Media Imperialism Reconsidered – Again: Local, Western and Indian Media Use in Uganda

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Abstract

This study examines the use of local, Western and Indian media by Ugandan college students in order to reconsider the media imperialism thesis in the context of increasingly complex global flows of media and culture. We surveyed a convenience sample of 193 students at Makerere University in Kampala in June 2003 and asked, among other topics, about their media use patterns, their perception of cultural threats posed by foreign media and their reasons for liking and disliking local and foreign media. We used a combination of closed and open questions. Consistent with previous studies, we discovered that the respondents preferred local media over foreign. But when asked specifically about foreign media, they preferred Western media to Indian media even though they believed Western media posed a more severe cultural threat to Uganda than Indian media. However, the respondents also may have felt some cultural and political proximity to Indian films despite the language barrier. We also found, again consistent with previous research, that respondents were active rather than passive media users. The respondents seemed particularly active when they expressed dislike for media. The respondents also raised concerns about intra-national cultural dominance by the major language group in the country. The results suggest that the media imperialism thesis may be reconsidered again to take into account complexities created by South-to-South media flow, but also intra-national concerns about cultural domination and subordination.

Key Terms: Media imperialism, media use patterns, media flow, cultural domination.

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Résumé

La présente étude porte sur l'utilisation des média locaux occidentaux et indiens parmi les étudiants ougandais afin de repenser la thèse de l'impérialisme médiatique dans un contexte mondial caractérisé par un flux de plus en plus complexe de media et de cultures. Nous avons enquêté un échantillon pratique de 153 étudiants de Makerere University en 2003 afin de déterminer, entre autres leurs modes d'utilisation des média, leur perception des menaces culturelles provenant des média étrangers et les raisons de leur attachement ou détachement des média locaux et étrangers. Nous avons fait usage d'une combinaison de questions ouvertes et de questions fermées. A l'instar des précédentes études, les personnes interrogées ont affirmé leur préférence des média locaux par rapport aux média étrangers. Toutefois, en ce qui concerne spécifiquement les média étrangers, notre population de recherche préfère les média occidentaux aux indiens tout en reconnaissant que les média occidentaux constituent une plus grave menace culturelle pour l'Ouganda que leurs homologues indiens. Quoi qu'il en soit, les personnes interrogées se sont montrées, dans une certaine mesure, culturellement et politiquement proches des films indiens, en dépit de la barrière linguistique. Conformément aux précédente études, une fois de plus, il nous a été donné de constater que les personnes interrogées faisaient preuve d'un usage actif plutôt que passif des media concernés. Cette population s'est montrée particulièrement active quant à l'expression des reproches qu'elle fait aux média. En plus, elle s'est montrée particulièrement préoccupée par la domination culturelle intra-nationale exercée par la communauté linguistique majoritaire du pays. Les résultats de ce travail recommandent une autre reconsidération de la thèse de l'impérialisme médiatique afin d'intégrer non seulement les complexités découlant des échanges médiatiques Sud-Sud, mais également les préoccupations intra-nationales concernant la domination et la subordination culturelles.

Mots clés : Impérialisme médiatique, Mode d'utilisation des média, Change médiatiques, Domination culturelle.

Introduction

As the international movement of people and spread of mass media (and their cultural products) has grown in scale and scope to unprecedented levels in recent years, questions about the impact of global media products on local cultures have taken on new significance. A theory of media imperialism proposed in the 1970s, premised on a one-way flow of information dominated by the United States, suggested Western media products – television shows, films, music, etc. – undermined local cultures and values in countries of the South.[1] Media imperialism theory was revised in the 1980s to challenge the idea of a passive audience manipulated by Western

media products. In the revised theory, the notion of a predominantly Western-dominated one-way flow of information remained, but media consumers in receiving countries were conceptualized as active audiences that could accommodate, resist, and resignify foreign media products for their own particular and locally relevant uses. The common thread in the media imperialism thesis of the 1970s and the 1980s revision was the predominance of the West-to-rest one-way flow of information and a focus on the effects of Western media products in the South countries.

By the 1990s, however, with the global trend toward liberalization under way, the growth of regional media powerhouses in the South, such as Globo in Brazil, Star TV in India and M-Net in South Africa, began to erode Western dominance in the global flow of culture. Despite the rapidly changing political economy of global media relations and new ways of conceptualizing these relationships, the basic question posed by the original and revised media imperialism thesis – that is, how audiences in local settings react to or are influenced by media products created in physically and/or culturally distant locales – is still relevant for understanding the impact of global cultural flows. Now, however, the questions must also address new complexities: researchers must consider not only the impact of Western media in South countries, but also the impact of media powers of the South on Western and other Southern countries or the impact of both Western media and Southern media in countries of the South. Boyd-Barrett (1998) has insightfully pointed out that the current political economy of global media relations can no longer be understood through only the lens of geo-politics, in which global media relations and flows replicated to a large extent the patterns established by colonialism (pp. 173-174). In the contemporary context, global media relations must be viewed also through the lens of geo-cultural relations, in which media contents flow between and within nations among senders and receivers connected by common language, cultural proximity or other shared traits.

In Uganda, which has a long history of ties to India and where there is a substantial Indian immigrant presence today, Western and Indian media, in addition to local media, are available to Ugandans. In this media environment, how do Ugandans respond to Western and Indian media in relation to local media? To what extent do they consume foreign media and what is their orientation towards them? This paper reports the findings of a survey designed to explore questions of this kind. The respondents are part of a convenience sample of Ugandan college students at Makerere University in Kampala, the nation's capital city. Given the limitations of the sample and the lack of previous research comparing the impact of

Western media and non-Western foreign media in South countries, we treat this study as exploratory and the findings as suggestive of trends and problems for further study rather than as definitive answers to new questions.

Before discussing the details of this study, we provide some important background. First, we present brief background on media imperialism. Next, we provide information about the recent history of the Western and Indian media in Uganda. Together this background material represents the context from which emerged our general research interest in cross-cultural media effects and specific research questions about Western and Indian media impact in Uganda.

A Brief Overview of Media Imperialism

The idea of media imperialism is most closely associated with the political economist and communication studies scholar Herbert Schiller, who first proposed a broader thesis of cultural imperialism. In a short book published in the mid-1970s, Schiller (1976) described cultural imperialism as:

> the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system (p. 9).

Schiller (1979) argued that cultural institutions of the West, including the mass media, are part of a world capitalist system and serve as the 'ideologically supportive informational infrastructure of the modern world system's core – the multinational corporation (MNCs)' (p. 21). The task of the cultural institutions was to create and deliver consumers to the MNCs. Schiller (1979) wrote that the purpose of globally distributed cultural products from the West was to 'create packaged audiences whose loyalties are tied to brand-named products and whose understanding of social reality is mediated through a sale of commodity satisfaction' (p. 23). The relationship Schiller described is an imperialistic one to the extent that powerful states imposed their cultural power upon weaker states with little or no reciprocation. Thus, cultural imperialism referred to the entire range of cultural institutions such as education, family, media and so on, as well as the ideological meaning of the messages these institutions disseminate and the social effects of those messages in reproducing unequal class relations (see Curran et al. 1977:10; see also Lee:1979).

Media imperialism can be viewed as one part of cultural imperialism. Lee (1979) notes that in theories of media imperialism, media institutions are often conceptualized as having a certain measure of autonomy within the cultural sphere (p. 42). Boyd-Barrett (1977) argues that media imperialism should be valued as 'a distinct analytical tool', not merely a sub-process of cultural imperialism (p. 118). Boyd-Barrett's definition of media imperialism reflects this perspective:

> Broadly speaking, the term refers to the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected (1977:117).

Boyd-Barrett (1977) used the term to describe unequal media relations between, for example, Western and Southern countries specifically in reference only to messages mediated through news agencies, advertising, magazines, films, and broadcasting networks. He also pointed out that most writing on cultural imperialism was unclear about the nature of media relations between nations. Researchers 'left it unclear whether the influence they describe have been the product of deliberate commercial or political strategy, the haphazard result of cultural contact or the inevitable outcome of a given imbalance of power in international relationships' (p.119). It was possible, said Boyd-Barrett, to better distinguish the 'modes of [media] influence by the degree of intentionality': media influence could be *exported* through a deliberate commercial or political policy or it could be *disseminated* unintentionally through existing networks of political economic relations. On the other hand, receiving countries could *adopt* media influence as a matter of commercial of political policy or it could be *absorbed* unreflectively as a result of contact (p. 119). Boyd-Barrett's conceptualization focuses on the process of media imperialism but says nothing about its effect. However, another scholar, following Schiller, identified the effect of media imperialism as the 'invasion of capitalistic world views and infringement upon indigenous ways of life' (Lee 1979:68).

Although Schiller did not view media as having an autonomous role from the category of culture (which included for him education, tourism, professional values, etc.) in the way that Boyd-Barrett did, Schiller (1979) addressed both the process and effects of media imperialism. He wrote that within the global hand-in-hand spread of MNCs and media institutions, 'the media…are the means that entice and instruct their audiences along this path, while at the same time concealing the deeper reality and

the long-term consequences that course produces' (p. 31). This Schillerian version of media imperialism has two main components: the first argues that the global growth and reach of Western media industries is closely linked to the broader trend of Western MNCs dominating global political economy and involves a deliberate commercial policy of exportation. Schiller may have been prescient on this count as economic and media researchers have shown the increasing global prominence of Western media conglomerates, their links to MNCs and the global predominance of Western media products in many countries (see for example, Nordenstreng & Varis 1974; Herman & McChesney 1997). The second component asserts that the effect of Western media products is to manipulate audiences to think and behave in ways that are beneficial for the profit-making goals of the Western MNCs. On this issue, Schiller is on much shakier ground because neither he nor his supporters (e.g. Dorfman & Mattleart 1975) provide unambiguous evidence for the claims of direct and powerful media effects on consumers of Western media products.

In the mid-1980s, researchers critical of the Schillerian assumption of passive audiences being manipulated by Western media products began empirical investigations of how residents of South countries used and reacted to Western media products. One of the first of these studies examined audience reactions among Israelis and Arabs to the US television serial *Dallas*, a typical Western media product of the time (Liebes & Katz 1990). The researchers found viewers of different cultural backgrounds interpreted the 'message' of the shows in very different ways. Sometimes, a storyline or plot twist that seemed inconsistent with existing local cultural values would be reframed or simply ignored. At other times, viewers found certain behaviour depicted on the show, such as greed, decadence, and consumerism, highly offensive. Liebes and Katz (1990) carefully concluded that Western media products consumed in a non-Western setting do not necessarily have direct and powerful effects on media consumers. This line of research demonstrated, in Tomlinson's (1991:50) words, 'that audiences are more active and critical, their responses more complex and reflective, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation and "invasion" than was assumed by the original cultural imperialism theorists' (see also Tracey 1985).

The active audience idea was an important corrective to the original cultural imperialism thesis about passive media audiences. However, Western media still dominated the global flow of media products. As a result, research that examined the active audience in the context of media imperialism focused almost exclusively on how consumers in countries of the

South used and reacted to Western media products. But in the 1990s, the global flow of cultural products grew increasingly complex (Boyd-Barrett 1998; Curran & Park 2000). A global trend toward economic liberalization had important consequences for the political economy of global cultural industries. Liberalization meant that media industries formerly under government control came to be privately owned; media industries that were already privately owned were increasingly deregulated; and, in many countries, foreign investment in domestic media industries was encouraged. Consequently, the media in some countries of the South grew strong enough to break their dependence on the West (though some cultural industries in the South, such as the Indian film industry, have always been relatively strong).

Today, media products of many kinds flow from certain countries of the South to countries of the West. Brazilian television programs are a mainstay of Portuguese television and Mexican programming and films dominate the viewing preferences of Latinos in the United States (Gutierrez & Schement 1984; Straubhaar 2003:78). The film melodramas from Mumbai (Bollywood) are popular with many segments of viewers in the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, the United States (Thussu 2000:222). In addition, horizontal flow of media products among countries of the South is also on the rise (Larkin 1997; Oliveira 1993; Straubhaar 2003:79; Thussu 2000:207). Some of this flow is between neighbouring countries that share a language, such as Latin America (Anatola & Rogers 1984) or parts of China and Hong Kong (Curtin 2003). Another part of this South-to-South media flow is the result of increased global migration. As diasporic communities establish themselves in locales distant from their points of origins, global media corporations try to take advantage of these new markets that are defined by a shared language and common cultural traits, rather than by shared geography (Anatola & Rogers 1984; Cunningham & Sinclair 2001). These diasporic users of media originating in their countries of origin are an example of what Boyd-Barrett (1998:173-174) might call geo-cultural media flow. Yet another type of South-South media flow, such as Brazilian telenovelas flowing to China (Oliviera 1993), Turkish television programming flowing to portions of Central Asian countries (Thussu 2000:207) and Bollywood films flowing to North African and West African countries (Larkin 1997) is not strongly linked to migration but perhaps to some combination of marketing efforts, the appeal of universal themes in story telling and ancient trade routes.

In terms of international communication research on global flows of culture, scholars have been interested primarily in two types of issues.

First, there is the tradition of documenting the flow of news and entertainment originating in the West and consumed in countries of the South (see, for example, early studies by Nordenstreng & Varis 1974; Tunstall 1977). Within this first tradition is a closely related project, discussed earlier, that examines the various cognitive and social effects claims of the media imperialism thesis (see for example, Liebes & Katz 1990; Wasko, Phillips, & Meehan 2001). The second area of study focuses on the movement of people from countries of the South to the West and how and why these diasporic communities establish media institutions as part of negotiating and refashioning their identities (see for example, Appadurai 1996; Gillespie 1995; Husband 1994; Naficy 1999; Ogan 2001; Riggins 1992).

Of less interest to media scholars has been the study of the idea and implications of South-to-South migrations of people and South-to-South spread of media, even though the empirical detail yielded by such studies could add substantially to understanding the current context of media globalization and to challenging theories of media imperialism. This paper explores how Ugandans use and react to Indian media, made available by the South-to-South migration of Indians to Uganda, as compared to their use of local and Western media. We posed the following research questions:

1. How frequently do Ugandans use local versus foreign media?

2. Which foreign media do Ugandans prefer to use, Western or Indian?

3. What do Ugandans like and dislike about foreign media?

4. To what extent do Ugandans find foreign media products threatening to local culture?

In the contemporary political economy of global media, answers to these questions should help us to think again about both the original and revised versions of media imperialism.

Uganda As a Case Study

Uganda is a particularly interesting location for exploring the issues outlined above. First, Indians[2] have been travelling to East Africa for 300 years and, in Uganda, had a significant presence until 1972, when Idi Amin expelled them from the country. Second, recent economic policy changes in Uganda have resulted in unprecedented growth in the electronic media sector (Ochieng 2000). International media firms and newly established local broadcasting and cable companies account for this growth. Thus,

Uganda represents a geopolitical space where two important aspects of globalization – movement of people and electronic media – are relatively nascent forces and provide a fresh case to examine questions about media imperialism in the contemporary global political economy of media.

Migrations of Indians from the West coast of India to East Africa and their subsequent financial role in East African commerce have been central to Uganda's economic, political, and cultural history. In the late nineteenth century the British recruited Indians to work on the colonial railroad in East Africa and by 1901, when the railway was completed, nearly 7,000 Indians lived in what is now Uganda (Adams & Bristow 1978). Many of these Indians remained in East Africa when the work was finished.

In spite of their relatively small numbers, Indians soon came to dominate the Uganda's economy and black Ugandans came to resent the Indians (see Mutibwa 1992). By the time of Ugandan independence in 1962, Ugandan leaders and the population at large regularly accused the Indian community of sending their wealth out of the country, refusing to employ East Africans and refusing to intermarry with local black Africans. When General Idi Amin came to power in the January 1971 coup, one of Amin's first actions was to expel all Indians except those most essential to governance and social control. By November 1972, all but about 250 Indians had left Uganda (Adams & Bristow 1979).

Amin remained in power until April 1979 when he was overthrown by an alliance of Tanzanian defence forces and Ugandan guerrillas. After several tumultuous years, Yoweri Museveni came to power in January 1986. Almost immediately, international donor agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, offered financial assistance to resuscitate Uganda's sagging economy on condition that Museveni takes measures to liberalize the economy, such as returning expropriated property to Indians, reducing and controlling government spending as well as privatizing public enterprises (Tukahebwa 1998). Museveni agreed and in 1992 he travelled to Canada and England to call on Indians expelled by Amin and invite them to return to Uganda and reclaim their properties (Abidi 1996). By the middle of 2003, about 10,000 Indians were living in Uganda.

One aspect of Museveni's move to liberalize the economy was allowing private ownership of broadcasting networks alongside state-controlled radio and television. Partly, the decision was in response to pressure from the World Bank, which insisted on enhancing freedom of expression in Uganda. In early 1992, Parliament passed legislation to open the airwaves to private broadcasting. As a result, there was an immediate increase in

the number of privately owned FM radio stations and television stations (Tripp 2004). A variety of entertainment and informational programs were broadcast in English and in Luganda, the language of the predominant Baganda ethnic group concentrated in southern Uganda. Multinational companies such as the South African firm MIH Holdings provided Western films and other television content through its terrestrial service M-Net and a satellite service Multichoice. As a result, there was a relatively high proportion of Western content on Ugandan television stations (see also Ogundimu 1996). As for the Indian entrepreneurs, their investment and participation in private broadcasting has been limited. They have been much more active, however, in cable television systems that cater to the Kampala Indian community's taste for information and entertainment programming produced in India. System operators worked with Indian program providers to downlink, via Arabsat, a bundle of channels from India including Sony, BBC, CNN, Asian MTV, ZeeTV, Asia Music, and Doordarshan (India's national television network), which itself offered about a dozen program streams in several Indian languages. In Boyd-Barrett's terms, Indian media firms enacted a deliberate commercial policy to export content to Uganda. The Indian migrant community in Uganda adopted the content as a deliberate choice. However, a consequence of the commercial policy was the unintentional distribution to native Ugandans who perhaps unreflectively absorbed it and reacted to it.

Method

The data presented in this study are based on a survey of 193 students enrolled at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. This convenience sample is not meant to represent media use patterns by Ugandan teens or young adults, let alone all Ugandan media users. Given the limitation of the sample and the fact that issues related to south-to-south media flow is relatively unexplored, the findings must be treated as fairly tentative but indicative of important trends to be explored in future research. The survey was written and administered in collaboration with colleagues in the mass communication department in March 2003.[3] The survey contained questions asking respondents about their basic demographic background, media use patterns, perceptions of Western and Indian threats to Ugandan culture, and why they liked or disliked various local and foreign media products. Questions about media use patterns, interaction with Indians, and perceptions of Western and Indian threat to Ugandan culture were designed as either forced choice yes-no or Likert-scale responses. Ques-

tions about what respondents liked or disliked about various local and foreign media channels were open-ended.

Findings

Basic Demographic Characteristics

The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 38 years and the mean age of the sample was 22.21 years old. Among the 193 respondents, 95 were female, 90 were male (eight people did not note gender). Geographically, nearly 30 per cent of the respondents were residents of Kampala, the national capital (54 out of 193 respondents). However, 65 cities and towns were listed as hometowns, which indicated a wide variety of rural and urban experiences among students in the sample.

Use of Local and Foreign Media Content

The respondents use local television most frequently and Indians satellite television least often. Table 1 shows the difference in mean scores of local and foreign media use, compared with the overall mean of media use (2.165).[4]

Table 1: Use of Local and Foreign Media

	Mean Score	Difference from Overall Mean (2.165)	t	Sig.
Local Television	3.643	1.478	30.610	0.000
Foreign Television				
Multichoice	2.530	0.365	5.351	0.000
Indian Satellite	1.400	-0.765	-12.825	0.000
Local Film	1.966	-0.199	-4.135	0.000
Foreign Film				
Western	2.642	0.477	6.698	0.000
Indian	1.358	-0.807	-18.804	0.000

Scale: 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; and 4=Frequently

These data indicate that local television is most used by the respondents, probably because it is 'free' and most easily accessible. Foreign television, on the other hand, is expensive and relatively infrequently used. Foreign film and even local film use require expenditure of funds, and so college students do not view these often. Among the foreign media, the respond-

ents show a preference for using Western over Indian media (see Table 2).[5] We explore the reasons for this difference later as we consider the responses to open-ended questions about why the students liked and disliked foreign media.

Table 2: Use of Western and Indian Media

	Western Media	Indian Media	Mean Difference	t	Sig.
Mean	2.583	1.360	1.201	23.416	0.000
SD	0.783	0.504			

Scale: 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; and 4=Frequently

The four demographic variables, age, gender, hometown and year in school, are not strong predicators of overall media use. However, analysis of age and school year indicates that younger students are more likely to use Western media, while older students are more likely to use local media.

Perceptions of Media as a Foreign Threat

Among six foreign items that people perceive as threats to Ugandan society, the respondents clearly feel that Western items are a greater danger than Indian items. Table 3 presents the mean scores of six potential threats from abroad. Each mean score is compared to the overall mean score across all threats (3.088). All of the Western items (we view World Bank as Western) have means higher than the overall mean, whereas the two Indian items have means lower than the overall mean.

Table 3: Perception of Foreign Threats

Threat	Mean Score	Difference from Overall Mean (3.088)	t	Sig.
Western Film	3.530	0.442	8.276	0.000
World Bank	3.506	0.418	7.708	0.000
Western Music	3.486	0.398	7.630	0.000
Indian Investment	2.598	-0.490	-7.074	0.000
Indian Film	2.313	-0.775	-13.536	0.000

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; and 4=Strongly Agree; when asked whether item is a threat to Uganda.

Liking and Disliking Foreign Media

Consistent with previous research, Ugandan respondents preferred local media content over foreign. However, when we asked specifically about foreign media choices, they consumed more Western than Indian media, even though Western media was viewed as a greater threat to Uganda than Indian media. To learn more about this apparent contradiction, we analyzed the answers from the open questions, which asked respondents to indicate why they liked or disliked specific media channels. In sum, the 193 respondents wrote a total of 984 responses indicating their reasons for liking and disliking various media. Table 4 indicates the rate of liking and disliking four foreign and one local media channel. Majorities like local television, satellite television and Indian film. Western film is the only media that a majority dislikes.

Table 4: Liking and Disliking Local and Foreign Media

		Like	Dislike	Total
Local Television	n	177	113	290
	%	61.03	38.97	100
Satellite Television	n	131	103	234
	%	55.98	44.02	100
Western Film	n	118	130	248
	%	47.58	52.42	100
Indian Film	n	115	97	212
	%	54.25	45.75	100
Total	n	541	443	984
	%	**55.0**	**45.0**	**100**

The large number of individual responses indicating liking and disliking of media were summarized into several broad categories that described the underlying patterns of the data. The eight categories were:

1) Content Type: Included reasons for liking or disliking media based on a type of content provided by the media channel, such as music, sports, soap operas, news, etc.

2) Gratifications: Included reasons for liking and disliking the media channel based on the type of enjoyment received (such as 'entertaining' or 'interesting') or not received (such as 'boring' or 'too local').

3) Accessibility: Included reasons for liking and disliking based on avail-
   ability, cost, language, etc.

4) Cultural: Included reasons for liking or disliking based on aspects of
   local or foreign culture, as depicted in media content.

5) Cultural Threat: Only included reasons for disliking a media channel
   because its content threatened Ugandan society and culture.

6) Morality: Included reasons for liking and disliking based on moral con-
   cerns, such as 'nudity', 'indecency', 'violence', depicted in the media
   content.

7) Generic: Included responses that simply noted liking or disliking with-
   out providing any specific reason.

8) Other: Included responses that could not be categorized any other
   category.

Table 5 shows reasons mentioned for liking media, while Table 6, reasons
for disliking local and foreign media, is missing altogether.

Table 5: Reasons for Liking Local and Foreign Media

	Local TV		Satellite TV		Western Film		Indian Film		Total	
Reasons	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Content Feature	111	62.71	108	80.60	29	24.58	67	49.57	306	66.07
Gratifying	41	23.16	16	11.94	68	67.63	21	18.26	146	26.84
Accessibility	10	5.66	3	2.24	1	0.85	5	4.35	19	3.49
Cultural	3	1.69	0	-	0	-	11	9.67	14	2.57
Cultural Threast	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Moral	0	-	0	-	0	-	2	1.74	2	0.37
Generic	10	5.66	7	6.22	20	16.95	19	16.52	66	10.29
Other	2	1.13	0	-	0	-	0	-	2	0.37
Total	177	100	134	100	100	100	115	100	544	100

Taken together, the tables also show an important contrast in the reasons
for the respondents' liking and disliking various media. As for liking, 'con-
tent feature' and 'gratification' comprise nearly 83 per cent of the reasons
for liking the various media. But for disliking, however, the reasons are
spread primarily across four different categories (content feature, acces-
sibility, cultural threat and moral). It is also important to note that the re-
spondents generally provided more specific reasons for disliking that for

liking: generic reasons for liking appear more frequently in Table 5 (reasons for liking) than in Table 6 (reasons for disliking). This indicates, perhaps, that when respondents dislike media and are critical about media products, they are more actively engaged with the media content. The tendency seems especially true for respondents who do not like satellite television and Western film as these media are viewed as representing a cultural threat or immorality. The finding suggests a further specification of the active audience idea of the revised media imperialism thesis: media consumers who dislike foreign content may more readily articulate the specific reasons for their dislike, while those consumers who like foreign content more often provide few specifics.

Table 6: Reasons for Disliking Local and Foreign Media

	Local TV		Satelite TV		Western Film		Indian Film		Total	
Reasons	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Content Feature	79	69.91	16	15.53	26	2	34	35.05	155	34.99
Not Gratifying	4	3.54	2	1.94	9	6.92	7	7.22	22	4.97
Accessibility	9	7.96	63	61.17	2	1.54	38	39.18	112	25.28
Cultural	8	7.08	0	-	0	-	9	9.28	17	3.84
Cultural Threat	0	-	18	17.48	35	26.92	0	-	53	11.96
Moral	8	7.08	4	3.88	58	44.62	3	3.09	73	16.48
Generic	1	0.88	0	-	0	-	6	6.19	7	1.58
Other	4	3.54	0	-	0	-	0	-	4	0.90
Total	113	100	103	100	130	100	97	100	443	100

To get a deeper sense of respondent orientations toward specific foreign and local media, we closely examined the actual written responses for specific media channels. We focused this analysis on satellite television, Western film, Indian film, and local television. This analysis revealed additional important insights about the ways respondents elaborated their reasons for liking and disliking media.

First, five response categories – liking satellite TV for its content features, disliking satellite TV based on accessibility issues, disliking Indian film based on accessibility issues, liking local TV based on content features and disliking local TV based on content features – should be noted because they are based predominantly on a single or, in the case of local television, three reasons. A very large proportion of respondents who liked satellite TV because of 'content features' cited the variety of programming available

(101 out of 108 responses). One respondent said: "I like it coz [sic] the variety they provide in entertainment, news" (male, 22 years old). Another said: '[I like] recent movies, music, videos + up to date news and info" (female, 22 years old). The large proportion of respondents who disliked satellite TV because of accessibility issues was accounted for almost entirely by the complaint of its high cost (60 out of 63 respondents). For example, one respondent said: "It's very interesting, diversified and addictive, but I don't like it because it is too expensive for the average Ugandan" (female, 20 years old). Notice that she does not dislike the contents of satellite television, only the high cost of access. The large proportion of respondents who disliked Indian film, because of accessibility difficulties, was largely due to the fact that the Indian films are often neither dubbed nor subtitled, so that the respondents simply did not like the language barrier (29 out of 38 respondents). A typical response was: "I hate them because I don't understand the Indian language" (female, 20 years old). Again, however, the content itself is not necessarily the problem. Rather, it is the issue of difficult access (based on a language barrier, in this case) that creates dislike of Indian film. Finally, respondents liked local TV in large numbers because of the programs offered (106 of 111), but a large number disliked local TV because of repetitive programs and advertisements (37 of 79), with the other 32 (of 37) merely listing the name of a program they disliked. Some typical responses expressing both liking and disliking include: '(Local television stations) have spicy programs but are often interrupted by advertisements' (male, 21 years old); 'Very resourceful, but many repeats' (male, 27 years old); 'Cool entertainment & news, then there's too much advertising which is hectic' (female, 21 years old).

While a single or a few dominant reasons constituted these five categories for liking and disliking, some other categories, such as the large number of moral reasons for disliking Western film, are based on more complex reasoning. In addition, there are interesting overlaps and distinctions among these remaining categories. Below we discuss these findings in two sections: concerns about culture and gratifications derived from media contents.

Concerns About Culture

The analysis of responses from the open-ended questions revealed not only additional detail about why respondents dislike Western film – that they are culturally imperialistic, promote stereotypes, convey Western arrogance, and are immoral – but also provided a sense of the intensity of disliking Western film. Not one respondent wrote a positive comment about

the cultural impact of Western films. Thirty-five of a total of 130 responses (27 per cent) said that Western film was a cultural threat. Many responses seem to follow the Schillerian logic of media imperialism in a straightforward manner. For example, this notion was typically expressed as: "Spreading Western imperialism, intimidating the poor countries is what I dislike" (male, 23 years old). In other cases, concern about culture is often expressed in relative terms, such as: "They are educative, but the African culture is being overwhelmed by Western culture" (male, 22). Concern about culture sometimes extended to media representations. For example, one respondent noted: "The Western films tend to portray black people as being violent and inferior in society. They are looked at as 'things'" (male, 23). Another noted: "[Western media] tend to portray America + Europe as 'almighty'" [sic] (female, 22). Another recurring pattern for disliking Western films is that they were viewed as 'immoral', 'indecent', 'pornographic', and 'violent' in 58 out of 130 responses (44.6 per cent). Included among these 58 responses were the following comments: "Xtreme [sic] violence and sexual immorality" (female, 21) and "Some are full of nothing but porn" (female, 21). Others connected such immorality to the cultural threat: "They are entertaining but some teach violence and lead to erosion of culture" (female, 23). These responses are consistent with the data in Table 3 showing that Western films were rated as the most severe of threats to Uganda.

When we analyzed the responses to Indian film, we saw an important difference in the ways respondents view culture in Indian film, as opposed to culture in Western film. Even though respondents do not perceive Indian culture as a threat to the Uganda, some still noted Indian culture as their reasons for disliking Indian films. Typically, the reasoning was simply: "Good, but too cultural" (female, 22) or "Too much culture in it [that] doesn't allow other people to understand" (female, 22). Thus, the notion seems to be that Indian films are too culturally specific for comprehensive cross-cultural understanding. However, 11 respondents said inclusion of Indian culture was precisely the reason *for* liking Indian films. One thorough response indicated: "Indian films portray originality of ideas and cultural inheritance. Their film industry has managed to promote the local talent within India" (male, 23). The response suggests that, for some, a lack of cultural comprehension was not necessarily a barrier to appreciating cultural representation from foreign sources.

The respondents' perception about culture in local television (i.e., local television) differs from the above-discussed foreign media. Some are generally appreciative about this media channel because it features local sto-

ries and culture. For example, one respondent simply noted: "They pro-
vide local programs & news, so I like them" (age and gender unknown).
Sometimes, the idea of localness expanded far beyond their region: "[Lo-
cal television] provides a variety of up-to-date programs, local & foreign
& talk shows; covers all events in Africa with many programs" (male,
23). The total number of those responses indicating an appreciation of
local stories, features and culture is 23 out of 170 (16 per cent). Only one
respondent took a contrary stance: "[local television stations], are too lo-
cal" (female, 23).

When respondents noted 'culture' as the reasons for disliking local
television, sometimes the concern is about domestic, not foreign, culture.
For example, some respondents disliked the ways in which certain local
cultures within the Ugandan context suppressed certain other Ugandan
cultures. One respondent indicated: "What I dislike about WBS and TV
Africa is that they don't cover up-country [northern Uganda]; their net-
work covers a few districts" (female, 23). Another respondent noted: "[Lo-
cal television is] not representative of Uganda's culture & only Luganda
speakers are catered for" (female, 21) and "WBS local programs con-
centrates on promotion of Buganda culture" (female, 30). These responses
suggest that media imperialism exists not only in the West-South context,
but also within domestic contexts.

Media Content and Gratifications

 Broad concerns about culture were important underlying reasons for lik-
ing and disliking both foreign and local media. Another set of issues was
related to liking and disliking foreign and local media content and to grati-
fication from using Western film, Indian film and local television.

As we have seen, even though respondents were often critical of
Western film, they still occasionally used it. An explanation for this appar-
ent contradiction is that respondents received a variety of gratifications
from Western film that were more salient and valuable to them than their
concerns about cultural threat. The most frequently mentioned gratifications
from watching Western film were: 'Entertaining' (23 out of 118 responses,
19.5 per cent), followed by 'interesting' (20/118, 17.0 per cent) and 'edu-
cative' (18/118, 15.3 per cent). These gratifications are expressed in rather
general terms, while reasons for disliking Western film are more specifi-
cally expressed. Often, one answer combined generic reasons for liking
media with specifically critical reasons for disliking. For example, one re-
spondent noted: "They are entertaining, but some teach violence and lead

to erosion of culture" (female, 23). This type of answer appeared in 34 out of 159 (21.4 per cent) responses.

As for Indian film, the reasons for liking were based on specific content features. Songs and music were the most frequently mentioned (19 out of 115, 16.5 per cent), followed by 'interesting', 'dancing', and 'Indian culture'. Music and dancing, as content features in Indian films, provided gratifications even though the 'language barrier' is the biggest reasons for disliking Indian film as a channel of mass communication. One respondent noted: "Language barrier but great story lines" (female, 26). This seemingly contradicting answer may be explained by another response that indicated: "I don't understand their language [but] they are so interesting through follow[ing] gesture" (female, 23). Another noted: "Most of the films have the same or similar storyline…" (male, 21), which tends to be a melodramatic love story that is universally comprehensible. As one respondent noted: "Too much love, that's what I want" (female, 20). This illustrates two polar characteristics of Indian film existing simultaneously for Ugandan viewers. The respondents point out, on the one hand, that Indian film is too culturally specific, including untranslated Indian languages. On the other hand, however, a few respondents pointed out the films' non-linguistic universality through dance, music and relatively simple stories.

The respondents identified a wider variety and mixture of gratifications from use of local television. Respondents used local television for various practical reasons, but the most frequently mentioned gratification reason is 'educative', which seems somehow distinctive in a medium geared primarily toward entertainment. For example, gratification reasons such as 'entertaining' and 'interesting' often accompanied the idea of 'educative'. In this vein, one response noted that local television was: "Free, quite educative, informative and interesting" (gender and age unknown). Others provided responses that more specifically connected gratifications to the idea to content: "On TV Africa, I like the African movies because they are educative" (gender and age unknown). Another respondent noted: "Provides educative soap operas" as his reason for liking local television (male, 21). This response seems to indicate that a normative idea for television's societal role was one of the important standards used to assess and critique the use and influence of local television or even of media in general. The respondents' notion and implication of 'educative' should be further explored.

Conclusion

There is a substantial flow of Western media content into Uganda. But, reflective of changes in the global political economy of media industries, there is also now a flow of media products of Indian origin into the country. While the students surveyed overwhelmingly prefer local to foreign media; among foreign media, they prefer the Western though it is used only 'occasionally' at best. However, the students also indicated that they see Western media products as more of a threat to Ugandan culture than the media products of Indian origin. In other words, even though students see Western media content as more of a cultural threat than Indian media content, they consume more Western media content than Indian. How might this be explained aside from the simple fact of easier access? It is possible that respondents view other people as more vulnerable to cultural threat than themselves. Several respondents indicated that they thought young people and children are especially vulnerable to Western film. It is also possible that the gratification derived from consuming Western media outweighs their concerns about cultural threats. And finally, the students may simply appreciate the production and entertainment value of Western media fare.

On the other hand, even though the students literally do not understand Indian television and films because of language barriers, they evaluate Indian media content as less of a threat to Ugandan culture than Western media content. Perhaps Indian media are viewed as more benign than the Western because they are viewed as somehow culturally proximate, since they are rooted in a somewhat familiar culture, given the historical presence of Indians in Uganda, or even politically proximate in the sense of perceiving a shared third world status. Finally, it is possible that Indian media stand out as different from anything else in the Ugandan media environment, and is therefore valued as something unique.

For some of the student media consumers, foreign media content or channels were not perceived as a threat at all, but media imperialism was still a concern. This perspective toward media reflected some respondents' concern about the dominance of the Luganda language and of Baganda concerns in Uganda-based mass media. Thus, Boyd-Barrett's conceptualization of the geo-cultural approach to media flows seems highly relevant here and raises the issue of intra-national media imperialism in which media content in the language and cultural idioms of one group dominate the local media offerings.

The media users surveyed in this study were not idle and passive recipients of whatever foreign content was available. Our data do not allow

a closer examination of the personal and interpersonal calculations our respondents might make in responding to foreign media, but it seems clear that for this sample of respondents the notion of active audience is more than a matter of liking or disliking media content or channels. For example, the notion of audience activity is complicated by the possibility that evaluation of media content may be unrelated to disliking or liking the media channel. Though this study did not investigate how student media users interpreted what they saw and heard in foreign film and television, we did learn that they made active choices among the foreign media *content* available and chose them for specific reasons, even if they disliked the foreign media *channel* itself. In addition, disliking foreign channels may lead to more active analysis of content gratifications. Especially for entertainment content, evaluations may be tempered by a sense that programs have normative shortcomings.

Our research revealed that respondents applied their critical perspectives in different ways to different foreign media content and channels (e.g. Western versus Indian), indicating a complex structure of orientations and feelings towards foreign media products. Future research should assemble larger, more random samples of media users and investigate the elements of media users' structure of orientation and feeling vis-à-vis growing content and channel availability in the South brought about by the increasingly complex relations among migration, money and the political economy of global media. This work could be accompanied by ethnographic work that explores underlying reasons – which in the Uganda case might include factors such as local attitudes toward Indian communities and the broader geopolitical climate involving Uganda, India, and the West – explaining orientations toward foreign media and the contexts in which they are consumed.

Notes

1. By South we are referring to the countries typically grouped within the category 'developing nations' or 'third world'. By West, we are referring to North American and European countries.

2. Indians are commonly referred to as Asians in Uganda. In press accounts and also in social science research, Asians is frequently the ethnic designation of choice. Here, we use the more specific term Indian, unless it is used as part of proper nouns or in original titles in print.

3. Simwogerere Kyazze of the Mass Communication Department was instrumental in the design and implementation of this study.

4. In our usage, 'local television' refers to commercial broadcast television only.

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The other available local television is state-run Uganda Television, which is not included in this analysis.

5. Western media is Multichoice and English-language film (r=.45). Indian media is Indian satellite and Indian films (r=.39)

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