

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AUDIENCE VIEWING OF THE  
TELENOVELA-*KUMKUM BHAGYA* AT SOME SELECTED SITES**



**JULY, 2017**

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**ELIZABETH OWUSU ASIAMAH**



**A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND  
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OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES (MEDIA  
STUDIES)**

**DEGREE.**

**JULY, 2017**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth Owusu Asiamah, declare that this Dissertation, with the exception of quotation and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

**SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE:** .....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:** DR. ANDY OFORI-BIRIKORANG

**SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE:** .....

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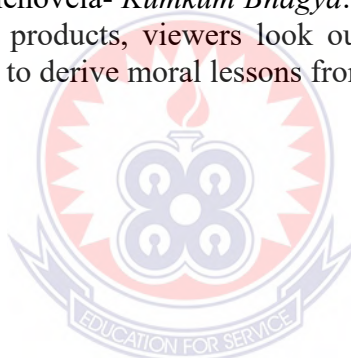
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## ABSTRACT

The study examines the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the Hindi produced telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* at selected sites in Winneba. The study further probes the rationale that informants give for viewing the telenovela at the selected sites and for watching the specific telenovela. Using the theory of Popular Culture, Cultural Proximity and the concept of Third Places through an ethnographic approach and anchored on interviews, participant observations, and focus group discussions, the study reveals that viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* cut across various classes on the social ladder reiterating the assertion that, in Africa, everyone irrespective of their sex, age, religion, or ethnicity patronizes popular culture. The study also demonstrates that the major characteristic of the selected sites which is the promotion of informal conversations qualified them as third places which became a motivation for informants' decision to visit the selected sites to join in the viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*. The study further reveals that viewers attributed their selection of the specific site for viewing the telenovela to socialization, proximity, financial constraint and escapism. The study indicates that the use of indigenous languages in the telenovela, the presence of verisimilitude in terms of content and humour and the popularity of the telenovela were predominantly, the social factors that influenced informants to view the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. The study concludes that when it comes to popular media products, viewers look out for programmes that they can easily relate with in order to derive moral lessons from them.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, focusing on the background, statement of problem, objectives and research questions. It also outlines the significance, the delimitation of the study and the organisation of the entire research work.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Nafihu (2014) posits that one of the effects of globalisation on culture is the growth of popular culture. The term ‘popular culture’ holds different meanings depending on who is defining it and the context within which it is being used. However, it is generally acknowledged as the culture of the people that prevails in a society at a point in time (Delany, 2007). As the ‘culture of the people’, popular culture is determined by the communication between individuals in their everyday activities which includes their style of dressing, the use of slang, greeting rituals and the foods that they eat. It is also manifested around the world through movies, music, television shows, satellite broadcasts, fast food and clothing, among other entertainment and consumer goods (Brummett, 1991).

Television, radio and newspapers are some of the tools of popular culture in the world (Delany, 2007). The growth of television as a tool of popular culture in developing countries over the last two decades has been extraordinary (Oster, 2008). The history of television which dates back to the 1960s indicates that television developed out of pre-existing technologies such as telephones, telegraph, moving and still photography, and sound recording (McQuail, 2010). What made television very innovative as

opposed to other technologies that developed at the period was its ability to transmit many pictures and sounds live, and thus act as a “window on the world” in real time. Also, the sense of intimacy and personal involvement that television cultivates between actors and participants on screen is another feature that added to its innovation (McQuail, 2010).

Adia (2014) posits that television can stimulate various forms of sociability. These forms can either be direct (e.g. when chatting with friends and family during a ‘movie night’ at home) or indirect (e.g. when discussing previously viewed programmes with colleagues at the office). A previous research by Morrison and Krugman (2001) emphasised a similar distinction between the “internal” social function of television viewing which aids in social interaction among members in a specific household and its “external” function which encourages the interaction with people not physically present at home.

Delli Carpini and Williams (1994) aver that television is a visual medium which at the same time makes the distinction between fictional and non-fictional programmes blurry for audience in terms of engaging in ‘real life’ issues. While popular culture on television may not always delve into social problems in any great depth, it gives the opportunity for viewers to work through either private or public concerns in order to influence perceptions, values or other political decisions (Peters, 2015). Morley (2005) is of the view that people do not just absorb whatever that they get from television but they make sense of what they read at full length. In addition, he states that the “sense” they make is related to a pattern of choices about what and when to view, which is constructed within a set of relationships constituted by the domestic and familial settings in which it is taking place.

Originally, television was thought of as a luxury which was available to a few privileged people in the society (Johnson, 2001). This is because it became a privately owned object used within the walls of people's private homes (Mihelj & Haxtable, 2016). However, the atmosphere that characterised television viewing often contradicted the impression of it being a private commodity. This is to say, "television viewing, the choices which shape it and the many social uses to which we put it, now turn out to be irrevocably active and socially processed" (Morley, 2005: p. vi). Ofori-Birikorang (2014) opines that "especially in Africa, television owners mostly bring their television sets into open spaces for interested members to share in the viewing experience" (p.1). He further states that even when such television sets become immobile from a particular location, interested people are often led into the specific private space to join in the viewing experience. Though television viewing was mostly criticised as an isolating and anti-social experience, Lull (1990) as cited in Ducheneaut, Moore, Oehlberg, Thornton and Nickell (2006), states that television can now be seen to play very important roles in the methods which families and other social units adopt to interact.

In today's world, television can be seen everywhere. In most cities, it is nearly impossible to pass a street without seeing a shop, a bar, a restaurant or even an office without a television (Adia, 2014). From about 10 million households that had television sets in the last decade of the twentieth century, Africa now has an estimated 42 million households with access to television (Ofori-Birikorang, 2014). Through communication satellites, reception dishes and retransmitting stations, television reception in Ghana now reaches people in the most remote villages of the country (Adia, 2014). Among all other things, the viewing of television provides

entertainment, information, education and other forms of gratification to audience members and as a result:

citizens who do not have immediate access to it as a commodity in their domestic spaces or who seek to experience the character of television as a gathering place must seek the gratification of this need from available domestic spaces that would welcome them: or from emerging spaces that traverse many urban locations, annexed to bars and restaurants where television is beamed on giant screens in open spaces (Ofori-Birikorang, 2014: p. 2).

The value that is placed on a particular television programme according to Ducheneaut et al. (2006) is often measured according to the amount of social interaction and audience that it generates.

### **1.1.1 Television viewing**

Throughout the world, most especially in developed countries, people consistently spend a considerable proportion of their leisure hours with the mass media, often more than they spend at work or school (Livingstone, 2003). Averagely, persons in the developed world watch about 21 hours per week of television (Burroughs, Shrum & Rindfleisch, 2002) and this makes television viewing a part of our daily lives.

George Gerbner is of the view that television viewing can bring about a shared way of viewing the world. Thus, television is considered as so pervasive in our culture that it 'cultivates' certain views across the world. This effect of television viewing is "small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011: p. 350). There are basically two types of television viewers- the heavy viewers (people who watch television more than four hours in a day) and the light viewers (people who

watch television less than four hours in a day) (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Heavy viewers are more likely to be influenced by the content of television programmes than light viewers (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

Though media (television) has become a part of people's daily lives, Blumler and Katz (1974) as cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) aver that audience members are discriminating users of it. That is to say, individuals use media to achieve their specific aims and goals hence they select the programmes that satisfy their needs. Some theorists like Philip Palmgreen are also of the view that the uses that audience members put media to are influenced by the audience's beliefs and attitude towards the media (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). For example, if some audience believe that watching telenovela provides entertainment and they want to be entertained, they will seek gratification from watching the telenovela. On the other hand, if they believe that telenovelas provide an unrealistic view of life, they will not watch it.

The audience for any broadcast television programme, according to Webster (2006) is logically formed from four possible sources. The first source produces the "lead-in" audience (those who stay watching from the programme that aired before the current programme). The second source brings about the "switch in" audience (those viewers viewing television at a particular time, but are attracted from another channel). The third source forms the "tune in" audience ( those who switch on the television and start watching a particular channel airing a specific programme) and the fourth source forms the "time-shift" audience (those viewers who watch a specific programme from their video recorders some days after it has been broadcast) (Webster, 2006). The viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* can be attracted to watch the telenovela through any of these four sources mentioned.



This study investigates the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of a particular television programme-*Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected domesticated but open spaces in Winneba. The viewing of television is very important in this research because it helps to better understand what goes on as people gather around a television set to watch the specific programme- *Kumkum Bhagya*. It will also help in explaining what makes the telenovela so special that people leave their homes and work places to join in the experience of viewing it at the selected sites.

### **1.1.2 Telenovela**

Telenovela as a genre of television programme is one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the world with hundreds of millions of viewers. They are melodramatic fictional television series produced from Latin America, the United States of America, India, and Brazil (La Pastina, Rego and Straubhaar, 2003). However, they originated from Latin America where they started as graphic novel representation of classic literature and stories. They have very defining endings that allow the kind of narrative closure which is usually after 180 to 200 episodes depending on their popularity (La Pastina, Rego and Straubhaar, 2003). They also “offer their audience dramas of recognition and re-cognition by locating social and political issues in personal and familial terms” and thus making sense of the complex world in which we live (Lopez, 1995 as cited in La Pastina, Rego and Straubhaar, 2003; p.2 ).

According to Antwi, Amoabeng, Anning and Antwi (2015), telenovela is possibly the most successful drama format in the history of television and this can be attributed to the maximum social interactions that it generates both internally and externally. La Pastina, Rego and Straubhaar (2003) also posit that telenovelas are designed to attract

a wide viewing audience of men, women and children. They are also able to catch and maintain the attention of a faithful audience throughout the 180 to 200 episodes (Machado-Borges, n.d.). The plots of telenovelas may conform to real-life seasons and holidays, and they often introduce fashion products, approach debatable subjects, and comment (in a realistic or parotic way) on contemporary social issues (Machado-Borges, n.d.).

Adia (2014) avers that,

Viewers can use telenovelas to reinforce their self-esteem, and as a self-reflective support tool to better recognize themselves. It can also be understood as a link to the experiences of others through which they can explain their own existence (p.1).

The effect of watching telenovelas varies from one class of people to the other. That is, if one belongs to the lower class in a social setting, the telenovela might help him or her build a more positive and valuable reflection of his or her status. Telenovelas can also provide values, images, rituals, symbols and models that act as reference points for those who are always in the process of constructing their identity like adolescents (Adia, 2014).

Due to the effects that telenovelas have on their audience, they are shown at strategic times in the day. Toure (2007) points out that the slot between 7:00 and 8:30 p.m. is synchronised with people's free time most especially women and youth and as a result, most telenovelas are given those slots which are deemed "primetime". The idea of primetime is that it will provide the largest possible audience (Antwi et al., 2015).

### 1.1.3 Telenovela in Ghana

For several years, fictional stories like telenovelas have dominated primetime programming on most of the television stations in Ghana (Adia, 2014). Telenovela in Ghana became prevalent in the 2000s but in 1997, TV3 broadcast Televisa's *Esmeralda* (Antwi et al., 2015). Most of the telenovelas broadcast on the Ghanaian media are either Mexican or Brazilian in origin which are adapted and adopted into English language. Sometimes they are left in their indigenous languages and subtitles in English are added to aid the audience in understanding. Some telenovelas that held most Ghanaians captivated in the late 1990s include *La Gata*, *Rosalinda*, *Second Chance*, *La Usurpadora*, *Cuando Seas Mia* and *Sunset Beach*.

*Kumkum Bhagya* is one of such telenovelas that attracted the attention of most Ghanaians in the late part of the year 2015. It is an Indian telenovela which was broadcast by Zee TV and was premiered on the 15th of April, 2014 in India. It is loosely based on the novel, *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen. *Kumkum Bhagya* is about a woman, Sarla Arora, who runs a marriage hall and lives with the hope of seeing her two daughters happily married. Pragyah, the elder daughter, who is practical, hardworking and committed to supporting her family, teaches at a college to ensure that her mother's earnings never fall short. In the midst of all the pressures on her, Pragyah forgets how to pursue any passions of her own. Bulbal, the younger daughter is vivacious, smart, stylish and a complete dreamer. She also has a job but hates her boss who later fell in love with her. The telenovela follows the lives of the two sisters, their hope, dreams and aspirations.

According to Machado-Borges (2003), a popular telenovela can stop the country temporarily. Baker (1997) citing Martin-Barbero (1995) provides two types of

telenovela. The first is defined as a serious genre, centred on ancient passions and feelings in which suffering prevails. The characterisation for this type of telenovela is mostly simplified. The second type incorporates a certain degree of realism and national specificity into its format, and characters are more involved in the routines and rhythms of everyday life. *Kumkum Bhagya* falls under the second type where there is more incorporation of realism, a showcase of the Hindu culture and audience members can actually relate to each scene in the telenovela.

In Ghana, *Kumkum Bhagya* was premiered by Adom TV on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 2015. It is shown five times in a week between 7:30 and 8:30 pm and is mostly followed by a chat room discussion also in Twi. On Sundays, an omnibus is shown between 12pm and 5pm. Being the first of its kind in Ghana, the Twi-Indian telenovela is full of all the intrigues of love, marriage, friendship and relationships.

Since the introduction of *Kumkum Bhagya* in November, 2015, it has generated a lot of audience. Though a telenovela from India, *Kumkum Bhagya* has chalked success in the Ghanaian market by way of attracting a lot of viewers. For instance, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 2016, the chief of Assin Asaaman in the Central Region of Ghana rewarded the personnel of Adom TV with a cow for being innovative and presenting to viewers *Kumkum Bhagya* which is transmitted predominantly in the indigenous languages-Twi and Fante ( Nti, 2016). In another instance, a student was arrested for using *Kumkum Bhagya* as a ploy to have sex with a married woman (“Student Arrested”, 2016). In many part of Ghana, audience of *Kumkum Bhagya* are mostly seen at some public spaces like bars, hospitals, restaurants and other supermarkets enjoying the viewing of the telenovela. Following the popularity, success and all the issues surrounding *Kumkum Bhagya*'s massive audience reception, I am doing an ethnographic study on

the kinds of interactions and performances that take place as viewers watch the telenovela at some selected domesticated but open sites in Winneba.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Television viewing appears to be largely a social activity, often conducted in groups (Morrison and Krugman, 2001). From a study conducted by Haran (1995), out of the 1000 people he interviewed, 47.7% said they watched television with their family whereas 44% indicated that they watched it with their friends. This illustrates the socialising power of television. Most studies such as Morley (2005) and Saxbe, Graesch and Alvik (2011) have been conducted on the viewing of television as a tool for socialisation within the family setting. However, studies on television viewing in free access open spaces in developing countries and the exact practices surrounding the social viewing of it are yet to be investigated (Ducheneaut, et al., 2006; Ofori-Birikorang, 2014).

Ofori-Birikorang (2014) used an ethnographic design to conduct a research on television viewing and identity construction in public spaces. In his work, he indicated that most programmes that drew huge crowds to the free public spaces were soccer, telenovelas and Nigerian movies. By the end of his study, Ofori-Birikorang (2014) concluded that various interactions go on during the viewing of television at the selected public television viewing sites and that though television continues to shape the social processes, “its movement into new spaces aided by digital and satellite technologies is also creating avenues for new cultural formations and identities” (p. 26).

Although telenovelas function as a means of cultural expressions to their local audience, their popularity among global audience remains unexplained (Castello,

2010). A lot of studies (Adia, 2014; Donkor, 2013; Machado-Borges, 2003; Castello, 2010) have however been conducted on telenovelas in general using various research designs. Toure (2007) did an ethnographic study on telenovela reception by women in Bouake (Cote D'Ivoire) and Bamako (Mali) where her study concluded that telenovela consumption is made possible because it is linguistically and visually available to all female viewers, whether educated or illiterate ones, who are able to understand the essence of the scenario—most often a love story. She further stated that television appears to be a window open on the external world, and a mirror which makes viewers think about themselves and their social condition, especially about family structure and parent-children relationships.

Antwi et al., (2015) employed a quantitative survey to assess the impact of telenovela on television viewership using United Television (UTV) as a case study. In their study, they established that most respondents enjoyed watching United Television's telenovelas which is a contributing factor to the station's market share. They further concluded that the station's language of broadcast –Twi was also another factor for its market share.

Other research works also looked at the effect of telenovela on its viewers. For example, Donkor (2013) adopted quantitative survey to evaluate the effect of television serials like telenovelas on teenagers in Madina. She noted that the viewing of the various television serials including telenovelas slightly affected how teenagers spoke, dressed and behaved and that the cultivation theory about heavy and light viewers may not work in every culture and situation.

Though a lot of studies such as the ones mentioned above have been conducted on telenovela reception in general, this study argues that the television viewing of single

serials and dramas such as telenovelas and soap operas at domesticated but open spaces in post-colonial cultures of developing nations is yet to be explored. The study further contends that since the viewing of telenovela at these selected sites has brought about a gathering of individuals at a common assembly ground, there is the need to explore the ideas that shape meaning making and the kind of interactions that take place.

This study therefore investigates the various kinds of performances that take place during the viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* at three domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba. It further explores the meanings that viewers give to their selection of those public spaces and the factors that influence their viewing of the telenovela.

### 1.3 Objectives

Slade and Beckenham (2005) assert that telenovela is a much derided genre which was at the same time the late twentieth-century opiate of the masses. However, the impact and success of the genre is incontestable. During the past twenty years, academic and industry approaches to this television text has been enormous (Slade & Beckenham, 2005). This study therefore seeks evidence to investigate the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites in Winneba.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the culture surrounding the immediate viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites in Winneba.

2. To identify how viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* rationalise their choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela.
3. To examine the social factors that influence audience's viewership of *Kumkum Bhagya*.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites in Winneba?
2. How do viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* rationalise their choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela?
3. Which social factors influence audience viewership of *Kumkum Bhagya*?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Telenovelas sell all over the world. As unrealistic as they can be, they have had a complex relationship with societies that they depict. Their influence has been, in turn, decried, particularly in terms of the impact that they have had on the news previously (Slade & Beckenham, 2005). Due to the popularity of telenovelas in Africa and specifically in Ghana, this study to further understand the television genre is of great importance to both academia and the movie industry.

In investigating the culture surrounding the immediate viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* and the factors that influence its audience viewership, the findings of this study will add on to the database of research on telenovelas in Ghana. It will also



set the pace for more researches to be conducted on other fictional television genres concentrating on the interactions that take place before, during and after their immediate viewing using ethnography as a research design.

The findings and recommendations of the study will also be useful to the Ghanaian movie industry, particularly the programmes team by providing education on how to package their media products for consumers in order to attract a lot of viewers. The findings and recommendations will also be useful to the government by providing information on the importance of third places in communities which will go a long way to promote community development.

## **1.6 Delimitations**

This study is focused on investigating the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela, *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba. It involves identifying any activities and performances that take place during the viewing of the telenovela at the selected sites and also investigating what influences audience to watch that specific telenovela. The study is limited to audience of *Kumkum Bhagya* selected from Winneba in the Central Region of Ghana. It also borders on three selected domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba, Ghana.

With the aim of finding out the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*, the researcher has operationally defined culture in this study to refer to any emergent behaviour at the selected sites before, during and after the viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*.

## **1.7 Organisation**

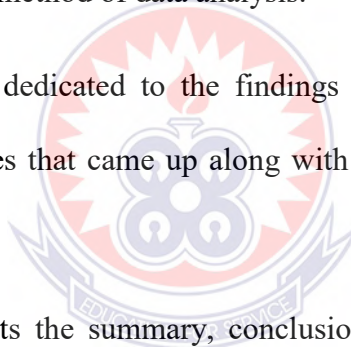
The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which embodies the background of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and the organisation of the study.

The second chapter presents a review of literature on the study and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter three presents the methods and procedures used for the collection of data for analysis. Issues discussed under this chapter comprised the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis.

The fourth chapter was dedicated to the findings and discussions of the study. It discusses in themes issues that came up along with theories and concepts in chapter two to explain them.

The final chapter presents the summary, conclusions from the findings and makes recommendations for further studies.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on all relevant written documents that are of concern to the research problem. It specifically discusses television in general, telenovela's appeal to global audience, the proliferation of telenovelas in Ghana and ethnographic studies which have been done on telenovelas. The chapter depicts an important tie between existing knowledge and the problem under investigation. The chapter further discusses the theories that underpin the study and their relevance to the entire research work.

#### 2.1 Television

In recent times, television has become the most powerful and all-pervading force throughout the world (Ahmed, 2012). Ariyibi-Oke (2007) asserts that "it combines the use of light, colour, sound and motion...and it works" (p.4). Seiter, Borchers, Kreutzner and Warth, (1989) as cited in Ahmed, (2012) are also of the view that,

It [television] disseminates information with lightning speed and impact, as well as infuse viewers with images and values in subtle and imperceptible manner. Because of its very inherent nature, television not only reflects the values of our society but also influence them. (p.3)

Research works done on television studies have proven that television has had an important impact on the personal reality of its viewers. Thus, television programmes lead to awareness and provide information which creates curiosity in the minds of viewers (Ahmed, 2012). Casey, Casey, Calvert, French and Lewis (2008) are of the

view that, though a relatively new mass medium which is addressed to a broad popular audience, television can be classified as a post-modern medium because it focuses on the present. Also, because of the different genres of programmes that television broadcasts, it offers an almost unlimited range of entertainment to its audience (Pugalendhi, 2015). Scholars such as Dominick (2009) and Rodman (2006) agree with Pugalendhi (2015) that television indeed provides a lot of entertainment to its audience. The different genres of television programming and the range of factual and fictional programmes on television channels, appear to offer vast choices and address the needs of different viewers (Bignell, 2008). In Ghana, there are various television channels such as Ghana Television (GTV), Metro TV, United Television (UTV), TV3, Adom TV, TV Africa and many others. These channels provide various television programmes which offer a wide range of choices to the television viewer. Television thus has a growing audience throughout the world (Pugalendhi, 2015).

Panjeta (2013) is of the view that in a world filled with insecurities and instability, reflected in most television programmes especially in the news, people tend to hesitate when it comes to adopting anything new. Thus, when surfing the television channels for a programme to watch, viewers mostly find themselves watching only the commercials while waiting to find the programme that satisfies their needs. The joy that is derived from the entertainment aspect of serials gives viewers security in familiarity (Panjeta, 2013). Other scholars such as Jensen and Oster (2008) also add that beyond entertainment, television increases the availability of information about the outside world and exposes its viewers to other ways of life.

Casey et al. (2008) aver that being part of a television audience is not static. Thus to them, a person can easily slip in and out of being part of an audience because “it is part of who we are but does not capture or define us or how we think” (p. 22). Singh

(2014) indicates that television viewing which can be referred to as ‘televieing’ involves numerous behaviours showcased by the various audience and these behaviours are not random phenomena but rather a response to a cause. Television viewing behaviours are therefore seen as “purposeful and goal oriented” intended to accomplish some objectives, which in turn would satisfy the need of the viewer (Singh, 2014; p.2). For example, one may come across people watching a telenovela at a particular television viewing site with all of them paying rapt attention to everything being said in the telenovela. The aim may be to aid them hear everything that is being said by the characters which will go a long way to gratify their need of getting information, entertainment or education from the telenovela being broadcast.

Mckearny, Morrison, Camron and Krugman (1994) postulate that when viewing a television programme, audience members do not only monitor the selected programme but also the commercials that come along with such programmes. To them, these viewers mostly do more audio monitoring of the advertisements as opposed to the visual attention they pay to programmes that they select. The period for commercials constitutes a “time out” for television viewers who use that opportunity to meet other needs. Television audience therefore get more engrossed in the commercials that appear in television programmes that they consciously choose to watch (Mckearny et al., 1994).

### **2.1.1 Television in Ghana**

According to Asante (1996), Dr. Kwame Nkrumah commissioned the broadcasting of television in Ghana on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 1965. The television service that was launched was the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Television Service and it was

established by the government at the time in collaboration with Sanyo of Japan (Laryea, 2015).

When television was introduced, the aim was to educate Ghanaians for national development and as a result there were no entertaining or profit making motives (Yire, 2011). Oberko (2010) however adds that television was also used for political purposes. Ghana had only GBC which was a state-owned television station and as such monopoly was enjoyed for so many years by the government. The introduction of the 1992 constitution brought about the freedom of the press which further promoted the establishment of private television stations (Yire, 2011). The government through the National Communication Authority (NCA) granted approval for the allocation of frequencies to all broadcast media houses including the private media. Although these private television stations have been given the freedom to operate, GTV however remains the only television station with nationwide coverage (Yire, 2011). On the other hand, a survey conducted by Geopoll, a mobile surveying platform indicates that for the past two years, United Television (UTV) which is a privately owned television station has been emerging as the lead in terms of ratings and shares by television viewers. This shows that though GTV has a nationwide coverage, it does not have the highest number of audience.

The various television stations in Ghana carry a variety of programmes ranging from health, entertainment, sports, politics, news to current affairs. However, there seems to be a pervasive influence of foreign programmes too. Oberko (2010) for example states that,

In order to stay on top of competition, one can find three or more South American soap operas, Nigerian produced movies, magazine programmes of

foreign descent, foreign movies and music videos among others. Also in order to broadcast 24 hours a day, some stations fill their late- night hours with the foreign services of cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation and others (p.3).

Furthermore, panelists at a round table discussion on the role of the media in Ghana organised by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) insisted that the screening of telenovelas coupled with other foreign movies which contained scenes meant for adults were a contributory factor to the decline of moral values in the Ghanaian society (“Too much foreign Programs”, 2011).

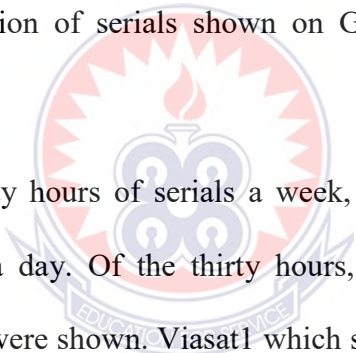
According to Siaw (2013), television viewing has been on the rise in Ghana with the cost of television sets reducing. This rise in television viewing in Ghana can however be attributed to the digitisation of analogue televisions. Digital television can provide more programmes than the traditional analogue television over one transmission channel. In tandem with the above, Casey et al. (2008) aver that “digitisation allows for greater choice and flexibility in television viewing and for the individualization of content” (p. VI).

### **2.1.2 Serials on Ghanaian Television**

Serials are a number of television programmes that rely on a continuing plot which unfolds in a sequential episode by episode fashion. These serials include soap operas, telenovelas and drama series which are mostly imported or produced locally (Donkor, 2013). Serials mainly follow story lines that last an entire television season. This distinguishes them from traditional episodic television programmes that rely on more stand-alone episodes. They appeal to the historic sense of time in that, not only are the various episodes in serials sequential but time also lapses between them. The “future”

shown on serials is constructed as being as open and uncertain as it is in the real world (Lazano & Singhal, 1993). The conclusion of a serial is sometimes not the end of the entire television programme as a whole, since sequel of those serials are sometimes made (Donkor, 2013).

Previously, Ghana Television (GTV) and TV3 used to telecast some foreign serials such as *The Bold and The Beautiful*, *The Days of our Lives* and *Passions*. However, in Ghana now, almost all the television channels show increasing numbers of serials both local (*Effiewura*, *Cocoa Brown*, *Yolo*) and foreign (*Veera*, *Kumkum Bhagya*). These television channels have allowed Ghanaian audience to watch more hours of serials a day than before (Donkor, 2013). In Rebecca Donkor's study which was aimed at investigating the proportion of serials shown on Ghanaian television stations, she stated that,



TV3 showed thirty hours of serials a week, which worked out to over four hours of serials a day. Of the thirty hours, five and a half hours of local Ghanaian serials were shown. Viasat1 which showed the most hours of serials, had sixty nine hours of serials per week; which was approximately ten hours of serials a day. Six hours out of the sixty-nine were local serials. Ghana Television (GTV) showed ten hours of serials in a week; this worked out to an hour and a half a day (Donkor, 2013; p.5).

Overall, Donkor (2013) concluded that based on the television stations that she surveyed, there was an average of thirty-three hours a week of serials telecast on the Ghanaian media leading to about twenty-five percent of television programming.



## 2.2 Telenovelas as transnational media products

Telenovelas are serial melodramatic genres that share the paradox of being successful and despised at the same time (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003). According to McAnany and La Pastina (1994), telenovela is probably the most watched television programme all over the world. They have a very strong audience appeal which was confirmed in 1990 when Telemundo tried to vary its prime time line-up by replacing telenovelas with other genres and which eventually led to a drastic decline in rating (Mbithe, 2012). For some time now, telenovelas have moved away from being only national products in Latin America to transnational products challenging locally produced programmes (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). This has led to the question of what is so special about these foreign telenovelas that makes them attract so many audience in most especially developing countries like Ghana. La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) further posit that the popularity and success of the television genre can be attributed with the fact that they are easily exported to other cultures due to their underlying structure, formulas, and archetypes that relate to many cultures. Miller (2010) agrees with them by indicating that telenovelas are popular among audiences because they tell stories that are captivating, drawing on themes such as love, redemption, and the overcoming of hardship which are universal.

Telenovelas play a key role in circulating ideas (Lombard, 1995), particularly in developing nations like Ghana as the audience easily relate with the situations depicted in them. Mbithe (2012) states in her study that telenovelas appeal to Kenyans in particular because the plot of the genre usually portrays “a very specific model of family: small, attractive, white, healthy, urban, a typical middle class setup that most viewers identify with regardless of their socio-economic status” (p. 19). Even though these viewers watch several scenes, only certain portions appeal to

them due to how they are affected by those scenes. Also, though a lot of television stations may broadcast telenovelas, not all of them appeal to every individual at a particular point in time but rather the audience choose which telenovela satisfies their needs and at what time to watch them (Adia, 2014 : Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

Originally, telenovelas were classified as women's programmes (Hamburger & Almeida, 2001). They generally had a predominantly female audience, although prime-time telenovelas and soaps such as Dallas (U.S) were aimed at a wider audience which included about at least 30% males (Ahmed, 2012). Despite criticisms that telenovelas have negative influences on their audience, the passion that viewers develop for them as well as the pleasure they find in watching them is incredible (Brown, 1994). Mbithe (2012) indicates that telenovelas are able to emotionally stir their audience, especially people that are still forming their views about society. For example, such people see characters in telenovelas and say, "I'm that one, but I could be that other one, and I wish I could be that one". For this reason, telenovelas command a passionate following, as the audience feel that its (telenovela) thoughts are audible to theirs (p. 2).

### **2.2.1 Proliferation of telenovelas on the Ghanaian Market**

Miller (2010) avers that because telenovelas are cost effective not only for domestic audience but exports too, they (telenovelas) became popular among producers and network executives in some parts of the world. The genre thus became "the programming executive's dream come true, especially in emerging or growing market because they were relatively inexpensive while they held a captive audience for an extended number of time" (Bilteyst & Meers, 2000 as cited in Artz, 2015: p. 195). The top telenovela producers include Televisa, Venevision, and O Globo, which are

the leading networks in Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil, respectively. However, new producers, such as Telefe in Argentina, RCN and Caracol in Colombia, RCTV in Venezuela, Azteca TV in Mexico and Telemundo have joined the telenovela market (Miller, 2010).

Mensah-Bonsu (2011) in a research conducted to investigate audience perception of foreign serials on the Ghanaian society indicated that various Ghanaian television producers loved to produce these foreign serials based on several reasons. Mr. Gadzekpo, a television producer at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) stated that producing telenovelas is cost effective because though the voice-overs cost some extra money, the telenovelas attract a lot of sponsors and viewers (as cited in Mensah-Bonsu, 2011). In tandem with the above, Mr. Botchwey who was TV3's Assistant Programme's manager said that,

TV3's number one consideration for showing soaps [and telenovelas] is the commercial visibility of the product. Although the cost for a full series of a foreign soap [telenovela] ranges between \$600,000 and \$2 million and there is additional charge for voice-overs, it is very easy to cover those costs (Mensah-Bonsu, 2011; p.7).

The above statements by the two media personnel indicate that foreign telenovelas yield more profit for the television stations and since most stations aim at making money, they produce these telenovelas in order to get audience for their sponsors. When interviewed on why local soaps and telenovelas were rarely broadcast on television, Mr. Atitsogbe explained that,

Local soaps [and telenovelas] do not sell because first of all, they are not true to life and secondly, they do not meet international standards of quality...

getting sponsorship for these local soaps[ and telenovelas] is very difficult (Mensa-Bonsu, 2011; p.7).

The proliferation of foreign telenovelas on the Ghanaian market can thus be attributed to the fact that local products are more expensive and do not attract a lot of sponsors and advertisements. The lack of verisimilitude in the local telenovelas can also be said to be another factor that has led to the multiplicity of foreign serials on the Ghanaian market (Mensa-Bonsu, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Ethnographic studies on Telenovela**

According to Harris and Johnson (2003), ethnography literally means a portrait of a group of people. This group of people being referred to share something in common and it is this “thing” that binds them together as one. The popularity of telenovela has led to its increased scrutiny among scholars and the media industry, and yet it seems that not everyone is talking about the same thing (La Pastina, Rego & Straubhaar, 2003). Many studies done on the television genre to better understand it in relation to its viewers, look at the audiences’ reception of the genre and in doing that apply the ethnographic design. In the 1980s and 1990s, media researchers moved towards anthropology and ethnographic methods to better situate their research within complex social contexts (Machado-Borges, n.d.). This turn to ethnography drew attention to a need to immerse in the daily practices and social worlds of the people being studied in order to better understand them and their way of life (McAnany & La Pastina, 1994).

In 2006, Jean-Francois Werner conducted a study on how women used television to domesticate globalisation where he zoomed in on the reception and consumption of Latin American telenovelas in Dakar-Senegal. The study was conducted during the first six months of the year 2002, where the researcher watched the telenovelas which

were broadcast at the time on a daily basis. He also practiced participant observations in several households by looking at how people behaved in front of the TV sets. In furtherance, the researcher conducted detailed qualitative interviews with non-representative sample of twenty purposively sampled telenovela viewers comprising of fourteen women and six men. These informants were grouped according to their class, educational background and socio-economic status. Through the ethnographic study, Werner (2006; p. 450) concluded that the process of watching television programmes at Dakar-Senegal could be described as “a dialectical domestication process” since on the one hand people were domesticated by the television and on the other hand television was domesticated by the viewers. He also observed that people loved to watch telenovelas in their private homes and as a result people who gather to watch telenovela belong to the same household.

For his PhD thesis in social anthropology, Thais Machado-Borges worked on investigating how some telenovelas shown on the Brazilian television channels are incorporated into the daily lives of the viewers and how the telenovelas are integrated and implicated within other media. In doing this, Machado-Borges (2003) believed that ethnographic fieldwork was what was suitable since he saw telenovelas as cultural products whose retrievability went beyond the television sets. Machado-Borges (2003) conducted fieldwork between 1995 and 2000 in the state of Minas Gerais, South-Eastern Brazil. He gathered a total snowballing sample of forty-five people consisting of thirty-eight women and seven men. I however oppose Thais Machado Borges’ use of snowballing technique for selecting his sample size since according to Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf

This method [snowballing] is well suited for a number of research purposes and is particularly applicable when the focus of the study is on a sensitive

issue, possibly concerning a relatively private matter, and thus requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; p.141).

The watching of telenovela is not any private thing as such it is always easy to find people who watch them. The researcher could have therefore set off purposively to find such people for his research.

Just like Werner (2006), Machado-Borges' (2003) informants occupied different social positions and educational levels. In collecting the data, he also used participant observations of the various telenovelas that were shown and at other times visited informants' homes to watch when the telenovela comes up during their normal day to day activities. Apart from the observations, the researcher conducted twenty semi-structured interviews, most of them with women (aged 15 to 45). These interviews helped the researcher's respondents to articulate what they feel, think and perceive of the telenovelas they watch. After his study, Machado-Borges (2003) gathered that telenovelas' landscapes, characters, names and persons could be used to comment on real life events, places and persons. On the other hand, everyday events could also lead to associations about fictive characters and situations. Also, viewers did not talk merely about the plots of telenovelas, their contents and characters, but they also talked at length about subjects and products that somehow intersected with the telenovela's plot.

After his PhD thesis, Thais Machado-Borges indicated in his article, *an ethnographic approach to the reception of telenovelas: some reflections on research methods* that,

Ethnographic fieldwork allowed me to visualize a crucial – though messy and complex – part of my informants' receptive experience... An ethnographic approach contributes, in this sense, to questioning the boundaries of television

programs by demonstrating that viewers, outside the context of immediate reception, engage with a flow of articulations that link fiction, reality, and consumption (Machado-Borges, n.d.; p. 14).

Eunice Akorfa Adia also did a reception study with the objective to analyse the socialising impact of telenovela on Ghanaian viewers. The study largely used the ethnographic method which adopted interviews and participant observation to gather information. Adia's (2014) study was a replica of Machado-Borges' (2003) work. She also conducted twenty informal interviews with her respondents who were also mostly females between 25 and 35 years. Just like Machado-Borges (2003), the main questions Adia (2014) asked had to do with whether her respondents watched and were familiar with telenovelas. Thus,

The aim for this question is to see if people watch telenovelas as part of their everyday life and to know which telenovela is the interviewee's favorite. Again, the focus is to know how many telenovelas they watch a day (Adia, 2014; p. 98).

One main difference between Adia's (2014) work and Machado-Borges' (2003) work is that whereas the latter used just face to face interviews, the former used both phone calls and face to face interviews. Both researchers also used snowballing technique for getting their sample size. Similar to Machado-Borge's (2003) study, Adia (2014) set out to investigate when, why and how themes related to telenovelas spontaneously came to the fore in everyday situations. Thus, the focus of her study was taken away from the moment of broadcast to streets, lecture theatres, parties and everyday conversations and interactions. Adia's (2014) interviews revealed that "a type of relationship has been developed by some viewers with the story by registering from



the viewer's viewpoint, variables such as originality and verisimilitude". Her informants also revealed that they chose what they desired to watch and decided on the time to watch them. This is in line with the uses and gratification theory.

These three studies are all ethnographic works done on telenovelas which concentrated mainly on how these telenovelas are incorporated into the daily lives of viewers, the effect they (telenovelas) have on them (viewers) and the interactions that went on as people watched them in the living room. The current study which also adopts the ethnographic design moves away from the living room to certain domesticated but open spaces such as salons and grocery stores which may not necessarily be meant for public viewing but turn into one anytime the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* is being telecast. The study adopts the purposive sampling method to arrive at the sample size for the study. In furtherance, the current study looks at the interactions that go on some few minutes to the start of the telenovela, during the telecast and some few minutes after the telecast of the telenovela.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **2.3 Popular Culture**

The term "popular culture" has not been easily defined by scholars in various fields (Storey, 2009). It has been evolving overtime and scholars such as Hall (1998) and Abah (2009) have observed that the initial idea of popular culture as a point of resistance between the elites and the ordinary people does not capture a unified meaning in entirety. Storey (2009) avers that popular culture is just an "empty conceptual category" which can be filled often in conflicting ways depending on the context within which it is being used (p.1). Thus the term has been interpreted differently by different scholars depending on the field they are coming from and the



situation within which it is used. In as much as there are these contradictions, most theorists have agreed on a common ground when defining it. Storey (2009) indicates that scholars have attributed popular culture to a culture liked by many people. Thus any cultural activity or thing that gains widespread acceptance and is consumed by a large number of people can pass as popular culture. This is what is reinforced by Barber (1997) and Abah (2009) when they posit that the term popular culture always refers to an existing social category known as “the people”.

Some scholars also view popular culture as the culture which emerged as a result of modernism and post modernism. Strinati (2004) for example defines popular culture as a set of generally available artefacts such as films, records, clothes, TV programmes, modes of transport and many others. However, other scholars such as Storey (2009) and Parker (2011) have criticised this definition indicating that it excludes all other things that existed before the advent of those technologies. To better understand the concept of popular culture, it is important to elucidate the idea of “popular” and “culture” separately and later put them together (Storey, 2009).

Williams (1983) as cited in Storey (2009) gives three definitions for culture which will be the basis for this study. In the first definition, he states that culture is a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. This definition is in tandem with that of Gans (1999) who defines culture as goods, ideas, practices existing for education, aesthetic sake, spiritual training, entertainment, recreation and many others.

Raymond Williams further goes ahead to give a second definition of culture as a particular way of life of a group of people. This definition looks at how a group of people dress, the food they eat, the language they speak among many other social

makeups. Finally, he refers to culture as the various works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activities. These artistic activities may include telenovelas, poetry, novel, ballet, opera, and fine art (Storey, 2009). Out of the three definitions, the second and third use of culture help to better understand the concept of popular culture and are also relevant to the current study. They are relevant because the study looks at the way of life (viewing of the telenovela at the selected sites) of a group of people through the artistic work-telenovela.

Storey (2009) further suggests four definitions of the term “popular”: well-liked by people, inferior kinds of work, work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people and culture actually made by the people for themselves. In all the definitions, one theme that is common is “the people” and this is what has influenced many scholars in defining popular culture (Hall, 1998).

There are various definitions that have been given by scholars with respect to what popular culture is (Delany, 2007). However, Parker (2011) states that John Storey’s six definitions as captured in his book *Cultural theory and Popular Culture* provide the most systematic and diverse views of popular culture. Based on this assertion, John Storey’s six definitions would be analysed in order to bring out the various views on popular culture.

Storey (2009) commences by indicating that popular culture is a culture which is widely favoured or liked by many people. With this definition, he looks at the quantitative nature of popular culture where one can “examine sales of books, sales of CDs and DVDs...attendance records at concerts, sporting events, and festival... market research figures on audience preferences for different television programmes” (p. 5). This definition is very popular so much that Hall (1998) refers to it as the

“market or commercial definition” and further contends that the concept must go beyond mere numbers to incorporate the relations between the elite’s domination and the ordinary people’s subordination (p.5). John Storey criticises this definition by stating that,

...unless we can agree on a figure over which something becomes popular culture, and below which it is just culture, we might find that widely favoured or well-liked by many people included so much as to be virtually useless as a conceptual definition of popular culture (Storey, 2009: p. 5-6).

A second way of defining popular culture according to Storey (2009: p. 6) is “the culture that is left over after we have decided what high culture is”. Thus, it is a residual category which is there to accommodate texts and practices that fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture. Popular culture, in this definition is equated to inferior culture. This second definition does not necessarily define what popular culture is but rather demarcates where high culture ends. In this definition, there is the need to know about high culture in order to determine where it ends and where popular culture begins. In sum, this definition does not give the difference between the two concepts and does not define popular culture at all.

In the third definition, popular culture is likened to mass culture. Scholars who refer to popular culture as mass culture always want to establish the fact that popular culture is a “hopelessly commercial culture” (Storey, 2009; p.8) which is mass produced for mass consumption with a mass of non-discriminating consumers.

The fourth definition provided by Storey (2009) is a build-up on the third definition. He states that popular culture is the culture that originates from ‘the people’. This definition acknowledges that the “people” are any other than “the elites”. The idea

here is that there is a major difference between two opposing worlds which are the world of the elites of the high class against that of the ordinary people (Strinati, 2004). It further opposes any other definition which may presume that popular culture is an imposition from the elite group to the popular class (Storey, 2009). According to Thompson (1968),

the popular classes are not intellectual ciphers, or a group of people who are easily manipulated by power but are able to generate their own values and at the same time appropriate those values made available by the capitalist system. The popular is in fact the product of its own struggles (Thompson, 1968 as cited in Vambe & Khan, 2009: p. 67).

This term “popular culture” is thus used to point to an authentic culture of the people. This is, popular culture as folk culture: a culture of the people and for the people. Hall (1998) points out that this definition is a descriptive one and is more anthropological since it takes into consideration the mores, customs, culture and folkways of ‘the people’. However, some scholars have criticised this definition by questioning who qualifies to be part of “the people” or not (Hall, 1998; Parker, 2011; Storey, 2009).

Holt N. Parker states that,

it is just as difficult to determine who does not count as “of the people,” or rather to determine the exact times and places when certain groups or individuals would be excluded, and from what other groups of “the people” taken as a whole (Parker, 2011: p.154).

Parker (2011) believes that the concept of “the people” has been romanticised and this makes it far from any historical reality. Thus to him, folk products have never been created in isolation from the centres of urban culture nor from elite culture. In tandem with Holt Parker’s assertion, Hall (1998) asserts that the structuring principle of “the

popular” is the tension and opposition between the central domain of the elites and the culture of the “periphery”. He encapsulates that there comes a time where a product may be of the periphery but may climb up the ladder to become an elite culture and thus the concept of “the people” is not clear as to whether it is truly referring to any other people excluding the “elites”. To Stewart Hall, this definition “freezes popular culture in some endless descriptive mold” (p. 448).

In John Storey’s fifth definition, he draws inspiration from the political analysis of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, particularly on his development of the concept of hegemony. Popular culture in this terrain is seen as a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups (periphery) and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups (elites). Popular culture in this tradition is not the imposed culture of the mass as per the second definition, but rather a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two opposing worlds which is marked by both resistance and incorporation (Storey, 2009). In tandem with the above, Tony Bennet explains that:

The field of popular culture is structured by the attempt of the ruling class to win hegemony and by forms of opposition to this endeavour. As such, it consists not simply of an imposed mass that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are ‘mixed’ in different permutations (Bennet, 2009 as cited in Storey, 2009).

In sum, those defining popular culture from the perspective of hegemony theory tend to see it as a territory of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate cultures (Storey, 2009).

The sixth definition of popular culture that Storey (2009) brings to bare is one informed by recent thinking around postmodernism. Under this definition, we no longer see a distinction between high and popular culture. Thus, postmodernism blurs the differences between ‘authentic’ and ‘commercial’ culture. Hall (1998) further states that though class and popular have a complex relation, they are not interchangeable. The reason he gives to this is that no culture has been attached to a specific whole class and continues that class cultures tend to overlap and intersect within the classes’ struggle. This definition does not however give a clear idea of what really consists of popular culture.

Storey (2009) opines that the definition of popular culture cannot be made whole if there is the absence of the “other”. This means that in defining what makes up popular culture, we mostly contrast it with the significant “others” such as mass culture, high culture, working class culture and folk culture. Finally, “what all these definitions have in common is the insistence that whatever else popular culture is, it is definitely a culture that only emerged following industrialization and urbanization” (p. 12).

### **2.3.1 Popular culture in Africa**

Though there are a lot of interpretations on what constitutes popular culture in the West (Abah, 2009), it is noteworthy that when it comes to the African context, the meaning is even more complicated. Barber (1987) posits that before the term “popular” was introduced into the heterogeneous African continent, it was already slippery. According to her, since the term is strongly implicated in a political attitude

towards “the people” it has become a “magical expression” and hence its application also differs. Thus, the concept of popular inherited from the European context is not only ambiguous but also distorting when applied in the African context (Barber, 1987; p. 6).

Karin Barber in her book, *Readings in African Popular Culture* notes that, in whatever way that “popular” is perceived, it always refers to an existing social category known as “the people”. Barber (1997) further avers that the concept of “the people” refers to those who are neither the state, the dominant classes, the aristocracy nor the bourgeoisie (p.3). Thus the concept of “popular” in the West often brings to bare a kind of struggle between the elites and the popular classes. Popular culture is therefore seen as involved in contests over boundaries of class, hierarchy and access even when the boundaries may not be clearly defined. In effect, this brings about the notion of the high culture of the aristocracy and the ruling class, and the low culture of the common people. In most parts of Africa, when high culture is mentioned, it does not look at the aristocratic class but rather a new elite group that may be associated with ‘outside power’ but is bound up with the local people through kinship, language and other community ties (Barber, 1997).

In her book *Popular Arts in Africa*, Karin Barber reiterates that the “people” referred to in Africa always point to a “heterogeneous, fluctuating conglomeration of ethnic, regional, religious, and class groups”. Hence whatever pertains to “the people” is inevitably and continually open to redefinition (Barber, 1987: p. 6).

When transferred to the African context, the notion of “the popular” further dissolves the already porous and shifting boundaries between what is popular and what is high or elite (Abah, 2009: p. 732). In tandem with the above, Dipio (2008) opines that in



Africa, everyone irrespective of their class, education and status consumes popular culture and in this context telenovela. There is therefore no one-to-one correspondence between class and culture. This means that “one cannot determine the position of an individual in the social process just by the musical forms, styles and genres he or she performs, listens to or patronises” (Erlmann,1991: p. 4). Even though there is a vast gap between the rich and the poor, highlighting on popular culture as a struggle between the elites who are culturally distant from the oppressed and exploited people does not fully capture what popular culture is in Africa. The reason being that ‘the people so often have networks that stretch into the elite, and regard themselves as potentially part of it’ (Barber, 1997: p.5).

This study therefore employs the African context of popular culture where the term does not necessarily look at the class struggles but rather concentrates on what functions in the interest of the masses and is accepted by them.

### **2.3.2 The Telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* as Popular Culture**

This current research aims at investigating the culture that surrounds the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites, the rationale for people deciding to view the telenovela at those sites and the social factors that motivate audience members to view the telenovela. It is evident that everything about the study is centred on the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. This telenovela is the media text that is being studied with respect to how its audience view it.

In the research work, the term “popular” is used to refer to things that are widely accepted and consumed by everyone. In that regard, telenovelas which have become very popular in Ghana and have thus attracted a lot of viewers (Adia, 2014) can be seen to be popular culture since an aspect of the concept (popular culture) has to do



with culture that is accepted and well-liked by a lot of people (Storey, 2009). Furthermore, telenovelas fall under popular culture because they address the daily experiences of people both rich and poor depicting their domestic, social, political and economic life (Makamani, n.d.). For example in the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*, audience are introduced to Abhi and Pragyah who belong to the two extremes of the social ladder. Abhi and his family represent the high class whereas Pragyah and her family also represent the ordinary people. The telenovela goes ahead to portray the activities and experiences of the two classes and in that way, audience from both classes find it easy to identify with the telenovela.

Delany (2007) notes that popular culture is delivered in large quantities through the mass media and since telenovelas in Ghana are broadcast through televisions which are tools of mass media, we can classify them as popular culture. Similarly, telenovelas have moved from national products within Latin American nations to transnational exports and in some instances are challenging local programming (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). As a result, they are produced in large quantities to their audience which qualifies them as popular culture. Telenovelas can also be referred to as popular culture just because they are popular in the Ghanaian context of something being popular. This can be attributed to the fact that though telenovelas became prevalent in Ghana in the 1990s, they have received more patronage than other television genres shown on television. Everywhere that one goes, the country is filled with telenovelas on the various television stations (Adia, 2014).

Due to the pressure of these foreign telenovelas on the Ghanaian media industry and the rate at which Ghanaians are rushing for them, the management of Kofas Media (one of the major movie production houses in Ghana) announced on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 2016 that the company is set to produce a telenovela series for the Ghanaian

screens. When interviewed, the CEO of the company, Mr. Kofi Asamoah stated that, “the decision to produce a telenovela is to reduce the influx of foreign content on local television and also to satisfy the fast growing audience and market demand for telenovelas in Ghana” (“Kofas Media”, 2016). The above statement reinforces the fact that telenovela is popular among Ghanaians and hence qualifies as popular culture.

The theory will therefore help to explain what goes on at the selected sites as people gather to watch the telenovela which is popular culture in itself. It will also throw more light on the reason that people give for watching the telenovela at those sites which under normal circumstances are not meant for public television viewing.

### **2.3.3 The selected sites as popular culture**

The viewing of television at public and free open spaces in post- colonial cultures of Africa can be said to be a new phenomenon even though Ofori-Birikorang (2014) asserts that in Ghana for example owners of television sets used to invite their friends and neighbours to join them in the television viewing experience. Although television sets have increased massively since their production (Saxbe et al., 2011), the introduction of digital and pay television has made it difficult for some people who do not have the purchasing power to get access to television stations which show very interesting programmes such as telenovelas and soap operas which have become popular in Ghana to be precise (Adia, 2014). Social actors who in one way or the other are unable to get access to these satellite and digital pay television stations like Multi-TV and DSTV mostly visit open public spaces where giant screens have been mounted to join in the television viewing experience. Such public spaces are mostly annexed to pubs, drinking bars, restaurants, among others.

The recent phenomenon of seeing a lot of people gather in front of supermarkets, salons or a phone shops (with small television sets which are mostly meant for the consumption of the owners and their family) is very interesting. The fact that a lot of people patronise these domestic but open places for the viewing of telenovelas and other television programmes qualify the sites as popular culture as posited by Storey (2009) who sees popular culture as anything which is patronised by a lot of people. Also, since the viewing of the television programme at the selected sites has become a way of life for most people who visit there, these sites can be referred to as popular culture.

#### **2.4 Theory of Cultural proximity**

Ithiel de Sola Pool has been credited as the originator of the idea of cultural proximity in the mass media (Wilkinson, 2002). However, elaborations on the concept have been attributed to Joseph Straubhaar. In his first article, Pool (1977) argues that audiences prefer local or regional productions to those imported from more distant cultures. Thus, according to Ksiazek and Webster (2008), the theory of cultural proximity grew in response to ideas of cultural imperialism which predicted one-way flow of culture from richer countries to poorer countries. Straubhaar (2003) states that for content to best resonate with viewers, the content and the viewer must be in the same cultural linguistic or geolinguistic space.

After Pool (1977), a lot of scholars have given similar definitions to what the theory of cultural proximity is. Straubhaar (2003) defines cultural proximity as the tendency for audience to prefer media products from their own culture or the most similar possible culture. In tandem with Joseph Straubhaar's definition, Ksiazek and Webster (2008) point out that cultural proximity is the "intuitively appealing notion that people will

gravitate toward media from their own culture” (p. 1). Lee, Yoon and Sohn (2002) as cited in Trepte (2008) aver that cultural proximity means something which originates from the same country or region. In spite of all the above mentioned definitions, the researcher is of the view that Lee, Yoon and Sohn’s (2002) definition of cultural proximity is incomplete. This is because for example if a telenovela in the French language is produced in Togo but has been widely accepted by the people of Burkina Faso, the reason may be attributed to the fact that they are both French speaking countries and for that reason, audiences can relate with the language being spoken in it and not necessarily because it was produced in Burkina Faso. According to Straubhaar (1991), the notion that people refer to home-made products is what is seen as a longing for cultural proximity. La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) further state that there are basically two factors that create a general context in which audiences make choices. First, audience choose programmes that are most culturally relevant or proximate to them and second, this proximity tends to be defined by historical spaces of cultural and linguistic commonality.

In communication, cultural proximity was first considered as an important ‘news factor’ with which journalists decided what is newsworthy (Trepte, 2008). However as time went by, cultural proximity has been used to explain the selection and enjoyment of television programmes by viewers. Proponents of cultural proximity indicate ‘language’ as a very important tool in determining audience preferences for different media products (Hoskins, McFayden & Finn, 1997; Straubhaar, 1991). Pool (1977) for example argued that people would rather see a film made in their own language than one with subtitles or even one that is dubbed. Similarly, Straubhaar (2003) posits that “at the individual audience level, competence, ability to speak or at least understand the language of a broadcast, is an important ingredient in audiences’

selection of a programme and their enjoyment of it” (p. 83). The researcher however contends Pool’s (1977) argument with the example that, though *Kumkum Bhagya* is originally made in the Hindi language and dubbed into the Akan language, a lot of people patronise it as opposed to locally produced Ghanaian series such as *Effiewura*.

Language is however not the only determinant of cultural proximity. La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) suggest that there are other levels of similarity or proximity, based on cultural elements such as dress, ethnic types, gestures, body language, definitions of humour, ideas about story pacing, music traditions, religious elements and many more. In addition to these factors, some scholars sometimes include: gender images, lifestyle, knowledge about other lifestyles, values, education, family, personal and group networks, travel, religion, and organisational affiliations (Straubhaar, 2010). This means that people seek proximity in terms of any of the above mentioned aspects of culture when selecting a specific media text to use. In furtherance, Pool (1977) avers that due to the fact that audience prefer culturally proximate products, television industries and advertisers have resorted to producing more programmes nationally and selecting an increasing proportion of what is imported from within the same region, language group, and culture.

However, Straubhaar (2010) suggests that the preference for cultural proximity, precisely national culture, is not uniform but rather related to social classes. According to him, some works in Latin America showed a particularly greater receptivity towards national and local culture by the “popular classes”. These classes include “the lower-middle class, working class, and poor” (p. 271). In support of the above, Vink (1988) also posits that popular classes are more drawn towards national and local television programmes as well. Thus, these classes “seem to prefer nationally or locally produced materials that are closer to them and reinforcing of traditional

identities based on regional, ethnic, dialect/language, religious and other elements” (Straubhaar, 2010; p. 271). A study conducted by Joseph Straubhaar at São Paulo shows that,

Preference for U.S. programs, such as mini-series, series, and music, tends to be stronger among the better educated. Preference for international films, which are largely from the United States, is also stronger among the better educated. In contrast, preference for national variety shows and regionally produced Mexican comedies tends to be stronger among the less educated. Although educational/cultural capital differences in preferences were stronger than age or gender differences, those were also notable. So it seems that the desire for cultural proximity that leads lower classes and middle classes (in terms of education) toward national culture may not be as strong for elites, who seem much more internationalised, as dependency theory would predict (Straubhaar, 2010; p. 272).

The current study contends the above assertion and indicates that since in Africa popular culture is consumed by everyone irrespective of their class (Abah, 2009), the same cannot be said of the television viewers in Ghana. For example, though *Kumkum Bhagya* is dubbed predominantly into the Akan language- Twi, its viewers consist of a discriminating masses of rich and poor in the society. Thus the viewers are attracted to the Indian telenovela as opposed to locally produced series like *Barber and Shoe maker*, *Cow and Chicken* and *Effiewura* which are originally in indigenous languages.

#### **2.4.1 Relevance of Cultural Proximity to the Study**

In a world where different kinds of people have access to increasingly abundant media environments, cultural proximity has emerged as an important theoretical construct for

explaining audience behaviour (Straubhaar, 2010). Based on this, the theory of cultural proximity will help to explain the researcher's findings for the third objective which is to identify the social factors that influence audience's viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

According to DiMaggio (1990),

To write for television, you must think in pictures. A good visual sense is absolutely crucial. Timing and rhythm are also important as well as your ability to identify with the viewing masses. Certainly, if you have no sense of what the viewing masses like or can identify with; your stories will not be marketable (p.11).

Several studies conducted outside Africa indicate that television schedules are dominated by international fictional programmes such as telenovelas and soap operas (Trepte, 2008). However, Trepte (2008) further asserts that ratings of international programmes hardly surpass those of domestic products. This according to him can be attributed to the fact that international programmes lack some kind of cultural content that the viewers can relate to. However, this cannot be said in Ghana since foreign telenovelas have practically taken over the media. A news story published in the Daily Graphic on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 2015 states that, "foreign content- telenovelas, soaps, sitcoms, movies, music, seem to have completely taken over most Ghanaian TV channels at the expense of local programmes" ("More local contents please", 2015). In an interview with journalists, a veteran Ghanaian actor, Dr. Antwi Rokoto indicated that,

He believes telenovelas have come not only to kill local television production in Ghana but also the nation's rich culture. He cited programmes such as *Obra* and the other local drama series which did not only entertain but were also



used as tools to sensitise the public on social vices and inform and educate the citizenry on government policies (“More local contents please”, 2015).

The statement above reaffirms the rate at which foreign telenovelas have taken over the Ghanaian media. Akpan and Ihechu (2012) attribute the unsuccessful nature of most media texts- both local and foreign to poor technical and content qualities. They further aver that,

it is essential for all the elements of television to be put to use during programme production in order to enhance effective and purposeful influence on the audience... This cannot be achieved without considering the cultural attributes of the programmes in relation to the expectations of the audience. The content and visuals are not supposed to derail from the cultural traits of the people for whom they are produced. And the audience rely on the producers for re-establishment of the cultural values (Akpan & Ihechu, 2012: p. 221).

The theory of Cultural proximity will therefore go a very long way to explain factors that make these foreign telenovelas specifically *Kumkum Bhagya* attractive to a lot of Ghanaian audience. For the purpose of this study, the theory of cultural proximity has been extended to include the geographical areas outside the home where media products are consumed. That is to mean, all other things being equal, audiences members will be influenced to watch their favourite television programmes at sites that are closer to them as opposed to those that are further away from them.

## **2.5 The Concept of Third Places**

Raymond Oldenburg, an urban sociologist at the University of West Florida in Pensacola introduced the concept of third places in 1989. The sociologist who mostly



wrote about the importance of informal public gathering places described third places as places where everybody knows your name which one can visit regularly, voluntarily and almost at any time (Jonsson. n.d.). To Oldenburg (1999), these are places outside the home and work places where people can feel relaxed and comfortable while taking part in a “good talk”. He further asserts that historically, people and their communities had benefitted from their participation in activities at public places for which reason third places are considered very important. The home is seen as the first place whereas workplaces are considered as second places (Jonsson, n.d.).

Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) opine that “third places exist outside the home and beyond the ‘work lots’ of modern economic production. They are places where people gather primarily to enjoy each other’s company” (p. 269). According to Oldenburg (1999), third places became relevant especially in America due to the problem of places. To him, Americans do not have special places that are set up specifically to contribute to informal public life hence most people are seen loitering at places which are not meant for such purposes. Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) also assert that third places come in many forms which can either be private businesses or public places. Though Raymond Oldenburg gives examples of third places to include bars, restaurants and cafés, Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) also add barber shops, libraries, dog parks, town squares, coffee shops, pubs and even grocery stores. In line with the examples given by Bernhardt and Stoll (2010), the sites I am studying can also be termed as third places since they are made up of two grocery stores and one hair salon. Third places are able to serve as unique public places which provide a context for sociability, spontaneity, community building and emotional expressiveness. They are

also able to function as a means of “keeping in touch with reality” through intimate personal ties (Jeffres, Bracken, Jian & Casey, 2009; p. 335).

Prominent public space is not reserved for that well-dressed, middle-class crowd that is welcomed at today's shopping malls. The elderly and poor, the ragged and infirm, are interspersed among those looking and doing well. The full spectrum of local humanity is represented (Oldenburg, 1999; p. 14).

Thus, such third places do not segregate people into the various social classes but rather welcome everyone irrespective of their age, sex, social status, educational background, among others. This therefore makes everyone comfortable and relaxed. Escapism is one main theme that runs through most third places where social actors admit to such places providing an escape or time out from life's duties and toils.

Joseph Wechsberg, for example, suggests that the coffeehouses of Vienna afford the common man “his haven and island of tranquility, his reading room and gambling hall, his sounding board and grumbling hall. There at least he is safe from nagging wife and unruly children, monotonous radios and barking dogs, tough bosses and impatient creditors” (Oldenburg, 1999; p. 21).

### **2.5.1 Characteristics of Third Places**

Third places came about as an attempt to finding solution to the problem of place in societies (Oldenburg, 1999). Oldenburg (1999) explicitly provides the various characteristics of third places which help to easily identify them from pubs and other places which do not serve the purpose of third places. In maintaining a relaxing and fulfilling life, Raymond Oldenburg suggests that communities must find balance in three realms of life - domestic, gainful or productive and the third is inclusively sociable, offering both the foundation of community and the celebration of it

(Oldenburg, 1999). Generally, third places primarily promote sociability. Thus these places are sanctuaries of sociability where conversation is the main activity and cordiality prevails (Oldenburg, 1999).

The first characteristic of third places that Oldenburg (1999) talks about is the neutrality of the grounds. To him, most people love to enjoy the company of their friends and loved ones but do not want them so close “in their hair”. Hence to ensure that everyone is comfortable and at ease, there should be third places which host such people serving as a neutral ground for both parties. These places allow people to come and go as they please and in which none are required to play host (Oldenburg, 1999).

The next feature has to do with the fact that third places serve as levellers. To Raymond Oldenburg, the term leveller was used to refer to anything that put humans on the same level or that reduced them to equal positions in the society. He goes further to state that third places do not set out formal criteria for membership and exclusion but are rather inclusive places where anyone at all can go and still feel comfortable without any form of discrimination (Oldenburg, 1999). Oldenburg (1999) further asserts that at third places,

... Those not high on the totems of accomplishments or popularity are enjoined, accepted, embraced, and enjoyed despite their "failings" in their career or the marketplace. There is more to the individual than his or her status indicates, and to have recognition of that fact shared by persons beyond the small circle of the family is indeed a joy and relief (p. 25).

Another characteristic of third places is the idea that conversation is the main activity there. Neutral grounds make available the place, leveling sets the stage for the

commencement and sustenance of the activity whereas conversation is the major activity that takes place at third places. At third places, good talks which are lively, amusing, colourful and engaging are always encouraged. Since status does not play a part at third places, people are able to converse, interact and to socialise among themselves with no restrictions (Oldenburg, 1999).

Accessibility and accommodation are another feature that help to easily identify third places in our communities and towns. Informal third places must not be far away from the residence of community members since proximity is of essence (Oldenburg, 1999). To Raymond Oldenburg, when the location of the third place is further away from the residence, getting there becomes inconvenient, and one is not likely to know the social actors there. They must also be open to accommodate people especially when they are free from the pressures of work and home.

Third places are also places for regulars. To Oldenburg (1999) third places come alive with the presence of regulars who frequent the place due to the benefits they derive from fellow social actors and not the owners of the place. The presence of regulars at third places is very important because these are the people that dominate the place. The dominance does not however reflect in terms of the numerical sense of the word but rather in the sense that irrespective of their number, it is regulars that feel at home at third places and therefore set the tone for conversations and friendliness. It is the regulars “whose mood and manner provide the infectious and contagious style of interaction and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial” (Oldenburg, 1999; p. 34).

Most third places according to Oldenburg (1999) have very low profiles. Thus, they can be seen as plain and as a result becomes very difficult when pointing out their importance to people. It is however the plain nature that gives regulars the opportunity

to set the tone for the place and not the owners. Since most third places do not usually have shiny bright appearances, they do not attract a lot of strangers and most middle class people seem to shun the place. Raymond Oldenburg avows that the plain nature of third places allows people to be themselves without any pretence. Third places are therefore ordinary parts of a daily routine for people who patronise them.

The persistent mood of third places is mostly that of a playful one. The conversations that usually take place there are playful ones which need not be taken so serious. Due to the playful mood of such conversations especially by regulars, newcomers are more likely to be taken aback. The unmistakable mark of true acceptance in a third place is not that of being taken seriously, but being included in play. Once accepted, people tend to feel more comfortable.

Finally, third places are seen as home away from home for most people who patronise them (Oldenburg, 1999). In referring to this, Oldenburg (1999) provides five aspects- first, individuals feel much acquainted to third places because of the familiar faces they see and feel involved with such people, secondly, individuals feel a sense of possession over third places to the extent of using the first person possessive pronouns in referring to them, also third places regenerate and restore individuals even though they cannot sleep at such places. Fourth, patrons feel the “freedom to be” which involves being at ease and expressing one’s self. Finally, the feeling of warmth is essential to feeling at home. Oldenburg (1999) however described the feeling of warmth (which involves friendliness, support and mutual respect) as the least tangible, but is likely to let the third place dissolve without it.

### 2.5.2 Benefits of Third places

Third places provide some benefits to both individuals in a community and the community at large (Oldenburg, 1997). Third places bring about unity in a sense that they help community members to know themselves very well as they meet there often to enjoy “good talk” together. Without these places, community members will live in isolation for years without even getting to know their neighbours (Oldenburg, 1997). They also bring about novelty by way of providing a diverse population to interact with, thus often giving patrons a different experience or way of seeing things. Novelty at third places can also be seen in the area where patrons or social actors are seen to have the ability to create the environment which is difficult to find in other leisure activities (Oldenburg, 1999).

Since third places generally promote sociability and association, they can be seen as what Oldenburg (1997) terms as “sorting areas”. This means that these third places help individuals to find other people with whom they share similar interest. For example in my study, social actors all meet at the selected sites because they all share the interest of watching the telenovela - *Kumkum Bhagya*. As such people meet, they are able to share ideas and perspectives on their common interest. Furthermore, third places also bring the young and old together in association with one another (Oldenburg, 1997) and they are also able to learn from each other through conversations. By this, third places offer what Oldenburg (1999) refers to as perspective where participants learn how to make use of humour and laughter since the hall mark of third places are not to be taken seriously but be involved in a playful manner. Third places therefore contribute “to a healthy perspective by combining pleasure with association in a wide group and affording the collective wisdom of its members” (Oldenburg, 1999; p. 50).

Another benefit that individuals derive from third places is a type of spiritual tonic which according to Oldenburg (1999) is accorded to members due to the fact that they are humans (social creatures) and have natural social needs of interacting with others. The desire to relate socially with other people and to indulge in conversations is mostly fulfilled at third places (Camp, 2015). At third places, people are able to make new friends whose relationship may be different from loved ones or family members. These kinds of friends are not chosen by the patrons of the sites but come by way of affiliation and can thus offer an immunity to the “messiness of other close-knit relationships” (Camp, 2015; p. 19).

Finally, third places foster political debate, reduce the cost of living and are places where one can collect “time-saving, labour-saving, and moneysaving advice - sometimes without even asking” (Oldenburg, 1997; p. 9). According to Oldenburg (1999), “the leveling, primacy of conversation, certainty of meeting friends, looseness of structure, and eternal reign of the imp of fun all combine to set the stage for experiences unlikely to be found elsewhere” (p.43).

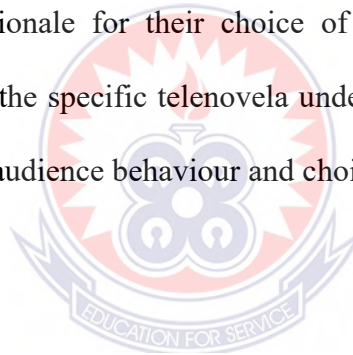
In the current study, the concept of third places is very important due to the fact that the selected sites possess most of the features which qualify them as third places in the Winneba Town. The concept will also aid me to explain the reasons that social actors give for patronizing the selected sites for the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

## **2.6 Summary**

In reviewing the literature, it is evident that television has become a part of the daily lives of people and due to the general insecurities in the world, viewers surf through various television stations until they arrive at a programme that satisfies their needs

and wants. Telenovela as a television genre in Ghana is very popular since a lot of people watch them. The literature further reveals that Ghanaians are however more attracted to foreign telenovelas as opposed to locally produced ones. Due to the popularity of foreign telenovelas on the Ghanaian market, studies have been conducted by various researchers to investigate the interactions that go on during the viewing of the television serial at the living room and how these telenovelas are incorporated into the daily lives of people.

Based on the research objectives, this study is grounded on the theory of popular culture, cultural proximity and the concept of third places. These theories help to explain the interactions that go on as audience view telenovelas at selected sites in Winneba-Ghana, the rationale for their choice of site and the social factors that influence them to watch the specific telenovela under study. The theories tend to give further understanding to audience behaviour and choices at the selected sites.





## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures employed to obtain and analyse data to study the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites in Winneba-Ghana. The chapter goes ahead to discuss the principles that underlie the methods and procedures which were used for the data analysis. Finally, the chapter explains the methods that were used to collect data for each of the research questions. It is therefore appropriate to restate the research questions. They are:

1. What is the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites in Winneba?
2. How do viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* rationalise their choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela?
3. What social factors influence audience's viewership of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*?

#### 3.1 Research Approach

In order to better understand the interactions that go on as viewers watch *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites, qualitative approach was adopted for the study. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding social practices and meanings of people in a specific historical or cultural context (Patton and Cochran, 2007). This means that it is effective in obtaining and gathering specific information about the norms, values and perceptions of a particular population. In tandem with the above,

Hancock (1997) avers that qualitative research studies the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data. Per the definitions given by Patton and Cochran (2007) and Hancock (1997), this study seeks to investigate the social practices and interactions that go on as people gather to watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites in Winneba. The viewers of the telenovela are seen as a group who share one thing in common- the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites, hence an investigation into their way of life will help me to gain more insight into their norms, values and general way of life at the selected sites as purported by Patton and Cochran (2007) and Hancock (1997). The study further probes into the opinions of the viewers with respect to their choice of site for the viewing of the telenovela and the factors that influence them to watch the telenovela daily.

Patton and Cochran (2007) further aver that qualitative researchers aim at analysing the situated form, content and experience of social actors in words rather than in numbers. This point is very important because as a researcher, I am interested in investigating the norms and values of the viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* as they watch the telenovela at the selected sites through interpretative meanings but not in statistical forms. Nkwi, Nyamongo, and Ryan (2001) reiterate this point by asserting that “qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values” (p1).

Creswell (2014) posits that the processes of qualitative research involve emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected from the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meanings of the data. In line with Creswell’s (2014) assertion, the current study involved me going to the field (the natural setting where

people gather to watch the telenovela) to gather data and to conduct a data analysis which was inductively built from particular themes obtained from individual informants to general themes that cut across all informants. Finally, the analysed data was subjected to interpretation.

### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2014), a research design can be described as a strategy, plan and a structure of conducting a research work. This is to say that a research design involves the arrangement of conditions for collecting and analysing data relevant to the researcher in the most economical manner that determines the sample size, sampling technique, the type of data and the means of data collection as well as the method of data analysis (Amoani, 2005). The selection of a research design is mostly dependent on the nature of the research problem, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audience for the study (Creswell, 2014). Corbin and Strauss (2008) also opine that qualitative research involves going past the known in order to see the unknown. In doing this, they suggest that researchers must gain "in-depth understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the people" (p.18). In line with the above, this research adopted ethnography as the research design which helped me to understand the culture of the people being studied. The ethnographic design was selected based on the nature of the topic, its objectives and the participants that participated in the research work.

Creswell (2014) defines ethnography as a " qualitative strategy in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational and interview data" (p. 12-13). He continued that researchers in ethnography study the shared patterns of behaviours,

language, and actions of a cultural group. In line with this definition, my research focused on studying the culture that surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected viewing sites in Winneba. This “culture” took into consideration the language, ways of behaving and the dos and don’ts of the group of people that were studied.

Furthermore, an ethnography according to Harris and Johnson (2003) is a written description of a specific culture - the customs, beliefs, and behaviour. This written description is, however, gathered based on information collected through fieldwork. In line with this definition, my research gave a written account of the culture of viewing a specific telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites (which under normal circumstances are not meant for public television viewing) based on information that were taken from the field.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also posit that ethnography as a research design is holistic in a sense that it tries to describe most of the important aspects of a particular culture’s meaning systems and material existence. Ethnographers are able to vividly describe these important aspects because as they conduct their study, they live intimately with the particular cultural group. In doing this, the ethnographers decide with the cultural group on the appropriate way of mixing perspectives through which the cultural phenomena can be studied (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). In line with this, the current research involved the researcher practically living the lives of the participants through frequent visits to the selected sites and watching and interacting with the participants as they view the telenovela together.

Geertz (2011) likens the conducting of an ethnographic study to the effort of trying to read. Thus, to him:

Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript- foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalised graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour (p. 10).

"Thick description", as borrowed from Gilbert Ryle, is what ethnography is all about (Geertz, 2011: p. 9). In this regard, the researcher gives detailed descriptions of the context within which actions are performed by the social actors. With respect to this definition, my research gave vivid descriptions of all the relevant things that apply to the culture of viewing *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites.

An ethnographic design was used because through regular visits to the various sites that were chosen for the study, I had the opportunity to engage in the phenomenon of ‘immersion’ which is a very important ingredient in an ethnography (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). In all, 42 visits were made to the selected sites during the ethnographic field work.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

According to Kusi (2012), sampling is the process of picking a subgroup for a study. Many researchers who adopt the qualitative approach use a sampling technique that directs their choice of what to observe or who to interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Palys (2008) is of the view that the sampling technique of a study can be determined based on the research objectives set by the researcher.

For the purpose of the current study, the sites, text and participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Oliver (2006) describes purposive sampling as

a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based on a variety of criteria which may include participants' knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. In line with this, Wimmer and Dominick (2013) also purport that purposive sampling includes data or subjects that are selected for possessing specific features that are in line with the study. Creswell (2014) defines purposive sampling as the selection of sites or participants that will aid the researcher in understanding the problem and the research question. He further points out that when using the purposive sampling, decisions need to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take and how many people or sites need to be sampled. Bernard (2002) concludes that purposive sampling involves the researcher deciding what needs to be known and setting out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience.

Based on the objectives of the research, three key sites with televisions were purposively sampled for the study. Purposive sampling method was also employed to identify informants who have knowledge about the topic under study. In tandem with Oliver's (2006) definition of what purposive sampling is, I selected informants based on specific criteria such as their viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites and their willingness to participate in the research. Also, I purposively selected viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* and not any other telenovela since these viewers helped in better addressing the issues in relation to the telenovela as explained by Creswell (2014). Finally, purposive sampling method was employed because I purposively set out to find what the study demanded and which people were best and willing to provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experience as explained by Bernard (2002).

There are two main sampling units for the current study- the sites and the people. Since the three selected sites have cultural meanings to the social actors who gather there to watch the telenovela, I studied the sites to investigate how people interact there and how acts of communication exhibit regularity or variation there (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002: p. 121). I further recruited and interviewed persons who have experiences and possess knowledge important to the research topic hence these people also formed part of the sampling unit.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling size**

The sample size of the study was taken out of all domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba, all telenovelas dubbed into the indigenous language-Twi on the various television stations in Ghana and all viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* who watch the telenovela at domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) opine that sample size is the “terra incognita” of qualitative sampling strategy. Thus, “there is no test that exists to tell the researcher when the sample is big enough or small” (p.129). Baum (2002) also posits that there are no closely defined rules for sample size however, Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) contend that when it comes to qualitative research, sampling mostly relies on small numbers with the aim of studying in depth and detail.

Kitzinger (2004) describes the complex nature of sampling especially for audience research by stating that;

The elasticity and sheer scale of mass media audiences means that sampling for audience research is rather like trying to frame the sky.

Researchers have to decide who constitutes a meaningful group of research



participants in the context of their particular research aims... Alternatively, the key research questions may mean that the best type of sample is one that maximizes possible diversity of interpretation or response (p.172).

Three sites were sampled for the current research work. The sites consisted of two grocery stalls (also known as supermarkets in Ghana) located at the H and E Community and South Campus of the University of Education, Winneba respectively and a hairdressing salon located at Obentiba all within the Winneba town. The researcher purposively selected the three sites because these sites typify the normative or expected behaviours that characterise the viewing of telenovela at domesticated areas which become public television viewing sites especially during the telecast of *Kumkum Bhagya*. Finally, drawing from Ofori-Birikorang (2014), the sites were selected because they were easily accessible in terms of their physical location and proximity and the social actors were willing to participate in the study most especially during the explorative stage of the research.

Creswell (2014) posits that as a general rule, qualitative samples should usually lie at under 50 whereas Adler and Adler (2011) also suggest that a sample size should be between 12 and 60. In line with their suggestion, 33 informants from the three selected sites were used for this study. These 33 informants consisted of 7 males and 26 females. Within this 33 informants, 4 of them were children (under 18 years selected based on permission given by their parents and guardians).

The informants were from various backgrounds in terms of their religion and educational background. In addition, the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* was selected because according to the *Daily Graphic*, it is the first telenovela in Ghana that was



adapted and adopted predominately in the indigenous language -Twi and was received by a large number of audience .

### **3.5 Data Collection instrument**

Casey et al. (2008) recommend that in order for ethnographers to gather rich data and the thick descriptions needed, they should adopt data collection instruments such as participants or non-participant observations, unstructured interviews, focus groups and research diaries. In line with this, the current study employed three data collection instruments namely participant observations, interviews and focus group discussions in order to ensure that data collected can be relied on to give better interpretations. Data for this research work was collected over a period of eight months spanning June, 2016 to February, 2017.

#### **3.5.1 Participant Observation**

McKechnie, (2008) avers that observation is one of the oldest and most used data collection tool which involves the researcher collecting impressions of the world around him/her using all of his/her senses especially the eyes and ears in a systematic and purposeful way to learn more about a phenomenon of interest. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) are also of the view that “observation as a technique can be used when data cannot be collected through other means, or those collected through other means are of limited value or are difficult to validate” (p.18). The type of observation that was used in this study is the participant observation which Gans (1999) defines as the term used to describe the “professional craft of experiencing and recording events in their social settings” (p.134).

Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) as cited in Kawulich (2005) also define participant observation as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (p.91). McKechnie (2008) indicates that the rich descriptions that participant observation generates, leads to a deeper knowledge and fuller understanding of the phenomenon under study. He further states that it is mainly powerful when combined with other methods such as interviewing.

In a talk given by Erving Goffman during the 1974 Pacific Sociological Meeting, he explains participant observation as,

One of getting data, it seems to me, subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation (Goffman, 1989: p. 125).

This means that the researcher is around when the people she is studying are responding to what life does to them. She does not just listen to what they talk about but also pays attention to minor grunts and groans as they respond to their situation (Goffman, 1989). In line with this, the current research involved me observing participants in their natural setting (the selected sites). I also became a regular member of their group since I resorted to going to the various sites and watching the telenovela with the social actors on a daily basis. This regular visit to the various sites was to enable me live the culture of viewing *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites with the people in question and to also gain extra knowledge on their minor grunts and groans which under normal circumstances cannot be gathered from the interviews and focus

group discussions. For example, I observed the behaviour, interactions, reactions and attitude of the audience before, during and after watching the telenovela at the selected sites, during the interviews and also observed the setting or environment within which the audience watched the telenovela which is in line with Hancock et al.'s (2009) assertion that sometimes there is the need to observe the environment of the participants in order to get valuable background information about the sites where a research project is being undertaken.

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

Another instrument that was used for the data collection is interviews. I used this instrument basically to gather responses for research questions two and three which inquired about the rationalisation that the informants gave for their choice of site for viewing the telenovela and the social factors that influenced their viewing of the telenovela. When the need also arose, I asked questions about the activities that participants indulged in as they watched the telenovela.

Qualitative interview involves a situation where one person who is known as the interviewer encourages others (interviewees) to talk about their interest and experiences without any kind of restraint (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In tandem with the above, Brinkmann (2007) explains interviews to mean a form of conversational practice where there is the production of knowledge by way of the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group of interviewees. The act of interviewing therefore involves the asking of questions and the listening of responses from people who tell what they know, feel and believe. Researchers engage in interviews because they help to better understand the social actors' (interviewees) experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon under study. Thus through qualitative interviews,

people get the total opportunity to craft themselves using their language (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The ethnographic interview was employed during the periods that I was on the field. These interviews were spontaneous and more informal as I took advantage of the slightest remarks made by someone or an action performed to interview the person. I also adopted informant interviews which gave me the opportunity to gather open-ended responses from the informants. The research participants of the study were asked questions which solicited responses pertaining to themselves, what they do and what goes on around them as they view the telenovela which is in line with the views of Lindlof and Taylor (2002).

Apart from the ethnographic interviews which were spontaneous because they arose from activities which occurred on the field as the telenovela was being telecast, the informant interview was pre-planned to ensure consistency with all informants. A semi-structured form of interview guide was used to enable the informants talk freely and to elaborate on questions asked. The questions that were asked were derived from the research questions of the study. The informants were given the chance to call for clarifications when the need arose. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, I had the chance to explain in simpler terms by modifying the sequence of questions and changing the wording whenever it appeared that informants had difficulties understanding a specific question (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Most of the interviews were done on the field during the participant observation whereas the rest were done at different locations depending on the interviewee's convenience. The length of each interview also differed depending on the interviewee but ranged between 5 minutes and 10 minutes. Overall 19 people were interviewed for

the individual interviews. Due to the limited time that I had to complete the interview, I ensured that rapport was created between myself and my informants before beginning the interview. I also adopted a conversational and informal way of interviewing so that informants felt at home and relaxed when answering questions. In line with Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) view on how to create a rapport, I introduced myself and my purpose to the informants. I also briefed them about how the interview was going to be conducted and reminded the informants that I did not know everything and hence was always ready to learn from them.

### **3.5.3 Focus Group Discussions**

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) aver that though focus group discussion is a form of interview, it has become a stand-alone data collection method by itself. Hancock et al. (2009) on the other hand see focus group discussion as an instrument that resembles interviews in a way. Bore (2012) employed focus group discussions to investigate audience engagement with television comedy in Britain and Norway. She stated that focus group is very good in television studies.

Using Bore's (2012) statement as a backdrop, I adopted focus group discussion as a data collection instrument since the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* is a television programme. In addition, focus group discussion was used because within a group context, members are stimulated by the ideas and experiences expressed by each other and thus what occurs is a kind of "chaining" or "cascading effect..." (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: p. 182) which helps to enrich the researcher's data collection. In line with Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) assertion, focus group discussion gave me a wider audience to talk about the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites and it also enabled me to derive valuable behaviours and elements such as slang, jokes, anecdotes

and many more- that brought to life the group norms and sense making that occur naturally in the participants' world.

The interviewees had the opportunity to express themselves fully and were made to understand that no answer is wrong or right. The semi-structured interview guide that was used helped me to adjust to the verbal styles of the participants.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection procedure basically looks at the various steps, ways and means through which the researcher applied the various data collection instruments to gather data for the research study.

#### **3.6.1 Participant Observation**

Most of the observations were conducted in the evening. In almost all the days, I went to the sites about twenty minutes before the start of the telenovela to observe what participants engaged in prior to the telecast of the telenovela. I also observed keenly while participating in the viewing of the telenovela during its telecast and stayed about twenty minutes after the telecast in order to observe the post-viewing interactions of the social actors before leaving for their various homes. The observations were done throughout the eight months of the field work. I began by entering two sites for the first month without identifying myself to anyone because those two sites had the social actors all standing outside which made it easier for me to blend in. I did this in order for me to familiarise myself with the environment and the social actors there. On the other hand, because the third site required that members entered the salon due to the nature of the place, I negotiated entry by talking to the owner of the place about

my purpose for coming there before familiarising myself with the environment and the social actors.

During the observational process, I paid attention to the participants at the setting, collected demographic (e.g., age, gender, education, class) and descriptive (e.g., dress and stature) information and tried to determine who the people were. Activities and events were observed and recorded to discover what people did and with whom, what was happening, and whether there were any trends and patterns discernible in the activities. I also attended to what people said, the words they used, accounts and explanations they gave to their behaviour, and the personal and social meanings and the attitudes and beliefs that were revealed through their talk. I did all these following the procedure given by Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005).

I also took field notes and pictures during the observational process. I mostly put down notes on actions and behaviours a few minutes before they began in order to prevent the social actors from detecting that their actions were being monitored and noted down. The field notes were however typed on my infinix note two phone whenever I was on the field and were later transferred to my field notebook whenever I got home. This was done to prevent the social actors from identifying that their every move was being recorded in a book in order to ensure that they were as real as they could be as they viewed the telenovela at the various sites. I saved my data on a 14gig scandisk pen drive and also back it up on Google drive in order to prevent me from losing all my data in case my laptop should fail. Descriptions of the environment and what went on there were put down in the field note. I also observed participants during the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions and watched out for their mannerisms, vocabulary and attitudes towards the topics under discussion.

### 3.6.2 Interviews

I adopted the traditional face-to-face interviews within the eight months of the entire field work (from June, 2016 to February, 2017). Each day, after observing the social actors and the social activities that went on at the selected sites, I took advantage of the slots for commercial breaks to introduce myself to the potential interviewees and also told them about my study. Once the interviewees accepted to be interviewed, the interviewer (myself) conducted informal interviews with them. In some instances, I scheduled the day, time and place for an interview to take place when the interviewees indicated that they were unprepared to answer the questions at the moment of viewing the telenovela. However, most of the interviews were conducted on the field at a time when the participants had met at the various sites to watch the telenovela. I ensured that most of the interviews were conducted after participants had finished watching specific episodes. Each informal interview with the participants lasted for about five to fifteen minutes.

On the day of each interview, I went with my smart phone (infinix note two) to record and retrieve the interviews I had. In some instances where the phone could not record certain observable activities during the interview, field notes were taken. Both ethnographic and informal interviews as used by Machado-Borges (2003) were adopted because they allowed for flexibility on the side of both the interviewer and the interviewee. The semi-structured interview guide (attached as appendix) was used to direct the nature of interview with each interviewee. I also allowed for new ideas which were outside the guide. Some questions about demography were asked including the age, work and educational level of the interviewees. This process was repeated for all the 19 informants that I interviewed. In order to obtain more



information, a simple and clear language devoid of ambiguity was used during the interview as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2003).

In line with Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) assertion of what characterises an informant interview, the research interviews that I conducted ensured straight to the point questions, brief interview encounters, interviewee anonymity, and focused more on individual perceptions about the phenomenon under study.

### **3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions**

Two focus groups were formed consisting of seven members each which is in line with Smithson's (2000) view that a focus group must consist of a moderate size, six to ten people. The discussions lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The venue and time for the discussion were determined by the group members. The discussion was arranged in a cordial and a relaxed setting. The chairs were arranged in a circular manner such that each member could see the other's face. This arrangement helped in creating rapport with informants and also aided in putting them at ease.

Each group consisted of informants from similar background. This was done in order to give the participants the freedom to express themselves without feeling intimidated by anyone above or below them. The first group consisted of two males and five females whereas the second group consisted of seven females. I was the moderator for the group discussion and I began with introducing myself to the groups and the reason for the meeting. I gave members guidelines on how the discussion was going to take place and also gave them numbers from 1 to 7 (for each group) which were used to identify them since members were more relaxed with their names not being mentioned or recorded. I took demographical information from my informants. My in finix note two phone was placed on a table at the centre of the group and I encouraged

participants to talk loudly and to talk one after the other in order for the recorder to get everything that each member talks about. Furthermore, I asked questions that set the pace for group members to express themselves.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

The data that I collected were analysed with the aim of getting the trends and patterns that run through all the interviewee's responses (Krueger, 1994 as cited in Genzuk, 2003). The data analysis began with the participant observation, through the individual interviews to the focus group discussions. In answering research question one which deals with the description of culture surrounding the viewing of the telenovela, the analysis began with assembling the data in order to get a total view of the entire process. The purpose for this description according to Genzuk (2003) is to "let the reader know what happened in the environment under observation, what it was like from the participants' point of view to be in the setting and what particular events or activities in the setting were like" (p. 9). In reading through the field notes and interview transcripts, I looked out for portions that well suited a descriptive write up about the specific phenomenon being studied and also ensured that in-depth and direct quotations were given to support the detailed descriptions and discussions of the specific research question. The descriptive part of the first research question was however grouped into pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing culture.

In analysing the data collected, I tried as much as possible to bracket my biases in order to come out with a more objective analysis and interpretation of the data. This bracketing had to be done because I am also a viewer of the telenovela and hence needed to bracket myself in order to prevent my biases from affecting the findings of the research work. Bracketing, according to Bertelsen (2005), involves the researcher

creating a distance from previously held assumptions or theories and basing interpretations solely on immediate insight into the phenomenon themselves. Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, played and transcribed. I read thoroughly and severally through the transcripts and marked out all the parts that were of relevance to the research questions.

The data collected for research questions two and three were further grouped into relevant themes. Thus the thematic qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse the data collected. Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clark (2006) is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p. 6). The inductive type of thematic data analysis where the researcher does not try to fit the data into any form of preconceived analysis or pre-existing coding frame (Braun and Clark, 2006) was used for this research work. Themes developed for research questions two and three include socialisation, proximity/location, financial constraint, escapism, indigenous language, verisimilitude and popularity of the telenovela.

Another part of the process involved the researcher interpreting and commenting on the assembled data as directed by Genzuk (2003). In embarking on the interpretative process, I looked out for issues that were raised by the informants, how these issues related to one another and to other literature and then meanings were drawn based on the theories underpinning the study. Direct quotations were also used to support my analysis and discussions.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

Some ethical issues that came up during the ethnographic study had to do with informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the consequence of the interviews.

In terms of seeking consent and giving information, I informed the informants about the purpose of the research work and what will be expected of them. The participants were then given the opportunity to either accept or decline to be part of the research study. Only those that gave their consent were interviewed and used for the research work. Even after consent had been given by the informants, I informed them of their right to withdraw from the study or answering a particular question if they deem it intrusive or inappropriate. Informants' permission was sought before the audiotapes were used to record whatever transpired verbally during the interviews and focus group discussions.

Informants below 18 years (who according to the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana can be classified as children) were also interviewed but with consent from themselves and their parents or guardian. Children and sometimes parents were also given some gifts in the form of snacks after the interviews had taken place. This was done as a form of appreciation for participating in the research.

With respect to confidentiality, the informants were assured of both high (information considered very private) and low (information considered mundane) forms of confidentiality as espoused by Iphofen (n.d.). Also, in ensuring anonymity and privacy, I did not use names of informants but rather linked them to pseudonyms especially at instances where they were being quoted directly.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

Anney (2014) in his research paper- *Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria* found that most students at the University of Dar Es Salaam-Tanzania in their dissertation employed the quantitative

trustworthiness criteria such as reliability and validity to assess the accuracy of qualitative inquiry. Brink (1993) and Creswell (2014) are of the view that the meaning that validity and reliability carry in qualitative research is different from what they connote in quantitative research. Brink (1993) indicates that validity in qualitative research is geared towards determining the accuracy and truthfulness in research findings. Anney (2014) therefore suggests that researchers should rather consider dependability (in preference to reliability), credibility (in preference to internal validity), transferability (in reference to external validity) and confirmability (in preference to objectivity) as trustworthiness criteria for qualitative investigation as propounded by Lincoln and Guba (2000).

### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that ensuring credibility (internal validity) is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in a research work. Creswell (2014) provides eight validation strategies in testing for the validity in a qualitative research. These processes include triangulation, using member checking to determine accuracy on the part of participants, using rich and thick descriptions, presenting negative case analysis, spending prolonged time at the research field, using peer debriefing, using external auditors and clarifying research basis. He further states that qualitative researchers should adopt at least two of the strategies in their studies. I applied three of these strategies by playing back all audios to participants for them to listen and determine if what has been captured is accurately what they meant to convey. The researcher also checked the audio tapes with her supervisor and other colleagues to ensure that the data she had gathered were in line with the results and data analysis. The dates, time and location for the field works and focus group

discussions were also recorded and made ready for any form of auditing or verification.

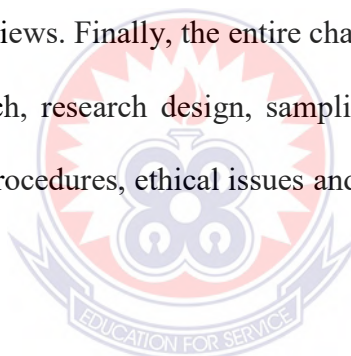
In addition, rich and thick descriptions were used by the researcher to describe the settings and activities that went on at the various sites as participants gathered to watch the telenovela. I also described how participants rationalised their actions and inactions through the interviews and focus group discussions that I conducted. I further used triangulation to determine the validity of the research work. Lincoln and Guba (2000) identify four types of triangulation; data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. The current research, however, made use of the methodological triangulation.

Methodological triangulation, according to Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012), involves using more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon. This type of triangulation according to Bethet and Zauszniewski (2012), aids in confirming findings, providing comprehensive data and finally increasing validity. The current study used observations, individual interviews and focus group discussions to explain and describe the culture surrounding the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected sites in Winneba.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) stress the close bond between credibility (validity) and dependability (reliability) and they argue that when a researcher is able to demonstrate credibility, it goes a long way in ensuring dependability. This, according to them may be achieved through the use of “overlapping methods”, such as the focus group discussions and individual interviews which were all present in the current study.

### 3.10 Summary

Chapter three introduced the methods that were used in collecting and gathering data for the study. The researcher adopted an ethnographic design through a qualitative research approach to investigate the culture that surrounds the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at some selected domesticated but open sites in Winneba- Ghana. Through participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions, I collected data from three sites in Winneba and thirty-three informants at the sites. Furthermore, rationalisation was provided for each method selected at every stage of the data collection. Three ethical issues that were raised during the ethnographic study were informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the consequence of the interviews. Finally, the entire chapter passed through the following outline: research approach, research design, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection methods and procedures, ethical issues and the validity and reliability of the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, discussions and analysis of data collected from the participant observations, interviews and focus group discussions conducted on the culture that surrounds the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites in Winneba. The chapter further presents analysis from the outcome of the data collected from the thirty-three informants to investigate the factors that influenced the social actors to watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* and their rationalisation for watching the telenovela at the selected sites. For the purpose of ensuring participants' anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms (such as Informant 1) for all the thirty-three (33) informants. Below are the research questions that guided the data collection:

1. What culture surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites in Winneba?
2. How do viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* rationalise their choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela?
3. What are the social factors that influence audience viewership of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*?

#### **4.1. RQ1: What culture surrounds the immediate viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites in Winneba?**

This research question addresses the various interactions and activities that took place as social actors met at the three sites in Winneba to view the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. As part of answering the research question, a demographical information



which covered the sex, age range, educational level and religion of the participants was sought. Out of the thirty-three informants, seven (7) were males, whereas twenty-six (26) were females. Four (4) participants were under eighteen years, twenty-four (24) were between nineteen (19) and forty (40) years, while five (5) were above forty years (5). Also, twenty-three (23) participants had their educational level up to the Junior High School, seven (7) had theirs up to the Senior High School level, whereas three (3) had their education up to the tertiary level. Finally, twenty-two (22) of the informants were Christians, three (3) were Muslims and eight (8) were Traditionalists.

The demographics indicate that though the numbers under the various demographical categories differ, the informants that participated in the research study cut across all the categories (sex, age, educational level and religion). This supports Abah's (2009) assertion that in most places in Africa, the people that adopt popular culture are not only the "rural folksy types, but a shifting amalgamation of different people as defined by language, ethnicity, occupation and religion" (p.732). Thus, in Africa, everybody regardless of his or her class on the social ladder, education, age, or religion consumes popular culture and in this context the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. The demographics further reaffirm Erlmann's (1991) stance that there is no one-on-one correspondence between class, position and media text which contradicts what scholars such as Strinati (2004) had stated. Thus, since the informants cut across all the categories, one cannot determine an individual's position in the social process or his/her class position from the telenovela he watches or patronises which further supports Storey's (2009) stance that no culture has been attached to a specific whole class. However, through the individual interviews that I conducted, it came to light that some social actors considered the site as a place for the "not so well to do". One informant stated,

Nna me dwen dɛ hɔn a wonnyi kandzia na TV nko na wɔ b'egyina ha hwɛ Kumkum Bagya ntsi mpen pii no ɔyɛ me ahobow dɛ mehu obi tsi dɛ abrantsee na ogyina hɔ (*pointing at a gentleman in a long sleeve shirt and trousers with a clean pair of black shoes*) no wɔ ha (*Informant 9, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket*).

This means:

I thought that it is only those without light and TV that come and stand here to watch *Kumkum Bhagya* so most times it surprises me to see someone like the gentleman over there (*pointing at a gentleman in a long sleeve shirt and trousers with a clean pair of black shoes*) coming here to watch it (*Informant 9, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket*).

Another informant stated in a similar manner that,

Kumkum Bagya dze, obiara hwɛ na ma ɔhaw nye esikafo no a hɔn wɔ TV wɔ fie naaso hɔn ba ha bɔ hwɛ no. Wɔ ma ha kyer (*Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket*).

This means:

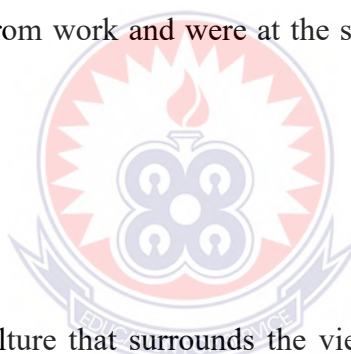
As for *Kumkum Bhagya*, everyone watches it but the problem has to do with those rich people who have TV at home but still come here to watch it. They make this place too crowded (*Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket*).

To these social actors, it did not matter one's status on the social ladder when it came to patronizing the telenovela but rather, social class became relevant with respect to individuals' choice of the selected sites for the viewing of the telenovela. This

perception by some social actors validated the need for research question two which investigated informants' rationalisation for the choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela.

As stated by Twigg (2009), clothes operate as part of class identity and hence one could easily determine the class of most of the social actors by the way they were dressed. Majority of the children were topless with no footwear whereas others were in torn clothes. Most of the women had clothes wrapped around them with a shirt on their wrappers. The few men that were around were also in t-shirts with shorts or trousers along with pairs of slippers. There were, however, a few people who looked "well to do" from the dresses they had on especially some university students and people who had closed from work and were at the sites in their well tucked-in shirts, trousers and shoes.

#### 4.2 The Sites



Before describing the culture that surrounds the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the domesticated but open sites, I first give a brief information about the Winneba town. Winneba, also known traditionally as "Simpa" is located at the Central Region in the Southern part of Ghana. The people of Winneba are predominantly into fishing and they speak Efutu and Fante languages. Agyeman (2013) corroborates that though a second language in Winneba, Fante is spoken in the inland part of Winneba making up two thirds of the population whereas Efutu is spoken among the suburbs along the coast including the fishing beach which also forms one third or less of the entire population. The presence of the University of Education at Winneba has helped to make the town a vibrant one.

The three sites that were used for the ethnographic study consisted of two grocery stores (supermarkets) and one hairdressing salon namely- *Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket*, *Seven up Supermarket* and *Young World Salon* respectively.

#### **4.2.1 Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket**

The Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket is located at the central part of Winneba, specifically, the Roman Community. There are a few supermarkets around the area but it is only Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket that allows people to stand outside and join in the television viewing experience. The supermarket is situated just beside the main road that runs through the community to other parts of the Winneba Town. The location of the site just by the main road qualifies it as a third place since Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) avow that the location of such third places closer to main roadways make it convenient for people to visit there often and in their numbers. When entering the Roman Community, the supermarket is sited at the left side of the main road beside a barbering salon. There is also a dry gutter that separates the supermarket and the main road. Painted with the colours light blue and white with faded patches of red paints showing, the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket stands out at the lane that it is located due to its size and structure.

Though the supermarket is a wooden structure, a metallic gate has been attached to it which according to the owner was made to protect it against armed robbers. There is a corridor from the main gate to the entrance of the supermarket itself and this is where the owner and his family and friends mostly sit to talk, eat and relax. This corridor also serves as a place where the owner of the supermarket stands to inquire about what customers need and also doubles as a kitchen where noodles are cooked and sold to

customers. Whenever customers went there to buy provisions, they stood behind the metallic gate and communicated with the sellers.

**Figure 1.** Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket



There is a 22-inch analogue television located on a shelf just at the entrance of the store and this television has been positioned to face the main road so anyone that passes in front of the supermarket sees it as long as the supermarket is opened. The position of the television gives anyone who wants to view a welcoming start thus qualifying the site as an informal third place according to Oldenburg (1999). There is also a Multi-TV antenna that is connected to the television in order to enable it access to digital TV stations such as Adom TV where *Kumkum Bhagya* is televised.

There is a movable bench that is always placed in front of the supermarket anytime that it is opened. This according to the owner is to aid people who come in to buy cooked noodles to relax as they wait for their food. However, this is not actually the case when *Kumkum Bhagya* is being televised since other social actors who come in to



watch the telenovela in the evenings occupy the seats even before the customers decide to sit on them.

**Figure 2.** A Television inside the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket



Adjacent the supermarket is a big immovable stone which also serves as a seat for most people who come around to watch the telenovela. According to Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) people tend to patronise third places when there are comfortable seats that will encourage interaction.

#### **4.2.2 Seven Up Supermarket**

The Seven Up Supermarket is located at the Southern part of Winneba; some few kilometres to the South Campus of the University of Education, Winneba. Due to the closeness of the supermarket to the university, a lot of people patronise it. The owner of the place sells cooked noodles, cards, teddy bears, soft drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. These items are mostly brought out of the store to the corridor which has no gate so the owner always carries them out in the morning and packs

them back inside in the evening when she is leaving. There are only two plastic chairs at the corridor and they are mostly occupied by the owner and a friend or a family member. There is a three step stair case that one ascends before entering the corridor of the supermarket. There are also three movable refrigerators which store ice cream and drinks. A 22-inch television is also placed on a long plastic table which can be found on the corridor. Just as the television set at Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket, the television at Seven Up is also made to face the entrance of the supermarket which, according to one social actor, indicates that the owner has no problem with people coming to stand there to join in the viewing experience. There is a Multi TV decoder placed at the left side of the television which is in turn connected to an antenna since the television is also an analogue.

The Seven Up Supermarket easily attracts people's attention due to its colourful nature. Thus a successful third place easily attracts people by its design, colour and nature (Bernhardt & Stoll, 2010). In front of the supermarket is a one way road that leads to other parts of Winneba such as Eyipe and the Central Campus. Mostly, when the space in front of the supermarket where people stand to view the telenovela is full, some stand across the road to join in the viewing of the programme.

According to some social actors, it becomes quite difficult viewing the telenovela from the other side of the road especially if one does not have good eyesight. Though Oldenburg (1999) asserts that a third place which is open and spacious enough attracts a lot of social actors, this assertion was contradicted at the Seven Up Supermarket since a lot of people patronised it even though the place was not open and spacious enough. Some social actors also went with their plastic chairs to sit right in front of the supermarket to watch the telenovela even though that becomes quite dangerous since they end up occupying part of the main road.

**Figure 3.** The Seven Up Supermarket

#### 4.2.3 Young World Salon

The Young World salon is located at Obentiba at the Coastal part of Winneba. The people that live at the community are mostly fisher folks. The salon is the biggest in the community with very affordable prices on services delivered. This was rationalised by the owner as a result of the class of people they offer services to whom she termed as not very “well to do”. The store has been partitioned into three main parts with one given to a seamstress at the extreme right and the other two belonging to the owner of the salon. The owner of the salon has however, converted the second room to a rice storage room where she sells bags of local rice to retailers. The salon is painted green and white and there is a door that links it to the rice storage room.

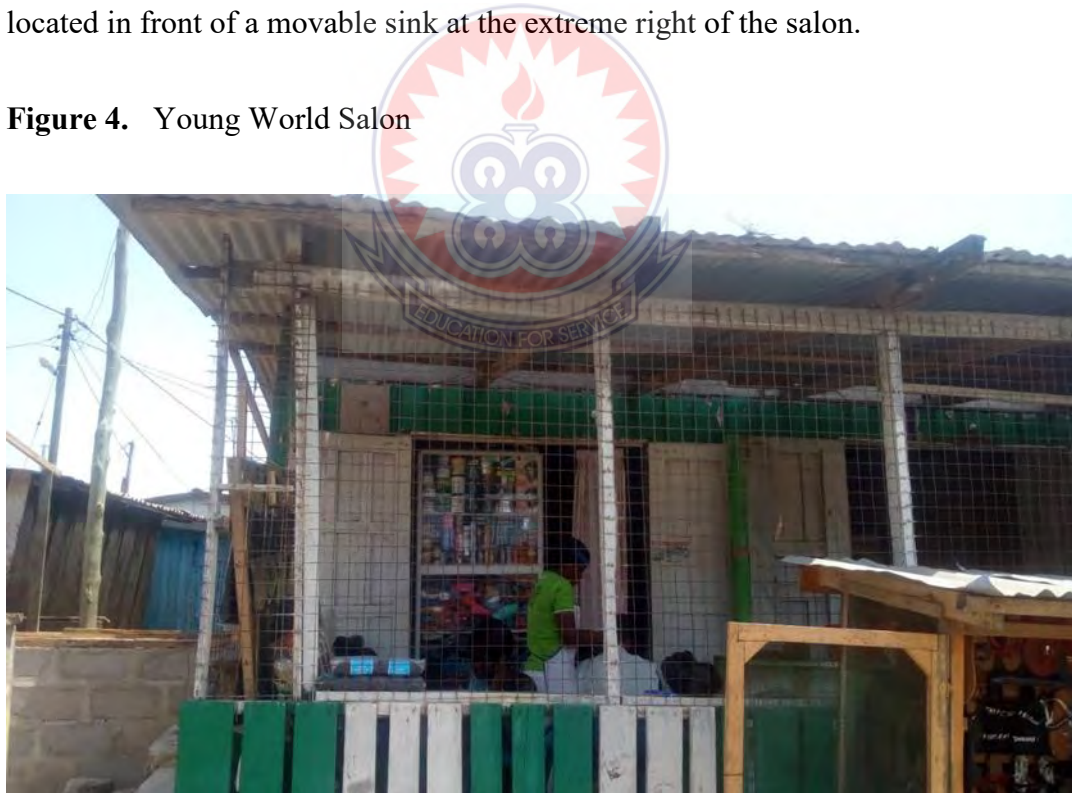
There is a fence that has been attached to the salon creating a kind of veranda where activities such as the braiding of hair, fixing of weaves and other outdoor activities are



done. Unlike the two supermarkets where the television is located outside on the corridor, the 18-inch television at the salon is placed inside which, according to the owner, is a much more secured place. Though the television is placed inside the salon, viewers at the Young World Salon are still able to join in the viewing experience.

When one enters the salon, the television is located at the extreme right on a television stand which has been erected on the wall. There is also a Multi TV cable connected to the television. Inside the salon, there are two big mirrors attached to the opposite sides of the wall and three hair dryers. There are also three wooden chairs and two plastic chairs. The wooden chairs are all placed under each dryer whereas one of the plastic chairs is placed in front of one of the mirrors glued to the wall and the last chair is also located in front of a movable sink at the extreme right of the salon.

**Figure 4.** Young World Salon



There is enough space for about five people if they decide to sit on the floor to watch the telenovela. The heat that however generates when a lot of people gather there

makes it quite difficult for the owner to accept a lot of people in the salon to watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

The owner also sells water and some soft drinks (in a refrigerator which is placed at the extreme left of the salon). This supports Bernhardt and Stoll's (2010) assertion that a good third places gives people access to food or beverages either at the site itself or nearby.

**Figure 5.** A Television at the Young World Salon



#### **4.2.4 The selected sites as third places**

Third places according to Oldenburg (1999) have their outstanding feature being the fostering of conversations or social interactions among social actors. Hence any public place outside the home or work place which encourages social interaction can be classified as a third place. The selected sites though meant for commercial purposes can be categorised as third places due to the fact that they promote socialisation

through conversations. The neutrality of the selected sites, their plain or low profile nature, their ability to serve as “levellers” for people of all categories, their easy accessibility, the presence of regulars who give the welcoming tones to newcomers, and the playful tone of these regulars all come together to qualify the selected sites as third places per the characteristics provided by Oldenburg and Brissett (1982). Furthermore, even though Jonsson (n. d.) asserts that third places have historically been considered as places for men whereas women have been restricted to the home and care of children, I observed that there were more women at the three sites as opposed to the men which can be attributed to the telecast of the telenovela which is considered to be women’s programme.

#### **The Culture surrounding the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites**

Mckearny et al. (1994) are of the view that the act of watching television can be active, planned and engrossing and can thus serve a social function or a welcome background noise for idle time-passing. The television genre- telenovela (*Kumkum Bhagya*), as a central mass ceremony provides diverse audiences with a common vocabulary and communicative experience that cuts across regional, class and other social boundaries (Porto, 2008). Thus though the audience of *Kumkum Bhagya* are diverse, the viewing of the telenovela together at the selected sites brings about a sort of culture which is shared amongst all of them. Media use according to Morley (2005) “happens within connected skeins of behaviour, accomplished practices...which constitute and maintain our social realities” (p.176). It is for this reason that this research question sought to investigate the type of interactions, behaviours, norms and values that exist during the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites. The

researcher therefore grouped the culture that surrounded the viewing of the telenovela into three main parts- *pre-viewing culture*, *viewing culture* and *post-viewing culture*.

### 4.3. Pre-viewing Culture

The pre-viewing culture in this research was operationalised as the norms, values and activities that took place fifteen minutes before the start of the telenovela. During the ethnographic visits, the researcher went to the three ethnographic sites to observe what social actors engaged in and also backed the observation up with informal and semi-structured interviews where necessary. The pre-viewing culture was also grouped into two parts: *arrival* and *activities*.

#### 4.3.1. Arrival

In the course of my ethnographic visits, I observed that especially during the week days, it was mostly children (under 18 years) that came to the sites earlier before the start of the telenovela. Even among the children, the girls that came there were more than the boys. Most of the adults (usually females), however, came to the sites about five minutes to the start of the telenovela. The men, on the other hand, arrived when the telenovela had already commenced. On the contrary, social actors who were unable to watch the telenovela during the weekdays arrived quite earlier on Sundays to wait for the omnibus of the telenovela to commence. When I interviewed an informant about why she mostly arrived at the site about three minutes to the start of the telenovela, she stated that:

Enyim dɛ ha yɛ obi ne store ntsi y'enntum mmbɛ tsena ha ntɛm dɛ  
yɛ retwɛn ma wahyɛ Kumkum Bagya ase. ɔwɔ dɛ store no wura no

nya Kwan yɛ n'edwuma ntsi mpɛ pii no, me tsena fie na ɔyɛ a na ma soma me ba besia no ma w'abɔhwɛ dɛ sɛ waahyɛ ase a. Sɛ "advert" no ba do pɛ, onyim dɛ Kumkum bɛ toado ntsi nna w'abɛfrɛ me (Informant 1, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

You know this place is someone's store and we cannot come and sit here very early all in the name of waiting for *Kumkum Bhagya* to start. The owner has to feel free to do her work so I mostly sit at home and send my daughter who goes to check every now and then to see whether the telenovela has begun. Immediately she sees a particular advert showing, she knows right after that Kumkum will continue so she comes over to call me (Informant 1, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

Another informant at Young World salon answered in a similar manner:

Hmm... Enyim dɛ sɛ Maame yi a ɔyɛ tsir ne bofuw a obotsum ahyɛ wo ohoroba. Da bi, ɔkaakyirɛ me dɛ me nnyi biribi papa biara yɛ wɔ me fie ntsi na me sɔr ara a nna mabɛtsina ha no ntsi ma ɔbɛyɛ a dɛm nkaba no, me soma me fie mbofra no ma wɔ bɔ hwɛ. Sɛ "advert" no ba do pɛ nna w'abɛfrɛ me. Enyim dɛ ɔwɔ dɛ me bu moho amma w'ankasa entsia me. (Informant 18, Young World Salon).

This means:

Hmm...you know this hairdresser can easily insult you at the least provocation. Once she told me I have nothing better to do that is why I come and sit there very early. So to avoid such comments from her I decide to monitor when the telenovela begins by sending the children in the house to go and check so when it starts they come and call me. You know I have to respect myself enough to avoid any form of disrespect from her (Informant 18, Young World Salon).

In this instance, the rationalisation for arriving at the sites just on time was attributed to the fact that social actors wanted the owners of the sites to get enough space and time to do their work before the telenovela began and as a result such participants resorted to relying on children to communicate to them (adult participants) whenever the telenovela began. The men also indicated that they had other things doing for which reason they arrived at the sites later when the programme had already commenced. These men were of the conviction that coming to the sites very early to wait for the telenovela to commence was unmanly. An informant who had arrived just on time for the programme stated:

Oh! Madam, already most of my friends laugh at me and complain about the fact that I watch this *Kumkum Bhagya* programme which they believe was made for women. So I won't make my case worse by coming here very early to wait for them to start. If that happens then that means I cannot walk with them as my friends anymore because I will definitely not be able to stand the rate at which I will be mocked by them... (giggles) already, they call me Mr. Kumkum (Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket).



The statement above dovetails into what Morley (2005) indicates that men prefer to watch hard programmes (documentary and news) whereas women desire soft programmes (telenovelas and soap operas) and as a result, men who are found to be avid viewers of soft programmes such as telenovelas are linked with femininity and weakness. For that reason most of the male social actors did not go to the various sites to wait for the telenovela to commence but rather went after the programme had already begun to avoid being mocked.

#### **4.3.2. Activities**

Before the telenovela started each day, children who were present mostly sat around the sites playing and conversing among themselves. These children imitated the voices of some characters in the telenovela and even called themselves by their (the characters) names. In an instance, I was awed to hear a young boy of about 10 years screaming at the friend upon being provoked and shouting amidst tears “w’anim de Abhi ne mpabowa ati” which means “your face looks like the footwear of Abhi” (Abhi is one of the main characters in *Kumkum Bhagya*). According to Oldenburg and Brissett (1982), third places give people the opportunity to express themselves and be vulgar in a way that the home and workplace do not. Thus the first and second places have restrictions whereas the third places allow people to do things freely and spontaneously without necessarily thinking about societal norms. The child in this case said whatever he felt and voiced it without any fear of reprimand from the adults around at the time.

I also noticed that some social actors especially children monitored commercials that usually commenced the telenovela which gave them a cue that the telenovela was about to start. Such social actors were conversant with almost all the commercials that

were shown before the start of the telenovela. This is in line with McKeamy et al's (1994) assertion that people afford more visual attention to the commercials that commence programmes that they have consciously selected and since these participants gather at the sites specifically to watch the telenovela -*Kumkum Bhagya* which they have selected among other programmes, they pay particular attention to its commercials.

Most of the adults that arrived before the telenovela commenced involved themselves in discussing issues which were outside the reason for gathering (*Kumkum Bhagya*). These topics mostly centred on their social, political, economic and religious lives. For example, during one of my ethnographic visits at the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket, I came across four social actors (men) who were debating seriously about their various churches prior to the start of the telenovela. Upon inquiring about why they preferred to discuss other issues before the start of the telenovela at the television viewing site, one of them indicated that they mostly watched the telenovela every evening so even if there is any discussion to be done on it, they do it after watching it and that at times that they miss some episodes, they visit friends who have watched those episodes for those friends to brief them on what they had missed even before they come to the site the next day to watch the next episode. To these social actors, a gathering at the television viewing site prior to the start of the telenovela was an opportunity to discuss other issues which are also of great importance to them. Another interesting observation I made was the fact that some social actors (women) used the pre-viewing period to discuss other telenovelas that they had watched such as *Veera* and *Simple Maria*. As one social actor approached the site, she called out to her friend who was already seated in front of the Young World Salon and asked “*εhwε adze a Veera ρdzi yε Bradev ςneda?*” meaning “did you see what Veera did to Bradev



yesterday?” And as the friend replied, she went over to sit by her and continued the discussion on what happened in the said episode of the telenovela, *Veera*. For these social actors, it is a normal and culturally acceptable thing to discuss other topics which may not necessarily be about *Kumkum Bhagya*. The pre-viewing period at the selected sites therefore encouraged more informal social interactions with known and unknown faces which is a major characteristic of third places according to Oldenburg and Brissett (1982).

Most of the women that arrived before the telenovela commenced also resorted to helping the owners of the sites with some work at the sites. At the Young World Salon for example, an informant indicated that whenever she arrived earlier at the site, she helped the salon owner to braid people’s hair since she (the informant) also knows how to braid. According to her, this has helped her to familiarise herself very much with the owner of the place so much that even if there is a commercial break during the telecast of *Kumkum Bhagya* she can decide to change the channel of the television. Thus, to these social actors, helping the owners of the sites prior to the telecast of the telenovela is a means of creating rapport in order to ensure they get easy access to the site every evening to watch their favourite telenovela. The helping hand given by some social actors came along with some sort of power in terms of the regulation and control over the remote control even during programmes. These social actors are mostly the regulars of the sites who welcome newcomers in the form of initiating conversations.

Another thing that formed part of the pre-viewing culture had to do with social actors’ adjustment to the setting. Some participants used the few minutes before the start of the telenovela to look for a suitable place to sit or stand. At the Seven Up Supermarket for example, those who came early enough used their chairs to secure a place right in

front of the supermarket. According to some informants, because the place is a public site, there is the policy of “first come, first serve” where irrespective of one’s age or social class, if he or she comes to secure a place and sits or stands there throughout the programme, nobody has the right to ask him or her to move or change positions.

Some mothers used the pre-viewing period to breast feed their children and attend to their (children’s) needs in order to ensure that the babies were either asleep or quiet during the telecast of the telenovela. According to a participant, the pre-viewing time is a good period for mothers to do some basic domestic chores since they cannot perform such activities very well when the telenovela has already begun. During most of my ethnographic visits, I observed that some mothers gave their babies food, sang songs and at other times carried them at their back to make sure the babies go to sleep. To these mothers, there is the desire for full concentration during the broadcast of *Kumkum Bhagya* hence anything that needs to be done should be done prior to the start of the programme. The pre-viewing culture at the selected sites therefore encouraged movement and more socialisation before the telecast of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

#### **4.4. Viewing Culture**

The viewing culture in this study comprised of all the activities, values and norms that took place each day between 7: 30pm and 8: 30pm and sometimes from 12:30pm to 4:30pm every Sunday during my ethnographic visits to the three sites. This is therefore the immediate viewing period where the viewers sit behind the television set at the sites to watch the telenovela as it begins till it ends. The viewing culture is also grouped into three sub topics- *adjustment to the television set, viewing styles and commercial breaks*.

#### 4.4.1. Adjustment to the television set

Immediately the telenovela began, social actors tried as much as possible to adjust themselves to the television set. For example, at the Seven Up Supermarket, participants who were gathered as the telenovela began tried to find a suitable place to either sit or stand in order to get a clear view of what was being shown on the television set. Some made sure that they changed their positions until they got to a position where they were not distracted by anyone or anything. Even as most social actors stood across the road to watch the telenovela, I observed that they busily shifted from one position to the other and stopped only when they felt where they were standing gave them a clearer view of what they were watching. The owners of the sites were however the only people that could ask a person to move away from where he or she was standing. Power is thus seen at play even as audience viewed the telenovela at these domesticated but open television viewing sites. In this case, the owners of the various sites are seen as the gatekeepers with more power than any other person at the site and all the viewers acknowledged that fact and gave them (the owners) the necessary respect. For example an informant stated that:

ɔyɛ a ɔgye akoma nanso biribiara nnyi hɔ a y'ebotum ayɛ osiandɛ,  
 eba ha na wɛ̃ hyɛ ase pɛ na eyɛ dɛ eregyina b'ebi a ebohu  
 biribiara yie pɛ nna owura no se kɔ ekyir ma ne nyanko mfa  
 n'egwa mbesi hɔ (Informant 13, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

It sometimes becomes annoying but there is nothing we can do about it because you will come here and immediately the telenovela begins, you try to

stand at a place that will give you a full view of the screen and all of a sudden, this woman (the owner) will ask you to move away for her friend to put a seat there... we just cannot complain (informant 13, Seven Up Supermarket).

The viewing of the popular culture- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the various sites thus brings about the display of power which according to most scholars such as Hall (1998) and Storey (2009) is evident whenever popular culture is mentioned.

As social actors adjusted themselves to the television set, there was the subversion of some particular Ghanaian culture at the sites. In Ghana, great respect is attached to age and social status. A younger person is mostly expected to show appropriate deference when talking or relating to an elderly person. It is also considered as a sign of respect for a child to get up from his seat for an elderly person to occupy it (“Ghana”, 2006). However, this general value is subverted and disregarded when children were seen occupying the few seats at the sites whereas the adults stood during the telecast of the programme. In this case, the children at the site paid no attention to the fact that the adults were standing and the adults, on the other hand, also saw nothing wrong with the children occupying the seats whilst they stood. One informant stated:

Oh ampa, mbofra no tsetse hɔ na mpenyinfo gyina gyina hɔ na me nngye ndzi dɛ ɔhaw obiara osiandɛ, siesiara hɛn nyinara hɛn adwen wɔ adze na yɛ rehwe no do. Yɛmpɛ dɛ obiara dze egua sɛm biara bɛhaw adwen. Emi dze me nnhu no adze kyenkyenai biara osiandɛ Kumkum Bagya ne mu no mpo, ehu dɛ wɔ ma mbofra no yɛ ma hɔn ara pɛ. Ghana ha na yɛ ma ndzamba bi haw hɛn (Informant 5, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

Oh yes! the children are mostly seated whiles we are standing but I don't think any of us has a problem with that because at the moment we are all watching the telenovela and do not want to be distracted by anyone asking a child to get up whilst he sits. But personally I don't see why it is a big deal to most people because even in *Kumkum Bhagya* you realize the young are free to do most things, it is only in Ghana that we take certain things too serious (Informant 5, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This is in line with Storey's (2009) assertion that popular culture gives people the chance to subvert prevailing norms of behaviour within a society. In another instance, some adults rained insult on an old man of about 58 years for disrupting the silence that was prevailing when an episode of the telenovela was in session during one of my ethnographic visits at the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket. The old man who had sent his granddaughter to buy a mosquito coil for him walked in rage to the site with a cane after waiting for several minutes for her to return. The man began whipping the little girl of about 8 years mercilessly when almost all the adults started insulting the old man not for whipping the child but causing distraction as they viewed the telenovela. This action really surprised me and even the old man himself who stated that "this *Kumkum Bhagya* has really made you all mad" and left with the granddaughter. Popular culture, according to William (1983) as cited in Storey (2009) can thus lead to a challenge of mainstream norms and the subversion of culture. In this case, the norm in Ghana where adults are supported by other adults and are always considered "right" when dealing with children was subverted.

#### 4.4.2. Viewing Styles

An interesting finding that came out of my data had to do with the manner in which the social actors viewed the telenovela. During the viewing of the telenovela, I observed that men had specific ways of viewing which differed from the way women viewed it. Almost all the activities that took place as the audience were viewing the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the three sites by the social actors were gendered. This does not mean all the activities were based on the biological make-up of the social actors but were rather influenced by the social roles assigned them by society. Men at the sites preferred to watch the telenovela in silence without any interruption whereas most of the women multi-tasked even as they watched the telenovela. My interviews with the informants further affirmed this when the men kept insisting that they did not see the reason why they should come to the site to watch a particular programme and be doing other things. To these men, watching the telenovela with rapt attention enabled them to understand the telenovela “in order not to miss anything” (Morley, 2005: p.141).

One nursing mother I interviewed at the Seven Up Supermarket also felt that as a mother, she was obliged to take care of her children even as she watched the telenovela. To her, it is her social responsibility and hence has no choice but to do the two at the same time. I observed as this nursing mother kept moving her head up and down watching the telenovela at a point and giving a spoonful of food to her baby who was fidgeting on her lap. During the multitasking, most of the nursing mothers interrupted other social actors who stood by them and kept asking these people about what had happened as they took their eyes away from the telenovela to cater for their children. There was always a “shhh” sound which implied “keep quiet” that was made to the women whenever they began to ask questions or talk as the telenovela was

ongoing. Though some nursing mothers stated their wish to be able to pay attention as the men, they however stressed the fact that it came with being a woman so there is nothing they could do about it. As Morley (2005) states, “it is not that women have no desire to watch television attentively, but rather that their domestic position makes it almost impossible for them to do so unless all other members of the household are “out of the way” (p. 142).

Interestingly, the sites could get very quiet and the look on people’s faces gave a clear indication that they were really into what they were watching. However, just like the sounds that are made by most football fanatics when their team loses or scores a goal, certain exclamatory sounds such as “ahh”, “oww”, “aaba” were heard in unison by most of the social actors including myself as a response to an action/s in a scene of the telenovela. These sounds indicated the viewers’ agreement, disagreement or dissatisfaction with something that had happened in an episode they were watching.

**Figure 6.** Audience Viewing *Kumkum Bhagya* at the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket



Right after that, the place becomes quiet and whenever such actions occur again, the participants make the sounds again. This cycle continued throughout as the social



actors viewed the telenovela. This observation contradicts Hall and Whannel's (1965) assertion that popular culture is pre-digested which means that people's response to it is pre-determined rather than a genuine interaction with the text. The responses in terms of the sounds that are made are always in response to certain actions in a scene which makes these sounds and reactions genuine.

Furthermore, as the social actors viewed the telenovela at the two supermarkets, I observed that more people stood as compared to those that sat on a chair or on the gutter slab. Some viewers leaned on each other as they stood to watch whereas others rested on the sides of the stores. At the salon, almost all the social actors sat on the floor to watch the telenovela and the two or three that stood always stood inside a store room and stretched their heads to watch the programme inside the salon.

One informant stated,

Me nyim dɛ yɛ botum egyina beebiara a yɛ pɛ naaso ɔnnyɛ dɛ yɛ bɛn adze ne wura ne "veranda" no ho. Ne nkyɛn hɔ no yɛ ɔno ne mba dze. Ne nyankofo na ne yer nko na w'otum gyina "veranda" no do hwɛ Kumkum... "apart from" hɔ no, y'etum gyina biabiara yɛ pɛ. Ma ohia ara nye dɛ yebohu no yie... (Informant 2, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

I know we can stand anywhere but definitely not go close to their veranda... that place is meant for the owner of the supermarket and his children. It is only his close friends or friends of his wife that can join them in the corridor to



watch the telenovela... aside that we can stand anywhere we want as far as we see what is going on (Informant 2, Seven Up Supermarket).

Another informant answered in a similar manner,

Madam adze no bɛyɛ dɛ, wɔ nnka nkyerɛ hɛn dɛ mma yɛ nkɔ "varendah" kakraba no a ɔwɔ store n'enyim naaso ɔyɛ adze a ɔwɔ hɔ. Eyi hɔn a wɔ bɛn "store" ne wura no fi hɔ a, obiara nnfa egua mba ha anaa ebɔto bi mpo a ntsena hɔn (Informant 6, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

Madam, the thing is that they have not really said anything to us that we shouldn't move to the little veranda they have in front of the store but it is something that is there. Apart from people that are close to the woman, nobody goes with a chair to the place or even goes to sit on the chairs there even if one is available (Informant 6, Seven Up Supermarket).

This adds up to the fact that the owners of the sites are the wielders of power at the sites during the telecast and viewing of the telenovela and therefore determine what should be done and what should not. As Morley (2005) states, due to the importance of television in the daily lives of people, rule-making, decision-making, conflict and dominance patterns emerge around the set as people gather to view it.

Even after a social actor had chosen a place to stand or sit to view the telenovela, when he/ she realizes that someone has blocked his view, he does not tell the person to move which is mostly what is done at home, on the contrary, the social actor rather readjusts himself to a place that he or she will be able to see clearly without any

distraction. Social actors pointed out that they were unaware of the fact that they actually readjusted themselves severally as the viewing was ongoing but further stated that it is just “common sense” to move to a different position since the sites did not belong to them. Though Oldenburg (1999) asserts that third places are usually neutral places where people feel comfortable and free, my findings indicated that social actors always had it at the back of their minds that they were being favoured by the owners of the sites hence were very particular about their attitudes and actions there. There were therefore some kind of restrictions at the sites which according to Jonsson (n.d.) are present at third places but are not as much as the kinds of restrictions at homes and work places.

**Figure 7.** Audience Viewing *Kumkum Bhagya* at the Seven Up Supermarket



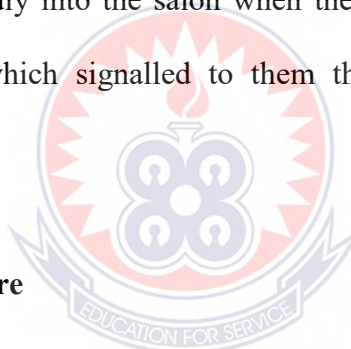
## **6. Commercial breaks**

During the telecast of the telenovela, there were at least four commercials that were shown before an episode ended for a day. When the social actors got very engrossed

in the telenovela and they realised that it had suddenly been paused for a commercial to take place, most of them verbally abused the producers of the programme as though these producers were standing right before them. In one instance, some social actors were busily enjoying the twist in an episode when a sudden break was given for commercials and one social actor screamed out of disappointment, “Adom TV fo dzi hɔnhu y’ebufu ankasa...” which means “the workers of Adom TV are very annoying”. To some of my informants, the commercial breaks distorted the flow of the telenovela and lessened the excitement that was derived as they viewed the telenovela which justified their raining of insult on the producers even though they knew nothing could be done about it.

Contrary to the pre-viewing period where informants paid particular attention to commercials that came before the start of the telenovela to serve as a queue for the commencement of an episode, informants revealed that they paid less attention to commercials that were shown in between scenes as they viewed the telenovela. This contradicts Mckearny et al.’s (1994) claim that the more social actors got engrossed in a selected programme, the more likely they are to watch and recall commercials that are shown. To the social actors, these commercial breaks gave them the opportunity to engage in other activities before the telenovela continued. I observed that most participants moved away for some time and came back after each commercial break. At the salon for example, almost all the social actors moved out whenever an advert was ongoing. Some of my informants indicated in the focus group discussions that they moved out during the commercial break in order to stretch their bodies since they spent all the time at one position inside the salon. Thus, commercial breaks became a socially acceptable time to take a break, relax and even talk to other social actors about scenes that have been watched previously without feeling any sense of guilt.

The straight and attentive look social actors had on as they viewed the telenovela was always replaced with smiles and relaxation during commercial breaks which further pointed to the various changes in mind set as these participants viewed the telenovela at the sites. Furthermore, though the social actors paid little attention visually to the commercials, they however took audio cues even as they did other things in order to be sure when the telenovela was about to continue. Similarly, Mckearny et al. (1994: p.193) found from their research they conducted that “if commercials were perceived as unimportant, they provided a time to socialise or attend to other needs... (and) while engaged in other activities, subjects were still conscious of the advertisements”. Some social actors who were busily talking about what had happened in the telenovela rushed hurriedly into the salon when they heard the concluding part of a particular commercial which signalled to them that the telenovela was about to continue.



#### **4.5. Post-Viewing Culture**

The post-viewing culture in this study began immediately an episode of the telenovela ended within the next fifteen minutes before social actors dispersed from the sites. Through the observations, interviews and focus group discussions, I found that the post-viewing time was the period for *Kumkum Bhagya* related topics in the form of debates, discussions, commentaries and predictions of events in the next episodes.

##### **4.5.1. Discussions, Debates, Commentaries and Predictions**

Through the interviews I had with my informants, it was revealed that one social actor mostly organised a discussion right beside the Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket after the telenovela had ended. This according to Adia (2014) can be termed as a direct form of

sociability where viewers discuss a television programme as it goes on or immediately as it ends at the exact place the television viewing took place. I observed this group discussion for some days and joined it after we had finished viewing the telenovela during one of my ethnographic visits. Maame Menua, a woman in her fifties was the one who started the discussion group. Wrapped in an African wax print cloth from her chest to her toe with multi-coloured slippers, Maame Menua moved away from the supermarket immediately the telenovela ended to sit by a rock adjacent it. Interestingly, immediately she sat down, some two social actors joined her and there she raised the topic about what they watched the day before as a precedence to what they had watched on that very day. Right after talking, the other social actors who were also females joined in the discussion and then three other females joined. The discussion became very interesting and it was mostly about characters' behaviours, physical features, dressing and fashion, people's views concerning certain scenes in the telenovela and most times a debate on certain actions by the actors. The five other women who joined Maame Menua were also in their thirties and forties. They were all housewives with children and husbands and were dressed almost the same way as Maame Menua except that three of these women had a shirt on their African print wrappers.

During the discussion, Maame Menua, being the moderator was the one that wielded power because when the debate became intense and there was so much noise, she was the one that determined who should talk and even called for silence. Also, all the members had equal freedom to express themselves including myself as a new person who had joined. They made me feel really comfortable and at times that I was quiet, they would ask me about my view concerning an issue in the telenovela. This buttresses the point made by Raymond Oldenburg that "regulars" at third places

always have the responsibility of making newcomers feel at home through playful tone of language and inviting them in conversations (Oldenburg, 1999).

At a point I was carried away by the debates so much that they all stopped talking and began to laugh at me. They really made new faces feel at home and very comfortable. In an interview with Auntie Menua, she stated that due to the fact that they were all married women, they discussed, commented and even debated about issues in the telenovela which affected their daily lives. She further indicated that sometimes they debated on issues which even led them to predict what was going to happen in the next episode hence they always waited in anticipation to visit the site the next day to see what will happen. Contrary to Machado-Borges' (2003) assertion that viewers discussed at length about subjects and products that somehow intersected with the telenovela's plot, I observed that all the topics discussed were issues that came up in the telenovela and not outside it.

Apart from the group discussions, after an episode of the telenovela had ended, I observed that most social actors at the three sites dispersed to their various destinations amidst discussion about issues in the telenovela. In one instance, five children who were heading home were busily predicting what would happen in the next episode as one stated, "they will arrest Abhi tomorrow" and another opposing it by saying "oh no, Abhi is rich they can't arrest him". Thus, through the post-viewing discussions, people are able to get moral lessons, share their life experiences and also seek advice from other social actors present.

#### **4.6. RQ2. How do viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* rationalise their choice of sites for the viewing of the telenovela?**

This research question addresses the reasons that viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya* give for watching the telenovela at the selected sites. Oldenburg (1999) asserts that there are basically three places in every community- the first place (home), the second place (workplace) and the third place (cafes, coffee shops and other hangouts at the hearts of every community). The three sites which were studied for this research can be grouped as third places in the Winneba Community. From the responses I derived from my informants, it became clear that social actors had various reasons for selecting specific sites to view the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. These reasons, however went beyond the fact that they wanted to meet to discuss other issues aside the television programme that brought them there as posited by Ofori-Birikorang (2014) in his research findings. The rationalisations of the participants were categorised into themes which are *Socialisation, Proximity, Financial Constraints* and *Escapism*.

##### **4.6.1. Socialisation**

As stated earlier, researchers such as Ducheneaut et al. (2006) assert that television viewing is a solo activity which leads to people being anti- social. Yet other scholars such as Morley (2005) and Morrison and Krugman (2001) contend that television viewing seems to be a social activity which is often conducted in groups thus rather promoting socialisation. Oldenburg (1999) posits that the home and work places are not conducive places for informal socialisation and therefore people resort to visiting third places to enjoy such friendliness and openness. To him, the major thing that third places such as the selected sites provide is pure sociability. The kind of sociability that



television viewing at these third places (selected sites) brings is what Morrison and Krugman (2001) term as the direct sociability. This type of sociability is what takes places as viewers sit together to watch and discuss a selected programme at selected places.

Prior to its proliferation in Ghana, television was seen as a commodity that could only be purchased by the “well to do” in the society and hence most people went to the homes of the few who had these televisions sets to join in the viewing experiences (Ofori-Birikorang, 2014). However, the increase in number of television sets and television stations has led to its easy access by most people hence halting the kind of togetherness and friendliness that came along with viewing with others. Through the interviews and focus group discussions that I conducted, it was revealed that most of my informants decided to watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites due to the fact that many people visited the locations to watch the programme hence they would have the benefit of viewing in the company of all those people. This is in line with Oldenburg and Brissett’s (1982: p. 269) assertion that third places are places “where people gather primarily to enjoy each other’s company”.

Some of my informants stated that though they had televisions at home, they did not enjoy watching the telenovela alone so decided to visit the sites which are patronised by a lot of people to view the programme. Thus the liveliness of the sites which are inhabited by people of different status influences social actors to visit there when it is time for *Kumkum Bhagya*. An informant stated,

Emi dze sɛ me nkotsee me rehwe wɔ me dan mu a ɔnnye me dɛ. Sɛ  
ye hyia wɔ ha a yɛdɔso ntsi ye kyerekyerɛ adwen fa ma osi wɔ



Kumkum no mu no. Ere nnya no dɛm wɔ w'ankotsee wo dan mu ntsi na me ba ha bohwe no (FGD1, Informant 1).

This means:

With me, I do not enjoy watching the telenovela alone in my room... when we meet here, we are a lot and we share our views and thoughts about issues that come up in the telenovela and this cannot be gotten when we are watching it alone in our rooms and that is why I come here to watch it (FGD1, Informant 1).

Another stated in a similar manner,

Enyim dɛ ma ɔbɛyɛ ma enya nkorɔfo ne hɔn bohwe ma ayɛ dɛ ntsia na me ba ha. Dem na ɔma ɔyɛ fɛ osiandɛ sɛ me tsena fie a, m'awofo mpɛ “programme” no ntsi me nko na me hwɛ ntsi me bɛ ka bi nom ho wɔ ha ama y'akasa na ayɛ enyigye. Dem Maame yi yɛ nara ne nkyerskyerɛ mu dabiara a w'obeyi Kumkum Bagya ewie na ɔyɛ eyika paa (Informant 9, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

... You know, it is basically to enjoy the telenovela in the company of other people. This is what makes the telenovela interesting because if I stay at home, my parents do not like it so I would be left to watch it alone hence I come here to join others watch it so that it becomes more interesting and interactive (pointing at a lady) that lady for example mostly holds her own discussions

after the telenovela and it is very interesting (Informant 9, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

The socialisation that takes place at the selected sites can be attributed to the fact that these sites have become popular culture for audience members. Taking it from Storey's (2009) first definition of what constitutes popular culture, most of my informants indicated that since the sites were patronised by many people for the viewing of the telenovela, they were also encouraged to visit there each time they wanted to watch the telenovela. These informants believe that the higher the number of people at the sites, the higher the level of socialisation. The socialisation being talked about has to do with the opportunity viewers get to make new friends, have conversations and to also share their views about pertinent issues in the telenovela. The worth of a particular television programme according to Ducheneaut et al. (2006) is mostly measured based on the amount of social interactions it generates. Other informants preferred to view the telenovela in groups in order to have a sense of sociability as opposed to watching it alone further contradicting the assertion that television viewing is an isolating experience.

An informant stated:

Nkorɔfo a mehyia hɔn wɔ ha no nnye amenyifo nso sɛ y'ehyia wɔ ha na yɛrehwɛ a, ɔmmfa ho na wo nyimpa bɛn, obiara tum ka naadwen. Me sua ndzɛmba pii fri nkorɔfo hɔ na me tum nye me nyankofo so dzi nkombɔ ansana programme bɛhyɛase na ne ewie yi nyinaa (FGD2, Informant 5).

This means:

The people I meet here are not always familiar faces but when we do meet to watch the telenovela, irrespective of who you are, you can freely talk about what you think. I always learn a lot from people I meet here and I get the chance to have some conversations with my friends even before or after we watch the programme (FGD2, Informant 5).

Some informants also indicated that it was at the sites that they get to meet their friends for other discussions. An informant stated:

Nna me hu m'ankofo bi dɛ wɔ taa hwɛ wɔ salon hɔ ntsi me yɛ m'adwen dɛ me nye hɔn bɛhwɛ ama sɛ yɛ hyia y'edzi ho nkɔmbɔ osiandɛ maawofo rentsei ma me nyankofo no mɛsram wɔ fie (FDG 1, Informant 4).

This means:

I used to see my friends watch it at the salon most of the time so I also decided to join them watch it so that we can still have a chat when we are all watching.

At home my parents will not allow my friends to come and visit me (FDG 1, Informant 4).

These extracts buttress Oldenburg's (1999, p.43) point that, "... primacy of conversation, certainty of meeting friends, looseness of structure, and eternal reign of the imp of fun (at third places) all combine to set the stage for experiences unlikely to be found elsewhere." Social actors therefore found the selected sites as perfect for the viewing of a telenovela like *Kumkum Bhagya* which has a universal plot open to many interpretations by viewers. Furthermore, the fact that anyone at all irrespective of his/her status could decide to visit the selected sites to watch the telenovela supports

Dipio's (2008) assertion that in Africa, everybody irrespective of class or age patronises popular culture.

To Oldenburg (1999), such third places can bring the youth and adults together in order for them to learn from each other. This goes in line with what an informant stated that sometimes she does not talk when she is at the site but rather listens to the experiences of some married women which goes a long way to help her in preparing for marriage. Third places such as the selected sites for this research "are easy places to collect time-saving, labour-saving and money-saving advice- sometimes without even asking" (Oldenburg, 1997).

Some of my informants also indicated that they preferred to watch the telenovela at the selected sites because they were familiar with the sites and the people that went there to watch the telenovela including the owners. To these social actors, seeing familiar faces with whom they could easily relate is a major reason for choosing to view *Kumkum Bhagya* at the selected sites. For example, an informant stated:

ɔyɛ a me bɛtɔ "ndomie" wɔ ha a me hu nkorɔfo pii dɛ wɔrehwɛ  
"programme" no ntsi sɛ me gyina hɔ retwɛn dɛ w'obewie me  
ndomie no a, me hwɛ bi. Sɛ wɔ yɛ wie mpo na w' ɔmpon  
"programme" no mpo a, me twɛn ma wɔ pon ansaana. Me nyim  
nkorɔfo a wɔwɔ ha no pii ntsi me yɛ "comfortable" dɛ mɔ hwɛ wɔ  
ha. Me tum dzi nkɔmbɔ biara wɔ ha osiandɛ me nye obiara wɔ dɛm  
(Informant 11, Ne Nyinaa Yie supermarket).

This means:

Mostly I come here to buy indomie and I see a lot of people watching the programme so as I stand for them to finish my indomie I take the opportunity to watch the programme. Even if they finish my indomie and the programme has not ended, I wait for it to end. I know most of the people here so I am more comfortable watching it here. I easily join in any form of conversation because I am used to most of the people here (Informant 11, Ne Nyinaa yie supermarket)

Another answered in a similar manner,

Nna me bæ ye mitsir wɔ ha ntsi wɔ reyɛ na wɔ hyɛ ase a nna maahwɛ bi osiandɛ nkorɔfo bebɔ Kumkum ho wɔ ha. "Salon" ne wura no ye nyimpa papa ntsi me ye m'adwen dɛ mɛ ba ha dabiara me wɔ mber abɛhwɛ na y'abɔ ho nkɔmɔ so (FGD 1, Informant 7)

This means:

It started with me coming over to fix my hair so at the course of it if they begin, I took the opportunity to watch it here since there are always people here to raise a sort of discussion. The salon owner is a nice person so I later made it a point to come here almost all the time when I am free to watch so that we can all engage in the discussions (FGD 1, Informant 7).

Just as the theory of cultural proximity posits, social actors patronised sites that they felt closer to in terms of familiar faces they saw there. Some also created familiar and informal relations with the owners of the sites which gave them a more reason to choose the selected sites as opposed to other domesticated but open sites. As stated by

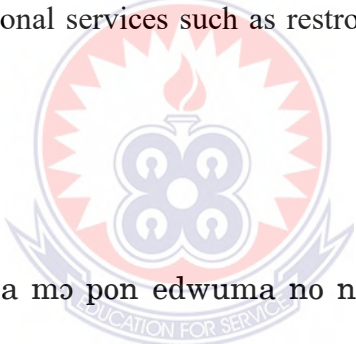
Jonsson (n.d.) in his findings that gaming cafes (third places) served as emotional comfort zones for gamers, my findings also proved that with the selected sites being third places, social actors had some emotional attachment to them since people who met were all lovers and viewers of *Kumkum Bhagya*. Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) aver that one thing that qualifies a place as a third place is its ability to encourage active social interactions. According to them, active social interactions have to do with direct interactions with people that one does not know very well or even at all. These social interactions which are in the forms of introductions and conversations surrounding the telenovela are one of the factors that influenced social actors to choose the selected sites. Thus, not only were the participants interested in the telenovela-based discussions but the fact that they could make new friends and discuss other ancillary issues prior and after the telecast of the telenovela at the sites.

Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) further postulate that when a site outside the home or workplace becomes affordable and it allows people the opportunity to linger and also open for people to use, then that place qualifies as a successful third place. From my observations, I realised that most social actors were not restricted in terms of movements at the selected sites even though the viewing period automatically brought about a sort of limitations in order to enable people to concentrate as they viewed the programme. The freedom of movement during television viewing which surpassed that of the first (home) and second places (work/school) is what motivated most social actors to patronise the sites for the viewing of the telenovela. Whyte (2001) therefore, states that people are attracted to most third spaces mainly because of the presence of other people.

#### 4.6.2 Proximity/ Location

As stated earlier in this work, the extension of the theory of cultural proximity suggests that all other things being equal, in selecting a site to view their favourite television programmes, audience members are more likely to choose a site which is closer to them as opposed to one that is further away from them. Most of my informants shared the view that the location of the sites which were either closer to their work places or their homes was a reason they chose to watch the telenovela there. According to Oldenburg (1999), people appreciate third places often due to their proximity and closeness to their homes, main roads and work places. Bernhardt and Stoll (2010) buttress this by stating that a lot of people will use third places regularly if they are close to additional services such as restrooms and are not far from where they live.

An informant stated:



Enyim dɛ time a mɔ pon edwuma no nn w'ashɛ ase dadaw ntsi me yɛ madwen dɛ mɔ hwɛ wɔ ha amma ma miss bibiara wom. Aha bɛn m'edwuma mu ntsi ɔyɛ easy dɛ mɛ nantsiw abɔhwɛ wɔ ha kyɛn dɛ mɔ kɔ fie a mo dur na w'apon mpo. Me fie wɔ Pomadze ntsi wara hwɛ a. (Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

You know mostly by the time I come from work, they had already started so I decide to watch it here so that I would not miss the entire episode. This place is closer to my work place so it is easier to walk here to watch it than to go home



by the time they would have finished an episode. My house is at Pomadze so you can imagine (Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket).

Another informant averred that,

Supermarket yi bɛn me fie ntsi dabiara me prefer dɛ m'ɛba ha abɔhwɛ sen dɛ m'etwa kwan tsentsen anaa m'ɛfa car akɔpɛ beebi ahwɛ me programme. Aha dze, sɛ wɔ pon mpo na me nye me nyankofo dzi nkɔmbɔ ansaana maakɔ fi mpo a, me nyim dɛ onnyi dɛ medwen ho dɛ adze resa (Informant 8, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

... since this supermarket is closer to my house (pointing at the house), I always prefer to come and watch it here rather than to walk long miles or even take a car to go and get a place to watch my programme. With this place, even if they close and I decide to chat with my friends before going home, I know I don't have to think about the fact that it is getting late (Informant 8, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

Jonsson (n.d.) posits that third places are usually walking distances to community members and the need for proximity by social actors was invariably linked to the economic benefits that was derived by participants. Social actors did not use so much energy walking to far places in search of a site for the viewing of their favourite telenovela and neither did they spend money taking taxis to far places to join in the viewing of the telenovela. This therefore saved them money and energy.

As Straubhaar (2010) stated that cultural proximity is class related, this point also came up in my study when I found that some informants categorised the sites as a

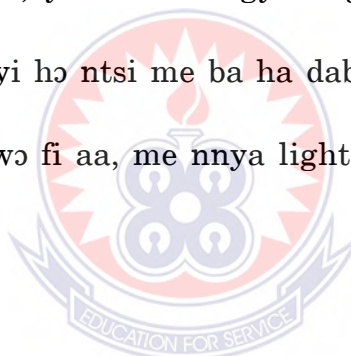
place for people of a lower class and were therefore surprised whenever they saw people who looked very well to do visiting the place. To most of my informants, the fact that the sites accepted them for who they were irrespective of their class and that they could easily relate with most of the social actors (proximity in terms of class) there was a factor that influenced them to visit the selected sites to watch the telenovela. This is in tandem with what Oldenburg (1999) asserts that humans as social creatures have social needs which include the desire to socially interact with other people without being restricted by social-economic status. Hence, due to the fact that the selected sites served these needs, social actors were influenced to always visit these sites to engage in the viewing of the telenovela where they were assured of a “good talk”.

In an informal interview, a participant indicated that she could not go and sit at a place like “Run Off” (a big pub in Winneba) to watch the telenovela because the people she always saw going there were people with cars and who can buy drinks but she on the other hand could not afford any of those. She further indicated that going to such a place, was going to be boring to her because she would not have anyone to talk to if she does not go with someone. However, the grocery shop she goes to watch the telenovela gives her the chance to see new people and even talk to them due to how “plain” and open the place is. Third places like the selected sites I studied played the role of levellers to the different social actors and therefore encouraged them to visit there often (Oldenburg, 1999). This further buttresses the point that popular culture (the selected sites) in Africa is patronised by people irrespective of their class, age, religion among others. As social actors found proximity in terms of location and social class, they were able to gravitate towards such third places for the viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*.

### 4.6.3 Financial Constraint

The increasing number of people that patronised the selected sites for the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* qualified these sites as popular culture based on the first definition given by Storey (2009). However, even though scholars such as Abah (2009), Barber (1987) and Dipio (2008) have stated that popular culture in Africa is patronised by people of all classes, my findings further revealed that most of the social actors chose to view the telenovela at the selected sites due to financial constraint. Thus, more lower class people were seen at the sites as opposed to the “well-to-do” in the community. In one of the focus group discussions, an informant stated,

Eba me “area’ a, y’enntum nngyee light. ɔwɔ dɛ yɛ ko tua biribi nso sika no nnyi hɔ ntsi me ba ha dabiara bɔhwɛ Kumkum Bagya osiandɛ sɛ me wɔ fi aa, me nnya light mpo na nkantama TV (FGD 2, Informant 4).



This means:

When you come to my area, we have not been able to get light, you see we have to go and pay something but the money is not there so I always come here to watch *Kumkum Bhagya* because when I am home I don't even get access to light let alone to a television (FGD 2, Informant 4).

Another informant spoke about his inability to buy a television set which gives him a reason to visit the site most of the time to join in the viewing of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

He stated,

Ma esi ma “economy” n’ayɛ no, nyimpa nntum nnsave ne aketua no bi mpo. Me hwɛ me yer na me mba ebien ɔnnɛ easy madam. Bɛyɛ mfe enum a absɛn yi, me tɔɔ TV a nna yɛ hwɛ nso oseii na menntum mboa sika ano nntɔɔ biom. Sɛ sika no ba a ɔwɔ dɛ tua eyi ne skuul fees nna obi so ne biribi ntsi sesiara dze mɛ ba ha abɔhwɛ programme no akesi dɛ m’ɛnya sika bi atɔ TV (Informant 19, Young World Salon).

This means:

The way the economy has become, one does not even get to save enough after taking his salary. I take care of my wife and two kids and it is not easy madam. About five years ago, I bought a TV that we used to watch but it got spoilt and I haven’t been able to gather money to buy a new one... when the money comes you have to pay this one’s school fees and that so for now I come here to watch the telenovela till I get enough money to buy a new TV (Informant 19, Young World Salon)

Other informants that had access to television sets at home also stressed on their inability to purchase Multi-TV on which they could get access to the television station that televises *Kumkum Bhagya*. To these social actors, the selected sites served as the only place where they could join in the *Kumkum Bhagya* viewing experience. An informant stated:

Me sister panyin wɔ store wɔ hɔ no (pointing) na ɔwɔ TV mpo naao onntɔɔ Multi TV decoder ntsi dabiara ɔbɛba ha abɔhwɛ programme no biara no, nna m’edzi n’ekyir osiandɛ, beebiara nnyi area ha a

w’otei ma wɔ hwɛ TV wɔ ɔ gyedɛ papa yi ne ha (Informant 7, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

My big sister has a shop there (*pointing*) and she even has a TV but she has not bought the Multi TV satellite so whenever she comes here to watch the telenovela, I follow her because there is no place that allows people to watch the programme in this area apart from this man’s supermarket (Informant 7, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

The selected sites in this case became the alternative for social actors who have no other means of watching the telenovela at their various homes. Oldenburg (1997) avers that depending on the location of third places, social classes and backgrounds can be “levelled-out” in ways that are unfortunately rare these days, with people feeling they are treated as social equals. Those who have access to televisions at home and those who do not have are all seen sitting on the same bench or standing to watch the telenovela without any form of discrimination whatsoever by the owners of the various sites. The sites therefore bridge the gap between the rich and the poor by providing them an equal platform to join in the viewing of one of the popular television programmes on TV- *Kumkum Bhagya*. This therefore gives social actors the opportunity to be able to participate in any conversation that comes up concerning the telenovela in question without anyone noticing that they do not have the purchasing power to either get a television set or a satellite television (Multi-TV). An informant averred:

Enyim dɛ Kukum Bagya bɛ yɛɛ “popular” nna obiara hwɛ bi. Odur beebi no, nna me kɔ skuul biara a nna me nyankofɔ reka ho aɛm,

nna me nko maatɔ mu. ɔma obiara hun dɛ y'enyi Multi TV wɔ fie ntsi ofir dem “time” no, aha yi ara na me hwɛ bi ama sɛ me nyankofɔ no ka ho asem a m'otum aka bi (FGD1, Informant 2).

This means:

You know *Kumkum Bhagya* became popular and everyone was watching it, at a point whenever I went to school my friends were all talking about it and I was left out. It made it very obvious that we did not have Multi-TV at home so since then I have been watching it here so that at least whenever my friends are talking about it, I can also be part of the discussion (FGD1, Informant 2).

The possession of satellite televisions such as Multi-TV came along with a sort of prestige and class which was accorded owners by society since most of these satellites cost “a lot” according to some participants. The sites therefore gave social actors the feeling of being among the “well-to-do” which is measured by their ability to take part in *Kumkum Bhagya* related topics. Similarly, in a study conducted by Ofori-Birikorang (2014), his findings revealed that the public television viewing sites had transformational powers in the lives and minds of the underclass social actors. Thus, the sites gave these underclass citizens the ability to imagine themselves as middle class members through regular access to satellite televisions. These selected sites also gave social actors up-to-date information on the popular telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. To these social actors, their inability to afford the light, television sets and satellite television stations did not stop them from enjoying the telenovela at such third places which are welcoming and open to all community members irrespective of their class, age, religion or ethnicity.

#### 4.6.4 Escapism

Oldenburg (1999) asserts that the theme of escapism is very common when it comes to discussions of third places in general. Thus, third places serve as an escape routes for the “common man” to forget about his unhappy state in life (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982). Similarly, some of my informants indicated that they chose to visit the selected sites to watch the telenovela because it helped them to forget about the harsh realities of life for some time. To these informants, the sites served as home away from home in that though they may have the economic power to get a television set and digital-satellite televisions, they preferred the sites which helped them to relax as they watched the telenovela. An informant avowed:

Hmm madam, my wife and I are always fighting especially when it comes to sitting at the hall together. She has a problem with the programmes I watch and I also do have a problem with the ones she watches. She nags almost all the time so mostly if I want to watch my telenovela in peace, I just come to this place where I can stand without any one disturbing or complaining. Sometimes I even stay longer here to chat with some people here so that by the time I get there I would just go straight to bed. (*Amidst laughter*) You women are just too difficult to understand (Informant 16, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

From the interview, the sites served as a peaceful haven for social actors who wanted to forget about their difficult states for some time. Wechsberg (1966) as cited in Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) in his study had similar findings when he indicated that the third place (the Viennese Coffee house) is a home away from home, a haven of tranquillity, a reading and gambling hall which saves a man from nagging wives, unruly children, tough bosses and impatient creditors. Social actors therefore resorted



to the selected third places because these sites provided escape for them. Another informant in a Focus Group discussion also stated:

Nkorɔfo pii ba supermarket ha bɔ hwɛ Kumkum... ɔyɛ a ɛwɔ haw na ndzɛmba pii wo w'adwen do nso sɛ eba ha a, enye nkorɔfo kasa na eserew a nna wo wirɛ efir wo haw nyinara. ɔnnye dɛ wo haw no yew naaso me pɛ dɛ me ba ha bɔhwɛ programme no osiandɛ sɛ me hwɛ wie mpo a ye dzi ho nkɔmbɔ na me hu dɛ me haw no nnso nnkyɛn obi ne dze ntsi ɔno na ɔma m'adwendwen no ba fa mu (FGD2, Informant 3).

This means:

This particular super market has a lot of people coming here to watch the telenovela... sometimes you are so burdened and you have a lot on your mind but when you come here... talking to people and laughing make you forget about all those burden... it is not like the problems vanish but I choose to come here to watch the telenovela because even after watching the telenovela, we discuss it and through that I get to realize my problem is not even bigger than someone else and that alone helps me to relax (FGD2, Informant 3) .

Unlike the home and work places which are marked by the constancy of population, third places are populated by diverse group of people who become part of the population by virtue of their presence at the sites (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982). These groups therefore encourage and advise one another which helps them to forget about their worries at least for the period that they would be at the sites. Not only did the sites serve as a means of escape but they also provided a respite from obligation. For

example, most of the children at the sites agreed that they decided to watch the telenovela at the selected sites because whenever they were home, they would be sent by their parents and would not be able to concentrate on the programme so the sites served as a hide out for them.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Glover and Parry (2009) to ascertain the importance and functions of the third place- Gilda's Club (in Greater Toronto) to patients living with cancer, their findings revealed escapism as one of the themes that emerged. Their research participants saw the club as a "home away from home" which carried them to a new and different world altogether. To them, the welcoming environment and the casual nature of the place all came together to create a relaxing and home-like surrounding which provided an escape from the reality of their life- that they are cancer patients.

#### **4.7 RQ3. What are the social factors that influence audience viewership of the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*?**

Akpan and Ihechu (2012) aver that television as a broadcast medium is patronised more as compared to other media due to its sound and visual attributes. However, despite these irresistible attributes, if poorly produced, the audience may reject its programmes. This therefore demands that the various television elements be put together in order to produce programmes that are beneficial to audience. Thus one cannot produce a television programme without bearing in mind the cultural attributes of the programme in relation to what the audience expect (Akpan & Ihechu, 2012). It is for this reason that this research question sought to investigate the social factors that influenced audience to watch the television programme-*Kumkum Bhagya*. Informants'

answers have been categorised into three themes which are *Indigenous languages*, *Verisimilitude* and *Popularity*.

#### 4.7.1 Indigenous languages

Most literature on cultural proximity place language preferences at the centre of the theory (Ksiazek & Webster, 2008). La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) avow that audience are attracted to programmes that are culturally proximate to them in terms of linguistic commonalities. Other proponents of cultural proximity such as Hoskins, McFayden and Finn (1997) and Straubhaar (1991) as already stated in this work aver that “language” is a very important element in determining the preference of audience for specific media programmes. Though *Kumkum Bhagya* is a Hindi telenovela, it is translated into the indigenous languages “Twi” and “Fante” which according to most of my informants is a major factor that influenced them to watch the telenovela. During my focus group discussions, an informant stated:

Kasa no a wɔ ka no na ɔma me hwɛ. ɔnnye hɛn nyinara na yɛ tse  
brɔfo na y'etum ka, nso dɛ me yɛ Mfantinyi sɛ wɔ ka Twi a metse  
ase ntsi ɔma me tse bibiara a wɔ ka wo mu no ase. Ne ho nnhia  
dɛ m'ebisa me mba no ebɛnadz na eyi kae... ebɛnadze na ɔno  
kaee, ma ohia ara nye dɛ m'etsina ha na m'ahwɛ programme no  
agyegyɛ mehyiwa (Informant 14, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

I also watch because of the language that they telecast in... it is not all of us that can speak and understand the English language but at least as a Fante, I understand when Twi is spoken so it makes it quite easier to understand

everything that the actors mean in the play... I don't have to be asking my children what this one said or what that one said, all I do is sit here and watch the programme to entertain myself (Informant 14, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

Another also stated in a similar manner:

Kasa a wɔka no na adzesuadze a ɔwɔ mu no na ɔma me hwɛ.  
Kumkum Bagya nye telenovela odzi kan a w'adan ba Twi kasa mu (Informant 15, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

I watch it because of the language and the moral lessons that I derive from it. You see, *Kumkum Bhagya* is the very first telenovela that was translated into the Twi language (Informant 15, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

To my informants, the indigenous languages used in the telecast of the telenovela made it easier for them to understand its content as opposed to the usual English language used in most of the telenovelas broadcast on the Ghanaian media. This supports Straubhaar (1991) stance that audience at the individual level are able to select and enjoy a particular media product if they have competence in terms of speaking and understanding the language of the selected programme. Thus, everything being equal, audience members will gravitate towards media products in the language with which they are most comfortable. Language is therefore a very critical element of cultural proximity in terms of audience reception of a particular media product (Ksiazek and Webster, 2008). Straubhaar (1991) further asserts that audience preference for proximity can be related to social class. To him, "popular classes" such

as the poor, the lower working class and those with low education have a greater affinity for national and local culture and television production as opposed to the elite, the rich and the higher in education whose preferences are always internationalised. This assertion is, however, contended in my study as my findings indicated that informants with higher educational background still craved for proximity in terms of language. An informant with tertiary education stated during one of my informal interviews that:

Well erm it is simple, one thing is that the language is being transliterated into our local dialect so it attracts a whole lot of people because if you look at our Ghanaian society, majority of us are always listening to the local languages, they prefer the local languages to the English. So sometimes it is easier for you to understand whenever it is the local parlance because someone wouldn't waste his or her time to be listening to the English language and sometimes it is not that I can't speak English but the language aspect is also part of it (Informant 3, Seven Up Supermarket).

The need for proximity in language did not pertain to only those with lower education but did cut across almost all the informants. Participants went further to indicate that though they patronised *Kumkum Bhagya* mainly because it is in two indigenous Ghanaian languages- "Twi" and "Fante", they would however not patronise locally produced telenovelas because they envision such television series would be unrealistic and full of exaggerations which according to them is a characteristic of locally produced movies and series in Ghana. This goes further to counter Pool's (1977) assertion as already mentioned that people would prefer to watch a film made in their own language than one with subtitles or even one that is translated through voice overs. Participants therefore preferred to watch *Kumkum Bhagya* which is originally

made in Hindi language but translated through voice over to the Ghanaian languages- “Twi” and “Fante” due to the other cultural factors with which they found proximity. This means that though social actors consider the language in which a particular media product is broadcast, if other factors (such as the content of the programme and the level of realism of the programme) do not go well with these participants, they are more likely to ignore such a locally produced programme for a foreign one.

Again, Straubhaar (1991) asserts that there are television programmes that are visually oriented and others that are language oriented and that programmes such as telenovelas, soap operas and comedies which are language oriented rely on language competence on the part of the audience in order for them to enjoy such programmes. Since *Kumkum Bhagya* is a telenovela, it demands that viewers understood what was being said in order to better assimilate the actions. Hence though language counts, audience members consider other cultural factors that they deemed important to the gratifications of their needs.

My findings further revealed an interesting result which indicate that some informants were attracted to the telenovela due to the fact that they saw “abrofo a woreka Fante na Twi” which means “foreigners (white people) speaking Fante and Twi”. Thus, these social actors did not really concentrate mainly on the understanding they were deriving from the language spoken but rather got enthused watching foreigners (white people) speak the indigenous languages as though they (the foreigners) were Ghanaians. For example an informant stated:

....mpo ɔno nda nkyɛn, sɛ mehu abrofo yi a wɔ reka Twi a ɔyɛ a na w'ayɛ biribi a ɔyɛ ahobow na enyigye pii... w'ama w'ayɛ dzen paa dɛ m'egyae hwɛ (Informant 4, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

... But even aside that, in fact seeing these white people speak Twi is something that amazes and interests me...This has really made it difficult for me to stop watching it (Informant 4, Seven Up Supermarket).

The urge to watch the actors in the telenovela speak these indigenous languages was another factor that influenced some social actors to watch the Hindi telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. Though the indigenous languages (Fante and Twi) were superimposed on the original language (Hindi) through voice-overs, most of the older people at the selected sites could not differentiate the voice overs made by Ghanaians to the original language spoken by the actors hence concluded these actors were indeed speaking the indigenous languages.

#### 4.7.2 Verisimilitude

Hall (1998) is of the view that audience do not consume popular culture mindlessly and passively and that they rather use it innovatively in their daily lives to create and express themselves. Majority of my informants indicated that the semblance of the telenovela in terms of content and humour to reality is another factor that influenced them to watch the telenovela. This theme came up in Adia's (2014) study when her findings indicated that female audience members developed some sort of relationship with the stories and actors of the telenovelas through the presences of variables such as originality and verisimilitude. Similarly, my informants indicated that due to the fact that they saw themselves in some characters in the telenovela, they were drawn to watch the programme almost all the time. Thus, though *Kumkum Bhagya* is not a Ghanaian telenovela, because of the storyline which is universal and easily relatable, viewers were always influenced to watch it in order to see what happens as the



episodes progress. This is in line with what Miller (2010) states that telenovelas have become common among a lot of people because the storylines are always captivating and are centred on themes such as love, redemption and overcoming of hardships which are universal. For example an informant stated that,

Me hwε Kumkum Bagya osiandε me hu ndzεmba a osi wo m'abrabɔ mu na me dze to to me bra ho. Ndzεmba a “movie” no mu fo no yε no bi sε ma me fa mu wɔ me relationship mu ntsi me tum sua adze wɔ mu na me dze to me dabiara brabɔ ho (Informant 19, Young World Salon).

This means:

I watch *Kumkum Bhagya* because I see some resemblance in my life as related to the telenovela. Some things that the characters do are mostly in line with what I face in my relationship so I am able to learn from some of the things in it so that I can apply them in my day to day activities (Informant 19, Young World Salon).

Another informant added to this by stating that:

Dabiara, sε me hwε telenovela yi a menyawa gye osiandε, okyere ma osima obi b'otum abɔ ne bra wɔ asaase yi do. ɔboa me so ma metu menba fo osiandε, nsεm na osisi wo mu no yε ndzεmba osi wo hεn abrabom daabiara ntsi etum tse ase (Informant 2, Seven Up Supermarket).

This means:

I am always happy when watching this telenovela because it serves as a guide as to how one can live his or her life here on earth. It also helps me to advice my children because you know, the situations in it are real so I can easily relate it to them (Informant 2, Seven Up Supermarket).

Due to the semblance of the telenovela to real life people and situations which according to Delany (2007) is a characteristic of popular culture, informants were easily able to get moral lessons from the programme which helped in their relationships and decision making. This further falls in line with Mbithe's (2012) assertion that telenovelas influence the social lives of people by providing moral lessons that aid them in widening their scope of thinking. Informants were therefore influenced to watch *Kumkum Bhagya* due to their need for education and information in the form of moral lessons which is in line with the uses and gratification theory as mentioned earlier in this work. Writers of telenovelas have contended that part of their mission is to teach their viewers "lessons of life" (Ahmed, 2012). Some informants added that the post-discussions on *Kumkum Bhagya* that they engaged in also helped them to get diverging views and advice on selected universal issues. Audience members therefore chose programmes that were most culturally relevant or proximate to them (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005) and in this case, viewers of the telenovela watched the programme based on the proximity of the storyline to their personal lives. They, as a result, saw the story to be something that is not very far from them.

Apart from the semblance of the storyline to informants' real life, how humour was defined and portrayed in the telenovela is another factor under verisimilitude which influenced audience members to watch *Kumkum Bhagya*. This is in tandem with what La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) aver that the definition of humour is one element of similarity in terms of culture that influences audience viewing of a particular media

product. Thus, most of my informants indicated that their ability to relate to some funny scenes and acts in the telenovela gave them a more reason to watch the television programme always. During one of my informal interviews, an informant stated:

Me hwɛ Kumkum Bagya osian ndzɛmba a ɔyɛ serew a ɔyɛ a osisi wo mu no ntsi (urm) ɔyɛ a ɔyɛ serew paa... ɔyɛ dzen dɛ m'ɛnya ho na m'ahwɛ naaso dabiara m'ɛny ho no, me hu dɛ ɔyɛ serew papaapa. Woara hwɛ dɛ India fo re ka Mfante.... Hɔn ndze na hɔn kasei bi tse dɛ “yɛ wo krom” na ma wɔ yɛ nyinara ma telenovela no yɛ enyigye ma me (Informant 12, Seven Up Supermarket).

This mean:

Well, I watch *Kumkum Bhagya* because of the comic reliefs inside (urm) you know sometimes it is very funny... I hardly get the chance to watch it all the time but anytime I do, I get to realise that it is very funny... can you imagine Indians speaking Fante... their tone, the local expressions like “ye wo krom” and all that they do make the telenovela very funny to me (Informant 12, Seven Up Supermarket).

Another stated in a similar vein:

Madam enyim dɛ ma okodo wo “programme” no mu bia yɛ nokwar...ɔwom dɛ wɔyɛ abrɔfo na hen so yeyɛ ebibifo naaso, biribiara wɔ ko mu no yɛ ndzɛmb a y'ehu wɔ Ghana ha. “Relationship” na ne mu haw na ne nkekaho... mpo m'osima wɔ yɛ

aserewsem no yɛ “real” mpo kyɛn hɛn "local ones" no a wɔ ma ntsiase yɛ dzen, biribiara a ɔwɔ Kumkum Bagya mu no tse dɛ hɛn abrabɔ mu nsem na ɔno naa ntsi na ɔma me hwɛ dabiara (Informant 16, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

This means:

Madam you know, the storyline is real... even though they are whites and we are black, whatever they go through is something that we can relate with here in Ghana. The relationship and its problems among others...and even the way they make the jokes are real unlike our own local movies that they make it so hard to believe, everything about *Kumkum Bhagya* looks like the real life stories and that is what has been motivating me to watch it always (Informant 16, Ne Nyinaa Yie Supermarket).

To these informants, the local expressions made in the Hindu telenovela, the mentioning of Ghanaian towns in place of Indian towns and the tone and pauses that the translators of the telenovela use in the programme all came together to make them laugh and since these funny statements and actions are made in relation to the Ghanaian culture, audience members are easily able to relate to them. Other informants also indicated that the similarity in the funny scenes that are shown in the telenovela to their real life was something that made them feel closer to the telenovela. One informant stated that,

(Laughs coyly) I just laugh so much most of the time when they are showing the programme on TV because I almost all the time see myself and my husband as Pragyah and Abhi even though I am much harder than Pragyah (coughs amidst laughter). You see when my husband and I are not on talking

terms and he needs something it becomes so funny because we would all be giving ourselves attitude and yet will realize we need the other person and this is what I see in the programme because I know how it feels, I always laugh so hard watching such scenes and I still get to learn what to do during those periods (FGD 2, Informant 2).

The comic part of the telenovela does not only help social actors to relax and entertain themselves but also come up with solutions to specific problems in relation to marriage and relationships as postulated by the informant above.

#### **4.7.3 Popularity**

According to Akpan and Ihechu (2012), a television programme cannot be successful without the producers considering the cultural attributes of the programme in relation to the expectations of the audience. When all these factors are considered, the particular programme becomes popular among its audience due to its effectiveness and purposeful influence on them. One theme that came up as a factor that influenced audience viewership of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* is the popularity of the telenovela. This theme is, however, outside the various elements that the theory of cultural proximity raises as the factors that influence audiences' choice of media product. According to some of my informants, they were influenced to watch the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* because it became popular and everyone was talking about it. To these informants, just like the domino effect, *Kumkum Bhagya* came on television and everyone around them was talking about how interesting and educative it was until it just hit them and they had no other choice than to also begin watching in order not to be left out when people are discussing it. An informant stated:

...Oh the lady I sit with in class, she always come to class and then she narrates the story to me, almost all the ladies including some guys were always talking about this *Kumkum Bhagya* programme so due to that I fell for the movie and then I started watching it and then yeah it's been interesting and now I can also talk about it with her any time (Informant 10, Seven Up supermarket).

In a similar manner, another informant from my second focus group also stated:

Nna nkorɔfo a wɔ wɔ me nkyɛn nyinara ka Kumkum Bagya mu nsem. Nna me “sisters” hwɛ bi dabiara na ɔyɛ a me nye hɛn tse hɔ na wɔ reka mu nsem nts... na ehu, me nye hɛn wɔ hɔ osiandɛ emi nye hɛn banyin kor ntsi sɛ kumkum asem ba do a me nko na me nntum nka bi osiandɛ nna me nnhwɛ bi ntsi da bi na me nye hɛn kɔ hwɛ bi wɔ barber bi hɔ na ofi do “m’edecide” dɛ mɛ hwɛ no dabiara. Ma ɔyɔ anyigye wo mu nye dɛ, beebiara me bɛ fa biara me tse dɛ nkorɔfo reka mu nsem na osiandɛ me hwɛ bi ntsi, me tum ka bi (FGD2, Informant 6).

This means:

Everyone around me was talking about Kumkum Bhagya. My sisters used to watch it all the time and sometimes, I will be sitting with them and they will be talking about it all the time so... and you see I am always with them because I am the only boy so when the topic of *Kumkum Bhagya* comes up I am always the one that cannot say some because I don't watch some so once I went with them to watch it at some barber's place and from that time I decided to watch

it all the time. The interesting part is wherever I pass I hear people talk about it and because I watch it I am able to easily join the conversations (FGD2, Informant 6).

In this scenario, informants' viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* is founded on the need to get interesting programmes and be able to form part of social discussions on the telenovela which can only be derived from viewing the programme.

Other informants also indicated that due to the popularity of the telenovela, watching it became a part of their daily activities. That is to say, as they began watching the telenovela, they liked it and hence made it a point to reserve 7:30pm to 8:30pm every week day to view it. These social actors therefore ensured that they did their household chores in a way that by 7:30pm, they would be ready to watch the telenovela without any distractions. Thus, watching the telenovela became a matter of habit as though it was an essential daily routine (Adia, 2014). An informant stated:

Me hyɛɛ asi dɛ me re hwɛ “programme” yi, menn “mmiss” osiandɛ obiara re hwɛ ntsi me yɛ “sure” dɛ m'ayɛ m'edwuma nyinara wɔ fie ewie ntsi “time” bɔ so na wɔ bɛ hyɛ ase no nna me wɔ ha. Mpo sɛ obodur na me nnwie a, me ba ha bɔ hwɛ na wɔ pon a nna m'akɔ sɔw medwuma do (Informant 19, Ne Nyinaa Yie supermarket).

This means:

Since I began watching this telenovela, I have not really missed it because everyone one is watching it and I make sure I do all my work at home so by the time they start, I would be here. Even if by that time I am not done, I come



here to watch it and after that go back home to continue my chores (Informant 19, Ne Nyinaa Yie supermarket).

The popularity of most telenovelas according to Ahmed (2012) rests predominantly on their undemanding nature and preoccupation with everyday problems and issues. These everyday problems may be big or small and are of relevance to the existence of viewers. Ahmed (2012) further avers that since telenovelas address societal issues, they owe part of their popularity to the fact that viewers form para-social relations with characters and also identify themselves with the plots and characters of the telenovela. Similarly, it was revealed in Adia's (2014) study that most of her informants placed much value on some prominent telenovela characters and perceived that they had some connections with them in terms of specific behavioural traits.

#### 4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the findings and discussions of the research questions for the study. Specific issues that came up with reference to the three major research questions were discussed and analysed using the theory of popular culture, cultural proximity and the concept of third places. The first research question was tackled by describing the informants and the three sites and further categorised into three main themes- *Pre-Viewing Culture*, *Viewing Culture* and *Post-Viewing Culture* from which these sub-themes emerged- *Arrival*, *Activities*, *Adjustment to the television set*, *Viewing styles*, *Commercial Breaks* and *Discussions and Debates*. In furtherance, a total of seven themes were developed and discussed for research questions two and three. Four themes for the second research question and three themes for the third research question. These themes are *Socialisation*, *Proximity*, *Escapism*, *Financial Constraint*, *Indigenous languages*, *Verisimilitude* and *Popularity*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the important issues that were raised in the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations to enable the Ghanaian movie industry players to know how to package their media products so that Ghanaians will patronise them more as opposed to their foreign counterparts. The chapter also provides suggestions for further research.

#### 5.1 Summary

The main objective of the study was to determine the culture that surrounds the viewing of the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya* at selected domesticated but open television viewing sites in Winneba. The study was underpinned by the theory of popular culture, the theory of cultural proximity and the concept of third places. In all, five chapters made up the entire study. Each chapter focused on various aspects of the topic under study which came together to address the objectives of the study. Through an ethnographic study of the social actors at the selected sites and with the use of observations, informal semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, I was able to elicit responses on the rationalisation that informants have for viewing the telenovela at the selected sites and the motivation for watching the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*.

## 5.2 Main Findings

Chapter four of this research sought to answer three research questions posed in this work- the culture surrounding the viewing of the telenovela at the selected sites, the rationalisation for choosing the selected sites for the viewing of the telenovela and the social factors that motivated informants to watch the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*.

Firstly, the study revealed that all the thirty-three informants who were interviewed were different people from different backgrounds in terms of their sex, age, religion and educational background. This reaffirmed the assertion made by scholars such as Abah (2009) and Dipio (2008) that in Africa, popular culture (telenovela) does not belong to a specific class of people but is patronised by everyone irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, sex, occupation or language. It also became evident that the selected sites were affirmed by the popular culture theory since a lot of people patronised such places for the viewing of their favourite telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*.

In tackling the first research question, three main categories emanated; pre-viewing culture, viewing culture and the post-viewing culture. I operationalised the pre-viewing culture to encompass all the norms, activities and behaviours that were showcased fifteen minutes prior to the start of the telenovela. Under the pre-viewing culture two themes- arrival and activities were discussed into details. The findings revealed that social actors used the pre-viewing period to adjust themselves to the sites by choosing where to sit or stand. Another activity that took place during the pre-viewing period as revealed in this study included the monitoring of commercials. During the viewing of the telenovela, most social actors adjusted themselves to the television sets. The owners of the sites were however the ones that wielded power at the sites.

There were also subversion of some Ghanaian culture at the sites as social actors engaged in the viewing of the telenovela. The findings further revealed that social actors engaged in various ways of viewing the telenovela which were mostly gendered. The findings further indicated that social actors used the post-viewing period for discussions, debates, commentaries and predictions on the specific episode that they had watched.

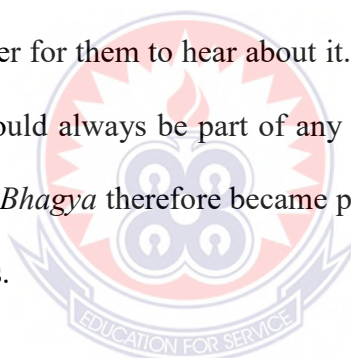
One finding that came up as a reason for social actors watching the telenovela at the selected sites was socialisation. Most social actors revealed that the friendliness and open nature of the selected sites was a major reason they visited the sites to watch the telenovela which buttressed Oldenburg's (1999) assertion that the main importance of third places is to promote socialisation among community members through informal conversation. Proximity in terms of location and equal treatment as humans was another reason why social actors chose to view the telenovela at the selected sites. Furthermore, financial constraint and the presence of the sites as places of escapism all led to most of my informants visiting there all the time to join in the viewing of the telenovela.

The findings also showed that the use of the indigenous languages Twi and Fante as a medium of transmission was a major factor that influenced some social actors to watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya*. The research went ahead to confirm La Pastina and Straubhaar's (2005) stance that all other things being equal audience members are more likely to gravitate towards media products in their own language as opposed to one in a foreign language. The study also contended the assertion made by La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) that people belonging to the lower class are mostly the ones who seek proximity in terms of linguistic competence in a media product as opposed to the rich or the educational elite whose taste are mostly internationalised.

Informants belonging to the elite group also indicated their preference for media products in their local parlance.

Verisimilitude in relation to the content of the telenovela and the manner in which humour was portrayed is another factor that influenced most informants to watch the telenovela-*Kumkum Bhagya*. The universality of the plot of the telenovela and its semblance to reality made it easier for these informants to relate to specific scenes thereby gaining some moral lessons from it.

The findings of this research finally indicated popularity of the telenovela as a factor that influenced informants to watch the telenovela. Informants revealed that the popularity of the telenovela which made it a topic of discussion for almost everybody around them made it easier for them to hear about it. Social actors mostly watched the telenovela so that they could always be part of any form of discussion that came up. The viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* therefore became part of the daily activities of social actors at the selected sites.



### **5.3 Conclusion**

The findings showed that the selected sites qualify as third places as propounded by Oldenburg (1999) because they have the most important ingredient: the promotion of socialisation through informal conversations. The study also indicated that the culture surrounding the viewing of the telenovela comprised of both planned and unplanned activities which were engaged in by social actors with the ultimate goal of ensuring that they enjoyed the telenovela at the selected sites with little or no distractions.

Other characteristics of the selected sites which included their plain and open nature, their ability to serve as escape routes for social actors and their ability to serve as

levellers for everyone who went there, all came together to influence social actors to visit the selected sites to join in the viewing experience.

The study concludes that most informants looked out for media products which were realistic in terms of content and the definition of humour. The presence of these elements in these foreign telenovelas is what influenced social actors to patronise *Kumkum Bhagya* more than the locally produced ones. Finally, the indigenous languages that the programme adopted which were easily understood by social actors as well as the popularity of the telenovela all influenced social actors to watch the Hindi telenovela every day.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

This study set out to investigate the culture that surrounds the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* at some domesticated but open sites in Winneba and to elicit responses from informants in relation to their rationalisation for viewing the telenovela at the selected sites and the social factors that influenced them to watch the Hindi telenovela. The findings of the study were analysed in relation to issues raised in the theory of popular culture, cultural proximity and the concept of third places. Apart from the limitation of time and the language spoken by some social actors, I also encountered other constraints when I was gathering data for the research study.

First, getting informants to speak during the one-on-one interview was very challenging at the beginning due to the fact that most of them did not like the idea of being recorded. Therefore, the researcher had nineteen informants for the individual interviews at the three selected sites. The nineteen informants, however, adequately represented the social actors at the sites. Again, I was able to conduct only two focus group discussions instead of the three I had earlier decided on. The two focus group

discussions, however, produced adequate data which represented the various social actors at the selected sites. In spite of the above limitations, the study has critical implications for further studies.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies**

For further studies, it is suggested that a follow up study can be done using two media products. One locally produced telenovela and another foreign produced in order to ascertain the differences and similarities in the culture surrounding the viewing of the two media products at selected free access open spaces.

Future researchers can also look at comparing the culture surrounding the viewing of *Kumkum Bhagya* or any foreign produced telenovela at home and at free access open spaces.

Further studies can investigate how gender issues are portrayed in the telenovelas that are imported to Ghana and the perspectives of Ghanaian viewers on such portrayals. This will go a long way to determine the effect that these foreign media products have on Ghanaians.

### **5.6 Recommendations**

Based on the discussions and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made to improve third places in Ghana and to encourage the patronizing of Ghanaian media products:

1. Specific places should be created by the local governments in various communities to encourage socialisation among community members since it has been proven by many scholars that third places help in community



development. These specially made third places must be constructed to possess, if not all, most of the features that are necessary to promote informal relationships and also serve as places of leisure.

2. The Ghanaian movie industry, especially the packaging team, must pay attention to the content of the media products that they produce since audience members seek verisimilitude in television programmes that they watch.
3. The movie industry in Ghana should promote the use of indigenous Ghanaian languages in most of their media products since most viewers seek proximity in language which makes it easier for them to understand the content of the movies. This will help reduce the proliferation or influx of foreign media products on the Ghanaian market.



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## APPENDIX

### QUESTION GUIDE FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

#### RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

1. Please, kindly introduce yourself exempting your name but including your age, educational level and religion.
2. What are some of the telenovelas you watch on television?
3. What time do you go to the site to watch the telenovela?
4. What are the things you engage in when you are watching the telenovela at the sites?
5. What are the activities you engage in right after the telenovela has ended?

#### RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

1. Why do you watch the telenovela- *Kumkum Bhagya* at the sites I usually find you watching it?

#### RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

1. What influences you to watch Adom TV's *Kumkum Bhagya*?
2. Would you have watched *Kumkum Bhagya* if it was produced in Ghana and acted by Ghanaians? Why?
3. Are there any suggestions you would like to make to Ghanaian telenovela producers?