Audience perception of portrayals of women in selected Lokshin Bioskop films.

BY

Sibusiso Thembalami Mtshede

Student No: 215079126

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Supervisor: Prof. Ruth Teer- Tomaselli

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University of KwaZulu Natal

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Supervisor:

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Department Chair:

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External Examiner:

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Sibusiso T Mtshede

Date………………………………………………………………………….

Contents

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Dedication

To all the women this is for you!

Abstract

This study was aimed at audience perceptions on the representation of women in Lokshin Bioskop films. The purpose of carrying out this research is to find out what the female audience has to say on the female representation in three Lokshin Bioskop feature films. This study will be informed by the encoding and decoding theory. The research explored representations of women in feature films through an assessment of the audience's perceptions therefore this study seeks to gain an insight into gendered reception hence the focus group participants are women. Three feature films *Taxi Ride, Umalokazana* and *Jezebel* have been selected for this study and will be viewed by the targeted audience and representation analysis will be drawn from these films. This study analysed how the audience perceived the representations of women from the three selected Lokshin Bioskop films by the directors.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background and context of study

The Lokshin Bioskop films are feature films made of locally produced content and its main focus is on telling Mzansi's ordinary stories. The feature films are screened on Mzansi Magic Channel (161) of DSTv, the South African satellite subscription television group. In partnership with South African filmmakers, Mnet empowered emerging talented filmmakers and producers by giving them an opportunity to produce captivating local content. Mnet created a platform for the South African creative industry by showcasing the Lokshin Bioskop films. These feature films were made for viewers in South Africa to watch content that they could relate to locally.

This study focuses on audience perceptions based on their perceptions of women representations in Lokshin Bioskop films. It focuses on interpretations of the embedded messages brought out trough women's representations in the feature films. This study establishes the relationship between the audience and the meanings inherent in the films as interpreted by the audience. Where representations are concerned, nothing is ever certain, and meanings are negotiated (Hall, 1980).

Dennis McQuail (2009: 58) stated that

> Mass communication is designed for large scale distribution via mass media to reach many recipients, including a one directional flow without dialogue opportunities on impersonal and anonymous relationships with the audience and the content is usually standardised.

McQuail's point here is that mass communication, including in this instance the Lokshin Bioskop films, are designed to be shown on screens, and do not, by their very nature, encourage reciprocal flows of information. Therefore, we tend to know very little about the way in which the audience actually responds to media (in this case, the films in question). Despite the use of social media some viewers comments remain known to them as there are few social pages that

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provide feedback from viewers. Most broadcasters rely on audience viewership numbers for their chief intelligence about reception. This 'audience' "was marked by a shifting composition within changing boundaries. It did not act for itself but was, rather 'acted upon' (thus an object of manipulation)" (McQuail, 2009: 41). The current research adopts a 'reception model' of media analysis. This is discussed more fully in Chapter Three (Theoretical Framework). For the moment it is enough to note that

> The essence of the 'reception approach' is to locate the attribution and construction of meaning (derived from the media) with the receiver. Media messages are always open and 'polysemic' (having multiple meanings) and are interpreted according to the context and the culture of the receivers (McQuail, 2009: 56).

Taking this assertion as my point of departure, this researcher conducted this study to gain a deeper understanding of this realization by McQuail (2009). Although this study is based on Lokshin Bioskop feature films that are broadcast on national television the study used a sample of audiences based in Durban. This was mainly because Lokshin Bioskop films are popular in Durban and it is home for one of the films under study *Umalokazana,* which was produced in Durban by Motion Pictures. Lokshin Bioskop films aim at maintaining the diversity of culture in South Africa and tell Mzansi's stories in a way that portrays them as a cultural product. Lokshin Bioskop films evoke cultural practices that are still common in some parts of Durban hence this study used a sample audience from Durban which is familiar with the feature films selected for this study *Umalokazana*. These are issues that will be explored and substantiated in the research.

The Focus group discussions which are fully unpacked in Chapter Five Data revealed that for some people films are agents of social change and enable a more just and progressive society as some people look up to television characters and imitate them through their dressing and other habits. McQuail (2009: 402) notes that "[t]here is plenty of evidence that the media are widely regarded by their own audiences as potentially influential for good or ill". Thus, the films are representative and possess a possibly pernicious influence on the viewers, whatever ideology they espouse shapes attitudes and behaviors of the viewers, and therefore this researcher provides close study about the audience's perceptions on female representations in the films. It is perceived that women are often marginalised and live in male dominated world where women

are often seen as victims of circumstances and media representations. Therefore, this study is aimed at gaining access into the female's perceptions of female representations (Radway, 1991)[1] and audience perceptions of South African films[2]. This research seeks to develop the society's understanding of the portrayal of women in the Lokshin Bioskop by conducting focus group discussions using a sample group of the population that watch the films.

This researcher has chosen to mainly focus on the perceptions of the audiences based on the content which are the images portrayed in the films and mainly because films are a prime source of a meaning. Bela Balazs (1952: 100-101) stated that there is a lot of distortion involved in interpreting images and that there is no consistency in images that is in seeing and reading pictures portrayed by the films the audience can be delusional in interpreting them.

> The position of the eyes in the top half of the face, the mouth below; wrinkles now to the right, now to the left- none of this now retains its spatial significance. For what we see is merely a single expression we see emotions and thoughts we see something that does not exist in space.

In a passage on film representations of dream states Balazs offered a distinction between a fairy tale images that signal their dream status by mere changes in form and images that reproduce the changed substances. Balazs was talking about close ups in scenes that appear on films, this researcher was informed by this assertion to keep an open mind in interpreting findings from focus group discussions that will be discussed later in Chapter Five of this study.

Therefore this research seeks to understand if audiences see things as they are or all they are seeing is an illusion. Meaning is an important aspect of this research because it is what drives the audience's perceptions of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films. As stated by Keyan Tomaselli *et al.* (1987: 17) no meaning is ever natural, necessary or neutral. This study aims at understanding the audience's perceptions that come from the meaning understood by the audience.

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[1]Radway, J. A. 1991. *Reading the romance: Women, patriarchy, and popular literature*. Durham (NC): University of North Carolina Press.
[2]http://nfvf.co.za/home/22/files/Reports/FINAL_NFVF%20ARP-QuantReport_10042015c

This study seeks to gain an insight into gendered reception and so it will borrow from a research conducted by Colleen Lowe Morna and Sikhonzile Ndlovu (2008: 84) that gives an insight into gendered audiences in Africa on the content and audience of three Southern African tabloids. Importantly, this research conducted found that, "although tabloids enjoy [good] patronage, readers [were] unhappy about what they [were] getting. The research reported that women were especially unhappy about the blatant stereotypes and sexualized images of women in the tabloids and both men and women would like to see less negative news, violence, pornography and images that degrade women" (Morna and Ndlovu, 2008: 84).

Background of Lokshin Bioskop Films

This researcher was mainly drawn into this study by a few personal experiences and my interest in the film industry drew me to analyse Lokshin Bioskop films and their significance in the South African film industry. Up and coming producers were given a platform to showcase their talents and film projects when Lokshin Bioskop films were birthed. The producers therefore used these feature films, to give new directors platform to tell Mzansi's stories and occupy spaces that have been ignored for too long as not many people have taken an interest of telling the lives of ordinary people. Lokshin Bioskop films are feature films produced by some of the most talented directors and scriptwriters in South Africa, these feature films engage and inform audiences of both males and females by re-telling South African stories.

The feature films narrate the extraordinary tales of typical South African day to day lives. Lokshin Bioskop films are a television production that deals with everyday events in a dramatic and humorous fashion. In most cases the producers cast unknown actors and actresses rather than big names of stars. Lokshin Bioskop films were launched in September 2013 by M-Net and the key objective is to entertain and educate South Africa with a target audience in mind[3]. The Lokshin Bioskop films project focused on training script writers, producers, directors and film producers and tapped on this raw talent to produce entertaining films that are both entertaining and educating. The home channel for Lokshin Bioskop films is M-Net channel 161. This is a

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[3]http://mzansimagic.dstv.com/2015/07/03/lokshin-bioskop-new-lokshin-bioskop-movies/

South African subscription-funded television channel that was launched in 1995 and broadcasts both local and international programming.

There is need to provide discursive arenas that give the audience an opportunity to open up and contribute to the film making process and this research is centered on media reception and how women make sense of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)[4] contends that, we are all social beings and we internalise ideas from our socialisation.

The socialisation concept explains how an individual learns through exposure to institutions such as the media, patterns of behavior, attitudes, values and norms. The media plays a key role in instilling behaviors, values attitudes and norms within the audience. This is why it is necessary to analyse the culture that is continuously internalised by the audience through watching the media. It is important to note that "culture does not make people, people make culture" (Adichie, 2009)[5]. This research will acknowledge the importance of culture and how it influences the images portrayed in the Lokshin Bioskop films. In line with this, the current research has the following objectives:

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyse audience reception and perceptions of the Lokshin Bioskop films this study will therefore use the semiotic, thematic and reception analysis theory. This will enable the researcher to gain a clear understanding of the audience's perception as they are the key informants of this study. In summary the objectives are as follows:

- To investigate how South African women audience receive and interpret images of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films.
- To investigate how audiences interpret the representations of women in Lokshin Bioskop films.

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[4]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc
[5]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

- To determine factors that influence how the audience interpret meanings in the representations of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films.

Research Questions

- How does the South African audience particularly women, interpret the portrayals of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films?
- Is there any marked difference in the way individuals or groups of audience interpret the representations of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films?
- What influences the audience's interpretation pattern?

Justification/significance of study

The analysis of audience reception and perceptions of Lokshin Bioskop films is an area that is yet to be explored and therefore this researcher saw it necessary to embark on this study. This study is important because it gives the audience a chance to voice their thoughts, views and feelings about the portrayal of women in films. The necessity to learn more about the importance of audience's perceptions in film studies was the main reason for embarking on this study. Film study is a democratic environment that is supposed to inform, educate and entertain the audience.

By so doing film producers should incorporate their audience's perceptions into film making as they are the consumers of the films and they are thoughts and views should be in cooperated. The audience should be given a platform to analyse and provide information and feedback to the producers so as to help producers improve their female representations than lose audience because their representations are being dismissed. The understanding of the films does not only lie on the message being relayed by the producers but it also lies on what is encoded and decoded by the recipients (Hall 1980). As interpretation and understanding of a message depends on what the audience decode from the films, this researcher saw it necessary to embark on this study and incorporate the audience's perceptions of the female representations.

The researcher is aware of the fact that research similar to this one have been carried out by various scholars such as Morna and Ndlovu (2008), Laura Mulvey (1975), Jill Johannessen (2009) and Hannelie Marx (2008). However the researcher feels justified to embark on it because the voices of women in African societies are silenced and film producers do not take into consideration their views when making films. Some of the studies carried out before have in cooperated men too and this study has deliberately targeted women as the audience of this study to give them a chance to express themselves.

The audience used in this study is meant to elicit parallel investigation and comparative approach with full analysis of the images used in the films under study. A broader perspective of the women's voices is also achieved by investigating three different groups of women used in the focus group discussions because of their different life experiences. This kind of study therefore still needs to be pursued due to its importance and the society needs enlightenment on the different views from African scholars.

The key belief of this research is that an understanding of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop film can add to body of knowledge in film studies. This can also impact on the shift from patriarchal gender identities to modern gender identities that is women to be portrayed as modern and discard the stereotypical images. This study comes in handy because it helps people to accept that the society is changing. Societies are slowly moving away from patriarchal roles for men and women and some of the past practices have been outshined and women should be seen in light of the current situations prevailing in communities. Women are emerging as innovative, with the same capacities of men recognising the breaking of gender boundaries and also reaching far beyond than the boundaries previously set for them by society and patriarchy.

Scope of study

This study will also center its attention on the impact that Lokshin Bioskop images had on the audience in regards to female representation in the films. The study will analyse the images, dress code, language and relations portrayed in the films to get a clear picture of the audience's

thoughts and views on the female representations. The study will specifically focus on audiences in Durban city center and Glenmore suburbs who watch the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Problem of the study

Lokshin Bioskop films have been criticised by various people for being biased in the female representation as some people argue that the woman is portrayed in a typical manner[6]. These films are widely consumed by many people as they play continuously throughout the day as they were commissioned by Mnet. The films touch on various issues that are of interest to most viewers as they claim to re-tell the South African stories in a more relaxed manner. It is therefore this researcher's intention to find out the female audience's views on female representations.

Delimitations of the study

This study will focus on three Lokshin Bioskop films that were shown on the screens upon inception in 2013 till present day. *Umalokazana* was deliberately used for this study as it was produced in Durban by Motion pictures and this researcher felt the audience under study would relate better with it as it closer to home culturally and socially. Comedy is also Lokshin Bioskop's cash cow as described by many and therefore this study also used one of the comic films *Taxi Ride*. *Jezebel* will also be use as the third film under study. The study will only focus on 2014-2015 productions. These films are discussed further in chapter five, covering the data analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter serves as an introductory chapter which outlined the research topic and provided the lens through which this research will be carried out. This chapter gives an insight to the research and it outlines the background of the research as it provides a description of the research problem. A brief history of the Lokshin Bioskop films, Mzansi magic and Mnet is explored in this chapter. The research questions which the researcher presented along with justification,

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[6]https://www.**facebook**.com/**Lokshin-Bioskop**-494327450620269/

scope and focus on the limitations of the study made it possible for the research to be carried out. The structure of the study gives insight into how the thesis will be structured. The chapter concludes by highlighting the significance of the study. The research, therefore, seeks to explore through an assessment of language usage of selected articles and the impact of female representations on the audience.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the literature that informs this study. It examines how various scholars that have studied representation of women in film as well as those who have studied audience perceptions on films specifically. This chapter explores various arguments and debates regarding the issue of television influence. This chapter will focus mainly on the media effects paradigm which pays particular attention to scholars who research on the effects of the media and the power of the audiences which then directs attention to theories like the reception analysis theory.

Gendered roles

There are significant highlights of various issues in the Lokshin Bioskop films such as tradition, sexual exploitation, modernity, sexual reproductive health, women and work. It is therefore important to find out how the above mentioned themes are perceived by the female audiences and how the audience will articulate their views. This study was mainly aimed to find out how the female audiences voice their views in an open and non-confining environment that allows certain issues to be talked of at liberty.

This study attempts to venture beyond the conventionally established confines ascribed to women's films (romance, love, drama) and the ways in which the women are represented in the films. It is the responsibility of women to articulate the female experience because the negative background of an unfalteringly practiced gender inequality may at times not adequately prepare the male film maker for a liberating portrayal of women. Hence the focus groups are all female groups and will be later on discussed in Chapter Four Methodology. Barbara Metcalf (1998: 84) argues that the oppressing member of society cannot wholeheartedly help in the liberating of the oppressed group. In regards to this topic, it can be said that a male producer cannot represent the female group in a way that opposes the general cultural stereotypes because they do not know what it is like to be female, oppressed by the society's expectations. The research seeks to develop the society's sensibilities and understanding of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films in regards to Metcalf's argument. This study does not disregard that many male film makers have tackled women's issues in their films creating positive images that empower

the women. It seeks to understand the representation and portrayal of woman in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

The patriarchal tendencies that are natural and popular in the African culture are the ones that defeat not only women but men as well in that as filmmakers they tend to portray themselves as the heroes of their household and end up showing women at their mercy all the time. How men are nurtured remains a challenge as they compete for positions in society they end up infringing on other people's rights. Peter Murphy (2000: 126) says that a man is free of the sex role stereotypes that limit the ability to be human. Sex role stereotypes say that men should be dominant, achieving and enacting a dominant role in relation with others is taken to be an indicator of success. "Success for men often involves influences over the lives of others. Adichie (2009)[7] agrees with the assertion that the stereotypical representation of women not only defeats women but men as well saying,

> We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them we stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity becomes this hard small cage and we put boys inside the cage. We each boys to be afraid of fear, we teach boys to be afraid of weakness, vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves because they have to be 'hard man'.

Patriarchy therefore can be viewed as a system of oppression, dictating to women's bodies and minds, destroying both subjectively and voice reducing male and female relations to a power struggle. Murphy (2000) stated that under patriarchy the acceptable exercise of masculine power requires the presence of a gender class that by definition is a powerless woman. This may be a result of how man is nurtured. According to Murphy (2000: 126) "success" for a man, often involves influence over the lives of other persons. "Success" is achieving positions of dominance and influence which is not open to everyone. Hence stereotypes identify men as greater or lesser failures those who fail to dominate are objects of scorn, jokes and sympathy from wives, peers and society in general. Hence, one avenue of dominance which is open to every man is dominance over women.

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[7]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

Male dominance in films is portrayed essentially from the oppressive practices emanating from the colonial set up which has patriarchal tendencies. There is an unbalanced distribution of wealth and opportunities between the male and the female as regularly portrayed in films. It is also important to note that not all men are empowered in this system. Joseph Pleck (in Murphy 2004: 96) analyses made power relationships in the context of patriarchy, which he sees as "a dual system in which men oppress women and in which men oppress themselves and each other". Raewyn Connell (1990: 577) developed what he terms the hierarchy of masculinities where at the top is what he denoted as hegemonic masculinity where there are dominant men and they have capital and instructions to subordinate other men. The second is what he termed complicit where most men are and they aspire to be part of hegemonic masculinity. At the bottom is what he called subordinate, where the level gay men and very poor men may be placed. These men regarded as the low rung. It is also important to note that masculinity is not a stable, fixed homogenous entity but constructed (Murphy, 2000: 97).

Masculinity can be attributed to the fact that the society in which they live in men are by in charge brought up to be powerful, aggressive competitive and tough or manipulation and not to show feelings Hence according to Murphy masculinity is that sense of self, that sense of worth, that right to power to accrues to every male on account of the global suppression of women. Thus masculinity, that cultural construct of human identity is hostile to gender justice and in short masculinity is immoral. Birth has ceased to be something that happens to woman and become the ultimate source of adult female identity. The females are therefore defined by their ability to procreate and maternity is supposed to occupy the whole of a woman's life.

Most films portray women as though they are meant for male consumption and the ideologies in the films are centered on making a man look as a hero that is always there to rescue a woman. While other representations suggest that women look good when they are under the male protection and guidance women used as the audience in this study criticised such representations. That is, Mulvey (1975) in her academic essay examined Hollywood film from a feminist point of view. Mulvey introduces the idea of the "male gaze" to explore the relationships between men and women. This study by Mulvey is relevant and was used in this study to tap into the possible explanations of gendered representations in films.

Mulvey's theory is often used to explain how film sexually portrays and exploits women. This then informs the researcher to pay particular attention to audience's interpretations and perceptions towards the issue of gender representations findings from this study suggest that women are portrayed in a way that makes them appealing to the male that is whatever representation is put across has to soothe the male ego sexually or egocentrically.

Dorothy Mbilinyi's and Curthbert Omari's (1996) edited volume of scholarly articles contains issues discussed in the papers ranging from societal gender issues, to everyday life situations encountered by women as a marginalised sex. The role of school text books, programmes, adverts, newspaper reporting, songs, poems and fiction. The selections in the books signal a range of mass media sites that early researchers in Africa were concerned with and carried out on the notion that socially constructed through the mass media. These papers and their views of influence this researcher to understand the gendered images and the power in reconstructing gender identities and roles.

Lokshin Bioskop films are consumed by a number of South Africans and have become popular at a time when the South African film industry is claiming its recognition as a film hub, though most of the films are dominated by male film makers. Hence the film bodies of knowledge are being a social construct and not God given they should be questioned with all conviction, especially at which oppresses and limits women's development. The films are viewed as a cultural, entertaining and socially constructed product performs many liberating roles but can reinforce social ills or naively promote them through various representations. Film makers need to break stereotypical images of women and create diverse and positive ones, in doing so they become agents of social change and enable a more just and progressive society. The works are representative and possess a malicious influence on the viewers at home; whatever ideology they support shapes attitudes and behaviors of people consuming the films.

Johannessen's (2009) research focused on how gender is constructed in the newspapers and local television in Tanzania. Johannessen says that the dominant gender discourse in the media supports a social conservative force, which might hinder women from taking an active part in society and development. However she argues that at the same time market liberation of the

media represents more varied themes that contest traditional gender roles. This assertion therefore guides the study on structuring questions for focus group discussions in such a way that the research will probe and find out from the audience on how they perceive women representations.

Women are explored in various ways where issues of gender are concerned and films often act as a mirror of what is already believed to be said about women through gender constructions. Ruth Wodak (1997: 74) in stated that "media plays a central role in construction and reproduction of group and individual identities as well as setting of social agendas. [Films do] not only use [preexisting] popular beliefs and stereotypes to depict events and people, but also impose certain social conventions, norms and images, a process that can [cause] discrimination". This research explored the construction of images though representations by involving the audience who are the main consumers of the Lokshin Bioskop films. The research borrows from *Gender and Discourse* that was put together by Alyson Simpson (1997: 14) who uses game playing in a family set up to explain how women are viewed as subjects of gender positions.

Ellis Cashmore (1994: 37) argues that women in most parts of the world have historically been regarded as bearers of children, oriented to domestic work and having no significant role to play in society's major institutions, such as politics, commerce and education. Adichie (2009)[8] alludes that women are

> […] more likely to do the housework than men cooking and cleaning, but why is that? Is it because women are born with a cooking gene? Or is it because over the years they have been socialized to see cooking as their role.

This realisation by Cashmore is important in analysing the gender identities that are reconstructed in the Lokshin Bioskop films in comparison with patriarchal gender identities and roles prevalent in South Africa. Cashmore goes on to argue that television aims to achieve applause rather than reflection meaning that it aims at making the audience happy rather than portraying the views and beliefs of the people it represents. This signifies profound change in culture it has been transformed into "one vast arena for show business". It is of paramount

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[8]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

importance to find out if audiences perceived the films as leading to cultural disintegration in relation to gender roles and identities portrayed in the feature films.

Role of audience

Dovey (2009) suggests that focusing on the performative dimension of African arts, highlights the distortion of production and consumption as well as the personified role audiences play through interacting with the performance and constructing meaning. These ideas are very important to this study because they make the researcher aware of other factors that are at play in influencing the audience's reception of a text. Dovey's research showed that media texts are essential and legitimate in enhancing literacy and that they can be used to inform studies that touch on audience perceptions. In her research, Dovey further on suggests that while the role of film makers as authoritative are sometimes seen in the use of voice-over, it also plays a role in dictating to the audience what should be deemed the final message interpreted from these films.

While the prominent feature of the producer in the film and the filmmakers acting in the films themselves, lack of funding is also recognized as resulting in African films being forced to fulfill multiple roles as writers, directors, producers, editors and actor. Hence Dovey suggests that the authorial role in African films is more marked than Hollywood film, for example, where specialization results in hierarchies of expertise the African films can expand on that if the audience perceptions are incorporated into the film making. Her form of authorship in African films is not oppositional to what is already in existence, as was in the European films but can be seen as an extension of social and artistic responsibility. This scholar informs this study to focus on effects exerted by film on the audience with regards to the role filmmakers play in reconstruction of meaning presented to the audience.

Dovey (2009) points out that cinematic text in South Africa have a great deal to offer when as primary texts for eliciting perspectives of review participants read. Dovey's research showed that media texts are essential and legitimate in enhancing literacy. Media literacy theorists have argued that which is a good reader bring to a written text which is similar to that which a critical viewer brings to a visual text (*Master Piece Theater Learning Resources,* 2012). Both the literacy and visual texts require a critical thinker to predict, make connections infer, ask

questions and interpret. In both texts the details of character, theme, plot, and mood conflict symbolism allow for meaning making and so viewers must be guided to be active audiences. This, therefore, directs this study to pay critical attention to how the audience becomes an agent of constructing meaning.

Empowering images on television are a scarce commodity that needs to be re looked and remade to best suit audience's needs of viewing positive images. Marx (2008) opens up another possibility for the construction of more empowering images of women in "the media by examining the role of soap opera narratives in constructing and deconstructing identities in South Africa". In her analysis Marx advances the notion that because soap operas are gendered as feminine they may be constituted as 'other' and as such possibilities "sites for the deconstruction of hegemonic gender identities" Marx (2008: 44). Consequently she argues that it should be possible for soap operas "to contribute to the construction of a woman centered self-defining 'other' which is oppositional to the hegemonic, male centered constructions of female identity and which can be used to strengthen the woman's voice". This assertion by Marx realises both sides and makes the researcher able to see the role of the audience as a power house to voicing opinions.

As people consume films their minds are often clouded by the images with which they are continuously fed. McQuail (1994: 327) argues that people's "minds are full of media derived information and impressions [and that people] live in a world [full of] media sounds and images". McQuail also recognises phases of the natural history of the media effect. He argues that when the media was created it was "credited with considerable power to shape opinion and belief, to change habits of life and to mold behavior more or less actively". McQuail (1994: 331) also realises the social constructivist effect of the media:

> This has been the development of a view of media as having their most significant effects by constructing meanings and offering these constructs in a systematic way to audiences, where they are incorporated 'or not'….

This assertion by McQuail is crucial to this study as it brings about the issue of an active audience. It helps the researcher to be aware of the notion that some audience has power to

discard some of the media messages. It therefore directs the researcher to use research methodologies like focus group discussions because they are more interactive. The researcher is able to understand fully if the sample population used for focus group discussion gained their perceptions of gender identities and roles from watching the films.

Television has a big effect on the role of the audiences as the messages relayed to the audience are often crafted in a way that best suits the producers. Joseph Klapper (1960: 5) argued that "the view of mass media was a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects" is one-dimensional and he suggested that researchers should consider the media more "as influences, working amid other influences". This realisation by Klapper enabled the researcher to be alert of the fact that it is not only the media that exerts influence on the audience, but there are other influences such as social status and educational levels that should be taken into consideration in recruiting the members of the focus group discussions. This then informed the researcher to pay particular attention towards audience's social status, religion levels and educational levels when gathering data because these factors as pointed out by Klapper has power to influence the audience's views.

The researcher took this assertion by Klapper into consideration when recruiting focus group participants as one group was drawn from a religious level, while the other was drawn from a social level where participants reside in a suburb and the educational level was also taken into consideration as the other group is composed of the working class women with different jobs. McQuail (1994: 419) quoted Klapper (1960: 8) who argued "that mass communication does not ordinarily serve as a necessary or sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors". This argument shows that the media has a great effect on viewers and it is up to the audience to attach a meaning to the films they consume. The media effects are also shown to operate within a pre-existing structure of social relationships and a particular social and cultural context. According to McQuail (1994: 329) it was also clear that information acquisition could occur without changes in behavior. McQuail and Klapper's contention therefore guides this study to pay particular attention to the social and cultural context which could have influenced audience perception of gender roles and identities.

The audience should be given a role in as far as the production of the films, that is their feedback and input should be taken into consideration. Kenneth W. Harrow (2007: 115-116) analysed a number of things linking them to having African films for Africans he suggested that,

> African film is important in the correction of misrepresentations of history and of African media.
> African films represent African society, African people, and African culture.
> African film should be the site of truth.
> African film is African.

Harrow also suggested that the answer to the African cinema problem was not about a viable economy basis but it rested upon the African audience, this urges the audience to play an active role in building the African films. Hence through this realisation by Harrow this researcher engaged the audience through focus groups to incorporate their views into film studies. That is this research aimed at engaging the audiences and their perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the audience as suggested by Harrow. Harrow's argument was mainly rooted on that African films should not be used as Hollywood's dream machines and should escape from the harsh reality of placing some people at the bottom as figures of the lost through representation. This also informed this study in that through the audience's perceptions the researcher was able to gauge if the Lokshin Bioskop films fulfilled Harrow's suggestion of having films for Africans that have positive images and do not use people as subjects in terms of representations. Harrow (2007) openly discussed on the need to deal with pressures of having images of women in films that place women as more appealing if they are portrayed as sex objects.

Interpretation of films by Audience

In 1980 Stanley Fisher wrote an influential book, where he argued for the fundamental importance of readers' interpretations of texts. He argued that a text is not a text without a reader and a context (Fisher, 1980: 52). In light of this dissertation, the Lokshin Bioskop films cannot be a "text" without the audience who are viewers and the context in which it is interpreted. The viewers of these films complete it as a "consumable media" (to use Fisher's phrases). This project, interrogated how the viewers of these Lokshin Bioskop films in Durban make meaning

and sense of the feature films in light of their context; that is their beliefs and values, which can be both entertaining and seen as a mirror of reality.

Production of a text applies to the activities of both the mass communicators and those of the audience. According to Fisher (1980), the extent to which the reader is involved in constructing meaning depends partly on the kind of text involved. In light of this study the text involved is film and this researcher used Fisher's assertion to understand the construction of meaning from films. Fisher (1980) stressed meaning-making as a process, not as the 'extraction' of 'content', but he limited the possible range of readers' meanings by stressing the importance of 'interpretative communities' hence this study is based on the audience's interpretation of the female representation in these films. John Fiske (1987: 14) also notes that, "a programme is produced by the industry and a text is produced by the audiences or readers" therefore the production of text applies to the activities of both the mass communicators and those of the audience. The extent to which the audience is involved in constructing meaning depends partly on the kind of text involved. Some texts are more 'open' than others for instance, one would usually expect more active interpretation by the reader to be involved with soap operas and series as these keep the audience always looking forward to watching the next episode.

Fiske (1987) further on argues that audiences are not passive recipients of media text but are active as they can decide what to and what not to consume and with what levels of concentration. This informs the study in verifying the decisions made by viewers in either taking up or leaving the reconstructed gender identities that were being shown on Lokshin Bioskop. These ideas therefore directed the researcher to pay particular attention to media theories such as the reception theory which is centrally concerned with the choice, reception and manner of response of the media audiences.

Various texts have been identified as texts that are not open for their readers to interpret the way they see fit because they push agendas and are very suggestive to what they believe in and what they want their readers to get from the text, hence the need for an open text. Umberto Eco (1979) stated that "an open text is one whose discourse does not try to constrain the reader to one particular meaning or interpretation" whilst on the other hand closed text constrains the reader to

one fixed meaning. In light of this assessment the Lokshin Bioskop films can be said to be open texts.

However, scholars of the Frankfurt give power to the media rather than the context in which it operates in. Herbert Marcuse (1972: 68) presented the media very pessimistically as an irresistible force:

> The means of [...] communication, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers... to the producers and, through the latter to the whole [social system]. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood... Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior (Marcuse, cited in Bennett 1982: 43).

For Marcuse, the mass media defined the terms in which we may think about the world (Bennett 1982: 44). The Frankfurt School in general was profoundly pessimistic about the mass media. As Janet Woollacott (1982: 105) who stated that, their work 'gives to the mass media and the culture industry a role of ideological dominance which destroys both bourgeois individualism and the revolutionary potential of the working class. David Olson (1977: 277) supports Frankfurt ideas by noting that formal scientific and philosophical writing "the meaning is in the text" rather than in its interpretation, but (whilst some may indeed see this as a goal), textual meanings can never be severed from interpretation. According to the Frankfurt School arguments, all media is propaganda and audiences are at the mercy of the content producers. In this dissertation, the audiences are used to share their perceptions of the female representation to bring out their own ideas on women representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Influence of Television on Audiences

Television has an influence in viewers as people consume films they have certain concerns they might want to express and views they would like to share. Films are believed to have been made for people to consume this researcher therefore saw it necessary to involve the audience as the study was mainly based on audience perceptions. Ien Ang (1991) argues that television plays an intimate role in shaping day to day practices and experiences of people, "at home but also outside it; at work; at school; in our conversations with friends, family and colleagues; in our

engagements with society, politics and culture". This scholar informs this study to focus on effects exerted by the Lokshin Bioskop films on the audience with regards to the reconstruction of gender identities of men and women in South Africa. Ang's assertion clearly highlights that TV is a socialising agent or an agent of socialisation. This therefore directs this study to pay critical attention to how feature films also become an agent of socialisation since gender itself is a social construct. Attention is therefore directed to theories such as the reception analysis theory which postulates that people do not grow up pre – conditioned to behave and think in a certain way or specific way. Individuals are not born 'programmed' to behave in a certain way; their worldview is shaped through the process of socialization and this process can also be credited to the consumption of television.

Television has a massive impact on the audiences as it plays a role in shaping and building consumers of television products. Munroe Price (2003: 338) recognises a number of television effects. He talks about the socialisation effect of television. He states that the media as well as other social factors act upon the subject helping to initiate an individual into social framework. The media helps to present a range of norms and behaviors which the society regards as normal. Price notes that the presence of other "social factors" and this idea shows that the media alone cannot exert influence. Therefore this study seeks to verify how social factors influence the reconstruction of gender identities by the Lokshin Bioskop films on the South African audience. It is important to find out how social factors like culture and tradition might influence people's perception of gender roles and identities in South Africa.

Heldge Rönning in (2002: 94) suggested that the public should have a say on what is written in the newspapers,

> Consequently the public has the right to express opinions in newspaper columns and to appear on radio and television. Without this access, the public has no real freedom of the press, only those who own the means of communication do. Those who have access to radio, television, newspapers, magazines and book publishers have a greater ability to speak than those without. It is argued that as there is no true market place of ideas, something that should be done through government action to rectify the balance and make provisions in the form of subsidies or regulations to that the press and broadcasting services accurately and fairly represent the fullest possible range of opinions and experiences of the society.

Rönning was referring here to the print media; however, through this assertion by Rönning this researcher saw it necessary for the public to have a say in films that are produced for their entertainment and hence included them in the study by making them the key recipients. Though Rönning's emphasis is on print media it can be implemented in film studies to ensure that viewers of these films are incorporated in the making of these films through their contributions. Rönning (2002) gave an in-depth analysis of media ethics as he tackled various issues in media. He drew parallels between cultural and media studies as he linked it to the African context. The decoding emphasis used by Rönning informed this study as it combined it with Stuarts Hall's (1990) decoding and encoding model as laid the foundations of it. Rönning's emphasis is on print media; however it was still useful in this film study. Rönning stressed on public sphere and through this assertion this researcher managed to use his view of having the audience being incorporated as producers in film studies by using the focus group participants as the key informants of this study.

Clark Ross (2007: 36) argues that "although the mass media are generally conceived of as epitome of the modern day public sphere, it allows the so called public only to a limited role in deciding what should take place on its platform". This realisation by Ross shows that the audience is not fully recognised as a valued public because their input is limited in that what the mass media feeds its viewers is not determined by the audience but by the producers themselves.

Television has a dominant influence on its viewers as in most cases viewers often become what they consume, that is the images they see every day on television end up shaping their characters. Neil Postman (1985) stated that television is a dominant influence on a culture's intellectual and social preoccupations. Postman further on suggested that the influence of production of films is often influenced by the money injecting institutions acting as gate keepers of the final production of the films that will be screened on television. Though this realization by Postman this researcher realized that the media is a money making institution controlled by various money injecting institutions and therefore the main television mandate becomes the making of profit. These ideas are very important to this study because they make the researcher aware of the other factors that are at play that influence media portrayal of gender related issues.

At a time when South Africa is increasingly marketing itself globally as a competitive film production destination, they should take advantage of this opportunity and make the best of it as the platforms have been made available to them. Tomaselli (1990) stated that

> For the first time in our history, the social, economic and political conditions which sparked progressive film movements in other countries are present in South Africa. We need to seize this moment and pilot the film industry as a whole to its full potential as an accelerator, rather than as a brake, to the future which has deluded us for so long.

This realisation by Tomaselli is important to this study as it helped in directing attention to what film ought to do and it brings light to understanding film in South Africa. Through Tomaselli's assertion this researcher gained a better understanding of the South African originating film industry and shifted the research to also examine if the Lokshin Bioskop films are making progressive movements in its industry as far as Tomaselli is concerned.

Film as a communication tool

Communication is the basic function in the television industry and most films aim at communicating a message to their audiences and the importance of communication of films can hardly be over emphasized. Communication is a process of transmitting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions and plans between various parts of the entertainment industry. John T. Masterson (1989: 343) notes that communication is the transmission of information, ideas, emotions and skills by the use of symbols to create meaning and affect one another. Communication is the transmission of messages from one person to another and this is further on discussed in Masterson (2006). Therefore this research aimed at engaging the audience to find out the perception of the audiences in as far as communication in small groups is concerned. Sarah Trenhom, (2007) highlights that the concept of communication has many definitions. From this view, communication in general involves people interacting with others. It is not possible to have human relations without communication. However, good and effective communication is required not only for good human relations but also for good and successful social relations (2007: 129). In relation to this study the researcher used the focus group participant to understand the assertion of communication by Trenhom who further on goes into detail exploring effective communication.

Objectives of communication

One of the objectives of communication is the drive behind the communication process. It answers questions such as why people communicate and what they desire to achieve in light of this study it is important to know if films achieve the goal of being used as a communication tool and this will be measured through data collection. Nicky Stanton (2004: 36) discussed goals that have to be achieved through communication,

> Whether we are writing or speaking, trying to persuade, inform, entertain, explain, convince or educate any other objective, we always have four objectives which include;
> To be received (heard or read)
> To be understood
> To be accepted
> To get action (change of behavior or attitude).

When the goals listed above are not achieved then the objectives of communication are frustrated and hence effective communication will not have taken place. This researcher through interaction with the focus group participants was able to note that the objectives of communication where achieved and representations, image and themes were received and interpreted in various ways which will be discussed in depth in the data analysis chapter.

Communication is influenced by communication barriers and emotions of viewers over a subject and the influence of the media. Emotions of either the communicator or the receiver can also prove to bear a barrier to communication as emotions can prevent effective communication. In the case of the films selected for this study the participants of the focus groups did go through a string of some emotions in some discussions. Thus according to Stanton (2004) it is important to avoid strong communication when a strong emotions is liable to make a confused decision because then judgment will be clouded by emotions and this can totally distort information deemed as important for the study.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the literature that informs this study, it explored various scholars that contend that film has an influence on to the audience. However there are other factors that work together with the influence of female representations and that the audience may have power to revoke some of the media messages. This chapter reviews scholarly viewpoints and work from previous research on media influence, audience reception and the role of film in reconstructing gender identities. This chapter stressed the agreement by scholars on the fact that media

influence on audience but this influence is not supreme it happens in agreement with all other societal influences.

This chapter defined film audiences from an operational point of view as being both active and passive. The audience is active if it possessed the critical ability and is involved in meaning negotiation of issues dealing with the portrayal of women otherwise it is passive. These scholars direct the study to find out the influence that the Lokshin Bioskop films had on its audience.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

The importance of developing suitable theoretical frameworks for analyzing and critiquing audience perceptions is underlined by many theorists in the field. This study employs the decoding and encoding model (Hall 1980). The main purpose of this theoretical framework is to understand audience's perceptions and gain an understanding of visual representation though the images portrayed in these films. The theoretical framework entails the analytic tools or spectacles that will be used to understand and penetrate the study. Reception analysis will be used in the current research to investigate the ways in which selected focus groups drawn from sampled audience members perceive women representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual framework as there are a number of theories that informs the study of the influence of television on to the audience. These theories help to find out the influence that was exerted by the Lokshin Bioskop films on the audience in relation to the female representations in these films. A theoretical framework helps to provide direction through which a research is to be viewed and allows for academics to locate their research in larger theoretical traditions. The selection of a theory for this research was developed during an analysis of related literature as previous studies were done and various theories were employed.

The use of a theoretical framework is to go beyond just capturing what happened, but to create an opportunity to analyse as well. In order to understand a theoretical framework and its function there is a need to define it. According to Scott Reeves *et al*. (2008: 631) theoretical frameworks can be defined as "[t]heories [that] give researchers different 'lenses' through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis".

The purpose of this research is to capture people's perceptions on audience perceptions of the female representations in Lokshin Bioskop. The theoretical approach employed by the researcher is relevant as it will be the lens the researcher uses to link the findings of this research to the primary reasons for carrying out this research. This research will in detail explain the reception analysis theory and also touch on the significance of the hypodermic model in relation to this study.

Audience

Media audiences can be defined in terms of location, consumption, size and subjectivity and the location of this decoding of these messages. In the case of this study is the home where audiences consume Lokshin Bioskop films in the comfort of their homes. Consumption suggests that the audience are defined by what they consume, in this case, the television films in the Lokshin Bioskop series. This study uses different audiences from the medium density suburbs and the central business district (CBD) of Durban as the participants in the research process. The main focus of this study conducted was on the relationship between the text and the audience which is fluid and ever-changing. In his book McQuail[9] (1997: 1) stated that the word audience has been used as the collective term of the receivers in the simple mass communication model. He further on suggested that the audiences are not observable and the conceptualising of the audience remains problematic due to its abstract manner (McQuail, 1997: 2).

Audiences involved in this study proved that it is no longer acceptable to assume that there is only one way of interpreting a text and this was clearly demonstrated during the focus groups were people attached different meanings to the same films. Conceptions around the way in which we think about audiences evolved from being passive to being active (see for example David Morley (1993)[10] and Croteua, Hoynes and Milan, 2011: 265)[11]. It is now accepted that audiences decide on the final meaning of the films they watch and these audiences were made up of people from different backgrounds that have different social and cultural experiences. The audience involved in this study proved to be in control of the media they consume and this showed that the media helps in various activities such as learning, emotional satisfaction, soothing, relaxation which helps with issues of personal identity, social identity, aggression and violence.

Reception theory and analysis

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[9]McQuail, D. 1997. Audience analysis. London: Sage Publications.

[10] Morley, D. 1993. Active Audience Theory. Pendulums and Pitfalls. *Journal of Communication* 43(4):13-19.

[11]Croteau, D., Hoynes, W. and Milan, S. 2011. *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences* London: Sage Publications

The reception theory is a non-linear model of communication developed by media theorist Stuart Hall (1980). The main function of the reception analysis theory was to identify why different receivers could understand different meanings from one message. Reception analysis shifts the focus of the producer of the film to the thought of the audience and it pays attention to the function of the audience after consuming the film. The reception theory showed that one message can be received by the audience based on a number of factors though the message will be encode in the same manner with the same intended meaning. This is said to be influenced by various important factors such as cultural background, age, race, gender and people's positions in the society (Hall, 1980: 56). This assertion informed this researcher and guided the researcher in choosing participants for the focus group discussions and also paying attention to the issues raised and discussed in the focus group discussions leading to important analysis of the texts.

Reception theory is widely used as a way of characterising the wave of audience research which occurred within communications and cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Hall's development of cultural studies in the 1970s highlights mainly on the encoding and decoding model of communications. John Fiske (1990) emphasised on the active audience operating within the semiotic democracy. His emphasis is mainly on the openness of the messages and on the activity of the audience within the reception analysis (Hall, 1980: 133). Hall's emphasis lies on his suggested shift that attention on how audiences reacted and made sense of the media presented to them.

Reception theory takes a closer look at what is actually going on when an audience consumes a media text, it provides an analysis of how audiences perceive a certain media message, what meanings the audience draws from the message and how they relate to it or understand the meaning that is being driven by the message. In the case of this study the reception analysis theory was used to explain what the audience perceives and understands from watching Lokshin Bioskop films and their analysis of the images portrayed in these films. The Reception theory also give the audience an opportunity to fulfill their needs and satisfaction and the effects of the message or text on the psychological, personal and social space of the receiver.

Reception analysis is a version of the reader's response to literally theory and the key person in this a theory is the audience as the theory gives the audience enough power to construct meaning from the given texts. This means that a text which is a film in this study is not just passively

accepted by the audience but instead it is surfed through channels decided by the audience and taken in three different forms that is dominant, negotiated or oppositional. This means that the meaning of these texts is not inherent within the text itself but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader.

Robert Holub (1984: 62) postulates that the reception theory refers to a shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader. In the case of my study the reception theory will be applied to the women in the three selected groups as they will interpret the Lokshin Bioskop they have watched and this is a shift of focus from the intention of the producers to the interpretation the viewer's bring to these films. Holub (1984) further on explained that the reception theory is a creative process that occurs in the act of reading hence it takes place in the mind of the reader and in light of this study it takes place in the mind of the audience

The reception theory should be understood as a consistent, sensible and collective undertaking. It is known as a reaction to social, intellectual and literary developments in Germany as it emerged in the late 1960's as a group effort. Holub (1984: 89) stated that the implied reader is defined as both a textual condition and a process of meaning production that is the streamlining of the potential meaning by the text and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. That is the origins of the implied reader are firmly planted in the structure of the text and in the structure of the text and in my research women and representation of women constitute the implied reader.

This therefore guides the study on how television influences people to accept reality as presented in the media with reference to gender identities of men and women. The basic assumption underlying this theory is that repeated exposure to consistent media portrayals and themes will influence people's perceptions of items in the direction of media portrayal Holub (1984: 92). The way the societies see themselves, how they are viewed and treated by others is determined by media representation.   In short, media representation tends to influence how people view themselves and others.

Reception theorists such as Karl Heinz Stierle (1980: 346) suggested that popular literature perpetuates and produces a naïve reading that is the reader 'collaborates' with the text and the

text 'collaborates' with the reader in the production of a self-fulfilling illusion. This is attained without complex aesthetic procedures. Umberto Eco (1979: 24) makes a distinction between open and closed texts in his work he explains the difference and importance of a closed and open text in understanding texts. Eco (1979) stresses that 'the reader as an active principal of interpretation is part of the picture of the generative process of the text'.

Encoding and decoding model

It is important to understand the way audiences interpret films because they are not passive audiences but are active and have the ability to attach certain meanings to messages. Stuart Hall 1980) rejected textual determinism noting that the audience has a deciding role on interpreting the meaning of a text. Hall emphasised the "significant role" of "the decoder as well as the encoder." It is important to take into consideration the role of an active audience and the way in which meanings are interpreted. The audience does not take meanings as they are embedded on the texts but they play a key active role of interpreting messages (Hall 1973: 128). The audience is at liberty to interpret meanings in the way they see suitable and therefore this researcher will use the focus group discussions to note the positions that the audiences take in interpreting these meanings.

Encoding

Encoding is mainly concerned with the production of the message and how various factors that make the production come into play with meaning. It is mainly the process that acquires meaning and how selected mediums give meaning to a text Hall (1980: 129). As the process deals with meaning and the decision of how best to relay a meaning a number of factors come into play from a socio cultural to economic background of the message being encoded. In regards to this study the encoding process applied to gendered media discussed in terms of the audience's perceptions off the female portrayals in the Lokshin Bioskop films. The audience's interpretations of these images produced were measured to compare against the stereotypical assumptions which are discussed in length later on this study.

Decoding

Decoding is mainly concerned with the selection and interpretation of if the media products consumed by the audience. The decoding process takes into account Hall's assertion that there are three main types of reception into media. This researcher is concerned with how the audience interpreted and attached meaning to the Lokshin Bioskop films under study and the female images produced for the audience's consumption.

The importance of decoding in this study was to find out what leads audiences to decide to engage with the media products they do, and what sense they make out of the media product that is the film watched and their interpretation of the media content. In relation to this study there is the issue of the gendered concept used to predict what females in this study decode from the portrayal of females in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Meanings constructed by the individual watching television are affected by the context in which media messages are consumed. Encoding and decoding of messages is the way in which media messages are produced, circulated and consumed by the audience and meaning is then constructed (Hall, 1997). Hall (1997) argued that meaning is not fixed or decided by the ender, the message is never transparent and the audience is not passive when it receives the message it plays an active role in constructing meaning. Hall (1980: 128) stated that there are several linked but distinctive moments, production, circulation, distribution, consumption and reproduction as part of the circuit of communication. He further on stressed on that the message must be correctly decoded by the receiver in order for meaningful exchange to take place.

In other words, the message cannot be said to be understood unless it produces the intended reaction within the audience. Some media texts like films for example have communication codes that offer their audiences social identities which some may adopt as their own but readers do not necessarily accept such codes passively. Those involved in communication processes do not share common and similar code and social positions as decoding of messages are likely to be different from the encoder's intended meaning. This study is also informed by Hall (1997: 5) who stated that work on cultural representation and signification practices predicted in what has come to be known as the "social constructionist approach" through this assertion Hall informed this researcher of the encoding and decoding model of the social totality.

This theory guided this study as the researcher was able to analyse the female representations in Lokshin Bioskop films guided by the encoding and decoding model. The message is then sent

through a specific medium where it reaches a particular audience, where in the case of this study the message was sent through a film and it was directed to consumers of the Lokshin Bioskop films who are the audience for this intended message by the producer. Once the message has been received according to the encoding and decoding model it is up to the audience to decide on one of three ways to receive the message that is:

> The dominant position: where the viewer takes the meaning of the message as intended by the producer of the message.
> The negotiated position: where the viewer accepts parts of the message but rejects others that do not fit the audience's interest.
> The oppositional position: where the viewer rejects the entire message after decoding it.

In conducting the focus groups for this research, the researcher acknowledges the fact that the audience may or may not concur with what the producers of the Lokshin Bioskop films were suggesting through the female portrayal.

Each of these messages was constructed and created by the producer of the films containing signs and symbols and language used and portrayed through the use of characters used in these films. These films also make use of signs, signals, language and symbols in the films to communicate a message to the audience. These visual signs and symbols are arranged in a particular manner for a particular reason by the producer.

Mass media codes offer their readers social identities which some may adopt as their own, but readers do not necessarily accept such codes they come up with their own Eco (1965: 18) which in this case the codes are the meanings attached to the female representations. Those involved in communicating do not share common codes and social positions, decoding likely to be different from the encoder's intended meaning. Eco uses the term 'aberrant decoding' to refer to a text which has been decoded by means of a different code from that used to encode it Eco (1965: 32). Eco describes as 'closed' those texts which show a strong tendency to encourage a particular interpretation - in contrast to more 'open' texts (Eco 1981). He argues that mass media texts tend to be 'closed texts', and because they are broadcast to heterogeneous audiences diverse decoding of such texts are unavoidable.

Disadvantages of the encoding and decoding model

The encoding-decoding model has been criticised on a number of grounds. Matthias Becke (nd)[12] notes in his online essay, that:

> Stuart Hall integrated different traditions in his model, and not all of them are easily compatible. Encoding or decoding results in a specific concept of subjectivity. Audiences can misinterpret meaning for the sake of trying to exercise the power they have in meaning production.

In other words, there is a possibility of an audience missing the point or getting confused while in search of the producers' intended meaning. In conducting the focus groups (reported on in chapter five), I attempted to be aware of the cases in which the research participants willfully chose to invert the producers' meanings.

Stuart Hall on Representation

This researcher will also look at representation as it is equally important in this study of the representation of women in the Lokshin Bioskop. Representation refers to the idea that aspects of a reality, could be gender, class and race can be represented by media practitioners in the form of writers, producers and directors to construct a text which creates meaning for the audience. In this study I will attempt to interpret the kind of meaning that the selected films create for the audiences. Meaning can be constructed through the use of language and images which will also be explained in detail when talking about semiotics in the next chapter. Hall (1997: 17) sees representation as an essential part of the production of meaning in that it is signified through the use of language and images.

Hall (1997: 32) presented the representation as a process that takes place at two various levels. He elaborated on these levels stating that they were, (a)The images we see in our heads that represent what is in our own world are what we use to give meaning to the text that we come across as a point of reference; and (b) The interpretation we attach to that which represents the world around us. That is, the signifier renders messages to the receivers who in turn rely on their own points of reference to construct meaning.

As suggested by McQuail (1993: 42) the media gives a kind of social measurement of changing representations of social groups and trends. The important point is that the media are not always able to present everything about the object of representation and there is need to select and frame

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[12] http://textarbeit.net/encoding.htm

some aspects of the object of representation. Representation and framing work together. It is important to note that the audience may understand these images, behaviors and ideas that are presented by the media in different ways in accordance with their individual values and assumptions of the world around them Hall (1997: 19).

> Representation is not just about the way the world is presented to us but also about how we engage with media texts in order to interpret and embrace such portrayals. Representation is not just about the way the world is presented to us but how we engage with the media texts to encode a message Hall (1997: 20).

Representation is therefore just as much about audience interpretation as it is about the portrayals that are offered to us by the media. The point is that producers construct all representations, irrespective of how natural they may look through the process of selection. As a researcher I understand representation to be the process of constructing meaning at production level and understanding the subject matter being represented. The main importance of representation in this study is that if certain representations are used constantly they tend to become familiar and may lead to the creation of stereotypes. However, this should not be mistaken for a different meaning that may present the audience as passive viewers who are just victims of what they are made to consume. One may note that in as much as people have their different views of the representation of women in the Lokshin Bioskop they still continue to watch and enjoy them instead of challenging their assumptions.

According to Hall (1997: 65) representation means the selection, presentation of structuring and shaping the already existing meaning. This implies that representation is more than presenting aspects of reality and is also about conveying meaning using the aspects of reality and uncovering the obvious and hidden meaning which is uncovers when looked at with a critical eye. Meaning is created based on our own understanding that is our attitudes, mental images and convictions. Thus the meaning may not always be free of stereotypes. This study will also use semiotics-based analysis to disentangle the ideological meaning of female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on theories and concepts that can help explain the role played by the audience in decoding the meaning of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Audience reception analysis believes that audience do not only take what is given to them without questioning or taking their own interpretations into consideration and this then means that all media is interpretable in any way understood by the audiences and therefore there is no room for one interpretation of a message. This theory further on emphasized on the relationship between the audience and the text being portrayed. In this way the audiences constantly differ in their thoughts and feelings towards a subject and hence this researcher saw it important to conduct focus groups so as to gather thoughts, views and interpretations from various participants. The reception analysis stated that one image can be given various meanings dependent on the factors at play.

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Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the research methods used and the procedures for gathering data which will be discussed in detail. Sampling procedures were taken into consideration while selecting focus group participants and the films to be used in this study. Focus groups, thematic analysis and case studies will be used and limitations of the methodology will be discussed in this chapter. Research is a process of trying to gain better understanding of the complexities of human experience and in some genre of research, to take action based on this understanding (Cathrine Marshal and Gretchen B Rossman 1999: 24). Therefore this research seeks to gain a deeper and better understanding of audience's perceptions with regards to female representations in Lokshin Bioskop films. This research will employ the use of focus group discussions, semiotics and group themes using thematic analysis to gather the themes identified by the participants.

A qualitative design has been preferred in researching communication and it offers a significant approach that explains the communication interaction process as it complements the interpretivist paradigm that has been used in this study. It also digs deeper into issues that cannot be explained by a quantitative method, therefore it was chiefly appropriate to employ the qualitative research design for this study. Qualitative research method was used in this research to analyse audience perceptions of the female representations in Lokshin Bioskop films, qualitative research is the series of alternating inductive and deductive steps. It is used in a search to find evidence that challenges or disconfirms concepts or ideas in a research topic.

Interpretivist Paradigm

A paradigm is a belief system or theory that guides a study and paradigms are models or frameworks that are derived from a worldview or belief system about the nature of knowledge and existence. Creswell (2003: 8) stated that the researcher relies on the "participants" views of the situation being studied and this was the case in this study as the participants in my study were the key informants for this study. Paradigms are shared by a community and guide how

researchers should act in regards to carrying out their research. The interpretivist paradigm is of the belief that reality is socially constructed (Martens, 2005: 12) and this study is aimed at audience participation to mirror the assertion that reality is socially constructed. Maureen J. Angen (2000: 384) states that there are certain criteria for evaluating research from an interpretivist approach. That is careful considerations and articulation of the research questions and that validity becomes a moral question that must be located in the discourse of the research community.

Interpretive approaches often rely on the naturalistic ways of data gathering. As such this researcher used focus groups to gathered data and get participants to share their thoughts and views in a natural setting that allowed them to voice their opinions. As an interpretivist researcher, this researcher entered the field with the insight and idea of what the audience perceptions of female representations are guided by previous studies done but this was inadequate in developing a research. This researcher remained open to new knowledge throughout the study and allowed it to unfold and develop in a natural way influenced by findings gathered from the focus group discussions. Lawrence Neuman, (2000) states that the ultimate goal of a researcher is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behavior rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects. This researcher paid full attention to the focus group discussions because it was important to understand motives, meanings, reasons and analysis from the participants of this research.

Qualitative Approach and a Reception Study Design

Qualitative research shares the theoretical assumptions of the interpretative paradigm which is what entailed this research and gives the researcher direction in conducting the study. Qualitative research is used to denote approaches which are supported by a set of hypotheses concerning the way the social world function. David Silverman (2005: 10) states that qualitative research seeks to answer questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. Female representations will be examined and qualitative research is helpful not only in giving rich explanations of complex phenomena, but in creating or evolving theories or conceptual bases, and in proposing hypotheses to clarify the phenomena.

Qualitative research goes beyond surface research as it reaches some parts that can be overlooked when conducting quantitative. As Judith Green and Nicki Thorogood (2004) argued

that qualitative research reaches the parts that other quantitative methods cannot reach, hence the use of qualitative research in this study to ensure that all areas are adequately explored and reached beyond surface findings.

Qualitative research involves an in-depth comprehension of the field of inquiry and conclusive understanding of the factors that can be attributed as having fueled the phenomenon. Bearing this in mind, it then follows that smaller samples have to be used within this methodology for better understanding compared to larger samples. Anselm Straus and Juliet Corbin (1990: 17) define qualitative research and as any research that produces findings not arrived by numerical measures or other means of quantification. Within this methodology, the study explored the role played by audiences in redefining gender identities and roles in the Lokshin Bioskop films. This research involved the identification and exploration of a number of often mutually related variables that give insight in human behavior that is motives, opinions, attitudes, in the nature and causes of certain problems and in the consequences of the problems for those affected.

Qualitative research method has an advantage over the quantitative in social research because qualitative research design provides valuable data about user needs, behavior patterns and it is used to compliment case studies Creswell (2009: 43). In light of this research case studies were used and therefore qualitative research was employed because of its compatibility with the topic under study. Qualitative research involves studied material and a collection of a variety of materials which in light of this study are the films used as case studies, personal experiences are also in cooperated making meaning to individual lives.

The qualitative methodology also offers a chance for an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon and it also uses subjective information, and not rigidly definable variables. Therefore this research needed an in-depth analysis so as to arrive at the conclusions drawn and qualitative research design was suitable for such a study. The qualitative research method examines complex questions that can be impossible with quantitative methods. In this study, qualitative research was of great importance in terms of accessing in depth information so as to be able to understand the audience's perceptions on the female representation in Lokshin Bioskop films. It was crucial in studying the perceptions of viewers before and after watching the feature films and like any other research design, qualitative research has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Instruments for data collection

The research is largely based on the viewer's responses to the films under study as they were the primary source of this study. The researcher and audience watched the films relating to the concept of representation and engaged in group discussions were the participants were given an opportunity to express their thoughts and views. In validating these films's impact on the target audience, selected focus group participants discussed representation of females in the films in relation to the reception theory and analysis of which gives a realistic dimension of the influence of producers which gives the ideal framework on how media should operate. Dovey (2015) stated that audiences have not been incorporated in the film making process

> Film festival directors and curators within Africa have not incorporated audience's tastes and desires into their conceptualisation of their festivals, audience have frequently stepped up to claim this power and sense of authorship and ownership over the festivals (Dovey 2015: 88).

Taking this assertion into consideration this researcher therefore conducted focus group discussions so as to incorporate the audience's perceptions into this study.

Case Studies

A case study is a research methodology common in social science and is based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group or event. Case studies are a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole (Yin, 1993). A case study is not a new form of research and it is useful in this study as it is a flexible method of research, it aims on exploration, hence researcher was free to discover and address issues as they were raised in the study. The case studies employed in this study were three films, namely *Umalokazana*, *Jezebel* and *Taxi Ride*. The films were sourced directly from M-Net and this researcher chose productions between 2014 -2015 which focused on issues that affect women. The chosen films had various themes that emerged from the focus group discussions that this researcher conducted as they were thematically in line with the study's theoretical framework and research questions.

Case studies give detailed examination of a single example of something, thus a case study could involve the study of a single institution, company or social group as stated earlier on this study involved three different social groups. This researcher had to choose the type of case studies to be used and decide whether they would use the exploratory and explanatory case study approaches. An exploratory case study is initial research that tries to look for patterns in the data.

According to Robson (1993: 149), a case study is basically defined in terms of its concentration on the specific text in its context. He thus says it is a strategy of doing a research which uses an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.

The reason to choose the type of case study to be used is mainly because there are many types of case studies. Yin (1993) cited by Tellis (1997) identifies three types of case studies namely descriptive, explanatory and exploratory. Exploratory case studies are sometimes regarded as an overture to social research further tries to analyse and explain why or how something happens or happened.

A case study seeks to understand a small group of subjects, case studies focus in more thorough data which gives research results more detail.

Sampling the Case Studies

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is most effective when one intends on studying a specific cultural domain (Tongco, 2007).This research investigates the representation of women, interrogating the audiences perceptions considering their cultural context. Hall (1997) acknowledges culture to be community of shared meanings. The purposive sampling technique is also known as the judgment sampling technique due to its premise of making a deliberate choice in choosing a particular subject to study due to the qualities the study possesses. The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find the case study they think they will get a large amount of information that favor their assumptions of a particular concept (Lewis & Shepard, 2006). In this case the researcher has chosen three Lokshin Bioskop films due to the way they center their storylines on particular roles women play in society.

In light of this study the researcher purposively selected the film *Umalokazana* (Philani Sithebe, 2013) which was made in Durban and revolves around issues that affect women even in today's society. The second film was *Jezebel* (Philip Moseou, 2013) which was selected for its themes that are brought out through the representation of women. The third film selected was *Taxi Ride* (David Kau, 2013) which humors its audience while ridiculing the female species.

Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling is the method of choosing items in an unstructured manner from the population frame. It is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in getting an inexpensive approximation of the truth (Creswell, 2009: 147). As the name implies, the sample is selected because it is convenient. This non-probability method is often used during preliminary research efforts to get a gross estimate of the results without incurring the cost or time required to select a random sample (Creswell, 2009: 149). It is also refer to a 'grab' or 'opportunity' sampling, and a method of choosing items subjectively in an unstructured manner (Creswell, 2009: 149). This is the type of sampling that the researcher will employ in coming up with the relevant films from the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Focus groups

A focus group is a small group discussion guided by a researcher who intends to research on a certain study (Creswell, 2009). It is used to gather information on opinions on certain topics and then guide future action. A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which groups of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, or idea. Questions were asked in an interactive group setting where participants were free to talk with other group members. Focus groups were used in this study so as to gather information from the audience who were the key informants in this study. Morgan (1998: 115) says focus groups can be defined as bringing together a small group of people to participate in a carefully planned discussion on a defined topic. Participants deliberated on various issues as questions emerged from the discussions leading to the unfolding of various themes from the films. It turned out that most of the participants were familiar with the films that were selected for this study as they were at the time showing on television therefore this researcher only played out snippets from the films and the discussions unfolded.

Focus groups rely on interaction and it is through this interaction that themes and interpreted meanings emerge. Focus groups offer a general definition, noting that focus groups rely on 'interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator' (Morgan 1997: 2). It is through focus groups that marginalized groups can get to have a voice on issues that concern and affect them therefore this study is giving women a chance to voice out on the representation of females in Lokshin Bioskop films. During focus groups some people can open up and share experiences and interpretations of films

when they share thoughts in a group setting. Focus group goes well beyond listening to others since they can serve as either a basis of empowering "clients" (Magill 1993: 14, Race et al 1994). This study will conduct focus groups in an open set up that stimulated conversation and people can share their views on female representations.

Sampling Method in Focus Groups

Sampling is a vital tool in methodology according to Rees (1983: 72) sampling can be considered to be the process of identifying samples that represent the whole population. It refers to a technical accounting device employed as well as a way of attempting to rationalise the collection of information so as to choose an appropriate way to restricted set of objectives persons, events and other phenomenon from which the actual information will be drawn. Based on this premise, it is possible to reach a conclusion by examining only a portion of the total group. Row Peterson (1982: 23) defines sampling as a procedure of choosing a segment of the population to represent the entire population under study.

Three focus groups with eight people in each group were used in this study and sampling procedures were taken in selecting the focus group participants. The sampling procedure used was non probability sampling. "Non-probability sampling involves choosing samples not so much to be representative of the target population, but on the characteristics of the target population" (Meadows 2003: 522). This study used the non-probability *convenience* and *purposive* sampling methods to select its sample. The researcher employed convenience sampling to choose participants that is same sex gender was used in the focus groups. The participants were drawn from Glenmore's suburb in Durban for the first group, the second group was comprised of working women from the CBD area of Durban and the third group was made up of women from an active arts church group from the Durban Christian Center. This researcher had to provide conducive environments that were not hostile or gave other participants more upper hand than others, the venues were neutral relaxed for all participants to ensure that they actively participate. Participants were asked questions about how they perceive female representation in the Lokshin Bioskop films and discussions unfolded leading to various realisations.

Limitations of Focus groups

This research had limitations in terms of gathering focus group participants particularly the working class group as the researcher had to constantly research new members because of failure to find time suitable for all intended participants. During the focus group discussions some of the participants lost focus as they continuously watched the films that had been left playing on television on mute. The researcher then ensured that during focus group discussions the television was switched off.

Analysis Methods

The relationship between media and society depends on three variables that operate in a circuit: production, text and audience- the circuit of culture. The variables have to be understood in relation to their context. Media texts are mediations of reality. Producers mediate their social, political and cultural context, obscuring decision processes of selection and construction governed by factors. Pieter Fourie (2009) indicated the importance of the institutional context of a texts production and reception. Chomsky and Herman (2008: 11) concur stating that "[f]actors such as ownership and control, [the] dependence [of other] funding sources (such as advertisers), mutual interests and relationships between the media and those who make the news and have the power to define it and explain what it means. They contest that editors and journalists internalize [priorities and] definitions [on] news worthiness that conform to the institutions policy ".

The media can be used as a tool to incorporate the audience as it portrays the 'truth' within society through films. The media is a tool constantly engaging in the negotiation of 'truth' within society (Fourie, 2009: 208-209). The media possess the power to establish and sustain relations of dominion (Thompson (1990) cited in Fourie (2009)). Thus this study aims to analyse the audience's perceptions of what is portrayed by the feature films under study.

Semiotics

Semiotics is the theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. Its basic principal lies in the understanding and use of objects and acts as 'signs' in relation to other signs. John Hartley and John Fiske (2003: 22) defined semiotics as the science of signs, how they work and the ways in which we use them. One needs to look at what position the producer is inviting the audience to

adopt. The text is the product of a range of semiotic decisions that act to position the reader inviting them to adopt one position and at least implicitly reject another (Fourie, 2009: 212).

Tomaselli (1996: 29) defines semiotics as "the study of how meaning occurs." Meaning in film, is embedded in the contexts of production of those filmic texts. As Tomaselli (1996) argues, prevailing meanings are outcomes of socio-cultural encounters. In other words, discursive practices and texts can be connected to wider social and cultural determinants following an unwritten transpersonal code (Stam *et al.*, 2005). There is a link, therefore, between the text and underlying societal power structures. Semiotic analysis is proposed of the content of the four films mentioned above, in order to understand the production services that went into their making, and the socio-economic context within which such production occurred.

John Hartley and John Fiske (2003: 22), the central concerns of semiotics are the relationship between the sign and its meaning and the way signs are combined to make codes. An audience uses media language to understand messages, that is to decode the meaning of a particular image such as fade ins and fade outs representing memory flashbacks. Balazs (1952) states that the presence of images gives meaning to the audience

> This is not simply because these allegories of allegories are crude and over obvious but also as has already been remarked- because images have a presence of their own reality and a further meaning over and above that. An image that gives its objects only this additional meaning and has no reality of its own becomes an empty lifeless vignette (Balazs, 1952: 57).

Signs have two parts, the signifier, which is the visible part of the sign, and the signified- that is what the said sign signifies or the idea or meaning or concept represented. Relationships can change between the signifier and the signified, for an example the same character in a film can be projected differently depending on the angles the camera uses. This also illustrates how chosen signs influence meaning. Therefore it is important to note why a particular sign has been chosen since everything is constructed for a reason. Fiske and Hartley (2003: 23) state that a sign is determined by culture therefore it is man- made. This study will use semiotics to analyse the three feature films under study during the focus group discussions. The main focus will be on the signs, symbols in regards to dressing and mannerisms projected by the films under study.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is described as a form of recognising pattern with data so that identified themes become categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006: 4). A theme is a pattern found in information that at the minimum describes and organises possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis 1998).The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed and the task of the researcher is to identify a limited number of themes which reflect their textual data. Patterns are identified through a vigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision. The thematic analysis is primarily concerned with characterizing and summarizing perceptions and lived experiences and applying the results to a particular research problem, rather than building and assessing theoretical models. It goes through processes of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of higher themes.

This study used thematic analysis to analyse the themes that emerged during focus group discussions. The thematic analysis is used by qualitative researchers and scholars in social, behavioral and applied sciences: literature, psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, history, art, political science, economics, mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, etc. (Boyatzis, 1998: 44). This researcher drawing from Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) generated the table below in relation to identifying and grouping of themes.

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phases	Description of the process	Application
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and re- reading the data, noting down initial ideas.	Eight women were selected for three different focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were held. The recordings were transcribed combining the recordings from each group. The data collected from all the focus groups was transcribed by the principal researcher. During this process the initial thoughts and ideas were noted

		down.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	Coding phase. The whole data set was given equal attention so that full consideration could be given to repeated patterns within the data.
3. Identifying themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	Searching for themes; themes explained larger sections of the data by combining different codes that may have been very similar or may have been considered the same aspect within the data. All initial codes relevant to the research question were incorporated into a theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	Researcher developed thematic maps to aid the generation of themes, helping the researcher to visualise and consider the links and relationships between themes that emerged. At this point any themes that did not have enough data to support them or were too diverse were discarded. This refinement of the themes took place on two levels, primarily with the coded data ensuring they formed a coherent pattern, secondly once a coherent pattern was formed the themes were considered in relation to the data set as a whole. This stage lasted until a clear idea of the various themes and how they fitted together emerged.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis	Phase of defining and naming the themes, each theme needs to be clearly defined and

	tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	accompanied by a detailed analysis. It was highly important to develop short but punchy names that conveyed an immediate indication of the essence of the theme.
		Main themes are viewed as essential in determining the understandings of all the participants. Labels for main themes were ''Marriage, love, vulnerability of women,
		Woman's place, comic relief and women as a subject of blame.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	Final stage (the report production) involved choosing examples of transcript to illustrate elements of the themes, considering existing literature and drawing conclusions (Implications for the future)

Ethical Considerations

The Ethics committee at the University of Kwazulu Natal approved this research and the researcher then proceeded to conduct this research and to collect data. The researcher issued every participant with a consent form to read, understand and sign before participating in the research. Following the ethical procedures consent was only required from the research participants as they participated in their personal capacities. Three ethical principles which were considered and crucial to the research process were autonomy, beneficence and justice (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). Autonomy includes the recognition of the participants' right to

be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether or not to participate, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Orb et al., 2001). Beneficence is doing well for others and preventing harm.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methodologies that were made use of by the researcher as a way of gathering information for this study. Several techniques were used to dig deeper into the audience's perceptions before and after watching the Lokshin Bioskop films in relation to female representations in these films.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis

Introduction

The main aim of this study is to understand the audience's perception of the female representation through reception analysis. Viewers of Lokshin Bioskop films were interviewed collectively in the focus group discussions, their discussions and interpretations were analysed and their consumption patterns of these films were discussed in order to find out how, why and what the audiences interpret from the images portrayed by the Lokshin Bioskop films. Using the methods discussed in the methodology chapter, this chapter presents and analyses the data which was collected for this study. To meet the objectives of the study, data was analysed and interpreted in relation to the theoretical considerations informing this study notably the reception theory and Stuart Hall's decoding and encoding model. This chapter is also informed by the literature review and the theoretical framework in chapters two and three which guided the study by laying down what has already been said about the role of representation and audience's perceptions.

The chapter combines findings from focus groups, semiotics, and thematic analysis. The analysis is pinned on the purpose of the study and seeks to fulfill its three objectives by providing answers to them. The objectives of the study are:

> To investigate how South African women audience receive and interpret images of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films.
> To investigate how audiences interpret the representations of women in Lokshin Bioskop films.
> To determine factors that influence how the audience interpret meanings in the representations of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films.

Profile of Participants

This study had three different groups of females residing in Durban, between the ages of 21-35 years. The groups were composed of an active youthful church group from Durban Christian Center, employed women working in the city center of Durban (marketing, sales, Human resources and administration departments) and some residents of Glenmore suburbs who are

studying, working and some doing both. The participants were conveniently selected in order to make sure that they watch the films and are not the typical "stay at home" woman who has too much time to watch and analyse these films. In summary the participants were urban, educated and a significant interest in this film study and other media studies. Their film, media and cultural knowledge became evident during the focus group discussions and influenced their reception of the images portrayed by the Lokshin Bioskop films. Overall it can be concluded that indeed there is no single meaning when it comes to female representation and understanding of messages encoded by film makers and this will be discussed later in relation to the various themes that were identified by the participants.

Participants are referred to in the groups they participated and reference is made as follows:

F.G 1- Durban Christian Center

F.G 2- Durban City Center working class

F.G 3- Glenmore Residents – middle class

Please note: all the names in this chapter are pseudonyms, chosen by the participants themselves. The researcher has a confidential code-list of the pseudonyms and the corresponding real names of the participants.

Film as a Representation of reality

At a time when South Africa is increasingly marketing itself globally within the film industry, it is important to explore representations of women in some of the films that seem to be taking the film industry by storm having been allocated their own channel to broadcast throughout the clock. This study took an interest in the Lokshin Bioskop films that have been coined Mzansi's own story teller.

Film representations are ways in which films portray particular groups, society, communities, ideas and themes in a certain way. Therefore my study focused on how a particular group which is in my case, women are portrayed in the Lokshin Bioskop films. This study aimed at examining films as simply reflecting or mirroring reality and having an effect on their viewers by examining audience's perceptions of female representation on films. Television is a very powerful, popular and universal medium of expression and is very popular and celebrated in many households. It has an impact on its viewers and it is no doubt that "people instinctively imitate actions and

model the behavior they observe: however they do not have the intellect or maturity to determine whether the action is appropriate or good" (Danielle Larsen, 2001: 1).

The media through representation has power to construct meaning as suggested by adverts through the use of representation, a fragrance advert portrays the person wearing that fragrance as irresistible and they are portrayed as people with a good sex appeal and irresistible. When advertising alcohol, alcohol is portrayed as a great party starter and car adverts often portray their cars as the must have cars with the best advanced technological functions. The media has power to construct meanings to their audiences and should have balanced representations so as to make their audience understand these films (Hall 1997: 37). This study therefore focused on female representations and used women as the main tool for data gathering to uncover the female audience's perceptions on female representations. The choice to make use of female participants resonated with Hall's assertion that we all speak from a particular place, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context,' positioned" (Hall 1990: 223).

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate how South African women audience receive and interpret images of women in Lokshin Bioskop Films. During the focus group discussions it emerged that participants felt most of the images of women portrayed were stereotypical and various discussions centered on such images were tabled.

Lokshin Bioskop and Stereotypical images

During the focus group discussions participants in this project concurred that they seek to break stereotypical images of women and create diverse, positive and progressive ones so that they as women can become agents of social transformation and enable a more just society that does not view a woman in a typical manner. As stated by Hall, "...identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past" (Hall 1990: 324).

The female participants in this study identified themselves in the name of being a woman and sharing while drawing from their experiences. Culturally unsaid matters were put to center stage to discuss the existence of stereotypical female images in the films. Focus group participants felt

that this representation of women analysed possesses a malicious influence on the viewers, because whatever ideology the films exposes shapes attitudes and behaviors of viewers.

The respondents in this research highlighted the fact that they are seeking to deconstruct stereotypical images of the woman's place and role, rejecting amplified and negative images of women that are prevalent in the South African films. Participants stated that man are free of the stereotypical representations and this was a clear reflection of what Murphy (2000: 126) stated that a man is free of the sex role stereotypes that limit the ability to be human. Sex role stereotypes say that men should be dominant, achieving and enacting a dominant role in relation with others is taken to be an indicator of success. "Success for men often involves influences over the lives of others" (Adichie, 2009)[13].Hence these women are speaking out as they seek to occupy front seats in the invention of their own reality and mirror that shows a real woman and not a typical woman. In the process they are seeking to erase externally enforced and patronising ideologies presented by producers of these films who are mostly male. The respondent's analysis was in line with Adichie (2009)[14] who stated that there is need to break from stereotypical images because they cripple society: "What if boys and girls were raised not to link masculinity with money, what if the attitude was not, the boy has to pay rather whoever has more should pay". This assertion shows that there is great need to socialize girls and boys in a different manner and this will help to break away from stereotypical images that portray men and women in a typical manner.

In one of the discussions, one participant Yoliswa[15] (F.G 2) said that they were tired of stereotypical images in the Lokshin Bioskop films.

> The minute I sit down to watch these Lokshin Bioskop films I already know the kind of images I will see. I only watch television in the evening after work and I follow these films but sadly all I ever see on these films is the stereotypical images of women. That is a woman is always crying and is usually at the mercy of a man.

She made reference to Tholi in *Jezebel* who was always in tears begging her husband to stay each time he threatened to leave her. Another participant added that it is such images that make people think that women are weaklings and always use tears to beg for mercy. She also stated

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[13]*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc*
[14]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc
[15] Please see note above about the use of pseudonyms.

that these film makers forget that there are some women like her that hardly cry and shed tears even though they are hurting they prefer to face their problems with a straight face.

Another participant argued that crying is not a sign of weakness and they should not portray women that cry as weaklings as crying is a way of relieving oneself of excess emotions. She argued that some men cry and it is okay because it is their way of getting rid of excess emotions but argued that these men are hardly shown on films because they probably feel that if they put images of men crying it will make them appear as though they are weak. Television messages have strong influences on individual and group behaviors, and views on issues of gender. It is without a doubt that this is a real problem as it has been noted by Adichie "The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than how we are" (Adichie 2009)[16].

In some focus group discussion some women bemoan the loss of voice that is associated with social conventions when Lwazi is forced to make a choice between her music career and marriage as she cannot have both. She is forced to give up her dream of singing and playing wife to be to Mvelo whose life is still going on well for him as he did not have to sacrifice his dreams for this marriage. The people around Lwazi hammer into her head the importance of marriage and describe it as a privilege and therefore she feels compelled to keep her marriage at the expense of playing naïve wife. The findings from the research echo the same sentiments as Adichie (2009) [17]states that marriage is a prerequisite of proving that one is female,

> Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage, I am expected to make my life choices keeping in mind that marriage is the most important thing. Marriage can be a good thing, it can be a source of joy, love and mutual support. Why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage and we do not teach boys the same value?

Some participants in the focus group discussions argued that it is the media that feeds people with the thinking that being married is a great achievement arguing that women are seen as child bearers, domesticated beings and have a limited contribution to real life issues. This is in line with what Cashmore (1994: 37) revealed when he stated that women in most parts of the world have historically been regarded as bearers of children, oriented to domestic work and having no significant role to play in society's major institutions, such as politics, commerce and

[16]*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc*
[17]*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc*

education.

Fig 1 *Lwazi is forced to work in the fields by her mother in law.*

South African Audiences and the Lokshin Bioskop films

Participants during focus group discussions highlighted that the language used in some of the Lokshin Bioskop films contributed to society's ill use of language to call women. They argued that the way men in these films talk to their wives suggests lack of respect. One participant made mention of how Lwandle has to protest and remind her fiancée that she is not a child but an equal to him as she is his fiancée.
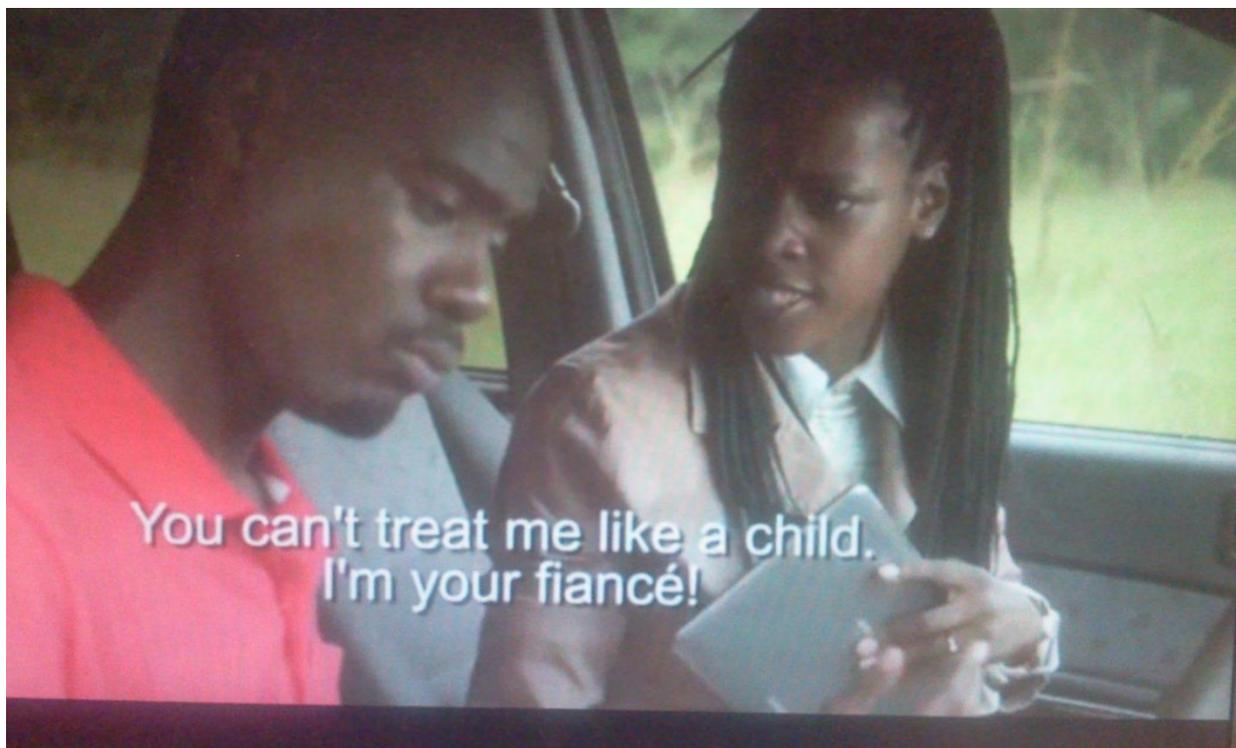
Fig 2 *Lwazi complains that Mvelo is treating her as a child*

The participants in one of the focus group discussions noted that some of the films make use of offensive word referring to women, whereas men do not get offensive tags. One of the participants also highlighted that there are some words in Lokshin Bioskop that are often used to refer to women and are an assault to the women and hence lead to women being called using these offending labels, for example women are sometimes referred to as of "*Unondidwa/ umahotsha*" which translates to mean a loose woman concurred the use of this kind of language is usually used by 'rebels' who like using offensive language. Some participants corresponded with this and also said that the use of such words is 'rude' and does not command respect and is associated with cheap reference to human beings. Zama (F.G 1) said that the language used when talking to women is quite offensive.

> When women do something wrong they are given tags that are offensive and it is not right. Jezebel is constantly labeled as *unondindwa* but Ben is not in any way insulted. In *Umalokazana* Lwandle in a moment of anger refers to Zethu as *unondindwa* and it such images that make people out in the world think it is okay to call a woman with such words.

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Language is one of the first mediums through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in culture (Hall 1997: 1-20).

One of the participants Nokukhanya (F.G 1) stated that most words that often become popular are often picked from films and language and they then become trendy ad used in societies. Some participants suggested that the language used when men talk to women demeans the woman as they talk to women in any manner they please. On the issue of language use most participants concurred that people who use this type of diction were largely influenced by television.

During the focus groups the participants also applauded the Lokshin Bioskop films for being a real mirror of women and this was in agreement with what was stated by Wodak (1997: 14) stated that media plays a central role in construction and reproduction of group and individual identities as well as setting of social agendas. This means that women are explored in various ways where issues of gender are concerned and films often act as a mirror of what is already believed to be said about women through gender constructions. One participant even suggested that it is necessary for women to look seriously into these images and work on what needs to be worked on because they are a reflection of what women really are. Nokukhanya said that it was important for film producers to tell it like it is, I know as women we often complain when we are portrayed in a certain manner.

> I think it is important for us to look at ourselves in the mirror and face the person we see. As women we have a serious pull down syndrome, we are our own enemies and we have a long way to go as far as the pull down syndrome is concerned. In Umalokazana the people that make Lwandle unwelcome at her in-laws place are women. For example her mother in-law complains about her dressing and takes her to work in the field just for control. I mean she had to understand that Lwandle was a city girl and was probably not used to some of these manual chores so as a woman all she had to do was to be lenient with her and introduce her to the hard manual labor with her consent. The way she handles it is as if to say you have to pay to be son's wife. Lwandle is accused of coming to steal men from the community. This is a real and clear picture of women that is how we are. We always feel threatened by another woman's presence and we are overly protective of our man. As women we always want to be up in arms with each other over petty issues and we like making each other feel uncomfortable.

Zama also echoed the same sentiments giving examples of *Jezebel*.

> I think some of these representations are a clear picture of how we as women behave towards each other. These images are common we see and read about

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them every day. In *Jezebel* instead of the maid helping her through her difficult time, she has her own motives and selfish reasons for taking up the job of a helper. The helper creates tension and even makes the situation worse, she encourages Jezebel to drink more so as to ensure that she becomes a wreck and she can take over her home. She lures Jezebel's unsuspecting husband and is happy to "help" Jezebel in performing wifely duties. As a woman one would expect her to help Jezebel clean up her mess and even help to make Jezebel's husband understand why Jezebel is behaving the way she is. As women we enjoy snatching each other's men we just love to do it that is why there is a high rate of *Omakhwapheni.* The maid and boss relationships are quite common in our circle of friends and families, we read about it and we even see it happening every day. It is because we enjoy hurting each other, if this world was full of women that can say no to a married man or even not make a move on a married men we would have a better world. So my conclusion is that the Lokshin Bioskop to an extent represents us the way we are and also exaggerates and disrespect us in some representations. For us to sit here and pretend as if we are always victims will not help we have to acknowledge that some of the images shown in these films are a true reflection of what we do.

In another focus group discussion one participant Sphiwe (F.G 3) noted that there are some positive representations as they discussed the theme of love in *Umalokazana*. She pointed out that women are natural lovers and when they are in love they can give up anything just to be with their loved one. In the case of Lwandle she was in love with her fiancée and she sacrificed her love for music for the man she loved. "In many cases I have seen women give up their dreams for love, I have seen women sacrifice for love and *Umalokazana* is a real reflection of how much of lover's women can be. Lwandle had to put her music career on hold so she can be with the man she loved. At least right there that is positive picture of women and it is real," she said. Another participant Ziyanda (F.G 3) said that women sometimes try too hard to lease and be accepted and while at it they lose their own identity.

> In *Umalokazana*, Lwazi seems to be trying too much to make her marriage work and in the process she loses her identity. This is so common among us women we try too hard to make those we care about happy at the expense of our own happiness.

Phumelele (F.G 3) argued that even if these images were "positive and a real reflection" they are still typical.

> Yes I agree with you that the sacrificing and love representations are practical but I still think those representations are just typical. As for the woman hate woman issue, yes it is true but these films seem to justify the fact that we are our own oppressors, so at the end of the day that is stereotypical for me because that is how people see us as women.

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Yoliswa (F.G 2) concluded that even though they are "typical" they are showing what is happening in everyday life and suggested that in a way these films are educating and raising awareness in viewers to be careful of the maids they hire to help.

> We also need to see the positives in these films as women we need to work on some issues and see where we go wrong so we can move forward and learn from our mistakes. Some women tend to relax when they have maids and even go to an extent of entrusting the maid with wifely duties such as cleaning the bedroom. Some people like confiding in maids so they need to see some of these things to be reminded of what can happen to them if they are not careful in handling their affairs at home.

During the discussions it emerged that most people are governed by society that is in most cases people tend to act and behave in a way that pleases society because they want to fit in. The participants concurred that culture; tradition and society play a vital role in shaping women's attitudes and behaviors.

Smallie (F.G 1) said Tholi needed to be loved and supported through her difficult time and not accusation from Ben.

Tholi did not have a real support system that is probably the reason why she ended up turning to the bottle. All Tholi needed was love and support from her husband, every woman desires to have a strong support system through a difficult time. Instead of her husband talking to her or even taking her to a counselor so that she can seek professional help the husband wants to walk out on her. I think that is a real problem in the society we live in, we have been made to believe that some of the things that can help us are for white people. A very good example is when one talks about seeing a shrink or counselor they are looked at in a funny way and a lot of whispering will do rounds. The African culture does not believe in some of the things that can help people deal with their situations as they do not believe that one can seek professional help and be assisted. So I think Jezebel did not know how to deal with her miscarriage and knew on that she would not get any help from people as they have their own theories on miscarriages and all. The husband also expected Jezebel to deal with her ordeal the way he was dealing with it as he was being a man about it, that is why he does not even b other to talk to her and ask her how she feels, sadly this is the kind of men we have around us they always expect women to be able to go through things the way they do.

> Zama (F.G 1) agreed with Smallie (F.G 1) as she added to the discussion,

> Tholi was probably dinking her heart out because she was feeling like a failure. Society expects every married woman to have a child and be able to conceive and when one miscarries people do not see them as women and a lot of stigma is attached to them. There is always something wrong with the woman when they have difficulties in carrying pregnancies to term. Maybe the pressure was too

much on her and was feeling less of a woman because she had failed to carry her pregnancy through to full term. Some of these issues that are portrayed in these films are so real and they really show the plight of women out there.

These focus group discussions revealed that women are moving beyond the expected compliance with received social and rhetoric definitions. They want to position themselves into arenas for new actions and relations, creating a space to communicate and speak out making their voices heard. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2001: 13) posits that the relationship between women and silence can be plotted by women themselves and must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The readiness to shock in their own free discussions implies an acceptance of the implications of speaking bravely and fiercely.

Responses from focus group participants on Images

Following responses gathered from focus groups on images portrayed it shows that a number of the people felt there were more negative images than positive ones.


■ Negative Images ■ Positive Images
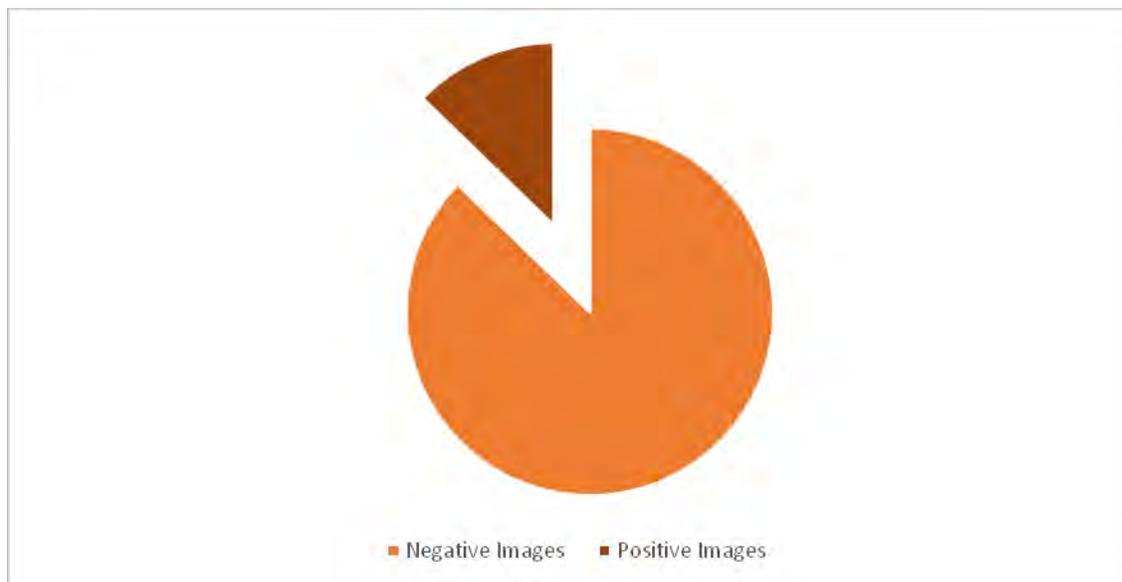
Fig 3 *The chart above shows the responses from participants in regards to negative and positive images.*

Participants in this study stated that television influences the way people dress and talk. As noted by Ang (1991: 75) who argued that television plays an intimate role in shaping day to day practices and experiences of people, "at home but also outside it; at work; at school; in our conversations with friends, family and colleagues; in our engagements with society, politics and culture". After the focus group discussion participants were asked if they are influenced by the images they see on films and below is a table showing their responses as some said they were being influenced.
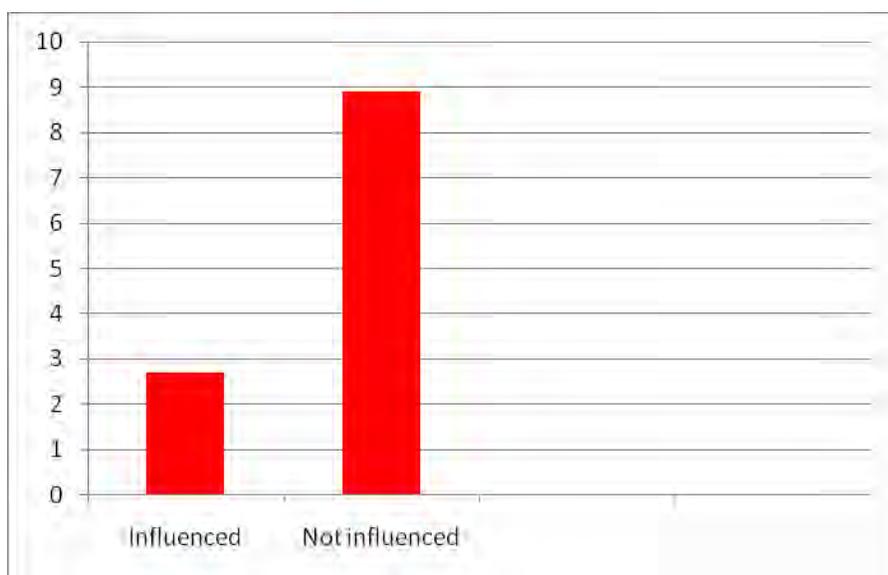

Fig 4 *shows how many participants were influenced and not influenced by film.*

Thematic Analysis

This section will be informed by thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) who argue that thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. They outline what thematic analysis is locating it to other qualitative analytic methods that search for theme or patterns. Therefore this researcher will use this as a guideline to using thematic analysis for this study.

Love

The theme of love has formed the basis of many romantic films and when one sees a love plot they already imagine a "forever after" love story which is fueled by scenes of burning love passion, commitment and love shared. However the two Lokshin Bioskop films under study, *Jezebel* and *Umalokazana* have the theme of love explored differently. Love in these two films is not the typical love story it is love which is centered on scenes of guilt, jealousy and doomed love. In *Umalokazana* Lwazi is in love with her fiancé who means the world to her but the women around her are a hindrance to the love and in her love developing, women are portrayed as enemies of love. Lwazi's mother in-law is a typical African woman who wants to be involved in his son's love choices as she encourages her son to pursue another girl from the village who she would have preferred for her son.

Love is clouded by jealousy as women in *Umalokazana* are jealousy of Lwazi's new found love they try by all means to destroy the love she shares with her fiancé. It is the same scenario in Jezebel, Jezebel tries to steal Tholi's love from her as she kicks her harder when she is down. When Jezebel is hired as a maid to help Tholi who has become grief struck, she has her own motives and intends to steal Tholi's husband right under her nose. She is also jealous of the love Tholi and her husband share and will stop at nothing until she too has it.

The two films under study both have a love triangle affair as third people are trying to come between two people who love each other. The theme of love in both films is explored in the same manner that is both the man in these women's lives does not give back the love they are shown by their wives. In *Umalokazana*, Mvelo fails to stand up to his mother who is coming between him and his love by trying to bring another woman into his love and mistreating his fiancée. Instead he adopts his mother's way of treating Lwazi and in the mix of things he forgets that he is supposed to show his love and commitment to his wife. In *Jezebel* Ben also fails to stand by Tholi and reciprocate Tholi's love for him. Instead of helping Tholi out of grieving by showing him his love, support and commitment he is busy making things worse for Tholi by accusing her of being an alcoholic. He too forgets that he has to love his wife back and help her out of the depression she is going through.

They say love conquers all but in these two films it seems not to conquer all as the women are the ones who are in love and trying by all means to make it work in their relationships while the men fail to give back as much as they take. The theme of love is explored differently in these two

films and it is not the love story that ends with a happy ending, it is however a true reflection of so many love stories we see around us and our communities. Love in these two films is explored through the lenses of an everyday experience that is we read and see maids that want to bargain more than just employment by trying to snatch men from their unsuspecting female employees. We also know of many mother in-laws that are hell bent on choosing wives for their sons and try to have a hold and control on their sons by gripping tight onto their sons and being too involved. Hlengiwe (F.G 3) a participant in one of the focus group noted that love plays a big role in the representation of women.

> The two women in *Jezebel* and *Umalokazana* represent a typical woman and the love they have for the people they have chosen to be with plays a big role in shaping their character. It is very common for women to love and expect to be loved back. The two films also have the same theme of those that are in love are being set apart by circumstances.

Another participant, Ziyanda (F.G 3), echoed the same sentiments.

> This happens many times around us, maids always want to steal their boss's husbands and it is as if to say women are desperate to be in love. As women we love and we give it our all with expectations of receiving the love back, but in many cases we get hurt because our expectations are not met. In many cases I have seen women get heartbroken because of love gone wrong. In regards to the two films I would say that should be taken as a lesson to us women because we are represented in the way we really are in real lives. We need to be careful of these people we hire to help us in our homes.

Hlengiwe (F.G 3) also said that she had picked a lesson well laid out for clingy and over protective mothers who want to be too involved in their son's lives.

> As a woman I think through the mother in law saga I have learnt that we should avoid making choices for our sons, we should get to a point where we support them of their choices. It is easy to love people that are loved by those that we love and I think we should also try to do the same instead of coming between two hearts that have found each other. It is also time people accept that times have changed and that arranged marriages will never work without the consent of the people involved.

Love is also seen as destroying people in both films under study. In *Jezebel*, Tholi is probably hurting so much because she has lost a loved life that she was falling in love with as it was growing inside her and so it is difficult for her to cope that is why she ends up depressed and turning to the bottle. Saunders in *Camberwell Council on alcohol (*1980) explains that excessive drinking impairs the normal sources of self-esteem for most women, because their evaluation of their worth tends to be based on social interactions. He further on suggests that when deprived of

his, the heavy-drinking woman's psychological vulnerability is made worse by society's assumptions about her inability to function in the traditional female role.

Tholi in *Jezebel* is acting out as suggested by Saunders, she feels rejected and deprived of the love she should be getting from her husband. It seems as if she has accepted the implied criticism from her husband and she is not capable of mothering a child, that she is not sexually attractive anymore and she thinks she is 'literally useless' and that is the main reason why it seems hard to win her off the bottle. In *Umalokazana*, Lwazi also feels deprived of the love she deserves; she keeps questioning herself about the choices she made when she gave up her love for music for love and marriage. The two films are centered on the theme of sacrificial love in which the two women sacrifice so much for their relationships to work.

Vulnerability in women

The theme of vulnerability in women is evident in these three films as women are at the mercy of men they love and look up to. In *Umalokazana*, Lwazi is portrayed as a woman who is vulnerable to the society and family she chooses over following her musical career, she is treated as an outcast and even the man she looks up to fails to stand up for her. Lwazi is attacked by other women in the community who accuse her of snatching their man because they had anticipated that her fiancé Mvelo would come home and hand pick a bride amongst them. Lwazi's presence is not welcome in this community as she is lashed out at from all angles.

Her mother in-law also had great expectations from Lwazi and ignores the fact that she is coming in from a different community instead of helping her through her ordeal and welcoming her into her new home she too makes Lwazi's stay unbearable by forcing her to work in the fields which is something she has never done in her life, everything she does is looked at with a critical eye. Her musical career is viewed as something that is foreign in their community and no one is supportive of her choice to sing.

This goes for Tholi as well in *Jezebel* she is portrayed as vulnerable, as she is alone and weak and depends on the bottle as the man who is supposed to love and protect her has turned his back on her. Tholi lost her baby when she miscarried and had been looking forward to having her child and obviously had great plans for her unborn child. It is only natural for a mother to fall in love with a life growing inside them and they often plan ahead and they have a joy looking

forward to finally giving birth an holding their baby for the very first time and living up to the saying 'love at first sight'. Tholi loses all hope and reason to live sober when she miscarries and she opens up herself to the world and is at her lowest and most vulnerable stage. Tholi is vulnerable and opens up her home to a stranger *Jezebel* who she cries out to for help. *Jezebel* takes advantage of Tholi's vulnerability as she has her own intentions of luring Tholi's husband to bed.

In *Taxi Ride* women are vulnerable as their choice of dressing and hairstyles is ridiculed by men who often pass rude comments. It is as if David Kau is opening up a lee-way for society to question women's choice of dressing.

The two women are portrayed as vulnerable and are also portrayed as kind hearted and naïve while the men in their lives are portrayed as saviors and grounds that women need to stand tall on for them to feel complete. The representation of women in these films shows how women can be easily taken advantage of and hurt in the society they live in if they are not cautious and are at their vulnerable stage. Many themes can be handpicked from these films but the cautionary portrayal of vulnerability and innocence of the female figures is the common bond of the two films.

Marriage

African culture shapes many of the representations in these films. The African culture demands that any woman who is of age and seen as an adult should be married. A stigma is naturally attached to women who are single, widows and divorced. This could be the reason why Lwandle in *Umalokazana* does not pursue her music career as she chooses to be a wife instead. It is necessary for one to trace back the institution of marriage to the history of marriage in the African culture.

The *Journal of Social Change* (1991: Volume 26) observes that women are their own enemies as they would rather be in extra marital affairs than be alone. It also states that African men are allowed to have more than one wife and extra marital affairs are an order of the day. This is made evident in the two Lokshin Bioskop films under study; in *Jezebel* the maid Jezebel would rather sell herself short than be alone she willingly has an affair with Ben fully aware that he is a

married man. Ben has an affair with their maid and Tholi is willing to forgive her husband and move on just so she stays married and completes the cultural expectations of her.

Jezebel is happy to have a married men in her arms and has it all planned out from the day she set her eyes on Ben despite the fact that he is married she is willing to be a side dish. In *Umalokazana*, Zethu deliberately leaves her bra in Mvelo's car just to make sure that Lwazi sees it and she too would rather be with a married man than be alone. Zethu is very much aware that Mvelo and Lwazi are "married" by the African standards but that does not stop her from pursuing Mvelo as stated by the *Journal*. She initiates an affair with Mvelo the same way Jezebel does with Ben and are both willing to go an extra mile and be a second wife even though Mvelo makes it clear to her that he has no intentions of leaving Lwazi, Zethu still has hopes of being second wife.

The theme of African marriages is explored in *Umalokazana* and *Jezebel*. In both films women are the ones that are seen to be working hard to keep the marriage going they are portrayed as people that want to keep it together despite what they go through. Men in these films are portrayed as the saviors needed by women for marriages to work, all the women throw themselves at them all in the name of having a piece of them. In *Umalokazana* Lwazi is the envy of the society because of her marriage to Mvelo and women cannot hide the fact that they too want Mvelo. The first time Lwazi goes to fetch water she is met with accusations of snatching men from the local women who vow to get Mvelo because they want him and have been waiting for him to come back home and choose a wife.

In this particular scenario women are portrayed as people who put their life on hold for a man to come and ask for their hand in marriage. Marriage is a big deal to the women and now that Mvelo had made a choice they are still willing to have extra marital affairs with him. Women in these films are viewed as people who look up to marriage as an institution that crowns one as a real African 'woman'. Lwazi even gave up her promising music career for marriage because it was important for her to get married. She was not welcome in Mvelo's community and faced a lot of challenges but she stayed there trying to make it work because she feared a failed marriage and could not think of going back home. Her biggest worry was what people would say if she returned home with a failed marriage attempt and was scared that she would be seen as less of a woman.

In the film *Jezebel*, Tholi values her marriage so much that she will give anything to stay married to Ben, she is even willing to forgive Ben for cheating and is determined to work through her love for the bottle if it's what it takes for her to keep her ring on her finger. In both films the men do not value their marriages as much as their wives do and they both sleep with other women while they are married. Women are portrayed as people who stay true to their marriage vows and are willing to forgive their husbands even if they cheat and sleep with other partners. This is a true reflection of what happens in real life, women easily forgive their husbands for cheating they do not leave them because they cheated instead they stay.

Society sees nothing wrong with a man who sleeps with another woman when they are married to another, this is brought out in Umalokazana. Mvelo's mother calls the act of 'cheating' normal and tells Lwazi that she should not make a big deal out of it because every man cheats and it is the woman's duty to stand by her husband when it happens. In Jezebel Ben, demands that Tholi should understand why he slept with another woman. Women are portrayed as people who have a little say in matters to do with marriage and are expected to understand everything that happens within the marriage institution. The two films under study show women as people who are willing to swallow the bitter pill to protect and keep their marriages growing. Women are also used to agree to the fact that a man is allowed to have extra marital affairs and this is brought out through Mvelo's mother.

One of the participants during the focus group discussions, Ziyanda (F.G 3) said she was worried about the lessons displayed around issues of marriage.

> As a viewer of films I always expect to draw lessons from films, so I am a bit worried about the way the marriage and love themes are explored in the Lokshin Bioskop films. I think that the two films are in a way saying that it is okay for men to cheat while they are married and women must be willing and ready to forgive them this happens. The way women are portrayed in both films suggests that it is not a big deal for a man to sleep with another woman while they are married and women to reaffirm this belief.

In the focus groups that were carried out by the researcher, participants concurred that the South African culture in a way promotes domestic violence because it mostly encourages young women to endure painful or violent marriages for the sake of marriage and thus endure domestic violence. The same can be said when it comes to men, participants also contributed ideas pointing out that males in marriages also have an apathy to talk about domestic violence issues especially if they are the ones who are being abused.

Woman's place

In silent ways the theme of a woman being confined to the home is consistently portrayed in Umalokazana and Jezebel as if to say the woman's place is at home. Tholi and Lwazi are both portrayed as stay at home wives with nothing much going for them in their lives except to wait for their husbands to rescue them as they entirely depend on the man in their lives. These two films do not show who women really are, because in today's world women get busy with their lives they do not only sit at home and do nothing but they get out and try a life for themselves too.

Tholi in *Jezebel* is portrayed as a stay at home wife who spends the whole day drowning her sorrows. Tholi is dependent on Ben that is why she always begs him not to leave her and is even willing to forgive him after Jezebel's incident because she does not have a life of her own instead she features in Ben's life. Lwazi on the other hand has shelved away her music career and chose marriage over doing something to improve her own life, she too wants to be part of the cast in Mvelo's life. The way these two women are portrayed is as if the film producers are saying women have nothing much to do with their lives and their lives are tied to men.

During the focus group discussions the participants echoed that women were not portrayed accurately or realistically in these Lokshin Bioskop films. One participant Ziyanda (F.G 3) said she was worried about such images.

> I personally think such images of women will hinder us women from developing from where we are to the next level. I am worried about such representations because they make it look as if it is okay to sit at home and wait for the man to go about his life, further his career and develop his life. No wonder some women do nothing about their lives and are content with staying at home because they see it on these films they tend think it is the way to life.

The wifeliness tendencies in these two films under study are continuously highlighted in these films by blows of submission, inferiority complex and willingness to please. Tholi and Lwazi are both submissive to their husbands and will stop at nothing when it comes to pleasing their husbands. Tholi wants to please Ben by suppressing her feelings and is ready to move on after the Jezebel incident. On the other hand Lwazi constantly tries to please Mvelo and his family by doing what they want and performing the roles that have been defined for her.

Lwazi sometimes tries to speak her mind but the thought is often suppressed by her desire to be a submissive wife to Mvelo therefore these two women both share the same sense of submission. The women in the three films under study have underdeveloped egos. In *Taxi Ride* one woman is taken in as entertainment for the night to satisfy the insatiable sexual appetite of a man who throws her out the next morning. After being thrown out she tries to negotiate to extend her stay that is after her ego has been bruised by being called a prostitute she still wants to be with a man who does not even know her name.

On the other films Tholi and Lwazi have underdeveloped egos because after being cheated on they still want to go about life as though nothing ever happened. Such images reduce the possibility of role development in women as women are constantly fed with images of women with underdeveloped egos they begin to think it is the way it is supposed to be. Chances of developing women's egos are very slim because they have accepted that they are worth next to nothing where men are concerned hence breaking the patriarchal mentality is still a dream in the pipeline.

Women in these films are constantly portrayed as people who are eternally waiting to be saved by the savior; in this case the men are their saviors as everything in their lives revolves around them. Women are constantly throwing themselves at these men and are fighting for a place in their lives as they all want a share of these men, they are constantly depended on these men and play victim all in the name of love. However times have changed and women are busy trying to achieve a lot on their own and such images are not of much help as they will begin to make people think that women should go back to the times when men were saviors in their lives and will always rescue them. There is no strength in these women, Lwazi in Umalokazana does not have the strength to turn her back on Mvelo's family as they constantly abuse and ill-treat her. She wants to stay, not to stay and fight but stay and hope that things will get better with time.

There are very few positive portrayals as revealed by the themes in these films it all leads back to o the woman's place being at home. Tholi also fails to leave Ben and seek help so that she can continue with her life, she too does not have the strength to leave Ben she would rather stay with him as miserable as she is. These continuous passive and submissive roles portrayed in films give the girl child little to aim for. When viewers at home are exposed to such images they hardly see beyond these images. The culture of domesticity is also highly emphasised on as

Lwazi's problems all start from her failing to play the domesticated daughter in law who is expected to work on the field, fetch water, cook and take care of her husband and family.

In *Jezebel*, Ben thinks Tholi is no longer carrying out her domestic duties and that too is the beginning of Tholi's problems as Jezebel gets hired to take care of the domestic work at home. The issue of domesticity is very popular and highly regarded as a woman's important quality in the African culture. These Lokshin Bioskop films under study make it look as though success in marriage lies in complacency, docility which depends on the silence of the woman who is ready to accept anything. The women in these films seem too lack self-worth they do not see themselves as worthy of any respect, love and compassion, they would rather settle what they already have. Such images do not only make the women look bad but they also encourage bad cultures among the young women who consume these films.

On the contrary people tend to think that a woman's place is next to her husband as a helper and in turn women begin to abandon their own dreams to help men and in the process they fail to understand that they have the upper hand. Mvelo's mother told Lwazi that the bible says a woman should help their husband. Genesis 2:20 says: *"And Adam gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field but for Adam there was not found and help meant for him"*. In this regard the help Adam needed was a woman and Lwazi's mother in-law was very right about that but forgetting there is more to being just a helper. The biblical connotations about a woman being a helper can simply be translated to show that women are important and men need women as well to function. If something is totally independent on anyone or anything it does not need help therefore the mere fact that a man needs woman's help makes a woman more relevant and important and there is need for women to see their worth, men are the ones that need a helper and so as a helper the woman should see her worth and work on being free from dependence syndrome.

Comic Relief

In October 1 2012 Mzansi Magic channel commissioning editor Brian Letlhabane in an interview with Munyaradzi Vomo said that comedy was one of Lokshin Bioskop film's genres.

> The Lokshin Bioskop films are set against the township backdrop. There is so much to expect from them, and we also included stories that experiment with the comedy sub-genres, romantic, action, drama and melodrama.

In this regard this research used one of the comedy films that are set to entertain at the expense of ridiculing women. During the focus group discussions most of the participants felt that *Taxi Ride* was a bit over the top in portraying women as ridiculous fashion lovers. One of the participants Bongie (F.G 3) said they were a bit disturbed by the portrayal of women in Taxi ride as they felt women were being taken for a ride for sure.

> I feel like David Kau in *Taxi Ride* is criticizing women because of the way they are portrayed, he makes them look stupid and he is not supposed to do that. We understand he is an entertainer but he is not supposed to criticize women and make people ridicule the way we dress and all. Our choices as women should be respected and not made fun of like we save the day by giving viewers at home a good laugh.

Although some participants picked out comic relief as a theme in these films, some participants would have none of it as they felt the comedy was made at the expense of ridiculing women. In the focus groups that were carried out by the researcher, participants concurred that the South African culture in a way promotes domestic violence through such films that are then described as comedy relief because it mostly encourages young women to endure painful or violent marriages for the sake of marriage and thus in the process suffer bruised egos. Campaigners have argued that violence against women remains a significant issue across Africa. In 2010 a Medical Research Council survey revealed that one in four South African men had admitted to raping a woman.

Experts believe domestic violence is boosted by the continuing acceptance of traditional gender hierarchies in societies across the continent. The fact that there was an uprising against gender based violence shows that there is need to produce positive images that do not present women as objects but rather as people that need to be respected. Television is a very influential media and has to take play a role in reconstructing gender identities and roles and protect women from being raped and abused by men.

Participants highlighted that the *Taxi Ride* portrays women as objects and men are freely passing comments that ridicule the female species. When Ayanda is on a taxi men come and make fun of her and pass nasty comments about her hair, calling her 'beetroot head' because of the purple color she has chosen to dye her hair with. One man is dressed ridiculously as a woman and participants felt David Kau was in a way mocking women's choice of clothes. One of the participants, Ziyanda (F.G 3), said that television feeds people with images that then make

women feel inadequate or ridiculed because they then feel they have to dress in a certain manner for them to appeal to the men. She argued that it feels like everything we do we need approval from the men.

Another participant, Bongie (F.G 3), highlighted that no matter how women dress or whatever hairstyle they choose it can never be good enough as she made reference to how the girl who has hair tinted to plum is mocked and referred to as a beetroot. She argued that such images then give viewers ideas of mocking and rapping women as she stated that rape is not only a physical act but one can be verbally raped. She gave an example, that if a teenager at home is watching these films they will then think they have a right to laugh and call women names because they deserve it and man should always comment on what women wear. She further on argued that women need to be portrayed in ways that will make people respect them and not make fun of their choices as men can choose to have a bold head or an English cut and no one says anything about their hairstyle, so it is only fair for women to also enjoy the freedom of having any hairstyle they desire without the fear of being labeled with tags.

Another participant Ziyanda (F.G 3) said that David Kau should not only focus on the plastic side of women.

> Taxi Ride turns women into one big joke and there is no balance in the representation of women. It is important to show both sides of the coin and I feel David Kau should have also put the natural side of us women. I am personally natural and I love the way I look and I do not have a problem with people who prefer being artificial because it is their choice to do so they have to be respected and not ridiculed.

Women as subject of blame

Women are always blamed for everything that goes wrong and this seems to have started in the bible were Eve was blamed for the Adamic sin and since then it has been the woman's fault. Biblically women were verbally assaulted (scripture).

In one of the focus groups conducted which comprised of young women in church ministry, one of the participants Zama (FG 1) noted that even in churches when pastors deliver sermons they make fun of their wives as they use them as examples. She spoke about how women are used as jokes and pastors will later on retract their statements and say they were only joking. One pastor made jokes about how his wife served him burnt offerings instead of real food as he claimed that

his wife can never make food without burning it and in essence he blamed his wife for everything that goes wrong.

A church is a place where most people seek refugee with the hope that they can be taken care of and if a person they look to for protection stands before them on a pulpit and verbally assaults them they tend to indeed feel useless. She argued that it is such scriptures and talk around us that fuels and shapes the images we see on television. She suggested that women are always blamed when things go wrong for example in *Jezebel,* Ben blames Tholi for every wrong thing happening in their marriage forgetting that he too is to blame for being negligent. In *Umalokazana* Lwazi is blamed for not being a traditional wife and for failing to meet up to cultural expectations.

People love to interpret the bible to best suit their own satisfaction and I have often heard people blame Eve for bringing sin nature into the world and this has created a lee-way for people to find it easy to shift the blame on a woman. In the bible Adam was given a responsibility to guard the garden and Eve but he failed to perform the duty he had been entrusted with that is why the serpent was able to worm its self into convincing Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. Therefore Adam was the first to fail his test and should be blamed but people ignore that and rush to use that scripture to make it look like women are to blame for everything the same way Eve in the bible was blamed for giving into temptation.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the information gathered using the methods discussed in the methodology chapter that is thematic analysis, semiotics and focus group discussions. The analysis of the themes was informed by the focus group discussions, literature review and theoretical framework discussed in great detail in chapters two and three. It can be noted from the analysis of the data that media exerts a certain amount of influence on to the audience. However, the audience also has power to take these media messages and appropriate them into their lives or even ignore them.

During the focus groups women were bringing out various perceptions as if they are meant to recover the repressed discourse of women that has been greatly occupied by men and constructed for them. These discussions were meant to give a critical rather than a criticizing analysis as they

highlighted that they often feel as though women are unnecessarily criticized. The focus group discussions proved that female are being probed to be independent and are being ushered into liberated spaces where they are to define their being, without consultation of the male.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of this study, it gives a compressed account of all the issues covered in chapters one to five conclusions are drawn from the major findings which are summarized. This chapter also gives conclusions reached after the data analysis presented in chapter five. It closes by giving recommendations informed by the knowledge generated by the study. Recommendations for further studies to female representations and audience's perceptions are also presented in this chapter. The main emphasis is on drawing conclusions from what the researcher managed to gather about the audience's perceptions on female representations. This chapter begins with the summary, recommendations to the film makers and ends with a conclusion.

Summary of the study

This study was carried out in Durban South Africa and it sought to reveal the audience's perceptions of the representations of women in the Lokshin Bioskop feature films. It was informed by literature on the influence of television which was specified in chapter two. The image that was presented by this study was that television exerts a certain amount of influence on its audience, but some audience's characteristics also play a part in shaping their perceptions. This assertion was more amplified during the focus group discussions where the audience played a great part in sharing their views and thoughts on female representations. The findings were achieved by conducting the focus group discussions where many themes emerged and many findings came to light from these discussions.

The study was also informed by the reception analysis theory and the encoding and decoding model while borrowing from the hypodermic needle theory which all sought to explain the notion of media influence. In a bid to reveal the role played by the audience in redefining gender identities and roles as portrayed in the Lokshin Bioskop films through the images used in the

films. This study mainly focused on the audience's perceptions and they were the key informants in this study.

In terms of the type of research, the study belongs to the qualitative research paradigm and the method of inquiry used was the case study methods which were the three selected films. The researcher made use of research techniques such as focus group discussion, thematic and semiotic analysis to solicit information from the South African audience who watch the Lokshin Bioskop films.

Research perception

The researcher managed to obtain crucial information from participants about their perceptions on female representations respondents believed that the films were sometimes a mirror and reflection of communities in South Africa while others felt some of the images were accurate and the films were telling it like it is and had succeeded in showing how culture and reality influenced the film productions. The focus groups conducted revealed that most people have different expectations from film makers and are yearning for positive images from film producers.

It also revealed that women are comfortable when talking in an open environment and are comfortable around each other. This researcher also noticed that interpretations of images vary and messages become clearer when interpreted by many people as this brings to attention some detail that an individual can overlook, hence the power of having focus group discussions. Some respondents felt the Lokshin Bioskop films are a mirror of what happens in society, and women are represented in a way that really shows their characters, while others felt women were being used as comic relief icons through being ridiculed. The themes that emerged during the focus group discussions were vital and can be used to improve the images being portrayed and can then educate and inform societies in a better way.

In addition this researcher managed to obtain essential information from different people from different walks of life as the respondents represented different types of people from church, working environments and suburban areas that are hardly considered to be viewers of Lokshin Bioskop films.

Conclusion of the Study

Evidence provided in the data chapter on data analysis and interpretation, justifies the conclusion that television plays a major role in influencing people's perception on various issues as noted by McQuail (1994: 327) who argues that people's minds are full of media derived information and impressions and that people live in a world full of media sounds and images. McQuail also recognises phases of the natural history of the media effect. However, in relation to some of the images of women portrayed it can be noted that several images portrayed on the films are already prevalent in the societies we live in as some are fueled by culture. These issues include women oppressing each other and continuously hurting each other competing for men and trying to be seen as happily married and some desperate to play second fiddle just so they have men in their lives.

However, from the research, it was also clear that the audience is an active one, from the group discussions conducted for this study it became evident that people do not just consume media messages passively but rather they assess the content they see on television. For instance, it was noted that most participants were against the use of language they saw on the show as well as gender based violence and homosexuality which was prevalent on the show. Some participants even questioned the realness behind a reality television show saying that the fact that there was an incentive and the participants were being watched tend to influence the way they behave in that competition clearly showing the activeness of the audience.

It was also noted that television plays a role in influencing viewers. This was in agreement with what was noted by Klapper (1960: 5) who argued that the view of mass media was a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects is one-dimensional and he suggested that researchers should consider the media more "as influences, working amid other influences". Thus it can be concluded that television plays a role in terms of influencing people's behavior, identities and roles but the audience also act actively towards these media messages and they choose the way they want to decode the images produced by the film makers. The research has revealed that the audiences perceptions of the female representations in the Lokshin Bioskop films is both seen as positive and negative with some participants claiming that women are represented just the way they are while some felt the images were stereotypical.

The plight of women according to the participants in this research is a result of entrenched cultural practices and modernisation. The focus group discussions detail the nature and

implications of the universal feminine outcry on the African soil. These issues they raise are symptoms of the confusion that has occurred in the spectrum of relations between women and men in society. They argued that the films show the abandonment of the female, with all that it entails on the personal, social, psychological, cultural, political and economic levels. The very nature in which man is natured has stimulated his somewhat violent and inconsiderate behavior, (Murphy 2004: 86).

The field of film study is full of richness and leads itself to a research agenda that can be creative, dynamic and responsive to the development needs of film. Research as activism means that not only must research stimulate academic discourse and inform learning but it must influence policy and practice ultimately leading to more empowerment equality for African women. Therefore this research showed that these voices should be incorporated into the film making process and films should be produce with women in mind.

The participants argued that Lokshin Bioskop films portray women as oppressed and having adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed and have become resigned to it. They are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom as long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires, hence the failure of Tholi and Lwazi to leave their husbands even when they are being mistreated. As rightfully noted by Rönning the audience should have a say in relation to the films produced for them. Rönning in (2002: 94) suggests that the public should have a say on what is written in the newspapers,

> Consequently the public has the right to express opinions in newspaper columns and to appear on radio and television. Without this access, the public has no real freedom of the press, only those who own the means of communication do. Those who have access to radio, television, newspapers, magazines and book publishers have a greater ability to speak than those without. It is argued that as there is no true market place of ideas, something that should be done through government action to rectify the balance and make provisions in the form of subsidies or regulations to that the press and broadcasting services accurately and fairly represent the fullest possible range of opinions and experiences of the society.

Rönning was referring here to the print media; however, through this assertion by Rönning this researcher saw it necessary for the public to have a say in films that are produced for their entertainment and hence included them in the study by making them the key recipients.

This study revealed that there is need for more empowering images on television as these are a scarce commodity on television that needs to be re looked and remade to best suit audience's needs of viewing positive images. As stated by Marx (2008) who opens up another possibility for the construction of more empowering images of women in the media by examining the role of soap opera narratives in constructing and deconstructing identities in South Africa.

Whether the chains chaining women appear as bonds or as insurmountable barriers women still have to rise above it and learn to correct and draw lessons from these images that are often put out to represent women.

Most participants in the focus group discussions alluded to the fact that critical perception is embodied in action, a climate of hope and confidence develops which leads men to attempt to overcome the 'limit situations'. This objective can be achieved through action upon concrete historical reality in which 'limit situations' are historically found. The female space is thus regarded as a contested space where the female has to grapple for her existence or be submerged by dominant patriarchal systems and therefore some participants felt it is time for women to also occupy the spaces by becoming film producers that will tell the story as it is told. Hence the female audience in showing a female condition that is somewhat ill-fated and of despondent they were trying to hint on how women should learn to perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality. This makes females enter the historical process as responsible subjects. Conscietisation enrolls them in search for self-affirmation.

Recommendations of the study

From the findings generated by this study, the researcher would like to recommend the following in line with what was stated by Adichie (2009)[18]:"I believe in the ability of human beings to make and remake themselves for the better".

This study therefore recommends that the film producers take into consideration the following:

- that women also participate in the film making process so that they too can incorporate some images that they would like to see;

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[18]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

- that film producers focus more on developmental issues rather than just producing films that are too much of bubble gum with little constructive lessons;

- that film makers produce equal and balanced representations of both females and males;

- that film makers make use of the audience's perceptions when they are producing films and consider feedback from the viewers at home; and

- that certain standards are put into place for all the film makers to take into consideration when they are making their films so that there is positive messages encoded for the viewers that watch these Lokshin Bioskop films.

Summary

The chapter gave the summary of the study, conclusion, limitations and recommendations to the Lokshin Bioskop film producers. Upon evaluating the findings of the entire research it can be concluded that the Lokshin Bioskop films are educative, informative and have an impact on their viewers, however the audience have concerns about some of the images used in representing women. It can also be concluded that Lokshin Bioskop films are really occupying a significant viewing in most homes in Durban.

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Project Title: Audience perception of portrayals of women in selected Lokshin Bioskop films.

My name is Sibusiso T Mtshede, a Masters student with the Centre for Communication, Media and Culture (CCMS), University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), South Africa. I am conducting a research on the audience perceptions on the representation of women in South Africa's feature film genre and I felt I should include you as consumers of the Lokshin Bioskop Films.

Welcome to our focus group, I would like to hear your thoughts and views about the representation of women in the feature films, your opinions about the Lokshin Bioskop films will be of great use in my study.

I hope to use this information to gain a better understanding of the representation of women in these feature films.

The discussions might last for 90 minutes or more. Are you ready to share your views about these feature films?

Please note that this session will be recorded to ensure I adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. However, the comments from the focus group will remain confidential and your name will not be attached to any comments you make. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Now let's do a quick round of introductions.

Questions

How often do you watch DSTv?

Do you enjoy watching Lokshin Bioskop Films?

What are your perceptions on representations of women?

What is a typical woman?

Do you have an ideal imagination of women representations?

What themes can you identify in the Lokshin Bioskop films you have watched?

People often talk about representation of women in films. Could you please tell me more about what you have noticed about this?

Thank you very much for such important information. Is there anything else we did not discuss that you would you would like to add?

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TOPIC: Audience perception of portrayals of women in selected Lokshin Bioskop films.

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Sibusiso T Mtshede I am a Masters student at the University of Kwazulu Natal collecting data to complete a study on audience perceptions of the female representations in Lokshin Bioskop films. The study is conducted under the supervision of University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Culture and Media in society (CCMS). My supervisor is Ruth Teer Tomaselli and I am writing to request your participation. The importance of this study is to find out the audience's perceptions of the portrayal of women in Lokshin Bioskop.

The study seeks to explore further our understanding of audience perceptions on issues of female representation in films.This study aims to contribute significantly to the corpus of knowledge on female representations in film. In so doing, the study may further assess how females decode meanings from films.

Participation in this study is voluntary and the focus group will not be paid for in money. The participant may withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences. This researcher will not use any confidential information without permission. The participant will be treated with respect and dignity during the focus group discussions and will not be deceived or tricked into revealing information unwillingly.

In general, all responses will be treated in a confidential manner. As a participant, you have the option to choose a pseudonym or the participants will be referred by a coded number system to be used for data presentation.

The data will be kept securely for five years for purposes of verification by the supervisor at the University, should you request for it an electronic copy of the final thesis will be sent to you on completion.

Yours Sincerely

Sibusiso T Mtshede

Your willingness to participate in this study will greatly be appreciated.

Details of the researcher and institution of research:

	Address	Phone Number	Email address	
Researcher	Sibusiso T Mtshede 3 Downing Road Glenmore Durban	+2773726413 4/ +2761187906 5	sbue01@gmail.com	
Department	Centre for Culture and Media in Society (CCMS)	+2731260250 5	http://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/Homepa ge.aspx	
Institution	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Howard College	+2731260181 3	www.ukzn.ac.za	

	Campus, Masizi Kunene Ave, Glenwood, Durban, South Africa.		
Supervisor			
Chair, UKZN Human Sciences Research Committee	Prof Ruth Teer Tomaselli	+2731260250 5	teertoma@ukzn.ac.za

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the above persons, should you want further information on this research, or should you want to discuss any aspect of the interview process.

Signed consent

	Yes / No
• I understand that the purpose of this interview is for solely academic purpose. The findings will be published as a thesis, and may be published in academic journals.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand I may choose to remain anonymous. (Please choose whether or not you would like to remain anonymous.)	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I may choose whether or not my name will be quoted in remarks and or information attributed to me in the final research documents. • I choose to use a pseudonym, not my real name.	**Yes** ☐ ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I will not be paid for participating.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I reserve the right to discontinue and withdraw my participation any time.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

• I consent to be frank to give the information.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand I will not be coerced into commenting on issues against my will, and that I may decline to answer specific questions.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand I reserve the right to schedule the *time* and *location* of the interview.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
* By signing this form, I consent that I have duly read and understood its content.	

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   **Signature**   **Date**

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   **Signature**   **Date**