



**APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTO NEWS PRODUCTION PROCESSES
IN SELECTED COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN GQEBERHA**

by

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Mini dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree.

Master of Public Relations and Communication Management

in the Faculty of Informatics and Design

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Mfundo Telson Radebe, do hereby declare that the work presented in this coursework mini dissertation is my own work. All sources used have been appropriately acknowledged and referenced using Harvard style of referencing.

DEDICATION

This mini dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my Mother Nosisa Mary-Rose Radebe, and my Father Bhuti Kaizer Radebe; my uncle Nkomayifaswa Mjoli; my late friend Noxolo Precious Memala; and lastly, my ancestors for giving me brains (Mphephethwa, Majiya, Manqabula, Omakhulu maSosibo, Mpunga, Masinikane, Nombusiso, Makhulu Matshangase Mjoli) to complete my studies. Thank you for believing in me even when I ignored your calls and couldn't attend family gatherings. You understood the mission to complete my studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The book of Second Corinthians 9:8 says God can make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. Therefore, without you, God, I wouldn't be able to make it.

My supervisor, Prof Blessing Makwambeni, for being the best and patient with me and guiding me from day one until the end. I will forever cherish the efforts, support, and guidance you shared with me. If I were allowed to enroll in a master's degree or PhD, I would, beyond doubt, choose you. My supervisor enabled me to have an experience of a writing retreat.

Thank you to the CPUT Vice-Chancellor's office for awarding me the Vice-Chancellor's Prestigious Achievers Award. The award covered my tuition costs and academic conferences.

Thanks to Nelson Mandela University's support for early academic researchers' research workshops. I appreciate the support from The Early Career Academics Advancement Programme (ECAAP) for supporting early-career academics to improve their research skills.

I thank community radio stations in South Africa, particularly *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio*, for allowing me to conduct interviews for my study.

I have got a lot of friends and family members who supported me. I cannot mention them by name; they know themselves.

Lastly, a very big thank you to my colleagues at Nelson Mandela University: the executive dean of the faculty of humanities, Prof Pamela Maseko; Prof Marious Crous; Prof Subeshini Moodley; Prof Jeke Leward; Prof Konik Adiran; Prof Wozniak Janina; Prof Given Mutinta; Prof Namalanga Mkhize; Dr Janelle Vermaak-Griessel; Dr Jakub Siwak; Dr Vuyelwa Jacobs; Ms Cindy Preller; Ms Tarryn; and Mr Jude Mathurine.

ABSTRACT

The advent of the internet and the swift proliferation of media technologies have substantially altered the everyday functioning of companies and their interactions with society. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have ushered in a new era of communication, prompting government departments, private companies, non-profit organisations, and media outlets to rethink their approach to communication. In the media sector, social media tools are reshaping the news production process, including news gathering, verification, editing, and distribution. It has also ushered in possibilities to reconfigure the relationship between journalists and their audiences. Despite this huge potential, there is a paucity of studies that have examined how social media is being appropriated in the news production process in the community radio sector in South Africa. In light of this background, this study examined the appropriation of social media into the news production process in selected community radio stations (*Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio*) in Gqeberha. A qualitative methodology consisting of semi-structured interviews with journalists and virtual ethnography was used to understand how social media is being appropriated into the community media space and reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences. The study findings show that the two radio stations have appropriated a wide range of social media tools into their news production process. Social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are being used for news gathering, processing, and dissemination in the community radio space. While these findings cohere with those of previous studies, this study provides new insights into how social media technologies like TikTok and WhatsApp have become key tools for news production that are reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in under-resourced communities in the Global South.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

MMDA	Media Development and Diversity Agency
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ICASA	Independent Communication Authority of South Africa
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
AM	Amplitude Modulation
FM	Frequency Modulation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
TAT	Technology Appropriation Theory
TAM	Technological Appropriation Model
VNs	Voice Notes

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

Social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok have created innovative avenues for journalists, editors, and producers in the newsroom (Hanse, Boczek, & Scharrow, 2023), contributing to and transforming news production processes. Journalists now use social media to generate story ideas about trending topics, stories, pictures, and videos (Hanse, Boczek & Scharrow, 2023). Journalists also now use social media platforms to investigate reports, create credible sources, and compile detailed information for their audience (Bullard, 2015). Mare (2013) argues that the use of social media has helped to improve information gathering, processing, distribution, and storage.

Bullard (2015) posits that different media houses have embraced social media in their newsrooms by establishing their own Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. This occurs because media houses understand that their audiences have moved to these platforms (Bullard, 2015). According to Humayun and Ferruci (2022:3), journalists use social media platforms for “all processes involving news creation, including seeking news story ideas”. Across the globe, the growth of social media and other digital platforms is contributing to the radio industry's growth, with audiences in countries such as Britain remaining high and active (Zakaria & Birikorang, 2018). D'Haenens, Lo, and Moore (2022) observe that countries in the Nordic region, such as Sweden and Finland, continue to see rapid growth in the dissemination of news through social media platforms.

Digital technologies and social media innovation have changed the process of news production in the newsroom by “creating additional opportunities for news gathering, information sharing, news consumption, production, and distribution among the general public” (Elisha and Kakooza, 2023). With the advent of fake news and disinformation, social media platforms also assist with news source verification by allowing journalists and editors to filter and assess the credibility of news (Wanda & Gondwe, 2021). The apprehension regarding deception or misinformation online has

grown in recent years, specifically regarding the impact on elections, public health, and public safety (Geeng, Yees & Roesner, 2020). Apuke and Omar (2021) provide examples of COVID-19, where people shared false content to help others.

Several studies have begun to examine social media integration in news production in Africa. In a study conducted in Lesotho, Matsilele, Makwambeni, and Mugari (2023) posit that journalists rely heavily on Twitter and Facebook for news production. The study further notes that journalists in Lesotho use social media platforms like Twitter as a source of news about events happening in the country, among other uses. Matsilele et al.'s (2023) findings echo Mwangela's (2015) observation that social media is aiding media houses in newsgathering and reporting. Matsilele et al. further argue that the appropriation of social media in newsrooms has significantly re-configured news practices and power relations between journalists and their audiences (2023). This finding resonates with Bullard's previous findings that, unlike in the past, when editors and journalists were gatekeepers of news and audiences were passive consumers, social media has empowered audiences to shape news production processes (Bullard, 2015).

A study by Ngoc (2022) has also established that news organisations' greater social media presence tends to foster two-way communication between audiences and journalists, leading to improved audience engagement that helps journalists to perform their role more effectively. In the new media ecology, journalists who engage with their audiences on social media are viewed as more trustworthy and receive higher ratings compared to those who use the platform exclusively to share news (Ngoc, 2022). In journalism training, the influence of social media has also become strong, with journalism instructors now incorporating social media into their courses in what Mpofu, Matsilele & Moyo (2023) refer to as social media journalism. Social media platforms are, therefore, nurturing a figurative relationship between social and mainstream media. It is encouraging audiences to participate in news creation while also enabling journalists to vigorously solicit user-generated content to publish it in mainstream media (Mare, 2013)

Although a growing number of studies have examined the appropriation of social media in news production, most studies have primarily focused on commercial media, especially print, and paid little attention to broadcasting and, more particularly, the

community media space (see Mwongela, 2015; Elisha and Kokooza, 2023; Matsilele et al., 2023). Moreso, extant studies that have examined the appropriation of social media into news production processes have focused on Facebook and X and hardly examined how platforms like WhatsApp, which is more pervasive in under-resourced contexts, have been appropriated and re-shaped the relationship between journalists and their audiences. Therefore, the study uses two community radio stations. It seeks to understand how *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM* community radio stations in the city of Gqeberha, in the Eastern Cape Province, appropriate social media into news production processes, and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences within the two community radio stations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the past decade, media institutions have increasingly appropriated a wide range of digital technologies and social media platforms into their news production processes. Extant studies have shown that the growing use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (X) in news production is disrupting the news production process as well as the relationship between journalists and their audiences. However, most studies that have examined social media appropriation in newsrooms have mainly focused on commercial media and paid less attention to the community radio space. Furthermore, extant studies have largely focused on the appropriation and integration of Facebook and Twitter (X) in news production processes and done very little to understand how other emergent disruptive social media platforms such as WhatsApp that are more widely used in under-resourced communities and TikTok, that is more popular among the youth audiences, are being appropriated in newsrooms and re-shaping the relationship between journalists and their audiences.

1.3 The study Objectives

1.3.1 The primary objective of the study:

To understand how social media is being appropriated into news production processes by selected community radio stations in Gqeberha.

1.3.2 Secondary Objective

To understand how the appropriation of social media is re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in the community radio space in Gqeberha.

1.4 Research Questions

- I. How are community radio stations in Gqeberha appropriating social media platforms into their news production processes?
- II. How is the appropriation of social media re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in community radio stations in Gqeberha?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the existing literature on social media integration in news production processes. The research findings will provide new insights into the appropriation of social media in the community media space, which is an under-researched area. Furthermore, the study insights will also assist community radio stations, particularly the journalists, producers, editors, presenters, program managers, and station managers, to understand how they can better integrate social media platforms into their news production processes, as well as understand the affordances they bring into the news production process. The study findings may also provide useful insight to organisations such as the Media Development Diversity Agency (MDDA) that fund and capacitate community media in South Africa on how to better support community radios in integrating social media into news production processes to make them more sustainable and participatory.

1.6 Chapter outline

Chapter One:

This chapter provides an introduction and background to the study relating to the integration of social media in news production processes in the community radio space. The chapter goes further to outline the statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions, as well as the study's significance.

Chapter Two:

The second chapter of the study reviews relevant literature relating to the appropriation of social media in news production processes from a local and global perspective. The chapter discusses transformations brought by social media in journalism practice; the appropriation of social media in news production processes; and the challenges associated with the appropriation and integration of social media in news production processes.

Chapter Three:

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter is premised on two theories: the concept of technology appropriation and the concept of participatory journalism. The concept of technological appropriation assists the study in understanding and evaluating the process through which social media, as a form of technology, is adopted, adapted, and incorporated into news production, while the concept of participatory journalism assists in understanding how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and their audiences.

Chapter Four:

This chapter outlines and discusses the research methodology and methods used in this study. It first justifies the choice of a qualitative methodology before outlining and discussing the research methods used in the study in the manner in which they are used. The chapter goes further to discuss the sampling methods and procedures used in the study, the data analysis process, and the ethical considerations made in the study.

Chapter Five:

This chapter presents analyses and discusses the findings of the study on the appropriation of social media in news production processes in the two community radio stations in Gqeberha, MADIBAZ and Nkqubela FM. It is also within the confines of the chapter to analyse and discuss findings on how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in the community media space. The findings are analysed and discussed in light of the study's conceptual framework and literature review.

Chapter Six:

This chapter summarises the major findings of the study and provides a conclusion. The conclusion includes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature that relates to the study. It reviews and discusses the literature on topics such as community radio in South Africa, public broadcasting, the appropriation of social media in the news production process, integration of social media into news production, and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and their audiences.

2.1 Locating *Nkqubela FM* and *Madibaz Radio* stations within the context of Community Radio in South Africa

The radio landscape in South Africa comprises three distinct categories: public broadcasting, commercial or private radio, which are primarily profit-driven, and community radio stations, which evolved in the 1990s as an alternative to state-owned public media (van Rooyen & Doorslaer, 2021:412). In the South African Context, community radio is defined as a non-profit broadcasting service dedicated to serving a specific marginalized community. The broadcasting initiative incorporates aspects of community ownership or membership, and is readily accessible to local individuals to promote their engagement in programming (Ngugi & Kinyua, 2014; The National Communication Authority, 2019:2; van Rooyen & van Doorslaer, 2021; Attuh & Kankam, 2024). Ngugi and Kinyua (2014) posit that community media outlets were established to enable individuals to convey their stories and engage in discussions essential for their autonomous development as citizens.

Media scholars have argued that the advent of community radio in South Africa, tagged along with the conclusion of apartheid in 1994, resulted in a more centralized and democratized media environment that minimized government and corporate influence (Lekgoathi, 2010; Ndlovu, 2011; Bosch et al., 2018; Matsilele et al., 2023). According to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), community radio is very important to broadcasting in South Africa, and as a result, the first few radio licenses were issued to operatives in this sector, with *Radio 412 Maritzburg* in KwaZulu-Natal being the first to receive an IBA license (Olorunnisola, 2002; Wabwire, 2013; Matsilele et al., 2023). At present, there are 249 community radio stations in South Africa.

Van Rooyen (2018) notes that community radio stations in South Africa cater to a specific language. Each community radio station's language policy is determined in cooperation with the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA). The number of languages catered for is based on the needs of the specific community served (van Rooyen, 2018). Community radio stations in South Africa operate through licenses that are administered by ICASA. ICASA sets the content and broadcasting conditions generally based on assurances of service made by the station when applying for its license (Krüger, 2011). Apart from the legal and licensing framework that was created for community broadcasting, funding and other practical supports come from the Media Development Diversity Agency (MDDA) and other institutions such as the Department of Communication, and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (Krüger, 2011). The community radio stations in South Africa largely fall into four distinct categories: geographical, ethnic, religious, campus, and entertainment (Wits Radio Academy, 2019; van Rooyen & van Doorslaer, 2021).

Nkqubela Community Radio Station is a community, non-profit radio station that is based in KwaDwesi township at Ziyabuya Shopping Centre. The station earned its broadcasting license in 2003 and has been on air since May 2024. The predominant broadcasting languages used by Nkqubela FM are isiXhosa (60%), English (30%), and Afrikaans (10%). The station targets audiences of all ages in the community. The station's mandate is to inform, educate, and entertain. Nkqubela FM also seeks to contribute to the development of marginal communities in the city of Gqeberha. Despite the 250-kilowatt broadcast footprint, the station reaches areas such as Kirkwood, Jeffery's Bay, and the outskirts of Nelson Mandela Bay (*Nkqubela FM*).

Madibaz Radio is a student-focused radio station at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in Nelson Mandela Bay in the Eastern Cape (Veldfire Media 2023). The NMU urban campus station provides edutainment to the youth of Nelson Mandela Bay. The audience listens to the radio station through various online media platforms such as Facebook (Madibaz Radio), with 11,758 likes, Twitter (Madibaz Radio), with 6,422 followers, and Instagram (Madibaz Radio) with 3,283 followers as of May 2024.

2.2 The Transition to Digital Broadcasting in Africa

Case studies from the analogue era predominate when discussing radio broadcasting history in Africa (Tsarwe & Chiumbi, 2023). However, some scholars have tackled the

question of how the African radio media space industry is managing the huge transition from analogue to digital broadcasting (Moyo, 2009; Gunner & Ligaga, & Moyo, 2011; Moyo, 2013). The digital revolution that radio broadcasting is experiencing is having a significant impact on it. In an attempt to advance toward digital transformation, they have, nevertheless, lately begun offering their content on mobile devices, which only works through the connection to the network (Hirschmeier, Tilly & Beule, 2019). Furthermore, Tsarwe and Chiumbi (2023) postulate that in the era of digital media, this kind of integration mostly happens between media technology goliaths such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, TikTok, and so forth.

Theoretically speaking, digitization is explained as an electronic process that helps to transform analogue data, regardless of size, into digital data. The information could be text, pictures, videos, and so on (Uranta, Ogbuaja, & Ajibola, 2023). Radio is evolving technologically, and these developments have also affected radio cultures and practices, particularly in news production. Additionally, technological convergence on radio continues to democratize and make radio more accessible to listeners (Moyo, 2013). Furthermore, Moyo (2013) avers that radio was once a physical forum for public discourse. However, today, it is a virtual, networked, and mobile space as well. A recent study indicates that the mobile phone is an ideal illustration of a converged digital media device, as it combines various portable media content, including “frequency modulation (FM) radio, television, images, music, and a variety of other features like voice, text, and chat (Tsarwe, 2023: 56).

According to Moyo (2009), most developed countries’ mainstream media, whether it be print or electronic, have adopted SMS as a means of communicating directly with readership, viewers, and listeners, and developing nations are doing the same. For example, a section of listeners’ participation is submitted through WhatsApp in radio and television broadcasting. This transition from analogue to digital broadcasting was discussed and signed at a global conference held in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 16, 2006, by the representatives of 104 countries. The conference was convened by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (Ogah, 2020). In addition, many nations, including the United States of America and European nations, have finished the switch from analogue to digital broadcasting since the agreement went into effect in 2006 (Oyedokun, Molindo & Ajayi, n.d).

According to Tsarwe and Chiumbi (2022:11), in countries such as South Africa, the radio industry plays a pivotal role in mediating public affairs. People have more access to the radio than to television and newspapers. They further aver that there are 284 community radio stations nationwide, in addition to 40 commercial radio stations and public broadcast stations. Nearly 23 million people (about the population of New York) listen to different radio stations and different programs daily.

In South Africa, the process of migration necessitated switching from analogue to digital transmission technology. The conversion of analogue to digital signals needed sophisticated decoders and set-top boxes to upgrade digital terrestrial television (Madikiza, 2011). However, the study conducted in Africa shows that the end of analogue broadcasting and the development of specialized equipment resulted in key issues for Africa, including the 'Balkanization' of African production and the maintenance of infrastructure that is still analogue. Consequently, the shift to digital broadcasting caused other fundamental challenges regarding the regulation of planning, pluralism of information, media development, and access to digital equipment (Chimanga & Mumba, 2020).

Furthermore, in the conceptualization of community radio stations, the term "community" refers to three distinct categories. The kind of community radio stations are the geographic ones, which cater to communities that are close to one another. Secondly, there are community radio stations on university campuses that cater to the student body and areas that are based on campus (Matsilele, Makwambeni, Nkoala & Bulani, 2023).

Despite the challenges presented by the conversion of analogue to digital media, several studies postulate that editors, news editors, producers, journalists, and the users of digital media, such as smartphones, the internet, and social media platforms, are comfortable with digital broadcasting (Hirschmeier, Tilly & Beule, 2019; Uranta, Ogbuaja & Ajibola, 2023; Tsarwe, 2023).

2.3 Conceptualising Social Media

The term social media refers to a collection of web-based tools that enable the production and sharing of user-generated content. Tools like social media networking, video sharing, and instant messaging are examples of social media technologies

(Gundecha & Liu, 2012; Bhanye, Shayamunda, and Tavirai, 2023). These social media platforms take on different forms, including internet forums, microblogging, podcasts, social networking, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, Flickr, MySpace, and other highly interactive websites (Bhanye, Shayamunda, and Tavirai, 2023). Power and Phillips-Wren (2011) note that social media has brought changes and improved technologies. These new technologies support user-generated content that is easily distributed and can be combined, edited, and archived.

Table 2.1. Typologies of social media tools (Gundecha & Liu, 2012).

Type of social media	Characteristics
Online social networking	Online social networks refer to web-based platforms that enable people and groups to establish virtual connections with their online friends and acquaintances. These users are likely to interact together through status updates, comments, media sharing, messages, video sharing, and calls. (Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, TikTok).
Blogging	A blog is a website that resembles a journal on which users, also known as bloggers, typically use this platform. It is typically used by individuals, influencers, journalists, politicians, and other members of the community.
Microblogging	Microblogs can be considered the same as blogs, but they contain restricted content, for example, Twitter, Tumblr, and Plurk.
Wikis	A wiki is a collaborative editing environment that allows multiple users to develop web pages such as Wikipedia, Wikitravel, and Wikihow.
Social news	The term social news describes how a user community shares and chooses news articles and stories.
Social bookmarking	Social bookmarking sites allow users of the internet to bookmark web content for storage, companies, and sharing, such as StumbleUpon and Delicious.
Media sharing	Media sharing is an umbrella term that refers to the sharing of a variety of media on the web, including audio, photos, and videos on Ustream TV, YouTube, and TikTok.
Opinion, reviews, and ratings	The fundamental function of these sites is to collect and publish the users' submitted content in the form of independent commentary on existing products, services, entertainment, and organisations. Furthermore, these sites provide product reviews such as Cnet, Yelp, and E-opinions.

2.4 Impact of Social Media on Radio News Production

The above-mentioned Web 2.0 technologies allow audiences to become more involved in the co-production of content, and media houses have accepted that the power dynamics are changing (Gundecha & Liu, 2012; Bhanye, Shayamunda, and Tavirai, 2023). They also use their influence to their advantage by combining, co-opting, converging, and leveraging their brands and intellectual properties across all channels. The emerging highly digital media ecology is upending this conventional model, which means that the power may not always lie with these media houses (Tsarwe & Chiumbi, 2023). Sauti and Makaripe (2023) contend that some of the improvements in new media technologies have expanded alternatives for radio programming and reception. These improvements have given birth to converged radio space, which is envisioned using the internet and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Arguably, in South Africa, social media usage in community radio stations has been rising significantly. Scholars have observed that radio stations' connection with their local community is enhanced by social media, which facilitates two-way communication connections (Gavaza & Pearse, 2023).

They further delineate that social media seems to be a neutral fit with mass media platforms (Gavaza & Pearse, 2023). The increasing adoption of social media and other online platforms in the radio industry, community, university, and commercial operations is hardly surprising. Several domains have experienced expansion, such as social media, online streaming, podcasting, on-demand platforms, and online platforms serving as on-air content sources (Sauti & Makaripe, 2023). Thus, new social media platforms such as TikTok and Clubhouse are gaining traction worldwide, particularly with the youth. Radio stations effectively engage with their audiences primarily on Facebook and Twitter" (Gavaza & Pearse, 2023:159). Moreso, the media institutions are incorporating live video streaming through Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook as part of their daily broadcasting. New social media platforms such as TikTok and Clubhouse are getting increased attention, and that growth has cut advertising revenues (Tsarwe & Chiumbi, 2023).

The advancement in technology and the use of social media platforms over the last twenty years have had a profound impact on news media. The South African media landscape now includes information and communication technology (ICTs) as a part

of mainstream and community media's media ecology and practices. Thus, integrating ICTs and their sustainability is better suited for community radio stations in urban and semi-urban areas, or those with a comparatively decent infrastructure (Matsilele, Makwambeni, Nkoala & Bulani, 2023). The current under-researched social media platform called *TikTok*, which is known for its brief videos, caters to its potential audience by providing concise and targeted content for mobile and web platforms. Short videos, as opposed to long ones, are therefore better at capturing the fragmentation time of users (Xu, 2022). Moon and Handley (2014) indicate that more than 90% of journalists are merely relying more on social media, such as Twitter, because it is presumed that these platforms are trustworthy sources for news production. According to the poll, journalists who work for websites 75% and magazines 57% are more likely to cite microblogging sites such as Twitter than those who work for newspapers (43%) (Moon and Handley, 2014:292).

According to Worldometer (2024), the current population of South Africa is over 68 million, according to the latest United Nations data. Out of the 68 million population, there were more than 43.48 million internet users in South Africa at the start of 2023, when internet penetration stood at 72.3%. In addition, a total of 112.7 million cellular mobile connections to the internet were active in South Africa, with this figure equivalent to 187.4 % of the total population. In January 2023, there were 25.80 million social media users in the country, or 42.9 % of the country's total population. As of May 2023, Facebook held the top spot among social media platforms in South Africa, with an account for about 30.7 million users. Moreover, LinkedIn and Messenger came next, with roughly 27.4 million and 11.8 million users, respectively (Cowling, 2023).

The radio stations are present on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, and TikTok, where young people from urban areas are also active users. These platforms are being utilized to introduce young people to radio, for instance, by having them follow radio hosts on Twitter, TikTok, and other social media sites. Even though young people may not directly listen to live radio broadcasts, they can still access the content by visiting Facebook and TikTok, where it can take the form of brief videos, or by following radio stations or their preferred radio personalities on social media platforms (Ruhanya & Gadzikwa, 2023).

2.5 The appropriation of social media in journalism practice

The appropriation of social networks by journalists is influenced by personal motivations, skills, as well as by professional and social factors (Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero & López-García, 2022). Mare (2013) argues that the amalgamation of social media platforms and the development of Information, including communication technologies, has had a positive impact on journalism practice as it improved news gathering, processing, disseminating, and engagement with communities, especially through utilizing ICT tools. In journalism practice and news production, social media platforms are continually being appropriated and shaped by people, groups, and institutions. The microblog's original function as a forum for the sharing of private information is progressively winning (Firdaus, 2016; Zago & Belochio, 2011).

Susan (2021) concurs that social media platforms in journalism practice are the most extensively used social media platforms, given that listeners easily access them. In Susan's findings, the radio presenters noted that their audiences were able to access the internet because a good number of people were able to access all social media platforms used by the radio station through their smartphones (Susan, 2021).

The data gathered in the study conducted in Lesotho indicates that social media technologies have been incorporated into newsroom cultures despite the divergent opinions of journalists regarding this adoption (Makwambeni, Matsilele & Msimanga, 2023). The study's findings divulge that journalists in Lesotho now primarily rely on Facebook and Twitter as their news sources and dissemination (Makwambeni, Matsilele & Msimanga, 2023). It has been presented that these digital technologies have brought together South African producers and presenters based in Zimbabwe, underground correspondents operating in an environment of state surveillance (Mare, 2013).

International scholars such as Zhang and Li have observed that while most relevant research on social media and news production has been conducted in Western societies, the current paper centres on Hong Kong, which is a non-Western society. The media market in the city is among the most competitive globally. They further reveal that by the end of 2017, there were 68 newspapers, 607 periodicals, two local commercial televisions, three community television stations, fifteen non-local TV stations, a public broadcaster, and two commercial radio stations in this 7.4-million-person city (Zhang & Li, 2020). In Britain, the use of social media in news production

was perceived during the December 2004 Asian Tsunami and the July 2005 London bombings, when the footage from Fifth Estate networked individuals captured on digital cameras and cell phones was first shown on prime-time television. After the July 7, 2005, explosions on the London underground and bus network, the BBC received over 20,000 emails, 4000 texts, 20 amateur videos, and over 1000 photos in just a few hours. The BBC's head of news at that time, Richard Sambrook, claimed that this caused news organisations to consider how they needed to approach their audience segments (Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2013:13).

Zhang and Li (2020) argue that Hong Kong has a high social media penetration rate, particularly within news production, and some of these new social media networks have played a gigantic role in news sources for Hong Kong local journalists; this includes journalists from mainstream newspapers finding news sources on YouTube, Facebook, and Foxy. Lastly, the main goal of blogs for journalists was not to source or verify stories; rather, they were used to express their news values and ideologies and make sense of their professional lives.

In South Africa, well-known mainstream newsrooms are starting to use artificial intelligence (AI) technology for various tasks related to news production processes. Even though the adoption of AI is still modest and gradual, the respondents we spoke with acknowledged that it is a practice they are now aware of occurring in those organizations. In the newsrooms, AI has been applied at different levels in the news-making process and for different purposes (Munoriyarwa, Chiumbu & Motsaathebe, 2023; Munoriyarwa & Chiumbu, 2024).

2.6 Appropriation of Facebook in news production

Extant studies show that journalists are appropriating social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter for news production (Paulussen, Harder & Johnson, 2016; Hermida, 2012; Jordaan, 2013; Bosch, 2016; Zhang & Li, 2020; Moyo et al, 2020 & Makwambeni et al, 2023). Although there are many reasons why journalists are appropriating Facebook in news production processes, one of the main reasons is that it has evolved into a tool for reporting (Paulussen et al, 2016). A study by Matsilele et al (2023) shows that Facebook is one of the social media platforms that is being used by journalists in the community media space in South Africa to produce news.

Journalists use Facebook to get story ideas, connect with their audiences, pose and follow up on questions, and receive responses to those questions from news sources (Matsilele et al., 2023).

Zelenkauskaitė and Loring-Albright (2023) have discussed the significance of integrating social media tools such as Facebook Live in the news production process. In the context of radio news production, which has always been audio-based and focused, Facebook Live has proved to be a rich medium. Zelenkauskaitė and Loring-Albright (2023) identify some of the affordances brought by Facebook Live: it provides instantaneous immersion, socializing, engagement, and interaction in real-time. However, scholars such as Paulissen et al (2016) have argued that traditional news outlets typically perceive social media platforms such as Facebook as avenues for showcasing and promoting their content by involving users in the dissemination process. They posit that Facebook is more than just an additional platform for news distribution or to compile news (Paulissen et al., 2016).

Social media tools like Facebook play an important role, particularly in strengthening the relationship between journalists and informants by tapering face-to-face or voice communication time. Therefore, with the advent of social media and new technologies, news consumers have progressively become producers of content themselves (Jordaan, 2012); journalists do not have power over news consumers in the digital age. Despite the increasing application of news consumers becoming producers of their content, it is said that journalists must not lose their competitive, critical, and independent perspective. They must tell people the information they do not always want to hear, journalists must find better ways to give context and promote understanding so that people pay attention to and engage with the news (Beckett & Deuze, 2016). The news dissemination of news processes is currently experiencing a shift in power dynamics due to the cultural and commercial interaction between social and legacy media, as well as producers and their suppliers. Facebook users are challenging the news production processes because they are increasingly involved in the recommendation and selective dissemination of the content, and they have turned into “secondary gatekeepers” of the content posted on Facebook news (Singer, 2014:55).

2.6 Appropriation of Twitter in news production processes

Twitter is one of the leading social media platforms that is being appropriated by journalists in newsrooms as a vital tool for sourcing and gathering, as well as news dissemination (Hermida, 2010; Hermida, 2013). Thus, Twitter and other social media tools like.....are among the new digital technologies that are facilitating the dissemination of news (Hermida, 2010; Hermida, 2013) and disrupting traditional journalistic gatekeeping accountability. A study conducted by Matsilele, Makwambeni, and Mugari (2023) shows that Twitter and Facebook are being appropriated by journalists in Lesotho for fact-checking and verification. Journalists in Lesotho use Twitter to source story ideas and verify pictures and videos of events such as weddings, parties, and funerals of influential people (Matsilele, Makwambeni & Mugari, 2023). Armstrong & Gao (2011) have previously observed that media houses such as the *Los Angeles Times* and San Diego public relations station *KPBS* used Twitter to disseminate urgent information like evacuation orders, shelter locations, and firefighting progress to large groups of mobile people during the Southern California wildfires.

Several scholars have argued that social media tools such as Twitter have opened up avenues and possibilities for participatory journalism and citizenship (Matsilele et al, 2023). They allow citizens to be involved in the creation and distribution of news. However, although extant studies show that journalists are appropriating social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook in news production processes, some studies indicate that, in some cases, older journalists tend to be opposed to the use of social media platforms as part of the news production process. Thus, Twitter and Facebook are seen as a threat to the journalism profession due to their vulnerability to fake news (Matsilele et al., 2023).

2.7 The appropriation of TikTok in news production processes

It is also shown that news publishers have started to take TikTok seriously. Newman (2022) concurs that many countries have discovered that publishers are frequently updating TikTok accounts with news-related content. The fastest publisher adoption has been in some larger European countries such as France, Spain, and the UK, as well as Southeast Asia, Australia, the United States, and Latin America. However, in

Nordic countries, Japan, and eastern and central Europe, there has been less enthusiasm for using TikTok in news production (Newman, 2022:8).

The recent findings on news on TikTok show the concentration on how journalists in established news organizations have adopted TikTok's unique social media logic for news reporting. The research has shown that professional journalists, news publishers, and digital natives all adjust to the social media logic of TikTok "Fun", with everyday videos participating in viral challenges, making audio memes, and utilizing the platform for specific features (Peterson-Salahuddin, 2023; Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero & López-García, 2022; Newman, 2022). Additionally, Norman (2022) further argues that more than three-quarters of users in the United States (77%), around two-thirds in Brazil (68%), and the vast majority of users in Indonesia (90%), Australia (89%), Spain (86%), and the UK (81%) are publishers, with approximately 81,000 TikTok accounts. News organisations have been slower to adopt the platform in Bulgaria (7%), Italy (29%), Japan (31%), and Denmark.

In Kitsa's study (2021:33), journalists in Ukraine appropriate relatively new social media TikTok sparingly, primarily to "track celebrities' activities and whereabouts". While journalists in Germany have adopted established quality standards and content production for TikTok (Degen, Olgemöller & Zabel, 2024). However, the media outlets' TikTok content does not simply present news through dance; rather, they strategically promote their brands and offer glimpses behind the scenes in a relaxed, musical environment that resonates with the TikTok audiences (Miller & Maddox, 2025). In addition, the recirculation of news takes place when TikTok users comment and share news or videos on other social media platforms without adding their interpretations of the news stories (Zago, 2023).

2.8 Appropriation of social media into news gathering

Newsgathering on social media platforms has drastically changed the set-up of newsrooms and made it easier for journalists to connect with leading newsmakers and organisations, through reducing the need for ingenuity to access news (Moyo et al., 2020; Makwambeni et al., 2025). Progressively, traditional news organisations have developed their online visibility on various social media platforms, which used to be solely used by individual journalists for newsgathering purposes (Matsilele et al., 2023).

The advent of digital technologies such as smartphones and the proliferation of internet and social media platforms have armed journalists with news tools and influenced a considerably more rapid method of newsgathering all over the world without having to get a reliable news source (Abubakar et al., 2021; Matsilele et al., 2023). An excellent example by Moyo et al (2020: 449): “The Tiso Black Star (formerly Times Media Group) has recently moved from their old offices to a wholly new purpose-built complex that reflects the changes in the newsgathering environment.” Although several scholars’ findings indicate that empirical evidence shows that “Generation Y predominantly depends on social media for newsgathering yet considers print newspapers to be a more credible news source,” while Generation Z uses mobile apps to access news (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014: 57; Agur, 2016; Dlamini & Daniels, 2023).

Given that media outlets have integrated social media tools for newsgathering, they face some challenges due to the rapid influx of updates, which can exceed hundreds and thousands of posts per minute, making it difficult for the public to monitor all that is being communicated (Zubiaga, 2019). According to Agur (2016:12), the news frontiers in newsgathering are as follows:

- “Technological excerpts helped journalists with limited cultural and linguistic knowledge to navigate mobile applications.”
- “Journalists encountered comparable difficulties to social newsgathering on open platforms, such as verifying content and identifying echo chambers.”
- “During protests, journalists notice a shift from public networks to private chat apps.”
- “Journalists leveraged WhatsApp to coordinate gathering both within and across organisations.”
- “The journalists reported that the foundational process of reporting remains largely the same from one-on-one newsgathering via phone or email.”

2.9 The appropriation of social media into news production.

In recent decades, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with newsgathering, processing, and dissemination, raising many questions about what makes up news. Moreover, traditional journalism has been castigated for being overwhelmingly driven

by profits, leading to limited emphasis on journalistic principles such as reference to high-profile individuals, countries, and obsession with negativity (Moyo, 2009; Nfor, 2024). The societal aspect of news production illuminates how audience participation in news using technology limits the work of journalists, news editors, and editors (Moyo et al., 2020). The reason these social media tools pose challenges to journalists and their editors is that the advent of social media has led to a shift in news production, circulation, and consumption, prompting journalism scholars to reconsider the news ethical standards framework and attempt to adopt digital approaches (Mast & Temmerman, 2021).

Social media platforms such as TikTok constitute distinctive difficulties for news in contrast to other social media platforms. The primary mode of communication is video in short form, which requires news production outside of traditional written articles (Newman, 2022; Hager & Diakopoulos, 2025). According to Matanjin et al. (2024), regarding news production, the serious problem is fact-checking, which is a process of validating the reliability and veracity of statements in news articles, social media posts, and other media sources after they have been published. Hager and Diakopoulos (2025) further delineate that journalists have an obligation to verify an anonymous account, particularly those that are shared on social media tools like TikTok. Nevertheless, as the proliferation of social media tools requires journalists to do superfluous work, journalists and editors of traditional media houses must adapt to a new digital news production model as the importance of news value grows (Matsilele et al., 2023). Lastly, the use of audience metric tools has improved the impact of journalism by introducing new values, packaging, and distribution methods (Moyo, 2020). In terms of news production, Zago (2023) argues that each social media platform carries its own set of microformats that demand to be contemplated when creating content for those sites. When establishing content for social media, it goes beyond just repurposing the same content to different channels, and it involves considering different algorithms, Languages, and microformats, in an ever-changing landscape for content creation.

2.10 Appropriation of social media platforms into news dissemination

In accordance with the reviewed literature, the proliferation of social media platforms such as TikTok has made it increasingly essential for journalists to disseminate news

through adopting short video content creation specifically targeting the younger audiences (Peterson-Salahuddin, 2024; Hradziushka et al., 2024; Hendrickx, 2025). Several scholars established that the sudden growth of social media platforms such as TikTok has made it an enormous worldwide news dissemination platform targeting over 1 billion users across 150 countries, with 60% of the audience being Generation Z, known as the young audience consuming news on TikTok (Freimann, 2024; Peterson-Salahuddin, 2024). The young audience is attracted by the appropriation of hashtags and likes, which represents the most noteworthy innovation in news dissemination on social media, as TikTok establishes an unswerving connection between users and content creators, enabling users to actively engage in the journalistic process (Saperas & Carrasco-Campos, 2025).

Apart from TikTok, several media companies have appropriated a variety of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, to reach a wider audience (Gabore & Xiujun, 2018; Freiman, 2022; Matsilele et al., 2023). For example, in the Republic of Lesotho, news reporters are increasingly making use of social media platforms as a low-cost way to disseminate news to the audience through live streaming (Matsilele et al., 2023). Although the fundamental practice of implementing the online dissemination process evolved when traditional media outlets published breaking news stories to their websites and provided hyperlinks to the news stories on various adopted social media platforms (Gabore & Xiujun, 2018). According to Steenkamp et al. (2020), accentuating Facebook sites as an online platform offered the public a wider range of avenues for information tracking and retrieval, information dissemination, and also where the participation took place, compared to traditional media. Whereas Nkoala (2024) provided a comprehensive example by comparing three tweets' accounts of African media houses, the study found that @TC_Africa's news dissemination is strictly text-based, posting content as a brief headline for online articles and possibly a short blurb, followed by an embedded link. Below is an example of a tweet posted by @TC_Africa in 2020 (Nkoala, 2020:531)



Figure 2.1. “A typical example of a tweet from @TC_Africa” (Nkoala, 2020: 531).

Although the dissemination of news is faster due to the use of social media platforms and other online tools, it presents barriers for many journalists because audiences are faster than journalists in sharing news online, and some of the news is inaccurate, making it difficult for journalists to track where that fake news emerged (Zannu et al., 2024)

2.11 Challenges in integrating social media in News Production processes.

The apprehension regarding deception or misinformation online has grown in recent years, specifically regarding the impacts on elections, public health, and public safety (Geeng, Yees & Roesner, 2020). Apuke and Omar (2021) provide examples from COVID-19, where people shared false content to help others. The global epidemic of mistrust towards mainstream media has had a direct correlation to the problem of fake news that journalists face today. The recent statistics of people who trust that media reports are accurate, newsworthy, fair, and truthful news information have significantly declined over the past decades (Mare, Mabweazara & Moyo, 2019). All these above-mentioned key challenges have enabled the practice of journalism to become susceptible to changes as audiences are being repurposed as prosumers instead of consumers (Mpfungu, Matsilele & Moyo, 2023).

Journalists increasingly turn to social media platforms to research story ideas, identify news sources, verify information, interview eyewitnesses, and analyse stories (Brandtzaeg, Lüders, Spangenberg, Rath-Wiggins, & Følstad, 2016). Diakopoulos, De Choudhury, and Naaman (2012) state that journalists evaluate the validity of the source of information in social media by using visual images to reveal appropriate information originating from Twitter, such as who has posted and their location. To put this succinctly, Mare, Mabweazara, and Moyo (2019) observed that individuals in this digital era can now take photos, record videos, write narratives or statuses, edit, and publish audio broadcasts instantly online and using social media sites. They further refer to these people as media producers, while in the scarcity of the internet, they were referred to as the audience.

However, Faix (2018:43) remarked that social media could encourage the spread of fake news because “phony news entrepreneurs are pushing the agenda of bogus reports purposefully. They design articles likely to provoke social media interaction, which will help them reach more viewers. The studies on social media and journalism (Zago, 2023; Vázquez-Herrero et al, 202) noted another potential challenge that recirculation of news on social media poses to journalism and the fact that news outlets can face a reduction in concern about accessing their websites and subscriptions to digital media platforms, especially among younger audiences. Zago (2023) points out that while news recirculation could assist editors and journalists in reaching a wider audience, it also poses several challenges for online journalists in pursuing and monitoring news circulation, spreading deception, and redirecting the audience. The context of fake news production, particularly in Africa, needs to be understood concerning the following: newsrooms with limited resources, poor infrastructure, the use of prominent channels of communication, media repression, and the lack of skills in digital literacy (Mare, Mabweazara & Moyo, 2019).

As much as scholars have stated, false rumours and incorrect information are frequently spread by being altered and resurfacing on partisan news websites, which makes readers share the information on Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms. Plotnick, Hiltz, Grandhi, and Dugdale (2019) suggest that nowadays, there are scores of studies in the literature that describe possible software enhancements and systems that could improve the usability and usefulness of social media for disaster management.

Despite the challenges revealed by several scholars regarding the use of new technologies and social media platforms in the news production process in all spheres of news reporting (Geeng, Yees & Roesner, 2020; Plotnick, et al., 2019; Faix, 2018). There are benefits and drawbacks to using social media for sourcing and verification in news production. First, during news breaking, social media offers real-time, updated information that journalists, news publishing editors, and editors can use. Additionally, social media makes it easier to work in demanding and highly mobile contexts and offers an interactive communication environment. Second, since social media has emerged as a major platform for user-generated content, more people can distribute their work, which could have significant journalistic value. Typical news sources, politicians, and celebrities use social media to share updates about their personal lives. Therefore, these updates can be used as quotes for news articles as politicians and celebrities frequently use Twitter for self-promotion and political campaigning, and that becomes a convenient beat for journalists in the newsroom (Zhang & LI, 2020)

2.12 Social media and the re-configuring relationships between journalists and audiences.

The use of the internet, particularly social media platforms, has allowed citizens to effectively engage with journalists through the sharing of news, videos, pictures, and voice notes. All this online conduct is carefully followed using audience analytics, indicating high attention to audience engagement (Handrickx, 2023). According to Mare (2013), adding to the conjunction of technologies has reconfigured the daily operations of radio stations in Africa, such as *SW Radio Africa* and Studio 7, on several levels, including increasing access to the stations' content and even restructuring reception procedures. Young people today listen to the radio via podcasts, social media networks, satellite, mobile phones, computers, and tablets (Makaripe, 2023).

In terms of social media reconfiguration, social media users' participation is especially important for journalism when it comes to sharing and debating news. Clicking the "share" or "retweet" button when reading a news article can help a news article reach more users who might not be following the original account. However, the user's participation goes beyond that as it includes many jokes, video editing remixes, and text comments, among additional creative replies to news events. Furthermore, all the

edited information is regarded as part of the news recirculation processes (Zago, 2023).

In Mabweazaras' study (2013), the radio stations' appropriation of the internet and smartphones in Africa is the best example of reconfiguring the relationship between news broadcasters and the members of communities. Willems (2012) argues that radio producers and journalists are under pressure to conduct more in-depth research for their stories to enhance the level of listeners' participation, as the internet has made it simpler for listeners and social media platforms to rapidly educate themselves about trending topics and specific issues. Furthermore, Mare (2013) delineates that due to smartphones' increased accessibility over landlines, more Zimbabweans can now participate in the creation of content. He includes that the audiences do this by texting new stories for information, divulging their opinions during live-streaming discussion programs, or posting requests for specific songs on Facebook.

According to a study on Radio Dialogue, Moyo (2013) revealed that radio stations are creatively bending the use of social media and other digital media technologies like smartphones with ward communities to foster a participatory culture that has the potential to be organic, bottom-up, and democratic. Mare (2013;37) observed that social media and other new media technologies have been critical in enabling journalists to broadcast news of Zimbabwe to the Zimbabweans who reside in South Africa. In addition, these new media technologies have "enabled journalists an option to access, gather, distribute, and interact with other Zimbabweans who are out of the country to fully participate in the issues affecting their country".

The recent findings presented that the youth in Zimbabwe are embracing the internet and smartphones, particularly social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, to share pictures and messages through interacting with radio presenters (Sauti & Makaripe, 2023). However, some of the respondents proposed that media owners, such as station managers, should consider employing presenters who have knowledge and understanding of social media platforms and who can effectively engage with the audience using the internet, not presenters who know music (Sauti & Makaripe, 2023). Moreover, it is arguable that reconfiguring digital technologies has made it possible for journalists to operate outside of newsrooms; they have also changed organisational work practices. The convergence of

technologies has altered radio stations' daily operation in several ways, including by making their programs more accessible to other community members (Mare, 2013).

During the ensuing banking crisis and economic unrest, Robert Peston, the BBC Business Editor, used his blog as a means of communicating with the larger BBC business team. However, it quickly gained popularity and was read by a larger audience. While he was speaking at the Edinburgh television festival, Robert explained his impetuses; for him, the blog is fundamental to everything he does, the discipline of doing it shapes everything, it assists in disseminating to a wider world, and connects him to the larger audience (Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2013). Zhang and Li's (2020) study argues that the attitudes toward social media refer to how journalists perceive their relationships with their audiences, how social media is reflected in professional practices, and whether social media has an impact on journalism's overall professionalism. They indicate that journalists, together with their editors, agree that social media improves their relationship with their audiences.

Daniels (2022) captures the essence of digital disruption in the space of media, mainly of those who are practicing the profession of journalism, with a focus on how citizens or communities participate in the news ecosystem when they have access to the internet, but they are not full participants. An example provided by Daniels depicts that in some countries in Africa, such as Zimbabwe, the space of news engagement between media houses and citizens, and the flow of information, is restricted or largely captured by political and economic forces. Furthermore, "the citizens often engage with mainstream news and other information through gossip, rumours, cartoons, and they are circulated via SMS's and WhatsApp messengers" (Daniels, 2022, cited in Postema & Deuze, 2020).

Zago (2023:255), cited in Zago and Migowski (2014), delineates that in their study, while they had an interaction with the users of Twitter and Facebook, they had never retweeted or shared something without clicking the link or reading anything beyond what was available on the social media post. They reveal that 80% of their respondents said they always did that on Twitter, while 20% did so on Facebook. The rise of analytics-driven journalism can also be attributed to the active and engaged audience. Media houses are now coerced to tell stories that readers, listeners, and viewers want

to consume, and they track the impact of their content hourly (Mpofu, Matsilele & Moyo, 2023).

Several studies unpack the nexus between radio, convergence, and corporate logic of audience through new digital media technologies in Zambia (Sauti & Makaripe, 2023; Willems, 2013). They further delineate that the use of social media platforms in radio stations enables more interactive communication between radio presenters and their audiences on social media through discussion that involves politics, economics, and other severe factors (Sauti & Makaripe, 2023). “In post-apartheid South Africa, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) had to redefine the way broadcasters interact with the public by incorporating digital media technologies, which are prevalent in the commercial radio market, to increase the opportunities for audience engagement” (Mokgosi, 2023:109). The study findings further depict that all the viewers and listeners' comments expressed during the shows on television and Programmes on radio stations are not for SABC or Motswedding FM. Therefore, SABC and Mustwedding FM cannot take responsibility for the comments expressed by their listeners (Mokgosi, 2023).

2.13 Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on the appropriation of social media in news production processes. It located the two community radio stations in the community radio context in South Africa before engaging with extant studies that discuss how social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok are being appropriated and integrated into news production processes. The chapter further discusses the challenges faced in appropriating social media in news production processes. The chapter concludes by discussing how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the two major concepts that inform the study: the concept of technology appropriation and participatory journalism. The concept of technological appropriation assists the study in understanding and evaluating the process through which social media as a form of technology is adopted, adapted, and incorporated into news production processes by the two community radio stations in Gqeberha (see Fidock & Carroll, 2006), while the concept of participatory journalism assists the study to understand how social media is re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in the news production processes.

3.1 The Concept of Technology Appropriation

It is believed that the construct of technology appropriation involves how individuals adapt and acknowledge technologies within their respective political, economic, social, and organisational contexts (Makwambeni et al, 2023). This notion is premised on the belief that when technology is presented, individuals and institutions may embrace, appropriate, and harness it in pathways that are prompted by their aspirations (Leonardi & Barley, 2010). In addition, technological appropriation encapsulates the normal customisation and re-configuration of technology to suit local needs but is also cognizant of the fact that technology may be appropriated for reasons beyond those for which it was initially intended (Dourish, 2003; Orlikowski, 1996). Scholars such as Mare (2013) have observed that journalists largely appropriate technology for positive and negative purposes, and as such, there are no established responsibilities and applications. Therefore, the concept of technology appropriation focuses on the sequential aspects of technological usage. It stresses the recursive nature of users' interaction with technology and how their repeated actions shape the technology's structure, which in turn shapes users over time (Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti & Hedman, 2020).

Several studies (Mare, 2021; Susan, 2021; Chiumbu & Motsaathebe, 2021) have employed the concept of technological appropriation to examine how technology has

been adopted in numerous media companies, predominantly the mainstream. Mare's (2016) study employed the concept of technological appropriation to understand how community newspapers in Mozambique appropriate innovative media tools in newsroom production. Chiumbu and Motsaathebe (2021) have similarly employed the idea of technological appropriation to identify and understand how South African journalists use new technologies. Similarly, Munoriyarwa et al. (2021) examined the magnitude to which artificial intelligence (AI) has been accepted in newsrooms as well as how journalists and editors appropriate it in news-making practices. Other studies have also examined how organisations, technology, and people interact using technological appropriation as a theoretical basis (Baillette & Kimble, 2008).

A study by Baillette and Kimble (2008), which examined Anglophone and Francophone literature, revealed that most studies view technological appropriation as having a positive connotation regarding information and communication technology (ICT). The studies reviewed view the appropriation and integration of new technologies into users' everyday routines as beneficial to both organisations and individuals.

3.2 Methods for Technology Appropriation

Bar, Weber, and Pisani (2016) observe that in the past two decades, the technology appropriation lens has been used to examine social expansion and technology. Technology appropriation is seen as encompassing user collaboration, usage revolutions, and social context. Bar, Weber & Pisani (2016) have examined the history of technology appropriation from early diffusion models to more complex analyses:

3.2.1 Technology adoption and diffusion.

Diffusion of innovations can be referred to as the forerunner to the recent studies on appropriation of technology. The term diffusion is explained as the method of communicating and spreading innovations over time. Rogers, Singhal, and Quinlan (2014:204) posit that the "rate of adoption refers to the relative speed at which an innovation is adopted by members of social systems". It is characteristically evaluated as the sum of individuals and groups who embrace a newfound thought over a distinctive period of time. As a result, the rate of adoption serves as a numerical indicator of how steep an innovation's curve is (Rogers, Singhal & Quinlan, 2014).

In the context of journalism, the recent study examined the notion of technological adoption by journalists and editors in the mainstream for newsgathering practices (Munoriyarwa, Chiumbu & Motsaathebe, 2023). Furthermore, the instantaneous technological diffusion of smartphones is the practical example of progressive acceptance of cellular phones applications “apps” phenomenon for the dissemination of news while attempting to strengthen engagement with audiences (Matsilele, Makwambeni & Mugari, 2023:22).

3.2.2 Adaptive Structuration

The early theoretical researchers in technology appropriation focused on human beings’ encounter with technology and the meaning that result from user interconnection. In this phase, appropriation is perceived as an iterative process in which individuals interrelate with technology and subsequently opt to customise structures from a set of options (Bar, Weber & Pisani, 2016). Furthermore, scholars have given the example of the cell phone as a technology that transforms communication among communities. They use families as an example of a technology that can increase familial connectedness, facilitating closer contact between family members. They, however, conclude that not all appropriations are positive because some children could skip lunch to pay more attention to mobile phones and the internet (Bar, Weber & Pisani, 2016).

3.2.2 Design for Appropriation

Researchers have additionally explored exactly how design and technological descriptions influence acceptance, thereby bringing adoption into the realm of workstation inquiries, design, and civilization. The design viewpoint acknowledges that not all adoptions are successful. Notably, technology adoption declines when consumers choose not to explore or evaluate a technology (Bar, Weber & Pisani, 2016).

3.2.4 Appropriation and social change

The belief that technology can be used for social change is not new. Resourceful technology appropriation involves strategic use of technology for collaboration, publishing, mobilisation, and observation. The distinction between use and appropriation occurs when technology is adopted to reflect goals and culture (Bar, Weber & Pisani, 2016).

3.3 The factors for the technological appropriation model

Several factors have been identified as influencing people’s adoption, adjustment, and occupancy of technology: non-appropriation, dis-appropriation, and appropriation. The following diagram illustrates and discusses the aforementioned factors (Carroll, Howard, Vetere, Peck & Murphy, 2006:6)

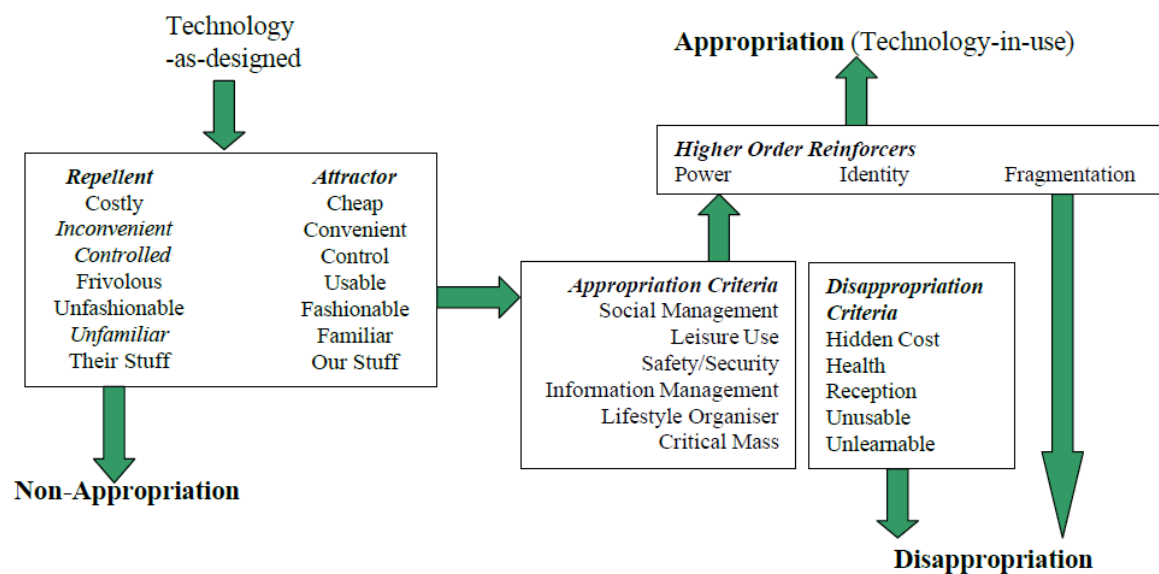


Figure 3.1: The factors of the TAM (Carroll et al., 2006)

The above diagram (Figure 3.1) shows the revised technological appropriation model, which captures three distinct categories. The classification of the three factors is accompanied by set criteria. The first factor is non-appropriation, which shows that technology is designed as a repellent and attractor. The following discussion differentiates between the three distinct factors.

3.3.1 Non-appropriation factor

Technology, as designed, provides features that allow or impose restrictions or shape its users’ actions. It has been postulated that the users of digital media and mobile phones are inclined to be attracted to ideas that coincide with their hobbies, requirements, and pre-existing attitudes. In addition, it has been noted that individuals are drawn to playing with and evaluating technology in terms of which one is easier to use, inexpensive, endorses real-life rather than impractical activities, meets their lifestyle, and fashion needs. In addition, the most powerful motivation for appropriating technology is likely to be convenience for the users of technology (Carroll et al., 2006).

3.3.2 Appropriation factor

The second category of factors also perform a pivotal task in the appropriation development. It avers that people are specifically drawn to technology, engage with it, and figure out whether or not it adds value to their lives. If the technology resonates with the demands of the people and offers a connection with their everyday lives, it will be appropriated. A list of appropriateness criteria influences whether a technology will be adopted, and what features or functions will be utilised. If absolutely none or a portion of these criteria are met or if the users have a negative perception of the technology, disappropriation criteria take precedence, and the technology will be disregarded or disappropriated. Furthermore, the intent for which people specifically resort to technology serves as the basis for integrating these devices into their daily lives.

3.3.3 Disappropriation factor

This factor states that there are multiple adverse opinions about mobile technologies. The assumption is that these could act as limitations to the appropriation of technology, and they named them dis-appropriation criteria. In this factor, the biggest gripe people have about mobile phones and technology is that their plans are inadequately clarified, and it is therefore difficult to keep track of all costs (Carroll et al., 2006).

3.4 Conceptualizing participatory journalism

Participatory journalism can be conceptualised as a practice whereby audiences have ceased simply receiving news via outmoded methods but are actively involved in its production and dissemination (Borger, van Hoof & Sanders, 2019). In the digital era, the rapid growth of Web 2.0 tools has created new avenues for audience participation in news production (Lawrence, Radcliffe & Schmidt, 2018). Bowan & Willis, 2003; Mambweazara & Mare, 2021) view participatory journalism as a modern communal practice where media organisations are increasingly allowing individual audience members or groups to participate actively in news production using modern collaborative digital technologies (see Mambweazara & Mare, 2021).

Extant studies show that the advent of social media and other new digital technologies has disrupted the authority and monopoly of journalists in news production (Matsilele et al., 2023). Audience participation and engagement in the news production

processes now set limits on journalists' ability to set the agenda. This shift is being experienced across media platforms, leading to the erosion of journalists' dominance. Consequently, audiences are now actively involved in news production as co-producers of news, thereby upending the traditional relationship between journalists and the public (Matsilele et al., 2023). At the institutional level, participatory journalism is characterised by institutionalising managerial, editorial, and technical procedures that permit audience participation to be integrated into news construction through a cooperative and group process (Henig, 2005; Vobič & Dahlgren, 2013). Thus, the impulse of participatory reporting practices challenges the classification of journalism and the traditional criteria for identifying journalists (Matsilele et al., 2023).

With the advent of social media and other digital technologies, scholars such as Matsilele *et al.* (2023) have acknowledged three interconnected ICT-driven forms of participatory journalism that are prevalent in most African countries: context-specific participatory practices; automated participatory practices; and general technological affordances. In addition, "computerised participatory processes are classifications of participation triggered by artificial intelligence; generic technological affordance refers to practices where audiences use interactive features on the web or social media, while context-specific participatory practices involve socio-defined forms of participation that cater to poor citizens" (Matsilele et al., 2023:129).

The three variants of participatory journalism that have emerged on the African continent have complemented and challenged traditional journalism practice (Matsilele et al., 2023: Mabweazara & Mare, 2021). The three variants endorse newfangled modes of co-operation in news production, namely "co-initiating, co-sensing, and co-creating" (Heikka & Caravans, 2019:441). The advent of social media and other digital technologies that are networked and collaborative has made it easier for citizens to produce media content on a large scale, resulting in a new wave of participatory journalism (Heikka & Caravans, 2019).

Hermida et al. (2011) have developed a generic participatory framework to understand the extent to which audiences can participate and influence news gathering and distribution. Domingo et al. (2008) extend this model by classifying the participatory framework into five stages of news production, namely: access and observation,

selection and filtering, processing, editing, distribution, and interpretation. These stages of news production are captured below:

TABLE 3.1: Five stages of news production (Domingo et al. 2008).

Access or observation	It is the initial stage of gathering data, when source material for a story is produced, including eyewitness accounts and audiovisual contributions. The website visitors are rarely specifically invited to take part in the access and observation phase. Most of the time, there's a method to get in touch with the newsroom or individual journalists, and some websites do not ask visitors to submit or share ideas for stories. In addition, if the story is thought to be newsworthy, a journalist may choose to work on it; subsequently, the public is not involved in any part of the production process.
Selection or filtering	As aforementioned, the selection phase does not involve participation; it is the newsroom that is responsible for selecting and filtering stories that will be published.
Processing or editing	Regarding processing and editing, there are not many online newspapers that let readers submit articles. Audiences on blogs and audiovisual content are increasingly becoming popular, as they are always easily distinguished from professional content. Likewise, blogs are regarded as the most open system of participation. Apart from this, most texts, pictures, videos, and other materials are cautiously selected by journalists. Moreover, the mainstream websites that allow the public to influence the creation of news content only allow the creation of content related to entertainment, hospitality, and travel, leaving hard news as the purview of journalists.

Distribution	As previously discussed, there are quite a few options for participation during the distribution stage. Based on automatic counts of the most read or emailed stories, most websites generate story rankings that are driven by users. The users can vote for the news they want to see or certain websites, but they cannot alter the journalistic skills
Interpretation	Readers' debates on current events are viewed as an opportunity for audience participation by most online news outlets. User involvement in the interpretation stage can be achieved through two primary methods: some websites allow users to comment below each news story, and others prefer to keep participation separated from news and have forum spaces.

Summary

This chapter outlined and discussed the two major concepts that inform the study: the concept of technology appropriation, which discusses the process through which new technologies are integrated into news production processes; and the participatory journalism concept that engages with how innovative digital media technologies are reconfiguring the relationship amongst news reporters and their audiences in news production processes in the two selected community radio stations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines and discusses the research methodology and methods that were used to understand the appropriation of social media into news production processes in two selected community radio stations in Gqeberha: *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*. The chapter begins by discussing the choice of the study's research methodology and methods in light of the study's objectives. The chapter further outlines and discusses the sampling methods and criteria used in the study, the data analysis process followed, and the ethical considerations that were made in the study.

4.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative methodology to gather data to understand both the appropriation of social media into news production processes in the two selected radio stations in Gqeberha and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between audiences and journalists in the community radio space. Qualitative research provides a holistic understanding of rich, contextual, and generally understood non-numerical data by engaging in dialogue with the research participants in a neutral setting (Ponelis, 2015). Qualitative research seeks to collect information primarily from firsthand textual data and analyse using specific interpretive methods (Taherdoost, 2022). It correspondingly examines the subjective meaning or social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and studying texts and images rather than using statistics or numbers (Rehman, 2020).

There are several benefits of using a qualitative research approach and its attendant methods. Primarily, qualitative research allows the researcher to generate a thick, detailed description of participants' knowledge, experiences, opinions, and feelings, as well as the interpretation of the meaning of their actions regarding the appropriation of social media into news production processes in their community radio stations (Rehman, 2020). Through this method, scholars may collaborate with qualitative methods such as participant observation and archival data analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Macaulay & Newman, 2023).

Therefore, the researcher employed a qualitative approach to facilitate interviews with journalists from two radio stations in Gqeberha, specifically MADIBAZ Radio and Nkqubela FM. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in full, and anonymised at the time of transcription (Creswell, 2021).

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Asenahabi (2019), research design outlines the types of data necessary, the procedure to be followed to gather and evaluate data that is used to address the research questions. Maxwell (2008) posits that in research design, the research questions perform two important functions: first, they serve to help the researcher focus the study, including the question's relationship to the conceptual framework and goals, and second, they give the researcher guidance on how to conduct the study. This study employed a qualitative research design consisting of qualitative methods to collect and analyse data from the participants. The research design enabled the researcher to collect in-depth information about the research problem. The research design consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from the selected community radio stations in Gqeberha. Data from semi-structured interviews was triangulated with data mined using virtual ethnography and qualitative content analysis.

4.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed as the central research method to gather data from the programme managers of the two community radio stations and journalists to comprehend how community radio stations are appropriating social media into the news production process in South Africa. As defined in Karatsareas (2022), semi-structured interviews are approaches that utilise open-ended questions to prompt contributors to express and articulate their perspectives, narrate their practices, and enable candidates to use their personal language to provide wide-ranging responses to questions posed. The strength of semi-structured interviews is that they typically necessitate a conversation between the researcher and participants, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented

by follow-up questions that are shaped by the interviewee's responses (Melissa & Lisa, 2019).

Therefore, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with purposively selected programme managers. Journalists, editors, and producers of the two community radio stations namely, *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*. The goal was to comprehend how they are appropriating social media in news production processes. Likewise, the researcher adopted semi-structured interviews as the data collection technique due to two primary deliberations: as a technique, they are appropriate for studying participants' insights and sentiments on the appropriation of social media into news production processes, as well as for probing for further information and amplification of answers. The study participants were made up of diverse programme managers, editors, news producers, and journalists, with diverse professional and personal backgrounds (Barriball & Whaile, 1994). Consequently, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain comprehensive information about participants' knowledge on the appropriation of social media into news production.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to meticulously listen to participants' stories, perceptions, thoughts, and ideas about the appropriation of social media into news production processes, and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences.

The other benefit of conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews is that the participants were able to express themselves freely without being constrained by predetermined frameworks (see Taherdoost, 2022). The researcher developed an interview guide in preparation for the interviews. The interview questions were broad in scope and intended to ensure that all interviews were conducted similarly and professionally (Brod, Tesler & Christensen, 2009). At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the study's goal. The initial questions addressed the participants' professional background and responsibilities at work. A total of fourteen (14) journalists were interviewed across the two radio stations. Out of the fourteen participants, twelve were journalists who also produce news while also serving as editors and field reporters. Two interviewees were radio program managers for the two radio stations, *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio*. All the interviews were conducted

face-to-face and were further recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai and provisionally analysed to identify themes.

4.4.2 Virtual Ethnography

The data collected through semi-structured interviews was triangulated with data mined using virtual ethnography to understand how social media is being appropriated into news production processes in the two community radio stations. Virtual ethnography was also employed to understand how audiences and journalists interact in the new media ecology, with a view to making sense of how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences. Notably, virtual ethnography also played a key role in corroborating findings gleaned from semi-structured interviews.

Virtual ethnography is a research method that employs several research techniques, such as surveillance, interviews, document analysis, and videography (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). According to Uzun and Aydin (2012), virtual ethnography is a method designed to comprehend interactions, communication, and communities within online contexts to cultivate relationships with the online participants or communities. The researchers may require a consistent online presence. In the context of this study, virtual ethnography was used to understand how journalists appropriate different social media platforms for news production purposes and also how they engage with audiences on social media. Crichton and Kinash (2003:2) contend that virtual ethnography is useful as the researchers “actively engages with people in online spaces in order to write the story of their situated context, informed by social interaction”.

Thus, in this study, the researcher precisely concentrated on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and TikTok used by the journalists of the two community radio stations to comprehend how news is gathered, verified, and disseminated using the above-mentioned social media platforms. Furthermore, the researcher employed virtual ethnography to see what tools are used by journalists in the community media space to gather news information and how these tools are appropriated for news gathering purposes.

On the other hand, virtual ethnography assisted the researcher in seeing and understanding how these social media platforms foster engagement between journalists and their audience. For example, on TikTok, journalists showed the

researcher their TikTok accounts, the type of content they share with their followers, and, mostly, journalists uploaded recorded videos of themselves reading the news. The researcher witnessed the comments and feedback provided by the users of TikTok. Other aspects that the researcher analysed include WhatsApp messages and audio voice notes from the audience to the radio station. The audience responses through the voice note because journalists share the radio station's WhatsApp number on various social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter.

4.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

This study embraced a non-probability purposive sampling method to recruit the participants. According to Hellenbeck (2021), in non-probability sampling, not all individuals stand a comparable probability of effectively participating in the study. The researcher selected respondents by considering their capacities as radio programme managers, editors, news producers, and journalists. The researcher also considered their comprehension and awareness of social media's appropriation into news production processes within the community radio space. The sampling exercised in the study was fundamentally subjective concerning classifying news reporters who have expertise in news production processes and enthusiastically apply social media in news production processes (Tongco, 2007).

Afterwards, the study researcher purposively interviewed two programme managers and journalists who served as both editors and news producers from the two community radio stations. The stations were purposively chosen because of accessibility. The researcher had straightforward access to the radio stations and the radio station managers after submitting ethics clearance.

In addition, the researcher selected the two radio stations because they are common community radio stations in Gqeberha and offer a variety of youth-oriented programs. *MADIBAZ Radio* station targets students and Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB) youth who speak both English and isiXhosa, while *Nkqubea FM* is based in a township called KwaDwesi Ziyabuya. The station broadcasts in isiXhosa 60 percent, Afrikaans 10 percent, and English 30 percent. In total, the researcher interviewed fourteen (14) journalists. Of the 14, twelve of these journalists also serve as news readers and actively play secondary roles as news editors. Two journalists occupy positions as radio station managers.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected using semi-structured interviews with journalists and that emerging from virtual ethnography were analysed using thematic and qualitative content analysis. Thematic analysis is a suitable method to identify experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set. It allows the researcher to actively assemble themes and meanings developed from a data set that answers a research question (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The findings from the virtual ethnography were analysed using quantitative content analysis to understand the major themes emerging from the findings. The researcher used virtual ethnography because it is a growing method in today's technologically connected society that is used to understand the online interaction between journalists and audiences (Steinmetz, 2012:27).

These findings were then corroborated with findings from the qualitative thematic content analysis and reflected on using the literature review, and the researcher analysed the social media platforms of *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio*. However, these two community radio stations did not have drafted policies on the use of social media in news production processes. This approach is ideal for this study since it entails that content analysis is gathered through comprehensive, face-to-face interviews before being analysed with a high degree of interpretation (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Furthermore, content analysis provides supporting evidence for a theory. In this study, semi-structured interviews and virtual ethnography conducted with two community radio stations were analysed to reduce data into more comprehensive topics through codes and themes (Shava, Hleza, Tou, Shonhiwa & Mathonsi, 2021). The researcher transcribed the audio recordings generated during the interviews with the study participants and analysed the interview notes. This process enabled the researcher to arrange the data from the interviews into themes. Themes are the primary outcome of data analysis that produce concrete outcomes in the field of study (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016).

4.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

There are numerous methods for measuring research variables and collecting data, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages. Noble and Smith (2015) posit that

reliability is the process of ensuring that when a specific technique is applied repeatedly to the same object, the results will be the same. Therefore, validity and reliability are important considerations when evaluating any measuring tool in research. Furthermore, they argue that considering the reliability of the study findings requires researchers to make decisions about the accuracy of the research in terms of the application and appropriateness of the methods used, as well as the integrity of the conclusions (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Validity refers to how well an experimental measure captures the intended meaning of a concept being developed. The study's reliability was guaranteed by using a well-designed interview schedule for semi-structured interviews with the participants from two community radio stations in Gqeberha. An audio recording of every piece of information gathered, and participants' consent. To obtain reliable, comprehensive information, all participants were asked precisely the same questions. The procedure described above ensured the reliability of the information collected during the interviews. The setting for semi-structured interviews was agreed upon by the community radio station managers and the researcher before the interviews. At *MADIBAZ Radio*, the interviews were held in a private, unused studio, whereas at *Nkqubela FM*, interviews were held in a quiet dining area.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher paid attention to, and obtained appropriate ethical clearance before fully embarking on the study. The researcher sought and obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the Faculty of Informatics and Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The approval was also sought and acquired from the two community radio stations, *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*, to conduct the study.

All participants in the study participated willingly without being coerced. They were adequately informed about the nature and scope of the study beforehand, as well as their right to withdraw at any point. The researcher also ensured that participants signed and authorised consent forms provided before participating in the study. The consent form clearly stated that privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity would be guaranteed in the study. According to Arifin (2018), it is imperative to preserve confidentiality throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases. Study

participants were also afforded an opportunity to give consent on whether the findings of the study could be used to produce journal articles and book chapters beyond the thesis.

As part of the ethical considerations followed in the study, participants were advised that every single interviews would be recorded, and their consent was sought. The data collected for the study was secured on Google Drive, and access was restricted. Amalia, Haerani, Romli, and Roshinta (2024:26) observe that Google Drive, which provides cloud storage, has become a popular solution for researchers in managing data, and integrating the Google Drive is an effective solution to back up data.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined and discussed the research methodology and methods that were used to understand the appropriation of social media into news production processes in two selected community radio stations in Gqeberha: *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*. The chapter discussed the choice of the study's qualitative methodology and methods in light of the study's objectives. The chapter further outlined and discussed the sampling methods and criteria used in the study, the data analysis process followed, and the ethical considerations made in the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents, analyses, and discusses the study's findings on the appropriation of social media into news production processes at *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio* community radio stations in Gqeberha. The chapter presents findings on how the appropriation of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and WhatsApp is reshaping news gathering, news production, and dissemination of news in the community radio space. It was also within the purview of the chapter to discuss findings on how the appropriation of social media in news production processes by the two community radio stations is re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audience.

5.2 APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY JOURNALISTS IN THE COMMUNITY MEDIA SPACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Previous studies have found that social media platforms are fundamentally disrupting news production processes in mainstream media (Mare et al., 2019; Matsilele et al., 2023). Media institutions are increasingly integrating social media in newsrooms, with journalists perceiving social media sites such as Facebook and X as advantageous for syndicating their work, conducting story ideas, researching stories, and also enhancing their visibility (Matsilele et al., 2023). Although previous studies have observed that community radio stations in South Africa have been slow in embracing social media and other digital technologies (see Bosch 2013), the study findings show that *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio* community radio stations have appropriated social media in their news production processes. The two radio stations are using social media to gather, produce, and disseminate news to their audiences. The data analysed in the study shows that journalists at *Nkqubela FM* and *MADIBAZ Radio* use social media to engage with their audiences in line with the key tenets of participatory journalism.

5.3 APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEWS GATHERING

The study's findings show that the two community radio stations, *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*, use social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram for news gathering. Mare (2013) observed that journalists largely appropriate technology for positive and negative purposes, and as such, there are no established responsibilities and applications. Therefore, the construct of technology appropriation focuses on the sequential aspects of technological usage. This notion is based on the belief that when technology is presented, individuals and institutions may embrace, appropriate, and harness it in ways that are prompted by their aspirations (Leonardi & Barley, 2010). The appropriation of social media for story ideas and news gathering is captured below by journalists from the two community radio stations:

"I use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This is where I find information and trending stories. For example, this week, all my stories were taken from various social media platforms because of the information I got from these digital platforms. Also, I follow some organisations in Qgeberha, and they post a lot of stories on their social media tools."

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have significantly assisted me in the morning during my brainstorming session for the stories I need to prepare for my news bulletin. Due to the numerous events occurring in the township, I opted to follow the Facebook pages of certain townships in Gqeberha, namely *KwaZakhele*, *eDwesi*, *MaGxaki*, and *Zwide*. I followed their Facebook page for numerous reasons. I even secured individuals for interviews, although they always prefer to remain anonymous. Without these social media platforms, my life would be difficult because I stay in the township, and it is costly to travel around *eKasi* to search and gather stories. That is why I prefer to use the social media platforms I mentioned to make my job easier as a journalist employed by the community radio station."

The data analysed in the study shows that social media allows young journalists who have no traditional news sources to feed them with information, like their older counterparts, to source news more easily, as shown below:

"Using social media as the source of information does not make me the laziest journalist in the world; it is where information is stored by the users of social media, influencers, including politicians. I am young and I do not have a lot of experience in journalism. Many companies post a lot of events on Instagram, press releases on Twitter and Facebook, sharing their content on TikTok, which is why I use those social media platforms every day as a journalist."

The above findings are in line with previous studies that have shown that social media platforms have become increasingly appropriated into news production practices. Hermida (2012) observes that social media platforms have been integrated into newsgathering by journalists who use them for story leads, brainstorming, and news sourcing. As stated by journalists who participated in the study, journalists are now compelled to make use of social media accounts to keep up with public discourse (Firdaus, 2016; Djerf-Pierre et al., 2020; & Matsilele et al., 2023). The integration of social media in newsgathering in the two studies corresponds with Matsilele et al.'s (2023 findings in Lesotho, where journalists in the mainstream media have shifted to social media for breaking news.

Previous studies have shown that journalists are increasingly appropriating social media platforms such as X and Facebook for news gathering (Matsilele et al, 2013; Mare, 2013). The study findings confirm these findings. Journalists at *Nkqubela FM* gather news stories on Facebook and Twitter. Social media integration in news production has made the job of journalists in the community media space easier. It allows them to gather and follow local and international stories on social media without having to travel to events. This affordance, which allows resource-constrained community media stations to save on their limited resources by gathering news beyond their own geographical locale, comes out clearly in the sentiments of the *Nkqubela FM* manager:

“Although we have financial encounters as community radio journalists, we rely on social media tools for story ideas. I get my daily story leads on Facebook and Twitter. Oh Mhhh...I also incorporate the Facebook page and Twitter handle for *Algoa FM* and *SABC* to see what has been posted by mainstream journalists. I check these social media platforms because I know very well that I will always come across something interesting. Then, thereafter, I make sure to call relevant stakeholders like the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan, SAPS, and EC government departments to confirm such stories. I do this simply because I don't want to be perceived as if I do copy and paste, I always come up with my unique angles.”

“A day before, I checked Twitter for events updates in the city of Gqeberha, as my genre is entertainment news reporting. I also check out what the celebrities who are based in Gqeberha have posted on Twitter. Then, I contact the event and PR managers to learn more about the event. I don't do this to gain access to the event; rather, it's a way for me to provide relevant and timely news to our listeners and students who may be

interested in following up about the events I reported. I also contacted the managers of those celebrities to balance my story.”

While previous studies have shown that Facebook and X are the main social media platforms used in news production, the study findings show that journalists in the two community radio stations are incorporating social media platforms like TikTok and WhatsApp for news sourcing as part of the news production process. The two social media platforms are used alongside other social media platforms like X and Facebook as a news source for content for their radio programmes, and a critical avenue for generating story ideas. This emergent role of TikTok in news sourcing is reflected in the quotes below, where journalists in the two community radio stations reflect on their appropriation of TikTok:

“I primarily use TikTok for content purposes. However, when it comes to social media tools that I use as a journalist, I also utilise Facebook, X, and Instagram because that is where companies distribute newsworthy information about their events. There’s no need for me to travel around looking for stories; instead, social media is the most effective platform for gathering information

Every day in the morning, I look at the new trends on TikTok, then investigate the concept and the meaning of the trend, and organise the interviews with people who have more followers, likes, and comments engagement on the trend. Although it takes some time for me to verify the information, TikTok is very helpful in my journalism practice.”

The emergent role that TikTok is playing in news gathering in the two community radio stations corresponds with Peterson-Salahuddin’s (2024) observation that TikTok has become an integral tool for finding and sharing news, particularly among younger audiences. This role also resonates with the key tenets of the concept of technological appropriation, which states that when a technology is deployed, people may accept and employ it in unique ways primarily influenced by their goals and objectives (Makwambeni & Makwambeni, 2024). As evidenced in the findings, TikTok influencers have become a critical news source as well as news experts interviewed in news bulletins. This unintended shift in news practices disrupts traditional news practices where news experts were previously sourced from established and ‘credible’ institutions.

One of the key insights emerging from the study is that the two community radio stations have also appropriated WhatsApp for news gathering. Unlike other social

media platforms that they use, journalists from Nkqubela FM and Madibaz Radio consider WhatsApp to be less time-consuming because it allows them to receive hundreds of story ideas and updates:

“As a young journalist with limited contacts for news stories, I predominantly depend on WhatsApp status channels. If you check your status on WhatsApp, at the bottom, you will see multiple companies and media outlets, such as SABC, e.tv, eNCA, News24, and other media organisations updating the latest stories. I consistently discover appropriate content and information for my news stories. I even receive updated media statements through WhatsApp.”

Figure 5.1 below shows excerpts of the updates that journalists use for story ideas and news sourcing:

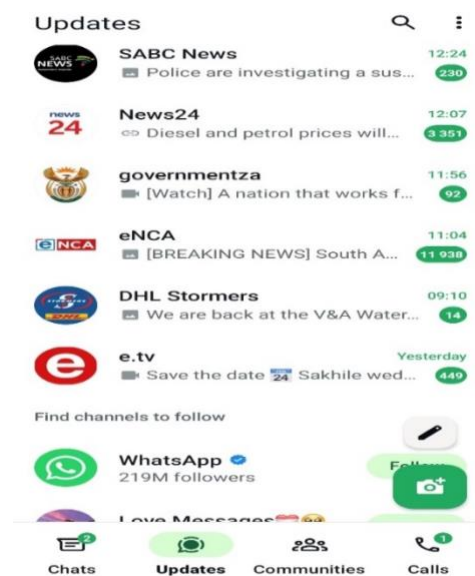


Figure 5.1: The WhatsApp updates channels

As reflected in the findings, WhatsApp allows journalists in the two radio stations to source news from ordinary members of society in the communities they serve. The quote below aptly captures the multiple ways in which journalists from Nkqubela FM and Madibaz radio use WhatsApp to generate stories about events taking place in the communities they serve:

“Do you know that just a few days ago, I did an interesting story I saw on WhatsApp? There was a robbery taking place at Greenacres Mall because of the status that was uploaded by my cousin and a couple of my contacts. Immediately, I contacted SAPS to confirm whether the robbery occurred or it was an old story. That was one of the stories I developed because of WhatsApp.”

This is echoed by another news reporter participated in the study:

“The one feature I like about WhatsApp is the presence of WhatsApp groups for journalists in the city of Gqeberha. I was added by my mentor from Algoa FM, and journalists are sharing a lot of information on that platform, I even receive a lot of media invitations, press releases.”

A junior journalists responded:

“I can say that WhatsApp is my daily social media tool for the gathering process; beyond that, I spend the majority of my time reading people’s statuses in the hopes of discovering and coming across some interesting news. In WhatsApp, people frequently post things on their status, such as accidents, crime-related stories, and other stories taken from other online platforms.”

Although previous studies, especially in South Africa, have not fully examined the role that WhatsApp plays in news production processes, Boczek & Koppers’ (2020) study has shown that WhatsApp usage in newsrooms has skyrocketed in countries such as Brazil. Thus, social media platforms like TikTok and WhatsApp are changing news gathering practices in the community radio space in South Africa and also globally, as observed by Matsilele et al (2023). As argued by Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey & López-García (2022), social media platforms have become highly influential in news production processes, which are adapting to the logic of the platform in a context marked by the incidental consumption of news, virality, and the intermediation of technology.

It is important to note that although social media platforms are being appropriated into news production processes in the two community radio stations, older journalists tend to frown on the use of these platforms in sourcing news, as they still prefer traditional news gathering methods, largely because of the threat of fake news on these new social media platforms. This is reflected in the sentiments of an older journalist practising at Nkqubela FM.

“Look, my brother, I am not disputing newsgathering on social media at all. The reason I still prefer the traditional way of gathering news is that I am of my age and experience in this industry. My community members, including the ward councillor, do share pictures and videos that are trending on social media. I do not hesitate if the story is relevant, newsworthy, and touches the community. Before I decide whether to do the story, it is important for me as a journalist to engage with the content where the story is trending, and then I contact relevant stakeholders for verification. My example would be contacting the SAPS if the story has something to do with crime (*Nkqubela FM*, September 2024).”

Researchers in technology appropriation have given consideration to humans' encounters with technology and the meaning that results from user interconnection. Thus, appropriation is perceived as a reiterative process in which individuals interrelate with technology and subsequently customise structures from a set of options (Bar, Weber & Pisani, 2016).

5.4 APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEWS PRODUCTION

Besides using social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp for news sourcing, journalists at Madibaz radio and Nkqubela FM have also appropriated social media in news production processes. The data analysed in the study shows that journalists are now able to harness pictures, stories, film clips, and audio clips from ordinary citizens in the community and broadcast them in real time. Thus, as argued by Mare et al (2019), social media platforms now allow ordinary people who were previously referred to as the audience to become co-producers of content in a new media ecology (Mare et al., 2019). The importance of social media in the news production process is explained below by journalists and producers from the two community radio stations. We use the videos that are shared by our audiences on social media. They play a crucial role in our news production. I always verify the videos and make sure that the quality of sound is good to be played on air, so that it is well received by the audience.

Social media allows audiences of the two community radio stations to influence news production directly and in real time through providing direct questions, interview clips, and providing direct feedback on broadcasts, as reflected in the quotes below.

“Our audiences highly interact with us, and they don’t only interact with the journalists, but also with the radio presenters. In terms of Facebook and WhatsApp, it is where the interactions take place. We are talking about people whose voices are voiceless, whose needs and wants are predominantly ignored by all spheres of Government. Therefore, by asking questions related to unemployment, protest, and lack of small business funding, the audience then feels empowered by playing their voice note on air.”

“The social media tools we use indeed accommodate our listeners in news production. The way they send voice notes on WhatsApp shows that it is their open and safe space to comment on the topics that touch and impact their lives. However, not all voice notes are played on air; we listen to them and ensure the use of appropriate language.”

The above findings show that social media has become integrated into the news production processes in the two radio stations. It is used as a critical tool for interaction and generating feedback from audiences in real time. The input gleaned from social media channels is fed back into the news production process to improve news. Social media platforms enhance user interaction and engagement, which fundamentally reconfigure traditional news production processes (see Cheng & Li, 2024). The appropriation of social media in news production processes in the two community radio stations in South Africa reflects broader shifts in news production processes brought about by social media platforms observed in previous studies (see Mare, 2013; Matsilele et al, 2023). What is also evident in the findings is that social media is playing an instrumental role in shaping the flow of communication, conveying issues, and challenging the status quo, particularly among young audiences (Sibanda & Ndlovu, 2023: 41).

The social media platforms of Madibaz radio and Nkqubela FM show that audiences are also encouraged to utilise the comment section to comment on news and to share. The logic of using the social media platforms is captured below by one of the station managers:

“The radio station is making it easier for the audience to participate in or engage with the broadcasting content. All journalists, including presenters, write a statement either on Facebook or Twitter, in which they seek the listeners' opinions. There is a VN number. Our listeners are incredible, using that number instead of commenting. In a day, we are likely to receive not less than 50 VNs, and on weekends, we get more than that.”

The data analysed in the study further shows that the appropriation of social media in news production processes has not only enhanced audience interaction and participation. It has also enabled the community radios to conserve their limited resources by saving on traveling costs. This point is illustrated below by one of the producers:

“I don't have to travel to attend events where public transport is not available because the public relations and events managers share clips, pictures, and videos. I work with a production team to get the most important clips and good sound quality for my news bulletin.”

Although social media platforms are now playing a critical role in news production in the two radio stations, they pose a challenge insofar as news verification is concerned.

This concern is highlighted below by a journalist from Nkqubela FM:

“Although videos, pictures, and messages are prevalent on social media, it’s my duty as a journalist in the digital age to check and verify information shared by social media users, because I don’t want to risk broadcasting erroneous information to the listeners. How do I verify facts? I contact relevant stakeholders who are impacted by the news, and also ask users to share more information; it can take up to an hour to feel confident about such stories.”

The fact-checking and news verification process followed by journalists in the two community stations follows traditional news practice. Similarly, journalists in traditional media houses in Hong Kong employ offline channels for sourcing and verification (Zhang & Li, 2020). Thus, journalists in the community radio sector tend to depend more on credible authorities, colleagues, and other media outlets for news verification insofar as news originating from social media platforms is concerned.

5.5 APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEWS DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION

Previous studies have shown that, besides transforming news sourcing and production, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have also reconfigured the news dissemination process in African newsrooms (Bosch, 2013; Mare et al., 2019; Matsilele et al., 2023). Unlike in the past, when news was broadcast through the mass media only, social media platforms have become an important tool for disseminating news in the two community radio stations in South Africa. The study findings show that Madibaz Radio, Nkqubela FM, and individual journalists have appropriated Twitter and TikTok to disseminate news in the form of tweets and live-streams. The utility of social media as a vehicle for news dissemination is reflected in the quote below, which was gleaned from one of the journalists:

“I have gained a lot of TikTok followers, and they always tell me to do more live coverage while I am busy reading the news. I also adopted that strategy because I have seen seasoned news readers using TikTok to read news, such as uTatu Siyavuya Neke, Lisakhanya Pepe, namanye ke amaqhawe namaqhawekazi endingawafanisa noMamu Noxolo Grootboom.”

The quote above shows that TikTok has become integrated into the news production processes in the two radio stations. It is used as a critical channel for disseminating news as well as a critical source of feedback from audiences. Several studies conducted globally show that social media platforms have not only been adopted into journalistic ecologies globally (Heravi & Harrower, 2016; Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Kalsnes & Lasson, 2018; Matsilele *et al.*, 2023; Ajiogu *et al.*, 2024), but they have also provided journalists with instant and widespread access to several types of content about breaking news events while also serving to disseminate reports on those events (see Alejandro, 2010; Heravi & Harrower, 2016).



Figure 5.2: Nkqubela news reader appropriating TikTok during a news bulletin.

The study findings resonate with Tsarwe's (2020) observation that social media platforms are enhancing public discourse and fostering participatory cultures within Africa's public sphere. The two community radio station and their integration of social media in news dissemination provide further evidence that media outlets globally have

conjoined social media platforms to adapt to their logic so that they get connected with their audiences. A key finding in this study is that TikTok, a social media platform that is mostly popular among youths, has been embraced in news dissemination by the two community radio stations. TikTok has become a key vehicle for simulcasting news in real time, as evidenced below:

“At the beginning, I had doubts about doing this because I was not quite certain if the listeners would like it. I had to work towards building my confidence because once I have recorded, there is no turning back to edit my live content. I was amazed by over 2000 likes and 36 comments in one day. I read news in both the studio and on TikTok. If I forget to go live, I will get many messages asking why I was not live.”

The integration of TikTok in news dissemination at the two community radio stations is not new. Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & Rodríguez-Vázquez (2021) and Peterson-Salahuddin (2024) have observed that several journalists and publishers have appropriated TikTok as a vehicle for posting and sharing news in line with the needs and demands of the digital natives.

As part of the broader news dissemination process, journalists at Madibaz Radio and Nkqubela FM utilise social media to promote their news content and direct audiences to their radio stations. This emergent role of social media in news dissemination is explained below by journalists from Madibaz Radio and Nkqubela FM:

“Instagram allows me to post my time slots for a news bulletin or for my guest to be interviewed. At some point, I get lost while reading the news. What excites me is that while I am busy reading the news, I see a lot of hearts in my livestream. I even use WhatsApp to alert students about the latest trending topics via my WhatsApp statuses.”

“We are using TikTok to promote our *MADIBAZ Radio*’s brand; we want our target audience to know that we are also found and available on TikTok, rather than Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and live radio. We are promoting all of our programs, including news programs, in a sophisticated manner through using TikTok, and I can attest that our listeners are engaging very well with our presenters on this platform.”

“Radio presenters and journalists have adopted TikTok to promote our radio shows. We cannot avoid the fact that people are using TikTok to produce their content, and that also forces us to adopt all these new digital media technologies, including TikTok, in our daily broadcasting.”

This emergent role of TikTok in the community radio space resonates with studies that show that several companies are adopting social media for marketing, advertising, and

promotion purposes. TikTok in particular serves as a powerful weapon to increase awareness about the radio stations and programme content. This role of TikTok as a promotional tool resonates with studies done by Hasim & Sherlina (2022) and Maulana and Sandyawati (2023), which show that social media has become a key tool for gaining and promoting brand identity.

5.6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND AUDIENCES?

The study findings show that social media platforms have reconfigured the relationship between journalists and their audiences across the news production process (news gathering, production, and dissemination). This shift in the relationship between journalists and audiences in the two community radio stations studied reflects characteristics of participatory journalism, where audiences are increasingly involved in the creation and shaping of media content (John & Johnson, 2022). Unlike traditional journalism practice, where journalists had minimal dialogue with their audiences (Hermida, 2011), the study findings show that social media has ushered in more opportunities for audiences and journalists to contribute to news production by turning previously passive audiences into creators and sharing their news content without gatekeeping any information (Vos & Thomas, 2024).

Audiences as journalists, partners in news sourcing and gathering

The data analysed in the study shows that, other than journalists being the sole news agenda setters and gatekeepers, social media has made audiences key partners in news production by determining what gets to be news and what is newsworthy. This reconfiguration of the relationship between journalists and audiences is captured below by journalists from *MADIBAZ radio* and *Nkqubela FM*:

“The use of social media brought the audience closer to news gathering through sharing newsworthy stories that are taking place in a township where I do not have sources. They are likely to share deeper and more sensitive stories. When following such stories, you get shocked because some are indeed accurate.”

“Social media has brought the audience closer to us journalists because they cannot afford to participate in news production by calling the radio producer or the station's landline. Last week, I covered a story of a lady

who was allegedly killed by her boyfriend in KwaZakhele township. I saw the story being shared in the morning by a lot of people on Facebook and WhatsApp.”

“Social media users provide us with news while we contemplate which stories to cover; my WhatsApp receives numerous potential newsworthy narratives.”

The findings of the study on how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audience relates to “the three extremely intertwined variations of participatory journalism acknowledged” by Matsilele et al. (2023:135), cited in Mabweazara and Mare (2021) as “generic technological affordances, automated participatory practices, and context-specific participatory practices”. The concept of generic technological affordances is described as a process and practice where audiences utilise an alternative feature on the web and or social media (Matsilele et al., 2023). Whereas automated participatory activities are considered as participation triggered by recent technologies such as artificial intelligence (Matsilele et al., 2023). Lastly, “context-specific participatory exercises concerning socio-defined participation forms that cater to economically deprived citizens” (Matsilele et al., 2023).

As reflected in the above quotes, audiences have been given agency to create news without gatekeeping any information (Vos & Thomas, 2024). They have substituted traditional news sources that were largely associated with credible institutions (see Matsilele et al, 2023). As stated below, the two radio stations encourage participatory journalism by providing a voice to the audience who were previously just consumers of news:

“Students share a lot of information on social media platforms. If it is the University management, they are discussing the crime within the university or the NSFAS allowance delay for that particular month. I encourage journalists, particularly the interns, to do such stories so that our audience can feel they are heard and prioritised by our radio station. All those stories become the list of our stories because we are seeking to empower the voiceless in the city of Gqeberha.”

Audience as collaborators in news production

The findings of the study further show that social media has enhanced new forms of collaboration in news production between audiences and journalists in the two radio stations. This collaboration can be understood as co-initiating and co-creating and results in a new wave of participatory journalism (Heikka & Caravans, 2019). Writing from a South African context, Mokgosi (2023) observes that radio stations are

harnessing multiple new technologies, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, to engage better with audiences (Mokgosi, 2023). Social media platforms like WhatsApp are therefore gaining momentum in the journalistic sphere. This is not only leading to more engaged audiences but also challenging news media to produce more engaging content. This enhanced interaction between journalists and audiences taking place on social media is elaborated on below by a journalist from Madibaz radio:

“From my side, I can assert that the interaction between us as journalists with our audiences is powerful. Why am I saying this? It is because I can rarely respond to the comments left by listeners. Even when I walk around the mall and in my community, I get a lot of compliments and questions from people, wondering why I did not mention their comments or play their audio voice notes on Air. I always tell my close friends I wish my audience could know the number of WhatsApp audio voice notes we receive per show for each question directed to listeners. Whenever I read the news, I make use of my personal TikTok account, Instagram, or Facebook to go live, but I barely reply to the comments. However, I am following Lisakhanya Pepe, who reads news on Newsroom Africa. I am amazed by the comments she responds to all her followers. In the future, I will also do so.”

The quote above shows greater connectedness that is taking place between journalists and audiences in the two community radio stations. Audiences are harnessing social media to engage with journalists by way of tagging them on trending videos and pictures, as well as sending audio voice notes on issues taking place in their communities. Mabweazara & Mare (2021) posit that this engagement with audiences should be viewed as a variant of participatory journalism that has emerged on the African continent, which has complemented and challenged traditional journalism practice (Mabweazara & Mare, 2021). This emergent form of participation brought audiences closer to the news production process, as shown below:

“For example, if I post a question on Facebook and ask the users to respond, I get a lot of WhatsApp voice notes and fewer comments on Facebook, and that shows my audience prefers to record themselves, which makes it easier for us in the radio station to play those clips. On TikTok, the interaction is likely to take place amongst my viewers, who comment during the news bulletin and after.”

“I recall running a story about Home Affairs corruption, an update on Chidimma’s case. I asked listeners to share their thoughts on Home Affairs’ cancellation of Chidimma Adetshina’s identification and travel documents. The responses were quite overwhelming; some of the WhatsApp audio voice notes were anti-Home Affairs, while others sympathized with the victim, who did not have an identity document and

could not get a job. Other WhatsApp audio voice notes called for a petition to stop Chidimma from participating in Miss South Africa.”

Thus, new digital technologies and social media have promoted participatory journalism by creating novel avenues for audience engagement, enabling the public to interact more swiftly and profoundly through online commentary, content sharing, reacting, or critiquing news. According to Gjoni (2017), these novel ways of engagement have also altered patterns of participation established by traditional media. For instance, participants on TikTok accounts perceive themselves as news reporters or citizen journalists. Peterson-Salahuddin (2024) views citizen journalism as a form of civic participation and social activism in which everyday people contribute their perspectives, experiences, and opinions about news alongside mainstream journalism. In this light, the proliferation of social media has restored alternatives for exercising citizenship. The integration of social media in news production processes has made it possible for users to feel connected to the newsroom through their content (Boczek & Koppers, 2020). Recent studies show that the incorporation of social media platforms like WhatsApp and TikTok into news production processes has made it possible for younger audiences to access and contribute more to news production (Boczek & Koppers, 2020).

5.7 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the study’s findings on the appropriation of social media into news production processes at *Madibaz Radio* and *Nkqubela FM* community radio stations in Gqeberha. It provided insights on how journalists in the two community radio stations have appropriated social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp in their news production processes. The study went further to discuss how the incorporation of social media in news production processes of the two community radio stations is re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a conclusion to the study on the appropriation of social media in news production processes of Madibaz radio and *Nkqubela FM* community radio stations in South Africa. The chapter begins by summarising the research questions of the study and key findings. The conclusions are based on the research findings generated by the data set. Subsequently, the study makes recommendations based on the study findings. The recommendations relate to the area of further research as well as usable insights that can inform future practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer two main research questions stated below:

RQ1. How are community radio stations in Gqeberha appropriating social media platforms in their news production processes?

RQ2. How is the appropriation of social media in news production processes re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences in community radio stations in Gqeberha?

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

6.3.1 Appropriation of social media into news production processes

The findings of the study show that the two community radio stations have appropriated social media platforms into news production processes... they use social media tools like Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok for news gathering, production, and dissemination. The study presented findings on how the appropriation of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and WhatsApp has reshaped newsgathering, news production, and dissemination of news in the community radio space. The study findings depicted how Nkqubela FM and MADIBAZ Radio community radio stations have appropriated social media tools in their news production. The two community radio stations actively incorporate social media for

news making, production, and dissemination to their audiences. The first section of the study findings divulges that the two community radio stations frequently used social media platforms for newsgathering purposes. Journalists who participated in the study acknowledged that social media tools assist them in generating news story ideas. It has been determined that due to a deficiency of social media literacy and infrastructure within the two community radio stations, both MADIBAZ Radio and Nkqubela FM have additionally integrated social media tools for other media houses, such as SABC and Algoa FM, to check out the latest and most trending stories. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that community members tag MADIBAZ Radio and Nkqubela FM on social media to help journalists see what is happening in the greater area of Gqeberha. It also appeared that other media houses, such as SABC News, Media24, eNCA, governmentza, and other organisations, share an extensive amount of updated news on their WhatsApp statuses, and MADIBAZ Radio and Nkqubela use the platform for news assignment and gathering.

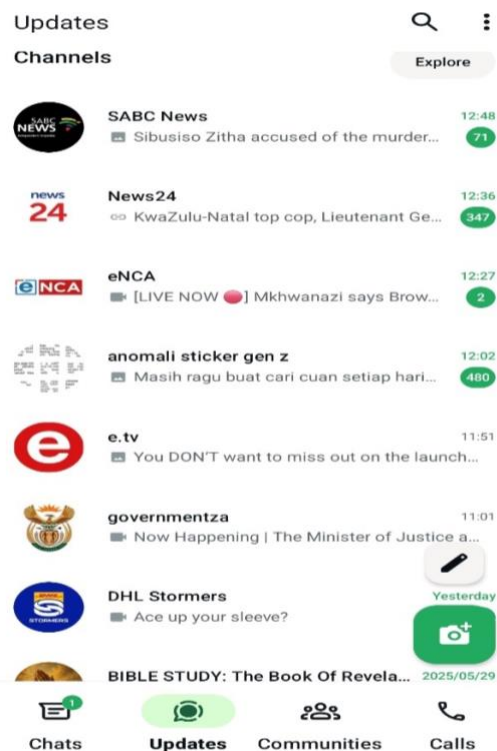


Figure 6.1: It is a screenshotted example of the WhatsApp statuses in which journalists from the community media space gather news story ideas.

Besides using social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp for news sourcing, journalists at MADIBAZ radio and Nkqubela FM have also appropriated social media in news production processes. The study findings show

that journalists are now able to harness pictures, stories, film clips, and audio clips from ordinary citizens in the community and broadcast them in real time. It is also presented that the audiences of the two community radio stations influence news production directly and in real time by providing direct questions and interview clips. Furthermore, the study findings show that MADIBAZ Radio, Nkqubela FM, and individual journalists have appropriated social media X, TikTok to disseminate news in the form of tweets and live streams. As a part of the broader news dissemination process, journalists at MADIBAZ radio and Nkqubela FM utilise social media to promote their news content and direct audiences to their radio stations

6.3.2 How social media is re-configuring the relationship between journalists and audiences

The findings of the study show that the appropriation of social media in news production processes of the two community radio stations has changed the relationship between journalists and audiences.... The use of social media has ushered in more opportunities for audiences and journalists to contribute to news production by turning previously passive audiences into creators and sharing their own news. The findings indicate that, other than journalists being the sole news agenda and gatekeepers, social media has made audiences key partners in news production by determining what gets to the news and what is newsworthy. The study findings provide valuable information through enhancing new forms of collaboration in news production between journalists and audiences in the two community radio stations.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1 Developing an online presence

The study revealed that community radio stations incorporate social media platforms into news production processes. Fundamentally, community radio stations devote both time and resources to establishing an online presence. Although (Busolo & Manalo, 2023:786) highlight the challenges that possibly impede community radio stations in rural areas and townships from doing their daily operations, they noted inadequate resources such as “ICT, lack of power, irregular power supply, high cost of power, and high cost for service provision of network connections, data, airtime are issues affecting ICT on the rural areas”. As the researcher, I recommend that community radio stations, despite the challenges aforementioned, invest more time in social media

posting, commenting, and replying to the comments left by audiences. This could be accomplished through hiring a social media specialist or coordinator. Due to financial constraints, the community radio station will have to invest in hiring students who are doing in-service training, because they are good and creative individuals.

6.4.2 Social media discussion forums to facilitate dialogical communication.

Both *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*, by employing and facilitating dialogical communication on social media platforms such as Facebook, where they constantly post, and Twitter, which is less engaged, can become conversation starters. The journalists who are using TikTok while presenting news, after their show, need to constantly respond to their followers, as the audience feels empowered if their names have been mentioned or they have been tagged on social media. The researcher has observed some social media users taking screenshots and uploading them to their WhatsApp statuses. In addition, social media discussion forums will raise the profile of the two community radio stations and enable other avenues, such as networking and collaborating with potential advertisers, donors, and investors.

6.4.3. Research on the radio Listenership

The researcher observed that not all radio followers comment on social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where the two radio stations are currently active. Both radio stations need to conduct accurate research about their listenership because many companies convey messages, but they usually end up reaching the wrong audience. Re-analyzing audiences will assist the radio in knowing its audience. I believe that being in the province of Eastern Cape does not mean I listen to Umhlobowene, the *SABC* radio station based in the province, *True FM*, and *Algoa FM* (commercial radio station within the province), I still listen to 947, Metro FM, and sometimes *Ukhozi FM*. The research on the target audience and listenership will enable the two radio stations to know the preferences of their audience, where to find them, and include potential stakeholders such as advertisers. I have seen many radio stations broadcasting live to the public at events such as national and international conferences. These two radio stations should implement broadcasting outside their studios, support campaigns, events, and community outreach to attract their audiences.

6.4.4 Training and development of young journalists

The study's participants were perplexed about the social media policy; community radio stations must have visible social media policies that are posted both inside and outside the studios because there is no staff retention within community radio stations. The visibility of social media policy will be beneficial to all internship program cohorts and in-service training participants who do not have an idea of how community radio stations operate. *MADIBAZ Radio* specifically, all study participants indicated that training and development in news gathering and reporting would be advantageous because they are still in university; the study's recommendation is to provide annual training and support to all journalists regarding the appropriation of social media into news production processes in the presence of digital media, social media, and other ICT tools. The recommendation is informed by the study participants who depicted an interest in gaining more support about the news production processes. This training can be offered by MDDA, Universities, state agencies, in the community, seasoned lecturers, and mainstream journalists.

6.5 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research needs to examine digital literacies as a strategy to assist journalists in the community space with the appropriation of social media tools and artificial intelligence into news production processes. The study presented the appropriation of social media into news production processes in selected community radio stations, namely, *MADIBAZ Radio* and *Nkqubela FM*. The findings indicate that journalists have integrated social media into news gathering and distribution. Moreover, this study presented the gaps regarding the appropriation of social media in news production, such as being present and responding to all listeners' comments on Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, to name a few. The future research will focus on community radio station management, empowering employees with current trends in media and communication in South Africa, such as artificial intelligence, disinformation, social media platforms, and acts. The findings of this study can be integrated into numerous media houses whether in public broadcasting, commercial media or the community media space on the appropriation of social media platforms into news gathering, production, and dissemination.

6.6 SUMMARY

This chapter summarised the study's research findings and provided the study's recommendations, research results, and direction for future research. The study found that journalists in South Africa use social media platforms in news production for various reasons, such as easier access to information, and these social media tools are reshaping the process of news gathering and distribution. In addition, this study presented that social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalist and their audiences, and through that process, new digital media tools brought audiences closer to news production, which also enabled an interaction between journalists and radio listeners. Although some challenges were presented regarding journalists being present on social media, this study offered insight into what could be done to avoid journalists' not being present on digital communication platforms. The study drew a conclusion based on research results and recommendations for the study.

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ANNEXURE 1: Individual Consent Form

FACULTY OF INFORMATICS AND DESIGN

Individual Consent for Research Participation

Title of the study:

Appropriation of social media into news production processes in selected community radio stations in Gqeberha.

Name of researcher:

Mfundo Telson Radebe

Contact details: email: mfundo.kznnews@gmail.com phone: 060 899 8991

Name of Supervisor

Dr Blessing Makwambeni email: MAKWAMBENIB@cuput.ac.za Phone: 081 433 6475

Purpose of the Study:

This research project entitled “Appropriation of social media into news production processes in selected community radio stations in Gqeberha” is conducted to understand how community media radio stations in Gqeberha appropriates the use of social media into news production processes. The study focuses on Journalists, Editors, Producers, and the two radio station managers of Nkqebala FM and MADIBAZ radio station. The identified participants have an experience in news gathering and dissemination within community media space.

Furthermore, as this study focuses on the appropriation of social media in the news production process within selected community radio stations in Gqeberha, and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences. A qualitative research methodology will be used to assess how journalists, editors, producers, and station manager appropriate social media within the radio station. In addition, the data collected through semi-structured interviews will be triangulated with data mined using virtual ethnography to understand how social media is being incorporated into the community radio media space. Therefore, virtual ethnography will be used to understand how journalists and audiences interact on social media.

The findings of the study will be made available to the Nkqebala FM, it will further offer an insight to the news production team regarding the appropriation and integration of social media in news production processes in digital age.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of:

- Participating in a semi-structured interview that will be recorded.

Confidentiality:

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential unless noted below. I understand that the contents will be used only for the study indicated, and the outputs of this study will be Mini-dissertation, conference presentations, journal articles and book chapters. My confidentiality will be protected by using general descriptors such as my current occupation, my age and my gender.

Anonymity will be protected in the following manner:

A transcript of the recordings of the semi-structured uniterviews will be used and in this transcript, if I request, nothing that identifies the creator of the recording will be included. The transcripts will be saved using a encrypted generic filename that cannot be linked back to the recordings. The analysis will be based on the transcripts.

Conservation of data: The research data collected will be kept in a secure manner.

The recordings will be downloaded and saved to an encrypted external drive that will be kept in a lockable drawer in a secure office. The recordings will be saved as password-protected word documents in an encrypted folder on a laptop.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will destroyed.

Additional consent: I make the following stipulations (please tick as appropriate):

	Yes	No
I would like my reflections to include my full name and surname		
I would like to be a part of the recordings to be made of the engagement.		
My exact words may be used in publications:		

Acceptance: I, (print name) _____

agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Mfundo Telson Radebe of the Faculty of Informatics and Design- Media Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the secretary of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at 021 469 1012, or email naidoo@cput.ac.za.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature:  _____ Date: 12 August 2024

ANNEXURE 2: Gatekeeper Letter



Mr Mfundo Telson Radebe

Master's in public relations and communication management

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Mfundo.kznnews@gmail.com

29 May 2025

Nkqubela FM

Shop 11, Ziyabuya Shopping Complex, Nelson Mandela Bay,

South Africa, 6001.

Dear Mr. Rasi, Sivuyile and Yaki, Xolani

RE: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT NKQUBELA FM

I work as an associate lecturer in the media and communications department within the faculty of humanities at Nelson Mandela University and pursue a master's degree in public relations and communication management at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

I am conducting a study that seeks to obtain an understanding on the appropriation of social media in the news production processes in selected community radio stations in Gqeberha. The sample (participants) in questions are the journalists, editors, producers, and the radio station managers of Nkqubela FM.

This study focuses on the appropriation of social media in the news production process within selected community radio stations in Gqeberha, and how social media is reconfiguring the relationship between journalists and audiences. A qualitative research methodology will be used to assess how journalists, editors, producers, and station manager appropriate social media within the radio station. In addition, the data collected through semi-structured interviews will be triangulated with data mined using virtual ethnography to understand how social media is being incorporated into the community radio media space. Therefore, virtual ethnography will be used to understand how journalists and audiences interact on social media.

The findings of the study will be made available to the Nkqubela FM, it will further offer an insight to the news production team regarding the appropriation and integration of social media in news production processes in digital age.

Yours Sincerely

Nkqubela FM



Mfundo Telson Radebe (Mr)

Signature

ANNEXURE 3: Approval from the participants



Shop 11
Ziyabuya Shopping Comple
KwaDwesi
Port Elizabeth
6201 F.S.A.

Dear Mr. Radebe

We hereby grant you permission to interview the station's staff for your research Mini-Dissertation.

Kind Regards,

Xolani Yisaka

Station Manager

Cell: 073 324 6872

Tel: 041 464 4471

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Xolani Yisaka', written over a dotted line.

[Click here](#)

ANNEXURE 4: Approval from the participants

South Campus
Student Governance & Development Department
Tel. +27 (0)41 504 2680
Sade'.Prinsloo@mandela.ac.za

Letter to consent for participation in research interview; The appropriation of social media int news production processes in selected community radio stations in Gqeberha.

Madibaz Radio Station has agreed to participate in a research project led by Mr Mfundo Telson Radebe, from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Thank you, Mr Radebe, for depicting interest in conducting research interviews with Madibaz Radio station. The Madibaz Radio hereby would like to inform you that research interviews can be conducted with Madibaz Radio staff members. However, interviews will be finalised upon research ethics approval from your institution. This letter serves to specify the terms of Madibaz Radio in the participation of the study.

1. Sufficient information about this project, the purpose of Madibaz Radio's participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. Our participation as an interviewee in this research study is voluntary. There are no implicit or explicit coercions to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher Mr Mfundo Radebe from Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The interview will last approximate 15-20 minutes between the interviewer and participant. In addition, I allow the researcher to take written notes, recording, and visiting our website or social media page during the interview. It is also clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped, am at any point of time entitled to withdraw from participation.
4. I have the right not to answer any questions, if I feel uncomfortable, I will not identify me by my name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

Regards

Sade' Prinsloo
Station Manager
Student Media and Engagement
Student Governance & Development



Change the World

PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, 6031, South Africa

ANNEXURE 5: FREC Approvals

Office of the Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Room 2.09
80 Roeland Street
Cape Town
Tel: 021-469 1012
Email: ndedem@cput.ac.za
Secretary: Mziyanda Ndede

22 August 2024

Mr Mfundo Telson Radebe
c/o Department of Media
CPUT

Reference no: 222155604 /2024/10

Project title: APPROPRIATION OF SOCILA MEDIA INTO NEWS PRODUCTION
PROCESSES IN SELECTED COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN
GQEBERHA

Approval period: 22 August 2024 – 31 December 2025

This is to certify that the Faculty of Informatics and Design Research Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology approved the methodology and ethics of Mr Mfundo Telson Radebe (222155604) for the Master of Public Relations and Communication Management.

Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



Prof L.J. Theo
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

ANNEXURE 7: Abstract for International conference



The 10th World Conference on Media and Mass Communication MEDCOM 2025

A17

[15]

THE APPROPRIATION OF TIKTOK INTO NEWS PRODUCTION PROCESSES IN SELECTED COMMUNITY RADIO STATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Radebe MT^{1*} and Makwambeni B²

¹*Media and communications, Humanities, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa*

²*Public Relations Management, Infomatics and Design, Cape peninsula University of
technology, South Africa*

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ABSTRACT

Digital broadcasting technologies such as the internet, as well as social media tools comprised of TikTok, have rendered up intriguing possibilities for journalists and media presenters to gather and distribute information to the audience at large. This study discusses the ways in which news production is appropriated using TikTok as a social media platform within the community media context. TikTok has the potential in re-configuring the relationship between journalists and their audiences. using MADIBAZ radio and Nkqubela FM in the city of Gqeberha as the case study and qualitative research methodology, consisting of semi-structured interviews with twelve journalists- the study seeks to understand the appropriation of TikTok into news production processes. The data collected through semi-structured interviews was triangulated with data mined using virtual ethnography to understand how community radio station news presenters integrate TikTok in news gathering and distribution. The primary data from the semi-structured interviews and virtual ethnography were analysed using a thematic analysis technique. The findings indicate that journalists who are news readers in the community radio stations integrate TikTok in news presentation or reading rather than in news gathering. Journalists depicted that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most appropriate platforms to get story ideas and TikTok is good for news reading because allows the interaction between the journalists and their audiences. Finally, TikTok, productively involved a young audience in news production by sharing community stories, photos, videos, and WhatsApp audio voice notes. These finding were premised on technological appropriation and the concept of participatory journalism.

Keywords: social media, tiktok, news production processes, community radio stations

Annexture 8: Editing Certificate



Triedstone Consulting

RC: 2020/429060/07

* Copyediting * Data Analysis * Market/Social Research * Digital Marketing

209 Chester House,
Chester Road,
Rondebosch, 7700
Cape Town, South
Africa.

25 September 2025.

Mfundo Telson Radebe,
Student Number: 222155604
Public Relations and Communication Management
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology,
South Africa.

Editing Certificate

We hereby certify that the dissertation titled "***Appropriation of Social Media into News Production Processes in Selected Community Radio Stations in Gqeberha***" was thoroughly proofread and edited for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and overall style. The editors ensured that the author's original intended meanings were preserved throughout the review process. All suggestions and amendments were tracked using the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" feature, allowing the author to review and decide on each modification.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist with this work.

Sincerely,

Joseph Olusegun Adebayo, PhD.