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Negotiating spaces: The role of media in perceptions of identity among Ethiopian migrants in Johannesburg: a focus on consumption patterns

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Abstract:

Johannesburg has seen a significant increase in its Ethiopian born population since the end of apartheid, which mirrors global patterns of cities being the primary destinations of international migrants. In addition the city is considered instrumental in shaping South Africa's media landscape. It is this juncture between media and migration which forms the theoretical basis of this study, as they both recognise the work of the *imagination*. This study explores the local particularities and stylistic features of media consumption patterns of Ethiopian migrants in Johannesburg and the relationship this has with articulating their self-understanding. It argues that South African media informs the bulk of the Ethiopian migrant media experience and as a result it contributes in assisting their integration into Johannesburg society. On the other hand, South African media also plays an active part in enforcing the respondents' sense of social exclusion, as the media highlights South African behaviours which they find offensive (such as xenophobia). In this way, Ethiopian migrant narratives and the ways in which they consume media serves both to rationalise their choice of leaving 'home' and the state of permanent transit in which they live.