

The Potential of Community Radio in Fostering Economic Empowerment of Youths in The Cape Flats Communities

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role community radio plays in fostering the economic empowerment of youths in the Cape Flats. Using Bush Radio as a case study, the researchers theoretically anchored the study on Dennis McQuail's (1987) media development theory. The study population comprised management staff, presenters, and listeners of Bush Radio. Findings revealed that Bush Radio positions youth at the forefront of their programming. The station serves as a credible source of information relevant and beneficial to young people focusing on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, education, and employment creation. Findings reveal that the station's youth-centric programmes focus on crucial community media tenets of localism and participation, which affords local young talent of artists a platform to promote and monetise their creative material. Finally, some of the study's findings revealed the station acts as a conduit that connects youths with government and relevant organisations offering opportunities to uplift and better their livelihoods.

KEYWORDS

Community Radio; Empowerment; Youth; Youth empowerment; development communication.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji peran radio komunitas dalam mendorong pemberdayaan ekonomi kaum muda di Rumah Susun Tanjung. Dengan menggunakan Radio Bush sebagai studi kasus, para peneliti secara teoretis mengaitkan studi ini dengan teori pengembangan media Dennis McQuail (1987). Populasi penelitian ini adalah staf manajemen, presenter, dan pendengar Bush Radio. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa Bush Radio memposisikan pemuda di garis depan program mereka. Stasiun ini berfungsi sebagai sumber informasi kredibel yang relevan dan bermanfaat bagi kaum muda yang berfokus pada kewirausahaan, literasi keuangan, pendidikan, dan penciptaan lapangan kerja. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa program stasiun yang berpusat pada pemuda berfokus pada prinsip media komunitas yang penting tentang lokalisme dan partisipasi, yang memberikan platform seniman muda berbakat lokal untuk mempromosikan dan memonetisasi materi kreatif mereka. Akhirnya, beberapa temuan penelitian mengungkapkan stasiun bertindak sebagai saluran yang menghubungkan pemuda dengan pemerintah dan organisasi terkait yang menawarkan peluang untuk mengangkat dan memperbaiki mata pencaharian mereka.

KATA KUNCI

Radio komunitas; Pemberdayaan; Anak muda; Pemberdayaan anak muda; Komunikasi pembangunan.

INTRODUCTION

The debate about which medium is powerful in disseminating information quickly and easily accessible to communities is ongoing. The goal of communication is for messages sent by an encoder (sender) to be easily understood by the decoder (receiver). Given the radio's portability characteristics, affordability, and reach, it is arguably the most potent means of connecting with individuals and communities. According to Al-Hassan, Andani & Abdul-Malik (2011:1), radio as a communication medium has played a significant role in nations' economic, political, and cultural development. Its uniqueness makes it one of the most appealing and universal mass media for participatory communication and action (TeerTomaselli & De Villiers, 1998:147). The South African media landscape is vibrant, dynamic, and ever-changing since the dawn of democracy, which is why it is arguably one of the largest, complex, robust, and matured media industries within the African continent (Maphiri, 2009:33).

However, in Sullivan, cited in (Lloyd 2013) 's view, South Africa's media is one of the most concentrated globally, affecting its quality and the sales of its newspapers. It can be a result of the dominance in the industry by few large media groups such as Media24 (owned by Naspers), Times Group (owned by Tiso Blackstar), *Independent Newspapers*, *Caxton*, and *the SABC* (state-owned). In response to this media concentration, community media emerged to fulfil a mandate of diversifying the airwaves and providing a media that reflects the needs and aspirations of all South Africans (Potye, 2018).

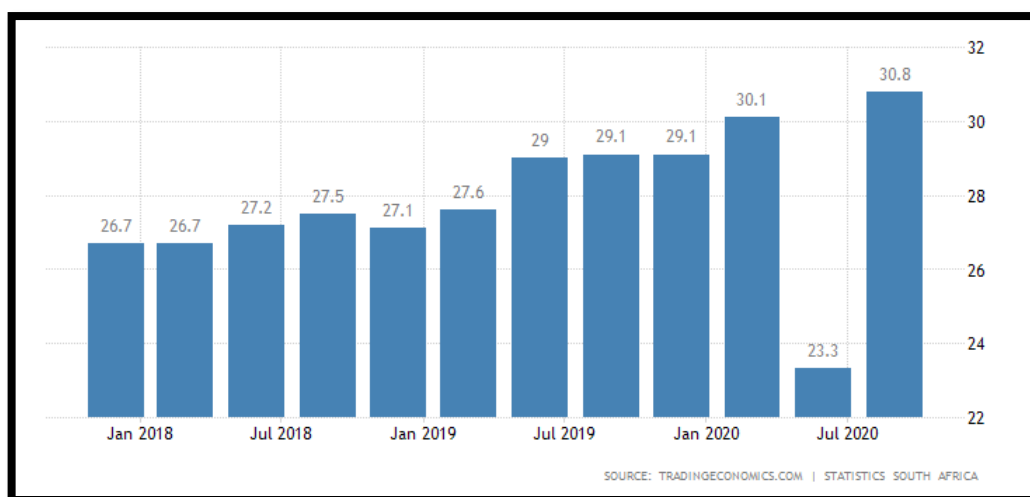
Scholars such as Fombad & Jiyane (2019), Chemwaina (2014), and Nirmala (2015) regard community radio as one of the key platforms that can fulfil the role of empowerment and the improvement of livelihoods of community members. Community radio in South Africa is an essential component of the overall democratisation of communications that started in the 1990s in the wake of a crumbling apartheid system (Murkens, 2009:1). Community radio offers a third model of radio broadcasting in addition to commercial and public broadcasting. These community stations serve geographic communities and communities of interest. They broadcast content that is popular and relevant to a local, specific audience but overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters. Despite their noble intentions and mandate, community stations face persistent challenges (NAB, 2019:20) such as signal interference, technological, financial and governance support. The Parliament Portfolio Committee on Communications (2018:14) revealed that one of the most prominent challenges community media faces is that many government departments are not keen on advertising in their publications or radio stations. In cases when they advertise, government departments want it done for free.

Given that community radio's mandate (in the case of this study, community radio) is to support the quest for community development, the challenges faced by community radio have direct ripple effects on society at large. For example, South Africa has an

unemployment problem. S.A. News (2020) reports that unemployment in the country rose to 30.1% in the first three months of 2020. The report reads:

“The number of unemployed persons increased by 344 000 to 7.1 million. As a result, the official unemployment rate increased by one percentage point to (30.1%) compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. The percentage of South Africans aged 15 - 64 years with jobs (the absorption rate) has declined by 0.3, a percentage point to 42.1%. The labour force participation rate increased by 0.5 of percentage points to 60.3% in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019” (STATS SA, 2020).

Figure 1. Two-year unemployment rates for South Africa

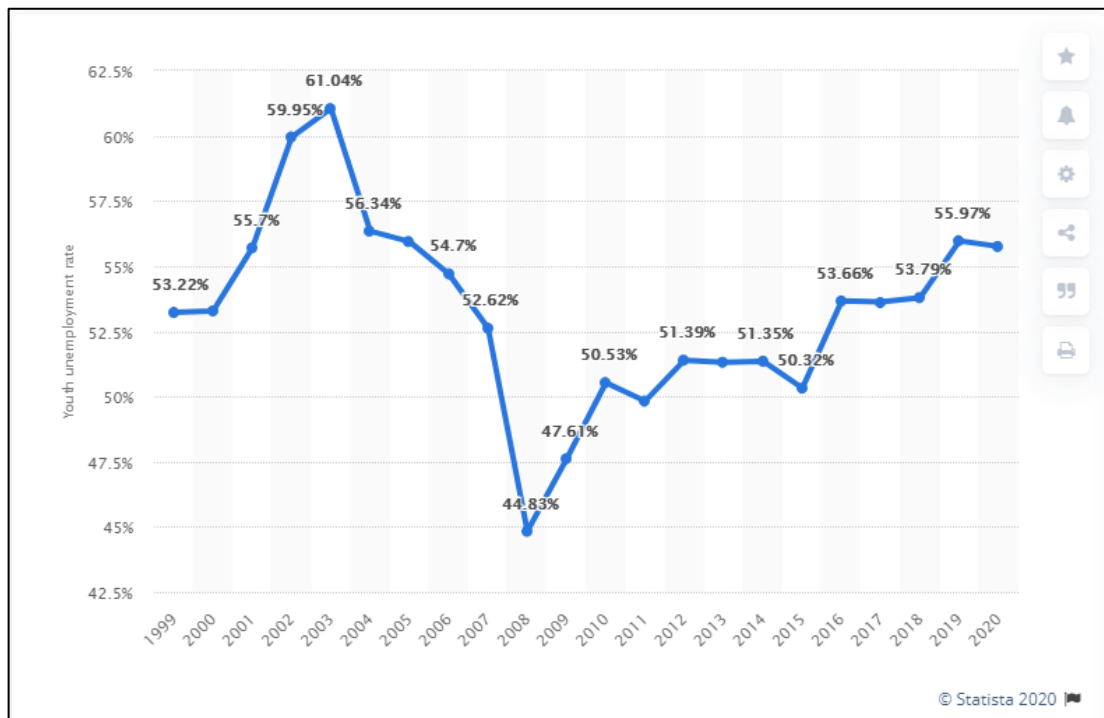


Source: STATS SA, 2020

Given rising unemployment in South Africa, especially amongst its burgeoning youth population, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts to mitigate social malaise. The media, society’s trusted ally, can play an essential role in programming to sensitise and empower. Al-Hassan, Andani and Abdul-Malik (2011) posit that community radio can play a significant role at the grassroots level for rural development. For instance, poverty, agriculture, gender inequality, education, and social problems could focus on programming.

Globally, South Africa has the highest inequality levels with a Gini coefficient of about 0.67 (Arko-Achemfuor, 2016:52). The World Bank reveal that youths account for 60% of all Africa’s joblessness. In North America, the youth unemployment rate is 25% but even more significant in Botswana, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, and South Africa (Ighobor, 2017). Italy (32%), Spain (34%) and Greece (40%) are the top three countries across the 36 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries with high youth unemployment (Fleming, 2020).

The figure below illustrates the youth unemployment rate in South Africa between 1999 and 2020.

Figure 2. The youth unemployment rate in 2020

Source: Statista, 2020

This graph illustrates the South African youth unemployment rate escalated exponentially from 53.22 in 1999 to 61.04% in 2013. It indicates the country experienced an 8% increase in five years. From 2004 until 2008, the country recorded a significant decline from 56.34% to 44.83%, which was the first and last enormous decline the country experienced. Since then, these figures have been slowly cumulative until 2010. From 2011 – 2015, the unemployment rate remained consistent, with an insignificant increase of 2%. Furthermore, these figures increased from 50.32% to 55.75% in 2020, slightly the same position the country was in two decades ago, as indicated in the graph. In summary, this graph depicts that the youth unemployment rate has been on the rise for many years in the last two decades, and it has turned out to be the tone of the foremost socio-economic challenges facing youths in the country.

In the Western Cape, youth unemployment records the highest statistic for those without matric compared to those with any tertiary education and training (De Lannoy et al., 2018:12). Furthermore, data shows the perpetual struggle of youths growing up in an impoverished environment such as the Cape Flats trying to find solutions to their problems. In doing so, young people are probing for support and interventions that would allow them to fulfil their aspirations for themselves and their families.

With all the challenges encountered by young people in South Africa, this study assesses *Bush Radio's* role in fostering economic empowerment amongst youths in the Cape Flats. The focus is on community radio's role in promoting youth empowerment. The media is

only part of an ecosystem dedicated to ensuring that young people in any given society form part of mainstream policy decisions that affect them. Suffice to state that the study does not attempt to ascribe all responsibility for youth empowerment on community radio. Thus, it is essential to state that it is not the researchers' intention in this study to adduce all duties for youth empowerment on community radio. The researchers understand the complexities of the youth empowerment discourse and recognise the immense influence radio plays in setting public discourse agendas and initiating desirable social change.

Youth is the backbone of any society. Youth is the period of adolescence during which young people transition from childhood to adulthood, become sexually mature and experience an increasing social and economic autonomy (Sumberg, Anyidoho, Leavy, te Lintelo, and Wellard, 2012:5). There is no generally accepted definition of the term youth because of its fluidity as a category describing a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood (Adebayo, 2018:146). However, globally, age has been the best possible means of defining the group. For example, the United Nations defines youth, thus: '...For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines those between the ages of 15 and 24 as a youth without prejudice to other definitions by the Member States' (Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/40/256, 1985).

In South Africa, youth is regarded as a significant human resource for development, often acting as crucial agents for social change, economic expansion, and innovation (The Presidency, 2015:2). According to the National Youth Policy (2015:10), anyone between the ages of 14 – 35 categorised as a youth. Similarly, the African Union Youth Charter also classifies young people between 15 and 35 as youths. Several U.N. entities, instruments and regional organisations have different definitions of youth, which the United Nations secretariat recognises, as summarised below.

Table 1. Definitions of youth according to various U.N. entities

Entity/Instrument/Organisation	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15-24	U.N. Instruments, Statistics
UN-Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth 15-32	Agenda 21
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: Youth: 15-24	UNFPA
UNICEF /The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child until 18	UNICEF
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15-35	African Union, 2006

The term 'empowerment is typically viewed broadly depending on its conceptualisation (Risler, Holosko & Hatcher, 2008:58). According to Quinn & Davies (1999:116), the

concept of empowerment originated with Aristotle's (384-322 BC) conceptualisation of power as potency; 'ideas and the movements of people and animals resulted from their power'. Based on several definitions of empowerment from literature, it is an ongoing process to enable individuals to access and control material and informational resources. Furthermore, Eyben, Cornwall & Kabeer (2008:5) posits empowerment fundamentally anchors around power. Power allows people to have the courage to do things they never thought capable of and the power that comes from working alongside others to claim what is rightfully theirs. In the South African context, the government for various developmental interventions leading to social change, whether for youth or women empowerment, has used the concept of empowerment.

For this study, youth empowerment (from the media consumption perspective) is a process of capacitating young people between the ages of 18 - 35 through information, education, and entertainment; to make choices and then transform those choices into desired aspirations. Also, to support them to develop the knowledge and the necessary skills required for them to succeed. The term empowerment refers to a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest, and mobilisation that challenge fundamental power relations.

Marginalisation and exclusion of women and youths in society are significant issues that have been in existence for centuries. However, media convergence has open communication mediums to be more affordable and accessible to society, especially to marginalised groups such as youth, disabled, and women. This section of the study explores how community radio has been (or can be) utilised as a vehicle to foster the social inclusion of young people through media production.

In South Africa, the Children's Radio Foundation (2021) utilises radio to create opportunities for information sharing, access to public services, dialogue, leadership, advocacy, and community building among youth. Besides offering young people training as reporters and content creators, the foundation affords them a platform to broadcast essential issues to them and their communities (giving them a voice). Some of the topics covered in their content are gun violence, climate change, gang violence, sexual and reproductive health, and unemployment (Gupta, 2020).

Similarly to the CRF, the *Young Reporters Network* (YRN) in Tanzania offers young people a unique opportunity to share their concerns, experiences, hopes, and aspirations and effectively participate in bringing about behavioural and social change through content featured on traditional and social media. The programme aims to increase young people's active participation in the production of children's programmes and develop their capacity to advocate for child's rights (UNICEF, 2014). The *Greater Lebowakgomo FM* is one of the proactive community radio stations in Limpopo for youth participation and involvement. The station provides young people with skills and tools to produce their

weekly programmes, which serves as their platforms to share their views about young people's challenges within the station's communities.

Through these case studies explored, it is apparent that community radio serves as a preferred medium to provide marginalised young people with a platform to raise issues of importance to them and their communities. The content produced by these emerging broadcasters ensures to eliminate the usual traditional stereotypes about youths and their challenges – through framing their own stories without an adult point-of-view. These case studies also indicate that radio is a tool that young people can utilise to gain experiential knowledge by producing media content that speaks about youths and their challenges in society.

Previous studies in South Africa (Gondwe & Mavindidze, 2014; Bosch, 2014; and Fombard & Jiyane, 2019) have focused on community radio's impact and role in society. While the studies mentioned above have dealt with community radio's role in society in general and their commercial viability or lack of it, few studies look at community radio's role in specific communities. Even fewer studies have explored community radio programmes targeting specific population groups like youths in particular communities. This study sets out to fill this research gap.

Another critical gap underpinning this study is the growing concerns amongst practitioners and community radio station owners that community radio stations are underfunded and unable to play their social responsibility roles and fulfil their mandates. One of the apparent effects of community radio's lack of funds is how they often replicate programmes aired by commercial radios, thereby (unwittingly) tilting towards commercialisation.

McQuail (1987)'s Development Media Theory underpins this study. This theory is one of the six normative theories of the press: Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory, Soviet Communism Theory, Democratic Participant Media Theory, and Development Media Theory. These theories are more concerned with prescribing how media should operate if specific social values are observed or attained (McQuail, 2005:14). Also, these normative theories have given guidance on the role of communication media in different cultures and eras (Musa, 1997:133).

McQuail (1987:199-121), as the proponent, identifies the basic assumptions (six principles) of the *development theory*; the media should make a positive contribution to the national development process; the state should restrict the media if economic interests and the development needs of the society are at stake; the media should give preference to information about national, cultural and language issues; the media should give priority to information about other developing countries that are geographically, culturally, and politically akin to one another; journalists have both responsibilities and liberties in obtaining and distributing data; in the name of protecting development

objectives, the state has the right to intervene by restricting and censoring the media. States subsidies and direct control are, therefore, justifiable.

The theory's central argument is that the media should prioritise the coverage of those areas that touch on people's lives. Also, it emphasises that the media must play a supportive role in government policy and programmes rather than being critical of governments, their programmes, and personnel (Baran & Davis, 2012). Furthermore, Johnson & Johnson (2013:101) argue that this theory proposes that the government intervene and foster development using communication programmes and action (policies). In South Africa, the media are often blamed by elected politicians, including the former President (Jacob Zuma), for not doing enough to publicise government achievements in housing, telecommunications, education, and health. Fourie (2007:198) adds the government accuses the South African media of focusing on the negative to the detriment of economic progress.

Despite its noble developmental agenda, Ihechu (2019:50) notes that the development media theory has its critics because many countries (even the developing ones) embrace democracy; the same democracy is against any form of media control infringing principle press freedom. However, unlike some of these countries, in South Africa, civil society plays a very instrumental role in ensuring the government does not control or censor media. For example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) attempted to censor its programming (by not covering service delivery protests) during Hlaudi Motsweneng on the organisation's helm. However, such actions did not prevail due to civil society organisations' powerful activism as "watchdogs".

McQuail (cited in Suleiman, 2018:197) describes mass media as development agents by sending out technical knowledge, encouraging individual change, exercising voting rights, aiding literacy, education, population control, and good health quality. Radio is a medium that penetrates disadvantaged communities. According to Odine (2014:49), youth nowadays communicate their concerns through the radio as a companion they trust. This close relationship between young people and radio affords the government a vital opportunity to engage and distribute its developmental information with youth through this medium.

This study employs this theory because it has to do with recognising access and media resources to pursue the developmental agenda. As a powerful mass medium in South Africa, radio serves as a crucial mass media platform to assist the government in accelerating youth empowerment and development. By employing this theory, the researcher assessed the Bush Radio station's role in fostering youths' economic empowerment in the Cape Flats through its programming.

METHOD

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers adopted the qualitative research methodology to gather data. In Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard (2014:39)'s view, this research approach allows the researcher to interpret and describe people's actions. Some of the advantages of qualitative research are that it helps researchers understand the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns. Common approaches linked to qualitative research include grounded theory, ethnography, action research, phenomenological research, and narrative research (Bhandari, 2020). Furthermore, by adopting the qualitative research approach, the researchers could interact with the study respondents (i.e. listeners, station management, producers, and content producers) to gain more insight into the topic.

As part of the qualitative study, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with staff and management of *Bush Radio*. The interviews sought to (1) Determine programmes produced by *Bush Radio* targeted at youths, (2) Examine how these radio programmes foster economic empowerment of youths, (3) Ascertain youth perceptions of *Bush Radio's* youth-focused programmes.

Although Cape Town has more than ten on-air commercial and community radio stations, this study considered only one community radio station: *Bush Radio*. *Bush Radio* is one of the oldest pioneering community radio stations in South Africa, which is why it regards itself as the "*Mother of Community Radio in Africa*" (Bush Radio, 2021). Its history dates back to the '80s, when it was formerly known as the Cassette Education Trust (CASET). It started during the height of apartheid as an audio-cassette production project, at the time when South Africa's media industry was under the government's control (Bosch, 2008:73). The station played a pivotal role in producing political content, such as the Defiance Campaign led by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). The rationale behind the selection of *Bush Radio* as a station of choice for this study is that it's the only station in Cape Town, with approximately 80% of its listeners are youths within the age group 15 – 35 (Bush Radio, 2021).

The researchers conducted the study in the Cape Flats community of Cape Town. Cape Flats refers to areas that the Apartheid government carved out for non-white Capetonians forcefully relocated under the Group Areas Act (S.A. Venues, 2021). Cape Town Travel (2021), Cape Flats consists of black and coloured communities such as Khayelitsha, Manenberg, Mitchells Plain, Bishop Lavis, Nyanga, Hanover Park, Phillipi, Bonteheuwel, Delft, Pinelands and Gugulethu. For example, the Youth Explorer report indicates youths in Mitchells Plain records 19% of its population; 21% in Khayelitsha; and 19% in Bishop Lavis (De Lannoy, Fortuin, Mpofu-Mketwa, Mudiriza, Ngcowa, Storme, and Smith 2018:10). Despite the high youth unemployment rate and escalating levels of human

trafficking and gang violence, these Cape Flats townships, to some degree, remain poverty-stricken (SAHO, 2021).

The researchers distributed 90 questionnaires to the respondents (youths) in the Cape Flats townships — Manenberg, Mitchells Plain, Khayelitsha, Elsies River, Nyanga and Phillipi. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of one research assistant. It included randomly selecting youths around these communities who were willing to complete the questionnaire. In addition, the researcher engaged study participants in public spaces within the study's delineated areas. The term 'public spaces' refers to places where you would easily find youths, such as taxi ranks, local spaza shops, recreational parks, etc. Unfortunately, a significant number refused to participate in this study due to safety concerns from COVID19. Furthermore, given the high rate of crime in the communities, some youths also declined participation. Subsequently, the researcher was only able to retrieve twenty (20) questionnaires, as indicated below.

Cape Flats townships	Questionnaire Targets	Questionnaires completed
Manenberg	15	2
Elsiesrvier	15	2
Mitchells Plain	15	5
Khayelitsha	15	4
Nyanga	15	3
Phillipi	15	4
TOTAL NUMBERS	90	20

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bush Radio programming targeted at youths

As earlier stated, the researchers conducted interviews with Bush Radio presenters and senior officials to determine the programmes produced by the station targeted at youths. As a result, the researchers identified the following programmes as a sample for the study based on audience reach and content focus for each programme.

Table 2. Bush Radio programmes targeted at youths

Radio Programme	Description	Presenter(s)
1. Sakh'isizwe	Daily talk show dealing with current affairs with guests from civil society, government, political parties, entrepreneurs, and community activists. The show features the local talent of artists, writers, athletes, academics, and community workers. Weekly,	Jasmine Roberts

	the programme is aimed to guide in making a better choice concerning daily life and information dissemination. (Monday – Friday, 12h00 – 14h00)	
2. The Breakfast Rush	3-hour long show which broadcasts 50% local music and features interviews with local artists, sportspeople, entrepreneurs, fashion designers, actors, and community leaders. (Monday – Friday, 07h00 – 10h00)	Yuzriq Meyer
3. The Morning Cruise	Daily informative magazine programme featuring interviews on various topics, designed to help listeners be on Cape Town’s pulse. With <i>Word of the day</i> , <i>Trivia questions</i> , <i>Info Guide</i> , <i>Job shop</i> , <i>Tip of the day</i> and <i>Quote of the day</i> , the programme guaranteed to keep its audiences current and get it talking. The show aims to educate, enlighten, empower, and inform listeners about issues concerning their daily lives without being boring (Monday – Friday, 10h00 – 12h00)	Mkhuseli Veto
4. Everyday People	Drive time show packed with insightful conversations that tackle business and finances, health, sports and even the arts. The drive time show ensures that afternoon is contagious with laughs, the latest music, and heartfelt conversations. After all, it’s all about listeners voices and their stories. (Monday – Friday, 16h00 – 17h00)	Phiwe Manata & Lerato Mashile
5. The Curly Wave Show	A weekend music show offers a platform to young entrepreneurs, emerging and established performing artists and D.J.s, to promote and share their stories and content. Also, the show has a segment that focuses on the latest trends in the entertainment space (Saturday, 12h00 – 14h00)	Michaela Muller

Based on the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher has discovered *Bush Radio* has a strong representation of young people in the driving seat in the production of these programmes, giving youths a voice to be heard. All presenters of these programmes are below age 35. The study also found these programmes aim to inform, educate, and entertain youths and the whole community served by the station. These programmes address a wide range of topics focusing on health, gender equality,

entrepreneurship, unemployment, service delivery, education, arts and culture, politics, sports, and labour matters.

These are some of the findings solicited from the respondents on the content of the station:

“You know, we take the philosophy that a little bit of sugar makes the medicine go down. So, our content is interspersing with social, health, political, and consciousness messages while still maintaining the latest music genres played, opening an opportunity for young artists. So generally, the station’s programming is geared towards a youth audience.”

“The average age of a volunteer or producer/presenter ranges from 22 to about 26. So, young people generate a bulk of the content, and that goes across the board – from news to on-air content.”

“I feel like they are informative and the right type of programmes for our community because they promote and support small businesses.”

Bush radio as a platform for youth economic empowerment

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews have formed a basis for understanding the role played by the radio station in fostering youths’ economic empowerment from the station’s perspective. In the context of the study, economic empowerment (from the media consumption perspective) is a process of capacitating young people through access to information, education, and entertainment; to make choices and then transform those choices into desired aspirations.

Promotes entrepreneurship

The researcher has found that most of the programmes identified by the station have a common element of support for local entrepreneurs and create awareness on entrepreneurship amongst youths. For example, *the everyday People’s* programme dedicates Mondays to local entrepreneurs, offering them a platform free of charge to promote their products and services and share their business experiences with other aspiring young entrepreneurs listening to the station. It also offers free advice on business-related matters such as business registrations, financing, taxes, etc. *In addition, every Wednesday’s Breakfast Rush* focuses on local *movers* and *shakers* in business, sports, arts, fashion, and civil society. The show presents an opportunity for small local businesses to be featured on the show to promote their products and services. Similarly to these two programmes mentioned, *The Morning Cruise* has a segment where youths interested in starting a business need a business mentor to connect them by inviting experts to be part of the show.

The following were some of the responses solicited from the respondents:

“So, Business Monday focuses mainly on businesses and entrepreneurship. We focus on businesses within the community

where we shine a spotlight on them, whether you are from Khayelitsha or Woodstock or even Sea Point.”

“Everyday People has a feature specifically around youth entrepreneurship. So, they do quite a bit and Morning Cruise as well has a lot of segments even the breakfast show that features a lot of young entrepreneurs regularly”.

“...the show has another aspect if you want to start your own business; we invite experts (people who are already in the business sector), and they come to the show to assist”.

Promotes skills training and employment

As stated in the National Youth Policy, young people represent a powerful resource of the country, provided they are supported and enabled to become active members of society. In Johnson (2007:4) 's view, community media deals with empowerment in many ways. One of those is through offering skills training programs to build and strengthen the capacity of both its staff and volunteers. Data revealed that the station has a rich history in skills training and employment for unemployed youths interested in community broadcasting. In addition, the station offers young aspiring broadcasters with (or without qualifications in Journalism or broadcasting) opportunities to gain professional on-the-job experience in presenting, producing and post-production. These interns and volunteers are not paid a salary but receive a stipend to cover their basic needs. Furthermore, the researcher discovered the station, just like many other community radio stations across the country, acts as a training ground for many aspiring broadcasters who require experience in broadcasting; then migrate to the commercial space for greener pastures.

Empowering unemployed youths

The researcher has discovered the programme *Sakh'isizwe* is centred on youth empowerment, and it has a segment focusing on job creation. A feature that offers listeners basic soft skills to enable them to get a job. These skills include crafting a CV, a covering letter, and how to register a business. Furthermore, the show connects youth unemployed youths to relevant youth organisations, which create opportunities for unemployed youths. Also, data shows *The Morning Cruise* show has a dedicated segment focusing on supporting young people searching for employment. Finally, the *Jobshop* feature lists vacant jobs in Cape Town on-air to unemployed listeners with no access to internet access to online employment opportunities (advertisements) and newspaper classifieds.

These are some of the views from the respondents:

“Sakh'isizwe helps the youth by equipping them with employment and educational information.”

“We have high youth unemployment. So, we found that even though certain shows don’t target a youth group, we find things like Jobshop segments, in particular, has been beneficial and interaction is quite great with young people.”

“The Morning Cruise – learn new words and how to upskill according to what companies are currently looking for.”

Promotes local content (music)

Data has revealed the station entrenches localism of its programming, one of the critical tenets of community media as Johnson (2007:3) conceptualised. Tucker (2013:395) asserts that community media must play local music, support local artists, and focus on public affairs as part of its programming principles. Localism is evident through all the youth programmes sampled for this study. As one of the regulatory requirements for community broadcasting, the station actively serves as a platform utilised by local young emerging artists to promote and monetise their creative content (music). The station fulfils this responsibility by affording local emerging and established artists a platform to engage and reach their target audiences and generate more bookings for gigs. Also, the researcher discovered having their music played more frequently allows these local artists to claim royalties from the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO).

Promotes financial literacy amongst youths

A study by Garg & Singh (2018:173) reveals low levels of financial literacy among youth across most parts of the world. In response to this challenge at the local level, the show *Everyday People* on Mondays has a dedicated segment aimed to educate youths on financial matters such as budgeting, black tax, business financial management, savings, and how to invest. In addition, the show brings in financial experts to engage with the listeners (youths) and capacitate them to manage their finances effectively.

One of the respondents revealed in the interview:

“Know Your Story is where we get financial experts, and they breakdown financial terms because most of the time, we find that most young people don’t know the terminologies in terms of what “black tax” is; how SMME’s work, and how taxes work, and so forth. So, we normally invite a financial expert or someone within the financial space to come and breakdown some of the terms in a way people will have an understanding of”

Youth perceptions of Bush Radio programming

The data obtained from the questionnaires formed a basis for understanding how youths perceive the programming produced at the station. The researchers present the in the form of using quotations extrapolated from the questionnaires administered.

In your opinion, what is the role of community radio?

This question served to ascertain respondents’ opinions on the normative function of a community station such as *Bush Radio*. These are some of the responses from the youths sampled for this study.

“To be the voice of the community and any community-related.”

“To act as a voice for the community, broadcast specific viewpoints of the community. In addition, share emergency information about crime hotspots on the Cape Flats.”

“To be informative, play a role in social upliftment.”

“Talk about what’s happening locally in our marginalised communities and bring development to our people.”

“To empower, equip and entertain the community.”

The researchers found that respondents have a basic understanding of the normative role and function of the station under study. However, it has also found that other respondents were not entirely knowledgeable of this function.

Which programme(s) is your favourite on the station, and why?

The researcher discovered some of the programmes sampled for this study turn out to be favourable to the young target audience. Below is the sample data extrapolated from the questionnaire in response to this question:

“The Breakfast Rush – because of the great music and updated news about the Cape Flats and beyond.”

“Sakhisizwe – for it helps me to know what is happening around me and the country at large.”

“The Morning Cruise – to learn new words and how to upskill according to what companies are currently looking for.”

Are you aware of programmes on the radio station that targets youth empowerment?

STUDY AREAS	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Khayelitsha	2	0	2
2. Manenberg	1	0	1
3. Nyanga	1	1	1
4. Mitchells Plain	1	2	2
5. Phillipi	2	1	1
6. Elsiesriver	1	1	0
TOTAL	8	5	7

The study has found that 40% of the respondents are aware of the programmes designed by the station focusing on youth empowerment, whereas 25% of the respondents are not aware, and the other 35% not quite sure if these programmes exist.

What are your impressions of the programme(s) in general?

Findings indicate the respondents have good impressions of various programmes produced by the station, and each respondent has a different perspective with each programme. Some of the feedback received in response to this question posed:

“It helps the youth by equipping them with employment and educational information.”

“I’m just enjoying the music.”

“Listeners share what they think, and the community get a sense of what’s happening concerning local developments.”

“It needs more local music and adds more content.”

“They benefit the community.”

Would you say the station is fostering youth economic empowerment? Please explain

In response to this question, data revealed most of the respondents affirm they believe that the station plays a role in the economic empowerment of youths through its programming. These are some of the responses extrapolated from the respondents:

“Yes, because if you listen to the programme, you end up getting that job you were probably looking for.”

“Yes, programs are educational and entertaining. “

“Yes, it is trying, but it must try harder.”

“Sort of, as it helps the youth know which industries demand which skills.”

“Yes, because it promotions towards young businesses.”

Do you have avenues to air your views and make suggestions to the station?

STUDY AREAS	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Khayelitsha	1	2	1
2. Manenberg	0	0	2
3. Nyanga	1	2	0
4. Mitchells Plain	1	2	2
5. Phillipi	1	2	1
6. Elsiesriver	0	1	1

TOTAL	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	7 (35%)
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Data below shows that most (45%) of the respondents are not aware of channels at the station to add or forward their suggestions and inputs regarding programming. A minimum number (20%) of the respondents are aware of the avenues created by the station for advice and views from the listeners. Another 35% is not sure of these channels. According to Nirmala (2015:42), radio stations such as Bush Radio must voice marginalised groups in society such as women, disabled, and youths to express their views on issues facing their community served by the station. To ensure its relevance to both its listeners and the community it serves, Alfandika (2019) recommends that a community station should form a relationship anchored on two-way communication where access and participation of the community in the station are paramount.

Would you say you're the station considers your suggestions?

This question aims to find out the involvement of youths in programme design and planning, especially for programmes targeted at young people.

STUDY AREAS	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Khayelitsha	0	3	1
2. Manenberg	0	1	1
3. Nyanga	0	1	2
4. Mitchells Plain	0	3	2
5. Phillipi	3	0	1
6. Elsiesriver	2	0	0
TOTAL	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)

Data displayed in the table indicates that a small portion (25%) of the respondents agree that the station does take their suggestions on programming into considerations. In contrast, a significant number (75%) of the respondents do not agree, and others are not sure if this process takes place at the station. To foster more participation and involvement of the community (listeners), Al-Hassan, Andani & Abdul-Malik (2011) recommend community radio stations conduct regular feedback engagements to identify listeners' preferences in strengthening the station's content. The data presented shows that the station needs to enhance its mechanisms or channels to engage its listeners.

In what ways do you think the station can foster youth economic empowerment through its programmes?

The researcher sought to understand how the station can improve its programming to empower its listeners to support the current programmes. These are some of the proposals generated from the respondents:

“Running youth workshops for entrepreneurs and work together with schools on upliftment programmes in poor communities.”

“Bringing in youth that is successful in their respective fields to share their journey in the world of work, to inspire the fellow South African sitting at home without hope and unemployed.”

“Be engaged with community forums, team up with schools, police, and NGOs to become proactive in youth activities.”

“Share business details and give them (youth) the opportunities to express their business ideas.”

“By giving youth advice on their lives. Also, help them pursue their goals as well as their dreams.”

CONCLUSION

The study discovered the station has several programming that caters to youths in the study's delineated areas. Data revealed that Bush Radio has a strong representation of young people in the driving seat in producing these programmes, giving youths a voice to be heard. They are one of the marginalised groups in society. Aligned with the ICASA mandate for community broadcasting, the study also found the station's programming aims to inform, educate, and entertain youths, inform, educate, and entertain young people and the whole community served by the station. These programmes address a wide range of topics focusing on health, gender equality, entrepreneurship, unemployment, service delivery, education, arts and culture, politics, sports, and labour matters.

Youth Economic Empowerment

In response to the main research question on the role of community in youth economic empowerment of youths, the study discovered the station offers a wide range of mechanisms to empower its listeners (especially youths). Firstly, it has been found that most of the programmes sampled for this study have a common element of support for local young entrepreneurs and create awareness on entrepreneurship amongst youths. Through these identified programmes, young emerging entrepreneurs have an opportunity to be offered a platform to promote their products and services at no cost, which could cost them a fortune compared to a commercial station. Secondly, the station offers young aspiring broadcasters' opportunities to gain professional on-the-job experience in presenting, producing and post-production. These interns and volunteers are not paid a salary but receive a stipend to cover their basic needs.

Furthermore, the data gathered indicates the station also caters to unemployed youths; these are young people sitting at homes with or without a formal qualification in need of a job. Through programmes such as *Sakh'isizwe* and *The Morning Cruise*, the station

provides listeners with relevant lists of vacant positions in Cape Town. Also, these include sharing information on work preparedness (how to draft a CV/resume, cover letter, etc.), financial literacy, bursaries, internships, and leadership.

Youth perceptions

The study sought to understand youths' perceptions of the programming designed by the station. A questionnaire was distributed and administered. Firstly, a dominant number of the respondents were aware (informed) of the normative mandate of community stations such as Bush Radio to the geographical communities it serves. However, it was also discovered a significant number of youths weren't listening or even aware the station exists in their area. Data shows the programmes sampled turned out to be favourable and relevant to the youths. Also, the study has found that 40% of the respondents sampled are aware of the programmes designed by the station focusing on youth empowerment, whereas 25% of the respondents are not aware, and the other 35% not quite sure if these programmes exist. Data also showed that most (45%) of the respondents are not aware of channels at the station to add or forward their suggestions and inputs regarding programming. A minimum number (20%) of the respondents are aware of the avenues created by the station for advice and views from the listeners. Another 35% is not sure of these channels.

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