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Baloyi, Makungu

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COMMUNITY RADIO'S COMPLIANCE TO PROGRAMMING: A CASE STUDY ON THE SELECTION OF CONTENT FOR ALEX FM'S CURRENT AFFAIRS TALK SHOW

By Makungu Baloyi

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of the University of Witwatersrand's Masters by Coursework and Research Report in Journalism studies.

Johannesburg May 2018

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism, at theUniversity of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Makungu Baloyi

30 May 2018

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Acronyms

IBA: Independent Broadcast Association

ICASA: Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

LSM: Living Standard Measure

MDDA: Media Development and Diversity Agency

NDP: National Development Plan

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER 1

AIM AND RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction

Community radio stations are regarded by many scholars to be at the heart of development (Hadland& Thorne, 2004, Van Zyl, 2003, Olorunnisola, 2002, Atton, 2002). When South Africa became democratic and the independent broadcasting authority (IBA) was set up, community media was developed and advocated for as a tool for transformation and the realisation of democracy. Furthermore the government saw a need to develop this third tier in the media landscape and formed the Media Development & Diversity Agency to offer support and ensure the growth and development of community media

Kruger, Monji and Smurthwaite, (2013: 4) outlines that “Community radio stations were set up to provide a platform for communities to communicate between themselves and with their governments without interference. In many ways, the sector entrenches the democratic process in which freedom of communication and speech plays a central role”. Community radio stations form an integral part of the media landscape especially in a democratic society. It provides the platform for citizen engagement at people’s languages and offer a space to discuss issues that are of concern to the community. Community radio in South Africa and in other parts of Africa has been used as a powerful tool to give the marginalized communities a voice and represent those who are not represented in mainstream media. “Community stations often represent the only space where poorer communities can discuss the issues that affect them (“Krüger, Monji and Smurthwaite, 2013:4). Due to the nature and sole objective of community radio stations, they can be considered as a participatory space for the community to exchange information, hold dialogue and facilitate discussion on issues that are prevalent to the community.

1.2 Aims & Objectives

The broad aim of this research report is to examine how the content produced weekly on the ALEX FM'S daily talk show speaks to the needs of the community. Subsequently, aiding the development of the community and fulfilment of ICASA license mandate, which is to provide programming that is of interest to their community. To find this out, the researcher investigated the selection process of content that is discussed on the show. The researcher also examined the newsroom processes involved and to the extent to which the community involved in this process.

The research investigated how Alex FM *(Alex FM Talk* show) acts as a participatory space that seeks to hold discussion and conversations about the needs of the community. It was evident that the research could not simply measure the outputs (media affects) so it further asked the questions of 'who' and 'what' is involved in the selection of the content aired on the show. The objective was that it would provide a starting point to understand the relevance or the effectiveness of community stations according to its normative roles as highlighted above by various scholars.

The research answered the following questions:

- What is the selection process for the content discussed on ALEX FM's current affairs programme?
- Who is involved in determining the topic for the talk show?
- What are the factors that contribute to the selection of topics for the talk shows?
- How is content gathered/sourced?

1.3 Rationale/Motivation

This research is inspired by a document ICASA produced early this year (March, 2017) outlining problems and challenges faced by community media. Compliance to content (programming) that speaks to the interests of communities was one of the challenges highlighted among other operational and technical challenges (ICASA, 2017). This research seeks to find out the full extent of this problem by looking into the process of selection and uncovering whether the content speaks to needs of communities or not.

For community radio to live up to their normative role which is to be a participatory space for communities to hold discussions and dialogues that are of importance to them, the type of content produced is very important (Olorunnisola, 2002). Content is the director of the kind of conversation and dialogue that will be held on the station, therefore investigating the selection process of this content is equally important. Investigating the selection process will shed some light in the involvement of community members and the relevance of the content produced from which we can ultimately deduce whether it is aiding to the development of the community and its people.

Many scholars have researched on the community radio as a form of participatory communication (Murkens, 2009, Mavhungu, 2009,). However, not much has been done in South Africa in terms of trying to uncover the quality of the content produced on community stations and if the content speaks to the interest of the community. Subsequently, to add to the research that has already been done on community radio acting as a participatory form of communication, it is crucial to investigate who is participating in this medium. Murkens (2009) investigated on the effectiveness of the two models (geographic & special interest) in meeting the needs of the community. This research investigated how community radio aims to meet the needs of the community further by looking at content and how it fills that gap specifically for a geographic community radio station such as Alex FM.

The growth in community radio stations has been pioneered by changing media policies in South Africa, new organisations have been put in place to support these radio stations and other forms of community media through finances and resources. The formation of organisations such as the Media Development and Diversity

Agency (MDDA) that have been put in place by the government to ensure that community radio stations remain functional and sustainable.

“The mandate of the Agency is enshrined in the MDDA Act and aims to:

• Create an enabling environment for media development and diversity which reflects the needs and aspirations of all South Africans.

• Redress exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged communities and persons from access to the media and the media industry.

• Promote media development and diversity by providing support, primarily to community and small commercial media projects.

The Agency is established to promote development and diversity in the South African media, consistent with the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Section 16 (1) o f the Constitution Act 108 of 1996.

The Agency mandate is to:

• Grant funding - provision of subsidies to individual media projects and to create an enabling environment for the development of a diverse media.

• Leveraging resources and support through technical assistance.

• Conducting and funding research.

• Facilitating capacity building.

• Advocating for media” (Media Development and Diversity Agency - MDDA, 2017)

This is a clear indication that the government does value community media and is willing to invest resources into ensuring that they are sustainable. However, the question that remains is not in the creation of community media but the quality of the content they produce. The government since 1994 has encouraged the inclusion of those who have been marginalised. This has been done by putting forward various structures and policies such as the Broad-based Economic Empowerment Act to ensure that there is representation of all groups especially those who never benefited from the apartheid regime. President Jacob Zuma reiterated in the state of the nation address 2017 their willingness to continue with National Development Plan (NDP) and will work towards seeing some of its values achieved. The NDP

highlights the government's efforts and plans to build a South Africa that free from poverty, inequality and unemployment (Gov.za, 2017). It is therefore evident that there are several strategies that have and are still being implemented to ensure that the country achieve economic, social and political freedom. It is therefore important to look at whether this is achieved not only in theory but in practice as well. Minster of Communication Ayanda Dlodlo, in her speech during the budget vote national assembly 2017, emphasised on the need to intensify support for community media as this is in agreement with the NDP. The minister highlighted the following: "In the coming year we will continue to support and build our community media sector. The importance of community media cannot be overstated. They are often the heartbeat of vibrant smaller communities. Since 1994 the footprint of community media has grown steadily and has begun to emerge as an alternative voice to the mainstream media. We must therefore ensure that community radio remains true to the purpose of informing, educating and entertaining the community" (doc.gov.za, 2017)

The research investigated a specific show, the power talk which is Alex FM's main current affairs talk show, it airs from Monday to Thursday 7pm-9pm.

Why ALEX FM?

Alexandra is a historic township; it was declared as the "native township" in 1912 (www.Alexandra.co.za) It became an area where black people could buy and own land under freehold title, this was before the 1913 Native Land Act was passed which prevented black people from buying and owning Land. The new act could not remove the people who had already bought land there (Morris, 2000). The area became a designated black township, and because of this, the Johannesburg City Council refused to be involved in Alex. As a result, the township suffered years of neglect and lack of investment and living conditions became progressively worse. Amongst many of economic social challenges at the time, it became very vocal in its stance against the apartheid regime (Morris,2000). In 1934 the township started a Bus Boycott which was joined by many political leaders such as former President Nelson Mandela. This was his description of Alexandra in the 1940s:

"Life in Alexandra was exhilarating and precarious. Its atmosphere was alive, its spirit adventurous, its people resourceful. Although the township did boast some

handsome buildings, it could fairly be described as a slum, living testimony to the neglect of the authorities. The roads were unpaved and dirty, and filled with hungry, undernourished children scampering around half naked. The air was thick with the smoke of coal fires in tin braziers and stoves. A single water tap served several houses. Pools of stinking, stagnant water full of maggots collected by the side of the road. Alexandra was known as the 'Dark City' for its complete absence of electricity. Walking home at night was perilous, for there were no lights, the silence pierced by yells, laughter and occasional gunfire" (Nelson Mandela, 1994, p.88)

There have been major changes in the Township from the 1940s till now, but at the same time the same socio-economic challenges still lingers. Alex FM as a community stations, seeks to create a platform where conversations and dialogue can be held in hopes to confront these socio-economic challenges.

Alex FM's goals are the following:

"To be a sustainable community owned and community driven radio station.

To serve the interests of the community by providing information, education and entertainment programming

Provide detailed, impartial and accurate information on ALL issues that are of interest to the community

Entrench the diversity of cultures as a fundamental development component.

Provide for maximum accessibility to the community" (Alexfm.co.za, 2017).

The reason for choosing this particular show was that in the study of radio as a medium it has been evident that the format of talk radio offers greater opportunity for dialogue and discussion between the listeners and the presenter. Kruger (2009) discusses how radio acts as a more effective public sphere, this is mainly because of its characteristics. Firstly, radio is easily participative, the cost of participating in radio programmes especially talk shows is low. It costs a few Rands (Airtime) now with the SMS and WhatsApp lines it has become even cheaper (Kruger, 2009). Secondly, radio is cheap to produce, it does not require expensive machinery and with the help of government agencies such as the MDDA communities are able to produce radio

with good quality equipment. Thirdly, radio has enormous reach allowing for the participation and interaction to be enhanced (Kruger, 2009).

Talk radio/ talk shows exudes these characteristics more efficiently especially the ability to hold discussions and dialogues meaning the selection of content has to be done delicately and with the intention to birth meaningful conversation that is of interest and beneficial to the target audience. Research done by Omwoha (2014) on talk radio and the public sphere focusing of *Jambo Kenya* as a case study investigated the role talk radio has in realising the ideals of a democratic society. It is evident that studies have been done on talk radio and its power as tool to facilitate dialogue and discussion that has political and developmental contribution. Kruger (2009) in his presentation paper titled “thoughts on radio as a public sphere” agrees with scholars above that talk radio acts as a suitable platform to hold public dialogue however, he highlights the following:

“But let me stress that this discussion does not mean I regard talk-radio as the be-all and end-all of good radio. It is the programming format that comes to mind when one talks about using the medium as a platform for the public exchange of views. In different and complex ways, radio dramas, news reporting, music programming and much else make their own contribution to public spheres. Those formats bring other value to the table which should not be ignored” (Kruger, 2009: 1)

This research was conducted with the hopes that it will offer a frame of reference when trying to understand the role of community radio in developing communities, not necessarily through ownership, staffing, advertising and revenue which are all critical aspects but looking specifically at content. One other significance of this study is to answer or rather shed some light on the issues of compliance specifically to programming which have been highlighted as a challenge for many community radio stations by ICASA.

- **Limitations of the Study**

The study focused on single radio station which is Alex FM. The factors that have been studied are unique to the community of Alex and Alex FM which may not be used to make generalised statements. However, using a single case allows for more in-depth analysis.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LITERATURE REVIEW.

Theoretical framework

2.1 Aim of Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to highlight theoretical frameworks that this research is founded on, as well as to draw on some literature that is relates to the study.

Firstly, the study draws from Jurgen Habermas 'theory of public sphere. Public sphere theory may be used to analyse how radio and particularly talk radio can act as a public sphere where issues of common good are discussed in the community. Critiques of Habermas's definition and view of public sphere (Nancy Fraser) is discussed especially because Alex FM is a community radio station and can arguably be considered as subaltern public sphere.

Secondly the study used the Democratic participatory theory as a basis of this research. Whenever Scholars study community radio or the health of community radio stations, developmental theories and the democratic participatory arise as the normative theories on which the studies are based. This chapter will discuss in depth how programmes such as *Power Talk* allows the citizens to engage with their governments on socio-economic issues as well as issues pertaining to service delivery. This is reliant on how the show is conducted and what content is selected.

2.2 Public Sphere

2.2.1 Talk radio a form of public sphere

Talk radio can be viewed as a democratic medium. The lines are open to all, few callers are screened, non-discrimination is the policy. There is no colour line, no political test, no registration, no qualification, and no charge for access (Levin, 1987).

Most scholars, and anyone who has listened to talk radio for that matter, will agree that talk radio rarely meets Habermas's standards of a rational debate leading to consensus. While accepting this limit, talk shows do allow for politics and issues in society to be discussed in platform outside of government censorship, often heatedly, but in a way which does promote participation and deliberation (Lunt & Stenner, 2005, p. 61). Whereas Habermas has been criticized because his egalitarian public sphere was exclusionary, talk radio shows are easily accessible to all, with the potential result being an agonistic public sphere. This is supported by Kruger (2009) in his discussion paper on how radio can act as a public sphere and how the mediums characteristics enable this to happen. The accessibility of the medium partly contradicts Habermas's initial conception as his account as only a few had access. Kruger (2009) highlights that the function of radio as cited by may radio stations speaks to their dedication to "inform, entertain and educate". These three factors often there centre of any public deliberation or discourse that happens in public spheres. He further explains that it is easy for the audience/listeners to participate in radio "All you need to participate in a radio discussion is a phone and a little airtime. And who these days does not have a cellphone? Even beggars on the street corners will pause from knocking on motorists' windows to take a call. The use of sms lines reduces the cost of participating in discussions even further" (Kurger, 2009: 4).

Radio is also very cheap to establish, the costs to set up a radio station are relatively low than other mediums which contribute to growth in this field. Community radio provides platforms to hold public debates and also create space for subaltern publics' voices to be heard (which will be discussed later in the chapter).

Radio also has an enormous reach in comparison to other medium, the most recent stats provided by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa shows that:

- **93%** weekly reach = 35,4 million listeners listening anytime in the week
- **76%** daily reach (Mon-Fri) = 28,9 million listeners on an average weekday

(www. brcsa.org.za, 2017)

Its reach is greater because radio has the ability to cater for different groups which can be categorized from economic status (LSM) to culture and geographic statuses.

According to Crisell (1986) radio is an 'intimate' mode of communication. "This means that it can be and is assimilated to our daily existence much more than the other media" (Crisell, 1986:12). When compared to Habermas's public sphere radio as a medium proves to exemplify similar traits. Coffee shops and salons were the spaces where these deliberations used to happen, they are intimate in their very nature and are embedded in many individuals' daily existence (Habermas, 1989). Radio portrays similar characteristics and thus can be qualified as a perfect fit to act as a public sphere for public debates. David Crider (2012) supports these facts on radio specifically talk radio as being a suitable public sphere. "Talk radio has become one of the most important media forums for discussing important topics" (Crider, 2012: 1). Hutchby (1996) describes talk radio as ''a space created at the interface of private and public spheres of modern society'' Radio as a medium has been studied as platform that due to its characteristics acts as a public sphere (Cowling & Hamiliton, 2011, Kruger, 2009). Bosch (2011: 198) considers Talk Radio as offering a space for political discussion and a channel of public opinion. Kruger (2009) highlights that he does not entirely deem talk radio as the "be-all and end-all of good radio", its format and dynamics allow for interaction between listeners and the presenter to hold debates and deliberations.

Lee (2002) asserts that talk radio serves as a platform for people to voice discontent towards government; it is an arena for expressing anguish resulting from social and political problems. In Bosch (2011) research on talk radio as a public sphere looking particularly at 567MW radio, acknowledges that this represents a bourgeois public sphere, as this talk radio caters for a particular class and race and that it is often elitist and commodified. Kruger (2009) proposes two dimensions of radio in

contributing to the public sphere, the breadth of participation in discourse that it allows, and the quality of that participation. This research investigated the breadth and quality of Alex FM's talk show.

2.2.2. Habermas' account of the public sphere

Habermas (1989) account of the public sphere theory acts as the base of this research. In his work, he accounts for a public sphere that holds rational critical debate on issues that are of common concern to the members of the state. He called this public sphere the bourgeois public sphere, which was created through the circulation of texts addressing issues which were of concern to the state. This happened through physically meeting in coffee houses and salons to deliberate on issues which at the time were centred on economics and trade. The media, national media particularly was seen as an integral part of the public sphere.

An important issue that arises from Habermas's conception of the public sphere is the idea of rational critical debate and common good which is of great relevance to this research. Central to understanding rational critical debate is to first understand what is debated; that is understanding the content of the debate before its rationality as well as its and common good is investigated. In community radio the mandate is that the station will provide content that is of interest (common good) to the members of the community be it geographic community or special interest community (ICASA, 2017). The content that is discussed must be researched and thoroughly scrutinized to qualify it to hold rational and critical debate which is what Habermas highlights as the indicators of a public sphere (Habermas, 1989).

Habermas's idea of the public sphere stands on the notion that this space where rational critical debate is held is outside of the state. In this public sphere government officials can be held accountable (Habermas, 1989). Even though this public sphere is outside the state, it does not exclude the issues that concern the state. It is not a space where state propaganda can be disseminated but where members of the public can debate about issues that are of public concern and promises their government are failing to deliver. In our society the media is viewed as a place where rational critical debate can happen outside of the state. South Africa's media landscape consists of three tiers, Private/commercial, public and

community media. In the history of studying Habermas's conception of the public sphere many scholars focus on private/commercial or public media especially in the study of how these public spheres shape and form public opinion and debate. (Cowling & Hamilton, 2006 and Serino, 2007). Both the case studies (AM Live and Sunday Times) discussed by Cowling & Hamilton (2006) and Serino (2007) respectively are aimed at affluent audiences, this supports Habermas's initial conception of the public sphere being dominated by the bourgeois and the elite.

Habermas's account of the public sphere is not one that represent the community of Alex and Alex FM. Alex as township does not represent the 'bourgeois' or affluent but rather the marginalized. This leads to Nancy Frasers and Michael Warner's critique of the public sphere

2.2.3 Fraser's conception of public sphere

Many scholars criticized Habermas' early conception of the public sphere, scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1991**)** and Michael Warner (2002) criticized his "narrow" view of the public sphere. They argued that there is a multiplicity of public spheres, consisting of subaltern public spheres as well as counter publics. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge Warner and Frasers view on the theory of public sphere, especially in a democratic country such as South Africa where there are multiple official languages and a diverse society. Nancy Frasers critiques how the Habermasian public sphere excludes the voice of the poor, working class and women. This meant that marginalized groups had no voice in the public sphere and were excluded from public debate and deliberations.

Fraser's idea of a public sphere is one that is represented by "open access, participatory parity and social equality (Fraser, 1991:125). This conception of the public sphere is mirrored in a post-apartheid South Africa. Community media which in its early conception was referred to as alternative media (Atton, 2002) can be viewed as a subaltern public sphere. She asserts the need of a multiple public spheres in stratified communities as it is impossible to equal participation in a single public sphere. This form of public sphere is not only to allow people of different classes to have access and participation but they are "the arena for the formation and enactment of social identities" (Fraser, 1991: 125).

Fraser's conception of the multiplicity of public sphere is evident in South Africa's media landscape which consist of three tiers the public broadcasting, commercial and community media. Community radio in comparison to commercial and public radio serve marginalised and "stratified" communities. Subsequently, constitute a different public sphere from the mainstream public sphere offered by commercial talk radio such as Power FM and 702 as well SA FM which acts as a national public sphere. If public debate and deliberation aid to the formation of public opinion which is for the general interest, it is therefore pivotal to acknowledge community radio as an integral part to democracy. When a community's participation in the public sphere is welcome, members become actors whose voices are included in the content. This is contrary to being passive recipients of information that may have nothing to do with the realities of their daily experiences (Olorunnisola, 2002: 133).

2.3 Democratic participatory theory

Drawing from Frasers (1991) concept of access and participation in the public sphere ties together with the McQuails (1987) idea of democratic participatory theory. The essence of the public sphere requires a level of participation and involvement to hold public debates. According to the democratic participatory theory, journalism needs to actively promote the political involvement of citizens. McQuail (1987) asserts that the democratic participatory theory emphasize the principles of inclusion, empowerment and expression through a range of communicative styles. There is a need for diverse viewpoints and active citizen involvement. "The democratic participatory theory state that the existence of the media must be justified by the terms of the needs and interests of recipients and not exclusively in terms of those of the media organisations, professional media workers or advertisers" (McQuail, 1987: 122). It seeks to promote involvement from 'grassroots' level.

Community radio offers the space for community members to engage in public discourse and engagements in their own languages about issues that affect them. Hadland and Thorne (2004) describe community radio as a platform that:

> provides the means for cultural expression, community discussion and debate. It supplies news and information and facilitates political engagement. It offers concrete means for public participation and for defending cultural diversity. Through access to

the production and consumption of relevant communications, community media forms a collective platform for community empowerment. (Hadland & Thorne, 2004: 13)

The normative theory of democratic participation is often centered on development, participation and giving the marginalized a voice. This definition correlates with the assumptions of the role of community media (radio). According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO')s handbook on community radio (2001: 18) the function of community radio stations are the following:

- Reflect and promote local identity, character and culture
- Create a diversity of voices and opinions on air
- Provide a diversity of programmes and content
- Encourage open dialogue and democratic process
- Promote development and social change
- Promote civil society , and
- Encourage participation, sharing of information and innovation.

Democratic participation advocates for all citizens' access into public spheres where public opinion is formed. This mean participation from all members regardless of their race, class, gender and economic strata. Lee (1995) advocates for democratic participation by highlighting that genuine democracy demands a system of constant interaction with all the people. Accessibility is required at all levels which maximizes participation in reaching consensus on socio-cultural, economic, political matters and service delivery issues.

A community radio station such as Alex FM acts as a participatory space that allows members of a historically disadvantage group to hold discourse around issues that affect them and their community. Democratic participatory theory highlights issues of inclusion, expression and empowerment, the assessment of the quality of the discussion that takes place in such participatory space is very important. Therefore, this theory builds up on the concept of content and programing for community radio stations.

According to Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA, 2017) the programming on community radio should have great emphasis on community issues that are not usually dealt with by other broadcasting services. The programming must be entertaining, informative and educative. ICASA further outlines that community radio stations should deal with development issues that will improve the quality of life for the poor (ICASA, 2017)

Literature Review

2.4 Community Radio

2.4.1 Definition of community Radio

According to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) act of 1993 Section 1, community radio is defined as a service that is fully controlled by a non-profit entity for non-profit purposes to serve a particular community. According to IBA Act community radio programming must reflect the needs of all people in the communities served, including “cultural, religious and demographic”. Community radio programming must:

- Emphasise community issues not normally dealt with by other broadcasting services.
- Be informative, educative and entertaining
- Highlight grassroots community issues, eg development issues, health care, environmental affairs
- Promote democratic values and improving the quality of people’s lives

Community radio stations mandate is there to serve their specific communities, whether be it geographic community or special interest community. They represent the voice of the community and serve their needs thereof (white,1990). The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) defines community radio as “one that offers service to the community in which it is located or to it broadcast, while promoting the participation of its community in the radio” (O’Sullivan et al, 1998: 213).

Community radio is essentially democratic. Ideally it should be radio by the people and not for the people. The broadcast and content produced should be done by the people belonging to the community. ICASA as one of the regulatory body of community media set out regulations that needs to be adhered to which support the ethos of community media. One of the regulations that buttress this issue is that newsrooms must consist of a community committee that advise on the nature and content of the news produced. This is done with the assumption and hope that the committee clearly understands the community and will advocate content that reflect the needs and interest of the community.

Al- Hassen et al (2011) states that Community radio is a type of radio service that offers a model of radio broadcasting beyond commercial and public service. Community radio "provides a mechanism for facilitating individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own diverse stories, to share experiences, and in a media rich world to become active creators and contributors of media" (Al-Hassen et al, 2011: 1)

Community radio aims to promote the right to communicate and allow for free flow information, news and opinion. It encourages freedom and creative expression thus contributing to democratic process and a pluralist society (Jordan, 2006). "Community radio form part of communication processes that aid to social change through empowerment, inclusion and participation thus leading to the achieving of sustainable development goals" (Girard, 2007:2).

What is key to sustainable community radio is ensuring that access to training, production and distribution facilities are provided since most community radio station work on the basis of having volunteers who might not have received formal journalism or communication education (Fairbairn, 2000).

The definition of community radio defers in different parts of the world. In Europe, community radio is referred to as "local radio" (Mtinde et al,1998) It is inclined to be the voice of progressive or fringe artistic groups, of minority, cultural, language and political interest groups. It is also very popular among gay-rights activists, environmentalists and indigenous cultures gravitate to local radio. In Latin America community radio, otherwise known as 'peoples' radio', became the voice of the poor and the voiceless, the landless peasants, the urban shack dwellers, the

impoverished indigenous nations and the trade unions (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001). Given the kind of populations to whom they are targeted, community radio outlets have also been used as tools for development (Siemering et al., 1998).

In Africa, it typically represents the marginalized in terms of race and colonial history. The function of community radio in most African countries is that of development and civic duty (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). In Africa community radio stations were as a result democratization, which resulted in deregulations of laws that hindered marginalized groups from owning any form of media. Community radio is most accessible medium in Africa, this is because of the high illiteracy rate and distribution relating to print media (Wanyekim 2000).

Tabing (2002: 9) defines community radio as “one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community”. It is by virtue of this definition that community radio should be operated and owned by the community not only producing content that suitable for the community. The very first community radio station was in Latin America, the Miners’ Radios of Bolivia were established by the miners themselves through their civil society groups (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). They were “independent, self-sustained, self-managed and faithfully served the interests of their communities” (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001: 46-47)

2.4.2 Community participation

Community radio by virtue of their definition have a participatory mandate. Community participation in community radio stations is evident at all levels, from ownership, management, programming and financing the station. This level of participation gives the listeners (community members) a sense of belonging, importance and achievement over and above content relevance to community needs (Wigston, 2001:430). Similarly, Hadland and Thorne (2004) outlines that Community media offers concrete means for public participation and for defending cultural diversity. Through access to the production and consumption of relevant communications, community media forms a collective platform for community empowerment. Hence, in South Africa, the development of community media has been synonymous with principles of democracy and development (Mavhungu, 2009).

Community participation impacts on the nature of research suitable for community radio stations. When the community is involved in station it allows for the efficient and effective fulfillment of their goals and mandate (Mavhungu, 2009). The achievement of content relevance is easily attainable if the people contributing to the content are from the community and are affected by the issues or have experience in the relevant topic that is being discussed. The breath of community participation is vast. On the issue of Ownership Berger (1996) raised questions about the degree of community participation implied in the 'owned and controlled by the community' criterion. He highlights that this category has so many layers and it can't be the fundamental key as this is unrealistic and this form of participation can "run out of stream" (Mavhungu, 2009: 9). For Berger, the most important feature of community media is 'participation plus a progressive agenda' (Berger 1996). Even though ownership and control do form part of community participation it is in the definition of these terms that clarify the argument between Berger and Hadland & Thorne.

Hadland and Thorne (2004) attempt to clarify the critical link between community participation and ownership, citing the Community Radio Manual (1999), which states that community participation is made up of three elements:

"The involvement of local residents in decision-making and participation in the work carried out at the community media organisation; the sharing of benefits accruing from ownership; and in the identification of needs with the aim of addressing them.

Once the above-mentioned requirements are met, it can be deduced that community participation has been achieved" (Hadland & Thorne, 2004: 89)

Participatory communication is defined as "that type of communication in which all the interlocutors are free and have equal access to the means to express their viewpoints, feelings and experiences" (Bordenave, 1994: 43). (Figueroa et al., 2002:11) summarises the key components of participatory communication as:

"The process and content of communication is owned by community; communication gives a voice to previously unheard community members; communities become their own change agents; the communication process is characterized by debate and negotiation on issues that affect community; emphasis is placed on outcomes that go beyond individual behaviour to widely recognized social needs"

This is the type of communication community radio station seeks to offer their audiences. Central to community participation is programming which speaks to content. This is an active form of engagement that allows for creative engagement in content development and production by listeners.

2.4.3 Community radio and development communication

As discussed earlier, many scholars when discussing community radio it's often in conjunction with development (development communication or communication for social change), synonymously with community participation.

According to Reardon (2000"15) communication for social change is "a process of public and private dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and how they can get it". He further emphasise the complexity of this field, it is an iterative model, not linear, its power lies in the fact that the outcome of any given phase feeds back into the process. Dagron (2001) reiterates this point and highlights how communication for social change definition differs because of experience, it changes its colour and shape at the will of the hands in which it is held. The basis of the definition lies in communities articulating their own agendas. Its role is one that seeks mainly to change individual behaviours, propelling them to take action and ultimately changing the behaviour of the broader society. This is done to understand people's situations and influences, developing messages that respond to the concerns within those situations. Communication processes are used to persuade people to increase their knowledge and change the behaviours and practices that place them at risk (Gary-Felder, 1999).

The principles of communication for social change as drawn from the Rockefeller foundation (2002:33): are the following

- It empowers individuals and communities
- It engages people in making decisions that enhance their lives
- It focuses on direct and many-many communications
- It relies on democratic ideals
- It allows previously unheard voices to be heard and
- Both the process of communications and the content of the messages are controlled by the receiving communities.

These principles emphasise the idea that people are seen as agents of their own change and not objects for change. Communication for social change moves away from designing, testing and delivering messages and on to supporting dialogue that

is already happening around key issues of concern. The focus moves away from individual behaviours and seeks to shape and affect social norms, policies and culture (Gary-felder, 1999: 8) Communication for social change moves away from seeing technical experts (from outside) as the saving grace and dominating and guiding the process to allowing the people most affected by the issues to guide the conversation and dialogue.

Wilkins (2008:1) defines development communication as a "process of strategic intervention toward social change, initiated and engaged by organizations and communities" This encompasses coming up with intentional, participatory strategies to rally on a certain cause that will be benefit the needs of the community, whether it be political, social or any form of need.

The World Bank Group which defines Development Communication as "the integration of strategic communication in development projects (in order) to improve the chances of success of (the) development projects. It strives for behavior change not just information dissemination, education, or awareness-raising" (www.worldbank.org)

Communication for social change/ development communication dates back to the 1950s and 1960s. In its infancy the focus or context of its inception was agricultural. Prof Nora presented her first paper on development communication at a conference at the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture symposium in Los Baños in honor of Dr. Dioscoro L. Umali. The theme of the symposium was "In Search of Breakthroughs in Agricultural Development," countries such as Ghana, South Africa and other parts of Asia have used tools of development communication to find better ways to enhance their agriculture and share amongst themselves how they can better their lives through different Agricultural breakthroughs. (See, *Simili Radio station* in Ghana, Radio *Incegelo* in Zambia etc). Taking action, finding solutions, calling on change to happen whether be it through changed behaviour or policies are all central to the definition of communication for social change as articulated by various scholars.

If the definition of Communication for social change continuously reiterates the need to elevate the voice of the affected/beneficiaries, both in defining the problem and coming up with the solution, the communication platforms that are to be used must

allow for the voice of the voiceless to be heard. Often communication for social change initiatives are aimed at addressing developmental issues such as healthcare issues, education, the economy, agriculture etc and the target audience are often lower income or rural dwellers. This means that the communication platform used must not only allow their voice to be heard but be accessible for them to receive the message. Friednwald & Campisteguy (ND) on the issue of voice say: “Too often, those who are denied voice are the same people who are closest to the challenges we need to solve and are on the front lines experiencing the impacts. Too often voice denied not only perpetuates disparity, but also stifles innovation and limits the ideas, perspectives and solutions that can be considered”

Community radio because of its characteristics and what it was created to achieve is often the best platform to use for communication for social change initiatives. However, this does not disqualify other communication platforms from being effective in disseminating messages of social change. Community radio unlike commercial and state media was created with the idea to be a platform of participation and sharing of ideas, information, news and entertainment by the community for the community (Olorunnisola, 2002). “The word ‘participation is kaleidoscopic; it changes its colour and shape at the will of the hands in which [it] is held” (White, 1994:1). Therefore, community radio is a better fitting platform for communication for social change initiatives. “For more than fifty years radio has been the most appealing tool for participatory communication and development. It is without a doubt the communication tool most widely spread throughout the world and has always been the ideal medium for change” (Dagron, 2001: 12)

There are a number of radio stations both in South Africa and other parts of the world that offer a platform of participation to advance initiatives of communication for social change. *Radio Zibonele* in South Africa is an example of a radio station that drive community participation in the pursuit of driving social change. *Radio Zibonele* broadcast in Kayelistsha Township in Cape Town, with a strong focus on health issues as their mandate is to enhance the quality of life through improving the health standards of the people. The content that is discussed on the radio station aids to the development of the township and offers community members with information regarding proper healthcare. *Radio Zibonele* was one of the very first community radio stations in South Africa, they made use of local healthcare workers to provide

news and information with regard to any health care issue that the community members may have. "*Radio Zibonele* has shown that communities can become empowered and take responsibility for their own development, using radio as one such means. Community residents have access to *Radio Zibonele* and use the opportunity to express their opinion about the programming, as well as to actively participate in the development of radio programmes" (Dagron, 2001: 141).

Community radio has been successful and proven to be of value to the community. Simli Radio in Ghana is an example of the role of a community radio in the livelihood of the community. Simli Radio is a community radio in the northern region of Ghana. It was founded in 2004 by Kumar after the realisation of the power of radio and as an avenue for participatory communication and as a tool relevant in both economic and social development (Al-hassan et al, 2011). "Simli Radio has been used to improve awareness and knowledge of solutions to community development problems within various sectors including culture, rural development, education, hygiene and sanitation, agriculture and local governance among rural people living in the Dagbani speaking districts in particular" (Al-hassan et al, 2011: 3).

The establishment of Simli radio station aided to the economic and social development of the community. Many mainstream radio stations will broadcast content at national level, this content as much as it is important may not speak directly speak to the people of Dagbani district in their language and their level and thus will be left out of public discourse. The content of this radio station was centred on agriculture, it created a public sphere for the community to share agricultural information among one another. This was useful information as they could go apply it in their different farms, make money, grow the economy and ultimately change their lives. Community radio stations have the power to contribute directly to social and economic development.

Sauti FM in Rarieda, Siaya County which is in Kenya is also an example of how community radio aids to rural development. Sauti FM was founded in July 2007. It broadcasts from Ndori market, Rarieda constituency in Nyanza Province. It is a community Radio station in Kenya and it broadcasts in Luo, a native language of the people living in this region. The radio station is a project by Bondo Youth Group, a Community Based Organization (CBO) in Rarienda. The radio station has a

broadcast capacity of 35km radius (en.unesco.org) The radio station's content is mainly centred on development issues, from Health, Agriculture and women empowerment

Sauti FM is now favourably considered by its listeners as a platform for educating and empowering the people of Rarieda. To quote one respondent, who is a local businessman:

"We have been in darkness for a long time, until this radio station came here. We have been educated by it and learnt a lot of things relating to agriculture, health, education and many others. The radio station has mobilized people here to form groups and start to spearhead their own development. We are truly being empowered" (Anduvate, 2014:56)

XKFM is also another great example of how community radio stations, through their content and overall programming not only facilitate development but have the ability to preserve culture. "XK fm is a radio station run by members of the !Xun and Khwe (two ethnic San communities), but owned and governed by the SABC. It was established to preserve and protect the cultures, languages and histories of the two communities as well acting as a facilitating and promoter of development"(Hart, 2011: 11).

The Khoi and San Communities the Northern Cape are the SAN, NAMA, GRIQUA, /XAM and the KORANNAS. It always remains a challenge to reach them all with information that entertain, educate and empower (www.iono.fm). Even though there are other community radio stations in the Northern Cape, the SAN and Khoi's have their own community and speak a language that is different from what the majority groups speak. This exclusion from being able to receive news, information and entertainment was eradicated by the formation of XKFM. Through the radio station they were able to share information (content) that is beneficial to them. As fore-mentioned participatory communication, is communication by the people for the people, XKFM represents exactly that. No one can understand their culture and create content that speaks to them as an ethnic group like they do for themselves.

The above-mentioned radio stations emphasise the power of participatory communication with regard to social change and how the voice of the marginalised is elevated and heard especially in community radio stations. Even though community radio seems ideal in providing a participatory space they are usually funded by NGO's donors or other forms of financial support. This may often present the challenge of community radio stations having to succumb to pressures of propaganda as donors and funders may have their own Agendas that the stations must adhere to since as they are funded in order to maintain donor- recipient relationship. Many organisations that are funded often have to alter their messaging and social change campaigns to meet the needs of their funders. This may be seen as propaganda. (Propaganda is a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist) (Jowett, 2005). Their agendas might still be noble and for a worthy cause but if it is not what the community needs (as defined by them) it can be classified as propaganda which is often the case amongst many organisation. This is in contradiction to what communication for social change stands for as highlighted above.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the two theorised (Public sphere theory and Democratic participatory theory) that will be employed in the study. From this chapter, the researcher has noted that there is an overlap between these two theories. Community media as the phenomenon being studied especially speaks to a public sphere that is supported by the theory of democratic participant theory. According to Habermas a public sphere is "a virtual or imaginary community which does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space" (Habermas, 1989). This space according to his account was exclusionary and commercialized.

Even though the type of public sphere defined by Habermas is not one that can be reflected through community media. Community media nevertheless does represent a certain kind of public sphere which is described by Warner (2002) and Fraser (1991). This form of public sphere is in agreement with the ideals of democratic participant theory. McQuail (1983:6) sees the theory as reflecting public "nation against the commercialization and monopolization of privately owned media and

against the centralism of public broadcasting institution, exhibited according to the norms of social responsibility”

The aim of democratic participatory theory is to create a space through the media where citizens can access information and this springs forth from the grass root levels which is ideally what community media represent.

In this chapter examples of community radio stations that have acted and continued to act as ideal public spheres ‘sub-altern’ for their communities have been highlighted. It is through the study of these case studies that proves the Fraser and Warner’s ideal of the public sphere to be true. It highlights the need to have these kinds of public sphere for the sake of having a functional democracy.

It is the aim of this study to uncover how content is selected in sub-altern public spheres (*Power Talk*, which is part of Alex FM). If the public sphere is perceived to hold deliberations and discourses that are for the general good of the state (Habermas, 1989). It is imperative for sub altern public spheres to hold discussions around matters that are beneficial to them. Therefore it is the aim of this study to want to explore how topics and content get selected or enter this public sphere.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

The Aim of the research was to find out how Alex FM's current affairs talk show (Power Talk) selects content for the show. The research sought to find out the factors involved in the generation of content as well understand how they filter what goes in and out of the show and the reason or understanding behind this.

This chapter outlines the methodology applied and methods used to obtain data for this research. This research made use of a mix of data collection methods namely In-depth interviews, participant observation, pilot listening of the show (which may be considered as content analysis). The research also expanded the data collection methods to include a scan of the Alex FM Facebook page as well the greater Alex Today page. It appeared that these were other platforms where most of the community members expressed their views and raised matters of concern in the community.

3.1 Qualitative Methodology

According to Brikci and Green (2007) qualitative research methods are characterised by the aim to obtain an understanding of social life. Their data findings are usually in the analysis of words and not numbers (quantifiable graphics). Creeswell (1994) also highlight that the focus of qualitative research is gain deeper insight or explore a social or human problem.

According to Hancock (2009) qualitative research aims to understand the society in which we live in. This speaks to why things are the way they are, why people behave the way they do, how opinions and attitudes are formed. He highlights that this understanding goes further to explore how people react to the things around them (Hancock, 2009). Qualitative research method seeks to answer a set of questions especially in areas where there is limited information available. "This approach is appropriate in the description of themes, trends, attitude or needs or relations that are applicable to units being analysed" (Du Plooy, 2002; 83). On the same breadth; Atieno (2009) highlight that qualitative research methodology is concerned with the process rather than the outcomes of the product. "The process of qualitative

research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details" (Antieno, 2009: 14).

Qualitative approach was suitable for this study as the researcher managed to answer question through in depth interviews that highlighted trends, themes and the reasoning behind the selection of content for *Power Talk*. It gave the researcher the ability to not only analyse these trends and themes but to interpret them with relation to theory that has been studied in this paper.

The research not only made use of qualitative research methodology, but applied it to a case study, Alex FM particularly the current affairs talk show (*Power Talk).* According to YIN (2003:.2) "the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" because "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events," such as organizational and managerial processes, for example. In fact, case studies seem to be the preferred strategy when "how or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (YIN, 1981:59). The case study method was appropriate in this study because it described a phenomenon, in essence it explored the what and how or why questions with respect to Alex FM's Power Talk.

In case study research, Yin (2009: 98) identifies six sources for collecting data, namely, "documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts". This study made use of four of the six, they are discussed below.

Strengths of Qualitative research methodology

Qualitative research method has the ability to simplify data without destroying the context and the complexity of the data analysed (Atieno, 2009). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to learn from the interview participant, it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Atieno, 2009). This proved to be true for this study. The researcher was able to ask follow up questions during the interviews, this resulted in the understanding of the phenomenon in a broad manner. Qualitative research method allowed the researcher to draw out themes from the study. This proved to be very helpful in this study as the researcher

was able to construct a more structured chapter on Data Findings and Analysis by dividing it into themes.

Limitations of Qualitative research Methodology

The biggest limitation of qualitative research method is ambiguity. Ambiguities are inherent in human language. This requires the researcher to recognize these ambiguities and work on deciphering them when analysing data. Another limitation as described by Atieno (2009: 17): “is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance”.

3.2 **Research design**

Research design is an anticipated plan of how the empirical investigation of the study will be carried out. It describes methods, techniques and tools used to collect, analyse and interpret data (Du Plooy 2009: 51)**.** For the purposes of this study the research design used exploratory/descriptive approach. This is because the research sought to answer questions of ‘what factors influence the selection of content for the talk show. According to Marsh (1982) Good description provokes the ‘why' questions of explanatory research, this is what this study sought to achieve.

- Mode of reasoning:

Ethnographic Inductive logic was used in this study. Inductive research “involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations for those patterns through series of hypotheses” (research methodology.net, 2018). This was done through engaging in participant observation, pilot listening and conducting interviews.

- Time Dimensions:

The study was conducted on cross sectional basis. According to Marsh (1982) cross-sectional studies make use of observations at a single time point made on all subjects. These include designs for single groups and case-series, comparative studies for independent groups and paired two-group design. This study only made use of one case study which is the talk show (Alex FM Talk). This was a research

report which means there was not enough space nor time to conduct a longitudinal study that would involve repeated measurements of the same variables.

3.2.1Data Analysis:

This study utilised the thematic analysis perspective which focus on describing the main ideas in the messages (Interviews, show archives) (Du Plooy 2009).The themes (main ideas) were evaluated in relation to the research question and research sub-questions. This was performed by looking for themes in the information (data) provided by the interviewees. Key messages were colour-coded and categorised.

3.2.2 Population

There have been major changes in the Township from the 1940s till now, but at the same time the same socio-economic challenges still lingers. According to Census conducted by StatsSA in 2011, Alexandra had an estimated population of 179624. 51.66 are male and 48.34 are female. It is among one of the most diverse townships in South Africa. 26.25 of the population are isiZulu speakers, 23,14% Sepedi, 11.29% Xitsonga, 9.77% isiXhosa 9.62% Setswana, 7.02% Sesotho and 4.82% are Tshivenda speakers. This justifies the reason Alex FM broadcasts in five different languages. For the purposes of this study, the researcher drew from a subset of the population who formed part of the interview participants and guests from the show (community members).

3.3Data Collection methods

3.3.1In-depth Interviews

According to Boyce & Neale (2006) In-depth interviews are part of qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents. They are used to learn about the interviewee's 'life world', their experiences and the meaning of those experiences. It allows the interviewer to 'read between the lines' and formulate questions for the interviewee that is based on that reading (Kvale 1996:30)

With In-depth interviews the researcher was able to raise follow up questions with the interviewees and discuss matters that arose which were of prominence. The main advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods (Boyce & Neale, 2006: 3).

Reese (1997) asserts that rather than presenting the results in the form of statistics, qualitative research produces words in the form of comments and statements. This has also been noted by Bates C. (1995) and Morse (1996) who state that "qualitative research has a great validity since it is a holistic approach to research that does not reduce participants to functioning parts".

3.3.2 Interview participants

This section details all the people interviewed for the research project. Community stations unlike commercial and public stations they are under resourced both in terms of employees (Human resource) & equipment. Therefore, the researcher had to make use of the little resources to elicit the information needed to complete this project. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the following people:

1.**The presenter of the current affairs show** (***Muntu Mbanjwa)*** He since joined the team in 2014. He is an active member in the community and engages with many community forums and is involved in community meetings that happen in Alex.

2. **The station manager (*Takalane Nemangowe***) Prior to being the station Manager, he had worked at Alex for a few years. In 2012 he was the presenter of the current affairs talk show. He also forms part of the listeners forum which forum for listeners to express their views and highlight issues the station must improve on and which topics to continue covering.

3.**The producer of the current affairs talk show (*Refilwe Mohale*)**. She is involved in the planning of the show, working together the presenter to come up with topics that will be discussed on the show as well as secure guests for the show. She acts as the gatekeeper on the show, manage calls and decide on the angle the show will go.

4. **The senior journalist at the station (*Ramatamo Sehoai*)**. He joined Alex he has worked on different shows. He was the reporter then moved to be part of the sports show and the breakfast show. He now is involved in the research team for the current affairs show as the senior journalist. On days when Bra Muntu is not available he stands in for him and present the show.

- Limitations

The limitations of in-depth interviews in this research were that interviewing small samples made it difficult to generalise the findings. In addition, the nature of community radio stations did not make it any easier to collect sufficient information. They already had a small staff so the pool of selection of interview participants was already limited. In-depth interviews are time intensive and some of my interview participants were only available for a short period of time a day. This resulted in having to schedule follow-up interviews. The cut in the flow of interviews has the potential to affect the output and content of the interview. However, the researcher managed to record the interviews and keep notes of the last points discussed so as to remind the interview participants where they last left off.

- Strengths

The strength of in-depth interviews which is applicable to this study is that the in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to elicit in-depth answers from the participants. The answers offered interpretive perspective which made the connections between the selection of content and the role community radio plays in development.

3.3 Participant Observation.

The researcher obtained permission to observe how the show is conducted for a week. Before observing the running of the show, the researcher sat down with the content producer to observe how together with the presenter plan, prepare, and finalise what content to cover and understand the reasons behind it. The observation happened during the first week of August.

According to Bernard (1994) participant observation are a process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally, then removing oneself from the setting or community to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on and be able to write about it. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) notes that observations enable the researcher to describe existing situation using all five senses thus painting a written photograph.

- Limitations

Even though participant observations allow the researcher to describe situations in a more vivid way they may be inaccurate and unreliable. Johnson and Sackett (1998) highlight how in participant observations often the issue of bias arise. The researcher may describe the situations based on their partialities whether be it political, religious etc.

- Strengths

Participant observations were suitable for the study as it allowed the researcher to gain empathy through personal experience. By acting as a member the researcher managed to get insight into their meanings, viewpoints, values and problems - gives authentic data (Du Plooy, 1995)

3.4 Pilot Listening

The study employed pilot studying, where the researcher listened to the show twice a month from July 2017- October 2017 making in total 16 hours of recording. The archives of these shows were provided by the production manager at Alex FM. The aim of doing the pilot listening was to seek out themes and trends to see if they correspond with the information provided by the interview participants. Out of the interviews it came out very strongly that the call-ins, prominent events and topical news and issues both provided by local newspapers and the government form a huge part of the content that is selected for the show.

Throughout the pilot listening, the researcher kept a diary where topics and guests were highlighted. The aim of the pilot listening was to identify themes that would correlate with issues that the interview participants highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview of *Alex FM Talk*

Alex FMTalk is a current affairs talk show that airs on Alex FM every Monday to Thursday from 7pm-9pm. It is hosted by Muntu Mbanjwa popularly known as 'Bra Muntu' on the station and in the community of Alex. Bra Muntu has been the host for the show for the past three years.

Takalane Nemangowe who is currently the station manager was previously the host of the show. When asked about *Alex FM Talk*, its value and contribution to the society he had this to say:

I've actually presented the show before, I've won several awards for that show. That show is very important, as a community radio station we are not a music station, we are more of a talk station. We are content driven, we are more of education. A show of that nature with Bra Muntu is a show that avails a platform to deal with various issues, from service delivery, health, education, anything that affects the community, youth empowerment, women empowerment, whatsoever that has content and affect us gets to be discussed on the show. So the main aim of that show is to create a platform and let people have conversations. The show if you listen to it is not about the presenter it's about people having conversation. I believe that in the absence of conversation problems will continue to exist but the more we have conversations the more we will have solutions. So that's the gist about the show, it is finding solutions through conversation, that's why it is more of a talk and relaxed show.

The content producer for the show is Refilwe Mohale, and Senior Journalist, Ramatamo Sehoai, also form part of the shows production. Together with Bra Muntu, the three form a team that works on the content and production of the show. According to the station Manager *Alex FM Talk* is among the most loved shows on the station after the traditional shows that airs daily from 9pm-12pm.

The researcher observed the show, interviewed the people who are involved in the making of the show as well as the station manager about how content is selected for

the show. Archives of the show were listened to which formed part of the listening diary as highlighted in the methodology.

4.2 Production process

This section details the production process at *Alex FM Talk* specifically how topics are discussed for the current affairs talk show. It will highlight the people who are involved in this decision-making process as well as an account from the researcher's view (participant observation) on how the meeting/discussion unfolds.

As a journalist and someone who has been exposed to newsroom practices and diary meetings, my encounter at *Alex FM* was rather new and unexpected. In many newsrooms especially in private and public media houses, the production process is formal and there are a number of people involved in making the decision of what gets to be covered and discussed whether it be in print or broadcasting. However, this was not the case at Alex Fm. It was not entirely unexpected taking into consideration the nature of community radio stations. Community radio stations usually depend on grants, donations and advertising revenue, which might not be a lot taking into account that their listeners don't have much disposal income. The lack in financial resources may result in the stations being understaffed and working on the basis of volunteerism. This may mean that the little staff that is available will usually be over-burdened with work and having to fill more than one role in the station. Due to the above-mentioned factors the way the production process operates may not necessarily mirror the formal journalistic standards.

Refilwe who is the producer of the show and Bra Muntu are the two people who are very involved in deciding what gets selected as topics or items to be discussed on the show. There is no formal diary meeting where they discuss or select content. The day I went for my observation, after concluding the show, Bra Muntu and Refilwe had a brief chat about what would be covered the next day. Bra Muntu explained to Refilwe that he had confirmed the guests for the next day (spokesperson of EFF ko 6 in Alex). Refilwe agreed with no hesitation which gave me an indication that they had had a conversation about what would be discussed but was still waiting on the guests to confirm.

In the interview with the producer Refiloe, the researcher asked a follow up question which arose from the observation of how they finalised the guests and topic for the

show. When Asked if ever they hold formal diary meetings or to explain the technical process of coming together with Bra Muntu to discuss and select content for the show, this is what she said:

Because I have a formal job, I go in the morning and come back at 5, which I just started a month ago. Two months ago we use to meet on a second day basis. I think it was mainly for me, because I wanted to familiarise myself with how he does things and his style and who is, because he's been in the industry more than me. But now we speak more over the phone I'll call, like on Saturday I actually had to call him to say this is who I found for Monday or I got an email from this person who would like to come through. Are you comfortable, what do you think? Do you wanna do a read up about it. But we speak a lot over the phone including Ramatamo the resident journalist. A lot of the time I liaise with him

The decision-makers of the show do not have any form formal meeting where they sit down and discuss what to cover why and who to get as guests. The fact that they do not have formal meetings does not mean they don't communicate as a team and share ideas. They make use of the little resources they have, 1. They are the only two people who are hands on the show 2. They have day jobs which means that time is also a restriction 3. They don't have a large team of researchers or contributors of content. This is the distinguishing characteristic of community stations, they utilise what they have and maximise their little resources to achieve desirable output.

Conclusion

The production process of *Alex FM talk* is not conducted in a formal setting. Their production process does not necessarily include the discussion of how they will go about finding content for the show but it is a process of confirmation and verification between the producer and the Host about content and guests they might have found separately or discussed previously. This usually happens just before the show or after the show. Even though they do not hold formal diary meetings, from my observations and the pilot listening they have never failed to deliver a show, one that has engaged their audience and guests.

4.3 Content Generation

This section ties in with the previous section. The aim of this research is to investigate how content is selected for the show. However, to determine the factors that contribute to the selection of content it is equally important to uncover how this content is gathered. This section will detail how and from where the content for the current affairs talk show (*Alex FM Talk*) is sourced.

From the interviews conducted with the Host, the producer and the senior journalist who is a contributor in the show they all had similar answers to the question of how they gather content. Even though they might not have formal diary meetings, it is incumbent upon each one of them to liaise with one another when they have content for the show, especially the Host and the producer.

Question: How do you generate content for the show?

Bra Muntu: how we come up with the content usually is, we do our research and then we go through all the corners, all avenues, go to the people on the ground to hear specifically what people are saying and what people are going through. There are people that come to us and say these are the issues we want to talk about. We go to community meetings, service delivery community meetings where the community is invited to have a say in many issues like crime, housing, jobs, opportunities, education, and lots and lots of issues facing the youth, particularly the youth. And sometimes, we walk from avenue to avenue we know that in each and every corner you will find the youth roaming around the streets, so that's part of how we gather content. Because we bump into them standing the corner and when you engage with them, they will tell you stories.

The content producer was asked the same question and this what she said

Refilwe: I would listen to maybe on an open line day, I would listen to whatever is brought up and whatever I feel has more meat or can be followed up then I take it from there. That's just one way of gathering content, otherwise, I used to drive in through the community and find events, uhm if there is an event we can go to or invite into the studio, we would do that. I always call him (Bra Muntu) and ask what do you think

Ramatmu who is the senior journalist had this to say when asked the same question.

Somehow we can be informed by events if there are public events, like government and stakeholders that are coming to address people, we can find a story in that. Somehow by just looking for example, incomplete construction projects, we raise an issue on that to say there's a building that is still not finished what is happening. We make follow ups to check what is happening and if there's been any improvements on stories that have been covered. Tip offs, we are informed by the season, we know that this is the flood season so we know there will be issues at Jurskei we know their living conditions they are just next to the river so we look at those kind of issues and they give us content. Sometimes because we work hand in hand with the municipality they send us press releases, they tell us this is what is happening they will be coming in Alex so they want coverage

From the answers provide by the key contributors of the show, the following are the main ways they gather content for the show:

1. Physical engagement with the community members around the streets of Alex. This is both intentional and random. For example the producer highlighted how she would drive into the community and check for any notices in community centres etc. while the Host (Bra Muntu) and Ramatamo highlighted that sometimes whilst walking in the streets they will either be approached or see things that trigger an idea about content
2. Meetings, these are both set up by either the government or the community members themselves
3. Events, they may also be set by government or the community but if the issues discussed at these events affect the community members it would form part of their content
4. Open lines. The producer explained how they sometimes have open lines "sometimes we have to improvise when our guests don't come through, we will then have an open line where any issue is addressed and talked about and we engage everyone" this platform is also used to generate content. Issues that arose from the open line can be taken further are turned into content for the show.

Conclusion

It is evident that the show does not have one way of generating content. They make use of various strategies to generate content for the show. Among all the different ways highlighted above of how they generate content, the underlying factor is the representing the voice or needs of the community. Through physical engagement, the creators of the show get to hear directly from the listeners the type of content they want to listen to on the show. The interaction with community is not in only through the air waves (call-ins and message interaction during the show). The key contributors of the show encourage this participation right from the beginning of the content generation process.

Meetings are a huge part of their information hub where they source content for their show. Not only do they go to these meetings to source content but they also hold follow up discussion on the show. From the Archives that the researcher listened to, the show that aired on the 19 July 2017 buttresses the use of meetings to source content from the show. On the 19th of July, the guest was Duma Kulashe, president of Bonafides movement, the young lions of the landless people. He was on the show to talk about what transpired at a meeting that happened earlier the same day. The meeting was about the issue of FrankenWorld (an open land close to Alex which the people of Alex want to claim so housing can be provided seeing there is problem concerning housing in the community). Many people called in during the show to want to understand the resolutions of the meeting and share their thoughts on the issue. This proves that this method of content generation works. The discussions that happen during the meetings seem important to the members of the community. This also suggests that community radio serve as an extension of a physical meeting, a place where community conversations are held.

4.4 Factors that contribute to the selection of topics

This section outlines the factors that the decision-makers considers before selecting a specific topic that will be discussed on the show. The previous section looked at the formal “journalistic and theoretical” process of how decisions makers deliberate and communicate among themselves on what to select for the show. This section goes beyond “how” this process looks like, and further investigates the “what”.

Theoretically community stations are obligated to produce content that speaks to the community, this is their mandate according to their ICASA license agreement. There are set rules and regulations in terms of how their radio stations are set up. For example according to the ICASA Act community radio stations must cover local news first. 70% of the content must be local news, 20 % national news and 10 % international. This stipulation from the Act already guides the station in terms of what contributes to the selection of their content. However, as the station or more so as key decision makers in the current affairs talk show, they must have their own selection criteria of what gets to go on air.

News values

From the interviews, with the producer of the show, the host and the contributing editor, news values are among some of the most important factors that contribute to what gets selected for the show.

Different scholars of Journalism have outlined a number of news values. They are not all the same but there are some commonalities in the values that deem news worthy. Some scholars have defined news values according to their experience in the field of journalism while others use ethnographic observation and interviews (Harcup & O’Neill, 2016). Schultz (2007) argues that six news values dominate: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict, sensation and exclusivity.

Even though the station does not adhere strictly to formal journalist standards (production process) news values still form part of the factors that contribute to the selection of topics

Relevance, topicality and newsworthiness form part of news values that influence the selection of topics for the show. Relevance and topicality in this regard is more

concerned with how the specific content or suggested issues are relevant to the community of Alex.

Makungu: How do you select topics for the show, which topic takes precedence?

Bra Muntu: We select a topic that we see its topical, making headlines

Makungu: So which headlines do you follow? Do you follow the national headlines, the local newspapers, which one?. Do you take mainstream news bring it to the community

Bra Muntu: we basically start from the community level, and then we go provincially then nationally sometimes internationally. Most importantly we strive to get to the bottom of our local content because this is where it's based, this is where things happen, you know people are talking issues; they come here and tell us so many unheard stories, so this is how we do things.

On the idea of taking topical news and news making headline to be part of the shows content as explained by the host, the producer echoed the same views. She emphasised that local news headlines are still the main factor in terms of selecting the topic:

"I came in with the view that we are going to educate the community, it doesn't matter whether its national news or Alex news, he basically advised that we more Alex, we more community issues and things like that. I listen to a lot of 702, ENCA news, SABC News, ANN7, just to get where we are as a nation. As much as we in Alex and are affected by the things that happen in Alex but we still live in South Africa where we need to know what is going on. My view is we still need to educate in that way, though it's not a lot of it, it's probably 20% of the time where we do national news than community news"

Beyond the two news values that have been highlighted above by the producer and the host, Ramatamo, highlighted other issues that contribute to the selection of topic/content for the show:

"There's quite a lot, the sensitivity, how it impacts or touches on the lives of people at that particular moment. It's like choosing, you've got different stories and then you choose what is more important than the other. Like if we have a government event,

we are expecting government spokesperson and all of sudden fire breaks somewhere down in Second Avenue, we are going to prioritize that, we look at the sensitivity, how breaking it is and how people's lives are affected by what would have happened at that particular moment. So they fluctuate but at the end of the day where people's lives are endangered and at risk, that story will come on top. We will prioritize that story and then all other issues will come at the bottom, that's how we go about choosing what comes first and then these other less sensitive one, less important one so to say, we can always say you know what, you, you can come later in the week, but then this is what we must cover first. If a child has been raped, someone has been killed you know we have to focus on that and deal with it"

From the above responses, it is clear that there is a relationship between news and the selection of topics/content for the show. Ramatamo describes the relationship as follows:

Makungu: so there is a relationship between your news bulletin and the content for the show

Rams: Absolutely, they are not in isolation, they can use what they have heard in our talk show, they can put it in our news bulletin

Makungu: so its vice versa, its not one in the other

Rams: No we are hand in hand, if they've got something because like a big issue, you've got limited time on the news bulletin so to expand it, to talk about it more, we take it to the talk show and then we invite people to come and expand more on a specific topic.

The relationship between news and content for the show has been studied by other scholars. Serino (2009) studied the relationship between news and the topics of the columns on Sunday Times. His research found that opinion topics generally followed the news. If a topic was prominent in the news pages then it was often found in the opinion pages. In the opinion pages the writers expanded on the news, discussed the topic in depth including their personal experience and their response to the news. Similarly, the *Alex FM Talk* has a relationship with news. Talk shows do not simply provide news and information, they provide a platform where people share their

opinion and deliberate on it. This deliberation and discussions that happen on the show, include the listeners through calls, WhatsApp messages and texts. This led to the study of how callers are handled on the show as well as how they interact with the guests and host.

The research through the interviews with the producer explored whether the show receives callers, how frequent and how the producer handles them

Refilwe: Firstly the callers, because we are a small radio station and our frequency is not that major, I mean it's basically I think the early Bramely and Suboy and yeah I don't think it reaches well, yeah the frequency is really limited. However, we do have callers, regular callers. Its people who know the show, know the host, so we don't get many calls we I first have to sit in and listen

Makungu: Alright, so there isn't much filtration

Refilwe: Not at all and its very seldom you find a caller who is off topic, a lot the people who are calling will be calling regarding what we are talking about. Or if we do have an open line because sometimes we have to improvise when our guests don't come through, we will then have an open line where any issue is addressed and talked about and we engage everyone. In terms of callers there isn't much gatekeeping. We let the listener talk and see if we can run along with it and if we can't we simply say not on tonight's show. But you know what the host is very amazing so he knows how to entertain and eventually let go of it. Sometimes it gets to me because we don't have time and then he entertains that and that eats up our time with the guests or with whatever issue we are trying to address. So we let the community talk, free engagement

Makungu: So in terms of callers, when I listen in to your show and when I was here, there are a lot of callers coming through, people are always calling in. How do you gatekeep the calling, do you allow anyone to come through cause the other time I observe that you don't have the, you know how in other stations they will listen first and send them through

Bra Muntu: We don't have that, this is community radio that is for commercial radio. Because now community radio I think this is the best platform for people on the ground to express themselves and what they're going through without unnecessary

red tapes unlike commercial radio whereby you need to be very careful what you're saying because your listenership is inclusive, black and white but community radio particularly the listenership is predominantly black people. So we don't ask what you're going to say we allow people to speak their mind.

Makungu: In terms of your show, your show is a talk show. Do you guys have a limit in terms of how many callers you take, how much time you discuss with the studio guests? Is that something that naturally happens or you see as things go

Bra Muntu: It naturally happens, you cannot limit calls, we need to make sure that we manage time and it depends what callers are saying, someone might say something constructive in a short space of time and you might say oh I wish I had five minutes to talk about that . So we always try to manage time. And we try as much as we can to take in more calls to accommodate as many views as we can. When people are trying to call in they always tell you that your lines are busy and you need to tell them that they must be patient you'll take their calls. Sometimes you need to be very strategic and versatile like I have said. Like say I'm going to take in the very first five callers and I'll allow the guest to continue answering questions and maybe after another five minutes allow five more callers to come in. you start to count how many callers you had and look at the time and you can see still more callers coming in then you say you will take the last one and wrap up and from there we are done and dusted. And then give the guest to wrap up and give him more time to explain and give listeners the space to ask questions and talk so this is what we normally do.

The discussion on how the decision makers handles calls can be understood better buy uncovering the concepts of gatekeeping and orchestration in broadcasting. These two concepts unfold in different forms in community radio and public or commercial radio.

- **Gatekeeping-**

According to Barzilai-Nahon (2009: 1) "Gatekeeping refers broadly to the process of controlling information as it moves through a gate or filter (in press) and is associated with exercising different types of power (e.g., selecting news, enforcing the status quo in parliamentary committees, mediating between professional and ethnic groups, brokering expert information)"

Talk shows in their nature are understood to offer a space for debate, deliberation and discussion of issues. As outlined above that this research seeks to investigate the process of the selection of content that is discussed on *Alex FM's current affairs talk show*. Shoemaker et al (2001) uses the hierarchical model to further explain the different forces that are involved in deciding which stories get to be published and aired. The hierarchal model asses the characteristics of the individual staff writers, newsroom routines and practices of the editors. Journalism has certain standards about what constitute news and the newsworthiness of certain events and information.

Throughout the study it has been evident that the theory of gatekeeping is not much applicable especially in the case of Alex FM. The journalists and staff members of the station recognize that the station belongs to the people therefore they always have to ensure that in their content they mirror the voice of the people of Alexandra. The newsroom routine at Alex FM Talk is one that prioritises calls. Because there is no gatekeeping does not mean the host and the presenter allows anything and everything to be aired on the show.

This leads to a phenomenon called Orchestration.

- **Orchestration**

Orchestration seems a better fit in explaining how the presenter and producer of the current affairs talk show handle debate and discussion on the show. According to Cowling & Hamilton (2010) Orchestration is defined as "a process in which journalists act not as gatekeepers but as conductors of the dynamics of debate"

During the observations and through listening to the archives of the show, the researcher noted many people calling in some not asking questions relevant to the topic. The researcher then took the opportunity to ask the hot how he handles such diversions.

Makungu: With that though, with the open line, there is the danger of someone diverting from the conversation or topic on hand. How do you as the presenter of the show handle such diversions.

Bra Muntu: You see you need to be very strategic, because you are presenting the show, you are driving the show so you need to differentiate who is running the show

is it you or the listeners. Now if someone just chips in and start to divert you must be able to pick it up quickly and summarise very politely and say well let's leave that for another time, we will have time to discuss that there issue now is this and that so that the listener can understand. Sometimes the listener will say look I'm not trying to divert but 'I've got a very important message to say particularly about the issue you're discussing, sometimes someone might say I'm an expert in this subject what you're talking about its just not a done deal, you need to be able to converse with the listeners in a relevant way so that they can understand that next time we'll have this discussion, we will bring it on board but this is not the relevant time to talk about it.

The role of orchestration is to not only make sure that the conversation is flowing and the callers are on topic, but at a show like *Alex FM Talk* it also involves handling time. Bra Muntu describes this orchestration against time

We need to make sure that we manage time and it depends on what callers are saying, someone might say something constructive in a short space of time and you might say oh I wish I had five minutes to talk about that. So we always try to manage time. And we try as much as we can to take in more calls to accommodate as many views as we can. When people are trying to call in they always tell you that your lines are busy and you need to tell them that they must be patient you'll take their calls. Sometimes you need to be very strategic and versatile like I have said. Like say I'm going to take in the very first five callers and I'll allow the guest to continue answering questions and maybe after another five minutes allow five more callers to come in. you start to count how many callers you had and look at the time and you can see still more callers coming in then you say you will take the last one and wrap up and from there we are done and dusted. And then give the guest to wrap up and give him more time to explain

In summary the factors that contribute to the selection of topics for the show are mainly based on news values. News values form a huge part of the criteria that decision makers in the show consider. While decision makers focus on selecting topics that are in line with news values, their main news value is relevance, relevance to their community, Alex. As described by both the host and the senior journalist that where the lives of the people of Alex are concerned they prioritize that

topic. This is evident in the correlation between the stories discussed on Greater Alex today as well as some government press releases (discussed under content generation). In the selection of topics, it was highlighted that even the selection of their guests are based on the ability of the guest to speak of the topic relating to the community of Alex. This led to the discussion of how the station handles calls and interaction with live guests. It was discovered that the station does not adhere to the principles of gatekeeping but rather orchestration. This is mainly due to how the station views itself and its role in the community. Because it is not a commercial station but a community station it is there to serve the community and offer a platform a platform for them to speak in an uncensored manner.

4.5 Bread and Butter issues

In the research, when the interviewees were asked about the main issues that are discussed on the show, the concept of bread and butter issues arose. It was described

Bra Muntu: Well, let me start by saying most of our content is bread and butter issues. Most of it is burning issues. How we come up with the content usually is, we do our research and then we go through all the corners, all avenues, go to the people on the ground to hear specifically what people are saying and what people are going through. As I said bread and butter issues, the living conditions and the triple P challenges is what our content is based on.

Makungu: Sorry what are the triple P challenges?

Bra Muntu: The tipple P challenges I'm talking about is poverty, inequality and unemployment. Those are the major burning issues and you also must understand that after 22 years of our democracy some people are saying it's not yet Uhuru. Some are saying well they have arrived particularly those who are elites and middle class the lower class everything is still the same, life is still the same. There are people that come to us and say these are the issues we want to talk about. Many people go to bed in an empty stomach and wake up on an empty stomach. You go to the ground you meet young girls at 14/ 15 telling you about their problems, experiences and day to day lives. Some will tell you that they come from the bundus and homelands and they came here for a better education. Some will tell you very uncomfortable stories; most of them will tell you that they don't have money to buy

sanitary towels. Some at the age 8/9 when they come from school they don't have anything to eat they are forced to go do recycling as young as 9 and 10. Others will tell you that at the age of 11/12 because they don't have guardians who look after them they are forced to fern for themselves and then you find others at the age from 9/10 turn to prostitution. Then there are other groups who decide to drop out of school because of circumstances and now people will come and say what do we do in this situation, how do we speak out, where do we get help and from here where to. So we have to invite the community to come on board to see what is happening, because at the end of the day we live in a very sick society. So our issues are based on that, what people are going through.

Ramatamu buttresses the same point;

We normally even say, we are about, we talk about bread and butter issues these are at the core of service delivery issues. Working together with the community we try to find solutions. Our content yes there are other light things we talk about but people are in pain, people are in misery. Even if you say you know what let me today just distress and be light in my topic but they will call in and tell you their issues like, ke na li probleme le makhelwani (I have a problem with my neighbour) my son is addicted to nyaope. The burden on their shoulders doesn't give them enough space to breathe. This is what they are going through and every day you know you hardly talk about anything else when you are a presenter on the show, even if you come with your script but you never know what to expect, somebody will be calling and you'll find a way of prioritizing that issue. That's basically our content for the talk show

The issues highlighted above have been evidently been discussed in all the archives I listened to. Throughout the pilot listening, the content that has been discussed have been around issues that speak to 'bread and butter issues', not only do they match the pilot listening but are reflected even through the Facebook page of Greater Alex Today. Outside of the bread and butter issues that are discussed on the show, the only 'light' content is when they are celebrating a specific holiday (e.g Heritage show rendition), profiling a celebrity (The feature on Ms South Africa second princess Boipelo Mabe). Even during this show it still led back to discussing how Ms Boipelo

Mabe overcame poverty and managed to get education despite coming from such a poor place.

Ramatomo explains that this will forever be like this. In his heartfelt and passionate comment he had this to say:

When you look at Alex, I don't know how to put it. It is an eye sore, especially we keep comparing Alex to Sandton that in itself is a pain, Alex is just a stone draw from Sandton there are high rise buildings, and there are developments and Alex remains undeveloped.

Alex represent the story of pain. As much as we can rejoice over the melting pot of culture and the history of the political leaders but Alex itself it's a story of pain and then for us to heal we get solace from talking, that's why there's power talk, we talk about ordinary people talking about their lives being given that space with their language using various platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp at the end of the day though we may not have solutions we say guys just talk. So, there was once a station manager who tried to change this approach and ask cosmopolitan questions and who tried to make us sound like urban radio it was difficult. Before we change that we need to change the structural position of Alex. Before we can sound like YFM, before we can sound like upper market radio station we need to fix Alex so that we as the community radio station can go somewhere, we cannot change our tone, we cannot change our content while things are like this in Alex. Alex FM will talk about the issues and the pain of Alex forever. But when we change we want to change together with the community. We caught in between those kind of things, even if you want to sound otherwise you cant you are talking to people who will start questioning. You need to be relevant to them. Like for instance for me when they talk about rats how rats are running havoc in the houses I know about that experience. When they talk about leaking houses especially when it rains I know that experience and I can understand their language and I can speak from their shoes. So when you are somebody coming and people are talking about these challenges you can be confused, sometimes you can ask as a young person why don't you work, why you don't go to school. These are difficult questions

Because of the rise of bread and butter issues and the pull towards having to cover these issues during the show. The show now acts as a space for the people of Alex

to release or a space to debrief. “It’s a platform to debrief, it’s a platform for people of Alex to talk about their pain in that space. We cannot rush them, that is why we gave power talk that 2 hours, even though there might be no solutions just opening up, there’s that sense of relief that we are given a platform to talk” (Ramatamo).

Conclusion

This section highlighted the issues that are at the core of discussion in the show. The aim of highlighting these issues which the decision makers call ‘bread and butter issues’ is to relate it to the factors that contribute to the selection of topics. Because the main issues as discovered through the interviews are bread and butter issue, it buttress the point that the main factor that contribute to the selection of topics for the show is relevance and its sensitivity to the community members.

4.6 Conversations are at the heart of Development.

“I believe that in the absence of conversation problems will continue to exist but the more we have conversations the more we will have solutions. So that’s the gist about the show, finding solutions through conversation” Takie

Since the show discusses ‘bread and butter issue’ and it is perceived by the station manager as a platform to not only debrief, but to connect those with the ability to bring positive change with the people in the community in need of this development. This is done through conversation. The station manager describes how these conversations aid to development

Well remember we using this kind of a show for officials to account, remember these people who are listening to the show are the people who voted for these officials. So for us to track the development when Herman Mashaba says vote for me I’ll build a school and a clinic and a stadium then we going avail the very same platform and call him and also call the people he told so that they can have him account, you did say you are going to build this and that, tell us how far are you still going to build those schools. Those conversations are helpful, they form part of accountability for government, they form part of tracking service delivery they form part of tracking development of our community, so if people raise issues and we able to use our powers as a station to get the relevant people t come and account. If for instance they are complaining about not having water in Alex, we will avail the platform and call the minister of water and sanitation Nomvula Mokonyane to say the people of

Alex have no water what needs to be done. A solution will arise from that conversation and we will be able to have water. So those conversations we are having is the more we are getting things done and speeding the process. As I said if we are not having these conversations there will never be water because Nomvula will never come down when it's a protest but if they are called by the media they will respond.

Conclusion

The station manager highlighted that the main aim of the show is to hold conversations that aid to development. This means that all the topics discussed have to adhere to this standard. This affects how they select topics. Development to them (as a station) might not be measurable by effects but if they can be a bridge to connect those in need and those who can offer the help. Another issue that was highlighted was that the station seeks to hold government officials accountable. This speaks to them acting as watchdog, which is one of the normative roles of journalism.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMMENDATIONS

This research sought to find out the selection process for the content on Alex FM Talk (Current Affairs show for Alex FM). It embarked on finding out the factors that contribute to the selection of topics for the show. Through qualitative interviews, participant observations and pilot listening the study discovered that there are number of factors that contribute to the selection of topics.

Through interviews with decision-makers on the show, it was interesting that even before highlighting the factors that contribute to the selection of topics, they defined how they viewed the show in relation to the station and the greater community of Alex. How they define the role the show plays both in the station and in the community is used as the basis on which they select topics for the show. This realisation then informs how they choose what ought to be discussed on the show as well as the angle they use to frame the show. This mirrors on the discussion in the literature review of how talk radio acts as public sphere.

The show acts as a public sphere where issues are discussed and deliberations held outside of the state. The decision makers also highlighted how they use the show to bring politicians and government officials to account. This is a form of tracking development by following up on promises politicians made to the citizens and asking the community if the promises have been fulfilled. The show has created a platform to discuss topical issues which concerned marginalised communities; the space Nancy Fraser calls the subaltern public sphere. Through the topics and content discussed in this show, the voice of the poor and marginalised communities of Alex are captured. As highlighted in the introductory chapters, Alex FM ought to cater for lower class and poor communities of this township.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the decision-makers (Host, producer, and senior journalist) together with the station manager view the show as being a pivotal platform for the community to converse about issues that are affecting them. These issues range from service delivery, crime, poverty, education, unemployment and

health. They call it ‘bread and butter issues’. It is from this stand point that they then weigh and decide on what topic they select for the show.

5.1 Content Selection

The research found that news values form a huge part of the factors they consider when selecting topics for the show. Topicality is one of the news values that influence the selection of a topic. Topicality in this case was viewed from a local (community) perspective because it is the area the station catered for. The research highlighted that only 20% of national news making headlines were considered, and this was only if the issue affected the community of Alex. This is in agreement with ICASA’s regulations on the coverage of news for community radio stations. This discovery led to the findings on the relationship between news and the content selected for the show.

The decision makers highlighted that there is a synergy between news making headlines and what they cover on the show. Ramatamu who is the senior journalist is a contributor to both platforms highlighted that Alex FM Talk provides a bigger platform to discuss some of the news making headlines. He asserted that since during the news bulletin they do not have the opportunity to engage with the affected parties regarding what is reported about them, they use the current affairs show as a space to deliberate further.

Newsroom practices at Alex FM are rather unstructured; there is no set of diary meeting where decision-makers meet to discuss, for example, what the content for the upcoming shows will be. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly; the decision-makers have other jobs or commitments during the day. Secondly; the relationship between the producer and the Host is one that works through telephonic communication and built on trust. However, through observations the researcher discovered that it affects the quality and the execution of the show. Sometimes the host will only communicate with the producer the day of the show about who is coming and what they will be talking about, it deprives her of the opportunity to actually produce the show. As a result of not having prior knowledge of what will be discussed, she does not have questions prepared before-hand and cannot run through the show with the host. The researcher observed that this seemed to be

normal behaviour for the station, but it affects the quality of the show and how each perform their set duties. This dilemma is common in community radio stations as the majority of the workers are volunteers.

It was made clear that even though a topic has been selected as well as the guests, sometimes they do not pitch. On days where the guests fail to pitch they hold open lines. This is another way of gathering topics for future shows. Once they have highlighted the issues raised during open line they select them based on which ones affect the well-being of the community. The producer highlighted that they select the one with ‘more meat and will impact the lives of the community’. This is not only a way for them to select content but maximise on community participation through user generated content.

5.2 Community participation

Throughout the study community participation was highlighted and this happens in different ways. Open lines as mentioned are a way in which they maximise community participation. Content gathering involves physically engaging community members in the streets, at community meetings and at the station. The research found that the relationship between the community members and the decision-makers was one of trust and openness. Due to the nature of this relationship; it was easier for community members to share their issues or suggests content. This made it easier for the decision-makers to see what the community wants to talk about and thus adhere accordingly. Through this open relationship between the community and the decision makers of the show, it has maximised the principles of inclusion, participation and access which is what democratic participatory theory is centred on.

The study through observations and interviews found that the relationship with the community is not only evident in the process of gathering and selecting content, but even during the show via calls. The show values callers and the host even knows most of them by name. The producer explained that their callers were usually regular callers. They are people who know the host and are familiar with the show. Because of this dynamic relationship, the host has a way of handling them in such a way that the show still achieves its mandate without being side tracked. With this said, they do

not filter or screen their calls or conversation, rather the host plays a role of orchestrating the conversation.

The study in its quest to find out the process involved in selecting content for the show; found out that the process was not structured. It is rather a fluid and spontaneous process but the core values of what the content is about remaining constant. There is a clear understanding of what the show aims to achieve which makes it easier for the decision makers to know what type of content to select. The clear understanding of the role allowed the decision makers to appropriately filter factors that contribute to the selection of content.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study looked at the process of content selection for Alex FM Talk. It is worth noting that the study did not investigate whether the content produced on the show has indeed resulted in direct or indirect change of development in the community of Alex. The study only provided a starting point by first analysing how content is selected. Throughout the process of collecting data; the participants highlighted that to a certain degree; content does contribute to the development of the community. The study therefore, recommends further research be conducted to find out those specific areas of development that are brought about by the show.

One of the limitations drawn from the study was that the study may fail to offer findings that may be generalised. This was due to the fact that only one case study was analysed.

ICASA in their regulatory framework discussion paper highlighted that many community radio stations were failing to comply with programming. The challenge was that community radio stations did not appear to cater to specific needs of their community. This research explored this challenge particularly at Alex FM. To determine whether the needs of the community are catered for; it was important to investigate the content (what it is, how it is selected) which is what the study did. Future research can further investigate the outcome of the content that is produced on community radio stations and its contribution to developing poor communities.

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Appendixes

Interview Transcripts

Interview: Bra Muntu, Presenter of Power Talk

Makungu: So I'm doing my research, on community media and development, So I chose Alex Fm because I love radio and its easier to observe the relationship between the media and community because of the live interaction nd hence I chose your show. I just wanna understand in terms of the content that you guys select for the show, I wanna understand the process of how you select your content and why you choose the particular content

Bra Muntu: Well,uhm let me start by saying all of, most of our content are bread and butter issues uhm most of them are burning issues, how do we come up with the content is usually, we do our research and then we go through all the corners, all avenues go to the people on the ground to hear specifically what people are saying and what people are going through. What we normally say is. What happens most importantly as I said bread and butter issues the living conditions the triple P challenges

Makungu: Sorry what are the triple P challneges

Bra Muntu: The tipple P challenges I'm talking about poverty, inequality, unemployment. Those are the major burning issues and you also understand that after 22 years of our democracy some people are saying its not yet Uhuru some are saying well they have arrived those particularly those who are elites and middle class the lower class still the same, life still the same, there are people that come to us and say these are the issues we want to talk about, many people go to bed in an empty stomach and wake up on an empty stomach. You go to the ground you meet young girls at 14/ 15 telling you about their problems, experiences and day to day lives some will tell that they come from the bundus and homelands and that they came here for a better education, some will tell you very uncomfortable stories, they will tell you that I came here to stay with my cousin and It was like I was dumped to see for my self. And most of them will tell you that they don't have money to buy sanitary towels, some at the age 8/9 when they come from school they don't have anything to eat they are forced to go do recycling as young as 9 and 10. Others will tell you that

at the age of 11/12 because they don't have guardians who look after them they are forced to fern for themselves and then you find others at the age from 9/10 turn to prostitution. Then there are other groups who decide to drop out of school because of circumstances and now people will come and say what do we do in this situation, how do we speak out, where do we get help and from here where to. So we have to invite the community to come on board to see what is happening, because at the end of the day we live in a very sick society. So our issues are based on **tha**t what people are going through.

Makungu: So you talk about how you go on the ground and do research, so is there a formal setting of the research, do you guys have like focus groups where you guys go, or is it like random when you walk on the street thats how you gather content or is it like you sit down and say people are gathering in a community hall or maybe you have like I don't know

Bra Muntu: It's a mix bag, we go to meetings hear peoples stories

Makungu: So what type of meetings are these

Bra Muntu: Community meetings, service delivery community meetings where the community is invited to have a say in many issues like crime, housing, jobs, opportunities, education, and lots and lots of issues facing the youth, particularly the youth. So we go to the ground sometimes, as you said not actually random but avenue to avenue we know that in each and every corner you will find the youth roaming around the streets, so that's part of the random because we bump into them standing the corner and when you engage with them, they will tell you stories, particularly the youth, they will tell you look, What's the point of going to university to get a degree, you'll hear a lot of youth saying they have been discouraged by what they see, seeing people like yourself going to university graduating after graduating and they're stuck and don't get a job and they start to stay what's the point to go to university because after graduating you don't get a job they will tell you this and that, you don't have experience you don't have the necessary skills and we can't pay you and this and that. And there are those who dropped out of school because no one ever noticed their talent, its all about go to school go to school and then you find ukhuthi some they're talented in something else but no one is noticing their talent so you ae forced to say do this do that and automatically what happens withdraw.

Makungu: So I had an interview with the station manager and he was telling me that the base of community development is through having conversation so the show, the current affairs show is the platform where you have these conversations

Bra Muntu: quite correct

Makungu: So how do select which topic takes precedence in terms of discussion in your show

Bra Muntu: We select a topic that we see, its topical, making headlines.

Makungu: So which headlines do you follow? Do you follow the national headlines, the local newspapers, which one. Do you take mainstream news bring it to the community

Bra Muntu: we basically start from the community level, and then we go provincially then nationally sometimes internationally. Most importantly we strive to get to the bottom of our local content because this is where its based, this where things happen, you know people are talking issues, they come here and tell us so many unheard stories, so this the platform in other words so this is how we do things

Makungu: So in terms of selecting the guests that come for example, when I spoke to your content manager, your producer, takie and Rams, they're all talking about housing as a burning issue in the community. When it comes to such discussions and having guests how do select guests. Do you select them in terms of them being local from Alexandra how do you select guests

Bra Muntu: We try to be balance, we normally get local people those who are going through those hardships particularly housing and then we also get authorities, from the officials human settlement department. Most we have officials from the city of Johannesburg which is the local level. Sometimes if the issue need people from higher structures we are ought to go for provincial guests where we hop in relevant people who are dealing with that issue.

Makungu: So in terms of callers, when I listen in to your show and when I was here, there are a lot of callers coming through, people are always calling in. How do you gatekeep the calling, do you allow anyone to come through cause the other time I

observe that you don't have the, you know how in other stations they will listen first and send them through

Bra Muntu: We don't have that, this is community radio that is for commercial radio. Because now community radio I think this is the best platform for people on the ground to express themselves and what they're going through without unnecessary red tapes unlike commercial radio where by you need to be very careful what you're saying because your listenership is inclusive, black and white but community radio particularly the listenership is predominantly black people. So we don't ask what you're going to say we allow people to speak their mind

Makungu: With that though, with the open line, there is the danger of someone diverting from the conversation or topic on hand. How do you as the presenter of the show handle such diversions

Bra Muntu: You see you need to be very strategic, because you are presenting the show, you are driving the show so you need to differentiate who is running the show is it you or the listeners. Now if someone just chips in and start to divert you must be able to pick it up quickly and summarise very politely and say well lets leave that for another time, we will have time to discuss that there issue now is this and that so that the listener can understand. Sometimes the listener will say look I'm not trying to divert but 'ive got a very important message to say particularly about the issue you're discussing, sometimes someone might say I'm an expert in this subject what youre talking about its just not a done deal, you need to be able to converse with the listeners in a relevant way so that they can understand that next time we'll have this discussion, we will bring it on board but this is not the relevant time to talk about it .

Makungu: So in terms of them, like you saying now its not the relevant time. Do you then use that as ways of creating content for future shows?

Bra Muntu: Yes because it has been raised that and the person, the particular person who is raising that issue is not the only person concerned about that issue, he has raised an issue that had been there a long time but was never tackled. So we will have it another time, then do the research and come up again and say lets get the relevant people to discuss this, lets get experts to discuss this, lets get ordinary people and extraordinary people and we tackle the issue form both perspectives.

Makungu: I hear you talk about research, how do research for your shows, what does that research process entails.

Bra Muntu: We go on the ground, we do thorough research, call people, we engage them. Even if it means we go to the library, you need to go and research, read and read so that you start to think for yourself.

Makungu: In terms of your show, your show is a talk show. Do you guys have a limit in terms of how many callers you take, how much time you discuss with the studio guests? Is that something that naturally happens or you see as things go

Bra Muntu: It naturally happens , you cannot limit calls, we need to make sure that we manage time and it depends what callers are saying, someone might say something constructive in a short space of time and you might say oh I wish I had five minutes to talk about that . so we always try to manage time. And we try as much as we can to take in more calls to accommodate as many views as we can. When people are trying to call in they always tell you that your lines are busy and you need to tell them that they must be patient youll take their calls. Sometimes you need to be very strategic and versatile like I have said. Like say I'm going to take in the very first five callers and I'll allow the guest to continue answering questions and maybe after another five minutes allow five more callers to come in. you start to count how many callers you had and look at the time and you can see still more callers coming in then you say you will take the last one and wrap up and from there we are done and dusted. And then give the guest to wrap up and give him more time to explain and give listeners the space to ask questions and talk so this is what we normally do. Although sometimes you know how its radio, the something that is very very uh, how can I put it. Something that is very .. ill get it. Another thing, you have listeners who are very very rude, sometimes other listeners are very emotional about what they are talking about.

Makungu: How do you handle that?

Bra Muntu: You should be able to know how to sense the mood, as I said you'll find that others are very emotional, you have to be sensitive. Others call with a certain agenda, others are not comfortable about it because we are talking the uncomfortable truth. So anything goes, how you handle that, someone can say you Ms Baloyi, you're biased, you're showing your true colours, you must know how to

handle this kind of things and be partisan especially when it comes to politics, that's where there's a big problem

Makungu: And then in terms of , do you believe your show aids to the development of the community?

Bra Muntu: Absolutely

Makungu: In what ways?

Bra Muntu: Because most of the things we talk about we see them happening, there's much pressure coming from the radio, people are talking extra ordinary things, now officials they are being out in a corner to act and deliver because now people are talking. When people are talking don't forget sometimes they become disgruntled, when they become disgruntled in what's happening they take their frustrations to the streets and once they take their frustrations to the streets what does that means it means to the government and relevant authorities this is the language you would understand and from there it's the point of no return. So to see happening they need to push, push to see the results at the end of the day. Because you go around the township telling people to come to meetings but you hear different stories that this is not for me and you ask why. They will tell you we are tired of hearing empty promises and now what happens when people don't go to meetings, the people who are authorised to deliver what's suppose to be delivered they get away with it, they take money because people are not there on the ground. Now how do you convince people for example we normally talk with the SAPC discuss relevant issues such as crimes, drugs, guns, illegal guns but the minute you bring them on board people will call in you'll hear a different story and vent their frustrations and anger how they have lost hope with the police and how they've lost confidence. But now when the authorities say we are inviting the communities to come to meetings people wont come

Makungu: so you guys act as a bridge?

Bra Muntu: Yes, there's something to pick up there, why people don't go to meetings called by the police, they will say we cant we have lost confidence, we've lost trust, whats the point for us to go there. Same applies when you go to community meetings where by the will be a government officials coming to address

the community. Community members will hold back to say we are not going there, we are tired these people will tell you lies. We are not going to socialise. Whats the point of going to that meeting because we going to socialise theres nothing in there for us. Same applies with jobs, I would ask the ruling party going down to the ANC youth league and say but now why doesn't the ANC have a youth desk in the township whereby the youth can go and access information and enquire on a whole lot of things from there, its not really happening, but some comrades will feel really agitated about this and were not aware of it and how much impact it has. You ask a question as a presenter why ANC youth league don't have a youth desk, with youth information where they can go and ask information, jobs and opportunities, instead you see what, you cheesy boys, spoilt brats who are into fancy lifestyles but now what about those out there at the end of the day they ask themselves where they are going to get their next meal and then we have others who are privileged so we have to try you know to balance it. And sometimes there are people who are comfortable with the truth, they will always come hard on us even on Facebook, but what we normally do is we don't have to respond to some of the things people are saying because people will always say what they want

Makungu: the station manager highlighted that you guys have a listeners forum. Are you involved on the listeners forum, what's your role

Bra Muntu: the role of the listeners forum you see, its still growing its something that has been recently organised. Now the role of the listeners forum what they do is they try to raise membership, listeners club of some sort which is growing from leaps and bounces which is doing well so far but as you know sometimes, people jump the line, they overstep into one anothers toes. The role of the listeners forum here is measure how many listeners do we have, who is Alex FM what are we giving back to the people and make sure that even they themselves they go on the ground and recruit more people to listen to the radio show because you'll find that people have a choice, you'll find them listening to other stations and find that there nothing new for us there but as soon as they tune in to the station they find it worthwhile, the format. In other words they make sure they spread the message across and they make sure they sell the ideas and format of the station. They will organise events have a family day and that sort of thing.

Makungu: So do you guys actually draw content for your shows ?

Bra Muntu: No, not at all, they are not part of it. They are part of the listenership and moreover, most of the members are loyal callers, regular callers

Makungu: I picked up that day that you have a relationship with your callers. There was one who called and you recognised his voice and you told the guest the name of the caller right and you were like wait, mang mang is going to call, sorry o forgot the name I wrote it down

Bra Muntu: yes,

Makungu: How long have you been doing the show to build such a relationship

Bra Muntu: 3 years now, another important thing, this is what I was saying about radio you must be very versatile, you must be able to know you listeners, you must be able to know their mood, know their voices and names. Its very important to call a listener by their name, they feel very special feel so loyal. He feels like he is adding value to the show, now that appeals to the next listener I want to be recognised as well to be playing a vital role. And I would listen to their voices very careful and I would know whose voice is this and who's calling and I would make sure I have to write down all their names to make sure I can know their names even if I have forgot.

Interview : Refiloe, Content Producer

Refiloe: Firstly the callers, uhm because we are a small radio station and our frequency is not that major, I mean its basically I think the early Bramely and Suboy and yeah I don't think it reaches well, yeah the frequency is really limited, so we do have callers, regular callers. Its people who know the show, know the host, so we don't get many calls we I first have to sit in and listen

Makungu: Alright, so there isn't much filtration

Refiloe: Not at all and its very seldom you find a caller who is off topic, a lot the people who are calling will be calling regarding what we are talking about. Or if we do have an open line because sometimes we have to improvise when our guests don't come through, we will then have an open line where any issue is addressed and talked about and we engage everyone. In terms of callers there isn't much gatekeeping. We let the listener talk and see if we can run along with it and if we cant we simply say not on tonight's show, but you know what the host is very amazing so he knows how to entertain and eventually let go if it. Sometimes it gets to me because we don't have time and then he entertains that and that eats up our time with the guests or with whatever issue we are trying to address. So we let the community talk, free engagement. And in terms of gathering topics, topics for the show. I would listen to evenings when we have open lines and I would gage which topics is of interest to the listeners or an issue is raised and then follow it up

Makungu: So, how are the issues raised, through the open line or?

Refiloe: that's just one way of me creating content, I would listen to maybe on an open line day, I would listen to whatever is brought up and whatever one I feel has more meat or can be followed up then I take it from there, that's just one way of gathering content, otherwise, I used to drive in through the community and find events, uhm if there is an event we can go to or invite into the studio, we would do that. I would write it down. I always always call him and ask what do you think

Makungu: The presenter?

Refiloe: yes, its been three months since I've been on the show, I now know what the listeners want, but in the beginning I had to get his input because I came in with the view that we are going to educate the community, it doesn't matter whether its national news or Alex news, he basically advised that we more Alex, we more community issues and things like that. I listen to a lot of 702, enca news, sabc news, ann7, just to get where we are as a nation. As much as we in Alex and are affected by the things that happen in Alex but we still live in South Africa where we need to know wht is going on. My view is we still need to educate in that way, though its not a lot of it, its probably 20% of the time where we do national news than community news. We do get callers like I said we those who call in are frequent callers those who know the presenter very well, they would sometimes call and say can I come through, speak about this and if its something that's worthy and worth while for the community and the station itself we decide between the two of us If they should come

Makungu: So its just you and him who work on the content

Refiloe: Yes,

Makungu: so you don't have any other people who work on the show?

Refiloe: Yes we have, Ramatamu is the resident journalist, so he is now on the ground, I think he is also writes for Alex Today if im not mistaken or greater Alex, so he brings people to say I have spoken, or there was this issue in the township I have spoken to them they can come through. I don't know if you were listening, last week Thursday they had ARDO and AMSTDA taxi association. They basically signed a peace pact, he was on the ground, he knew about that, he contacted the guys and they came through to the studio, the work on the content is basically between the three of us

Makungu: Alright, so in terms of, like going back to what you listening to mainstream media radio station and filter that information to the community. Is there ever a way for you trying to do that in the opposite, like set the agenda for mainstream media, for example you spoke about how you listen to 702 right, you take the news agenda set there nationally right, and try have a local angle to the community

Refiloe: we do that, like I said we try to move away from too much national news, but we do 20/30% of the time we infiltrate national news to our community news, we do include it

Makungu: So in getting Alex news out, is it one of your goals or keep it within the community. Like I know the MEC is launching this drugs must fall, (I read it in the paper in the front) so do you guys try make that dominant in the mainstream, so whats the relationship with trying to get this content in the mainstream media

Refiloe: we have people like Ramatamu, im not, I did media studies, I can say im on the technical part, but not so much because im not even hands on, but I saw the need to learn how to operate the desk, but there is a group of people/journalists rather who get the news, we have a Facebook page Alex FM where they post. Im not sure how they do it, but I know that when we have events we do get people from 702, we do get people from sabc and they engage. Im not on the ground unless there is nothing and im trying to get contact and im not finding anything, I have to literally go in and talk to people or visit community centres to see whats on the boards and touch base. Basically, Alex Today and Greater Alex helps me see relevant issues, or issues that will impact the community in terms of, I don't think it has a lot of readership but people do listen to the radio. We try to put whats in the paper on radio

Makungu: so your engagement with the community its basically physical like going to the community. Whats your relationship in terms of engagement through social media as the content producer

Refiloe: I'm very technologically challenged, so these things still give me anxiety. Its been a plan to create a page and a twitter account, and the host is quite old, if I am he's probably worse than I am. But it is a plan that we have been trying to get going. I use the Alex FM Facebook page just to also see , ([Makungu interjects] so you want to have your own as Power Talk), Yes

Makungu: Do You have like scheduled diary meetings, what is the technical process of you coming together with the presenter to come up with content for the show?

Refiloe: Because I work, I have a formal job, I go in the morning and come back at 5, I just started a month ago, Two months ago we use to meet on a second day basis to, I think it was mainly for me because I wanted to familiarise myself with him, he's style who he is and how he does things because he's been in the industry more than I have been, but now we speak a lot over the phone, like on Friday, no Saturday I had to call him and be like listen this is who I found for Monday or this is who send me an email saying they would like to come to get feedback from him, like what do you think, are you comfortable about it. Do you want to do a read up about it so I can confirm the interview. So we speak a lot over the phone, including Ramatamu the journalist, a lot of the time I liase with him to hear, do you have someone if they do that would be our stand by and we would put his people on to the show.

Makungu: So what are your or general issues you find that the community wants to be addressed, is it crime, is it health, is it financial what is the main

Refiloe: It changes, I think its very interesting how it changes with what is trending in the mainstream, though there are prominent issues such as housing, drugs, alcohol and drug abuse, education, school issues. Those are the most prominent issues that come out to say what are we doing about this, yes its frustrating. Yesterday we had a show, the chairperson of SGB in Alex, you could hear that it hit home because parents have issues with kids at school, kids that are roaming around during school hours, kids that are selling drugs at school. So I would think crime, alcohol abuse, housing issues like when we have a topic or a guest addressing housing issues the phone lines are off the hook

Makungu: so you measure that through the call ins?

Refiloe: Yes, and entrepreneurship, there are many young people interested in that, we try have a show once a week where we speak with entrepreneurs who are hosting workshops and things like that.

Makungu: going back to the issue of entrepreneurship, so I was sitting in the front desk and me being me eaves dropping on peoples conversation, there was one lady who looked distressed and came in looking for one of the journalists I think it was Ramatamu. She was saying she has emailed this guy who promised her and group that he will do a business plan for them and now he is nowhere to be found and he is not answering their calls and he has taken the money and things like that. And last

week I think you guys had an accountant [refiloe: yes it was Thursday the shimam group] taking about financials. So how do you deal for example, now she came with a problem which is more of a story, I don't know how you guys will handle it maybe you gonna release an article so people can know about it, now in terms of your show as power talk how do you then link up your content with issues that come in with reports or things like that.

Refiloe: for me its usually difficult to do research, remember when you go on air you always have to have facts and have to be objective and cant take one persons side of the story. Because they are on the ground I usually wait for the story to be covered and if theres any issue I need to know ill contact one of the journalists who covered the story just so that we cover ourselves and don't have any come backs and things like that, so you have to always be careful and sensitive

Makungu: coming back to that story neh, so you guys did a financial show, helping the community with basic accounting for business and doing financial statements. How do you guys ensure, how do you measure the fruitfulness or impact in has on the community members . do you guys get feedback, what's the relationship in terms of feedback about the content you have produced on the show.

Refiloe: I usually get a lot of smses not much emails, but I would get smses from either the guest, which is not much measurable who will say thank you that was a good interview, thanks for bringing this up and things like that. From the community side I have not really measured which is something I must do actually, otherwise we look at the ratings, I try go into the programmes manager and say, how we looking, is there anything, any changes and things like that.

Interview: Ramatamu, Senior Journalist

Makungu: As part of the Power talk, what informs your content

Rams: Like we've been saying, Alex is still under developed, Alex is still lacking behind at a lot of things, and these things inform our content. Its like a walk in centre, people just bring their issues, you give them platform on air, other community members can advise as well, even if they have been harassed or there are any acts of human violation. We are informed by the people, they raise issues they are the ones that know what is happening in their lives, they know their challenges and they

guide our content. We cannot limit them in national spheres where things are happening, we sometimes get into those kind of topics, politics, crime related stories at national level, we just have the ability to make them relevant to them locally. Housing is a major issue in Alex

Makungu: before we go into talking about housing as a major issue, how do you identify these issues. What is the process like, so do you guys just wait for people to walk in with issues, how, so what is the relationship/process of gathering your content. So in other diary meetings they would sit in a room like this and pitch stories. So how do you find the content lets start there

Rams: Okay, yes, somehow we can be informed by events if there are public events, like government and stakeholders that are coming to address people, we can find a story in that. Somehow by just looking for example incomplete construction projects, we raise an issue on that to say there's a building that is still not finished what is happening. We make follow ups to check what is happening and if there's been any improvements on stories that have been covered. Tip offs, we are informed by the season, we know that this is the flood season so we know there will be issues at Jurskei we know their living conditions they are just next to the river so we look at those kind of issues and they give us content. Sometimes because we work hand in hand with the municipality they send us press releases, they tell us this is what is happening they will be coming in Alex they want coverage

Makungu: So do you now for example get press releases , now bring some of the issues raised in the press releases to be part of the show.

Rams: yes, they can also be part of our news bulletin

Makungu: so there is a relationship between your news bulletin and the content for the show

Rams: Absolutely, they are not in isolation, they can use what they have heard in our talk show, they can put it in our news bulletin

Makungu: so its vice versa, its not one in the other

Rams: No no we are hand in hand, if they've got something because uhm like a big issue, you've got limited time on the news bulletin so to expand it, to talk about it

more, we take it to the talk show and then we invite people to come and expand more on a specific topic

Makungu: so with the issues that you guys have, so you've told me how you find content, through events, tip offs visits but then how do you select what goes on air, so for example if there are evens by government and they give you press releases how do you decide what goes on air

Rams: there's quite a lot, the sensitivity, how it impacts or touches on the lives of people at that particular moment. Its like choosing, you've got different stories and then you choose what is more important than the other. Like if we have a government event, we are expecting government spokesperson and all of sudden fire breaks somewhere down in second avenue, we are going to prioritize that, we look at the sensitivity, how breaking it is and how peoples lives are affected by what would have happened at that particular moment. So they fluctuate but at the end of the day where peoples lives are endangered are at risk, that story will come on top. We will prioritize that story and then all other issues will come at the bottom, that's how we go about choosing what comes first and then these other less sensitive one, less important one so to say, we can always say you know what, you, you can come later in the week, but then this is what we must cover first. If a child has been raped, someone has been killed you know we have to focus on that and deal with it.

Makungu: So what is the relationship coz you talking about sensitivity and peoples lives and that's how select content and prioritize what to cover first and what takes precedence. What's the relationship with community members in terms of trying to seek content from them

Rams: No that one is quite simple you know uh, Alex FM is for as the name says its for the community of Alex, it is community driven, we cannot do anything without the community. The community, they phone, they tell us their issues and then we always strive to get solutions to their issues, we try. They come in some of them have our personal numbers most of them WhatsApp us and tell us that Ramatamu this is what is happening I need your attention. They no longer take us like journalists, its like we are the link between their issues and government. Ramatamu can you guys help I need a house, I've got a leaking pipe can you please get hold of the councillor. They give us stories but at the same time they also expecting us to give them solutions.

So We've got an open relationship, they know at anytime that they can talk to us and we always try even though we sometimes are busy we always try to attend to their issues.

Makungu: So you spoke about housing and it being a major issue in Alex, how did you identify that it was a major issue in Alex.

Rams: Uh, im not quite sure about the figures, I think in Alex we are over half a million the people who are staying in Alex. You can imagine in one square mile so many people, its like a ticking time bomb what is happening in Alex, and people just to get shelter will end up staying in dangerous conditions like the river banks people are now building on pavements, that's why people are now staying in abounded factory buildings, that has told us that in deed there's a serious challenge of housing. Lately the illegal land invasions where people are just occupying any vacant piece of land. That has informed us that there is a serious challenge of housing.

Makungu: So I can deduce that you guys work from the ground, you go to the places, go around the streets and identify that oh now there's new buildings on the pavement so that how you actually got to see

Rams: exactly, even the demonstrations, the protests you know, now and then people will be marching, seeking and looking for the answers. People will call you and tell you that I've been waiting for a house since, 1996 what is happening, people are still on waiting lists and there is nothing happening. Young people will tell you that I'm old enough now I'm tired of living with my parents I need my privacy. Those kind of things they tell us that there's a challenge, young people want their own spaces. And there is no land in Alex, there's land that we are told belongs to Wits university, Franken World and people are asking themselves when will they be given land because that land can accommodate a majority of the people, we told that Wits is currently negotiating with government to see how can the people of Alex be given that land. That's why lately people occupy that land because its vacant and nothing is happening and they wanna know when are we going to get that land so that the massive backlog can be reduced.

Makungu: with this housing issue, then how do you make that content for the show

Rams: we also experience people complaining like someone has stolen my house and I've rented my house to someone and that person doesn't want to pay, or now it's a flood season and someone has been taken by the river, someone has been swept by the river, then we come together and say at the end of the day its because of the housing challenge that these things happened. Frequent shack fires and at the end of the day. When we summarise it and say if there was land there wouldn't be these shack fires, people would be having their own land to build their homes not like how these shacks are so squeezed that there is no space, but when they are apart a little bit. When there are fires there wont be these damages. At the peak of this we've got two major issues, land and lack of housing.

Makungu: is your content driven by bringing solutions and how do you define development as a station

Rams: We normally even say, we are about, we talk about bread and butter issues these are at the core of service delivery issues. Working together with the community we try to find solutions. Our content yes there are other light things we talk about but people are in pain, people are in misery. Even if you say you know what let me today just distress and be light in my topic but they will call in and tell you their issues like, ke na li probleme le makhelwani (I have a problem with my neighbour) my son is addicted to nyaope. The burden on their shoulders doesn't give them enough space to breathe. This is what they are going through and everyday you know you hardly talk about anything else when you are a presenter on the show, even if you come with your script but you never know what to expect, somebody will be calling and you'll find a way of prioritizing that issue . that's basically our content for the talk show.

Makungu: since you say power talk is mainly for challenges, why is that or what is the reasining behind it

Rams: because there's more time there, you can talk about their issues. It's a platform to debrief, it's a platform for people of Alex to talk about their pain in that space. We cannot rush them, that is why we gave power talk that 2 hours, even though there might be no solutions just opening up, there's that sense of relief that we are given a platform to talk. When you look at Alex, I don't know how to put it. It is

an eye sore, especially we keep comparing Alex to Sandton that in itself is a pain, Alex is just a stone draw from Sandton there are high rise buildings, there are developments and Alex remains un developed. Alex represent the story of pain. As much as we can rejoice over the melting pot of culture and the history of the political leaders but Alex itself it's a story of pain and then for us to heal we get solace from talking, that's why there's power talk, we talk about ordinary people talking about their lives being given that space with their language using various platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp at the end of the day though we may not have solutions we say guys just talk. So, there was once a station manager who tried to change this approach and ask cosmopolitan questions and who tried to make us sound like urban radio it was difficult. Before we change that we need to change the structural position of Alex. Before we can sound like YFM, before we can sound like upper market radio station we need to fix Alex so that we as the community radio station can go somewhere, we cannot change our tone, we cannot change our content while things are like this in Alex. Alex FM will talk about the issues and the pain of Alex forever. But when we change we wanna change together with the community. We caught in between those kind of things, even if you wanna sound otherwise you cant ypu are talking to people who will start questioning. You need to be relevant to them. Like for instance for me when they talk about rats how rats are running havoc in the houses I know about that experience. When they talk about leaking houses especially when it rains I know that experience and I can understand their language and I can speak from their shoes. So when you are somebody coming and people are talking about these challenges you can be confused, sometimes you can ask as a young person why don't you work, why don't you go to school. These are difficult questions

Makungu: when you are saying that how important or how does it aid to your content in terms of people that work behind the scenes, where they are from

Rams: emotional, we get attached to overlook things like time. But we need to be professional and ethical even though we a journalists and need to be ethical because we stay here we know and experience everything first hand as well.

Interview: Takie, Station Manager

Makungu: The general running of the station

Takie: My name is Takalane Namaguwe, im the sation manager of Alex FM. The community convenes to select a board. The board consist of the chair person, deputy chair person, secretary, deputy secretary and five additional board members. And now the board to appoint the station manager. The station manager appoints his or her management team, head of programming, head of news, news editor, there's sales and marketing, there's also head of administration. Those people are the ones who are going to formulate their own teams. For example the programmes manager will then run auditions, look for presenters and producers, to form a department.

Makungu: when I was checking your website one of the pillars where engagement with the community. When it comes to giving the community a voice what does that look like.

Takie: well because we are a radio station there platform is there already. We take calls, we have a show called speak your mind (30 min feature in the breakfast show) where community members can say whats on their mind. For maximum participation for example in programming, we need to engage the community, hear what on their minds. We have the listeners forum. It's a structure supported by the station. It has the chairperson, deputy chair person, secretary and whatsoever. That's the group of loyal listeners of the station. They meet month to month basis. These guys are the eyes and ears of the stations, they are the foot soldiers, they are the ambassadors of the brand. So whatever we do we notify them, we involve them in everything that we do. From events like I said, from changing the programming we involve them because those are the people who listen to the station and their views are always accurate because their views comes from a listener point of view. They will tell you about what kind of content they want to listen to and their views are always welcome.

Makungu: so in your listeners forum, do you change them or is it a fixed group of people

Takie: Unlike board, them they don't get changed, they can change their leadership, and say well we want this person to be our leader, but there isn't much contestation. It goes beyond listening, they do outreach programmes, they donate, collecting food

parcels, and clothes and going to assist the community, but going under the umbrella of Alex. They meet here at Alex FM. I form part of the meetings, if I'm not available another board member or a presenter will be available. They meet every second Saturday of the month. In the meetings, its more about the programming, what needs to be changed, they do events, and have their own programme such as Molo Makhelwani, as they are doing that they will be campaigning for Alex FM

Makungu: your station broadcast in five languages, (Xitsonga, isiZulu, siPedi, Xhosa and English) How do you navigate such a variety of languages.

Takie: The thing about Alex, Alex is diverse, for example if a person is speaking Pedi a Zulu person can understand, this is due to the nature of the place we are coming from. We are a very diverse society, we are multilingual. For the station to take that root is because we are multilingual. For example if you are speaking xhosa, all the Nguni's can understand, if you are speaking Pedi, Sotho's and Tswana's can understand. Venda and Tsonga's, even if they are not the same chances are someone who knows Venda can understand Tsonga, for example I'm Venda but im fluent in Pedi. SO we have chosen those five languages as our core because we know they will cover the rest. We also have strictly, focused traditional shows, for example today from 9-12 we will have a sisotho show. And those are the shows that are doing well for the station, the ratings are always high, you open calls its like a call-in centre, people are more attached to their culture.

Makungu: In terms of choosing your presenters, is it a mandate that they must navigate all these five languages?

Takie: It's a language of your choice, when we say we broadcast in these five languages, its not a must to be able to be fluent in all of them. Each and every language is a stand alone. If you are good in Tsonga, we can still hire, the market we serve is not limiting us. At least understand when a caller is speaking a different language, even though you'll reply in your language chances are they will also understand.

Makungu: Development is one of the themes that have come through in my previous interviews as well as analysing your motto. So how do you push development in the community that you are based in

Takie: well I view Alex FM as a link between the community and the people who can positive change. We are a vehicle or a community leader through media to make sure that we go all out there to get people who can invest in our community. This goes beyond being a radio that provides, information, education and entertainment. To a point that we form strategic relationships with your Wits, Boston Media house Damelin, to give away bursaries in the community. That's development on its own. We also go as far as coming up with programmes like I said with listeners Forum, to give out food parcel to senior citizens. Last Month We gave away 300 food parcels to the senior citizens, and we plan to continue doing that programme. We are a radio station that cares, we are a radio station that wants to see our community benefitting in a way. We are using our brand name, to go maybe to Pick n Pay to say We are Alex, FM we are representing this group of people. we form strategic relationships with your police stations with your clinics, your schools to make sure that as a station people utilize us as something like a safe house. You know last I was attending a Wits workshop in Braynston, we were talking about local truth and trust in the community through media. Community radio stations we become a family member because when they listen to the station, they are expecting su to tell them the truth and they trust us. So sometimes when they going through whatsoever, for example when a child is missing they will go to the police and also come to Alex FM because they know Alex FM will be able to assist them

Makungu: do you take the cases forward.

TaKie: So the process will be like, we will first publicise it because we are a radio station, we will make noise about it, that there is such a child who is missing, during that time we run a parallel process to link you up with the police. We have a working relationship that they will prioritize us. Believe it or not the police, the system Is not effective but if it comes through us they will prioritize it.

Makungu: to talk about the current Affairs talk show with Bra Muntu, why do you think it is important for your station to have such a show.

Takie: Well. Ive actually presented the show before, I've won several awards for that show. That show is very important as a community radio station we are not a music show, we are more of a talk station. We are content driven, we are more of education. A show of that nature with Bra Muntu is a show that avails a platform to

deal with various issues, from service delivery, health, education, any thing that affects the community, youth empowerment, whatsoever, women empowerment, whatsoever that has content and affect us gets to be discussed on the show. So the main aim of that show is to create a platform and let people have conversations. The show if you listen to it is anot about the presenter its about people having conversation. I believe that in the absence of conversation problems will continue to exist but the more we have conversations the more we will have solutions. So that's the gist about the show, finding solutions through conversation, that's why it is more of a talk and relaxed show

Makungu: So how do you think having conversations aids to development

Takie: Well remember we using this kind of a show for officials to account, remember these people who are listening to the show are the people who voted for these officials. So for us to track the development when Herman Mashaba says vote for me I'll build a school and a clinic and a stadium then we going avail the very same platform and call him and also call the people he told so that they can have him account, you did say you are going to build this and that, tell us how far are you still going to build those schools. Those conversations are helpful, they form part of accountability for government, they form part of tracking service delivery they form part of tracking development of our community, so if people raise issues and we able to use our powers as a station to get the relevant people t come and account. If for instance they are complaining about not having water in Alex, we will avail the platform and call the minister of water and sanitation Nomvula Mokonyane to say the people of Alex have no water what needs to be done. A soluion will arise from that conversation and we will be able to have water. So those conversations we are having is the more we are getting things done and speading the process. As I said if we are not having these conversations there will never be water because Nomvula will never come down when its a protest but if they are called by the media they will respond.

Makungu Housing

Takie: As far as 94, the issue of housing in Alex is a burning one, even government I can see they are trying but they are failing to address it. The issue is not housing is land. Alex is very congested, even government they have run out plans of how to

develop Alex. People don't have housing and there's no land that's why it will remain a burning issue.

Listening Diary

Date	Topic	Guests	Highlights (bread and butter issues)
18/07/2017	Madiba Day 67 min	1. Boipelo Mabe 2. Mme Tshidi from Refiloe legae 3. Young lions (Mpho, Thabang, Merve	- Poverty (growing up in alex, overcoming soci-economic challenges, education - Charity, giving back, healthcare or underprivileged children - Housing issues and developments about land at Franken World
19/07/2017	Land issues	1. Bright Mashaba and Thokozani Mnsis 2. Duma	- It was touch base of the two gentlemen who lost their jobs in a fraudulent

		Kalushi president of Mabona bona	contract and appealing for job placements - Housing, and land issues which is a continuous issue
04/09/2017	Stories making headlines	1. Resident social activist, Thabo Mupatsi	- Community announcements - Gangsterism in the community, community welfare - History of Alex and struggles that arose from Alex.
21/09/2017		1. COSATU national Spokesperson Sizwe Pamla 2. Shimah group & Santam 3. Sesi Busi	- National Strike on corruption and state capture. - Managing service providers in small businesses - Cemetery clean up for the community of

			Alex.
12/10/2017	Santam night (Thursday shows)	1. Noxolo Dlamini 2. Adom Fiser	- From engineering company talking about contractors and insurance for engineering s-s-sector
25/10/2017	Open line	Different callers	- Housing was the main issue callers were taking about - Flats and criticizing of councillors a
15/11/2017	- A new TV Show - Zimbabwe Crisis	Mojo Diamond	- Father figures - Encouraging men to be involved in the lives of their children and fight the stigma and statics around fatherlessness - Covering Headlines, Zimbabwe Crisis
21/11/2017	Crime	Lolo Likalaka from	- Killings,

		Tsutsumani Mike Bhiya	- House breaks In the Tsutsumani section - Crime - Xenophiba arising due to the crime - Accusing of foreign nationals taking jobs from local memebers.