'Assessing Africa's Competitiveness in a Global Context', World Economic Forum, 2007, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gcr/africa/1.1.pdf (Accessed on 17/04/09).

Blumler, J.G., Gurevitch, M. and Katz, E. (1985) 'Reaching out: a future for gratifications research', in Rosengren, K.E., Wenner, L.A. and Palmgreen, P. (eds.). *Media Gratifications Research: Current Perspectives*, Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.

Bourgault, L. M. (1995) *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington.

Bourgault, L. M. (1996) 'Television Drama in Hausaland: The Search for a New Aesthetic and a New Ethic', *Critical Arts*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 61 - 84.

Boyd, D. (1984) 'The Janus effect? Imported Television Entertainment Programming in Developing Countries', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 379-391.

Brown, M. E. (1994) *Soap Opera and Women's Talk: The Pleasure of Resistance*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Browne, R. (1980) 'Ritual One', in Browne, R. (ed.) *Rituals and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, Bowling Green University Popular Press: Ohio.

Brundson, C. and Morley, D. (1978) *Everyday Television: 'Nationwide'*, British Film Institute: London.

Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, Unwin Hyman: London.

Burkingham, D. (1991) 'What are Words Worth? Interpreting Children's Talk About Television', *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, pp. 228 – 245.

Cantor, M. and Pingree, S. (1983) *The Soap Opera*, Sage: Berverly Hills, Calif.

Cantor, M. G. & Cantor, J. M. (1992) *Prime Time Television: Content and Control*, Sage: Newbury Park, CA.

Castelló, E. (2007) 'The Production of Television Fiction and Nation Building: The Catalan Case', *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 49-68.

Coltart, J. M. (1963) 'The Influence of Newspaper and Television in Africa', *African Affairs,* Vol. 62, No. 248, pp.202-210.

Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2006) (Revised Edition), Oxford University Press: New York.

Castoriadis, C. (1987) *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Polity Press: Cambridge

Dalrymple, L. (1987) Explorations in Drama, Theatre and Education:A critique of Theatre Studies in South Africa, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Natal, Durban.

DeFleur, M. L. and Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1989) *Theories of Mass Communication* (5th ed.), Longman: New York.

Dornfield, B. (1998) *Producing Public Television, Producing Public Culture*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.

Du Gay, P. (ed). (1997) *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production*, Sage: London.

Du Gay, P., Hall, S. Janes, L. and Negus, K. (1997) *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, London**:** Sage.

Elliot, P. (1972) *The Making of a Television Series*: *a Case Study in the Sociology of Culture,* Constable: London.

Ellis, J. (1982) *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*, Routledge: London.

Ellis, J. (1992) *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (Revised Edition), Routledge: London.

Engelman, R. (1996) *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History*, Sage: London.

Espinosa, P. (1982) 'The Audience in the Text: Ethnographic Observations of a Hollywood Story Conference', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 77 – 86.

Fiske, J. & Hartley, J. (1978) *Reading Television*, Routledge: London.

Fiske, J. (1987) *Television Culture*, Methuen: London.

Fiske, J. (1992) 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', in Lewis, L.A. (ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Routledge: London.

Foucault, M. (1982) "The Subject and Power", in Dreyfus, H. L. and Rabinow, P. (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Harvester: Brighton.

Foucault, M. (1983) 'Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject', in Dreyfus, H. L. and Rabinow, P. (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* Harvester: Brighton.

Frandsen, K. (2008) TV-Entertainment: Crossmediality and Knowledge—A Research Project,
http://www.nordicom.gu.se/common/publ_pdf/255_frandsen%20research%20project.pdf (Accessed on 20/10/08).

Gadsen, F. (1986) 'Wartime Propaganda in Kenya: the Kenya Information Office, 1939-1945', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 401- 420.

Gans, H. J. (1979) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Times*, Vintage Books: New York.

Garnham, N. (1979) 'Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 1, pp. 123 - 146.

Garnham, N. (1997) 'Political Economy and the Practice of Cultural studies', in Ferguson, M. & Golding, P. (eds.) *Cultural Studies in Question*, Sage: London.

Geraghty, C. (1991) *Women and Soap Operas*, Polity Press: Cambridge, U.K.

Gerbner, G. (1956) 'Towards a General Model of Communication', *Audio Visual Communication Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 171-199.

Gerbner, G., Mowlana, H. and Schiller, H. L. (1996) *Invisible Crisis: What Conglomerate Control of Media Means for America and the World*, Westview Press: Boulder, Colo.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Githiora, C. (2002) 'Sheng: Peer Language, Swahili Dialect or Emerging Creole?' *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2,. pp. 159-181.

Githiora, C. (2008) 'Kenya: Language and the Search for a Coherent National Identity', in Simpson, A. (ed.), *Language and National Identity in Africa*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Gitlin, T. (1979) 'The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment Author', *Social Problems*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 251-266.

Gonzales, J (ed.) (1998) *La Cofrodia de Las Emociones* (*In*)*terminables*. *Miradas Sobre Telenovelas en Mexico*, Universidad de Guadalajara: Guadalajara.

Graffman, K. (2004) 'The Cruel Masses: How Producers at a Swedish Commercial Television Production Company Construct the Viewers', a working paper,
http://www.media-anthropology.net/graffman_thecruelmasses.pdf (Accessed on 19/06/09).

Grossberg, L. (1996) 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall', in Morley, D. and Chen, K-H. (eds.) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge: London.

Gubrium, J. and Holstein, J. (1987) 'The Private Image: Experimental Location and Method in Family Studies', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 49, pp. 773-786.

Hachten, W. (1971) *Muffled Drums: The News Media in Africa*, Iowa State University Press: Ames.

Hagen, I. and Wasko, J. (eds.) (2000) *Consuming Audiences?: Production and Reception in Media Research,* Hampton Press: Catskill, N.J.

Hall, S. (1973) `Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', CCCS Stencilled Occasional Paper No. 7, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

Hall, S. (1980a) 'Encoding/Decoding' (extract from Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies stencilled paper No. 7 titled 'Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse') in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P. (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies,1972-79*, Hutchinson: London.

Hall, S. (1980b) 'Introduction to Media Studies at the Centre', in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P. (ed.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, Unwin Hyman: London.

Hall, S. (1980c) 'Recent Developments in Theories of Language and Ideology: a Critical Note', Hall, S. et al (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972- 1979*, Hutchinson: London.

Hall, S. (1992) 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in Hall, S., Held, D. & McGraw, T. (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures,* Polity Press in association with the Open University: Cambridge.

Hallin, D. (1998) 'Broadcasting in the Third World: From National Development to Civil Society', in Liebes, T. and Curran, J. (1998) (eds.), *Media, Ritual and Identity*, Routledge: London.

Halloran, J. D., Philip, E. and Murdock, G. (1970) *Demonstrations and Communication: A Case Study,* Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, UK.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson. P. (1983) *Ethnography*: *Principles and Practice*, Tavistock Book: London.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson. P. (1995) *Ethnography*: *Principles and Practice*, Routledge: London.

Harding, F. (2003) 'Africa and the Moving Image: Television, Film and Video', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 69-84.

Hartley, J. (1992) *Teleology*, Routledge: London.

Head, S. W. (1979) 'British Colonial Broadcasting Policies: the Case of the Gold Coast', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 39-47.

Heath, C. W. (1986). 'Broadcasting in Kenya: Policy and Politics, 1928-1984', Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

Heath, C. W. (1992) 'Structural Changes in Kenya's Broadcasting System: a Manifestation of Presidential Authoritarianism', *Gazette*, Vol. 37, pp. 37-51.

Heath, C. W. (1999) 'Negotiating Broadcasting Policy: Civil Society and Civic Discourse in Ghana', *Gazette,* Vol. 61, No. 6, pp. 511-521.

Helleiner, G. K. (1983) 'The IMF and Africa in the 1980s', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 17-33.

Helliwell, J. F. and Putnam, R. D. (2004) 'The Social Context of Well-being', *The Royal Society* (online), Vol. 359, pp. 1435-1446, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1693420/pdf/15347534.pdf (Accessed on 18/11/09).

Helregel, B. K. and Weaver, J. B. (1989) **'**Mood-Management During Pregnancy Through Selective Exposure to Television, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 15-33.

Herman, E. S. and Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, Pantheon: New York.

Hobart, M. (2004) Comments on Katarina Graffman's Working Paper, 'The Cruel Masses', http://www.media-anthropology.net/hobart_comment.pdf (Accessed on 19/06/09).

Hobson, D. (1980) 'Housewives and the Mass Media', in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P. (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, Hutchinson: London.

Hobson, D. (1982) *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera*, Methuen: London.

Howard, D. and Mabley, E. (1993) *The Tools of Screenwriting: A writer's Guide to the Crafts and Elements of a Screenplay,* St. Martin's Griffin: New York.

Hyam, R. (2006) *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918 – 1968*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Kagwanja, P. M. (2006) ''Power to Uhuru': Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections'*, African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, pp. 51-75.

Karikari, K. (1994) 'Introduction', in Karikari, K (ed.) *Independent Broadcasting in Ghana: Implications and Challenges*, Ghana University Press: Legon.

Katz, E. (1959) 'Mass Communications Research and the Study of Popular Culture: An Editorial Note on a Possible Future for this Journal', *Studies in Public Communication* Vol. 2, pp.1-6.

Kelly, K. & Van der Riet, M. (2001) 'Participatory Research in Community Settings: Processes, Methods and Challenges, in M. Seedat, (ed.) Duncan, N. and Lazarus, S. (cons eds.) *Community Psychology: Theory, Method and Practice. South African and Other Perspectives*, Oxford University Press: South Africa.

Kirk, J. and Miller, M. L. (1986) *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications: Beverly Hills.

Kivikuru, U. (1995) 'New Forms of Cultural Identity in an African Society', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences,* Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 371-389.

Klapper, J. T. (1960) *The Effects of Mass Communication*, Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois.

Kottak, C. P. (1990) *Prime-Time Society: An Anthropological Analysis of Television and Culture*, Wadsworth: Belmont.

Laden, S. (2003) 'Who's Afraid of a Black Bourgeoisie?: Consumer Magazines for Black South Africans as an Apparatus of Change', *Journal of Consumer Culture,* Vol. 3, pp. 191-216, http://joc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/3/2/191.pdf (Accessed on 17-11-2009).

La Pastina, A. (2001) 'Product Placement in Brazilian Prime-Time Television: The Case of a Telenovela Reception', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 45, pp. 541-557.

La Pastina, A., Patel, D. and Schiavo, M. (2004) 'Brazilian Telenovelas: The Social Merchandising Approach', in Cody, M. Sabido, M., Singhal, A. and Rogers, E. (eds.), *Entertainment-Education and Social Change: History, Research, and Practice*, Lawrence Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ.

Laitin, D. and Eastman, C. M. (1989) 'Language Conflict: Transactions and Games in Kenya', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 51-72.

Laslett, B. (1999) 'Personal Narratives as Sociology, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 28, No.4, pp. 391-401.

Lasswell, H. (1948) 'The Structure and Function of Communication in Society', in W. Schramm, W. and Roberts, D. (eds.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana.

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Bernard, B. and Hazel, G. (1944) *The People's Choice*, Columbia University Press: New York.

LeCompte, M. D. (1987) 'Bias in the Biography: Bias and Subjectivity in Ethnographic Research', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 43-52.

Lerner, D. (1958) *Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, The Free Press: Glencoe.

Liebes, T. and Katz, E. (1986) 'Patterns of Involvement in Television Fiction: A Comparative Analysis', *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 151-171.

Liebes, T. and Katz, E. (1990) *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of "Dallas"*, Oxford University Press: New York.

Ligaga, D. (2005) 'Enacting the Quotidian in Kenyan Radio Drama: 'Not Now' and the Narrative of Forced Marriage', *The Radio Journal – International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media,* Vol. 3, No. 2., pp. 107-119.

Lopez, A. M. (1995) 'Our Welcomed Guests: Telenovelas in Latin America, in Allen, R. C. (ed.), *To Be Continued: Soap Operas Around the World*, Routledge: London & New York.

Lucey, P. (1996) *Story Sense: Writing Story and Script for Feature Films and Television*, McGraw-Hill: New York.

Mak'Ochieng, M. O. (1995) 'The African and Kenyan Media as the Political Public Sphere', Paper Delivered at Conference of Communicators, Arniston, 25 - 27 August 1995.

Mak'Ochieng, M. O. (2000) "The Making of an African Public Sphere: The Performance of the Kenyan Daily Press During the Change to Multi-Party Politics", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Maloba, W. (1992) 'The Media and Mau Mau: Kenyan Nationalism and Colonial Propaganda', in Beverly G. Hawk (ed.) *Africa's Media Image,* Praeger: New York.

Marsden, T. M. (1981) 'Television Viewing as Ritual', in Browne, R. (ed.), *Ritual and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, Bowling Green University Popular Press: Ohio.

Maubert, E. (2006) *Television in Kenya*: *Regulation and Programming*, Transafrica Press: Nairobi.

Maziotti, N. (1993) *El especta'culo de Passion: Las Telenovelas Latino Americanos*, Colihue: Buenos Aires.

Mbeke, P. O. (2008) 'The Media, Legal, Regulatory and Policy Environment in Kenya: a Historical Briefing', Commissioned by the BBC World Service Trust, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya_media_legal_framework.pdf (Accessed on 12/11/08).

McHoul, A. and Grace, W. (1995) *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*, Melbourne University Press: Victoria.

McQuail, D. (1986) 'Media Institution and Organisation: Production of Media Culture', in *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction,* Sage: London.

McQuail, D. (2005) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, Sage: London

Meehan, E. (1991) 'Why we don't count: the Commodity Audience', in Mellencamp, P. (ed), *Logics of television: Essays in Cultural Criticism,* Indiana University Press: Bloomington and BFI Publishing: London.

Meehan, E. R. (2000) 'Leisure or labour?: Fan Ethnography and Political Economy', in Hagen, I and Wasko, J. (eds.), *Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research*, Hampton Press: Cresskill, New Jersey.

Merton, R. (1946) *Mass Persuasion*, Free Press: New York.

Metz, C. (1975) 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen,* Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 14-76.

Metz, C. (1982) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, Macmillan Press: London.

Michaels, E. (1990) 'A Model of Teleported Texts (with Reference to Aboriginal Television)', *Continuum: Communication and Tradition*, *Essays after Eric Michaels*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 8-31.

Miller, D. (1992) 'The Young and the Restless in Trinidad: A case of the Local and the Global in Mass Consumption', in Silverstone, R. and Hirsch, E. (eds.), *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, Routledge: London.

Moore, S. (1993) *Interpreting Audiences: the Ethnography of Media Consumption*, Sage: London.

Morley, D. (1980) *The 'Nationwide' Audience*, British Film Institute (BFI): London.

Morley, D. (1986) *Family Television*, Comedia: London.

Morley, D. (1992) *Television Audience and Cultural Studies*, Routledge: London.

Mosco, V. (1996) *The Political Economy of Communication*, Sage: London.

Mosco, V. and Kaye, L. (2000) 'Questioning the Concept of the Audience' in Hagen, I and Wasko, J. (eds.), *Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research*, Hampton Press: Cresskill, New Jersey.

Mosime, S. T, (2007) "Botswana Television BTV Negotiating Control and Cultural Production in a Globalising Context: A Political Economy of Media Ownership in Africa", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Mulvey, L. (2003) 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Brooker, W and Jermyn, D (eds.) *The Audience Studies Reader*, Routledge: London & New York.

Murdock, G. (1989) 'Critical Inquiry and Audience Activity', in Dervin, B, Grossberg, L., O'Keefe, B. J. and Wartella, E. (eds.), *Rethinking Communication*, Volume 2., Sage: Newbury Park and London.

Murdock, G. (1991) 'Television and Citizenship: in Defence of Public Broadcasting', in Tomlinson, A. (ed.) *Consumption, Identity, and Style. Marketing, Meaning, and the Packaging of Pleasure*, Routledge: London.

Mytton, G. (1983) *Mass Communication in Africa*, Edward Anorld: London.

Nariman, H. N. (1993) *Soap Operas for Social Change: Toward a Methodology of Entertainment-education Television*, Praeger: Westport, Connecticut.

Natesh, A. M. (1965) 'Kenya: Development of Broadcasting and Television', Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, UNESCO: Paris.

Nimer, B. (1966) 'Television as a Factor in National Cohesion', http://ntrs.nasa.gov/archive/nasa/casi.ntrs.nasa.gov/19660030084_1966030084.pdf (Accessed on 21/04/09)

Njeru, E. R. N. (2005) 'Kenya Broadcasting Corporation: Bridging the Digital Divide in Kenya Through Wireless Radio and Television Signal Distribution', a Case Study Lecture, Trieste, Italy.

Nyamnjoh, F.B. (2005) *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*, Zed Books: New York.

Obonyo, L. (2007) 'Kenya Press, Media, TV, Radio, Newspapers', http://www.pressreference.com/Gu-Ku/Kenya.html (Accessed on 04/08/08)

Ochieng, P. (1992) *I Accuse the Press: An Insider's View of the Media and Politics in Africa*, Initiatives Publishers: Nairobi.

Odhiambo, L. (1989) 'The Working Environment of the Journalist in Africa', in Deutsche Afrika-Stiftung (eds.) *Media Neighbor Africa—Stocktaking and Development Potential with Regard to Cooperation*, Karthauser: Bonn.

Odhiambo, L. (2002) 'The Media Environment in Kenya Since 1990', *African Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 295-318.

Oduori, R. W. (2002) 'Language and Politics in Kenya: Restricted and Elaborated Codes', *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 434-442.

Okigbo, C. (1998) 'Television and National Independence', in Smith, A. and Paterson, R. 1998 (eds.), *Television: An International History*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Ole Saitoti, (1986) *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior: an Autobiography*, Random House, New York

Ong, W. J. (1982) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Routledge: London.

Oosthusyen, C. (1997) 'Intertextuality in the Soap Opera *Egoli*: Culture and Consumption', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Natal, Durban.

Opondo, P. A. (2000) 'Cultural Policies in Kenya', *Arts and Policy Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5, p. 18.

Palmer, P. (1986) *The Lively Audience: A Study of Children Around the TV Set*, Allen & Unwin: Sydney and London.

Paterson, C. A. (1998) 'Reform or Re-colonisation? The Overhaul of African Television', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 25, No. 78, pp. 571-583

Pitout, M. (1996) 'Televisie en Resepsiestudie: 'n Analise van Kykersinterpretasie van die Seep-Opera Egoli - Plek van Goud' (Television and Reception Study: An Analysis of Viewers' Interpretations of the Soap Opera Egoli - Place of gold), University of South Africa: Pretoria.

Prabu. D., Horton, B. and German, T. (2006) 'Unpacking Television Entertainment Through Experience Sampling: A Multilevel Analysis', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden International Congress Centre, Dresden, Germany, Jun 16, 2006, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p91776_index.html (Accessed on 19/10/08).

Pye, L. (1963) *Communications and Political Development*, Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Radway, J. (1987) *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, Verso: London.

Reeves, G. (1993) 'State and Communications', in *Communications in the 'Third World'*, Routledge: London.

Rojas, M. (2005) 'A Conceptual-Referent Theory of Happiness: Heterogeneity and Its Consequences', *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 261-294, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.ukzn.ac.za:2048/stable/pdfplus/27522506.pdf (Accessed on 18/11/09).

Roome, D. (1998) "Humour as 'Cultural Reconciliation' in South African Situation Comedy: An Ethnographic Study of Multicultural Female Viewers", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Natal, Durban.

Ruby, J. (1996) 'The Viewer Viewed: The Reception of Ethnographic Films', in Crwaford, P. I. and Hafsteinson (eds.) *The Construction of the Viewer*, Intervention Press: Aarhus**.**

Saenz, M. K. (1994) 'Television as a Cultural Practice, in Newcomb, H. (ed.) *Television: The Critical View*, Oxford: New York.

Scannell, P. (1996) *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Blackwell: Cambridge, Massa.

Sebba, M. (2002) *Contact Languages: Pidgin and Creoles*, Palgrave: Houndmills.

Shannon, C. E. and Weaver, W. (1963) *The Mathematical Theory of communication*, University of Illinois, Urbana.

Shapiro, M. E. (1989) *Television Network Prime-Time Programming, 1948-1988*, McFarland and Company: Jefferson, North Carolina.

Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction* (Second Edition), Sage: London

Silvey, R. (1974) *Who's Listening: The Story of BBC Audience Research*, George Allen and Unwin: London.

Singhal, A. and Rogers, E. M. (1999) *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, New Jersey and London.

Sless, D. (1986) *In Search of Semiotics*, Croom Helm: London and Sydney.

Sood, S. (2002) 'Audience Involvement and Entertainment-Education', *Communication Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 153-172.

Spitulnik, D. A. (1994) 'Radio Culture in Zambia: Audiences, Public Words, and the Nation-state', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago.

Stamps, C. H. (1979) *The Concept of the Mass Audience in American Broadcasting: An Historical-Descriptive Study*, Arnos Press: New York.

Steier, F. (1991) *Research and Reflexivity*, Sage: London.

Strelitz, L. N. (2002) "Media Consumption and Identity Formation: the Case of the 'Homeland' Viewers", in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 24, pp. 459-480.

Tager, M. (2002) "A comparative Ethnographic Audience Study of Zulu-speaking Students Living in Residences on the University of Natal's Durban Campus", a PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal.

Terre Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. (1999) *Research in Practice*, University of Cape Town Press: Cape Town.

Thompson, J. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Polity: Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Tomaselli, K. G. and Tomaselli, R. (1985) 'Media Reflection of Ideology', Seminar in Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit, University of Natal, Durban.

Tomaselli, K.G., Dyll, L and Francis, M. (2008) "Self and Other: Auto, reflexive and Indigenous Ethnography" , in Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. and Tuhiwai Smith, L. (eds.) *The Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies, Sage: London.*

Tufte, T. (1999) 'Television Fiction, National Identity and Democracy—the Role of National Television Fiction in Modern Societies', in Durousseau, I. (ed.) *Reception de la Television*, University of Copenhagen: Copenhagen.

Tufte, T. (2001) 'Entertainment-Education and Participation: Assessing the Communication Strategy of Soul City', *Journal of International communication*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 25-50.

Tufte, T. (2003) 'Telenovelas, Culture and Social Change: From Polisemy, Pleasure and Resistance to Strategic Communication and Social Development', Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain.

Walsh, D. (1998) 'Doing Ethnography', in Seale, C. (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture*, Sage: London.

Wedell, G. and Tudesq, S. (1996) 'Television and Democracy in Africa: the Role of Television in the Democratisation of the Countries of Sub-Saharan Africa', European Commission (DG VIII) Study, European Union: England.

West, V. (1995) *Characters Not Stereotypes: A Writer's Guide Book*, University Publishing Company: Berkeley, California.

Wilkinson, J. F. (1972) 'The BBC and Africa: A Talk by Mr. J. F. Wilkinson, Head of the BBC African Service', *African Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 283, pp. 176-185.

Williams, K. (2003) *Understanding Media Theory*, Arnold: London.

Williams, R. (1980) *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, Verso: London.

Wood, J. T. (2000) *Communication Theories in Action: An Introduction* (2nd Edition), Wadsworth: Belmont, California.

Wrong, M. (2009) *It's Our Time to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle Blower*, HarperCollins: London.

Yaple, P. and Korzenny, F. (1989) 'Electronic Mass Media Across Cultures', in Asante, M. K. and Gudykunst, W. B. (eds.), *Feminism and Social Justice in Education: International Perspectives*, The Falmer Press: London.

Ytreberg, E. (2006) 'Premeditations of Performance in Recent Live Television: A Scripting Approach to Media Production Studies', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No.4, pp. 421-440.

Zettl, H. (2003) *Television Production Handbook*, Wadsworth: Belmont, California.

Zillmann, D. (2000) 'Mood Management in the Context of Selective Exposure Theory, in Roloff, M. F. (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 23*, Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Zillmann, D., and Bryant, J. (1994) 'Entertainment as Media Effect', in Bryant, J. and Zillmann, D. (ed.) *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, Erlbaum: Hillsdale, New Jersey.

Newspapers and Magazines

'Anti-Media Law Signed'. *Saturday Nation* (on line) (January 2 2009). http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/509842/-/u0qp5m/-/index.html (Accessed on 19/04/09).

Arango, T. and Carter, B. (2009, November 20) 'An Unsteady Future for Broadcast', *New York Times* (on line). http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/21/business/media/21network.html?_r=2&hp

Bosire, J. (2005, May 13) 'Pomp at Nation TV Relaunch: Station is Renamed NTV With New Slogan at Colourful Event', *Daily Nation.*

Editorial (2001**,** April 28**)** *Saturday Nation*.

King'ara, G. (2007, May) 'Kenya TV Disappoints', *The Media* (magazine)**,** pp. 38-40.

Mohammed, H. (2005, May 31) 'Steadman Sharpens Market Research Tool', *The Financial Standard*, FS 5.

Muganda, C. (2005, January 22) 'Meet the Real Woman Behind *Uhondo's* Tina', *Saturday Nation*, Review (Television).

Mukinda, F. and Issa, H. I . (2008, September 7) 'Girl Kills Step-Father Over Harambee Stars Match', *Saturday Nation* (on line), September 8, 2008). http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/468290/-/tkcdv8/-/index.html (Accessed on 14/04/09).

Ombati, C. (2008, September 8) 'Girl Kills Father After They Disagree Over TV', http://multimedia.marsgroupkenya.org/?StoryID=230224&page=2 (Accessed on 20/11/09).

Okuttah, M. (2008, September 16) 'KBC to Lower Telecoms Market Entry Costs with Masts for Rent', *Business Daily*(on line): Infrastructure.

'No Winners in the Sorry Saga of Media Legislation'. *Daily Nation* (on line) (January 8 2009). http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/-/440808/512130/-/427cut/-/index.html (Accessed on 18/04/09).

'Nujoma Votes Big Brother Out', *The Mercury*, July 30, 2003, *Edition -1*.

'Your Favourite Turn-ons!' *Daily Nation*, May 10, 2005, Centrefold.

Internet Sources

World Economic Forum (2007) 'The Africa Competitiveness Report , 2007', http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Africa%20Competitiveness%20Report/2007/index.htm (Accessed on 04/08/08).

Media in Africa Foundation (2006) 'The Annual Kenyan Leadership Month in the Media, 2006: A Comprehensive Report', http://www.mediafocusonafrica.org/media/documents/A%20COMPREHENSIVE%20REPORT.pdf (Accessed on 17/04/09).

US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs (2008) 'Background Note: Kenya' (June 2008), http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2962.htm (Accessed on 15/07/09).

Jubilee Research (2003) 'Jubilee 2000: Profile: Kenya', http://www.jubileeresearch.org/databank/profiles/kenya.htm (Accessed on 17/04/08).

Kenya Communication Act, 1998. Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK),

http://www.cck.go.ke/html/faqs.asp?catid=6 (Accessed on 10/07/08).

Internet World Stats (2008) 'Usage and Population Statistics',
http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm (Accessed on 17/04/09).

The World Bank Country Brief (2007),
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/KENYAEXT
N/0,,menuPK:356520~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:356509,00.html (Accessed
on 17/04/09).

Nation Media Group, 'Media of Africa for Africa', http://www.nationaudio.com (Accessed
on 17/04/09).

'New Law Could Hurt TV Stations', http://www.apsattv.com/history/august2003.html
(Accessed on 14/04/09).

BBC News World Edition, Aug 15, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2195252.stm,
(Accessed on 10/10/08)

Television Programmes

Dunia (?) KBC Television, Kenya

Egoli (1991 -), M-Net, South Africa

Heart and Soul (2000), KBC Television, Kenya

Kisulisuli (?) KBC Television, Kenya

Reflections (2003 – 2005), KBC Television, Kenya

Soul City (1994-), SABC Television, South Africa

Tausi (?) KBC Television, Kenya

Tushauriane (1987 –1989), VOK Television, Kenya

Uhondo (2003 – 2006), NTV, Nation Media Group, Kenya

Vioja Mahakamani (1975-) Channel 1, KBC Television

Vitimbi (1986 -), Channel 1, KBC Television

Vituko (?) KBC, Television, Kenya

Wingu La Moto (2004 – 2007)

Radio Programmes

Ushikwapo Shikamana (1987 –), KBC Radio, Kenya

Interviews and Personal Conversations

Catherine Wamuyu, Head of Youth, Education, Women and Children Department, KBC. Also Producer-Director of *Reflections*, February, 9 2005.

Charity Mwala, Former Principal Actress in *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Christopher Singila, Producer-Director of *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*, February 2005.

Derrick Amunga, Principal Actor in *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Edith R. N. Njeru, Engineer I (Electronic), Planning, Research and Development Department, September 2008 (Email Correspondence).

Elizabeth Kamwiri, Director of *Vioja Mahakamani*, February 2005.

George Koigi, Director of *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Kimaita Magiri, Production Manager, NTV, April 2005.

Lucia Shikuku, Writer and Script Editor of *Uhondo* and *Wingu La Moto*, September 2005.

Mary Onyango, Acting Television Programmes Controller, KBC Channel 1, February 2005.

Monica Abok, Principal Actress in *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Muriithi Wamai, Set Designer and Location Manager, September 2005.

Naomi Kamau, Writer of *Reflections*, September 2005.

Stan Darius, Producer-Director of *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Stephano Ngunyi, Executive Producer of *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Zuhura Asman, Writer of *Uhondo*, September 2005.

Government of Kenya and Other Reports

Official Report, House of Representatives (July 2, 1963), Vol. 1, Part 1.

Report of the Television Commission (December 14, 1958), Government Printer: Nairobi.

End Notes

i See National Aids Control Council Final Report on Assessment of the Socio-economic Impact of HIV and AIDS on Key Sectors in Kenya, December, 2006, http://www.nacc.or.ke/2007/images/downloads/final_reportsocioeconomic_impact_study.pdf (Accessed on 17/04/09).

ii See indicators at International Telecommunication Union, 2007, http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Reporting/ShowReportFrame.aspx?ReportName=/WTI/BasicIndicatorsPublic&RP_intYear=2007&RP_intLanguageID=1 (Accessed on 17/04/09).

iii See Parliament of Kenya. The Kenya Constitution, Revised Edition, (2001) (1998), http://www.bunge.go.ke/downloads/constitution.pdf , through, http://www.bunge.go.ke/constitution_2001.php (Accessed on 17/04/09).

iv See The Draft Constitution of Kenya, 2004, http://d.scribd.com/docs/logyy2i2m9a552m5f3m.pdf (Accessed on 04/08/08)

v See Media Council of Kenya (MCK), http://www.mediacouncil.or.ke/structure.php (Accessed on 06/08/08)

vi The Plymouth Committee was sponsored by the British government in 1936 under the chairmanship of the Earl of Plymouth. It was mandated to do a comprehensive study on policies and logistics of colonial broadcasting. The Plymouth Report, published in 1937, recognised that broadcasting could have great influence in imparting British culture and ideas to the natives in the colonies. More importantly, it could be used for advanced administration, education and enlightenment of the colonial subjects (Head, 1979).

vii See Colin Miller, http://www.oldradio.com/archives/international/zamb.htm (Accessed on 7/07/08).

viii Mau Mau was a complex militant movement, said to have begun in Kenya's 'White Highlands' where mainly Kikuyu squatters in European farms revolted against colonialism in general, but more so for the confiscation of their land in Central Kenya. Eventually, it developed into a kind of civil war as the peasants in the movement attacked other Kikuyus perceived as loyal to the British colonial government (Hyam, 2006; Maloba,1992)

ix See Nixon Kariithi, 'Kenya', Museum of Broadcast Communications, http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/K/htmlK/kenya/kenya.htm (Accessed on 04/08/08).

x A commercial empire founded in 1978 by Roy Thompson (later Lord Thompson), and has vast interests in media and publishing, http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/rep_pub/reports/1960_1969/fulltext/036c03.pdf (Accessed on 03/08/08).

xi Canadian Lord Roy Thompson was a principal figure in the Television Network Ltd which comprised: Television International Enterprise Ltd; Scottish television; National Broadcasting Company; Independent Television for South Wales and West of England Ltd; Twentieth Century Fox Film Company; The Nakuru Press Ltd; Northern Broadcasting Company of Toronto Ltd and East African Newspapers Ltd (Nimer, 1966).

xii See Nixon Kariithi, 'Kenya', Museum of Broadcast Communications, http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/K/htmlK/kenya/kenya.htm (Accessed on 04/08/08).

xiiiSee Ministry of Information Communications, http://www.information.go.ke/thedepartments.htm (Accessed on 7/07/08). Today, KIMC also offers diplomas in Mass Communication, and a proposal was recently drafted petitioning for the college to be converted into a fully-fledged University of Mass Communication.

xiv 'About KBC'. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, http://www.kbc.co.ke/info.asp?ID=1 (Accessed on 17/04/09).

xv See Nixon Kariithi, 'Kenya', Museum of Broadcast Communications, http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/K/htmlK/kenya/kenya.htm (Accessed on 04/08/08).

[xvi] Njeru, E. R.N. (2005) 'Kenya Broadcasting Corporation: Bridging the Digital Divide in Kenya Through Wireless Radio and Television Signal Distribution'. A Case Study Lecture, http://wireless.ictp.it/school_2005/lectures/casestudies/njeru.pdf (Accessed 03/08/08). In February 2005 Njeru gave the presentation at International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) at Trieste, Italy during a workshop on WiFi (Wireless Networking Training). Participants normally presented experiences of Wireless or Radio Spectrum applications in their countries as case studies after the workshop (Njeru, 2008, Email Correspondence).

[xvii] G. K. Helleiner (1983: 22-25) notes that for countries to qualify for the World Bank and IMF loans, "they have to come to an accommodation with the [IMF or the World Bank]". In the 1980s the World Bank made such loans to Kenya, Malawi, Ivory Coast and Senegal. During the same period, the IMF expanded its lending to needy countries in the developing world but only through high-conditionality lending "windows" and credit "tranches."

[xviii] See Kenya Law Reports, http://www.kenyalaw.org/kenyalaw/klr_app/frames.php (Accessed on 04/08/08).

[xix] See 'Media of Africa for Africa', Nation Media Group, http://www.nationaudio.com (Accessed on 17/04/09.

[xx] See Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), Report of the Taskforce on Migration from Analogue to Digital broadcasting in Kenya September, 2007, http://www.cck.go.ke/transition_analogue/ (Accessed on 04/08/08).

[xxi] See Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), Radio Communication/TV Stations, http://www.cck.go.ke/html/child.asp?childcontid=38&childtitle=radiocomm_tv_stations&contcatid=3 (Accessed on 04/08/08).

[xxii] Due to unavoidable circumstances, I had to leave SOAS prior to the beginning of my third year. In 2008, I enrolled at Culture, Communication and Media Studies (CCMS), University of KwaZulu-Natal on the basis of the work I began at SOAS.

[xxiii] *Ref: Request for an opportunity to work as an intern on the production set of any local Nation TV Television drama*

As part of my research degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, I have been asked to immerse myself in a television production environment for a period of at least three months. This activity is to fulfil some of my field research requirements. I have chosen to conduct this research in Kenya because I feel that as a Kenyan trained in script writing, working as an intern at Nation TV would provide me a rare but necessary opportunity to learn about the complexities of producing television drama for a national audience. Working as an intern on the production set of any Nation TV drama such as Wingu La Moto would provide me with the ideal opportunity to learn the dynamic particularities entailed in the making of a Kenyan television drama.

The purpose of this task is founded on my belief that today the idea that media (particularly TV) are preconditions for 'sense making' is not a farfetched one. In this process, television's position is central, and it can sometimes reveal the forces most at work in the determination of the priorities and goals of a given television-mediated society at a given time. As Kenya is quickly becoming a television-mediated society, it is important that we understand the process of television production as the first stage of understanding the important role television programmes can play in the Kenyan society.

Kindly consider my request and provide me with a learning experience that will allow me to better contribute to the limited existing body of knowledge about media in Kenya and Africa in general.

Sincerely,

George Ngugi King'ara.
PhD in Media candidate, SOAS, University of London.

xxiv Also, the application letter (above) and vetting that an intern or researcher goes through before entry in KBC guarantees one a smooth social interaction particularly with the production personnel once inside the compound. Below is the entry permission document:

KBC

KENYA BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Telegrams : "KBC KE"
Telephone : Nairobi 334567
Telex : 25361
When replying please quote
KBC/PERS/1/33 VOL IX
Ref: No. ....
and date

P.O. Box 30456, NAIROBI
KENYA

.........................20.............

Date: 20/1/05

George N. Kingara
Box 149
Ruiru

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INDUSTRIAL ATTACHMENT.

We are pleased to inform you that your application for attachment in our Corporation has been approved, subject to payment of attachment fees of Ksh. .....1000. per month.

You will be attached to Television Prog. Dep .... The attachment period is scheduled to begin on 1/2/005 .... to 30/4/05 ....

While on attachment, you will be required to adhere to the laid down regulations pertaining to Industrial Attachment as stipulated in the KBC Industrial Attachment Policy.

You will also observe and be subjected to all the Corporation rules and regulations.

Please note that you will be responsible for your own upkeep within and outside the Corporation in the duration of the attachment.

Yours faithfully,

P. MOGAKA (MRS.)
FOR MANAGING DIRECTOR

CC   Chief Security Officer, KBC

xxv **Outline of questions posed to the research participant during in-depth face to face interviews:**

i)   What are your duties in working on this show/ or this TV station?

ii)   Who guides the way you work on this show?/ or in this TV station?

iii)   When did you start working in television?

iv)   Do you enjoy working in this show?/ or this TV station? Why?

v)   Who do you think watches this show?

vi)   How do you know they watch the show?

vii)   Do you ever get any responses from ordinary people about this show? How?

viii)   Who do you have in mind when writing/producing/acting/shooting/this show?

ix)   What problems do you face writing/producing/acting/shooting this show, and how do you deal with them?

x)   Who pays your salary?

xi)   Other relevant questions were prompted by responses given by the subjects and guided by the stated objectives of this study.

[xxvi] According to Bird (2003: 169), some of the American Indian students who had participated in her first study on representation in 1996 felt alienated by mainstream media. They were also dismayed at their powerlessness, or Bird's, to sway Hollywood into incorporating their (Native) perspective into television programmes.

[xxvii] According to the former Chief Executive Officer of NMG, Wilfred Kiboro, the organization aspires "To be 'the media of Africa for Africa'. With a dozen newspapers, two business directories, two magazines, two radio stations and one television channel, [the organization is] already the leading multimedia company in East and Central Africa" (Daily Nation, Friday, May 13, 2005).

[xxviii] $1US was equivalent to Ksh 77.2 in February, 2005 (Central Bank of Kenya, http://www.centralbank.go.ke/rates/exchangeindex.asp?Cat=1-FEB-005&DayVal=0&MonthVal=1&YearVal=8 accessed on 12/09/08).

[xxix] Kenya African National Union was the ruling party in Kenya since her independence in 1963 to 2002.

[xxx] Nation Media Group Supplement (2002), http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/iso/story3.htm (accessed on 27/09/08).

[xxxi] According to a Kenyan veteran journalist, Phillip Ochieng, the Presidential Press Unit's authority over the reportage of the president's mandate usually superseded that of the newspapers and broadcast media news departments during the era of Kenya's second president, Daniel Arap Moi (Mbeke, 2008).

[xxxii] Cast means the team of actors involved in bringing the script to life. The Crew includes the producer/director, camera people, lighting people, stage designers, costume designers, hair and make-up people, location scouts and managers and production assistants (Zettl, 2003).

[xxxiii] Gathering from my empirical observations in the field, it appeared that most of the producers and cast of *Uhondo* held jobs at KBC and other places.

[xxxiv] Central Bank of Kenya, Foreign Currency Exchange Rates, http://www.centralbank.go.ke/rates/exchangeindex.asp?Cat=19-JAN-2005&DayVal=18&MonthVal=0&YearVal=8 (Accessed on 19/06/09).

[xxxv] In order to off-set some of the production costs, Eagles Media Agents Ltd resorted to a 'bartering system', whereby prospective production partners would be invited to provide shoot locations, cars or costumes in return for advertising time on *Uhondo*. This would either be in the form of captioned messages at the end of the programme or within the content of the show as part of the scenery of the story universe. Below is an example of 'barter deal' request letter for a shoot location for *Uhondo*:

Eagles Media Agents Ltd.
Suite 111, Ruprani House, Mokhtar Dadah Street
P.O. Box 59863-00200, Nairobi. Tel: 020 245818

1ˢᵗ April 2005

THE GENERAL MANAGER
THE WIDSOR GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
P O BOX 45587
NAIROBI.

ATT: Anne

Dear Sir,

PARTNERSHIP IN PRODUCTION OF A TV SHOW AT THE WINDSOR
Uhondo is one of the most popular and most watched local television *Soap Operas*, currently showing on Nation T.V every Tuesday at 7.30 PM. It is basically about the daily happenings in the lives of some interesting Kenyans and is full of intrigues, twists and turns consequently making it a must-watch by all.

Eagles Media Agents are contracted by **Nation Media Group** to produce this well-liked soap *opera*.

We are therefore glad to invite the **Windsor Golf and Country Club** to partner with us by allowing us to use some of the facilities at the club for our production purposes. These would include lawns, restaurants and rooms.

In return Eagles Media Agents in conjunction with **Nation T.V** will advertise the club by carrying its name in each of the 13 episodes (extendable) in the program end credits. This will go a long way in enhancing the quality of the program while at the same time give viewers a sneak preview of what the **Windsor** as to offer.

We look forward to your anticipated support.

Yours faithfully,

EDGAR LUMBASIO
BUSSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

ˣˣˣᵛⁱ The TPM's boss is the managing director of the KBC network, who in turn takes orders from the board of directors, who are appointed by the president and the minister in charge of broadcasting (Field Notes, 2005; Maubert, 2006).

ˣˣˣᵛⁱⁱ As a way of serving the 'real life' needs of society, the director and cast of *Reflections* occasionally socialised with 'members' of their audience and donated gifts to the needy (Catherine Wamuyu, February 2005, Interview). The letter below from Kenyatta National Hospital is proof of the said social outreach by the 'show':

KENYATTA NATIONAL HOSPITAL
Hospital Rd. along, Ngong Rd.
P.O. Box 20723, Nairobi.
Tel: 2726300-9
Fax: 2725272

3th February 2005

Reflections K.B.C
P.O box 30456
Nairobi

Att: Kamau Wa Ndungu

RE: **APPRECIATION**.

The Director, Board of Management and staff of Kenyatta National Hospital would like to extend their most sincere gratitude for your visit and donation to the patients at the Hospital.

Your kind gesture was highly appreciated and will go a long way in making the lives of patients admitted here much better.

Once again, thank you very much and God bless.

Hannah Gakuo
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

xxxviii In television language, Prime Time (with an American television culture inflection) is the period between 6PM and 10PM (or 11PM depending on time zones) when the largest number of viewers is expected to be watching television (Shapiro, 1989). In the Kenyan television culture, Prime Time begins at the evening news hour at 7PM and ends with late news at 10PM. Gathering from my research and lived experiences in Kenya, children and their parents may watch television together for part of the early hours of this period. This is also the time when stations slot programmes with the highest potential to attract the largest audience.

xxxix *Daily Nation* is the newspaper with the widest readership in Kenya. In part of 2004 and 2005, it consistently featured stories and articles reflecting the dire plight of Kenya's youth. The following is a list of relevant examples: 'Kibaki locked out the youth in key State appointments' (Wednesday, December 14, 2005); 'Solve problems facing youth to harness potential for progress' (Daily Nation, Sunday, December 11, 2005); 'Society

has failed the youth' (Thursday, December 8, 2005); 'Youth demand greater role in national affairs' (Sunday August 14, 2005); 'The root causes of substance abuse among Kenya youth' (Monday, August 30, 2004).

[xl]Kenya: country Brief,
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/KENYAEXTN/0,,menuPK:3565
20~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:356509,00.html (Accessed on 12/09/08).

[xli] Below is the letter from a satisfied high school principal who wrote to Wamuyu in appreciation of the services *Reflections* was rendering to the youth in his school. To Wamuyu, the letter was also proof that her aims with the show as a public service to the youth were well placed:

KIARITHAINI HIGH SCHOOL,
P.O. BOX 310,
KARATINA.
31st July 2003.

THE PRODUCER "REFLECTIONS"
KENYA BROADCASTING CO-OPORATION,
P.O. BOX 30456,
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: APPRECIATION.

I would like to register my gratitude, appreciation and congratulations to you for your most aspiring, challenging and entertaining production - "Reflections"-Your sensitivity to the needs of the young and old is definitely evident through your various episodes; sensitively selected.

Indeed, I would particularly want to pay tribute to your Sunday 20th July 2003 programme in which you portrayed challenges facing young Christian men and women. Bravo! Thanks for being mindful of the spiritual well being of the young people. Indeed, it's a most ignored area. Thanks also for being mindful of the exploitation by drug barons of young boys and girls in our high Schools when they are forced to traffic drugs hence running down our otherwise strong pillar of our future: education (Sunday 27th episode) kudos!

I must bring to your attention that your programme is making a strong impact in both the young and old peoples' lives that seem to be getting shattered by lack of advice like the one you are offering. By addressing pertinent issues like drug abuse, peer pressure influence, family conflicts and their impact on the children, then your are not only addressing contemporary issues but also educating the society on how to deal with them.

It's therefore encouraging that such a timely programme is being watched by many a people in our beloved nation Kenya. I must mention here also that your choice of characters is indeed excellent; both the young and old alike can easily identify with these characters.

Once again, receive my appreciation and keep on the good work. May the lord bless you with greater ideas to help the society.

Yours faithfully,

SAMUEL M. MUTHEE.

[xlii] The Maasai people are sometimes seen to provide an example of how Kenyans should conserve their traditional cultural heritage. They are stereotyped as a community that has not disintegrated in the face of modernisation in Kenya. At the same time, they are considered as backward in the context of modernity, often relegated to marginal jobs in urban centres, cattle herding and humble curio trading (Ole Saitoti, 1986).