



**Examining community media sustainability
in the digital age: A study of
community radio stations in the North-West
province of South Africa**

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DECLARATION

I, Didunloluwa Olayinka Tella declare that except for the references indicated in this text, this study represents my original work. I guarantee that no similar work has ever been submitted by anyone at any other university or institution of higher learning.

Signature

Didunloluwa O. Tella.

Date: Day..... of..... 2022

Signature

Professor W.E. Heuva.

Date: Day.....of.....2022.

DEDICATION

To the Immortal, Invisible, and Only Wise God

Whose love and mercy upholds me still,

I am who I am because you are.

To my son, Araoluwa Champion Enoch Abisoye.

I love you more than life itself.

You inspire me.

To the ever supportive ones

Thank you for believing in me.

Rev. Dr and Mrs Ojofunmi Tella.

I treasure and cherish you both.

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To the ageless, mighty and omnipotent God, who began with me and has seen me thus far, I return all the thanks and appreciation. It can only be you. You are overwhelmingly gracious to me. I say THANK YOU.

To my parents, what would I have done without your support? Thank you for sticking with me through it all. I am grateful and I will forever appreciate you.

My wonderful siblings, Mrs. Gbemiro Akinwumi, Olaoluwatobijubeelo Tella, and Dr. Toluwani Tella. I am glad I have you all. Thanks for your support, care and assistance. One love continues to bind us together and forever.

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ABSTRACT

Studies abound on different approaches by which media firms can achieve sustainability. However, there is intense paucity of literature on ways in which local media firms (community radio in South Africa) can achieve sustainability amidst the prevailing digital challenges. Hence, the knowledge gap this study intends to fill.

Current studies indicate a good amount of scholarly work on media sustainability focusing on large media organizations, however, there are insufficient literature that discusses methods/approaches by which local media station/ managers can achieve sustainability in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Hence, the knowledge gap.

Thus, in a bid to fill this gap and contribute to the broader media management scholarship in South Africa, the effort is to contribute and expand the literature on the sustainability of community radio in the digital age by assessing the ways community station managers in the North-West Province have used to keep their small media firms up and running in this digital times. It seeks to propose appropriate methods by presenting certain best practices/methods that media managers can adopt in handling/managing their media firms effectively in this digital times.

Using a qualitative method and drawing samples from community station managers, media experts and the academics; the study examined and interrogated the various attempts in which community radio stations achieve sustainability in the digital age. This was done using semi-structured interviews and the Dynamic Capability Concept was used as the theoretical basis. In this digital age, it is pertinent to state that media sustainability goes beyond financial sustainability. Its social and institutional sustainability should be incorporated. Thus, for media organization-particularly community radio to achieve sustainability in this digital age, it must leverage and harness on its 'localness'.

Theoretically, and in line with the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, this study has been able to contribute to knowledge and has proposed a new approach to achieving media/community media sustainability in the digital age - which is by leveraging on the medium's dynamic capability (localness). Contextually, the study has attempted to close the knowledge gap by presenting ways community media stations in the North-West Province can achieve sustainability in the digital age. Furthermore, and as a way to contribute to community media/media management scholarship in the South African context, this study

debuts as a novel contribution to achieve community media sustainability amidst the prevailing digital challenges - an area that is under-researched.

KEYWORDS: Examination, Community Media, Sustainability, Digital Age, North-West Province, South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The study examined the various attempts in which community radio stations can achieve sustainability in the digital age. Two decades after the emergence of the Internet and World Wide Web, existing /traditional media are still struggling to adjust to the new environment and changes caused by the emergence of new digital technologies (Kung, 2017).

The emergence of these new digital technologies resulted in the proliferation of digital channels and the growth of other new digital platforms. (Goode, 2017). This brought about the entrance of new players in the existing traditional media market and consequently, a new kind of environment, players, and rules emerged. This in turn made existing/traditional media to begin to audit their businesses, check their products and improve their conducts and performances. These changes brought about profound effects on the management strategies and practices within and across media companies as each medium struggles for survival and relevance in this digital age (Faustino & Ribeiro, 2016). In addition, these new digital technologies are compelling existing/traditional media organizations to make fundamental shifts in the transformation of their organizations' business models and the reorganization of the news media industry as a whole (Tom Evens et al, 2017).

Furthermore, the new digital technologies brought a paradigm shift especially in the media and communication world such as – the changing content and texture of news and information, increase in the demand for digital media and new communication technologies, offering faster and cheaper distribution networks and various ways of consuming information (Kaul, 2012). The implication of these digital innovation resulted in the personalization of the new media spectrum and the associated technologies- where the media consumer can own, create and distribute media content. The aftermath of these amongst other things is the creation of many digital options for the media consumer-gradually making traditional media disposable and extinct (ibid: 1).

To put the above- mentioned issues succinctly, these new digital technologies have disrupted traditional existing businesses (Schumpeter, 2013; Rogers, 2016), caused turbulence (Casilone, 2009), and displaced shaky/weak businesses/companies (Dimmick et al, 2004).

These new digital technologies have been defined as “science-based innovations that have the potential to create a new industry or transform an existing one” (Day & Schoemaker, 2000:2).

While these (disruption, turbulence, and displacement) have been summarily identified as challenges facing businesses (media inclusive) in the digital age, they are also being tagged as the consequences of digitization (Daidj, 2018). Turbulence on its own has been defined as the “unpredictable and swift changes in an organization’s external or internal environments that affect its performance” (Casilone, 2009:13). In the mediascape, it is regarded as a double-pronged challenge creating both opportunities and threat for media firms. In reality, turbulence has enabled organizations to create and seize opportunities for growth in order to sustain their competitive advantage, while simultaneously managing the chaos and risks that comes with the uncertainty of the digital age. Thus, in view of the prevailing challenges accompanying these new digital technologies, this study explored ways by which community radio stations could remain sustainable.

Disruption on the other hand is said to happen when an ‘existing industry faces a challenger that offers far greater value to the consumers in a way that existing firms cannot compete directly with (Rogers, 2016:196). In this case, it is evident that the new digital technologies are disrupting because they are offering value-laden products and services that the existing media industry does not, and cannot, offer. Some relevant examples are Google and print media (books, magazines, library, etc.). The media consumer gets to read, see, and know about almost everything at a click via Google. The access, availability and variety of information provided by these new technologies makes it disruptive such that the average media consumer will opt and derive so much value and utility using these technologies to visiting a library or lending a book/ magazine. While this is not to underscore the importance of traditional media, it seeks to highlight the disruptive effects these technologies have had on traditional media and its management.

Another example is that of YouTube and video cassettes/players. With this, new media consumers have unlimited access to variety of media contents at a click of a button. It is an audio-visual repository of virtually everything compared to the homebound video cassette offering one information at a time. In all, these disruptive technologies do not seek to offer a different version of the same product or service. Rather, they meet the customer’s needs with a product, service, or business model that the existing industry does not, and cannot, offer. (ibid: 197).

Lastly, these new technologies have displaced shaky/weak businesses/companies. This idea originated from the niche theory of Dimmick (2004) which is being used to examine competition between new and older media forms. Being a new media form (digital technologies); the niche theory seeks to highlight the consequences attending the rise of a new medium. The niche theory states that such a medium will compete with established media for consumer satisfaction, time, and advertisement. Thus, in cases where competition exists, the consequence for the older media consists of exclusion or replacement, or displacement, wherein the new medium takes over some of the roles played by the older medium (Dimmick et al., 2000). Thus, the most common consequence of competition is displacement (ibid: 22). In view of all of the above-mentioned challenges facing existing media, how can established media (community radio in particular) thrive and remain sustainable in this digital age?

As such, it is expedient to give careful consideration to the ways in which existing/traditional media (community radio) manage and sustain themselves in this increasingly turbulent time. As part of effort, scholars are beginning to conceptualize and give meaning to ways in which existing/traditional media can remain viable and sustainable in this digital age. One of such concepts that speaks to this development is the Dynamic Capabilities Concept. In this study, dynamic capabilities (DCs) is seen as the appropriate theory in explaining how firms can respond when they are confronted with uncertainty and turbulent environment. According to Teece (2007:17), the DCs are ‘the ability of an organization and its management to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments’.

The assumption is that doing business in turbulent environments requires more than the traditional focus on core competencies and the ownership of unique assets. To sustain long-term competitiveness, it also requires difficult-to-replicate capabilities. Drawing on this concept, possible questions emerging are: What are the dynamic capabilities in community radio? - which serves as the focus of this study; and how can community radio stations/managers particularly in the North West Province leverage on such dynamic capabilities to ensure long term sustainability in this digital times? These are some of the questions the study sought to interrogate.

The subsequent chapters contain the following research sub-themes which are: background to the study, statement of the problem, aim, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, as well as the structure of the study.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Like other mainstream counterparts, community radio is a medium and it has a sustainable advantage. However, and as contained in the policy formulation of community radio, community radio stations are not-for-profit organisations. In other words, they are community radio stations not to be run for the purpose of making financial gains. In South Africa, they are registered as Section 21 companies (i.e. non-profit companies, with board of directors). This differentiates community radio from other mediums which are - the commercial radio stations and the public service broadcasters. Another defining feature of community radio is that this medium, unlike the public and private broadcasters, is set up to serve a particular community and must be identified distinctively with community and voluntary organizations.

Community radio by structure and legislation is a component of the broader broadcasting system, which includes (commercial and public service broadcasting categories). It is considered an intervention strategy of choice for deepening participation and community ownership (da Costa, 2012).

However, its quest for sustainability has been challenging. These challenges have however been compounded with the arrival of the new digital technologies. As a result, the effort is to evolve ways by which this medium (community radio) can achieve sustainability in this digital terrain. In current research, a lot of scholars have only succeeded in suggesting approaches from the entrepreneurial standpoint in a bid to make community radio financially self-sufficient.

However, inasmuch as the financial sustainability of community radio remains a valid factor, Dlamini and Dagon (2005) established its inadequacy. Both authors Dagon and Dlamini (2005), conceptualized media sustainability as a three-pronged process that goes beyond financial gains and economic returns from media operation or investment. In this three-pronged process, social, institutional, and financial viability constitutes essential pillars for news media sustainability. While financial viability speaks to financial capital and funding mechanisms, social viability is about the community participation in the media governance, and news media's fulfilment of its social responsibility mandate in the society. The

institutional viability is linked to external and internal factors. Externally, political contexts, media policy, and government legislations are among key factors that foster institutional viability. Internally, managerial leadership, working condition, and media ownership enable institutional viability.

In Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini's (2005) view, these elements – financial, social, and institutional viability – work together to ensure not only the survival of community media outlets but also how to make it self-sustainable. While the three aspects are mutually reinforcing, each aspect represents critical pillars by which community radio managers must build and grow their community radio stations if they are to remain sustainable. Thus, effort will be made to examine each of the above mentioned elements (financial, social, and institutional) in a bid to achieve wholesome sustainability for community radio in the digital age.

There are a growing number of issues affecting community radio stations in South Africa as elsewhere in the developing world. However, the most recurring and prominent is the issue of financial sustainability (Bosch et al, 2019; Mofokeng, 2018; Muswede & Sebola, 2018; and King 2017). Besides sustainability being the major challenge confronting community media globally, the challenges brought about as a result of these new digital technologies (turbulence, displacement, disruption) have complicated the existing challenge- threatening the viability of all media organizations (community radio stations inclusive). Thus, in view of all these challenges, the effort is to examine ways in which community radio stations particularly in the North-West Province are achieving sustainability.

In the North-West Province, which happens to be the contextual setting of this study, the same is true as stations are not financially sustainable and are heavily reliant on government-assisted agencies and donor organizations. This is according to Molebogeng Taunyane in Tavhiso (2009:22) who noted that 'the problems that plagued the sector (community radio) in its early stage are still evident and keep recurring. The majority of the stations still rely heavily on agencies such as the MDDA (Media Diversity and Development Agency) and (donor) funding from international agencies'. Thus, when donor funding ceases, the station itself stops. As a result of this, many community radio stations become unsustainable - frequently appearing and disappearing on-air. Financial challenges like this require the attention of all stakeholders including scholars, government, and practitioners in the field.

Thus, in view of the financial instability of community stations as well as the emergence of new digital technologies, there is need to examine ways in which stations managers in the North-West Province are keeping their stations up and running in this digital times.

Furthermore, there is paucity of literature on media and media management in the North-West Province – as there are insufficient academic studies on the sustainability of community radio stations and how they can subsist through time as participatory and inclusive social organization (Correia et al, 2019). However, the few existing ones (Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini, 2005; Tavhiso, 2009; Manyozo, 2009; Gordon, 2016; Laxmi et al, 2018; Correia, et al, 2019) largely focuses on entrepreneurial approaches to make community radio self-sufficient, neglecting the existence of the digital challenges.

Thus, in a bid to fill this gap and contribute to scholarship, the effort is to contribute and expand the literature on the sustainability of community radio in the digital age by assessing ways by which community radio managers in the North-West Province have used to keep their small media firms up and running in this digital times.

In Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini's (2005) view, these elements – financial, social, and institutional viability – work together to ensure not only the survival of community media outlets but also how to make it self-sustainable. While the three aspects are mutually reinforcing, each aspect represents critical pillars by which community radio managers must build and grow their community radio stations if they will survive the digital age. Building on the idea of the above mentioned authors, the question that comes to mind is in view of all the challenges discussed above, how can community radio stations achieve wholesome sustainability? Again, what strategies/ approaches are community radio managers evolving to achieve all-round sustainability in this digital age? This is the core of this study and serves as the main issues that managers need to respond to.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As it is with community stations globally and in South Africa, financial instability remains the most prominent and recurrent challenge faced by community media stations. Coupled with this are the challenges caused by the new digital challenges which has made sustainability challenging for local media organization in South Africa-particularly the North West Province. In view of this, scholars have only attempted suggesting entrepreneurial approaches in making community radio financially sustainable, neglecting the digital

challenges. Furthermore, much of the findings on digital challenges faced by traditional media do not squarely apply to the context of smaller media markets like community radio. As a result, there are insufficient scholarly work that deals with the methods/approaches in which local media managers can achieve sustainability in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Hence, the knowledge gap.

Thus, as a way to contribute to the body of knowledge on community media management in the North-West Province and South Africa; this study emerges to serve as an empirical study suggesting approaches by which local media organizations (community radio) can attain sustainability. Practically, the study will serve as an invaluable resource manual for community station managers; institutional stakeholders; and media policy makers on appropriate ways to galvanize community media for wholesome sustainability in the digital age as espoused by (Dagron, 2005)

Thus, in view of the challenges noted above, the effort is to investigate the approaches local media managers are using to achieve sustainability in their media firms in this digital age. Thus, the study seeks to answer the overarching question: What methods/approaches do community radio stations in the North West Province use to achieve sustainability in the digital age? This is the principal problem this study seeks to interrogate.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine the approaches community radio stations in the North West Province have employed to sustain themselves in the digital age.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the aim of the study, it was further divided into three specific objectives which are as follows:

- (a) To identify the challenges facing/threatening the sustainability of community radio stations in the North West Province in this digital-turbulent time.
- (b) To interrogate methods community radio stations are employing to address challenges of sustainability in the digital age.
- (c) To propose appropriate ways / methods for the sustainability of community radio in this digital age.

(d) To establish theories that explains ways in which local media organizations (community radio) can achieve sustainability in the digital age.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objectives above were further used to develop key questions that guided the entire research process:

- i. What are the challenges facing/ threatening the sustainability of community radio stations in this digital-turbulent times?
- ii. What methods are being used by community radio stations in the North-West Province to address these challenges?
- iii. Which appropriate method(s) can community radio stations adopt to sustain themselves in the digital age?
- iv. What are the theories that explains the methods/approaches by which local media organizations (community radio) can achieve sustainability in the digital age?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Geographically, this study does not focus on the whole of South Africa. The specific focus is on community radio stations in the North West Province of South Africa. The choice of the North West Province is informed, firstly, by the researchers' familiarity with media-related developments in this area. Hence, this study will be limited to managerial issues within these community radio stations. Currently, there are twenty (21) active community radio stations in the North-West Province of South Africa (SAARF, RAMS 2019). The radio stations are Mafikeng FM, Mmabatho FM, Star FM, Modiri FM, Bosveld stereo FM, Vaaltar FM, Village FM, Bophirima FM, Letlhabile Community Radio, Life FM, Kopanong FM, Radio Mafisa, Bojanala FM, Kgatleng FM, NWU FM, Lichvaal Stereo 92.6FM, PUKfm 93.6, Bodumedi FM, Motsile FM, Ratlou FM and Madibeng FM.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In view of the current digital challenges facing all mediums, and the need to make/ keep them sustainable, this study intends to call the attention of all media stakeholders (media practitioners, media managers, researchers, government). This is to give serious attention to community radio's management issue through a careful consideration of the strategies/approaches that currently exists in managing community radio stations. This is

needed to assess and develop sustainable strategies/approaches for community radio in this digital age.

Also, in view of the fact that little is being done in media management issues in this third sector- community media (Lowe & Brown, 2015), this study seeks to contribute to the broader media management studies scholarship. This is to expand the extent of literature in media studies/community media management in the North West Province of South Africa and the rest of the sub-continent. Also, it attempts to propose appropriate methods by which community media organizations (community radio) can remain viable in this digital era.

In addition, this study will constitute an empirical work presenting certain best practices/methods that media managers can adopt in handling/managing their media firms effectively in this digital times. It will serve as a guide to both existing and aspiring community radio stations/managers on methods to adopt to achieve sustainability.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The research approach employed for investigation is the qualitative research methodology with specific focus on interviews (semi-structured type) as the core research method.

The methods used in data presentation and interpretation is thematic analysis with emphasis on interpreting the data, and generating themes needed to answer the research questions.

Qualitative research methodology is an approach or paradigm used to develop concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in a data, which seeks to make meaning through numbers and statistics (Berg, 2001). In addition, qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. In other words, the qualitative approach is more interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, and social roles (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). In view of this, the qualitative research methodology was selected because it is a type of research method that explores and interprets phenomena and concepts (Du Plooy, 2009:45).

Furthermore, the methodology was used because it generally draws on the benefits of qualitative traditions, which purposes are to expand our knowledge of the organizational processes and challenges of small/local media institutions (community radio) in the new digital environment. It focused on the methods being used by local media stations in achieving sustainability while suggesting appropriate method(s) to adopt for community radio

sustainability which will be of immense relevance for institutional stakeholders, within the context of their cultural and social differentiations (Gray, 2004);

In addition, the qualitative research methodology will assist in identifying, interpreting and understanding the “what” “why” and “how” of the methods being adopted by these community radio stations. This will in turn generate extensive empirical data for the analysis of community radio management/sustainability issues in the North-West Province.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has the following limitations, notably:

- i. Due to the physical limitations imposed by the pandemic, the researcher was unable to physically familiarize with the respondents, hence only verbal information received during the digitally mediated session Zoom and WhatsApp video calls would suffice.
- ii. This study is NOT interested in measuring the impact of the challenges of new media technologies on community radio stations. The challenges are evident (as identified above) and taking its toll on business organizations (media firms inclusive) round the world. Thus, emphasis is on the methods/approaches being used by the community station managers in achieving sustainability.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This work is divided into seven chapters and they are as follows:

Chapter Two: This chapter constitutes the literature review and seeks to interrogate studies that have focused on approaches being used to achieve media sustainability in the digital age. It also explores literatures focusing on different aspects of sustainability that managers should integrate in achieving media sustainability.

Chapter Three: The chapter explained the theoretical/conceptual frameworks of the study. These are theories needed to give meaning and interpretation to the concept of media sustainability in the digital age. This chapter will also present the methodological framework that guided the study, as well as the research design of the study.

Chapter Four: This chapter presents the historical trajectory of community radio in South Africa. It begins with the development of radio broadcasting in South Africa, emergence of community media in South Africa; its development and progression through the apartheid era,

post-apartheid, and the current state of community radio particularly in the North-West Province where this study is located.

Chapter Five presents and discuss the data in a sequential order. This is to generate themes needed to achieve the aim of the study.

Chapter Six: This chapter analyses the qualitative research findings on community media sustainability in the digital age. The essence is to contextualize the findings and place them in perspective for a broader understanding on ways community station managers in the North-West Province can achieve wholesome sustainability for community radio stations in the digital age.

Chapter Seven provides a summary of the key findings. It provides further discussion in order to evolve recommendations as well as develop insights for further research in community radio scholarship/ media management. Thus, the study concludes that in order to for local media organizations to achieve sustainability in the digital age, they must leverage on their localness.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines relevant and related literatures to the study. With focus on the digital age, the chapter examines recent scholarly articles on the subject matter (media sustainability). The review focuses on the concept of media sustainability; the approaches media managers are using to achieve sustainability in the digital age. It further explores the current state of media sustainability in South Africa, and the varied approaches to achieving wholesome sustainability (financial, social, and institutional) for community radio in the digital age.

Understanding News Media Sustainability

‘News media sustainability’ is a term that has become popular and is being used in scholarly literatures. This is amidst what has been described as an upheaval era of journalism and news industry (Anderson, 2013; Brock, 2013; Machesney’s and Nichols, 2010). Generally, the term ‘news media sustainability’ is conceptually and analytical ambiguous in the practical sense of journalistic activities and media economics. The concept of news media sustainability is considered a tricky term because of the ambiguity of (a) defining sustainable media environment, and (b) determining the measuring yardsticks of news media sustainability that extend beyond financial profitability (Sakr, 2016). However, sustainability is regarded as the foundation for independence. Thus, if the African media is to contribute to democratic development, market growth, and a tradition of liberty and human rights, it must solve this important question of financial independence (Olorunyomi, 2018).

Furthermore, and in a bid to give a conceptual clarity to the notion of sustainability in the subfield of media economics and management, Picard (2010:57) posits that the sustainability of media organisations is determined by the interplay between ‘production, market, technological, social and managerial forces’. Thus, attention should be paid to the factors because those factors not only shows the competitiveness of the media industry; rather, it predicts the future development paths of media firms. Thus, while Picard (2010) provides standard guidelines and limited definitional ambiguities of media sustainability, he fails to define and expand the theorization of news media sustainability in both practical and analytical sense. Hence, what is sustainability and how can community radio stations/managers achieve sustainability in this digital age?

Going further, and in a bid to answer these, Abernathy (2018) advances four (4) main suggestions as to how local media stations, albeit in television in order to step up their game especially in the digital era. They are; (i) focus on digital delivery of content; (ii) innovate, not just on the digital side but with on-air programming as well; (iii) focus on ways to connect with local communities through issues such as education, the economy and transportation; and (iv) increase enterprise and investigative reporting.

Furthermore, and as part of efforts to provide solutions to make media organization sustainable generally, Posetti, (2018:11) opines that media managers need to integrate the 'end-user' in order to foster sustainable journalism. In other words, media managers should refrain from just acquiring and adapting these new media technologies, rather they should "refocus on foundational concepts of journalism innovation, end-user/audience needs, and core elements of practice, especially within legacy news media contexts". According to him, this will help media organisations to develop a model framework for sustainable journalism. This kind of framework will have within it innovation built on solid research, analysis, reflective practice and knowledge sharing within news organisations, collaboratively across industry, and via academia.

On his part however, Wail et al, (2019) notes that in order for businesses to remain sustainable in this digital era, more attention should be put on three main axes, which includes; enhancing the customer experience, adopting customer centricity and incorporating technological capabilities so as to shift or enhance the existing business model of the firm (Wail et al, 2019). However, Eid and El- Gohary, (2013) state that adopting and implementing e-marketing strategies within media firms is another veritable way of achieving sustainability. From these comments, one certain factor is recurring, and that is the end-user/consumer. In other words, sustainability of an organisation is tantamount to prioritizing the needs/want of the consumer. This highlights the participatory concept inherent in community radio. Hence, customer-centred approach is key in ensuring sustainability.

Furthermore, while focusing on a technology-aided approach, Correia et al, (2019) states that utilizing the open-source technology and content should help communities to maximize creative output while minimizing costs. The open source technology is the availability and utilization of technology (software) for community broadcast purposes (Stallman, 2010). They go further to argue that since both (technology and content) offer the possibility of product modification by the end user, open-source technology and content have the potential

to give community radio stations the tools that they need to remain active. However, this approach is seemingly not feasible and practicable, as it does not align with the structure and mission of community radio. For this to happen in community radio, certain things need to take place such as the acquisition of digital equipment as well as the training of staff members for use. Details of this will be found in the following chapters.

In addition, Lenssen & Johann-Lenssen, (2019) state that sustainable business in the digital era is to achieve the right balance between managing competitiveness and profitability. According to them, this is achieved by integrating organizational context issues into the business model and competitive strategy, laying the foundation for long-term profitable growth. Another concept by Casilone & Kotler (2009) is called the Business Enterprise Sustainability (BES), and is concerned with maximizing the underlying values of companies in the long-term. The concept constitutes several things, which include a responsive, robust and resilient business strategy at its core to achieve long-term sustainability. Prominent of the strategy is the continuous replenishment of innovative products and services to ensure long-term sustainability of organisation (media organisations inclusive). Thus, drawing on this approach, the question is: how can community radio stations achieve business enterprise sustainability in these turbulent times? Do community radio stations have the capacity to continue innovating? In addition, how can these stations be empowered to innovate and thereby ensure their sustainability?

A different but complementary concept called the ‘value-based management’ has been introduced by Barrett, (2006). The basic underlying idea in this concept is that each medium/media organisation must discover its own identity by defining its values, which will provide the foundation for a long-term development effort. Several studies have shown that only those companies that have defined their strategic and operative goals based on their values will enjoy long-term business success (Collins & Porras, 1994). According to Barrett, value-based management also helps to identify the company’s core business areas.

David Teece, Gary Pisano, and Amy Shuen (1997) further strengthened this idea in their paper titled “Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management”. They argue that “it is the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments” (p. 516). This concept arose from a key shortcoming of the Resource-Based View (RBV) of Barney (1986; 1991) and Wernerfelt (1984), which ignored factors surrounding resources, and assumed they simply “exist” (pg.96). Considerations about

how resources were developed, integrated and released were under-explored in the literature-hence, the emergence of the Dynamic Capabilities Concept (DCC).

The Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC) primarily concerns itself with leveraging on the unique assets and capabilities of an organization to ensure sustainability- and not merely its competencies and resources as stated in the Resource-Based View approach of the strategic management theory. In light of this and drawing on this concept, the effort is to identify and explore the unique assets/capabilities in community radio and how such assets can be leveraged on to ensure sustainability in their media firms in this digital era.

The Dynamic Capability Concept holds the view that media organisations should suggest those assets and skills that are unique to their organisations and cannot be imitated, thus protecting with knowledge barriers. Drawing in on this theory, the researcher seeks to proffer sustainable approaches to managing community radio in the digital age. Thus, for the community radio manager, the only way is for its managers to look within, identify the medium's main competitive assets/advantage, constantly and repeatedly strategize on these assets to ensure the long-term sustainability of the medium.

In addition, in view of the dynamic nature of these new technologies and daily innovations, Berman, (2012) argues that the only safe things are for media organisations to keep evolving (based on each medium's peculiarities), by innovating new ways and styles for them to keep surviving in these digital times. Suggesting a particular model called the new platform aggregated model (user-generated content and open-distribution platforms). Berman suggests that media managers adopt, integrate, and pattern their businesses to this model to survive and remain relevant in this digital age. Furthermore, in view of the disruptive and turbulent environment, as well as the challenging and competitive environment it portends to the manager, Weil and Woerner, (2015:79) proposed a four (4)-business model that managers can adopt/integrate in this digital era. They are:

(i)the Supplier Model: (this model involves the phasing out of the suppliers in a business environment/cycle, and the company management steps in and directly connects with the end user/consumer),

(ii)Omni Channel Model: (this model provides customers with access to their products across multiple channels, including physical and digital channels, giving them greater choice and a seamless experience).

(iii) The Ecosystem Driver Model: (This kind of model offers a complementary or sometimes competing services in the dynamic business environment, e.g. Google), and the

(iv) Modular Producer Model: (This type of model concentrates on producing more products and services and leveraging on other successful business portfolio).

However, upon review of these models, only one model seems relatable to community radio, and that is the Omni Channel Model, which gives consumers/audiences access to their products across multiple channels. Hence, how can community radio be made accessible to consumers across other platforms in the digital age?

Current State of Media Sustainability in South Africa.

Just with the way these digital technologies have fractioned and reduced the revenue sources of legacy media globally, the same exists in the South African media landscape. Many printed newspapers are starting to close shop and local/community media are starting to lose the struggle to survive (Dugmore, 2018). Thus, despite the profound benefits that these new digital technologies present, the current digital divide among the South African populace exists. As such, for the local news media- they are still struggling and unable to handle the disruptive power of digital technologies in terms of how it affects their medium and its impacts on retaining audiences and generating revenue. It is in view of all these challenges, that this study emerges-to develop ways to make community media sustainable in the digital age.

Current State of Community Radio Sustainability in South Africa.

Community radio by structure and legislation is a component of the broader broadcasting system, which include commercial and public service broadcasting categories. It has been considered an intervention strategy of choice for deepening participation and community ownership (da Costa, 2012).

There are a growing number of issues affecting community radio stations in South Africa as elsewhere in the developing world. However, the most recurring and prominent is the issue of sustainability (Bosch et al, 2019; Mofokeng, 2018; Muswede & Sebola, 2018; and King 2017). Besides sustainability being the major challenge confronting community media globally, the challenges brought about as a result of these new digital technologies (turbulence, displacement, disruption) have complicated the existing challenge- threatening the viability of all media organizations (community radio stations inclusive). Thus, in view of

all these challenges, the effort is to suggest ways by which community radio stations particularly in the North-West Province can achieve sustainability.

Generally, there are insufficient academic studies on the sustainability of community radio stations and how they can subsist through time as participatory and inclusive social organization (Correia et al, 2019). However, the few existing ones (Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini, 2005; Tavhiso, 2009; Manyozo, 2009; Gordon, 2016; Laxmi et al, 2018; Correia, et al, 2019) largely focuses on entrepreneurial approaches to make community radio self-sufficient.

Inasmuch as the financial sustainability of community radio remains a valid factor, Dlamini and Dagron (2005) established its inadequacy. Both authors, conceptualized media sustainability as a three-pronged process that goes beyond financial gains and economic returns. In this three-pronged process, the social, institutional, and financial viability constitutes essential pillars for news media sustainability. While financial viability speaks to financial capital and funding mechanisms, social viability is about the community participation in the media governance, and news media's fulfilment of its social responsibility mandate in the society. The institutional viability is linked to external and internal factors. Externally, this consists of political contexts, media policy, and government legislations which are among key factors that foster institutional viability. Internally, this speaks to managerial leadership, working condition, and media ownership.

In Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini's (2005) view, these elements – financial, social, and institutional viability – work together to ensure not only the survival of community media outlets but also how to make it self-sustainable. While the three aspects are mutually reinforcing, each aspect represents critical pillars by which community radio managers must build and grow their community radio stations if they are to remain sustainable in the digital age. Building on the idea of these authors, the question that comes to mind is in view of all the challenges discussed above, how can community radio stations achieve wholesome sustainability? Again, what strategies/ approaches are community radio managers evolving to achieve all-round sustainability in this digital age? This is the core of this study and serves as the main issues that managers need to respond to.

In the North-West Province, which happens to be the contextual setting of this study, there is paucity of literature on media and media management- in this case community radio management. Thus, in a bid to fill this gap and contribute to scholarship, the effort is to

contribute and expand the literature on the sustainability of community radio in the digital age. This is by assessing the ways community radio managers in the North West Province have used to keep their small media firms up and running in this digital times.

While, there are a myriad of issues confronting the contemporary manager in today's digital world, this study seeks to establish thoughts concerning issues of sustainability focusing on small media organizations (community radio). There is no doubt that small businesses are finding it hard to remain viable and sustainable due to the turbulence and disruption in the environment (Danaher et al, 2015). Thus, a critical approach to solving this is to identify and explore the approaches/ processes by which community radio stations achieve sustainability in this digital times.

Media Management in the Digital Age.

In basic terms, media management is the effective management of media organisations. It is an academic intersection of two different social sciences: media and management. It is an interdisciplinary research area devoted to the effective management of media and media organizations especially in the digital age (Munoz, 2018).

Media management research became an area of interest and study during the 20th century as media conglomerates began to take shape, first in the newspaper industry, and later in the radio, motion picture, and television industry (Albarran et al, 2008). The media industries are unique to society in many ways in that they are ubiquitous and pervasive in nature. The media is a primary source for information and entertainment and an important part of the function Laswell (1949) described as transmitting the culture of a society. Given the unique nature of the media, the study of the management of media enterprises, institutions, and personnel evolved quite naturally over time. Today, media management is a global phenomenon, and research and inquiry in the field of media management crosses interdisciplinary lines, theoretical domains, and political systems.

Research in media management is applied today to the business side of all kinds of media organizations operating in various industries, including newspaper, radio, television, film, and the Internet. From a management perspective, all functional areas are of interest for the discipline, including strategy, personnel, operations, marketing, finance, and entrepreneurship. Finally, media management research is mostly focused on global, European, and American markets. But it is also a rising discipline in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, with an

increasing number of scholars coming from these world regions. However, the good coverage of media management regarding different business functions and media industries has not been followed up by enough relevant research on competencies of media managers (Munoz, 2018).

For this study however, and in view of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject being studied (media and management), it has made formulating a central theory quite hectic (Chan-Olmsted, 2006). This has made scholars rely more on management theories and have failed in developing media and communication theories. (Kung, 2007). As such, the strategic management theory will be used. However, in order to achieve the purpose of this study, and to be able to explain the phenomena being studied, a conceptual framework called the Dynamic Capabilities Concept (DCC) under the strategic management theory is being used to interpret and give meaning to the study.

The Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC)

This concept arose out of the need to understand the mechanisms media organizations are taking to adapt to changing market conditions (Albarran & Picard, 2004), and exploring strategic options for companies operating in various markets and regulatory settings (Liu and Chan-Olmsted, 2003).

Until recently, certain theories such as the Niche Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV) have been used to understand media management. However, these theories do not provide for the necessary and adequate means to address the challenges traditional media face in fast-changing, turbulent times of industry change, hence the DCC (Chakravarthy, 1997; Oliver, 2013, 2016). The DCC is particularly relevant to this study because it expressly highlights the ways/methods by which media organisations (community radio) can remain sustainable in this turbulent times-which is by dwelling on its dynamic capabilities. In addition, it outlines the methods/ways to identify and leverage on these dynamic capabilities, and for community radio, it is by leveraging more on its locality/localness. Thus, this theory is particularly useful because it outlines the capabilities community stations can leverage on to achieve sustainability in the digital age.

Furthermore, the changes caused by technological advancements, shifts in media consumer's needs and preferences has given rise to the need for media firms to seek a balance between continuity and efficiency - to ensure sustained profitability- and adaptation to achieve new

competitive positions in this digital age (Maijanen and Virta, 2017; O'Reilly III and Tushman, 2013). As a result of these and in order to meet this challenge, media firms need to purposefully create, extend, and/or modify their existing resources and competences in order to address these new challenges (Capron and Hulland, 1999). This is as stated in the Dynamic Capabilities Concept which regards organizations' capabilities as dynamic when they enable a firm to formulate and realize new strategies to reflect changing market conditions by modifying its resource base and/or combining and transforming available resources in new and different ways (Morgan, 2012).

In recent research, many scholars have advanced different approaches to media sustainability ranging from niche creation to exploring the dynamic capabilities of the media firm. However, a number of literatures and intense insights has come from the dynamic capabilities concept because of its emphasis on dynamics- a concept that speaks to issues of strategic renewal, adaptation and growth in turbulent times. The DCC reinforces the view regarding the external environment of firms as increasingly turbulent and hypercompetitive (Anderson and Tushman, 1990; D'Aveni, 1994).

While the DCC lacks a standard definition because of the different approaches and perspective in which scholars have conceptualized it, the definition of Helfat and Martin (2015) is more succinct and captures the essence of this study. Both authors define the DCC as the capabilities with which organizations constantly integrate, reconfigure, renew and recreate its resources and capabilities and, most importantly, upgrade and reconstruct its core capabilities in response to the changing environment to attain and sustain competitive advantage. While this definition pre-supposedly speaks to big organizations generally (media inclusive), current research attempts to unravel and conceptualize the meaning of dynamic capabilities especially as it relates to local media firms. Thus, what exactly are dynamic capabilities and how can they be identified in community radio?

Dynamic capabilities are: (i) "the organizational and strategic processes by which managers manipulate resources into new productive assets in the context of changing markets" (Galunic and Eisenhardt, 2001:1229). It is also defined as the (ii) "the ability of managers to renew the firm's competences so as to achieve congruence with the changing business environment" (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004:127). Finally, it is (iii) "a firm's behavioral orientation constantly to integrate, reconfigure, renew and recreate its resources and capabilities and, most importantly, upgrade and reconstruct its core capabilities in response to the changing

environment to attain and sustain competitive advantage” (Wang and Ahmed, 2007:35). In other words, dynamic capabilities are those intrinsic assets/competencies peculiar to a firm/organization capable of making them achieve sustainability in the digital age.

Taking into consideration the proliferation and raging effects of these new media technologies in the media landscape, the question arising is what do these new technologies mean for media managers, and how do they shape media work? The first general point to make is that these developments have created a very different strategic environment (Kung, 2011). The environment is such a compelling one such that it is forcing other mainstream media to go back to the drawing board to think and strategize. This emerging environment is different from the stable environment mass media models are predicated on. These emergent environments are characterized by uncertainty: industry boundaries are unclear (as is, for example, the case with the ongoing convergence among the media and telecommunication; business models are evolving; consumer preferences are not well known, and competition from digital technologies.

Therefore, these emerging environments present a complex management challenge, particularly for incumbents encumbered by their legacy systems and processes. Thus, existing players need to embrace new strategic directions to master new content competencies. They will need to be able to strategize more rapidly and make their organizations more flexible.

Media Managers Approach to Achieving Sustainability.

Having established above that achieving media sustainability is a cocktail mix of different factors that includes leveraging on both its (dynamic capabilities) intrinsic assets as well as other external factors (economic, political, content, technology, and community), media managers need to focus on the above processes in order to achieve sustainability in their respective media organizations.

The reality is that in today’s digital world, a whole lot of media managers do not have an experience or knowledge base of how to operate in a rapidly changing market because of the oligopolistic and monopolistic markets in which the media has traditionally operated in (Picard, 2004). Hence, managers of small businesses (community radio) are finding it hard to adapt their business models to new markets and competitors (Danaher et al, 2015). Scholars (Cortellazo et al, 2019 & Heikkila et al, 2018) posits that for managers, they must continuously innovate with their business models or risk going into extinction. This requires a

proactive management that will introduce innovation in all the organization's dimensions: (i) innovation of product (ii) Innovation of processes (iii.) innovation of organization (iv.) innovation of marketing (v) Technological innovation. (Sande and Gallego, 2018).

Recent studies have shown that the only way for media managers to successfully tackle or respond to sustainability challenges is to explore their dynamic capabilities. It is a theory used in explaining how media firms can respond when they are confronted with uncertainty and turbulent environments. This dynamic capability has been described as the "ability of an organization and its management to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments" (Teece, 2007: 516).

The dynamic capability concept holds the view that doing business in turbulent environments requires more than the traditional focusing on core competencies. The DCC further states that, to sustain long-term competitiveness, it also requires difficult-to-replicate capabilities. Thus, for community radio stations and its managers, what are the difficult-to-replicate capabilities, and how can managers of community radio stations leverage on these dynamic capabilities to ensure sustainability and long-term competitiveness.

The nature of each medium particularly legacy/mainstream media (community radio inclusive) has made it in such a way that each medium has a traditional competitive advantage in that they can differentiate themselves in the quality of their content amongst other things. In this digital age however, each medium's competitive advantage is not sufficient to deal with the challenges of digital technologies and ensure sustainability, hence the need for each medium to focus on its inimitable qualities/dynamic capabilities.

To do this, it is expedient to highlight the dynamic capabilities of community radio. By this, the effort is to identify the inimitable qualities of community radio that other mediums do not have. For community radio, Graham&Greenhill (2014) states that local news firm must continue to experiment with models and products embedded in high content quality and community presence. In addition, Zuckerman (2004) is of the view that local news media need to better to understand the new market ecosystems emerging in the digital age, to build tools and systems that help communities collect and share information and connect that information to action.

Going further, and in order to establish this phenomenon empirically, there is need to look into other climes (preferably developed countries) to identify and explore the approaches media managers are using to achieve sustainability in their media firms in this digital era.

In the United Kingdom for instance, and as part of responses to achieve sustainability, media organisations are using multiple responses, including consolidation, vertical integration, and collaboration, to keep their media firms viable (Goode, 2017). Focusing more on the collaboration kind of response, Goode (2017) describes it as the most popular response used in the UK media industry. This involves organizations cooperating with each other to achieve specific objectives, rather than competing. According to Goode (ibid), this response takes many forms-which includes include mergers, acquisitions, alliances and partnerships, and more informal ways of working together. Goode (2017) further states that this kind of response allows both collaborators (partners) to access new capabilities and to develop dynamic capabilities while retaining the autonomy to produce the creative content at the heart of success in today's multi-platform, converged media world.

In Africa, the challenges and questions of news media sustainability in Nigeria and several African countries are primarily bounded in the political, socio-cultural, and economic contexts of journalism practice in the continent, while the innovative changes in the communication technologies are secondary (Ojo, 2015). As a result, a large percentage of media organizations in many African countries are unable to respond to the challenges of sustainability because they are unstable and are the brink of extinction themselves largely due to the political, socio-cultural, and economic limitations in which journalism is practiced.

In reality, the sustainability and performance of news media organisations in the African continent are largely driven by political motives/financial gains, and not by the public service ethos and/or entrepreneurial spirit. By so doing, several media organizations do not conduct market intelligence analysis or have coherent business plans because they are primarily set up to boost the social and political status of their owners(ibid). While the above issues are prevalent and generic to media organizations, there is need to investigate their approaches and how they (media managers) achieve sustainability especially in local media firms.

Media Managers' Approaches to Achieving Sustainability in Local Media Organizations.

Much of the findings of the research on the challenges faced by traditional media in the UK and US do not squarely apply to the context of smaller media markets, shielded from international trends and competition. In addition, there are insufficient literature that highlights methods/approaches by which local media managers can achieve sustainability in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Hence, the knowledge gap. Thus, the challenge is to investigate and establish the approaches local media managers are attempting to achieve sustainability in their media firms in this digital age.

Doyle (2010) presents some media managers' views on digital challenges in the United Kingdom (UK) and the transition to multiplatform distribution in particular. Her research shows that most respondents agreed on the need to adopt a 360°-distribution strategy. This strategy is the use and conversion of media content into new outputs and across new platforms, which is characteristic of a 360 approach. This approach according to Doyle (2010) means that costs might be higher than the benefits in the short term, however, it yields substantial opportunities for additional consumption and additional audience value. While the above strategy focuses on mainstream media, it does not speak to local media strategy to achieving media sustainability.

Also, in view of a research conducted in Europe by Puppis et al, (2017), the research focused on the view of legacy media managers in handling the current digital challenges. The research finding recommends that in order for media managers to achieve sustainability- they must diversify their current business model and be open to align their current business models to existing digital approaches (Puppis et al, 2017).

However, Donders et al, (2018) posit that in view of the way small media markets have been shielded away from international trends and competition, the only strategy local media firms can adopt is to connect with their audiences. That way, they would be connecting with their local audiences while at the same time developing a new business model.

Going further, McPhee (2014) combined all the above points in his submission to list certain sustaining activities which media managers should incorporate and these includes people, relationships, systems, ideas, infrastructure. While the above listed factors are cardinal in achieving sustainability, the suggestion resonates in the thoughts of Syrett and Devine (2012)

who both advocate for media managers to adopt an integrated approach, which involves: (i.) reconfiguring businesses to manage uncertainty (ii.) developing a capabilities framework.

While the above reviews are important in achieving sustainability, Syrett and Devine (2012) conclusively notes that there is no single strategy for achieving sustainability. Rather, every company must hone a strategy that is best adapted to their environment and competitive situation and executed using their unique blend of skills and resources. In view of the above-mentioned thoughts, how can community radio develop its own strategy to achieve sustainability? Does it (community radio) have the capacity to do this?

Achieving Financial Sustainability for Community Radio in the Digital Age.

It is no doubt that despite community radio's revolutionary success and capability, financial sustainability still remains a challenge in community radio stations (Girard, 2007). Until recently, financial sustainability was understood only in terms of finance/funding, however, recent studies have shown that it goes beyond funding. It considers the station's model of financing, how it apportions finance to its different units and the methods in which the station generates revenue. Achieving financial sustainability for community radio ranks high and is one of the most pertinent issues for all media stakeholders considering its role and significance in the democratization of the airwaves in the South African context.

In South Africa, only community radio stations of interest (faith-based community radio stations) have been successfully able to achieve financial sustainability, while the rest look up to the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) (Bosch, 2010). While the MDDA has government funding, it does not have sufficient funding to service all the community radio stations that apply to its pool of funds. Thus, financial sustainability for community radio stations remain a challenge in South Africa.

Again, many are of the opinion that financial sustainability in community radio stations is tantamount to self-sustainability. This is not practicable as it is difficult to imagine a community radio station in any part of the world that is entirely self-sufficient/sustainable, that is, (capable of generating all necessary resources through member contributions or through its own activities).

Thus, in order to clarify these two terms - financial sustainability and self- sustainability, it is important to understand what sustainability is in a broader sense. It is 'the ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to its mission effectively

and consistently overtime without excessive dependence on any single funding source' (Canon, 1999). Drawing on the above definition, it suffices to say that no media station can be entirely sustainable, ditto community radio.

Going further, Zuckerman, (2004); Graham and Greenhill, (2014), state that leveraging and investing in the community the radio serves is the most feasible way in local news media can remain financially sustainable in this digital age, albeit they are aided from other sources. In other words, community radio stations need strong community ownership that grows out of community participation and engagement in the radio; content that is relevant, addressing issues of importance to the lives of people (Jallov & Jannusch, 2014).

Leveraging on the community it serves for financial sustainability is important in order for them to remain uncompromising and true to their journalistic ethos and mandate. Other aspects of achieving financial sustainability includes community radio's self- generating activities which includes: membership, messages to be aired on radio, in-kind contribution to the radio, fundraising parties, commercial side activities and advertising (Jallov, 2012)

Another of such method is for community radio stations to re-invest and plough back into the station the revenue generated by entrepreneurial means. The assumption here is that community radio stations should evolve ways to be self-sufficient (El-ghul, 2004). However, not many are, as a large percentage of them are heavily reliant on donations, aids from international agencies and NGOs. In South Africa, a large percentage of community radio stations, if not all still rely on grants from MDDA, government agencies and other non-governmental organization. However, and as if reading into the future, El-ghul, (2004), warned that uncertain times lie ahead of community radio, and the future path is torn between those who support the move in the direction of commercialism and others who are firmly against it on the grounds that such a move might compromise the ethos of community stations.

El-ghul, (2014) further argued for the self-sustainability of community radio stations and that practical methods such as the ones listed below should be incorporated into the financial life of community radio stations.

- apply more entrepreneurial principles, in particular marketing principles;
- lobby for more favorable licensing requirements including the elimination of sponsorship time limitations;

- promote sharing of resources among stations such as facilities, rentals and airtime for those stations that share a geographical location;
- promote the use of barter payments;
- promote long-term philanthropic relationships between community radio stations and donors. (El-ghul, 2004:14).

El-ghul, (2014) conclusively notes that the above steps, if followed would financially aid community media stations and make them self-sufficient rather than looking up to agencies and donor organizations for help.

Achieving Financial Sustainability for Community Radio by Community Participation.

Having noted above that one of the cardinal ways to achieve financial sustainability for community radio stations is by involving and investing in the community (community participation). It is important to define what community participation is, and highlight the participation strategies of the community in achieving financial sustainability, and vice versa as the case maybe.

Defining community participation, Hartley and McKee (1996:218) states that it 'is a very vague and open concept and is used to mean very different things. It often subsumes other concepts and approaches (such as, 'community involvement and participatory planning and development which are themselves ill-defined'. It has further been described as a concept that changes in color and shape at the will of the hand in which it is held (White, 1994; Dagrón, 2001).

However, in order to bring about clarity and avoid any form of ambiguity for this study, community participation is understood in terms of community plurality/inclusiveness in the attainment of financial sustainability for the radio station. There are quite a number of literatures on community participation and many scholars have explored the concept from various academic disciplines and field. However, there is little or no literature that explores community participation from the standpoint of achieving (financial) sustainability in community radio. Hence the knowledge gap.

Furthermore, and in view of all these, the most prominent work that summarized the essence of community participation is that of (Froehlich et al 2012). It was a survey report to examine the participation of local and community radio stations in Africa, Asia, Latin

America and the Pacific. The study examined the involvement of the radio stations' communities in programming, management, ownership and funding. In all regions, involvement in programming was strongest. However, results show that participation in management, ownership, and funding were less common. The ranking of the various areas of participation was similar throughout the regions; the only differences were in their importance. However, in Africa, the level of participation in financing and ownership was comparatively high compared to participation from other continents, while Latin America and Asia tops participation in programming and management respectively (Froehlich et al, 2012).

In addition, and according to the survey, majority of the stations generate revenue through multiple sources (ibid). In Latin America, advertising is of primary importance, in Africa, sale of airtime and funding by foreign and local donors are relatively significant, while in Asia, governmental support plays a bigger role than in the other two continents. In view of all these, lack of funds is still seen as the most severe constraint for increased participation of communities in all regions covered by the survey. In their submission, (Froehlich et al 2012) submits that an early involvement of the communities (in the planning and implementation phase) and their organisation in listeners' clubs are two factors that lead to stronger participation.

Again, (Jallov, 2012) highlighted some community-based financial strategies by which community radio stations can achieve sustainability and engender participation. They are: (i) community-based fund generation (ii) commercial side activities (iii) advertising (iv) sponsorships; and (v) state funding. In view of the above mentioned approaches, Jallov (2012) says the strategies listed above only represents a tip of the iceberg as 90 per cent is still hidden below the surface. Thus, and in her words, Jallov (2012:43) says "initiative and innovation opportunities are immense, however, the challenge is to get the funding mix right-community by community". Thus, how can community stations in the North-West Province utilize this funding mix model to achieve financial sustainability? Do community stations in the North-West Province have the capacity to adopt/ integrate this?

Achieving Social Sustainability for Community Radio Stations in the Digital Age.

Having reviewed that community pluralism and participation is important in achieving financial sustainability for community radio stations in this digital age. It is important to state that in the quest to achieve holistic sustainability for community radio as espoused by Dagon and Dlamini (2005), there is need to evolve ways to achieve its sustainability socially. First,

social sustainability highlights the importance of participatory approach at all level and at all times - this includes the process of decision making, management and technical skills (Dagron, 2005). In other words, for community radio to be sustainable in this digital age, it needs the participation and involvement of its community for its creation, use, and survival.

Social sustainability refers “to community ownership of the station and participation in the production and airing of programmes at both decision-making and operational levels” (Arora et al., 2015:12). In other words, it must provide people with genuine access to radio not only as receivers and consumers of programmes, but as producers and contributors of content. Social sustainability also seeks to empower local communities by establishing public spaces for dialogue and for collaborative action.

However, one of the factors affecting the social sustainability of community radio stations is the capacity of community radio stations to recognize and address emerging needs of the communities (McConnell et al., 2001). Recognizing this, Harris and Rajora (2006) argue that community acceptance is essential to overall community radio sustainability. Hence, for the sustained interest of the community, community radio stations must use all the opportunities to take advantage of public gathering, special programmes on community, culture and uniqueness. Thus, there is need to highlight the approaches needed to achieve social sustainability for community radio.

Approaches to Achieving Social Sustainability for Community Radio Stations in the Digital Age.

While certain generic approaches as espoused by (Kruger et al, 2013) such as the community’s participation in governance, financing, and general activities are important in achieving social sustainability, Jallof (2012) is of the opinion that in order to find answers to the lingering issue of sustainability in community radio stations, a clear strategy is critical.

Ordinarily, Jallof (2012) says that the participatory feature of community radio should have provided a way by which the medium could achieve wholesome sustainability; however, it is unable to do that because of the other areas/units in which sustainability needs to be achieved. Thus, she noted that a clear strategy plan that will move the station from its current state to its desired end goal (wholesome sustainability). Furthermore, she suggested a clear strategy plan under these three issues, they are:

i. Management – a clear strategic plan to formulate and implement decisions that will move the station from its current state to its desired goal.

ii. Investors and Potential partners- a clear strategic plan will indicate how serious and realistic the radio station is about their plans and dreams, and to which extent an investment in radio and their capacity is promising/ viable.

iii. Impact and Change- A good strategy plan will facilitate an assessment and highlight areas/ ways in which more effort or attention is needed. (Jallov, 2012:109) paraphrased.

Thus, in view of the above reasons, the development of a strategic plan should be a priority task for community radio stations as early as it is feasible (Shinkede, 2019; Jallov, 2012).

Engendering Strategy Plan to Achieve Social Sustainability for Community Radio Stations in South Africa.

Having noted above that creating a strategic plan is essential in achieving social sustainability for community radio stations. It is important to state that such plan should be drawn /conceived in the early stages of the creation of a community radio station and not at later stages when the community radio station is struggling to remain viable. In addition, it is important to state that this strategy plan is different from one community radio station to the other depending on the kind of ownership in existence as well as the business model.

This is to ensure that the direction/future of the community radio station is feasible. The strategic plan is a core document and expression of the entire raison d'être of the radio station (Jallov, 2012). It has been described as an excellent framework to guide and shape the future of the medium. Thus, the principal idea of a strategic plan is to clearly identify the dreams and aspirations, the vision of the radio station and merge it to the needs and desires of the community in order to achieve a socially sustainable radio station.

The essence of the strategy plan is to assist the station in documenting its plans, goals and milestones and to ensure it sticks to it. Below are a list of themes and issues that should be included in a strategy plan (and other things that maybe considered important):

- i. Vision (What is the community radio's vision and what are the things in place to help it achieve its vision).
- ii. Mission (What is the stations' mission and how it intends to achieve its mission)

- iii. Values and Principles (What are the values and principles of the station and how do they align with that of the community) Adapted from (Jallov, 2012:156).

Achieving Institutional Sustainability for Community Radio Stations in the Digital Age.

Institutional sustainability as espoused by Gumucio-Dagron (2001) relates to the radio station's policies; democratic processes; management styles; internal relations and practices, and partnerships with external agencies. In Jallov's (2007) concept of institutional sustainability, it is being conceptualized as issues of management and supervisory bodies, appropriate technologies, appropriate democratic structure, training and participation, and belonging to relevant networks. Also known as organizational sustainability, it is the way in which the internal and external affairs of a station are managed (Mafani, 2015).

While community support and participation are critical to the existence and survival of community radio stations, its external networks and alliance is crucial as well. Thus, community radio stations must ensure they draw on localness to build strong partnerships with civil society and development organisations that work in the local community. These partnerships become beneficial to stations for communicating crucial development information to local residents (Manyozo, 2012). Furthermore, it is important to state that community radio stations derive their authority and license to act from community support and participation. Therefore, they are able to influence the rest of the community to adopt desired changes (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Viewed in this context, it can be argued that community radio stations in South Africa, derive their legitimacy from their stakeholder communities. This makes community radio a powerful institution and a veritable vehicle for not only shaping opinions and attitudes in the community but also for influencing behaviour, thus making it a potential conduit for diffusing the benefits of ICT to its stakeholder communities (Megwa, 2007). Thus, how can managers make their institutions sustainable in the digital age?

Approaches to Achieving Institutional Sustainability in the Digital Age.

In a bid to, Jallov (2012:142) suggested some approaches to achieving institutional sustainability. First, she suggested the need for a positive and enabling environment in terms of appropriate and legal regulatory frameworks. She outlined other approaches as follows:

- (i.) internal democracy (dynamic management at the level of the day-to-day management and coordination).

(ii.) accountability, training and participation, appropriate structures (clear framework in place to ensure all these factors are achieved).

(iii) management and supervisory bodies (Good leadership in place to ensure efficiency).

(iv) appropriate technologies and participation in relevant networks (installation and maintenance of appropriate gadgets and machines and belonging to relevant associations and networks).

Focusing on the latter approach – participation and belonging to relevant networks, in South Africa, existing few studies have only focused on community radio broadcasting neglecting core structural issues such as ownership, professionalization, and the impact of institutionalization on the conduct of community media (Chiumbu, 2010). Using a political economy approach, Chiumbu (2010) argues that it is difficult for community broadcasting stations to actively participate and establish themselves between the state and the market. She went further to say that, state institutions such as the MDDA AND ICASA determine the policies and regulations governing these community stations. As such, the state does have some advantage over community media in South Africa.

Furthermore, Bailey et al, (2008) suggests that enabling high quality legislation and regulation strengthens community media, it can be argued that such state-based regulation can compromise the ethos and mandate of community radio broadcasting, making it vulnerable to interference. Another issue raised by Chiumbu, (2010) is that of commercialization. According to her, this factor is causing many community radio stations to be market-oriented, as it is the case with many community radio stations in South Africa-relying on adverts and donations from NGOs and the private sector.

In view of all these issues mentioned above, how can one achieve an institutionally sustainable media in the digital age? (Kruger et al, 2013) states that the solutions include clear set of principles and policy, strong leadership and transparency. This is needed to maintain productive relationship with the media institution as well as with other interest group and partners. An institutionally sustainable community radio encourages participatory decision-making processes, transparency and transfer of knowledge to those with less experience in broadcasting. The interaction between media's institutional capabilities and functioning socio-political environments is crucial to sustainable media landscapes, editorial independence, and responsible journalism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Having briefly defined above the main theoretical framework guiding this study- the Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC). This section will further elucidate on the two theories used in this study. The first one is the Dynamic Capabilities Concept (DCC), and then the Resilience Theory. The section begins by presenting the current state of knowledge of Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC) in the field of media management. It further provides the definition of the concept; and then highlights the suitability and applicability/relevance of the concept in relation to community radio in the quest to achieve sustainability in the digital age. The other theory - Resilience Theory is used to complement and give credence to the Dynamic Capabilities Concept. Therefore, this chapter begins with the conceptual framework- Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC), followed by the Resilience Theory.

Current State of Knowledge/Literatures on Dynamic Capabilities Concept.

Quite substantially, scholars have explored the concept of Dynamic Capabilities Concept from a considerable amount of perspectives and fields of discipline (Bouncken et al. (2008); Oliver (2018); Ellonen et al. (2009); Maijanen and Jantunen (2016); Maijanen and Virta (2017); Hasenpusch and Baumann (2017). However, there has been little or no attention to conceptualizing DCC in the context of local media firms such as community radio. Hence, the knowledge gap. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap by contributing to scholarship in the field of media management particularly in the global South.

Understanding Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC)

The concept Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC) is rooted in the field of management, including media management. It concerns itself with ways in which organizations (media) identify and respond to change. Change in this sense include challenges in the economy, including new challenges brought about by the emerging process of digitization.

Until recently, certain theories such as the Niche Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV) have been used to understand media management. However, these theories do not provide for the necessary and adequate means to address the challenges traditional media face in fast-changing, turbulent times of industry change, hence the DCC (Chakravarthy, 1997; Oliver, 2013, 2016). In essence, the inadequacy of the Resource-Based View and the Niche Theory to interpret and give meaning necessitated the use/adoption of the Dynamic Capabilities Concept (DCC). The DCC is particularly relevant to this study because it expressly highlights

the ways/methods by which media organisations (community radio) can remain sustainable in this turbulent times-which is by dwelling on its dynamic capabilities. In addition, it outlines the methods/ways to identify and leverage on these dynamic capabilities, and for community radio, it is by leveraging more on its locality/localness.

In addition, the changes caused by technological advancements, shifts in media consumer's needs and preferences has given rise to the need for media firms to seek a balance between continuity and efficiency - to ensure sustained profitability- and adaptation to achieve new competitive positions in this digital age (Maijanen and Virta, 2017; O'Reilly III and Tushman, 2013). As a result of these and in order to meet this challenge, media firms need to purposefully create, extend, and/or modify their existing resources and competences in order to address these new challenges (Capron and Hulland, 1999). This is as stated in the Dynamic Capabilities Concept which regards organizations' capabilities as dynamic when they enable a firm to formulate and realize new strategies to reflect changing market conditions by modifying its resource base and/or combining and transforming available resources in new and different ways (Morgan, 2012).

In recent research, many scholars have advanced different approaches to media sustainability ranging from niche creation to exploring the dynamic capabilities of the media firm. However, a number of literatures and intense insights has come from the dynamic capabilities concept because of its emphasis on dynamics- a concept that speaks to issues of strategic renewal, adaptation and growth in turbulent times. The DCC reinforces the view regarding the external environment of firms as increasingly turbulent and hypercompetitive (Anderson and Tushman, 1990; D'Aveni, 1994).

While the DCC lacks a standard definition because of the different approaches and perspective in which scholars have conceptualized it, the definition of Helfat and Martin (2015) is more succinct and captures the essence of this study. Both authors define the DCC as the capabilities with which organizations constantly integrate, reconfigure, renew and recreate its resources and capabilities and, most importantly, upgrade and reconstruct its core capabilities in response to the changing environment to attain and sustain competitive advantage. While this definition pre-supposedly speaks to big organizations generally (media inclusive), current research attempts to unravel and conceptualize the meaning of dynamic capabilities especially as it relates to local media firms. Thus, what exactly are dynamic capabilities and how can they be identified in community radio?

Dynamic capabilities are: (i) “the organizational and strategic processes by which managers manipulate resources into new productive assets in the context of changing markets” (Galunic and Eisenhardt, 2001:1229). It is also defined as the (ii) “the ability of managers to renew the firm’s competences so as to achieve congruence with the changing business environment” (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004:127). Finally, it is (iii) “a firm’s behavioral orientation constantly to integrate, reconfigure, renew and recreate its resources and capabilities and, most importantly, upgrade and reconstruct its core capabilities in response to the changing environment to attain and sustain competitive advantage” (Wang and Ahmed, 2007:35). In other words, dynamic capabilities are those intrinsic assets/competencies peculiar to a firm/organization capable of making them achieve sustainability in the digital age.

Dynamic Capability Concept and Community Radio

Having established above that dynamic capabilities are peculiar to every organization (community radio) and can be identified, what then are the dynamic capabilities in community radio and how can community radio managers leverage on these capabilities to ensure sustainability?

In order to leverage on these dynamic capabilities and ensure sustainability in community radio, community radio managers must not only re-configure their existing business models and firms’ resources, but also continuously work/build on its difficult-to replicate capabilities (Schneider, 2013). This idea is further strengthened in the thoughts of Graham and Greenhill, (2014:5). They assert that for the local media firms to survive, “they must continue to experiment with models and products embedded in high content quality and community presence”. In other words, they need to focus more on their localness/locality, community factor/strength and other resources, which are peculiar to them as a medium and use it as a competitive advantage.

In addition, Zuckerman, (2014) opines that there is need for the local news media to better understand the new market ecosystems emerging in the digital age, to build tools and systems that help communities collect and share information and connect that information to action. He goes further to state that this requires a change in philosophy of the local news media to work closely with communities to understand their needs and strengths, and to develop useful tools together using collaborative design principles.

Furthermore, the argument above resonates in a concept called the Business Enterprise Sustainability (BES) introduced by Casilone and Kotler (2009). This concept concerns itself with maximizing underlying values of companies in the long-term. This includes the continuous replenishment of innovative products and services to ensure long-term sustainability of the organization. Therefore, for community radio to achieve sustainability in this digital age, it must continuously seek to innovate with products and services. Thus, drawing on this concept, the question is: do community radio stations have the capacity to continuously innovate? In addition, how do we empower the medium to innovate to ensure their sustainability?

Going by the dual identities of media organization as being both a business and a cultural institution, it suffices to say that all media organizations (community radio inclusive) have the capacity to innovate. However, for radio generally, its capacity to innovate is being delayed because it continues to operate on traditional/old business models and has failed to opt for innovation strategies needed to explore new pathways of production, broadcasting and marketing made possible by the digital environment (Gallego et al, 2018).

Thus, in order for radio not to miss the opportunities the digital ecosystem presents, it needs to; (i) undertake a thorough review of its current business model, and (ii) adopt a genuine innovation culture (Gallego et al, 2018). This requires a proactive management that will adopt and introduce innovation in its entirety: (a) innovation of product (b) innovation of processes (c) innovation of organization (d) innovation of marketing, and (e) technological innovation. While all the innovations listed above are needed in media organizations in order for them to remain sustainable in the digital era, attention should be placed more on the latter - technological innovation.

In a different yet complementary thought, Gunzel and Holm (2013) maintains that while most news media organizations have continuously introduced innovations in certain elements of their business models, the various innovation approaches remain uncoordinated. Thus, the authors suggest that traditional media organizations should rather concentrate on adapting particular elements instead of changing the entire business model logic.

Dynamic Capability and Innovation

Having defined dynamic capabilities as assets and capabilities present in an organization which is geared towards achieving sustainability in the digital age, innovation on the other

hand is the product of utilizing an organization's dynamic capability to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Ellonen et al., 2011).

While innovation is crucial to a firm's survival and success, it is particularly critical in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of which community radio is one. Innovation is defined as "the discovery of a fundamentally different business model in an existing business" (Markides, 2006:20). It is also the firm's capacity to adopt new systems, introduce and develop new products through the combination of innovation behaviour, strategic capability and internal technological process (Rajapathirana and Hui, 2018). In other words, and in the context of this study, innovation is the ability to create and generate new techniques for the sustainability of community radio in the digital era. Thus, do community radio stations have the capacity to innovate continuously? In addition, how do we empower the medium to innovate to ensure their sustainability?

Over the years and as stated above, the need to innovate in radio has not been swift mainly because the radio industry keeps clinging to old business models which has led to significant loss of opportunities (Gallego et al, 2018). Thus, in light of this study, how do one exploit these dynamic capabilities to ensure innovation in community radio? Current empirical research reveals that in order for community radio stations to ensure innovation, they must adopt this integrative approach which includes learning, knowledge and innovation. According to the DCC concept, the ability to utilize the assets and capabilities in an organization begins with 'sensing', 'seizing', and 'transforming' - which is a form of knowledge begging to be seized and transformed (innovation). This approach corroborates the DCC and it explicitly appears as one of the definitions of dynamic capabilities according to (Helfat and Peteraf, 2015). In this approach, one is a product of the other and the aim is to ensure that organizations (community radio) are able to withstand the turbulence and remain viable.

While dynamic capabilities and innovation are said to be interrelated, existing literature shows that they are different and distinct concepts (Bresnik and Hisrich, 2014). As such, media managers must ensure they continuously embrace knowledge, learn, and then use the knowledge garnered to achieve sustainability in their media firms.

Resilience Theory

While the DCC remains the principal theory on which this study is based, another theory that lends credence to the Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC) is the Resilience Theory of Walker et al (2002). It is defined as the capacity to continue to function during and after a severe shock or stress, or at times of increasing instability (Walker et al, 2002). This theory conceptualizes community radio as an alternative media and seeks to focus on strategies for maintaining the capacity of the system (community radio) to cope with whatever the future brings, without the system changing in undesirable ways. Walker further explains that resilience depends on the system being able to cope with external shocks in the face of irreducible uncertainty. In turn, this requires understanding where resilience resides in the system, and when and how it can be lost or gained. It also requires the adaptive capacity of managers in order to steer the affairs of the station. Thus, for community radio/managers- what approaches are they deploying to be resilient to achieve sustainability?

Dynamic Capability and Resilience Theory

While the former concerns itself with optimizing organizational capabilities/assets in achieving sustainability, the latter focuses on ways to continue to function during and after a severe shock or stress, or at times of increasing instability (Walker, 2002). The resilience theory centers on strategies for ‘maintaining the capacity of the system(media) to cope with whatever the future brings, without the system changing in undesirable ways - and this can only be done by understanding where the resilience resides in the system(media)and when and how it can be lost or gained (Walker, 2002:74). Thus, the effort is to identify where resilience lies in community radio, and how such can be lost or gained.

In a bid to identify and understand how resilience can be lost or gained particularly in community radio, Walker (2002) argued for ‘adaptive capacity’. Defining what ‘adaptive capacity’ is all about, he says it is an aspect of resilience that “reflects learning, flexibility to experiment and adopt novel solutions, and development of generalized responses to broad classes of challenges” (Walker, 2002:6). He described it as the capacity to nurture and preserve the elements that enable the system to renew and reorganize itself following a massive change. This capacity according to him resides in aspects of memory, creativity, innovation, flexibility, and human capabilities.

Finally, he goes further to highlight three (3) methods in which local media can adapt and be resilient during instability. First, grassroots media must: (i) constantly learn new media software and hardware, adapting to technological advances; grassroots autonomous organizations lend themselves well to this kind of fluid adaptability, often finding ways to access new technologies despite scarce resources; (ii) adopt and adapt innovative journalistic practices and; (iii) develop horizontal relationships with a wide variety of audiences, online or otherwise.

Thus, from the reviews above, it suffices to say that both concepts are cardinal in ensuring sustainability. While dynamic capabilities focus on intrinsic (internal) assets which media managers must deploy to achieve sustainability, resilience theory speaks to media organizations' capacity to adapt and withstand (external) threats/turbulence. Thus, to achieve sustainability for community radio, media managers and other media stakeholders involved in community radio should leverage on the medium's dynamic capabilities as well as its resilience (adaptive capacity).

Dynamic Capability and Media Sustainability

Having established above that part of having a sustainable media requires optimal utilization of its organization's dynamic capabilities (intrinsic assets), how can these intrinsic capabilities be deployed to ensure sustainability? (Deselaers et al, 2019) maintain that it requires taking a step back from looking solely at revenue at the level of an individual media outlet. According to the authors, it requires a wider and more holistic approach that considers the environment around the media sector—the media ecosystem.

Deselaers et al, (2019) are of the opinion that just as it is in a healthy natural ecosystem where different plants and animals have access to food and water and possess the traits they need to flourish in their specific habitat. Similarly, a healthy media ecosystem depends on an enabling environment - a suitable business model, for certain, but also a supportive legal environment, an equitable advertising market, journalism training institutions, professional associations, distribution networks, a reliable internet infrastructure, the trust of the community, etc. Without these kinds of conditions, even the most innovative business model or reporter training program cannot ensure long-term viability.

Furthermore, and in order to buttress the point above, (Cook and Sirkkunen, 2013) argue that such is tantamount to creating a niche. In other words, and according to both authors- a

potential solution to these sustainability-related concerns might lie in establishing a niche, which translates to constructing a role in the media market that will make them distinctive from other news providers. The argument is based on the fact that niche is critical for the health of the news market and that niche similarity leads to destructive competition, whereas niche differentiation leads to coexistence (McDowell, 2014:45). However, these niche approach/theory is insufficient to effectively give meaning to the issue of media sustainability particularly in the wake of digitization hence the dynamic capability concept (DCC).

It is expedient to state that both concepts-dynamic capabilities and media sustainability are different concepts aimed at achieving media viability in the digital age. While both concepts are headed towards the same goal, the difference is in the resource/factor it uses in achieving it. Thus, while media sustainability seeks to produce high-quality journalism in a sustainable way, dynamic capability seeks to leverage on the intrinsic assets/competencies present in each organization to achieve sustainability. These intrinsic assets have been categorized into three coherent clusters of capabilities; i.e., sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring (Teece, 2007). Thus, while sensing refers to the identification and assessment of an opportunity for sustainability, seizing involves the mobilization of internal and external resources/competencies to address an opportunity and capture value from it. While reconfiguring refers to continued renewal and orchestration of resources to keep the resource base of the company in line with the shifts in the business environment. In other words, a community radio should be able to ‘sense’- identify an opportunity, “seize’- deploy all resources within its reach to leverage on such opportunity and then ‘reconfigure’- finally evolve ways to ensure the continued usage of such opportunity for the sustainability of the medium (community radio).

Furthermore, and in order to innovate towards sustainability, businesses need to shift their focus from competitiveness per se, to competitiveness in a sustainable way (van Kleef and Roome, 2007). Thus, how can community radio be made competitive in a sustainable way?

In summary, while the dynamic capability concept recommends taking advantage of the organization’s unique peculiarity /capability to be sustainable in this digital age, the resilience theory argues for strategies the organizations could adopt during this increasing unstable times. Summarily, while both concepts are poised to achieve the same goal (sustainability), the methods vary. The dynamic capability focuses more on the (internal) resource, while

resilience theory speaks to media organizations' capacity to adapt and withstand (external) threats/turbulence.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed relevant and related literatures to the study. With focus on the digital age, the chapter examines both past and current scholarly articles on the subject matter (media sustainability). It explained the concept and relevance of the dynamic capabilities concept (DCC) to this study. It went further to highlight the synergy between dynamic capability concept and the varied concepts/terms needed for media sustainability in the digital age. It focused on the concept of media sustainability; the approaches media managers are using to achieve sustainability in the digital age. It further explores the current state of media sustainability in South Africa, and the varied approaches to achieving wholesome sustainability (financial, social, and institutional) for community radio in the digital age. While the chapter discussed varied methods towards achieving wholesome media sustainability (financial, social and institutional); it conclusively highlights the need for community radio station to focus on their dynamic capabilities in order for them to remain sustainable in the digital age. Thus, and in view of the abundance of literatures on media sustainability, existing literatures have only focused on large legacy media organisation, neglecting local media organizations particularly in Africa. Thus, this study sought to close the knowledge gap and contribute to community radio scholarship in developing African nations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter presents the research approach employed for investigation in this study - which is the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodology is an approach or paradigm used to develop concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in a data, rather than in quantitative, which seeks to obtain meaning through numbers and statistics (Berg, 2001). In addition, qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. In other words, the qualitative approach is more interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, and social roles (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). This is in contrast to quantitative methodology that reduces people's words to statistical equations and thereby losing sight of the human side of social life. Therefore, in line with this, and bearing in mind the nature of this study, the researcher's study will adopt the qualitative research approach.

This research methodology is similar to, and echoes the thoughts in the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm as espoused by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The main aim of this paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience, seek to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking, or the meaning s/he is making of the context. In other words, this paradigm places emphasis on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. This is according to Punch, (2005) who says that the interpretivist/ constructivist paradigm seeks to construct knowledge socially because of his or her personal experiences of real life within the natural settings investigated. Hence, the key tenet of the Interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Building on this paradigm, and identifying its implication on this study, the researcher seeks to give meaning by highlighting the methods/approaches in which local media stations (community radio) have adopted to keep their media firms sustainable in this digital era. First, by identifying the methods/ways, exploring the suitability of the methods needed for the sustainability of community radio stations. The next thing to do is to make meaning of the data gotten from the respondents in order to forge a suitable approach needed to ensure the sustainability of local media stations in the digital age.

Thus, below is the justification for selecting the qualitative research methodology.

-The methodology is employed because it generally draws on the benefits of qualitative traditions, which purposes are to expand our knowledge of the organisational processes and challenges of small/local media institutions (community radio) in the new digital environment. It focused on the methods being used by local media stations in achieving sustainability while suggesting appropriate method(s) to adopt for community radio sustainability which will be of immense relevance for institutional stakeholders, within the context of their cultural and social differentiations (Gray, 2004);

-In addition, the qualitative research methodology was selected because it is a type of research method that explores and interprets phenomena and concepts (Du Plooy, 2009:45). This methodology will assist in identifying, interpreting and understanding the “what” “why” and “how” of the methods being adopted by these community radio stations. This will in turn generate extensive empirical materials for the analysis of community radio management/sustainability issues in the North-West Province.

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the qualitative research design. It was selected because of the nature of the study, which is exploratory and interpretive. It explores, interprets phenomena and concepts (Babbie, 2013). Thus, below is the justification for selecting the qualitative design - especially as it relates to community media sustainability in the North-West Province.

The choice of the North West Province is informed, firstly, by the researcher’s familiarity with media-related developments in this area; hence the selection. Furthermore, and upon further investigation, the researcher discovered that there are no scholarly research literatures bordering on media/media management in the province. Hence the knowledge gap. Therefore, in a bid to fill this gap and contribute to media/community radio scholarship, the North-West province was selected. This is despite the fact that the Province has a considerable high number of community radio stations in the four district municipalities.

Time Dimension of Research

This study employed the longitudinal kind of research with emphasis on the case study approach. The case study approach is a method whereby the researcher examines, in depth, many features of a case or few cases over a duration of time. A case can be individual, groups,

organizations, movements, events, or geographic units. In this study, the case here was (managers, experts, and the academic). While this kind of research design enables researchers to conduct several observations of the same subject over a period of time, the defining feature is that it enables the researcher to detect developments or changes in the characteristics of the target population at both the group and the individual level. The point here is that the case study approach extends beyond a single moment in time, it also establishes sequences of events.

This is unlike the cross-sectional research design which compares different population group at a single point in time and does not provide information on the cause-and-effect relationship (Babbie, 2013). Thus, as a result of the nature of this study-which is explorative, the researcher employed the longitudinal case study method as a way of exploring/identifying approaches that community radio managers are using to deal with challenges caused by digitization in their media organisations. The researcher began interviews with the stations closest to the researcher (Mmabatho FM and Mafikeng FM), while the other interviews were conducted via Zoom and WhatsApp Video calls. This was because of the physical limitations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted over a six-month period and the interviews began with the managers, followed by the experts, and then the academic.

Population of the Study

The population for this study was all community radio stations in the North- West Province of South Africa. Currently, there are (21) community radio stations which are spread across the four (4) major district municipalities in the Province namely;

- i. Bojanala Platinum District Municipality
- ii. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality
- iii. Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality
- iv. Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality.

However, due to the current limitation posed by the (COVID-19) pandemic, the researcher purposively chose two (2) community radio stations in each district municipality, making a total of eight (managers) in all. With the aid of a radio assessment survey (RAMS) by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRCSA), the researcher purposively selected

both the ‘most active’ and the ‘least active stations’ community radio stations in the four (4) district municipalities of the North-West Province outlined above.

Active stations mean community radio stations that are consistently on-air, while the least active stations refer to stations not on-air or stations having little on-air presence. This is needed in order to establish and benchmark best practices in the selected community radio stations. Therefore, from each district municipality in the North-West Province, both active and a non-active (2) community radio station was selected, making a total of eight (8) managers in all. The managers were selected because they are the first port of call in an organisation, saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the smooth running/administration of an organization-in this case, a community radio station. In addition, they are most likely to have expert knowledge on the subject being studied.

Furthermore, in order to generate a rich and robust data needed to answer the research questions and achieve the aim of the study, data was sought from media stakeholders/experts. This includes experts of community-based media institutions and academia. The media based institutions are as follows:

NMT- Namibia Media Trust

MDDA- Media Development and Diversity Agency

NCRF- National Community Radio Forum

ICASA- Independent Communication Authority of South Africa.

Statutorily, three out of these media organisations (MDDA, NCRF, and ICASA) are primarily concerned with the growth and development of community radio, hence their selection. While the former- Namibia Media Trust (NMT) was selected because it is, a media-based institution committed to the promotion of press freedom, freedom of expression and access to information. The selection of Namibia Media Trust came about in the course of the data collection process when the researcher learnt that the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), which was the primary research site has closed shop. In addition, seeing that the Namibia Media Trust (NMT) is also a media based organization advocating for media plurality and freedom, the researcher considered it fit. Thus, seeing that there are four media organisations, each director/person-in-charge of each organisation was interviewed, making it four (4) experts in all.

For the academia, data was sought from three (3) academic at the University of Johannesburg, University of Cape Town, and University of Limpopo respectively. These three academic are authorities and are widely published in the media/ community radio scholarship in South Africa. This was done in order to augment the primary data and get scholarly views /suggestions on ways to empower/ position local media firms (community radio) to be sustainable in this digital age. In addition, topical and relevant literatures regarding the sustainability of local media firms were also used.

Data Collection

Primarily, the form of data collection was through interviews. In view of the existence of different kinds of research interviews, the researcher made use of the semi- structured interview. The semi-structured kind of interview allows for probing, exploring and evaluating responses from the interviewee which is needed for this study which is investigative in nature.

Interview Sample

Purposive sampling was used in selecting all the respondents for this study (managers, media experts, and the academia). Purposive sampling “may be defined as selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions” (Teddlie and Yu, 2007: 80). The sample consisted of 15 participants; eight (8) community radio managers from all the district municipalities in the North-West Province; four (4) media experts from the community media based organization; and three (3) academic from three selected universities in South Africa. Each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes. The idea of semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to guide the discussion through further probing, and redirecting the interview whenever the respondents went off-track.

The community radio managers were asked to identify the kind of approaches their organization was using and why they consider such method appropriate, while questions to the media experts/stakeholders centred on the approaches/ activities they are using to support/empower community radio stations for them to remain viable in this digital era. Finally, the academic was asked for their thoughts on community media sustainability in the digital age. The researcher further requested for ways in which community media can be empowered to achieve sustainability. Also, in view of existing regulatory policies governing community radio broadcasting in South Africa, the researcher asked for ways in which

community radio stations can achieve wholesome sustainability (financial, social, institutional) in this digital times. Respondents were also asked to give their views on the current state of sustainability in community radio stations in South Africa. Here, emphasis was put on respondents from the media experts and the academic.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected using semi-structured interviews. After collation and transcription of the data from the various respondents, the researcher began to sort the data assigning and labelling the data to each respondent (managers, experts and the academia). Thereafter, themes were generated for each set of the responses. For example; themes were generated for the managers, experts, as well as the academics. They include: stakeholders' knowledge/familiarity of the challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age, stakeholders' method in addressing the challenge, stakeholders' recommendation in addressing the challenge of sustainability, and stakeholders' efforts in achieving wholesome sustainability (financial, social, and institutional) media sustainability in the digital age.

It was after this that the researcher began to identify and analyse the patterns (themes). Data from both the media experts/stakeholders and academia was compared and contrasted and it showed some similarities as well as differences. The data from media experts focused on practical, implementable activities in favour of community radio stations in South Africa, while the data from the academic were mainly prescriptive, suggesting to both the media stakeholders as well as the managers of the radio stations. While some of the activities highlighted by the media experts are still being proposed, some other activities have been implemented, while the remaining are still in the offing. Thereafter, the writing began as detailed in Chapter Four (5) of this study. Below is the pictorial illustration of the step the researcher followed while analysing the data for this study:

Phase 1: Familiarising with data

Data was transcribed at this stage. The researcher then read through all the transcribed data and identified possible patterns.

Phase 2: Generation of initial codes

The author generated codes from the initial patterns identified.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The author sorted the various codes to generate potential themes.

Phase 4: Review of the themes

Candidate themes were refined. Those with little supporting data were merged while those with too much data were

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The author identified the essence of each theme and determined the aspects each theme captured.

Phase 6: Report production

Armed with fully identified themes, the author embarked on report writing – relating the narrative to the research

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006:87).

The figure above were the six steps the researcher followed in analysing data.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to state that the data-collection process began after the researcher received the approval letter from the Social Transformation Research Entity of the Faculty of Humanities. During the data collection process, the researcher verbally asked for the consent of the participants before the interviews were conducted. This was because the researcher was unable to physically meet with the respondents as a result of the restrictions placed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence respondents were unable to sign the consent forms. “Informed consent means subjects are made adequately aware of the type of information the author

wants from them, why the information is being sought and how it will directly or indirectly affect them” (Kumar, 2011:244). This information was provided to ensure that participants who were uncomfortable with the subject matter and procedures were able to withdraw at early stage (Keyton, 2011:81-82). Fortunately, no single respondent withdrew from the exercise. However, it is important to note that the process of conducting research started after the researcher had received the ethics approval letter from the Ethics Committee of the university.

The interviews were organized in a way that put the respondents at ease (Motjamela, 2005:48). Except for managers at Mmabatho and Mafikeng community radio stations, all other respondents were interviewed via Zoom and WhatsApp video calls. This is as a result of the restrictions placed by the Covid-19 pandemic. All interviews were recorded (after obtaining respondents’ permission) and later on transcribed. Recording was necessary because it offered the researcher an opportunity to focus on the interview and the non-verbal expressions instead of writing down notes. Although rapid advances in technology have provided a computer mechanism that can transcribe spoken words directly into text, the researcher decided to transcribe the interviews himself which made her more familiar with the data. The author also ensured that the transcripts were “a verbatim account of what was said by both the interviewer and the respondent and the interaction captured as given, not corrected or standardised” (Keyton, 2011:291). After transcribing, the researcher verified the transcript against the audio recording.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology used in this study. It gave a breakdown of the qualitative research methodology the study employed, the research design/instruments, and the analysis. Using the qualitative research methodology, it recorded the methods as well as the rationale for using such methodology which was in line with interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm needed to achieve the aim of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY RADIO IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter presents the historical trajectory of community radio in South Africa. While this chapter aims to provide an historical account on community radio in South Africa, it particularly intends to highlight the different changes/development that occurred in community radio pre and post-apartheid. Thus, it begins with the development of radio broadcasting in South Africa and the emergence of community media in South Africa. It further highlights the emergence and progression of community media through the apartheid era, post-apartheid, as well as the medium's current state particularly in the North-West Province where this study is located.

Development of Radio Broadcasting in South Africa.

Broadcasting began in South Africa in the early 1920s. During that time, a group of amateurs began experimenting with a new mode of communication called the wireless telephony. By 1921, the first actual station for wireless telephony was put into operation in Port Elizabeth. Thus, by the end of 1921, wireless telephony, now known simply as radio was pushing wireless telegraphy completely out of public limelight (Orlick, 1968).

As the popularity of radio began to grow, the government recognized the need for regulating and controlling the medium. Thus, in August 1923, the South African government issued regulations for the new medium (radio). Subsequently, the Postmaster-General was given the power to grant licenses for the establishment of radio transmitters as well as for the installation of receiving sets by private listeners (Orlick, 1968). The audiences/ listeners were required to contract with the licensed broadcaster in their area and pay the standard prescribed charges in order to obtain a listener's license. The regulation also gave the broadcaster certain rights which included the right to hire out receiving radio sets, and to make contracts with advertisers to disseminate advertising contents for not more than six minutes in any hour (ibid;1968). In all of these, some citizens objected to the intervention of the government. While some of the citizens went ahead to accept the new regulations grudgingly; the rest ignored it. This did not however diminish public interest in radio.

However, due to the linguistic, cultural and ethnic class in which South Africa has been fragmented by apartheid, there was need to create a broadcast outfit that will cater to the needs and interests of the different categories of people, hence the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) emerged to

be used as a case study in negotiating different ideological conflicts. Established in 1936 as a public service broadcaster under a report authored by Sir John Reith of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) during the apartheid years. Sir John Reith was asked to investigate and make recommendations for the feasibility and potentialities of the new South African Broadcasting Corporation (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008). In his report, John Reith highlighted the importance of the broadcasting industry in a country as South Africa. He further noted that, if feasible, there was need to manage the industry properly as South Africans were not aware and did not understand the enormous power and influence of broadcasting (ibid: 2008). The following were other recommendations he made regarding the establishment of the SABC:

i. that the South African broadcasting service be brought under the auspices of a public corporation like the BBC. He further recommended that the corporation should be an autonomous statutory body.

ii. Sir John Reith further stated that under no circumstances should the proposed media corporation function as a government controlled organisation or a state department. According to him, the corporation should be controlled by a Board, and the corporation would have the sole right to manage the country's broadcasting (Bevan, 2008).

Consequently, the new Broadcasting Act, No. 22 of 1936 to aid the establishment of the SABC was passed in June 1936 and came into action on 1 August 1936. The Act made provision for the establishment of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and all broadcasting rights were assigned to the new broadcast corporation. Amongst other things, the Act further empowered the then Governor General to appoint the SABC Board members and take on a supervisory role. Furthermore, the new law also made provision for television. However, at the time, television was financially unviable, hence, it was clear that the government and the SABC were not considering establishing such a service (Bevan, 2008). However, should South Africa get a television service; it would also be controlled by the SABC - as stipulated by the law.

Going further, and after many failed demonstrations in bringing television into South Africa, television was officially launched in 1969 after an official investigation into the medium. Thus, South Africa's first television service was inaugurated in 1976. According to popular views, the reason for the delay/absence of television over the years was as a result of Albert Hertzog's (the then Minister for Posts and Telegraph) hatred for modern invention. Thus, it

was not until Hertzog's departure from being the Minister that the South African government agreed to introduce television (Bevan, 2008). This did not happen without the many debates and initial skepticism concerning the introduction and impacts of television on the South African populace. However, shortly after television was introduced, many other inventions came and South Africa joined other countries who had access to television and other broadcast inventions (Bevan, 2008).

Emergence of Community Media in South Africa

Community media emerged in South Africa in the early 1990s as a solution to the apartheid era of state-owned and controlled media. It was a product of the activism of pre-1994 South Africa and was seen mainly as an alternative press - responsible for building a democratic and anti-apartheid consciousness. At the time, alternative media mainly appeared in print media format which includes posters, newsletters and pamphlets. It was used as a platform to expose the brutality of apartheid, to provide an alternative point of view, and to help mobilise civil society and build political resistance (Maphiri, 2012). Consequently, this alternative media began to flourish and thrive as a number of notable print titles/leaflets were circulated in communities. Audio cassettes were distributed at university campuses, and strategic community access points were also used as key distribution points (ibid :2012).

At the time, any material seen as pro-democracy was regarded as having the potential to incite instability. Thus, the existence of alternative media was not encouraged; neither was it enabled by the government at the time. This therefore made it easy for the government to repress and harass those organisations actively involved in publishing it (Maphiri, 2012). However, despite the suppression during those times, community media grew as the consciousness of the vast majority of South Africans grew and pressure was mounted on the government for change.

Emergence of Community Radio Post- Apartheid

As stated above, the community radio movement began from the political and cultural struggle against apartheid of the 1980s; where radio was seen to have the potential to inform and mobilise communities against apartheid (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006). It is important to state that pre-1994, community radio was virtually unknown in South Africa. However, by the end of 1999, there were already sixty-five (65) community radio stations broadcasting in and to

communities in rural, semi urban, and urban areas of South Africa (Siemering, Fairbairn, Rangana, 1998).

Prior to South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, 'the existing laws of apartheid was used to keep citizens separated into geographical, social, and political enclaves. As such, the laws were used to exclude, suppress, and discriminate the voices of the majority' (Olorunnisola, 2002:127). As such, all the broadcast laws and powers rested in the hands of the apartheid government; thereby creating propaganda and restricting the flow of information in and out of South Africa.

However, as South Africa's first democratic elections drew near, political parties as well as concerned citizens interested in breaking the monopoly of the apartheid-run SABC over the airwaves began to put pressure on the Council for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). In response, CODESA drew up the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act. The 1993 Act established the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) whose tasks included: (i) making policy on broadcasting; (ii) issuing broadcast licenses, and; (iii) regulating and monitoring broadcasting activities in South Africa (ibid: 130).

Furthermore, the Act also mandated IBA to control the airwaves without any interference from the government. However, the most important aspect of the IBA Act was the recognition and inauguration of a three-tier broadcasting system - public, commercial, and community-in place of the monopolistic coverage of the airwaves by the South African Broadcasting Corporation(SABC). Amongst other issues that the Act provided for, it particularly prioritized and enforced local content quotas. The reason for this was to: (i) cater and ensure the promotion of a national and provincial identity; and (ii) provide to the need for broadcast programs to cater to the wide-ranging languages spoken by the peoples of South Africa (Olorunnisola, 2002).

Thus, shortly after the country's democratic elections in 1994, the airwaves were opened and community radio stations began broadcast. For the first time, people who have been perpetually exposed to the state-run media with its biased propaganda now had their own radio stations (ibid: 2002). This marked the freedom of the airwaves, and for community radio; it became a platform for engaging in civil discourse particularly to the previously marginalized and historically disadvantaged people. Thus, it served as a tool of engagement and participation between the government and the communities.

Consequently, a number of constitutional rights were put in place to guarantee freedom of expression and, by extension, freedom of the press and other media. These new media legislation and regulations created an enabling environment for community media; allowed for support systems to be established; and introduced funding structures to support sustainability (Maphiri, 2012). This enabled community media to thrive and prosper. Given the allowance and operational freedom community radio had during that time, the role of the community media sector in South Africa changed and continues to. Thus, apart from primarily being a local broadcast medium to the disadvantaged and marginalized communities, the medium is considered to have a peculiar role to play in bridging and reconstructing the social fabric of the communities in which it operates. It is also regarded as the main instrument used in gathering and disseminating local news to local audiences. Community radio is also a platform meant for discussing and deliberating about local issues that concerns the community. As such, ‘dialogue is at the heart of the community and its members. Thus, and within the context of the community, community radio is a much needed media platform for amplifying and strengthening the social unity within the communities - particularly the communities with historically disadvantaged and prejudiced backgrounds’ (Maphiri, 2012:63).

Going further and in the South African context, community radio is considered the third largest tier of broadcaster nationally with 8.8 million listeners found in mostly rural areas across all the provinces. This therefore means that community radio’s share of audience is 26% of the total radio audience of approximately 33.6 million (National Association of Broadcasters, 2019). However, the share of audience is not the same as share of revenue; as revenue generation as well as financial sustainability remains a challenge to the sustainability of a lot of community radio stations in South Africa.

Currently, the reality is that many community stations in South Africa rely heavily on funding from government sources such as the MDDA to keep their operations afloat (Muswede, 2018). Whilst some level of financial support is inevitable within the community broadcasting environment, the benefit that these community stations provide justifies the cost. Thus, apart from keeping community members informed and connected, the existence of these community broadcasters also provides employment to community members. Thus, according to the MDDA’s 2017/2018 report, the MDDA’s support and promotion of community broadcasters has created 778 full-time and 1,320 part-time jobs. In addition to the jobs being created, the numerous volunteers that are involved in assisting the stations

translates into the mobilization of communities around the awareness and development initiatives (MDDA, 2018).

Legislations and Regulations: Creating an Enabling Environment for Community Radio

Currently, South Africa has 285 licensed community radio stations spread across the nine provinces; and a listenership of 8 million (MDDA, 2021). Invariably, this indicates a positive development and utilization of the community radio spectrum in South Africa. It further shows that the prevalence of these community radio stations is as a result of the enabling environment that the media enjoys in South Africa. This is as a result of favorable policies and legislations made to ensure the entrenchment of the right of access to the media. It is also a way to give previously disadvantaged communities the liberty to own and engage with a medium of their own.

Consequently, freedom of expression was guaranteed and detailed in the South African Constitution, (Act No. 108 of 1996). The constitutional guarantee was introduced to foster an open society free from oppression and censorship. In a way, this created opportunities for community media to express their views openly and freely within the limits of the law. There was also tacit acknowledgement that media produced ‘by the people for the people’ was a vital part of South African society (Maphiri, 2012:64). Thus, through the Bill of Rights, the media was guaranteed access to any information held by the state; and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. Furthermore, and due to the nature of South Africa’s democracy, access to state information was seen as critical to inform discussions and debates and to get citizens talking. Thus, the prevalence and broadcast of community media provided an accessible platform for local communities. This development marked a new dispensation for community media in South Africa. The era was characterized by the exponential growth of the free press – in the number of publications and radio stations as well as in the structures and mechanisms put in place to sustain community media.

Broadcast Legislations and Community Media

As part of efforts to ensure continued media plurality and democratise the airwaves post-apartheid, the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, No. 153 of 1993 (IBA Act) was formed. This Act was the first major piece of legislation to deal with broadcast media in the

post-apartheid context (Maphiri, 2012). The Act also introduced the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), an independent regulator for the licensing of community broadcasting services as well as public and commercial services.

However, as society advanced and technology became prevalent, there was need to factor in and take into cognisance the essence of these new digital technologies. Thus, the existing IBA and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) converged to form the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) through the enactment of the ICASA Act, 13 of 2000. ICASA now becomes the broadcast regulator in South Africa. Other broadcast laws in favour of community media includes: The Broadcast Act 4 of 1999, and the Electronic Communications Act, 36 of 2005. The Broadcast Act of 1999 was formed to repeal the Broadcasting Act of 1976 in order to establish a new broadcast policy framework and accommodate technological advancements for an emerging democracy in South Africa. The new Act reaffirmed the legislative recognition of community broadcasting service as previously defined in the IBA Act of 1993. Thus, the contents of the Broadcasting Act of 1999 acknowledges that the South African broadcasting services are owned and controlled by South Africans. Furthermore, the Act resolves to ‘align the broadcasting system with the democratic values of the Constitution and to enhance and protect the fundamental rights of citizens’ (Maphiri: 2012:65).

However, with the advances in technology and the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications, the Electronic Communications’ Act, 36 of 2005 (known as the ECA) was enacted. This is the most recent Act governing all broadcast services in South Africa (ibid: 69). It was formed to replace the Broadcasting Act of 1999 which provides for the granting of new licenses to all tiers of broadcasting. Thus, for the community broadcaster, the ECA does the following:

- i. makes the procedure for accessing a license for community broadcasting much simpler. Previously, community broadcasters had to wait for ICASA to request applications but now they can apply under a class license. This means that they only apply for registration rather than going through an application process (As contained in Section 17(5) of the Electronic Communications Act, 2005).
- ii. the Act allows all holders of a license granted in terms of Chapter 3 of the ECA to pay contributions into the MDDA account (which must not exceed one per cent of the licensee’s annual turnover) to advance the objectives of the MDDA Act 14 of 2002.

Thus, in view of the existing liberal/favorable legislations in support of community stations in South Africa, why are community radio stations (particularly in the North-West Province) still struggling to be sustainable? Going further, and in view of the events that happened during that time, Tleane (2001) argues that the neo-liberal politics of the South African government affected the operations of ICASA as well as the community radio stations. Another factor that complicated the workings of ICASA during that time was the merger of IBA and SATRA which made the agency lose focus on community radio, and focused on commercial media.

According to Tleane (2001)'s account, it was during that time that (time of the merger into ICASA), radio activists marched to Parliament, protesting the time-consuming process of granting four-year licenses. The Freedom of Information Institute (FXI) as well as the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) organised the march (demonstration) and community radio activists showed up to support the protest against system backlog (Tleane, 2001). Their grievances were as a result of the time-consuming licensing process that led to communities being "shut out of the communication and information game" (Tleane, 2001:10), causing those already poor in communicative tools to remain poor, thereby maintaining inequality of information access among the population.

Furthermore, it was also during that time that there was mass retrenchment of the number of employees as a result of financial constraints by ICASA. This according to Tleane was as a result of the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and the focus on market forces. Thus, Tleane summarizes the events of that time as: "Just like other sectors of the society, broadcasting has not managed to survive the heavy and gnawing claws of neo-liberalism and conservative political-economic thinking. Underlying all these is the heavy interplay of power and dictatorship of the market" (Tleane, 2001:36).

Finally, Tleane argues that ever since the establishment of ICASA, the agency has been the subject of criticism with regard to lack of competence on community radio and licensing; financial and political issues. The agency (ICASA) has also been accused of its lack of focus on community radio; and its lack of communication with community radio stations. Many community radio stations complained that ICASA did not understand the situations of the various stations, neither was an effort made to inform community radio stations about important processes or procedures within the ICASA system (Tleane, 2001:18). While some political analysts claim that the agency was established because of a lack of political will,

others claim that the motive of the government was financially based rather than in the interest of community broadcasters and their communities (Tleane, 2001:9). However, and in response to public agitation, the government decided to establish and fund an agency that would drive the growth of the community media sector and provide for alternative voices. Thus, an Act was enacted which established the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA).

Community Media and Its Relevant Support Organizations

The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)

After 1994, the government decided to set up an agency that would cater to and drive the growth of the community media sector- to provide for alternative voices. As a result, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) emerged. The agency came into existence through the MDDA Act 14, 2002. The Act defines media/media development as the development of the media environment and infrastructure so that historically disadvantaged communities and persons have access to the media as owners, managers, producers and consumers of media. Thus, the objectives of the Agency are to:

- i. encourages ownership and control of, and access to, media by historically disadvantaged communities, historically diminished indigenous language and cultural groups;
- ii. encourage the channeling of resources to community and small commercial media;
- iii. encourage human resource development and capacity building in the media industry, especially amongst historically disadvantaged groups;
- iv. encourage research regarding media development and diversity (MDDA, 2021:2).

The MDDA was established to promote media development and diversity in South Africa by providing financial and other support to community (non-profit) and small commercial media projects. Thus, in view of the agency's roles, what are the efforts of the MDDA towards the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age – particularly community stations in the North-West Province? In addition, what is the state/level of adherence of community stations in the North-West Province to the expectations of the MDDA? Given the recent statistics from the agency, the MDDA claims that it has supported approximately 128 media projects with a total of 38 million rand. Furthermore, and in the North-West Province, the

Agency has been able to able to fund thirteen (13) community radio stations spread across the district municipalities in the North-West Province. Also, the agency has been able to support seven (7) community print media in the province (MDDA, 2021). This shows the agency's commitment to media plurality. Despite these developments however, the agency is unable to support/satisfy all community broadcasters in need of financial support. This is because the agency has budget limitations and cannot exceed its budget. Thus, apart from government funding, there is need for civil societies and private sectors to give the needed support for community radio stations in South Africa.

Going further, it is important to state here that there are quite a number of support organizations committed to the advancement of community radio organizations in South Africa. They are:

- a. Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)
- b. National Community Radio Forum (NCRF)
- c. National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
- d. SENTECH (Signal Distributor for the South African Broadcasting Sector)
- e. National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA).

Hence, a brief review of the mandates of these organizations will be done; together with their efforts/activities in sustaining community stations in this digital age? While their roles/mandates differ statutorily, there exists as part of their function a tacit commitment to the advancement of community broadcast services in South Africa.

Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)

ICASA is the sole regulator and licensor of South Africa's broadcast and telecommunication services. It is a Chapter 9 institution (an institution which supports democracy) in terms of the South African Constitution and is a portfolio organisation of the Department of Communications (DoC). ICASA was established by an Act of Parliament (ICASA Act 13 of 2000), and the following are the functions of ICASA as stipulated in the Act:

- a. to license broadcasters, signal distributors, providers of telecommunication services and postal services;
- b. to make regulations;
- c. to impose license conditions;

- d. to plan, assign, control, enforce and manage the frequency spectrum;
- e. to ensure international and regional co-operation;
- f. to ensure the efficient allocation of numbers;
- g. to ensure interoperability of networks;
- h. to receive and resolve complaints

Amongst its other critical functions, ICASA enforces compliance with rules and regulations, defends consumers from unfair business practices and poor quality services, arbitrates on disputes and complaints brought against licensees and controls and manages the effective use of radio frequency spectrum (ICASA, 2021). In view of ICASA's role listed above, what is the state of adherence of community radio stations in the North-West Province to ICASA's operational and licensing rules? In addition, what is the level of compliance of these community radio stations to the stipulated licensing and operational requirements of ICASA?

From the information retrieved from the official website of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), on the 1st of December, 2021; the Authority stated that it has just re-opened its licensing processes for community radio and television broadcasting services across the country. This is due to the high levels of non-compliance and failure to meet the requirements of ICASA. The Authority stated that out of one hundred and forty-two (142) applications received in respect of the Invitation to Pre-Register (ITP-R) for community broadcasting services; only two (2) applicants made it to the second phase of that licensing process. The Authority went further to state that out of the forty-two (42) applications received in respect of the Invitation to Pre-Register (ITP-R) for community television broadcasting services; no application made it to the second round of the licensing process. Thus, as part of ICASA's sensitization programme, it intends to organize country-wide public workshops in 2022 for communities. This is to assist them and familiarize them with the requirements of ICASA's licensing procedures. Thus, all interested communities have been encouraged to actively participate in the workshops and other related programs so that they can have a clearer understanding of what is required to grant and issue community broadcast licenses.

The agency (ICASA) stressed that communities should take time and learn how the community broadcasting environment works; and all regulations attached to the sector, as this is the basis within which they can be sustainable and successful. ICASA noted that they have received reports of instances where community radio stations were hijacked in the provinces

– serving the interests of a few individuals. Thus, as part of efforts, the Authority has embarked on a process to review the applicable regulations; in order to award licenses to deserving communities in a future-proof context (ICASA, 2021).

National Community Radio Forum (NCRF)

Established in December 1993, the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) is a national membership-based association of community radio stations in South Africa. The NCRF served as an impetus for the formation of ICASA, IBA, and then the MDDA. The association exists to build an enabling environment for community radio, derived from principles of the Windhoek Declaration for Broadcasting, 1991. The forum provides information and advice to the community radio sector through consultation; setting standards for the sector and monitoring implementation. The forum also enables structures and systems that encourage community radio initiatives and stations to share experiences, skills, best practices and resources.

The other functions of the NCRF includes: managing capacity building in the sector; lobbying and advocacy to promote the interests of the sector; and forging strategic alliances and partnerships with key stakeholders to facilitate delivery of services, resources, funding and support to the sector. The National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) currently boasts of 156 members across the nine provinces. It is the strongest and most representative body in the sector and has continuously represented the interests of its member stations and the sector. The forum also offers opportunities for stations to collaborate. This is as contained in the NCRF charter which focuses on the interdependence of community media and civil society. The following are the mission/vision of the forum:

Mission: to build a vibrant and sustainable community media sector in Southern Africa.

Vision: advocate and lobby on behalf of our members, various stakeholders to advance participatory democracy towards sustainable social development in communities through community radio.

As part of the forum's effort, the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) Northern Cape is promoting a self-regulatory measure through a peer review mechanism that will see the development of a Code of Good Practice among community member stations. The system is designed to support and assist member stations in the province deal with statutory requirements such as South Africa Revenue Service (SARS) compliance, corporate

governance, management and leadership, and community involvement. The intention is to create a template that can be replicated in other provinces- taking into consideration the peculiar changes/modifications to varying local contexts and conditions.

In the North-West Province, which this study focuses on, the NCRF has a membership of eighteen (18) community radio stations spread across the four (4) district municipalities. This indicates a good level of acceptance and association by the community stations in the North-West. However, and in view of NCRF's mission stated above - it seems as though the NCRF is yet to make true its mission as community radio stations in the North-West Province still struggle to remain sustainable. The following are the NCRF's proposed plan/activities to support community radio stations. This was discussed in a National Policy Presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Communications, 2015. They are:

- i. continue with our advocacy role in pushing for amendments for acts that will create an enabling environment for community broadcasters.
- ii. ensure a continuous training for board members.
- iii. create a monitoring and evaluation unit in each community station in South Africa.
- iv. ensure a bi-monthly evaluation tool, to create a uniform framework in accountability.
- v. develop a national board and management performance assessment tool, to keep up to the realisation of a strong and professional broadcasting sector (National Policy Conference, 2015:57).

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) is an association of broadcasters that was formed in 1992. It is a voluntary association funded entirely by its members. The NAB's establishment coincided with South Africa's democratisation/liberalization of the airwaves. Thus, the functions of the NAB includes: regularly engages with policy makers on behalf of member organizations in order to promote an industry grounded in the principles of democracy, diversity and freedom of expression.

The Association currently has over eighty (80) media organisations as its members; while other individuals participate as members too (NAB, 2021). The NAB represents and is always committed to advancing the needs of all three tiers of broadcasting. It has consistently made policies and regulatory submissions on community broadcasting matters since its inception. Thus, the NAB represents the interests of its members from the public, commercial and community broadcast service as well as signal providers and industry associates.

Although the NAB members comprise a limited number of community broadcasters, the NAB has always been committed to advancing the needs of all three tiers of broadcasting and it has consistently made policy and regulatory submissions on community broadcasting matters since its inception. As part of its commitment towards the continued existence and sustainability of community radio stations in the country, the NAB through its members make significant annual contributions to the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA). The MDDA in turn fund the community media sector. The NAB's Community Radio Committee noted that, notwithstanding the MDDA and other sources of funding and support for community radio, the critical issue of sustainability in an ever-changing media landscape continues to be a challenge for legacy media. Thus, all support should be extended to legacy mediums in order for them to thrive.

The NAB is the voice of South Africa's broadcasting industry. The vision of the association is to maintain an environment in which South African radio and television broadcasters can thrive - serving audiences and contributing to development and diversity. The association exists to represent the interests of South African broadcasting and the following are some of its goals:

- i. to ensure a broadcasting system that provides choice and diversity for audiences.
- ii. to achieve a favorable climate for broadcasters to operate within.
- iii. to achieve a broadcasting industry grounded in the principles of democracy, diversity and freedom of expression.

In view of the goals and mission of the Association, it is important to know the level of acceptance/association by community radio stations in the North-West Province to the goals/vision of the NAB. In other words, what are the efforts/activities of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in supporting community radio stations in the North-West Province and ensuring that these stations remain sustainable in this digital age. Currently, out of the nineteen (19) active community radio stations in the North-West Province, only two community radio stations belong to the National Association of Broadcasters: Mafikeng FM and PUKFM respectively (NAB, 2021). This does not indicate a sufficient level of acceptance of association of NAB in the province.

While the NAB continues to work towards its vision and goal, it is expedient for community stations as well to have a compelling content; governance and management mechanism;

compliance; and an audience-centric or community approach particularly in this digital times. These are the key elements to achieving sustainability (NAB, 2019).

SENTECH (Signal Distributor for the South African Broadcasting Sector)

SENTECH is the leading provider of electronic communications network services to the country's broadcasting and communications industry. It has the largest terrestrial signal distribution infrastructure for both radio and television. It is a Schedule 3B company which makes it a government business enterprise, implying that it operates on a commercial basis and is required to be financially sustainable and self-sufficient.

The company operates as a common carrier; offering wholesale services on an equitable, non-discriminatory, and non-exclusive basis. SENTECH provides broadcast transmission services for all of South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) radio and television stations; the country's commercial radio and television stations; and the over 256 community radio stations. SENTECH's 181 Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) sites enable it to provide infrastructure and connectivity to the retail, telecommunications and public sectors. SENTECH derives its mandate from the SENTECH Act and the Electronic Communications Act (No. 36 of 2005). However, in 1996, the SENTECH Act was amended, converting the company into a separate state-owned entity operating as a common carrier responsible for providing broadcasting signal distribution services to licensed radio and television broadcasters. SENTECH provides both individual and corporate electronic communication services (ECS). It also provides international voice-based telecommunications and multimedia services. The company currently has sixteen (16) operational centres, regional and local offices and a vast network of terrestrial broadcasting and broadband sites in all nine provinces. This infrastructure features:

- i. 100% satellite coverage throughout South Africa and the SADC countries.
- ii. 181 DTT sites providing a footprint coverage to approximately 84% of the national population.
- iii. 192 Frequency Modulation (FM) sites servicing 151 radio broadcasters including 20 public broadcasters.
- iv. 21 commercial broadcasters and 118 community radio stations.
- v. 43 Internet connectivity sites for Mpumalanga Department of Finance.
- vi. 133 SA Connect sites and 11 Internet-4-All sites (SENTECH, 2021:1).

Currently, SENTECH derives almost 25% of its revenue from the radio portfolio. This therefore means that any revenue decline in radio advertising revenue will have a negative impact on SENTECH. Hence, it suffices to say that radio and other electronic broadcast medium serves as a major source of revenue for SENTECH. In view of this, what are the efforts/activities of SENTECH in ensuring that licensed community radio stations are allocated signal frequencies promptly? Furthermore, and as part of commitment towards its goal and in view of the fact that many of these community stations do not have the wherewithal to purchase signal frequencies, SENTECH in collaboration with the MDDA has provided a subsidy for signal frequency purchase for community radio stations to benefit from. This subsidy together with other trainings are part of the commitments of SENTECH to community radio broadcasting.

National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA).

The National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) is a non-profit institute for digital education in terms of the Companies Act (1973) and is listed as a schedule 3A public entity in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (1999). NEMISA derives its mandate from the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) which was formed subsequent to the merger of the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services (DTPS) and the Department of Communication.

The vision and mission of the Institute is as follows:

Vision: To empower South Africans with the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) capabilities and world class innovative skills.

Mission: To provide digital skills training for the proper use of technology, in order to improve the quality of life of all people in South Africa (NEMISA, 2021).

Furthermore, NEMISA's mission also includes the provision of integrated e-skills to all South African citizens for the attainment of socio-economic development in South Africa and to radically advance human capacity development in e-skills (digital skills). Thus, the Institute in conjunction with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), is focused on the execution of programmes and activities for the development of required digital skills and competencies to leverage the power of modern ICTs in South Africa. This is needed so as to contribute to the socio-economic development; improving service delivery; and enhance competitiveness through ICTs in the Republic. The Institute

offers various digital courses and programmes in radio production, graphic design, film and television production, animation, etc. to capacitate interested participants with the requisite digital skill in order to forge a sustainable society.

Furthermore, NEMISA also focuses on digital skills development for meaningful use of digital technologies. Its services focus on the following product offering through partnerships established with tertiary institutions, NGOs, Local and Provincial government, Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMME's) and industry partners (NEMISA, 2021).

Thus, the Institute was set up as a bridge; to fill the digital inadequacies and challenges of the digital age; and its impact on the socio-economic fabric of South Africa. Furthermore, and in view of the challenges of the digital age especially as it affects community radio stations; what efforts is NEMISA making to ensure that community stations are digitally capacitated? To many of the community radio managers in the North-West Province, the digital age is an unfamiliar terrain, hence the need for the managers to be digitally literate; equip and familiarize themselves with the needed skills to successfully navigate the digital age. The Institute currently has three main centres in these provinces namely: North-West (Mafikeng Digital Innovation Hub); Gauteng (NEMISA, Park Town); and the Free State (Central University of Technology (CUT). While these three centres are just pilot centres; more digital training centres will be established in the remaining provinces. (NEMISA, 2021).

Community Radio Broadcasting in the North-West Province of South Africa

Having reviewed the emergence of community radio through the apartheid and post-apartheid phases, there is need to examine the state of the medium in the North-West Province where this study focuses on. Generally, there are no scholarly research literatures bordering on media/media management in the province. Hence the knowledge gap. Therefore, in a bid to fill this gap and contribute to media/community radio scholarship in the North-West province, the Province was selected. This is despite the fact that the Province is home to a good number of community radio stations in the four district municipalities.

According to the Radio Assessment Measurement Survey (RAMS) by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRCSA), the North-West Province has a total of twenty-two (22) community radio stations spread across the four municipal districts. However, only nineteen (19) are actively on-air. (BRC-RAMS, April 2019-March 2020).

Traditionally, the North-West Province is a medium-sized province in contrast to other province in South Africa. The Province contributes greatly to South Africa's gross domestic production (GDP) from mining and agriculture. Despite this however, the province is characterized by high-level poverty, unemployment, as well as low-literacy levels (Tshizumba, 2011). In view of the socio-economic challenges in the Province, the effort is to examine the state of the community radio stations in the province by giving a breakdown of their profile as well as contribute to media scholarship in the Province. This in terms of their programming, target audience/listenership, organization and ownership.

As earlier stated, there are currently nineteen (19) active community radio stations in the North-West Province. These radio stations are a combination of faith-based; geographically based; and interest groups community radio stations. They are: Mafikeng FM; Mmabatho FM; Radio Mafisa; Star FM; Kopanong FM; Bosveld stereo 107.5FM; Modiri FM; Kgatleng FM; Madibeng FM 105.3; Bojanala FM; Ratlou FM; Village FM; Bophirima FM; NWU FM; Life FM; Lichvaal Stereo 92.6FM; PUKfm 93.6; Bodumedi FM; Aganang FM.

The following are the brief history/profile of these stations and their programming format.

1. Brief History of Mafikeng FM (96.7)

Formerly called Radio Sunshine, the station began as a religious community radio station. Its bulk of programming centred on religious issues and gospel music. However, and as time went by, community members started demanding for better, inclusive, and community-centred programming that would represent their interests and views, and address their concerns. Thus, as a result of that, the station was shut down by the regulatory body.

In 2005 however, Mafikeng FM was inaugurated. It began as a mouth- to- mouth service, coming and going, and later in 2008 when it got its license from ICASA, it started full- blown broadcast operations, and has remained uninterrupted on air.

The station broadcasts in three different languages namely; Setswana, at 75%, followed by English at 20%, and then Afrikaans at 5%. Its programming style is such that news and current affairs is at 60% while music follows at 40%. The station broadcasts every day for 24 hours. The community station targets all age groups and has successfully created programs tailored to each of the age groups of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality and the surrounding communities. This is in view of the fact that the community comprises of different socio-economic backgrounds.

Mafikeng FM is a community radio station that broadcasts to the entire Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality in Mafikeng in the North-West Province of South Africa. Its signal also services the entire global community via audio streaming at www.mahikengfm.co.za

2. Brief History of Mmabatho FM (107.7)

It is a Christian community radio station, located in Mafikeng, North West Province in South Africa. The radio station has a reach of 150km radius across Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality. The target audience of the station includes all members of the community from age 3 to 100 years of age. The station can as well be listened to live via online-audio streaming at: <https://www.mmabathofm.online/>

Below is the station's programming format:

Programming Style: 60% talk and 40% music

News and information: 75% shall be local; 20% nationally; 5% International.

Music Ratio: The music ratio is 60% of South African music and 40% International.

Broadcasting Languages: 75% Setswana; 15% IsiXhosa; 5% English; 5% Afrikaans.

Broadcasting Hours: The station broadcasts round the clock- 24 hours and 7 days a week.

3. Brief History of Radio Mafisa FM (93.4)

It is a community radio station that broadcasts from Rustenburg in the North-West province. The station commenced broadcast on the 1st July 1996 on 90.7 FM. Shortly after, the station changed its frequency and started broadcasting on 93.4 FM on the grounds of interference by frequencies of other nearby broadcasters. Since its inception however, the station has built a local, national and global reputation as a reliable source of news and information particularly to the community residents. Its programming format is: talk programmes at 60%; while music is at 40%. The station also broadcasts round the clock (24hours) and it does that in Setswana at 80%; followed by English at 15%; and other languages at 5%. Despite the station's wide coverage in the North-West Province, one of the station's downside is that it has no functional website and no online streaming platform.

4. Brief History of Star FM (102.9)

This community radio station began broadcast in July, 2005 in Klerksdorp, North West, South Africa. The community radio station is independent, listener-driven with a strong governance structure in place. The station's reception beams in all the four district municipalities of the North-West Province. Below is the programming format of the station. The radio station can be live-streamed at: <https://liveonlineradio.net/star-fm-102-9>

Programming Language: Tswana, Sotho, Afrikaans, and English.

Programming Format: 60% Talk, 40% Music.

Target Audience: 10 to 69 years.

5. Brief History of Kopanong FM (100.0 & 103.5 FM)

This is a community station based in the North West Province. The station's reception is received in the four district municipalities of the North-West Province as well as in Botswana. The station is online for twenty-four hours a week; and ensures that listeners are kept up breast with current affairs on daily basis. The radio station can be live-streamed at <https://kopanongfm.radio12345.com/>

The programming format of the station is as follows:

Programming Language: Afrikaans, English, and Tswana.

Programming Format: 60% Talk, 40% Music.

6. Brief History of Bosveld Stereo FM (107.5)

Bosveld Stereo is a privately owned Afrikaans radio station with a Christian background. It broadcasts from Hartbeespoort using the frequency of 107.5 FM. Religious and music contents make up most of its line-up, which is completed with entertainment shows, news reports and the latest development on current affairs. The weekly programme Top 20 stands out among its programming as the most popular with a younger audience. A live streaming feature is available for free on Bosveld Stereo's website: <https://bosveldstereo.co.za/> to reach listeners outside its broadcast area. The station's live streaming can be found at https://radioinfant.antfarm.co.za/Bosveld-vjs/bosveldstereo_player.html

7. Brief Profile of Modiri FM (91.7)

It is a community radio station based in the North West. The main rationale for the establishment of the station is to develop the community of Ratlou and Tswaing Local Municipalities in Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality. The community of Ratlou and Tswaing Local Municipality are part of communities in the North-West Province where there are little or no opportunities to explore radio talents and benefit from radio facilities/broadcasting. Thus, Modiri FM was formed to close the gap of broadcasting between both communities (Ratlou and Tswaing). Thus, it was founded to serve as a platform for both communities as well as to economically empower the communities through revenues from broadcasting and advertising. The radio station can be streamed/ listened to online via <https://mytuner-radio.com/radio/modiri-fm-464521>

The following is the programming format of the station:

Broadcast Time: 24 Hours

Programming Language: Afrikaans; Tswana; English.

Programming Format: 40% Talk, 60% Music.

Coverage Areas: Delareyville; Vryburg; Sannieshof.

Target Audience: 16-80 years.

8. Kgatleng FM (91.3)

It is a community radio station serving the geographic community of Moses Kotane Local Municipal area in the North-West Province. The station combines English and other local languages in its content. The radio station can be streamed/ listened to online via https://streema.com/radios/Kgatleng_FM

9. Madibeng FM (105.3)

This is a community radio station broadcasting located in Brits, South Africa. The station provides African Gospel, Kwaito music and Talk programming. It also features news, social issues, and development in the areas of Madibeng. The station broadcasts at the frequency of 105.3FM. The community radio station has social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. It also has an online streaming service available for listeners online and to enable

them stay in touch with their favorite program (https://streema.com/radios/Madibeng_FM)
The radio station has an app which can be downloaded and installed via Google Play store.

10. Bojanala FM (90.6)

This station is a faith-based (Christian) community radio station. The station plays vibrant gospel music, motivations, educational teachings and sermons that are spiritually inspired. Bojanala FM began broadcast on the 2nd of June, 2016 and has consistently remained on air for 5 years. The station broadcasts from within the jurisdiction of the Bojanala platinum district municipality in the North West Province. Bojanala FM broadcasts from Tlhabane and the signal of the station reaches some parts of the Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. The station has a functional website and listeners can listen to the radio station online via: <https://sites.google.com/view/bojanala-fm/home>

11. Ratlou FM (100.4)

It is a youth-oriented radio station that broadcast from Madibogo in North West province of South Africa. The station can be found online and listened to at <http://www.ratloufm.org.za>

12. Village FM (99.8)

This is a community radio station based in Madikwe village, in the Bojanala district of the North West province. The station started small and has had tough competition from other local community radio stations. However, over the years, the station sharpened its broadcast skills and has been able to engage and serve the communities that we broadcast to. The youths make up the bulk of our presenters as well as other managerial staff members. The radio station has a functional website and streams live from the station's website at <https://villagefm.co.za/home>

13. Bophirima FM (107.9)

It is a community radio station based in Zeerust, South Africa. The station broadcasts on the 107.9 frequency and its services beams to community in Zeerust, Lichtenburg and other township areas. The station can be streamed live at <https://bokonebophirimafm.radio12345.com>

14. North-West University FM (105.5)

NWU FM – North-West University FM (NWU FM 105.5) is the campus radio station for the Mafikeng Campus of the University. The station's primary audiences are students and young

people residing in and around Mafikeng. However, because of the station's unique youthful and urban sound, the station also attracts older listener between (27-35 and older). Currently, and due to the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic, the station is simulcasting in collaboration with other community radio stations in the Province. NWU FM has 4,000 listeners, with an average of 3100 daily listeners' audio streaming. It currently livestreams at <http://www.nwufm.co.za>

15. Life FM (100.6 & 98.1)

This station is a non-profit Christian radio station that caters to the Christian community within Klerksdorp on the frequency 100.6 FM and in Potchefstroom on 98.1 FM. The station also live streams globally through the internet at <https://www.lifefm.co.za>. In its programming, the station offers community news reports, sports programmes, gospel music shows, and talk shows on a variety of issues. Its broadcast also includes several daily devotions and worship programmes, as well as sermons from well-known international preachers.

16. Lichvaal Stereo 92.6FM

The station commenced broadcast in 2003. It is a community radio station based in Lichtenburg, North-West Province. The station started with a few volunteers and has grown into a community radio station with 27 volunteer broadcasters and 5 full-time staff members. Lichvaal Stereo covers within a range of approximately 100km radius around Lichtenburg, North-West, South Africa. The station caters to the Afrikaans community and therefore broadcast in Afrikaans. The station broadcasts nationally and internationally over the internet at <http://www.lichvaalstereo.co.za/> Lichvaal Stereo offers programs for a wide range of listeners, from toddlers to the elderly, with programs ranging from gardening and agriculture to alternative Afrikaans music. However, the target audience is mainly between the ages of 18 to 45 years. Lichvaal Stereo offers outdoor broadcast services, which are done in live events for businesses, schools, and churches. The station also provides music for special occasions.

17. PUKfm (93.6)

This is a campus radio station run by students of the North-West University (NWU) in Potchefstroom. It caters to university students by offering a line-up comprised of various music shows, news reports, educational programmes and entertainment shows. Its music

repertoire combines international and local artists, a wide variety of genres and classic hits from different decades. PUK FM broadcasts in English and Afrikaans to Potchefstroom using the frequency 93.6 FM. It is also possible to listen live to its broadcast globally, through its online live streaming service at <http://services.nwu.ac.za/pukfm>

18. Bodumedi FM (105.0)

It is a youth-oriented community station that is based in Mamusa Local Municipality in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati of the North West Province. It caters to the community groups in Mamusa local municipalities. The station provides a full spectrum of programming contents to the youth and its target community. The programming format is at 60% talk and 40% music. The station was established with the aim of supporting the community's interest and working for social change amongst its community.

Bodumedi FM aims to provide information and assistance to the community through the media and the internet. The station utilizes the media and internet to create job opportunities by accessing information, education, news and all other important programs that are useful in improving the lives of the youth and young graduates in the community. This is to enable the youths have access to job opportunities and information needed to gain experience and the needed skills to become entrepreneur's/job creators. The station can be listened to online at <https://famcast.co.za/q/stations/bodumedifm/>

19. Aganang FM (90.0)

It is a community radio station based in Potchefstroom in the Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality of the North-West Province. The station is located in Potchefstroom and has the following programming.

Broadcast Hours: 24 Hours.

Broadcast Languages: Tswana, Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, and Sotho.

Program Format: Talk 60%, Music 40%.

Age Group: 14 - 60

Male/Female Listeners: 40/60.

The station can be accessed online at <https://www.aganangfm.org.za>

Discussion: Issues Emerging from Community Radio Stations in the North-West Province.

Having given a brief profile of all the active community radio stations in the North-West Province, it is important to highlight certain issues that emerged from the profile of the community radio stations. They are as follows:

1.Social Media: From the profile of the stations above, it is evident that many of the community radio stations in the North-West Province have established their presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram etc. Thus, it suffices to say many of the community radio stations have social media presence/visibility, as is the case of Mafikeng FM, Kgatleng FM, and many other stations in the Province. However, upon review of the contents on the social platforms, many of the contents was to establish their presence and highlight their programming on the platform. While this serves as part of the benefits of the Internet and the digital platforms; it indicates that managers of these community radio stations know the essence/import of social media platform in marketing their station and positioning it for global reach/attention. Furthermore, and upon review of the contents on these stations' social media platform, there was absence of user interactivity or direct engagement with community members. Thus, Bosch (2013) concludes that despite community journalists' attempt at engaging with new technology; they have not been able to engage with the technology in meaningful ways.

Going further, and in a study conducted by Bosch, (2013) on social media and community radio journalism using three community radio stations in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban respectively. The study showed that all of the stations are connected to the internet. However, there is little or no user interactivity, as there is no evidence of any civic journalism or direct engagement with community members. According to Bosch, (2013) and in the three cases studied, it seems as though access to the internet reduced already limited interaction with community members as potential news sources. This therefore raises the issue of the digital divide. While this term usually refers to access to technology, in this instance, this concept can also include gaps in digital literacies evident in the reduced/low amount of community members engaging the stations' social media site. Thus, a key role that community stations can play is to enhance their communities' ability to engage with new technology through digital and media literacy to ensure the digital divide is not widened even further (National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), 2017). In an effort to support the stations, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) rolled out digitized studios and ran two digital literacy workshops in 2018. These workshops focused on digital literacy (the different social platforms and how to use them, legal aspects and ethics), and how to use

and interpret analytics. However, considering the number of community radio stations in South Africa; volunteers and staff members in the stations, efforts need to be made to ensure that all workers/stakeholders are digitally literate (MDDA, 2021).

Going further, a Freedom of Information Institute study (2014:58) on community radio found that:

i. community radio stations are generally aware of the implications of the internet and accept that social media usage is not as pronounced because of limited access to the internet and relatively low penetration rates of mobile phone usage, particularly in the low income and rural communities they serve.

ii. all the sampled stations in the study were present on several social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The activity of community radio stations on these platforms was assessed to be moderate to low.

iii. most community station participants published their broadcast online using streaming services such as Tune in Internet Radio.

Some stations indicated that social media had yielded negative implications on listenership among communities. Jozi FM attributed declining listenership to greater use of Facebook, Twitter and Mxit as alternate sources of information and entertainment as opposed to community radio.

Conclusively, Berger and Mgwili-Sibanda (2006:38) have demonstrated how small-scale print media across the continent have failed to effectively use ICTs and have not realized their potential to contribute African news content to global cyberspace. The authors however note that in considering the provision of local news via online platforms, it should be noted that “the adequacy of news for local communities is also largely dependent on assumptions of homogeneity amongst local audiences”.

2. Online Streaming Service: Virtually all the community radio stations in the North-West Province can be streamed/listened to online/via the Internet. This is evident in the different online streaming services these community radio stations utilize to service their audiences; especially their young listeners. However, upon accessing these stations online, there was no listener engagement/presence via the online/streaming platforms. In a way, this indicates that these managers know the potentialities and merits of the Internet and other social platform; as many of the community radio stations can be streamed/listened to online via the Internet.

However, despite the knowledge of the benefits of the Internet and other associated digital platforms on the part of the manager, why are these community radio stations struggling to remain sustainable in the digital age? In response however, these managers have simply distributed their content using different available technologies instead of developing an integrated approach in terms of seizing the opportunities posed by the social uses of the Internet for the benefit of their media organization (Cardoso and Moreno, 2016). In context however, the managers of these community radio stations have merely utilized the internet and other social media platforms for retaining their audiences, marketing and branding, forgetting to use it to enhance and benefit their media organization.

While these forms part of the benefits of these digital technologies, more competencies are required of the media manager in order to be able to fully utilize the benefits of these technologies in his media organization. First, media managers “need to develop foresight and be able to spot technology trends that influence social uses that enhance every aspect of their media organization” (ibid: 224). In a study on the state of media companies in the digital age conducted by seventeen (17) consulting firms who examined the results of 30 reports published between 2011 and 2012, the findings show the evolution of a new business space in the digital sphere (Cardoso, Mendonca, Paisana, & Lima, 2013). This new environment has created new business models for creating economic and cultural value as media companies now reside within a digital age. As such, it is expedient for media managers to understand this new environment, channel their existing business models to conform to the digital media model in order to remain sustainable in this digital age.

In view of the fact that transition to a digital media environment is complex and requires structural changes that are not easy to implement, media managers need not only understand the features/peculiarities of these digital technologies. Rather, they need to take into consideration the effects/challenges that these digital technologies might have on their media firm- which serves as the core of this study. This is to ensure that the media manager is capacitated enough to navigate the affairs of his media station in this digital age.

3. Programming: The profile of the community radio stations in the North-West Province have shown that the community radio stations have maintained the programming quota as stipulated in the ICASA Act-formerly called IBA Act-which is to promote the language and culture of historically disadvantaged and marginalized group. Thus, these stations have allocated more preference to local content in terms of their broadcast language and local

music- as all the stations broadcast in all of the eleven (11) official languages and promote local music/talents.

4. Ownership: As outlined above, all of the community radio stations in the North-West Province are not stand-alone. This is because they all belong to one of the three distinct categories of community radio stations in South Africa namely; community of interest stations (also known as faith-based stations); geographic community stations; and campus radio stations. However, from the profile of stations listed above; there seems to be youth-oriented stations (stations formed to project the interests/ambitions of the youth) such as Bodumedi FM as well as social development stations such as Modiri FM. These kind of stations are set up to provide broadcast infrastructures in both communities; serve as a communal/social bridge between the two geographical communities and serve as a platform for civil discourse. This indicates that the concept of community radio is evolving and changing to accommodate other kinds of social ideologies and perspectives.

Challenges and Impacts of Digitalization on South African Media.

The term ‘digitalization’ is ambiguous and is often associated with ‘digitization’ and ‘digital transformation’. However, the terms have different nuanced meanings depending on the context and industry or field of study they are used. For this study however, the term digitalization will be adopted. This is because ‘digitalization’ captures the essence of this study. Literally, digitalization is the switch-over of systems and structures into digital technology. It has further been described as the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures. Thus, it is defined as the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenues and value-producing opportunities; and it is the process of moving into a digital business (Gartner, 2018).

For a while now, the global media industry has been experiencing and operating in economic uncertainty as well as highly competitive environment against these new disruptive entrants. This has been powered by the Internet and fast-moving technological advancements. Considering the historical trajectory of the media institution, Murdock and Golding (1974:206) described the different stages/processes in which the media has gone through. According to the authors, the media started from the cottage industries owned by the postman; and it later metamorphosed into the differentiation stage-where every media organisation was known for its distinct productions. Finally, it has evolved into a saturated and concentrated

stage where the media is owned by a few capitalists known as “media owners.” On one hand, these media owners have put so much attention and emphasis on the technological potentialities of this new technologies, while trying to benefit from the economic benefits/potentials of the new technologies as well.

Murdock and Golding (1974) further notes that the growing industrialization of the media and the prevalence of digital technologies requires all media stakeholders to identify and examine the challenges that these technologies portends to their respective media firms and how to manage it. This is an accurate picture of the contemporary situation of the media industry and it is in view of this that this study emerges- to highlight the challenges of these new technologies on community radio as a medium and evolve ways to make it functional and sustainable in this digital age.

Primarily, this chapter focuses on the impact of digitalization in the South African media landscape. There is no doubt that the South African media is experiencing the effects of digitalization-both positive and negative. Starting with the positive impacts of digitalization, this chapter will further discuss the negative/challenging effects of digitalization on traditional media (community radio) in these changing times.

First, one of the positive impacts of digitalization on the media industry, particularly radio broadcasting is that it has converged the media. As such, radio is available across multiple platforms. It can be streamed on the Internet or through mobile applications on smartphones as well. With the aid of technological advancements, the focus and texture of radio has shifted from only sound to visual models e.g. text, video, web pages (Gazi et al, 2011). Another development is that these digital technologies has made it possible to produce and deliver media in a variety of format (ibid).

Thus, apart from meeting the varied needs of the media consumer, it affords them to choose and select their media preference. Consequently, digitalization has given the media consumer the impetus to personalize the new media spectrum and the technologies associated with it. It has given the media consumer the right to own, create and distribute media content. Digitalization has also made distribution easier as programming is open to mass contribution and consumption by the user. In other words, digitalization has enabled the ‘convergence of modes’- a combination of telephone, computing and broadcasting across one singular system (Jenkins, 2006).

Globally and in South Africa as well, newspaper publishing houses have felt the effects of digitalization the most. This is because their structure of revenue has drastically reduced following the transition of readers to online websites and news organizations. This is particularly evident in South Africa as newspaper publishing houses and some other media houses in South Africa are starting to close shop. This is in addition to dozens of local community newspapers that have closed shop between 2015 and 2017 (Dugmore, 2018). Thus, these digital technologies have disrupted the conventional flow of revenue of legacy media in South Africa and globally. Another positive innovation enabled by digitalization has been the emergence of new voices/ media platforms; new ways to generate revenue from the internet; amongst other things.

Generally, the challenges that digitalization has brought upon existing media has been classified under three kinds namely: disruption of traditional existing businesses (Schumpeter, 2013; Rogers, 2016); turbulence (Casilone, 2009), and displaced shaky/weak businesses/companies (Dimmick et al, 2004). Thus, disruption, turbulence, and displacement have been identified as the three main challenges confronting the media presently, amongst other challenges. These challenges have been further compounded with the political dynamics as well as the festering digital divide to digital technologies among the South African populace. This is due to the fact that it is in African countries that digitalization has impacted the most (Adegoke, 2017). While its impact has been resounding in Africa generally, its uptake and reception in a country like South Africa has not been homogenous- as there are still substantial geographical and demographic imbalances in technological adoption- owing to the legacy and footprints of apartheid.

Furthermore, and having identified the challenges that digitalization has brought on the existing medium, it is expedient to define these challenges and their impact on community radio. Despite its broad dissemination in the scholarly world, the concept of disruption has been widely misunderstood and its basic tenets frequently misapplied. It has been defined as a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses (Christensen et al, 2015). It has also been defined as when an existing industry faces a challenger that offers far greater value to the customer in a way that existing firms cannot compete with directly (Roger, 2016).

Thus, and summarily from the definitions above, it suffices to say that these new technologies are the ‘challengers’ to the existing media and are products and services that incumbents do

not, and cannot offer. The reality is that the traditional media are chasing after advertising and other digital technologies. Thus, for community radio, the challenge is the same and it has been further compounded as the medium is allowed to operate only within the confines of its mandate.

Challenges of Digital Technologies on Community Radio.

In view of the positive impacts of digitalization on community radio, these digital technologies also present community radio with challenges and possible threats. According to the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), (2017:9), the following are the challenges facing community stations in South Africa, amongst other things.

- i. fragmentation of audiences and increased competition for listeners.
- ii. globally, advertising is shifting from traditional media (print, radio and television) to online platforms like Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google.
- iii. due to the pervasiveness of digital technologies, community stations are vulnerable to hacking and illegal access to the station's information/database.
- iv. undue pressure from government agencies and stakeholders to digitalize. Thus, many community stations feel pushed to move in the direction of technology because of national objectives, rather than being driven by audience needs. This could lead to a disconnect between community stations and their audiences and more needs to be done to help community broadcasters understand why they should go online, beyond the rhetoric of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Furthermore, and from a business management perspective which serves as the theoretical basis of this study, the managers of many small business organizations (community radio) are not technologically savvy and know little about social media (Jones et al, 2014). Thus, the absence/lack of digital knowledge has made many stations lose revenue, while many station managers have gotten ripped off in a bid to contract the services of a web manager/web developer. This is as stated in a research finding by Media Connection Company. In their report, the community radio solutions company found that community radio stations have an engaged audience - as they can hear and feel the pulse of their audience. However, the challenge is that these stations do not know how to monetize their listenership/audience power. While they recognize that they have power, they are unable to translate this power into revenue. Hence, the need for digital media literacy and training for the station manager(s).

Digital Media Literacy for Community Radio Stations

There is no doubt that the peculiarities of the new environment caused by new digital technologies necessitates the need for all media stakeholders-particularly the managers to be digitally capacitated. This is to ensure that the managers are sufficiently equipped to handle and navigate their media stations in this new digital terrain. As indicated above, community radio managers in the North-West Province have only utilized social media technologies to establish their presence and distribute their programming on the social platforms. In practice, they are unable to meaningfully integrate and engage these digital technologies into their stations (Bosch, 2013). This indicates a form of digital illiteracy on the part of the managers as well as a gap in digital literacy/usage especially as it concerns community radio stations in the rural areas in South Africa.

Current research shows that digital media literacy goes beyond mere appropriating social media platform in the broadcast activities of the station. It is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms (Aufderheide,1993; Christ & Potter, 1998). These four components — access, analysis, evaluation, and content creation—together constitute a skills-based approach to media literacy. Furthermore, and in the context of this study, digital media literacy refers to the utilization of the Internet and its associated technologies to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages.

In the South African context, the adoption of digital media literacy in community radio stations (particularly the access to ICT by journalists) is still very low and is very much influenced by the location of the community radio (Nassanga et al, 2013). In view of the fact that many community radio stations are rural-based, many community stations have less access to utilities like electricity, telephone networks, roads, etc., which all contribute to low access to ICTs. This creates an ‘imbalance in access and it impinges on the journalists’ ability in rural areas to fully integrate and benefit from ICT in the performance of their work like their counterparts in semi-urban and urban areas’ (ibid:265). Hence, the gap in digital literacy/usage.

Thus, for the journalist in semi-urban/urban areas who has integrated ICTs into their journalistic activities, it has created a new dynamic; thereby changing the way they collect, process, distribute, store and retrieve information through use of digital multi-media platforms. They are able to edit their material on the computers and share it with others in their networks (Nassanga et al, 2013). Thus, the swift access to electronic information

sources has improved the quality and output of their stories and created a multiplier effect that has hastened the speed of information flow. It has also increased the volume of information available in the community. This therefore leads to a vibrant, creative, and participatory engagement through the use of the digital technologies.

Thus, considering the potential benefits of ICT integration into community radio; governments, NGOs, development partners and media development institutions need to support community radios, particularly those in rural areas, to gain better access to ICT equipment. The access alone may not be sufficient, hence further support should be extended to the areas of operating costs, maintenance and training in ICT skills, particularly in using multi-media platforms. The support for capacity building and training should go beyond basic applications to address personal, institutional and systemic barriers, as well as content development for community radio stations (Githaiga, 2007).

Governments in Africa and media development institutions should focus more on strengthening the capacity for community radio to integrate more ICTs into their operations, which would enable increased access to both local and global information for the journalists and their audience communities. As Girard (2008) submits, if the target set at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) for all communities to have access to radio by 2015 is to be met, there is need to include community radio in universal service policies so that they can have access to the universal service funds usually reserved for complete infrastructure development. With more funding, community members will be empowered to share in the benefits of ICT and participate more in the democratization processes as active citizens, rather than passive media consumers. Thus, integration of ICT into community radio has great potential to narrow the information gap and contribute tremendously to poverty reduction in Africa, particularly in the rural communities.

Conclusion: This chapter presented the historical trajectory of community radio in South Africa. It began with the emergence and development of radio broadcasting in South Africa—particularly during critical phases (the apartheid era, post-apartheid, and the current state of community radio particularly in the North-West Province where this study focuses on). It further explored the different structures that has so far enabled community radio thrive in South Africa. This includes: legislations and the existence of relevant support organizations such as the MDDA amongst others. The chapter finally gave a brief profile of the nineteen

(19) active community radio stations in the Province; whilst highlighting the impact of these new digital technologies on these community stations.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NATURE OF CHALLENGES FACING COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE.

This chapter presents the data obtained from the respondents in the study. The participants include: the community radio managers, media experts/directors in charge of community-based media organizations, and the people from the academia. The chapter seeks to present the findings of the study especially as it relates to community radio managers in the North West Province of South Africa.

The data was obtained through interviews. Fifteen (15) interviews were conducted from all the stakeholders. The researcher conducted interviews with eight (8) media managers, followed by four (4) media experts, and then three (3) personalities from the academia. The data was collected over a six-month period (January 2021- June 2021).

The breakdown of the interview questions was done first to bring out the themes emerging out of the interviews. This is needed in order to be able to give answers to the research questions. For the interviews, three different interview schedules were used and it contained different set of questions – a schedule for the community radio managers, the directors of the media organizations, and the academia (see appendices).

Findings in this chapter are therefore arranged under themes. This is needed in order to address issues in relation to the wholesome sustainability of community radio stations and ultimately answer the research questions.

Themes Emerging from the Interview Schedule for Community Radio Managers.

The following are the questions posed to the radio station managers, followed by their responses:

1. Managers' knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing their community media organisations.
2. Managers' knowledge/familiarity of the kind of challenge facing their radio station and how they are you managing it.
3. Managers' approach in addressing the challenge of sustainability in their radio station.
4. Managers' rationale for selecting the method used in dealing with the challenge of sustainability.

5. Managers' suggested methods for community radio stations to sustain their stations in this digital age.
6. Managers' approach in achieving financial sustainability in your station?
7. Managers' approach in achieving social sustainability in your community radio station?
8. Managers' approach in ensuring institutional sustainability in your station?

The responses to the above-mentioned questions have been grouped into themes outlined below:

Theme 1: Managers' knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing their community media organisations.

From the information obtained from the managers, it is clear that there are digital challenges. However, they only highlighted organizational challenges. According to them, these are challenges they are facing as a media organization – challenges limiting them from functioning optimally. These issues range from governing board interference in the station's administration, inadequate tools/equipment, inadequate finance, etc. While many of them know and are aware of the different kinds of organizational challenges they are experiencing, they do not consider digital challenges as a different kind of challenge. Thus, inasmuch as they are supposed to be focused on digital challenges and its impacts on their radio stations, they are more concerned with pressing organizational challenges. They do not consider it worthy of their attention in the scheme of other pressing organizational challenges.

“I think this is common to community radio managers generally. We have challenges and we know that. However, I do not know all those digital challenges you mentioned–disruption, turbulence, and displacement. What other challenges are there other than the ones we are currently dealing with? I think I should be more concerned and committed to dealing with these in-house challenges rather than compounding the challenges that I don't really have answers to” (*Manager A, 10 February, 2021*).

“Community radio has challenges and I know that. Whenever we go for trainings with some other organizations like the MDDA and other non-governmental agencies, we are usually updated with a lot of challenges that the sector is facing globally and within South Africa. However, there is only little to what we can do. We are limited in funds, talents, state-of-the art equipment's, resources, etc. (*Manager B, 22nd February, 2021*).

“The big media and private media broadcasters are swallowing us up. They get all the funds, donations and we receive the remnant, which is not sufficient. Yet we must not really talk, because that is how it is meant to be. They say, community radio stations are non-profit organizations so we should not be about the money. However, there are so many bills to pay- stipends for volunteers and

staff, rent, transmission cost, and other overhead and miscellaneous expenses (*Manager C, 4th March, 2021*).

Theme 2: Managers' knowledge/familiarity of the challenge peculiar to his media organization.

While organizational challenges seem to be a challenge to all community radio stations, the managers do not know and are not familiar with the kind of digital challenge present/affecting their media organizations. As discussed in the first theme above, the managers are familiar with organizational (internal) challenges; however, digital challenges to them are strange, as they do not consider any other challenge greater than the ones they are experiencing.

“I am aware of the challenges, but in the long-run, I still regard them as organizational challenges indirectly. I do not know neither am I familiar with digital challenges present nor affecting this radio station. However, I know the kind of challenges affecting this station, and chief of it is the governing board's interaction in the affairs of this station. It is quite worrisome and I do not know if it is because of the location of the station, but the truth is they stifle my initiative, creativity and leadership skills in directing the affairs of this station. This is because I always have to take permission from the board before I can do anything in the station. I recently had to call for a meeting to air my grievances. Now, tell me, these are real organizational issues that must be tackled before focusing on the digital challenges you mentioned (*Manager D, 14th April, 2021*).

“The most pressing challenge this organization is facing is that we do not have enough subscribers to come and buy airtime and sponsor programmes. Almost the station's entire budget relies on the grants/funds from the MDDA and other donating organizations. We are not able to generate enough funds and the little we generate is re-invested back into the station” (*Manager B, 22nd April, 2021*).

“Challenges in a community radio station never ends, we only try to prioritize and try and deal with the most pressing issue. In my station, the most pressing need right now is that of talent/capable hands. This station needs capable hands. Many potential recruits/volunteers only see community radio stations as a place to acquire experience, and once they come across better offers, they leave. Therefore, we are constantly in need of capable hands/talents who are willing to stay and build the programming of the station. There is so much challenge to deal with internally before we start thinking of ways to deal with and retain our stations in the face of these threatening digital challenges you mentioned.” – (*Manager C, 04th March, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Community Radio Managers on their Knowledge/Familiarity of Digital Challenges

Discussion of themes 1 and 2 already gives a clear picture of the state of knowledge/familiarity of the managers in the North-West Province. The discussion focused on certain themes such as the managers' knowledge of the challenges caused by the prevalence of the new ICTs. It also examined their familiarity on the kind of digital challenge they are experiencing/ affecting them as a community radio station.

Critically evaluating the discussions from the themes, it provides a scenario that shows that digital education should be provided to the managers as a large percentage of them are only aware of digital challenges on paper. In reality, they do not know neither do they understand what digital challenges are. They do not understand how these challenges affect their radio stations and how to spot/identify one. Thus, in reality, they have translated these digital challenges to mean organizational challenges they experience every day.

Thus, considering the prevalence and nature of digital technologies, media managers need to understand the impact and potentialities of these new media technologies in order to identify and know the kind of technologies that is needed within their organization. This is to enable them develop the capacity to spot technology trends that affect their companies' business models and understand the affordances of technologies—their potential uses and modes of interaction—and their impacts (Cardoso & Moreno, 2016). It is only then; they will be able to successfully transition and manage their media firms in these digital times. The ability to spot/identify media technology trends that will positively or negatively impact serves as the novel approach that media managers must have.

Main Findings

- (i) Manager's general lack of knowledge regarding the digital challenges affecting their media station.
- (ii) Manager's lack of knowledge concerning the kind of digital challenge affecting their community station.
- (iii) Digital literacy/education is required to assist managers in effectively running their media stations in the digital age.

Theme 3: Managers' approach in addressing the challenge of sustainability in their radio station.

All of the managers attest to the fact that they do not have any particular method they use in addressing the challenge of sustainability. They however claim that challenges (whether challenges of sustainability or not) are dealt with spontaneously and in the interest of the radio station.

“A lot of times, I just use my initiative to deal with the challenges. However, this depends on the challenge. I don't have any method I adopt...maybe I use the common sense approach”- (*Manager D, 14th April, 2021*).

“The truth is that there is no one method to deal with challenges. I deal with challenges as they appear”- (*Manager C, 04th March, 2021*).

“As the manager of this station, whatever method am using is done in the best interest of the station and the methods are used depending on the kind of challenge” (*Manager F, 06th May, 2021*).

Theme 4: Managers' rationale for selecting the method used in dealing with the challenge of sustainability.

In Theme 3 above, all the managers said that they do not have any particular method they use in addressing the challenges. They however, maintained that despite the spontaneity they use in dealing with the challenges, decisions are always done in the best interest of the station and its staff.

“There is no rationale other than to see this community radio station grow-to continually provide a space for democratic discourse among the people”- (*Manager F, 06th May, 2021*).

“I don't think I have any reason other than the fact that it is my job and I must ensure that whatever decision I make in handling the sustainability of the station must contribute to its development” - (*Manager G, 18th May, 2021*).

“I am the manager of this station, so whatever decision I make must be in the best interest of the station”- (*Manager H, 20th May, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Community Radio Managers on the Approach(es) used in addressing digital challenges.

Rationally and from the discussion above, it is very unlikely for managers who know little or nothing about digital challenges to know the approach to use in tackling the challenge. However, upon further enquiries and in a bid to confirm this theme empirically, the managers

said that they do not have/follow any approach in addressing the challenges (refer to discussion of themes 3 and 4 above). Rather, they all claim to handle challenges as it comes. However, they all claim that while dealing with such challenges, they do not compromise the interest of the station. On further enquiry, they (managers) maintain that they do not have any rationale other than for them to see that the station is functional and achieve the station's goal.

Main Findings

- i. Managers claim no clear-cut approach in dealing with the challenges of sustainability in their media station, rather challenges are dealt with as they come.
- ii. The managers further assert that they utilize their initiative when challenges come and make sure that all the decisions are done in the best interest of the station.

Theme 5: Managers' suggested methods for community radio stations to sustain their stations in this digital age.

Quite a number of managers prescribed some approaches in dealing with the challenges of sustainability, albeit from their personal point of view/organization.

“We enforce more of local content programming because we are for the community first before any other thing. Therefore, I'll recommend that managers should prioritize, showcase, and promote local content in their media organization” (*Manager G, 18th May, 2021*).

“I will recommend client satisfaction as one of the things managers should ensure they live up to. A happy and satisfied client will always come back for business” (*Manager H, 20th May, 2021*).

“I think managers should keep themselves abreast of things happening in the world and around them. In other words, managers should be knowledgeable enough to know what to do to keep their stations running” - (*Manager F, 06th May, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Recommendations of Community Radio Managers in Addressing the Challenges of Sustainability.

Discussion of theme 5 elaborated on the issue. From the discussions, the recommendations were quite a lot. However, the three most recurring and prominent recommendations are:

- (i) manager's knowledge acquisition in managing the station.
- (ii) prioritization and promotion of local content programming.
- (iii) adequate training and support for staff and volunteers.

Drawing on the first point (manager's knowledge acquisition in managing his station), which speaks to the deliberate search and acquisition of relevant knowledge in managing the media station in the digital age. This point corroborates the point made in discussion of Theme 1 in this chapter. Thus, apart from highlighting the importance of digital education for managers, managers of community radio must seek and acquire relevant knowledge that will assist to navigate their community radio stations successfully in the digital age.

Going further on the second point raised - prioritization and promotion of local content; this thought is similar and corroborates the point previously established in the literature section of the previous chapter, which says that in order for community radio station to remain viable in the midst of digital challenges, it must continuously innovate with its local content.

In addition, this same idea is being reiterated in the theoretical aspect of this study. It says for community radio to remain sustainable, it must leverage on its dynamic capabilities which is its localness. Thus, in view of the fact that "localness" has been identified as the dynamic capabilities of community radio; community station managers must then continually harness their 'localness' in order to remain viable in the digital age. How then can local media stations harness on their 'localness' to be sustainable is the next logical question to ask.

Theme 6: Managers' methods in achieving financial sustainability for their community radio stations.

Many of the managers attest to the fact that they are nowhere in achieving financial sustainability as their main source of revenue are aids/grants from government agencies such as the MDDA, SENTECH, GCIS, etc. While a lot of them are striving to generate revenue by themselves, it is insufficient as the money generated is channeled to service the operating expenses of the station and to pay stipends to the staff. Thus, the issue is the consistent generation of money to service the station and to keep them financially independent and sustainable.

"Our main source of revenue is from the MDDA, SENTECH and GCIS. Others are community support and patronage, jingles, sales of airtime- which trickle in. While the main grants are once-off grants, the expenses of the stations are a daily and recurring type. Thus when the grants are exhausted, what becomes the fate of the community radio station?"
(*Manager D, 14th April, 2021*).

“Despite rigorous marketing of our station, airtime and sponsorship, we’ve still not been able to balance out in terms of finance. There’s so much to cater to in community radio, yet the finances are limited” (*Manager C, 04th March, 2021*).

“I think when community radio stations get financing right; other radio issues will be sorted. This finance issue has always been a challenge for community radio. However, I think it has more to do with proper and equitable management of the finances. But how do we even manage when the funds are not enough in the first place?” (*Manager E, 16th March, 2021*).

Main Findings

(i) The responses of the managers in dealing with the challenges of sustainability can be summarized into three main points which are listed below:

- manager’s relevant knowledge acquisition in managing the station.
- prioritization and promotion of local content programming.
- adequate training and support for staff and volunteers.

(ii) Concerning attaining financial sustainability, the managers claim they are yet to achieve financial sustainability as they still rely heavily on aids/grants from government agencies such as the MDDA, SENTECH, GCIS.

Issues Emerging from the Managers in Achieving Financial Sustainability

From the data gathered, it is evident that many community radio stations in the North West Province are struggling to achieve financial sustainability. From the responses and apart from the funds/grants received from the MDDA, GCIS and other supporting agencies, community radio stations in the North West Province are nowhere close to achieving financial sustainability. This is because these funds serve as their main source of revenue. Upon further enquiry on the station’s revenue generating methods, the managers attest to the fact that they generate income. However, such income is usually not enough to cater to the needs of the station for a long time as all of such income is usually ploughed back into the station to keep the station up and running. Hence, the need for a consistent source of revenue for community stations in order to keep them sustainable and independent. The practical approach suggested by El-ghul (2004:14) would be most suitable to make them financially sustainable. This approach recommends to managers to apply more of entrepreneurial principles-particularly marketing principles. Thus, and in view of this digital age, are these principles sufficient/capable of making community radio stations financially sustainable?

For community radio stations in the North –West Province and in South Africa, financial sustainability is seemingly the most popular and relatable out of the three cardinal pillars that

make up media sustainability. From their responses, financial sustainability is tantamount to media sustainability. However, other aspects of sustainability which includes both its social and institutional seems strange and unrelatable to the managers.

Theme 7: Manager's approaches to achieving social sustainability in community radio stations.

The managers attest to the fact that they enjoy a relatively good amount of social sustainability. This is because they have a good working and mutual relationship with members of the community. According to them, these community members remain the station's primary clients and investors. In addition, they sometimes double as participants and as sources of news.

'What is a community radio station without its community? They form the bulk of our programming content, sales, revenue. This has been possible because we interact closely with them by involving them in the stations various activities. They invest in our station by sponsoring programs to promote the cultures and norms of the community. Because we involve them in the management and decision-making process of the station, they sometimes contribute to the stations development' (*Manager A, 10th February, 2021*).

'Forget the support that comes from the government, it is the legitimacy that the community members impose on the radio station that really makes it viable. It is from the community we get our volunteers/staff, sales, revenue and every other thing. Therefore, a station that downplays the social essence of its media firm does it at its own peril. For this station, we have been intentional about the social sustainability factor and the relationship has been good so far. They are part of every activity and decision making process of the station' (*Manager C, 04th March, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Managers in Achieving Social Sustainability.

Discussion of Theme 7 indicates a favorable response regarding social sustainability. All of the managers attest to the fact that they enjoy a relatively good amount of social cordiality from the community. Hence, they have been able to achieve social sustainability. Upon further enquiries as to the approaches they used in achieving this, a good number of them said they took the station to the community. In other words, they involved and made community members participate in all the activities and administration of the station. The managers said the community members are duly represented in every meeting and deliberations of the station. In a bid to verify and authenticate this claim by the managers, a Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS) published by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa

(BRCSA) confirms this claim in their recently published survey (BRC-RAMS Listenership Report, April 2019-March 2020). The survey shows a high measure of radio listenership in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, followed by Bojanala District Municipality; and the other two district municipalities in the North-West Province.

Theme 8: Manager's methods in ensuring institutional sustainability in community radio stations.

Many of the managers in the North-West Province think achieving institutional sustainability is about the station adhering to the rules and regulations set up by the main regulator ICASA and other stakeholders such as the MDDA, and NCRF. Rather, it is the way in which both the internal and external affairs of a station are managed. Many of them attest to the fact that they are struggling to achieve institutional sustainability as the only time they think and adhere institutionally is before obtaining the broadcast license and when the license expires and when the need arises.

“Apart from acquiring the broadcast license and fulfilling all regulatory obligations required of us as a station, I don't think I have any issues with achieving institutional sustainability” (*Manager E, 16th March, 2021*).

“I don't even know what institutional sustainability means, however, if that is what you say it is, internally we are striving. Externally, I think we need to put more effort to ensure that the stations participate and gets involved with other relevant networks and association” (*Manager H, 20th May, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Managers in Achieving Institutional Sustainability.

Discussion of Theme 8 indicates that a number of managers in the North-West Province do not understand and are not familiar with the concept of institutional sustainability. While other managers who are a bit familiar with the term think, achieving institutional sustainability starts and ends with obtaining a broadcast license and fulfilling all the regulatory obligations that comes with it.

Main Findings

- i. The managers claim that they enjoy a good amount of social sustainability with members of the community.
- ii. The concept of institutional sustainability is a strange and unfamiliar term to some of the managers. While the remaining few think it starts and ends with obtaining a broadcast license and fulfilling all the regulatory obligations that come with it.

Themes Emerging from the Interview Schedule for Media Experts/Stakeholders of Community Based Media Organizations.

The following are the interview questions posed to the experts/stakeholders of community based media organizations; and their responses:

1. Experts' knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio.
2. Experts' recommended approaches for community radio stations to use in managing their organisations to ensure sustainability.
3. Experts' recommended approach in ensuring the sustainability of community radio in the digital age.
4. Experts' recommended approaches to achieve financial sustainability for community stations in the digital age.
5. Experts' recommended approaches to achieve social sustainability for community radio in the digital age.
6. Experts' recommended approach to achieve institutional sustainability for community radio in the digital age.
7. Experts' recommended approaches for community media stations to achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age.

The community based media organizations are:

- i. MDDA – Media Development and Diversity Agency
- ii. NCRF- National Community Radio Forum
- iii. ICASA- Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
- iv. NMT- Namibia Media Trust

The responses to the above-mentioned questions have been grouped into themes outlined below:

Theme 1: Experts' familiarity/knowledge of the digital challenges facing community radio stations.

The experts claim to be aware of the digital challenges facing community radio stations. They however noted that the degree of challenges varies from station to station.

“The MDDA is aware and familiar with the challenges facing community radio stations in this digital age. Top of the challenges they are encountering is funding coupled with some organizational challenges. We have supported and we will continue to support community radio stations as much as we can but we cannot do so much without the support of other

agencies and organizations. There is much to be done for community radio as this sector is the most popular and wields so much power for grass root democratization and inclusion particularly from historically disadvantaged group” (*Expert 1, 2nd June, 2021*).

“Yes, we are aware of the challenges facing community radio stations and we are committed to assist these stations in navigating the challenges”. The entrance of digital challenges has compounded the existing challenges such that station managers are ill prepared to deal with the challenges of sustainability. Thus, the NCRF is prepared to support these stations to ensure they remain competitive and accessible (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Being the regulator and licensor, we know and are aware of the challenges facing community radio stations in this digital age and we’re doing all within our reach to ensure that we make things easy for these stations regarding their license and other obligations” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“The digital challenges are pervasive and we at The Namibia Media Trust (NMT) are aware of these challenges especially as it relates to community radio. These challenges often go unnoticed and it takes a knowledgeable manager to be able to handle and address it” (*Expert 4, 20th June, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on Their Knowledge/Familiarity of Digital Challenges

Discussion of theme 1 gives a clear picture of the state of knowledge of the above-mentioned experts. The discussion focused on the experts’ knowledge of the challenges facing community media organizations in the digital age. While all the experts responded affirmatively to being familiar with the challenges community radio stations are facing, the challenges seem no different from the daily organizational issues that community radio stations experience/ deal with. The challenges range from inadequate finance, the festering issue of digital switch-over for radio, governing board interference and staff/volunteer issues.

Critically evaluating the discussions from the theme, it gives a scenario that shows that the experts know that these digital challenges exist, however they are not well versed about digital challenges and how it affects community radio stations. Instead, they only identified organizational problems facing community radio stations. Thus, experts need to acquaint themselves with the current digital challenges facing all media organizations (community radio inclusive). This is needed to update their knowledge and be able to effectively spot digital challenges, recommend and proffer solutions to the challenges facing media organizations. As it stands and from previous discussions with the station managers, there is a difference between internal (organizational) challenges and the current digital challenges as espoused in Chapter 1 of this study. However, the current digital challenges seem more like

an external challenge, in reality; it affects both the internal and external parts of media organization.

Theme 2: Experts' recommended approaches for community radio stations to use in managing their organisations to ensure sustainability.

The experts recommended different approaches in which community radio stations can adopt in managing their stations to ensure sustainability and they are as follows:

“Charity they say begins at home. Therefore, community radio managers should become organized before dealing with issues like the digital challenges. Managers must ensure that everything is fine internally (from staff and volunteers, governance, programming content, license and compliance issues, and other organizational issues that needs to be sorted). It is only then they will be able to deal with the digital challenges and ensure sustainability. We understand that this sector is vulnerable (to donors, sponsors/NGOs and even the government) and needs all the help it can get. This is why the MDDA is doing all within its power to support and capacitate the sector” (*Expert 1, 02nd June, 2021*).

“I am of the opinion that steady and adequate funding will solve most (if not all) of the issues community radio stations are facing. This is the closest medium to the citizens. In fact, it is the people’s medium, hence they need all the financial help they can get. I am certain that once that is in place, other aspects needing attention will correct itself. Even the digital challenges you mentioned can be easily dealt with when community radio stations are funded properly” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Compliance! Community radio stations should ensure they comply with all licensing and regulatory obligations. I want to believe that is the first step towards sustainability. Particularly in the age of alternatives. Despite different concessions on some grounds, I can tell you for free that a lot of community radio stations are not complying and find it hard to comply with the regulators requirements” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“Media sustainability is a multi-faceted challenge, and I think it’s time that traditional media outfits like community radio integrate some digital colorations into their system. While it sounds cliché; truly, the future is indeed digital. Therefore, my recommendation will be for the managers to adopt all digital mechanism into their administration. I know this does not come cheap considering the status of community radio stations as being non-profit, but it needs to be done to ensure that the locals get the best of information and that the station remains” (*Expert 4, 20th June, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on Ways to Deal with the Challenges of Sustainability in Community Radio.

From the discussion in Theme 2, the experts highlighted some ways to tackle the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations characterized by proper administration/management of the media station, adequate funding, compliance, and alignment/ integration of digital technologies in the production of media content. While the

former three factors are valid methods, the latter point (alignment/integration of digital technologies) speaks more to the way in which managers can deal with the challenges of sustainability in this digital age. However, are community radio stations capacitated to afford/implement this? Furthermore, in light of the digital age and coupled with the challenges the digital age brought on existing media, are the above-listed factors capable to successfully deal with the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations?

Main Findings

- i. Experts not well versed and knowledgeable concerning digital challenges affecting community radio stations.
- ii. Experts recommended methods to deal with the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations are summarized as follows:
 - proper administration/management of the media station.
 - adequate funding.
 - compliance, and
 - alignment/ integration of digital technologies in the production of media content

Theme 3: Experts' recommended approach in ensuring the sustainability of community radio in the digital age.

The experts categorically stated the efforts/activities their organization is doing to ensure the sustainability of community radio stations. They outlined the efforts their organizations are taking to ensure the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age and they are as follow:

“I want to reiterate our vision at the MDDA, and it is: Access to diversified media for all. In line with our mandate, and as an organization, we are in the process of building a sustainability model for community radio stations in South Africa. We are still in the process of compiling all the challenges the community-broadcasting sector is facing in South Africa and I can assure you that before the end of this year (2021), we will evolve a pragmatic, practicable model for community radio stations. The community radio sector needs a solid and strong model, which all potential and existing radio stations should adhere to. The project has been going on for some time and I assure you that all these challenges will eventually phase out.

“Our other plans for community radio is to enhance the sector when the digital switchover eventually happens, however, only that of television is on course. We do not know when that of radio will take effect. However, in the interim, we are doing our best to support these community radio stations by providing grants, capacitating and training their staffs and volunteers. You will agree with me that the media digitization project is capital –intensive, so

even after we get the approval, we need all the funds to implement the switch-over of all community radio stations in the country” (*Expert 1, 02nd June, 2021*).

“Our agenda in NCRF is to create an effective association/membership for all community radio stations in South Africa. We support, communicate, and review our activities, plans/goals for all community radio stations. Concerning our efforts in ensuring sustainability in community radio, we are not a fund- dispensing organization like the MDDA and the likes. Thus, we do not have money to give. However, we provide the moral support needed. We do this by lobbying for good policies in favour of community radio, diversification of the airwaves to foster a dynamic broadcasting environment in the country through the establishment of community radio stations” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Our support/effort to community radio is setting licensing and regulatory standards. This is usually done before granting license to the stations. We are aware that some of the grantees come with ulterior motives in seeking licenses to promote their interest; hence, we maintain strict licensing rules and post-licensing monitoring activities. This is to ensure that the license is used for what it is intended. Hence, one of the requirements before granting license to community radio broadcasters is to ensure that they are self-sustainable in case of any eventualities. Again, if and when these stations default, we do station-visits to the erring stations, which is usually in form of training to assist and familiarize them with what is expected of them. We always make sure we engage in a consultative process to get inputs from players and stakeholders in the industry before coming up with a new regulation” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“Our commitment to media sustainability cuts across board. We believe in Ubuntu. Hence, for community radio, our passion and mission is to continually advocate for a conducive environment for the flourishing of community radio broadcasting. In addition, we are earnestly campaigning and lobbying for the digitization of all mediums (community radio inclusive). Hence, we hope it becomes a reality soon as it will assist community radio stations to become sustainable (*Expert 4, 20th June 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on their Efforts to Ensure the Sustainability of Community Radio Stations in the Digital Age.

Discussion of Theme 3 elaborated on the issue. From the discussions, the experts outlined the methods their organizations are using to ensure the sustainability of community radio stations. Knowing fully well that these media based organizations are utilizing different means to achieve sustainability). The following are their interventions towards community radio, amongst other issues:

- i. Evolving and developing a sustainable model for community radio (MDDA).
- ii. Lobbying for favorable policies for the advancement of community radio stations in South Africa (NCRF).
- iii. Maintaining good operational and licensing standards for community radio broadcast license (ICASA).

iv. Advocating for a conducive environment for the flourishing of community radio stations (NMT).

While the experts have identified their efforts above, that of the managers, who are the primary and main stakeholder in this study is problematic. This is because they do not have any clear-cut method they use in ensuring sustainability (refer to Discussion of Themes 3 and 4 in the Manager's Section above). Instead, they handle challenges just the way it comes.

Theme 4: Experts' recommended approaches to achieve financial sustainability for community stations in the digital age.

In view of the fact, that grants, donations, and other subsidies are temporary and could cease based on circumstances beyond the donor, the experts have advised community radio managers to devise ways in which they can remain sustainable. This could be in the form of setting up a business enterprise or other business innovations that would constitute revenue to the station. Ultimately, the MDDA and NCRF have encouraged that community radio stations not to forfeit or underestimate their social capital (their relationship with the community and its members), as it remains their lifeline when other forms of assistance are not forthcoming.

“The effort is to ensure the continued sustainability of community radio. The grants and aids we give are once-off and are not enough to sustain these stations. Thus, apart from evolving entrepreneurial methods to achieve financial sustainability, stations should remain cordial with their community because when all assistance goes, the community can never go. They remain the true financier and booster of community radio stations” (*Expert 1, 02nd June, 2021*).

“Achieving financial sustainability has been one of the issues plaguing community radio station since inception. Hence, my recommendation to community radio managers is to look within and bring out ways the station can be self-sustained. Though the funds generated might be insufficient to cover the entire operating cost of the station, but if such generated funds are augmented with the support received from the community (if any), it will go a long way to sustain the station. Hence the role of the community in achieving financial sustainability cannot be underestimated” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Our mandate as a regulator doesn't concern financial obligations. We are strictly limited to licensing approvals and operational procedures. However, there are some statutory grant giving organizations like the MDDA, GCIS and even the Department of Communication that assists community radio in achieving financial sustainability” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“The digital age has opened up many legitimate ways to make money online. Thus, I will encourage media managers to tap into the unlimited financial resources online to augment their revenue. Financial constraint is a major challenge to all media organizations especially during this COVID-19 pandemic, thus unconventional and unpopular ways to augment the stations income is the way to achieve financial sustainability” (*Expert 4, 20th June 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on Ways to Achieve Financial Sustainability for Community Radio Stations.

From the discussion in Theme 4, the experts highlighted ways in which stations can achieve financial sustainability and they include (i) maintaining their social capital with their respective communities (ii) evolve ways to achieve self-sustainability within the station, and for managers to (iii) leverage on the digital opportunities that the internet presents. Focusing on the latter approach, this speaks more and advances the point earlier raised above (See Discussion 1 and 2 in the Managers section) on the need for managers to be digitally educated in order to be able to access and benefit from the financial opportunities present in the internet. This applies to both existing and potential managers on the need to be digitally educated.

Main findings

(i) Experts efforts to ensure the sustainability of community radio station in the digital age includes:

- Evolving and developing a sustainable model for community radio (MDDA).
- Lobbying for favorable policies for the advancement of community radio stations in South Africa (NCRF).
- Maintaining good operational and licensing standards for community radio broadcast license (ICASA).
- Advocating for a conducive environment for the flourishing of community radio stations (NMT).

(ii) Experts recommended methods to achieve financial sustainability for community stations includes:

- Evolving and developing a sustainable model for community radio (MDDA).
- Lobbying for favorable policies for the advancement of community radio stations in South Africa (NCRF).
- Maintaining good operational and licensing standards for community radio broadcast license (ICASA).
- Advocating for a conducive environment for the flourishing of community radio stations (NMT).

Theme 5: Expert’s recommended approach to achieve social sustainability for community radio in the digital age.

The experts have recommended to the managers to nurture and maintain an intimate, cordial relationship with their community in order to achieve social sustainability.

“What is a community radio station without its community? Dialogue, deliberate involvement and participation of its community members in the administration of a community radio station is necessary for the good health of a radio station” (*Expert 1, 2 June, 2021*).

“The radio station and its community are mutually inclusive. Hence, the need for both to continually co-exist in order to sustain the radio entity. Thus, managers must learn to prioritize and promote the interests of the community within the radio station. That way, the community will be willing to support the station when the need arises” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Inasmuch as that is not included within our mandate as a regulator, I would say interaction and networking is key. As such, community radio stations should interact with its host community and other local stakeholders to access opportunity, information and ensure sustainability. A community radio should not and must not stand alone” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“Community radio stations must ensure collaborations and partnerships with their host communities. It is a guaranteed way to secure their legitimacy and ultimately achieve social sustainability” (*Expert 4, 20th June, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on Ways to Achieve Social Sustainability for Community Radio Stations.

From the data gathered in Theme 5, the experts unanimously recommended to managers to have and secure an intimate, cordial relationship with their respective communities, as it is their biggest resource. They described social sustainability as the only genuine and indispensable tool in achieving both financial sustainability and ultimately ensuring wholesome sustainability. The same is true for the managers as well who stated that they enjoy a good amount of social cordiality from their host community. (See Discussion of Theme 7 in the Manager’s section).

Now that both parties (managers and experts) attest to the relevance and indispensability of social sustainability, it suffices to say that in order to achieve sustainability for community radio in the social age, social sustainability is pertinent.

Theme 6: Experts' recommended approach to achieve institutional sustainability for community radio in the digital age.

The term - institutional sustainability sounded unfamiliar to the experts. However, upon further clarifications, they were able to share their views on how managers can achieve institutional sustainability.

“From your explanation on what the concept means, I think it’s a follow-up of social sustainability. The only difference is that it involves the collaboration of other external parties in the form of networks, associations, relevant to community radio. Thus, it is still within our mandate in the MDDA to ensure the sustainability of community radio as an institution. Therefore, I can say that institutional sustainability is to achieve a balance in both the internal and external affairs of a community radio station. As such, while managers strive to sort the challenges internally (organizationally), he/she must ensure that the external networks and relationships are in order as well” (*Expert 1, 02 June, 2021*).

“We are an institutional support and advocate to all community radio stations in South Africa, and I can say categorically that institutionally, there are still so many issues that need to be sorted out for community radio. This is in terms of legislations, policies, regulations, governance, and the current challenge of digitization. Thus, while we (NCRF) advocate and lobby for a better version of the aforementioned in favour of community radio, managers should channel their energy and ensure their internal (organizational) affairs are in order” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“As a regulatory body and as an agency that is mandated to set the operational/licensing standards, we ensure we don’t impose any rules on potential/existing community radio broadcasters. Before we set out to publish any law or regulations, we always seek fair hearing. In other words, we call for public hearing of all community broadcasters and other relevant stakeholders and request for their thoughts/suggestions, inputs, reviews before passing or amending any law. It is our way to ensure that all of us agree and are in alignment with whatever rules are being made” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“Despite the push of the digital age, media managers must ensure they are in good standing with agencies and associations –belonging to relevant local networks and agencies to enable them collaborate and advance their mandate” (*Expert 4, 20th June, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Experts on Ways to Achieve Institutional Sustainability for Community Radio Stations.

Discussion of Theme 6 gives a clear picture of expert’s understanding of institutional sustainability. While the concept seems unfamiliar and unpopular to the experts, they were able to respond upon clarification. Hence, there is need to familiarize and capacitate managers on ways to achieve institutional sustainability in the digital age. To the experts, they consider achieving institutional sustainability an indispensable effort in the quest to achieving wholesome sustainability. To do this, managers must ensure they balance both the internal and external activities of their organization to achieve wholesome sustainability.

Main Findings

- i. The experts have recommended to the managers to nurture and maintain an intimate, cordial relationship with their community in order to achieve social sustainability.
- ii. The experts have recommended that managers must ensure they balance both the internal and external activities of their organization to achieve sustainability.

Theme 7: Experts' recommended approaches for community media stations to achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age.

“Financial sustainability cannot be over-emphasized in community radio stations. This is because other kinds of sustainability hinges on financial sustainability. In addition, certain legislations governing community radio stations should be amended or revoked. For instance, the Section 21 law that registers all community radio stations as non-profit organization should be amended because some of the managers do not seek for ways to make their stations sustainable; instead they wait for grants from the MDDA and other donating agencies. This has made much community radio managers financially apathetic to sustaining their stations, which is one of the reason why some stations do not stay on air for too long. On our part however, the financial budget is usually not sufficient to cater to all the community radio stations in the country. Hence, the legislations should be amended in such a way that enables the manager to look for ways to sustain their station, while augmented grants and donations from our agency and other donating would be a plus” (*Expert 1, 02nd June, 2021*).

“I think for community radio to achieve sustainability in the digital age, its governance should be taken seriously. The governing board in a community radio station wields so much power that it is capable to break and make the station. Hence, whatever decisions/ rules they make is capable of affecting the station both positively and negatively. As such, careful consideration should be given to the selection of board members who are passionate about the growth of community radio stations. In most cases, the reality is that because of the influence and power each member wields, they usually do not respect managerial/professional boundaries. They usually extend such influence to control the affairs of the managers and other staff members, especially if the manager was not recruited the right way. Thus, effort should be made to ensure that capable, experienced and passionate governing board members are put to govern the affairs of community radio stations” (*Expert 2, 09th June, 2021*).

“Compliance is still the way. I know there are many other commitments for community radio stations in South Africa, but the first step towards sustainability is compliance. Compliance with all operational and licensing procedures with ICASA and with other agencies as well” (*Expert 3, 21st April, 2021*).

“While digitization is still not confirmed, I think community radio stations will do themselves a lot of good by acquiring and integrating some digital media technologies into the programming and administration of their stations. This will enable them to be competitive and produce good content for listeners/audiences who have an abundance of choices” (*Expert 4, 20th June 2021*).

Issues Emerging from Experts on Ways Community Radio Stations Can Achieve Sustainability in the Digital Age.

The discussion in Theme 7 were responses from the experts on ways community radio stations can achieve sustainability, albeit from a personal stance. The points noted were: (i) financial sustainability (ii) governing board (iii) compliance (iv) acquisition and integration of digital communication technologies for media production. While all these issues are valid in achieving organizational sustainability, are they sufficient in achieving wholesome sustainability for community radio stations?

Themes Emerging from the Interview Schedule for the Academia.

The following are the interview questions posed to members of the academia:

1. Academia's familiarity/knowledge of the digital challenges facing community radio stations.
2. Academia's recommended approach in ensuring sustainability for community radio stations in the digital age.
3. Academia's efforts in ensuring the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age.
4. Academia's recommended approach for community radio to achieve financial sustainability.
5. Academia's recommended approach for community radio stations to achieve social sustainability in the digital age.
6. Academia's recommended approach to achieve institutional sustainability for community radio stations in the digital age.
7. Academia's recommended ways for community media stations to achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age.

The responses to the above-mentioned questions have been grouped into themes outlined

below:

Theme 1: Academia's familiarity/knowledge of the digital challenges facing community radio stations.

The academics claim they are aware of the challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age.

“Yes, I am aware of the digital challenges community radio stations are experiencing globally and in South Africa. However, the nature of these digital challenges varies from station to station. It is important to state that these digital challenges have complicated things for the traditional media as many of them do not have the competence and skill to tackle the challenge (*Academic 1, 14th June 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Academics on their Knowledge/Familiarity of Digital Challenges.

The academics claim to be aware of the digital challenges (see Theme 1 under the academic section). However, this is not the same for the managers and experts; as they claim to be unfamiliar with digital challenges (refer to the first Themes in each section). Instead, they seem to be familiar and overwhelmed with organizational challenges. Currently, they seem to be busy dealing with their respective media in-house challenges. Thus, a lot of them are unable to distinguish between digital challenges and organizational challenges.

Theme 2: Academia's recommended approach in ensuring sustainability for community radio stations in the digital age.

The academics stated that there is no standard method in dealing with the digital challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station, hence, there is no consensual/ generally accepted method in addressing the challenge(s) as each station responds differently.

“As stated earlier, there is no one-size fits all kind of approach to dealing with digital challenges in community radio. Note that, these digital challenges do not present themselves in certain form at all time. Thus, the only way is for media managers to know and understand the peculiarity of the challenge they are experiencing in their station and carve out ways to deal with it” (*Academic 2, 25th May, 2021*).

“We would only be able to recommend when we must have been able to sample all community radio stations in South Africa and aggregate our findings. It is only then we would be able to confidently recommend a standard approach in dealing with the challenges. However, based on the peculiarity and nature of these challenges as it varies from station to station, the only current recommendation is for the manager to evolve ways to address the challenges” (*Academic 3, 30th March, 2021*).

Main Findings

- i. Unlike the managers and experts, the academics claim that they are familiar with the challenges of the digital age.
- ii. There is generally no standard method in dealing with the challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station. Hence, there is no generally accepted method in addressing the challenges as each station experiences and responds differently.

Issues Emerging from the Academics on Methods in Dealing with the Digital Challenges.

All of the academics unanimously stated that there is generally no standard method in dealing with the digital challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station, hence, there is no consensual/ generally accepted method in addressing the challenge(s) as each station experiences and reacts to these challenges differently. Hence, managers are advised to carve out ways to handle the challenges. (See Discussion of Theme 2 in the Academic Section).

Theme 3: Academia's efforts in ensuring the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age.

The academics noted that their efforts are mainly prescriptions and recommendations towards the sustainability of community radio stations. This is different from the efforts of the experts and station managers who do the bulk of the work and are at the fore-front of implementing the recommendations.

“In view of the fact that we are restricted in our roles as a media stakeholder and in order not to absolve myself of the responsibility that comes with it, it is expedient to give scholarly recommendations to all stakeholders (managers and experts inclusive) on ways to ensure the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age. First, in view of the digital age, which to some managers are an unfamiliar and uncharted terrain, there is need for consistent training/capacitation of community radio managers' in order to familiarize and empower them on how to navigate their organization in this digital age. They need to be taught how to position, present and market their station in the sea of alternative media counterparts. There is need for deliberate and informed digital skills acquisition for the manager and the experts as well. This is not about handling all the station's social media sites alone, it is about the acquisition of digital skills in local content production, programming, marketing, etc. It is only then we can say we are on the path to sustainability” (*Academic 2, 25th May, 2021*).

“While our efforts are to recommend sustainable approaches to achieving community radio sustainability, managers must learn to leverage on the social aspects of the medium and

cultivate mutually beneficial community relations. Particularly in this digital age and in light of this pandemic, social networking and participation with their community is sacrosanct” (*Academic 1, 14th June, 2021*).

“If there is anything community radio stations can do to remain sustainable, it is to leverage on their peculiar advantage which is their “localness”. Many community radio stations tend to pattern and follow the way of the commercial radio stations who are well-resourced, forgetting that they can as well wield that “local advantage” to their benefit. That is the only thing that can keep them sustainable and competitive. They should focus on promoting local contents and programmes, cultures/traditions, local sports, and community service. (*Academic 3, 30th March, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Academics on their Efforts in Ensuring the Sustainability of Community Radio Stations in the Digital Age.

The academics noted that their efforts are largely prescriptions and recommendations towards the health of community radio stations in the digital age. However, they further highlighted some efforts, which the experts and other supporting agencies should assist the managers with, amongst others. They are:

- i. consistent training/capacitation of community radio managers with digital skills in order to familiarize and empower them on how to navigate their organization in this digital age.
- ii. community radio managers must leverage on the social aspects of the medium and cultivate mutually beneficial community relations (social capital).
- iii. community radio managers must harness and utilize their peculiar advantage which is their “localness” and focus on promoting local contents and programs, cultures/traditions, local sports, and community service.

While the above-mentioned are valid and appropriate measures to deal with the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations, are these methods enough to ensure the sustainability of community radio in the face of these pressing digital challenges?

Theme 4: Academia’s recommended approaches for community radio to achieve financial sustainability.

As earlier mentioned, all of the assertions of the academics are mainly prescriptions and recommendations based on their areas of research expertise and/academic knowledge/experience. However, station managers have been advised to explore and seek for ways to augment the station’s finances. They further noted that in this era of digitalization where other funding opportunities may be opening up via new technology platforms, the

management of community radio stations may need to demonstrate strong entrepreneurial abilities by considering alternative funding sources such as crowdfunding and the prudent management of existing funds to reduce the increasing costs associated with keeping the radio stations in business.

“Statutorily, the bulk of finance for community radio stations comes from donations and grants. However, station managers are encouraged to explore the different funding opportunities/resource available on the internet. This is needed to augment the station’s income and ensure its financial sustainability. There are a lot of opportunities on the internet and station managers will do well to leverage on them” (*Academic 1, 14th June, 2021*).

“Aids and grants will never be enough for community radio stations and I know that the meagre amount they generate through jingles and advertisements cannot cater to the daily expenses of the station. Thus, as a way to demonstrate their entrepreneurial capability, managers should create or invest in local businesses and investments that will yield returns to the station” (*Academic 2, 25th May, 2021*).

“I would say that in all of this, prudence of the available resources is key. Money is never enough to do anything these days, hence the manager must judiciously utilize the available resources in his reach. Efficient financial allocation, disbursement, and management to the needs of the station are key in achieving financial sustainability” (*Academic 3, 30th March, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Academia on Methods in Achieving Financial Sustainability.

The academics have suggested three methods to achieving financial sustainability in this digital age, and they are:

- i. Exploring, leveraging and harnessing on the different funding opportunities/resources available on the internet.
- ii. Managers should create or invest in local businesses and investments that will yield returns to the radio station.
- iii. Judicious and prudent management of the station’s available resources.

While the experts shared in the same thoughts regarding the first two methods as the academics, the station managers who are the primary executors have no clear-cut approach in achieving financial sustainability, as the stations are all heavily reliant on grants and donations.

Main Findings

1. The following are the efforts of the academics in ensuring the sustainability of community stations in the digital age.

- i. consistent training/capacitation of community radio managers with digital skills in order to familiarize and empower them on how to navigate their organization in this digital age.
- ii. community radio managers must leverage on the social aspects of the medium and cultivate mutually beneficial community relations (social capital).
- iii. community radio managers must harness and utilize their peculiar advantage which is their “localness” and focus on promoting local contents and programs, cultures/traditions, local sports, and community service.

2. The following are the recommendations from academics for community radio to achieve financial sustainability:

- exploring, leveraging and harnessing on the different funding opportunities/resources available on the internet.
- managers should create or invest in local businesses and investments that will yield returns to the radio station.
- judicious and prudent management of the station’s available resources.

Theme 5: Academia’s recommended approaches for community radio stations to achieve social sustainability in the digital age.

The academics highlighted the importance of social sustainability. They described it as the core of community radio and have identified it as the essential and an indispensable factor in achieving wholesome sustainability in the digital age. It has also been identified as one of the guaranteed way in achieving all other kinds of sustainability.

“The mandate and mission of community radio entrenches its communality, hence for community radio to achieve social sustainability in this digital age, there is need for a deliberate involvement, participation, and prioritization of the community in the operation and management of the station” (*Academic 3, 30th March, 2021*).

“Leveraging and harnessing local content is another veritable way managers can achieve social sustainability. Apart from sourcing and utilizing local talents in content production, this would also serve as a way to generate revenue into the station” (*Academic 1, 14th June, 2021*).

“Cultivating effective networking and interaction with the community and other relevant local organizations are key to achieving social sustainability. It is the gateway to achieving the other kinds of sustainability as it enhances collaborations, partnerships and opportunities that might lead to mutually benefiting community relations” (*Academic 2, 25th May, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Academics on Methods in Achieving Social Sustainability.

The respondents in this study (managers, experts, and academics) identified the need for social sustainability. While the managers described it as their biggest resource, the experts highlighted it as a gateway through which other kinds of sustainability can be achieved. The academics also extolled its relevance in the quest towards achieving wholesome media sustainability. Thus, from the data gathered as well as the reviewed literature, it is evident that all of the stakeholders - particularly the managers are favorable towards the idea and are socially sustainable to an extent.

Furthermore, social sustainability seems like a panacea in achieving media sustainability in the digital age. While all three main respondents agree to it being an indispensable factor, likely possible questions emerging are: Is social sustainability sufficient in achieving wholesome sustainability? Why has this factor been ignored or perhaps under-utilized particularly by managers? The answers to these questions will form part of the issues to be discussed in Chapter 6 (recommendations) as well as further research studies.

Theme 6: Academia’s recommended approaches to achieve institutional sustainability for community radio stations in the digital age.

To the academics, achieving institutional sustainability requires achieving a balance between the internal and external constituents of the media organization. The academics further advised that managers should ensure that the internal goals are achieved first before focusing on the external. This is to enable them legitimize themselves and be able to function optimally as an organization in the digital age. They further stated that it is imperative for managers to reach a balance between their internal (organizational) goals and their external pursuits.

“Typically, many managers usually pay a lot of attention in achieving their internal organizational goals while neglecting external commitments. However, in order to achieve institutional equilibrium for community radio stations in this digital age, managers’ must give the same amount of commitment/attention to both aspects (internal & external). I would say no aspect should be given more prominence than the other because both are important in achieving institutional sustainability” (*Academic 2, 25th May, 2021*).

Issues Emerging from the Academics on Methods in Achieving Institutional Sustainability.

Though largely unpopular and misconstrued among the managers, the experts and academics seem to be very informed about it. Both experts and academics advised that it is the next factor after social sustainability that managers must strive to achieve in order for their community stations to remain sustainable.

Theme 7: Academia’s recommended ways for community media stations to achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age.

The summary of their responses is: There is no general/standard approach to achieving media sustainability in the digital age. This is because the challenges of digitization differ from station to station and as such, the experiences and reactions to the challenges in each station would be different. Thus, based on each station’s current reality, the community radio manager is expected to develop ways to manage his media organization in the digital age. This submission echoes in the thought of Syrett and Devine (2012) who both noted that there is no single strategy for achieving sustainability. Rather, every company must hone a strategy that is best adapted to their environment and competitive situation and executed using their unique blend of skills and resources. Thus, based on the different realities and experiences of media stations, community stations should hone a strategy peculiar to their station and environment and deploy it to achieve sustainability.

Main Findings

1. The academics have listed the following as methods by which community stations can achieve social sustainability.

- deliberate involvement, participation, and prioritization of the community in the operation and management of the station.
- leveraging and harnessing local content is another veritable way managers can achieve social sustainability.

- cultivating effective networking and interaction with the community and other relevant local organizations are key to achieving social sustainability.

2. The academics recommends that managers' must devote the same amount of commitment/attention to both aspects (internal & external) of their community station. The academics noted that no aspect should be given more prominence than the other because both are important in achieving institutional sustainability.

3. The academics recommends that based on each station's reality, community stations evolve ways to manage their media stations in the digital age.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the presentation and discussion of the data that emerged from the respondents. The responses were divided into themes, and the discussion of themes started with the managers, followed by the experts and then the academia. The essence was to present their responses, review and identify any similarities and disjuncture in their responses, and ultimately answer the research questions.

Findings that arose in the discussions both from the experts and academics highlighted valid methods to achieve community media sustainability in the digital age. However, the summary of the findings highlighted the need for every station to develop ways to manage and sustain their stations in these digital times. This is because the experiences and reactions to these digital challenges varies from station to station, hence there is no standard methods to adopt/recommend to stations.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter interprets and analyses the qualitative research findings on community radio sustainability in the digital age. The purpose is to put these findings into perspective for a broader understanding on how community stations can achieve sustainability for in the digital age. The focus of this study was to examine and interrogate the approaches community radio managers' in the North-West Province have been using to achieve sustainability in the digital age. Hence, data were gotten from the respondents in order to achieve the aim of the study. The respondents include (managers, experts, and academics).

The practical rationale of the study was to propose solutions to the challenges of sustainability in local community media organisations in view of the digital challenges. Hence, theoretically, this study has been able to create/suggest appropriate methods to sustaining local media stations in this challenging times. This aligns with the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm that focuses on constructing social reality within the natural environment of the subject. Thus, for the community radio manager, the effort is to make meaning of the ways they have sought to achieve sustainability amidst the prevailing digital challenges.

Summarily therefore, this chapter seeks to make meaning of the findings within the context of the literature reviewed and through the guidance of the theories underpinning the study-notably the Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC) and the Resilience Theory. This is needed to give meaning and interpretation to the findings to the study. Thus, the whole essence of this chapter is to synthesize the research findings in order to achieve the following research objectives. The following are the summary of the research findings followed by the analysis of the research objectives.

Summary of Research Findings

The study sought to highlight and examine the approaches that community radio managers were using to sustain their media organizations in the digital age. The arguments in this study centred on approaches to make community radio stations sustainable amidst the prevailing challenges of the digital age. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the thematic areas that emerged from the findings of all the respondents which includes (managers, experts, and the academia). They are as follows: Respondent's knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age; Respondent's knowledge/familiarity of the

digital challenges peculiar to their media organization; Respondent's Approaches in Addressing the Challenges of sustainability in the digital age; Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Social sustainability in the digital age; and Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Financial and Institutional sustainability in the digital age. The following discussion is hereby presented along the thematic areas:

Respondent's Knowledge/Familiarity of the Digital Challenges facing Community Radio Stations.

In view of the responses obtained from the stakeholders (managers, experts, and academics) (See the first themes in the Managers, Experts, and Academic section in Chapter Five); it is clear that the respondents (managers, experts and academics) do not deny the existence of digital challenges. However, they are more concerned and familiar with internal (organisational) challenges threatening the sustainability of their media stations.

However, only the academics claim to be familiar with the digital challenges. The managers claim to be unfamiliar and unconcerned with the digital challenges, as there are far more pressing internal (organizational) issues facing their media stations. On the other hand, the experts seem not well versed about the digital challenges (particularly the ones identified by the researcher in the first chapter of this thesis and as empirically confirmed in Chapter 4 of this thesis) and its impacts on community radio stations.

Summarily therefore and from their responses, community radio managers are more concerned with internal(organizational) challenges and have far more pressing organizational challenges that needs to be sorted in contrast to the digital challenges. In view of that, the question to then ask is: Why are community station managers more concerned with internal (organisational) challenges rather than the prevailing digital challenges affecting their media stations as well as other media organizations?

However, the literatures reviewed in Chapter Four (4) of this study established the existence of the challenges of digitization on community radio in South Africa. Thus, the following are some of the impacts of digitization on community radio stations in South Africa, amongst others.

- i. fragmentation of audiences and increased competition for listeners.
- ii. globally, advertising is shifting from traditional media (print, radio and television) to online platforms like Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google.

- iii. undue pressure from government agencies and stakeholders to digitalize. Thus, many community stations feel pushed to move in the direction of technology because of national objectives, rather than being driven by audience needs. This could lead to a disconnect between community stations and their audiences and more needs to be done to help community broadcasters understand why they should go online, beyond the rhetoric of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. (National Association of Broadcasters, NAB, 2017:9)

Furthermore, and from a business management perspective which serves as the theoretical basis of this study, the managers of many small business organisations (community radio) are not technologically savvy and know little about social media (Jones et al, 2014). Thus, the absence/lack of digital knowledge has made many community stations lose revenue, while many station managers have gotten ripped off in a bid to contract the services of a web manager/web developer.

This is as contained in the report by the (National Association of Broadcasters, NAB, 2017:42). The report stated that community radio stations have an engaged audience - as they can hear and feel the pulse of their audience. However, the challenge is that these stations do not know how to monetize their listenership/audience power. While they recognize that they have power, they are unable to translate this power into revenue. Hence, the need for digital media literacy and training for the station manager(s).

Going further, the managers and experts further highlighted the various organisational challenges facing community radio stations in the North-West Province such as governing board interference; inadequate tools/equipment; scarcity of capable/trained talents; and financial constraints in the radio stations. This therefore brings to light the need to understand and differentiate both terms- organizational challenges and digital challenge (which serves as the research interest/ focus of the study). From the responses of the respondents; organizational challenges mean internal challenges- challenges limiting the station from functioning optimally. It could also mean challenges being experienced by managers in the course of discharging their duties. While both definitions aptly define organizational challenges; digital challenges are challenges caused by the entrance and prevalence of new digital communication technologies. Thus, and in order to further substantiate the identity and nature of digital challenges, they have been described as “science-based innovations that have the potential to create a new industry or transform an existing one” (Day & Shoemaker,

2000:2). Thus, it suffices to say that the two main kind of challenges threatening media sustainability in the digital age are: organizational challenges and digital challenges. While the former exists because a media station is primarily a fully-fledged organization, the latter is as a result of the entrance of new digital technologies. Hence, these are the challenges threatening community radio stations in the North-West Province of South Africa. It is this same challenge that has had disruptive, turbulent effect on the media while finally seeking to oust/displace the existing media.

Respondent's Knowledge/Familiarity of the Digital Challenge Peculiar to their radio station.

As stated above, the community radio managers do not deny the existence of digital challenges, however, they are uninterested about the prevailing digital challenges affecting media organisations (their community stations inclusive) (See Theme 1 in the Managers Section in Chapter Five) Instead, they are more concerned and familiar with internal (organisational) challenges threatening the sustainability of their media stations.

Thus, and from the discussions above, it is logically impossible for managers who are uninterested in the prevailing digital challenges to know the kind of digital challenge affecting his radio station. Hence, the need for digital education for the media managers. The need for digital education is important because digital has become the base to which all media business models must, adhere to. Thus, media managers need to better understand technological principles; the full potential of products and digital processes; community and user behaviour; and informational architecture, content management and analytics (Cardoso and Moreno, 2016).

Furthermore, Cardoso and Moreno, (2016) recommends that digital education is primarily necessary to understand the intricate features of these new digital technologies in order to avoid adopting a purely cosmetic approach, which is usually the case when media managers are pressured to implement measures to confront the digital age. According to these authors, it is not just about transitioning and adopting all the social media applications and website readily available on the internet. It requires selective and appropriate use/integration of these new digital technologies.

Furthermore, and in order to assist community managers so as to be able to deal with the digital challenges confronting their organisations; another competence needed on their part is

trend spotting. This means going beyond embracing and adopting every new technology (because they are novel). Rather, the selection and integration of these digital technologies should be evaluated in terms of their ability to support and extend existing or new business models. Thus, for the media manager, an understanding of the socio-technical trends and the intrinsic nature (and benefits) of these new technologies will enable the managers to choose technologies that extend their media business reach; deepen customer engagement; and set a path directly or indirectly towards the generation of revenue streams (ibid: 235). Going further, the next thing right after trend spotting is the ability to practically apply the competence to innovate. This is by bringing those trends together to create new and innovative business models that can compensate for the disruption of current ones (Cardoso and Moreno, 2016). Hence, innovation.

Innovation needs to happen both at the level of products and processes. This thought is further reiterated by (Gallego et al, 2018) who submits that in order for radio not to miss the opportunities the digital ecosystem presents, it needs to adopt a genuine innovation culture. The authors state that this requires a proactive management that will adopt and introduce innovation in its entirety: (a) innovation of product (b) innovation of processes (c) innovation of organization (d) innovation of marketing, and (e) technological innovation. Thus, the question is: Are community empowered to innovate? Do they have the means and resources to innovate with both their products and processes? How can they be empowered to innovate in this digital age?

Respondent's Approaches in Addressing the Challenge of Sustainability in the Digital Age.

The findings from the experts revealed certain methods in addressing the challenge of sustainability such as: proper administration/management of the media station; adequate funding; compliance; and alignment/ integration of digital technologies in the production of media content. While the above factors are valid methods towards achieving media sustainability in the digital age, the latter point (alignment/integration of digital technologies) speaks more to the way in which managers can deal with the challenges of sustainability in this digital age. However, are community radio stations capacitated to afford/ implement this? Furthermore, in light of the digital age and coupled with the challenges the digital age has brought on existing media, are the above-listed factors capable to successfully deal with the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations?

Going further, the managers claim not to have any particular method/approach in addressing the challenge of sustainability because they prioritize and deal with challenges as they come (see Theme 3 in the Managers Section of Chapter Five). On further enquiry, the academics explained that there is generally no standard method in dealing with the digital challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station, hence, there is no consensual/ generally accepted method in addressing the challenge(s) as each station experiences and reacts to these challenges differently.

This thought is further strengthened in the thoughts of (Syrett and Devine, 2012). These authors maintain that there is no single strategy for achieving sustainability. Rather, every organization (media) must carve a strategy that is best adapted to their environment and competitive situation and executed using their unique blend of skills and resources. Hence, managers are advised to carve out ways to handle the challenges of sustainability in their respective stations (See Discussion of Theme 2 in the Academic Section).

Focusing on their peculiar blend of skills and resources, scholars have suggested that in order to achieve long term competitiveness and sustainability in this changing environment, the dynamic capabilities of each organisation (media) must be leveraged upon. This is as espoused in the theoretical framework of the study- the Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC). This concept states that media organisations should focus and harness on those inimitable, difficult-to replicate capabilities in their media organization and use it as competitive advantage to remain sustainable. Thus, what are the dynamic capabilities in community radio? Also, how can these dynamic capabilities be leveraged on to achieve sustainability in the digital age.

Going further, and in the literatures reviewed, many scholars listed various approaches in dealing with the challenge of media sustainability. However, only those of (Graham and Greenhill, (2014) and Zuckerman (2014) capture the essence of this study (local media sustainability). They assert that in order to achieve media sustainability in the digital age, local media firms must continue to experiment with models and products embedded in high content quality and community presence. This requires the stations to focus more on their localness/locality, community factor/strength and other resources, which are peculiar to them as a medium and use it as a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, Zuckerman, (2014) opines that there is need for local news media to better understand the new market ecosystems emerging in the digital age, to build tools and systems

that help communities collect and share information and connect that information to action. He goes further to state that this requires a change in philosophy of the local news media to work closely with communities to understand their needs and strengths, and to develop useful tools together using collaborative design principles.

This thought raises the essence of social sustainability which highlights the importance of the community's participation, decision making, management and technical skills in the sustainability of the station (Dagron, 2005). Thus, and in order to answer the third research objective, two main methods that have been suggested by scholars for local media managers to achieve sustainability are: (i) harnessing their 'localness' (ii) ensuring social sustainability with the community the radio serves.

Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Social Sustainability in the Digital Age.

The findings from the managers established the fact that managers enjoy good amount of social capital from their community. This claim has been duly authenticated by the Radio Assessment Survey (BRC-RAMS Listenership Report; April 2019-March 2020) released by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa. The survey showed that community radio stations in the North-West Province enjoy a relatively good amount of radio listenership. Hence, it suffices to say that community radio stations in the North-West Province have been able to achieve social sustainability.

In addition, both experts and academics consider social sustainability a guaranteed way to achieving media sustainability as it is regarded as the gateway through which other kind of sustainability can be achieved. In view of these, the question is: Why have managers been neglecting or under-utilizing this factor? In view of the fact that they enjoy a relatively good amount of social sustainability, why are they yet to achieve sustainability? In response however, recent literatures show that attaining social sustainability is not enough in achieving media sustainability. Thus, and in order to achieve media sustainability in the digital age, there is need for both financial and institutional sustainability as espoused by (Dagron and Dlamini, 2005).

Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Financial Sustainability in the Digital Age.

Financial sustainability was seemingly the most popular and relatable aspect of the three cardinal aspects of sustainability. This is because the respondents gave a lot of information regarding the financial state of their stations. The findings from the study indicate that

community radio stations in the North-West Province are struggling to achieve financial sustainability as many of the stations rely heavily on grants from the MDDA and other donating agencies. However, as part of ways to address the challenge of financial sustainability, the experts and academics recommended to managers to: (i) apply entrepreneurial and marketing approaches as suggested by (El-ghul, 2014); (ii) leverage and utilize the economic opportunities present on the Internet in augmenting the station's income, amongst other things. In addition, (Jallov and Jannusch, 2014) claim that investing in the community the radio serves is another veritable way for community radio stations to achieve financial sustainability. This same thought is reiterated by Graham and Greenhill, (2014); Zuckerman (2014). Thus, in view of all the methods listed above, are the methods capable of achieving financial sustainability for community radio station? The authors advised community radio stations to focus on their 'locality/localness' and use it as their competitive advantage. In other words, community radio stations need strong community ownership that grows out of community participation and engagement in the radio; content that is relevant; and addressing issues of importance to the lives of the people (Jallov, 2012). This again raises the essence of social sustainability.

Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Institutional Sustainability in the Digital Age.

The findings from the managers and experts indicate that the term 'institutional sustainability' is an unfamiliar term as they were unable to give responses at first. However, upon further clarifications, they were able to give answers. The managers think institutional sustainability starts and ends with obtaining a broadcast license and fulfilling all the regulatory obligations that comes with it. While the experts understand it to mean achieving a balance between the internal and external constituents of the media organisation. However, in view of the digital age, how can managers achieve institutional sustainability in their respective organisations?

(Kruger et al, 2013) states that the approach to achieving institutional sustainability include clear set of principles and policy, strong leadership and transparency. This is needed to maintain productive relationship with the media institution as well as with other interest group and partners. An institutionally sustainable community radio encourages participatory decision making processes, transparency and transfer of knowledge to those with less experience in broadcasting. The interaction between media's institutional capabilities and functioning socio-political environments is crucial to sustainable media landscapes, editorial

independence, and responsible journalism. The main points discussed by Kruger et al, (2013) are participatory decision making process, transparency and interaction between the media institution and the socio-political environments. This again highlights the important of social/participatory sustainability. Thus, it suffices to say that social sustainability is a requisite to achieving media sustainability in the digital age.

Analysis of the Research Objectives

The research objectives are:

- i. To identify the challenges facing/threatening the sustainability of community radio stations in the North-West Province in this digital-turbulent time.
- iii. To interrogate methods community radio stations are employing to address the challenges of sustainability in the digital age.
- iii. To propose appropriate ways/methods for the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age.
- iv. To establish theories that explains ways by which local media organizations (community radio) can achieve sustainability in the digital age.

The first research objective was achieved using the qualitative data obtained from the respondents (managers, experts, and academia). The responses were grouped into themes which includes: (i) Managers knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age; (ii) Managers knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges peculiar to their media organization; (iii) Experts knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age; and (iv) Academics knowledge/familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age.

Thus, while all the respondents do not deny the existence of digital challenges, only the academics showed knowledge /familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations. The experts were unable to categorically identify the digital challenges, while the managers claim to be unfamiliar with the digital challenges as they seem to be more concerned and familiar with internal (organizational) challenges. Furthermore, and upon further investigation, the researcher discovered that there are no scholarly research literatures bordering on media/media management in the province. Hence the knowledge gap.

The second research objective was achieved using the combination of the qualitative data obtained from the respondents (managers, experts, and academia) as well as the literature review. This is because the second objective sought to interrogate the methods community radio stations are using to address the challenges of sustainability in the digital age. Thus, the responses were grouped into themes which includes: (i) Managers' Approaches in addressing the Challenge of sustainability in the digital age (ii) Expert's Approaches in addressing the Challenge of sustainability in the digital age (iii) Academics Approaches in addressing the Challenge of sustainability in the digital age.

The literature reviewed from both local and international texts suggests certain approaches media organisations can use in addressing the challenge of sustainability. However, much of the findings of the research do not apply to the context of smaller media markets like community radio. Thus is because much of the literatures focuses on the large media organisations. Thus, there are insufficient literature that highlights methods/approaches by which local media station/ managers can achieve sustainability in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Hence, the knowledge gap. Thus, the challenge is to investigate and establish the approaches local media managers are attempting to achieve sustainability in their media firms in this digital age.

The third research objective was achieved using the qualitative data obtained from the respondents (managers, experts, and academia) and the literature texts. The responses were grouped into themes which includes: (i) Managers' Recommended Approaches in Achieving Media sustainability in the digital age (ii) Experts' Recommended Approaches in Achieving Media sustainability in the digital age (iii) Academics Recommended Approaches in Achieving Media Sustainability in the Digital Age.

The literature reviewed from both local and international texts suggests certain approaches media organizations can use in achieving sustainability. However, those approaches do not apply to local media organizations (community radio). Hence, there is no standard/consensual approach in achieving media sustainability. This is because media firms experience and reacts to the challenges of digitization differently. However, from the theoretical framework guiding this study, the theory recommends that in order for local media organisations to remain viable and sustainable in this digital age, they must leverage on their dynamic capabilities (localness). Thus, what are the dynamic capabilities in community radio? How can they be leveraged on to achieve sustainability in this digital age?

Dynamic capabilities are defined as the capabilities with which organisations constantly integrate, reconfigure, renew and recreate its resources and capabilities and, most importantly, upgrade and reconstruct its core capabilities in response to the changing environment to attain and sustain competitive advantage (Helfat and Martin, 2015). An investigation into these dynamic capabilities is crucial in understanding what approaches station managers in the North-West are currently using to achieving sustainability in their respective media firms. Also, the Dynamic Capability Concept is instructive – as it stresses the kind of capabilities station managers need to leverage on to achieve all-round sustainability in their respective media firm.

Furthermore, and in view of the fact that this study seeks to interrogate ways in which community station managers are managing their stations in this digital age; further information was sought from the respondents (managers, experts, and academics) using qualitative data in a bid to achieve the research objective. Thus, their responses were further grouped into themes which includes: (i) Managers' Approaches in achieving financial, social and institutional) sustainability in the Digital Age; (ii) Experts Approaches in achieving (financial, social, and institutional) sustainability in the Digital Age (iii) Academics Approaches in achieving (financial, social, and institutional) sustainability in the Digital Age.

The fourth research objective was achieved using the theoretical framework guiding the study. The main theoretical theory guiding the study was the Dynamic Capability Concept. It is a school of thought under the strategic management theory that explains methods/approaches by which media organizations (community radio) can remain viable and sustainable in the digital age. The theory recommends for media organizations (community radio) to focus and dwell on its dynamic capabilities to increase their competitive edge and achieve long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

Inasmuch as the study has outlined different valid ways to achieve media sustainability in the digital age, the bulk of the work still lies with managers. Thus, if managers are to achieve wholesome sustainability (financial, social, and institutional) in this digital-turbulent times, they must leverage on their dynamic capabilities in order to remain sustainable. In context, this means community radio stations in the North-West Province must embrace and harness their locality/localness to achieve competitiveness and sustainability. However, seeing that many of the community station managers in the North-West Province are

uninterested/unfamiliar with the challenges of the digital age, and do not consider digital challenges worthy of their attention in the scheme of pressing organizational(internal) challenges; there is need for digital education/digital media literacy for the community station manager as it will teach and equip the community manager on how to navigate his media station in this digital-turbulent time. It will also assist the managers to spot and identify the new challenges brought about by the digital age (especially how the challenges impact his/her own media organisation) and enable them develop responses to the challenges.

Finally, and according to Dagrón (2005), media sustainability requires a wholesome approach (financial, social, and institutional). It therefore becomes more imperative and expedient to achieve media sustainability in the digital age because of the challenges that comes with the new digital technologies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study as well as recommendations for further research in this area. The study set out to identify and interrogate the approaches community radio managers had been using to achieve sustainability in this digital age. The first chapter began by giving a general overview of the challenges of digitization on traditional media; its emergence, the current state of the study, and its significance in the world of communication. It went ahead to state and establish the concept of community radio in South Africa and its three cardinal approaches (financial, social, and institutional) in achieving media sustainability. The study finally presented a general orientation of the problem statement, research objectives, and relevance of the study.

Chapter Two reviewed the concept of media sustainability and the approaches media managers have been using to achieve sustainability in the digital age. In a bid to establish this phenomenon empirically, efforts were made to look into other climes (Western media) to identify and explore the approaches the managers are using to achieve sustainability in their media firms in this digital age. It went further to explore the current state of media sustainability in South Africa, and the varied approaches to achieving an all-encompassing sustainability (financial, social, and institutional) for community radio in the digital age.

Chapter Three described the research design, instrument, and methodology. It includes the research process which is made up of the research design- a qualitative type (using the semi-structured kind of interview as instrument); and population of the study (consisting of community radio managers in the North-West Province, the experts, and the academia). The data collection procedure was through interviews and the responses were recorded. The chapter also discussed the theoretical framework that guided the study. The principal theory used in this study was the Dynamic Capability Concept (DCC). The theory highlighted the importance of organizations (media) leveraging on their dynamic capabilities - a necessary capability media managers need to have and deploy in order to achieve media sustainability in the digital age.

Chapters Four and Five covered data presentation and analysis respectively. The analysis was done using thematic analysis. In this chapter, analysis was done using themes that emerged from the interviews, and conclusions were made based on the responses obtained from the study. The data collected was analyzed from an interpretative paradigm whereby reality/meaning was constructed from the submissions of participants in relation to the research question based on their experiences and context. The participants include the managers, experts, and the academia. The presentation of findings was thematically organized under (i) Respondent's Knowledge/Familiarity of the digital challenges facing community radio stations (ii) Respondent's Knowledge/Familiarity of the digital challenge peculiar to their radio station (iii) Respondent's Approaches in Addressing the Challenges of sustainability in the Digital Age (iv) Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Social sustainability in the Digital Age (v) Respondent's Approaches in Achieving Financial sustainability in the Digital Age (vi) Respondent's Approaches to Achieving Institutional sustainability in the Digital Age.

Summary of Research Objectives.

The findings in this study have been presented and discussed in Chapters Five and Six thematically under six main themes. Theme One and Two sought to know whether the respondents were aware and familiar with the digital challenges and the kind of digital challenge affecting their radio stations. The respondents include the (managers, experts as well as the academia). Theme Three sought to know and identify the approaches the respondents have been using to tackle the digital challenges and achieve sustainability. Theme Four dwelt on identifying the approaches the respondents were using to achieve social sustainability; while Theme Five and Six sought to know the approaches the respondents were using to achieve both financial and institutional sustainability respectively.

All of the above-mentioned themes summarizes and aligns with the research objective of the study which is to achieve a wholesome media sustainability.

The aim of Objective One was to identify the challenges facing/threatening the sustainability of community radio stations in the North West Province in this digital-turbulent time. The study established that there are two main kinds of challenges facing community radio stations in the digital age namely: (i) organizational (internal) challenges and (ii) digital challenges. While the former is an existing organizational challenge, the latter is a challenge which emerged as a result of the entrance and prevalence of digital technologies on traditional

media. The latter has therefore been described as “innovations with the capacity to create a new industry or transform an existing one” (Day & Shoemaker, 2000:2). Hence, these are the challenges threatening community radio stations in the North-West Province of South Africa. While the former exists because a media station is primarily a fully-fledged organisation, the latter is as a result of the entrance of new digital technologies. It is this same challenge that has had disruptive, turbulent effect on the media while finally seeking to oust/displace the existing media.

Furthermore, Objective Two sought to identify and interrogate the methods community radio stations are employing to address challenges of sustainability in the digital age. The study established that there is generally no standard method in dealing with the digital challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station, hence, there is no consensual/ generally accepted method in addressing the challenge(s); as each station experiences and reacts to these challenges differently. Essentially therefore, every organization (media inclusive) must carve a strategy that is best adapted to their environment and competitive situation and executed using their unique blend of skills and resources. Hence, media managers are advised to develop ways to handle the challenges of sustainability in their respective stations. Focusing on what to develop, the theoretical section of the study recommends that media organizations should focus and harness those peculiar and difficult- to replicate capabilities(localness) in order to remain sustainable.

For Objective Three, the aim is to propose appropriate methods for the sustainability of community radio in this digital age. The findings in the study indicate that scholars have proposed two main ways to achieve long term competitiveness and sustainability in this changing media environment. First, organizations (media inclusive) must leverage on its dynamic capabilities. Thus, for community radio; this requires the stations to focus more on their localness/locality, community factor/strength and other resources, which are peculiar to them as a medium and use it as a competitive advantage. Secondly, to achieve sustainability, the local news media should work closely with communities to understand their needs and strengths, and to develop useful tools together using collaborative design principles. This speaks to social sustainability- which highlights the importance of the community’s participation, decision making, management and technical skills in the sustainability of the station (Dagron, 2005). Thus, and in order to answer the research objective, two main methods that have been suggested by scholars for local media managers to achieve

sustainability are: (i) harnessing their 'localness' (ii) ensuring social sustainability with the community the radio serves.

Objective Four sought to establish as well as highlight the theoretical framework guiding this study. The main theoretical theory guiding the study was the Dynamic Capability Concept. It is a school of thought under the strategic management theory that explains methods/approaches by which media organizations (community radio) can remain viable and sustainable in the digital age. The theory suggests to media organizations (community radio) to focus and dwell on its dynamic capabilities to increase the competitive edge and achieve long-term sustainability. In this context of this study however, the localness of community radio is its dynamic capabilities, hence, local station managers should leverage on their localness to be sustainable.

Contribution of the Study

The focus of Objective Three serves as the main contribution of this study- which is to suggest appropriate methods by which local media stations can achieve sustainability in the digital age. The findings from both the literature as well as the theoretical aspect recommends that in order for local media stations to achieve sustainability, they must leverage on their dynamic capabilities (localness). For community media managers, this means adoption and integration of local (community) into the structure, governance and administration of the station. The practical implication of this in the community station is that everything must be aligned locally. Thus, from the recruitment of the governing board to the recruitment of the staff/volunteers, the local community must be involved. Of specific importance is the content programming which must be 100% local. Therefore, and in order to achieve wholesome sustainability of the media station in the digital age - which includes its financial, social, and institutional, the community must be involved.

While community stations in the North-West Province have been able to achieve social sustainability according to the reports published by the Broadcast Research Council (BRC-RAMS), there may be need to ascertain the veracity/practicality of the reports made by the Broadcast Council in the community stations themselves. This might also be an area for further research to investigate the approaches by which media organisations achieve/attain social sustainability in their respective media organizations (community radio). This might take the form of a kind of on-the -spot assessment/evaluation in the media organizations to check whether the stations are socially sustainable or not.

Going further and from the literatures reviewed in Chapter Two of this study; there are no clear-cut methods in achieving sustainability in local media organizations. This is because many of the approaches suggested by scholars to achieve sustainability only speak to large media organizations. Thus, as a result of this shortcoming (knowledge gap) from the literatures on how local media organizations can achieve sustainability in the digital age, this study employed the use of the Dynamic Capabilities Concept (DCC) as a theoretical basis to give meaning and interpretation to the study. Thus, the DCC emphasizes leveraging on the dynamic capabilities of the organization to achieve long-term growth and competitiveness. Contextually therefore, and in order for managers to achieve sustainability in their respective local media organisations, community managers are required to leverage on their “localness/locality” to remain sustainable in the digital age. This involves community radio managers to not only re-configure their existing business models and firms’ resources, but also continuously work/build on its difficult-to replicate capabilities (Schneider, 2013). This idea is further strengthened in the thoughts of Graham and Greenhill, (2014:5). They assert that for the local media firms to survive, “they must continue to experiment with models and products embedded in high content quality and community presence”. In other words, they need to focus more on their localness/locality, community factor/strength and other resources, which are peculiar to them as a medium and use it as a competitive advantage. This again emphasizes the need for community stations to be socially sustainable in order to achieve sustainability in the digital age.

Going further, and drawing from the responses/discussions of the experts in Chapter Five of this study, the experts highlighted some ways to tackle the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations which are as follows: (i) proper administration/management of the media station (ii) adequate funding (iii) compliance and (iv) alignment/ integration of digital technologies in the production of media content. While the former three factors are valid methods, the latter point (alignment/integration of digital technologies) speaks more to the way in which managers can deal with the challenges of sustainability in this digital age. Thus, possible questions emerging are: Are community radio stations capacitated to afford/ implement this (in light of their status as non-profit organizations)? Furthermore, in light of the digital age and coupled with the challenges the digital age has brought on existing media, are the above-listed factors capable to successfully deal with the challenges of sustainability in community radio stations?

On the other hand, however, the academics stated that there is generally no standard method in dealing with the digital challenges in community radio. This is because the nature and peculiarity of the challenge varies from station to station, hence, there is no consensual/ generally accepted method in addressing the challenge(s) as each station experiences and reacts to these challenges differently. Hence, managers are advised to carve out ways to handle the challenges (See Discussion of Theme 2 in the Academic Section).

Summarily therefore, and as a way to close the existing knowledge gap and contribute to community media scholarship in the North-West Province; this study recommends to community radio managers in the North-West Province to leverage on their 'localness' in order to be sustainable in the digital age. This is to make managers recognize that they have a sustainable advantage (localness) and encourage them to leverage on that peculiarity to achieve sustainability; rather than seeking to pattern their stations after the business models of the commercial/public broadcasters.

Thus, as a requirement and as part of competencies required of managers to navigate their stations successfully in this digital age, managers must demonstrate competence in these two areas namely: trend spotting and the ability to practically apply the competence to innovate. It is expedient to state that these competence is not about transitioning and adopting all the new digital technologies, social media apps, into the media station. Rather, the selection and integration of these new digital technologies should be evaluated in terms of their ability to support and extend existing or new business models. Thus, for the media manager, an understanding of the socio-technical trends and the intrinsic nature (and benefits) of these technologies will enable the managers to choose technologies that extend their business reach; deepen customer engagement; and set a path directly or indirectly towards the generation of revenue streams.

Knowing fully well that if the dynamic capability (localness) of community radio is leveraged on, it is sufficient to engender its sustainability in this digital time. As a result, this study serves as a template and has set the ground for further research into other kinds of local media organizations (television, print), in other African countries to explore their sustainability approaches in the digital age. With the use of different research methodologies, community radio is capable of generating ground-breaking empirical results in media/media management scholarship. It will also open up new vistas of knowledge needed for advancing and managing the medium in the digital age.

Theoretically, and in line with the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm that focuses on constructing social reality within the natural environment of the subject, this study has been able to establish; thereby contributing new knowledge - by suggesting a novel approach by which local media organizations (community radio) can achieve sustainability in the digital age- which is by leveraging on the medium's dynamic capability (localness). Contextually, the study has established ways in which community radio stations in the North-West Province can achieve sustainability in the digital age. Furthermore, and as a way to contribute to community media/media management scholarship in the South African context, this study debuts as a novel contribution towards the conceptualization of community radio sustainability in the digital age. It sought to highlight the challenges of digitization local media organizations (community radio) are facing in South Africa and in the broader African context- an under-researched area in the emerging literature on media in the digital age.

Summarily therefore, the study has shown that achieving community radio sustainability in the digital age requires leveraging on the medium's dynamic capability. The dual function of community radio both as a medium as well as a tool in the democratization of the airwaves necessitates the need to explore ways to ensure its sustainability especially in these changing times. The study established that community radio managers in the North-West Province are capable of achieving sustainability in their respective media firms if they utilize their social capital. This study therefore paves the way for future research in community radio in order to generate more knowledge about the sustainability of this important medium of communication in the digital age. This study has attempted to contribute both practically and epistemologically along those lines.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this study is to the community station managers in the North-West Province. The study recommends that in order for them to be sustainable in the digital age, they must leverage on their 'localness'. This is to make local media managers recognize that they have a sustainable advantage (localness) and encourage them to leverage on that peculiarity; rather than seeking to pattern their station after the business models of the commercial/public broadcasters.

Leveraging on their localness will enable the management of the local media station to achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age (financial, social, and institutional). First, it will enable the management of the local media station to concentrate and channel all their

resources, talents and efforts on a specific community instead of seeking to attract and retain all the audiences/target market available as the commercial broadcasters would do.

Financially, it will enable the local media station to invest and source for finances within and around the community. Thus, localizing within the community will enable business and enterprises to partner (sponsor), invest, and transact business with the local media station which will in turn benefit and generate revenue to the station. Furthermore, and in terms of creating programme content, localization will assist the community station to formulate/conceptualize programmes/activities tailored to the needs of the people -which represents their shared ideals/values.

Socially, localization will allow for the involvement and inclusion of community members in decision making, management and technical skills of the station for survival.

Institutionally, localization will enable the managers to balance and manage the internal and external affairs of its station. Thus, while community support and participation are critical to the existence and survival of community radio stations, its external networks and alliance is crucial as well. Thus, community radio stations must ensure to draw on localness to build strong partnerships with civil society and development organisations that work in the local community. These partnerships become beneficial to stations for communicating crucial development information to local residents. Ultimately, the effort is to position and give community radio a competitive edge and enable this tier of broadcasting to remain viable in the digital age.

Going further, and in view of the findings from previous chapters as well as the fact that community station managers in the North-West Province are more familiar and concerned with internal (organizational challenges) than with digital challenges; there is need for digital training/education for the managers in order to first acquaint them, and then to assist in order for them to be able to navigate their media station successfully in this digital time.

There is no doubt that digital challenges are a strange and unfamiliar challenge to the media manager, hence, there is need for consistent capacitation of the media managers to acquire relevant digital skills and knowledge in selecting appropriate technologies to boost the growth of the station. Consequently, there is need for relevant media stakeholders to support local media organizations with the requisite knowledge needed to navigate the effect of these challenges in their media station. As a result, further studies are needed focusing on how

stakeholders (including academia) can support media organisations in navigating the effects and challenges of digitization on the media.

Conclusion

The study examined approaches community radio stations in the North-West Province have employed to sustain themselves in the digital age. From the study, it was evident there is no general approach by which local media organisations can achieve sustainability. This is because these community station experiences and reacts and to digital challenges differently. Hence, drawing from the theoretical recommendations, stations have been advised to leverage on their dynamic capabilities to achieve long-term competitiveness and sustainability in this digital-turbulent times.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused only community radio stations in the North-West Province of South Africa. However, in view of the existence of other kinds of mediums (print, television); another study is needed to fill that gap. Thus, this study cannot serve as a template for other mediums- such as the commercial broadcasting and the print media.

Again, this study did not focus on measuring the impact of the challenges of new digital technologies on community radio stations- which serves as a limitation for this study. The argument is that the impact of digitalization on media (community radio) is evident, hence the effort is to evolve approaches for local media stations to tackle the challenges of digitalization in order to remain sustainable in the digital times. Thus, in line with that and as a way for further research, a comparative study could be done using two mediums (television and print or as the case maybe) in developing African countries. Thus, further studies may attempt to identify whether the impacts of digitalization on the selected mediums are similar /different; and highlight efforts/ measures to make them sustainable.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERVIEW

Thank you for giving your consent to participate in this study. Please read and certify the following:

1. I hereby confirm that I have been duly briefed and informed about the nature and conduct of the study.
2. That I may at any stage withdraw my consent and participation in the study, without any negative consequences for me.
3. That the information provided will be treated as confidential and can only be used for the purposes of this study and for any other related academic activity such as publication of the findings in a scholarly journal.

I declare that I am willing to participate in the study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I, Didunloluwa Tella, hereby attest that the above-named participant has been fully informed about the nature and conduct of the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Interviewer (If Verbal Consent is given)

Signature _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TAPE RECORDING

Thank you for giving your consent to participate in this study. I would like to seek your permission to record the interview so that I can get an accurate account of the interaction. This will assist me to accurately report and write up the interview for the research work.

Please kindly note the following:

1. You are free to decide on whether you want this interview recorded or not.
2. You are also free to request me to stop the recording at any time during the interview, or ask me to switch off the tape recorder for a while if you don't want certain information to be recorded.
3. You are also at liberty to request an erasure of parts of the recorded information.

Would you like us to record the interview?

(If no), I respect your choice, we can now start

(If yes), Kindly sign this form to indicate your consent.

Informed consent for tape recording

The essence and rationale of this interview has been explained to me by the researcher. Thus, I understand that the interview is being recorded to facilitate the writing and reporting of my responses for the purpose of the research work; while ensuring that my confidentiality is guaranteed. I also know that I can opt out of the recording at any time during the interview and as when the need arises. In view of that, I hereby give consent to the recording of the interview.

Participant's Name

Date of Birth (optional)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Interviewer (If verbal consent is given).

Date:

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MANAGERS

1. Are you aware of the challenges facing media organisations because of new ICTs?
2. Are you aware of the kind of challenge facing your radio station and how are you managing it?
3. What methods are you using to address the challenges of sustainability in your radio station?
4. Why is the method suitable/appropriate for dealing with the challenge of sustainability?
5. Which method would you recommend for community radio stations/managers in sustaining their stations in this digital age?
6. How do you go about achieving financial sustainability in your station?
7. How do you go about achieving social sustainability in your community radio station?
8. What do you use in ensuring institutional sustainability in your station?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MEDIA EXPERTS/STAKEHOLDERS OF COMMUNITY BASED MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS.

1. Are you aware of the challenges facing community radio stations because of the presence of new digital communication technologies?
2. What approaches/strategies can community radio stations use in tackling/managing their organisations in the digital age?
3. As media expert/stakeholders, what are your efforts in ensuring the sustainability of community radio in the digital age?
4. In what ways can community radio be positioned to achieve financial sustainability?
5. How can community radio stations achieve social sustainability in the digital age?
6. How can community radio stations achieve institutional sustainability in the digital age?
7. Can you recommend ways in which community media stations can achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ACADEMICS

1. Are you aware of the challenges facing community radio stations as a result of new ICTs?
2. What approaches/strategies can community radio stations use in tackling/managing their organisations to ensure sustainability?
3. As members of the academia, what are your efforts in ensuring the sustainability of community radio stations in the digital age?
4. In what ways can community radio be positioned to achieve financial sustainability?
5. How can community radio stations achieve social sustainability in the digital age?
6. How can community radio stations achieve institutional sustainability in the digital age?
7. Can you recommend ways in which community media stations can achieve wholesome sustainability in the digital age?