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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

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ABSTRACT

Community radio is radio that serves a specific community. In South Africa, Community radio licenses are issued on two grounds, to either serve a geographic community or a community of interest. In both these instances the mandate is to serve the community and provide content that is relevant to the community. Aleaz (2010) highlight that Community radio is supposed to empower the marginalised communities and give them a voice. One of the ways to empower these communities and give them a voice is through programming and providing content that represent them and maximising their participation in programming. This research looked at how content was selected for *Alex FM's* Current affairs talk show. It explored how content is gathered and selected with the aim of establishing whether communities are involved in the process. It also sought to investigate the factors that contribute to content selection and whether there is any link to community participation and development.

The research is located within the tenets of public sphere and the democratic participatory theory. These theories offered an understanding of the role community radio plays in community in development. Democratic participatory theory values inclusion of citizen's voices in public deliberations. This was corresponded with the public sphere theory's version of Nancy Fraser's of the sub-altern public spheres. The theory highlighted that there is a need to have multiple public spheres to allow the marginalized who cannot participate in Habermas's bourgeois public sphere to still have a voice.

Qualitative research methodology was used to explore the content selection process at *Alex FM* for their current affairs show. Together with participant observations and pilot listening the researcher used these methods to collect data.

The findings revealed that factors that contribute to the selection of content are news values. Topicality and relevance being the main ones captured in this study. The findings also show that content gathering process at Alex FM; maximises community participation. Subsequently, this guides the station (or producers of the talk show) to structure content of the show in line with the needs of the communities.