

**EXPLORING THE COVERAGE OF POLITICAL  
ISSUES/NEWS IN UKHOZI FM NEWS PROGRAMME,  
*ABASIKI BEBUNDA*, IN JULY 2016.**

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**(211524158)**

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I, Sanele Justice Gamede, declare that the research reported in this thesis, apart from where otherwise stipulated, is my original research; this dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university; and, this thesis does not contain other people's data, graphs or other information, unless acknowledged as being obtained from other persons. This thesis does not have other people's writing, unless directly acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers; where other written sources have been quoted. In the case where someone's work has been used, their words have been re-written, but holds the meaning and is referenced. In the case where other scholar's exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in quotation marks and referenced. I declare that this thesis does not contain text, graphics or tablets copied and pasted.

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## **Abstract**

The study explores the political coverage in the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) weekday news programme, *Abasiki Bebunda*, in July 2016 a month that preceded the 2016 local government elections. The purpose of the research was to answer the following research questions: what political issues/news did *Abasiki Bebunda* cover; to explore transparency of the show in reporting news and biasness towards certain political parties; how far did the show allow public participation during this show; and finally, to find out if the show play its role a news programme, or it has been turned in to a platform from which political parties conducted their public relations campaigns, and used it for their political gain? Conducting the research, the researcher used the show *Abasiki Bebunda* as a case study to explore the political coverage in the programme and to answer the questions outlined above. The data was collected through audio recordings, which were bought from SABC, which contained the recordings of the show throughout July 2016. The methodology employed by the research successfully provided answers to the questions posed.

The study revealed that the show had different themes and different types of news, such as local, national and international news. The research revealed that the show was had a greatly structured, especially because of its timeslot, the late afternoon primetime, which made it very attractive to the listeners. It also revealed that there was more coverage given to the African National Congress (ANC). This indicated that the show covered more ANC related news other political parties, because there were a number of political parties that were not covered in the show, or that received very little coverage. The data revealed that the show allowed public participation and it created an active public sphere in which the public was able to participate during the show. The show was still a vehicle for news reporting, and on balance, it had not been hijacked by political parties although the data reveals more coverage of the ANC.

**Key Words:** *Abasiki Bebunda*, SABC, Ukhozi FM, Radio Bantu, Public Sphere, Content Analysis, ANC.

## **List of Tables and Figures**

### **Tables**

**Table 4.1 - Showing Data Analysis**

**Table 5.1 showing data collected from *Abasiki Bebunda* show July 2016**

### **Figures**

**Figure 5.2 Time allocated to each political party**

**Figure 5.3 indicating the number of political news items per political party**

**Figure 5.4 shows the themes that were mostly covered in July 2016 by the number of days it appeared in the show.**

## **List of Acronyms**

ANC – African National Congress

AU – African Union

BCCSA - The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa

CBS - Columbia Broadcasting System

DA – Democratic Alliance

EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters

HSRC - Human Sciences Research Council

ICASA - Independent Communication Authority of South Africa

IEC – Independent Electoral Commission

IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party

NAB – National Association of Broadcasters

NBN - National Broadcasting Network

NFP – National Freedom Party

SABC - South African Broadcasting Corporation

SASSA – South African Social Security Agency

UIB - United Independent Broadcasters

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Tables and Figures</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Acronyms</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter One</b> .....	<b>10</b>
The Purpose of the Study .....	12
Objectives of the Study .....	13
Questions Asked .....	14
Background of the Study.....	15
History of <i>Abasiki Bebunda</i> .....	16
Organization of the dissertation .....	17
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Literature Review .....	18
Introduction .....	18
Radio .....	19
<i>Radio Broadcasting</i> .....	20
<i>The Rise of Radio Networks</i> .....	21
<i>Types of Radio</i> .....	23
Radio in the Digital Age .....	24
Radio in South Africa .....	25
South African Radio News .....	26

Radio Bantu .....	28
Ukhozi FM .....	28
Media Regulation in South Africa .....	30
<i>South African Media Regulation Before 1993</i> .....	30
<i>South African Media Regulation After 1994</i> .....	32
The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) .....	35
Radio Talk show .....	36
<i>Abasiki Bebunda</i> as an Example of a Radio Magazine Programme .....	37
Conclusion .....	38
<b>Chapter Three</b> .....	<b>40</b>
Theoretical Framework: Public Sphere .....	40
Public Sphere Theory .....	40
Historical Background of Public Sphere .....	42
Theorizing Public Sphere .....	43
Descriptive Theorization of Public Sphere .....	45
Normative Theories of Public Sphere .....	45
Shortcomings of Public Sphere Theory .....	46
Media and the Political Public Sphere.....	47
Public Service Broadcasting as an Example of Public Sphere .....	49
Talk Radio as a Way in which Public Service Broadcasting is able to fulfill the Mandate of Public Sphere .....	52
Public Sphere in <i>Abasiki Bebunda</i> .....	53



Conclusion .....	55
<b>Chapter Four .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Research Methodology and Data Collection .....	56
Research Methodology .....	56
Research Design .....	57
Objectives of the Study .....	58
The Qualitative Approach .....	58
<i>Advantages of Qualitative Approach in this Study</i> .....	59
<i>Sampling</i> .....	59
<i>Data Collection Method</i> .....	60
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	61
<i>Content Analysis</i> .....	62
<i>Thematic Analysis</i> .....	62
Research Trustworthiness .....	64
<i>Credibility</i> .....	64
<i>Dependability</i> .....	65
<i>Limitations</i> .....	65
Conclusion .....	65
<b>Chapter Five .....</b>	<b>66</b>
Data Analysis .....	66
Introduction .....	66
A Recap on the Objectives of the Study .....	66

Background on Data Collection .....	67
The Structure of the Show .....	81
Political News Coverage .....	82
Time Allocated Per Political Party .....	86
Content of the Show .....	88
Public Participation .....	90
Conclusion .....	93
<b>Chapter Six .....</b>	<b>95</b>
Conclusion and Recommendation .....	95
Recommendations .....	97
<b>Reference List .....</b>	<b>98</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

A journalist is a person who reports news, someone who provides information that society needs (Knight, 2008:104). Journalists should be people who are honest and fair in gathering, reporting and interpreting information (Knight, 2008:104). They are expected to be ethical and accountable in their reporting. This suggests that journalists should be able to act independently without being influenced by other people or affiliation with organisations such as political parties. Their work dates back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when newspapers were one of the major ways of transmitting news. (Martin and Copeland, 2003:1). Journalistic work has revolved over centuries and they have done a great deal in keeping many societies and the world informed. Today they do more than just reporting news but they enforce accountability in communities and community leaders. They also enforce service delivery and justice through keeping everyone accountable for their actions.

In South Africa and many parts of the world, many people depend on news, such as radio news, reported by journalists. In a report done by the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRCSA) in 2016, over a period of twelve months in the entire major commercial and community radio stations, showed that majority of South Africans listened to radio (BRCSA, 2016).<sup>1</sup> The study revealed that 35.4 million (93% weekly reach) listeners listen anytime in the week and there are 28.9 million listeners (76% daily reach) on an average weekday (BRCSA, 2016).<sup>2</sup> The above figures inspired the researcher to use one of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) most listened isiZulu-language radio station, Ukhozi FM, which constitutes approximately 20% of total weekly listenership (over seven million individual listeners per week) in the country (SAARF, 2016),<sup>3</sup> as a case study to examine the political news coverage in *Abasiki Bebunda*.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.brcsa.org.za/brc-ram-radio-listening-jan-dec-2016/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.brcsa.org.za/brc-ram-radio-listening-jan-dec-2016/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.saarf.co.za/rams-commercial/2016/RAMS%20MAR%202016-Audience%20National.pdf>

## The Aim of the Study

The intention of the current research, as briefly indicated above, is to explore the political issues covered by *Abasiki Bebunda*, a current affairs news show aired by Ukhozi FM. *Abasiki Bebunda* report current affairs and different news. During the show, there are discussions about current issues, either political issues or service delivery issues and the public has input through comments via calls, emails and social media. The study took place between February 2016 to December and the data was collected from the beginning to the end of July 2016.

The key questions of the research were to examine the political issues covered by the show and evaluate the coverage of each of the political parties involved in the then-upcoming elections. The research investigated whether there was evidence of biasness towards certain political parties or the extent in which the show is an instrument of certain political party or parties, trying to use it as a public relations tool. The researcher also examines the extent in which the show is public-centred and how far it serves the public interest, since Ukhozi FM is categorised as being a public broadcaster. As statutory body regulated by the Independent Commission Authority of South Africa (ICASA), the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is expected to have public interest, through providing show such as educational and entertainment (Govenden, 2010:25). Mtimde (2000:733) adds that the once state-owned and controlled public broadcaster, the SABC now has a bigger directive of addressing the needs of all South Africans. Ukhozi FM, a radio station under the SABC, has been classified as a public radio station as stipulated in the Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999<sup>4</sup>, and it is expected that the news programme should report fairly and unbiased to any political party and ensures democracy (Zikalala 2005:2).

The researcher reports on previous research undertaken to account for the transparency and changes on radio news reporting in the post-apartheid era. This is because under the apartheid government prior to 1994, the SABC was an important part of the then-government's propaganda resource. However, the SABC underwent a process of 'transformation', highlighted by scholars such as Tomaselli; Berger; Teer-Tomaselli; Lekgoathi; Louw and Malton, in order to better reflect and inform the South Africa public as a whole. Berger (2000:96) emphasised the

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<http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/WPFD2009/pdf/South%20African%20Broadcasting%20Act%20of%201999.pdf>

change of ownership, staffing, conceptions of the political role of journalism, media content and the audiences. The most important alterations were the gradual easing of government control and its abolition in the interim constitution. In spite of numerous government censorship under apartheid, however, South Africans had received news reports through several publications and broadcasts. Comparing the media, especially radio, today and under the apartheid government, there were many laws and censorship which had caused limits on the media (Berger 2000:95). Therefore it is necessary to examine the effectiveness and existence of the changes argued by Berger (2000) on how journalist report news today.

The researcher used Ukhozi FM as a case study because of its listenership that is over seven million (SAARF 2016),<sup>2</sup> which is one indication that more people are listening to radio and Ukhozi FM. In an article written by the *City Press* (2015)<sup>5</sup> radio sets in South Africa were estimated to 15.4 million. According to *City Press* (2015)<sup>3</sup> due to the affordability of radio, being portable and that radio does not need people to be literate, it has been the most used form of media in South Africa, reaching beyond South African borders. People living in deep poor and most remote rural areas are able to listen to radio news, especially to Ukhozi FM since it's a national radio station. The choice of Ukhozi FM is also influence by the accessibility of the radio station, since the researcher reside in Kwa-Zulu Natal in Durban.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research explores the political news/issues covered and discussed in *Abasiki Bebunda*. The study's interest is to examine the coverage of political issues in the show and determine whether the news contains biases towards particular political parties. The statistics of the number of radio sets provided by *City Press* (2015)<sup>6</sup> suggest that there are many people in South Africa who depend on radio news in order for them to know what is happening around their communities, provinces and across the country. Ukhozi FM on its own has a listenership of over seven million listeners, calculated over a period of a week (SAARF 2015).<sup>2</sup> The high number of listeners can be, including other indications, an indication that people in South Africa highly depend on radio and radio news. Therefore, it is empirical for journalist working for such big radio station to report fairly, without being bias.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/SA-radio-by-numbers-20150429>

## Questions Asked

The study aims to present findings that will address the following research questions:

1. What political issues does *Abasiki Bebunda* cover?
  - 1.1 Are they local/international political issues?
2. To examine the show's transparency in reporting political related news.
3. In what ways (if any) does the show still serve its purpose of reporting news show or it has become a platform where political parties conduct their public relations?
4. In what way, (if any) does the show allow participation of the public?
  - 4.1 To what extent does the public influence the topics or issues discussed during the show?

## Background of the Study

In 2015 a weekly online University of KwaZulu-Natal student publication, *The Howard Press*, attracted many criticisms from student, especially politically affiliated students. They used the publication's social media accounts, such as Facebook and Twitter, to voice out their opinions on the unreliability of South African journalists. Since their inception of tabloids in 2001, the work of many South African journalists have been under constant and often bitter criticism from many commentators. The bulk of the criticism can be grouped into two main categories, namely the supposed low quality of journalism practised by many journalist, and concerns about the lack of ethical standards guiding the actions, especially those of tabloid journalists (*Rhodes Journalism Review*, 2005).<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars agree that journalists in South Africa, in both broadcast and print media, have been criticised by both political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and other commentators for being biased in their journalistic work of being watchdogs (De Beer *et al* 2016:45). Some public commentators and political analyst have concluded that the biggest problem with the South African media and its journalist is trying to fulfill the role of being watchdogs of the public and having too much opinion in their reporting (De Beer *et al* 2016: 38). A study of political journalists in South Africa found that “journalists saw their role as a type of political opposition to the government, in the absence of a strong and viable opposition party to

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr\\_no25/danger\\_to\\_journalism.pdf](http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr_no25/danger_to_journalism.pdf)

challenge the ANC's dominance" (Wasserman 2010:578). The tension between the ANC and journalist in many occasions suggest that South African journalists has failed to only assume the job of being watchdogs, their reporting concludes that they have affiliations with political parties (De Beer *et al* 2016:38). As a result, their reporting is questionable, which can result in lack of trust from the public. They have been accused of having too much opinion in their reports (Reid 2014)<sup>7</sup>.

The researcher in this dissertation used *Abasiki Bebunda*, a news show on Ukhozi FM, as a case study to examine how journalist in SABC report news, especially political news. The show is a product of SABC news, produced by a team of Ukhozi FM news producers using news gathered by mainly SABC journalists/reporters. Other sources of news and headlines for the show are drawn from trending issues or news from newspapers, social media and events that are happening in and outside the country, such as political conferences, political debates, political party scandals and crime. It is presented mostly by Mr. Bongani Mavuso and Mr. Tusokwakhe Mhlaba. The show broadcast from Ukhozi FM studio situated in Durban in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province. However, sometimes the show is hosted in the Johannesburg studio. There are times when the show is aired outside both studios but produced at Ukhozi FM. This normally happens when there are events that need a live feed, such as summits, parliamentary discussions, political debates or the president's speech.

The target audience of the show is everyone who listens to Ukhozi FM. Today the audience is very diverse since the station has None-isiZulu speaking listeners as well. The audience contributes through comments on twitter, by calling during the show, through emails and comments on the show's Facebook page. Listeners can initiate topics that can be discussed in the show through social media. Through social media the public has influence towards the show because they can make a certain issue trend, prompting the producers to include it amongst the topics to be discussed. The show presents diverse type of stories, from political issues, sports, development, government issues, crime, to mention but a few.

The study is unique because there is no recent research on SABC radio shows, particularly *Abasiki Bebunda*, and while there are few on Ukhozi FM, they do not specifically focus on a

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-04-24-analysis-south-african-media-on-world-press-freedom-day-2014/#.VvEVgnoZJ04>

news show within the SABC radio stations. Various scholars such as Richard Collins (1992) Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (1995), Slum Mpopfu, Susan Manhando and Keyan Tomaselli (2000), Daan Van Vuuren (2004), and Thokozani Mhlambi (2008) have variously examined the SABC and policies within the organization, or its transformation before and after 1993. There are few recent studies done, recently, which examine the content of shows within radio stations, especially those of the SABC. There are also few research studies unpacking the question of journalist's supposed biasness, especially within the SABC. The researcher finds the study important to the SABC and Ukhozi FM, because it can be used as a form of feedback about the show, and the recommendations deduced from the findings may contribute to the future direction of the show.

### **History of *Abasiki Bebunda***

*Abasiki Bebunda* is a news current affairs programme on Ukhozi FM, broadcasting on Monday to Friday between 18:00-19:00 (Ukhozi FM website).<sup>8</sup> The show dates back to *Radio Bantu* and *Radio Zulu*. *Abasiki* means 'cutters' and *Ibunda* means an African grass (Ukhozi FM website). *Abasiki Bebunda* was a group of African woman who travelled long distances from their villages to cut *Ibunda*, the grass, in other villages. Whilst they were cutting and collecting *Ibunda* they also collected news from distant villages told by other woman and recounted them when they got back into their own villages (Ukhozi FM website). Many people started believing their stories, even though they were uncertain on how true they were. These women became popularly known for their stories and people waited for them to come back with their stories every time they were away to cut *Ibunda* (Ukhozi FM website).

The name of the show, *Abasiki Bebunda*, came to existence from the characteristics of this group of woman. Journalists are doing exactly as the woman did in their communities, gathering and reporting news back to people. The SABC journalists and reporters work hard and travel long distances to gather news and come back to report through all the SABC outlets, including that of Ukhozi FM current affairs shows *Abasiki Bebunda*, *Ezanamuhla*, *Ezangempelasondo* and *Ezisematheni*. Without journalists and reporters the public would not be able to know what is happening around them. Even though citizen journalism is playing a role in reporting news through social media, but it can't outweigh the work done by journalists and reporters through

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ukhozifm.co.za/sabc/home/ukhozifm/shows/details?id=5f987e0c-fc66-4aba-894f-00f5fd156998&title=Abasiki+Bebunda>



radio, newspapers and television. Many people who share news on social media, especially twitter and Facebook, rely on verified news from news agencies.

### **Organization of the dissertation**

Chapter one provides the reader with background information on the importance of radio news and the statistics on people listening to radio. It also outlines the justification and objectives of the study and indicates the fundamental research questions of the study.

Chapter two reviews the literature and recording some of the arguments and findings from other scholars on radio, radio in the digital world, history of radio in South Africa, Radio Bantu, Ukhozi FM, media regulations in South Africa, radio talk show formats, South African radio news and *Abasiki Bebunda* as an example of a radio magazine programme. It also discusses the relevance of the above-mentioned points of argument in the study.

Chapter three is the theoretical framework used in the study that assists in making sense of the data collected, and theories employed to analyze the data. The study uses the German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism Jürgen Habermas' theory of public sphere. Habermas (1989) define the public sphere as a realm within social life in which public views can be molded and which are opened to all. The public discussions within the public sphere, according to Habermas, is classless and the connections between active public in the public sphere are formed through a mutual willingness to take part in matters that have a general interest (Susen 2011:43)

Chapter four is devoted to delineating the methodological approach of this study. It sketches a qualitative research approach, indicate data collection methods, the kind of data that was collected, and the sample size. It also gives an account on how the data was analyzed using content analysis.

Chapter five presents the research findings and analysis. The chapter begins with a background outlining the context of the study. It gives a recap on the background of the study, questions to be asked and answered by the study as well as objectives of the study. A presentation of the findings is made which is grouped into themes that emerged from the recordings of the show.

Chapter Six presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

The following chapter outlines the relevant literature review surveyed for the purposes of preparing for the data collection of this dissertation.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This chapter explores scholarly work done by different researchers on radio and radio news. The study, as indicated in chapter one, aims at exploring the political news coverage on Ukhozi FM current affairs news programme *Abasiki Bebunda*, a combination of news, a talk and a magazine radio show. The researcher finds it important to interact with literature from different scholars on the history of radio and radio in South Africa, literature on Radio Bantu and Ukhozi FM. Engaging with literature on Radio Bantu and Ukhozi FM helps in finding the differences, the transformation and the journey between Radio Bantu and Ukhozi FM. The chapter also compares the regulation of radio, especially those under the SABC, before 1993 and the regulation after 1993 in South Africa. Literature on regulation of radio links with the theoretical framework, public sphere, chapter of the study. The public sphere helps in questioning whether the regulations before 1993 and after 1993 allowed the establishment of a public sphere, a platform where individuals can discuss and share common interest in public radio stations. Comparing the regulation of the South African media before and after 1993 will also show transformation within the South African radio, especially on spheres of public participation. The chapter also engaged scholars on talk radio shows and radio magazine in order to establish a better understanding of how talk radio and magazine radio shows operate. This will assist in evaluating the extent in which *Abasiki Bebunda* is in line with what the literature will establish about talk and radio magazine shows. The chapter also explores radio news, especially in South Africa, because radio news forms the integral part of the research.

Different scholars have undertaken much work around radio; they have explored different aspects of radio. Scholars such as O' Sullivan and Lewis (2006) have done research on the future directions for research on radio audiences. Radio has become a vehicle for change, a platform to motivate people, an environment where ordinary citizens can have a voice (Rubin and Step, 2000:636). Rubin and Step (2000) put forward a similar argument to that of Dennis McQuail (2002) on how radio programmes, such as talk shows, play a big role in shaping people's daily

lives and interactive relationships. Such radio shows allow people to shape their own society and be able to influence culture and norms (Rubin and Step, 2000:637). Radio has played, and is still playing, a major role in educating people on different aspects of social and everyday life. Today's radio has educational programmes designed for every age group. Ukhozi FM, for example, has programmes for high school learners and youth empowerment programmes. In an evaluation study of a radio drama about HIV/AIDS in Zambia it was evident that the drama educated people of Zambia, it had a great impact on knowledge and behavior regarding HIV/AIDS related issues amongst Bemba speaking people in Zambia (Yoder et al., 1996:195). There has been a great transition in radio, especially with the advancement of technology and social media. The public, through social media and technology is able to participate in radio shows (Shirky, 2011:28). Today's radio has created a two-way type of communication, through which the public is able to communicate with the presenter and the presenter responds to the listener at the same time. This has been enabled by technology such as telephones, cell phones, emails and social networks (Shirky, 2011).

## **Radio**

The invention of radio was pioneered by Guglielmo Marconi, through the help of notes left by Hienrich Hertz and James Clerk Maxwell (Lule, 2013:254). Lule (2013:254) argues that Guglielmo Marconi is often recognized as the designer of radio, but he used the biography of Hienrich Hertz, who had written and visited experiments on early forms of wireless transmission. He then replicated Hertz's experiments, with success in the ability to send transmissions from one side of his attic to the other (Sturmey, 1958:16). It was through combining the ideas and experiments of other people than starting the invention from scratch (Coe, 1996:4). According to Sturmey (1958:16) "radio is not an entity, a thing in itself; it is simply the use of electromagnetic forces travelling in space".

After Marconi made the wireless technology popular, many people at first regarded it as a way to allow the telegraph to function in areas that could not be connected by cables (Abboo, 2009; Crisell, 1986). In the early days radios were made, as devices, for marine ships to communicate with each other or with land stations. When this device was created the aim was a person to person type of communication and the possibility for broadcasting, sending messages to a large

group of possible listeners wasn't recognized until later in the development of the medium (Coe, 1996:5).

Radio, like any other mode of communication, has distinct characteristics. Andrew Crisell (1986:4) on the book "*Understanding Radio*" revealed the characteristics of radio as a mode of communication where messages can be sent to many receivers at the same time. The relationship between the sender of the message and the receiver is so close, but it is only oral (Crisell, 1986:4). As much as this means of communication enables the sender to send messages to many people beyond the limits of geographical barriers, Crisell (1986:4) critically pointed out that the message received by the receiver can be misunderstood. A miss understanding could be created by language barriers. No matter how good the presenter might be in presenting the show, if the listeners cannot hear what he says they will definitely switch off or tune into another channel. Radio is available in different formats recently (Kivikuru, 2006:12) and it is available even for people in remote areas. "Radio is no doubt the number one mass medium in South Africa. However, there are at least two major types of radio listeners. For most of the adult audience, radio is and has always been the main source for information, while for the youth; it is more a source of entertainment" (Kivikuru 2006:12). Kleinrock and Tobagi (1975) echoed Kivikuru (2006) that radio is considered one of biggest medium and neither newspaper nor television can match with it in terms of its proximity as a purveyor of news and information because of its convenience even in cars, digital devices such as cell phones.

### ***Radio Broadcasting***

What strikes everyone, broadcasters and listeners alike, as significant about radio is that it is a blind medium. We cannot see its messages, they consist of noise and silence, it is from the sole fact of its blindness that all radio's other distinctive qualities and the way in which the audience us it. (Crisell, 1986:3).

Radio broadcasting is not something new, as mentioned above, it dates back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Marconi in 1895 first started broadcasting radio transmission using a wireless telegraphy (Lule, 2013). Radio in simple terms is communication using radio waves (Lule, 2013), it is the same radio waves that are used in telephones and television. As mentioned above, the invention of radio was solely aimed at person to person communication, but through the advancement of technology radio broadcast to a larger audience was achieved (Sterling and Kittross, 2001: 447). According to Lule (2013:256) wireless technology made today's radio

possible. The use of radio for news, music, programmes such as church sermons and weather reports that is currently contained in today's radio is not something new. In the early 1880s people depended on radio to transmit news reports and other programmes such as stories (Lule, 2013:272).

Mass media such as newspapers had been around for years before the existence of radio. In fact, radio was initially considered a kind of disembodied newspaper. Although this idea gave early proponents a useful, familiar way to think about radio, it underestimated radio's power as a medium. Newspapers had the potential to reach a wide audience, but radio had the potential to reach almost everyone. Neither illiteracy nor even a busy schedule impeded radio's success one could now perform an activity and listen to the radio at the same time. This unprecedented reach made radio an instrument of social cohesion as it brought together members of different classes and backgrounds to experience the world as a nation. (Lule 2013:272).

The technology required to build a radio transmitter and receiver became easy, and the knowledge to build such devices quickly got to the public. Amateur radio operators quickly crowded the airwaves, broadcasting messages to anyone within range was developed and people were able to listen to radio anywhere (Lule, 2013:256).

Radio news transmissions and as early as 1880s is a significant indication that radio news programmes have been an important aspect of many people's lives. Programmes such as *Abasiki Bebunda* carry on this tradition. The dependence of the public on radio, reporting news and other programmes, suggest a great need for one to conduct a study such as this one. The evidence of existence of radio and audience from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is importance to this study because there has been much transformation from the way news was reported back in the 1800s compared to today. Decades ago journalists waited for the news bulletin in order for them to report news. The same thing applied to the public, they had to wait too. Today journalists upload news on the Internet and social media where ever they are and whenever they can. The public do not need to rely on radio bulletins or a newspaper the next day. Therefore, it is important for one to enquire into the changes and examine the transformation that has occurred and its implications towards radio news and journalists.

### ***The Rise of Radio Networks***

After radio has shown its potential from being a person-to-person way of communication, many business people and governments saw a potential of using radio profitably. This profit potential

gave the rise in radio networks (Sterling and Kittross, 2001:77). In 1926 the United States of America's National Broadcasting Network (NBC) was established and groups of stations that carried syndicated network programmes together with a variety of local shows soon formed its own network called Red and Blue networks. Two years after the creation of NBC, the United Independent Broadcasters (UIB) became the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and began competing with the existing Red and Blue networks (Sterling and Kittross, 2001:77). This rise of radio network gave birth to the genre of educational shows and entertainment shows which the current case study on *Abasiki Bebunda* is a contemporary example. Sterling and Kittross (2002:82) claim that although early network programming focused mainly on music, it soon developed to include other programmes such as educational and youth programmes.

Radio networks also gave birth to the introduction of commercial radio (Sterling and Kittross, 2001:104). Today there are commercial radio stations, in South Africa such as Gagasi FM, East Coast Radio, and many more, which are mainly for commercial purposes. Due to the rise of networks in the early 1900s businesses people and many companies saw an opportunity in commercial radio, they started their own commercial radio stations (Weinberger et al., 1994). However, initially stations did not advertise in a way that the modern radio listener would recognize. Early radio advertisements contained only of a normal sales message that was broadcast during business hours, with no direct selling and mention of prices (Sterling and Kittross, 2002). It was considered an unnecessary invasion of privacy, because unlike newspapers, which were bought directly at a newsstand, radios were at home in the presence of the entire family (Sterling & Kittross, 2002). As a result, there could be children listening to an advert of products they should not buy.

However, the rise in mass communication argued by Udry et al (1972) and the social impact of radio brought about, within a few years, the normality of advertising on radio programmes. Advertising agencies even started sponsoring certain radio shows or radio. Ukhozi FM is amongst the radio stations that advertise during their shows. As mentioned above, at first, radio adverts were only aired only during the day, but as economic pressure increased, such as during the Great Depression in the 1930s, local radio stations started to search for new ways of creating revenue, and advertising became a normal part of the radio soundscape (Sterling and Kittross, 2002). Many public radio stations such as Ukhozi FM have adopted the commercialization of

airtime. This has affected many radio programmes because radio stations continue accepting adverts in order for them to create revenues, ignoring the effect on time allocated for a programme. Due to adverts, it is possible for one to get distracted and turn off or switch to another radio station.

### ***Types of Radio***

The transformation of radio from that defined by Crisell (1986:17), which was a way of communication from one point to the other, enabled the different types of radio present today. In South Africa there are mainly three types of radio stations, namely the public, commercial and community radio stations. Public radio station, normally are known as national public radio stations, are radio stations, including television, whose main purpose is to broadcast to the public without making profits (Abboo, 2009). They are normally funded by the state through tax payers money, but they are allowed to make revenues through air sales and hosting events (Brown, 1996). Examples of public broadcasting radio stations in South Africa include Ukhozi FM, Umhlobo Wenene FM, Ligwalagwala FM, and many more. In South Africa, every province has its national radio station, which mostly broadcasts in the dominant language of that particular province.

Commercial radio stations on the other hand are mainly profit driven, and they are not usually owned by the state, they get funding mostly through selling air time and advertisement (Rothenbuhler and McCourt, 1987). However, in South Africa, the Broadcasting Act makes allowances for 'public-commercial' stations that are wholly commercial in nature but remain part of the SABC's portfolio. Radio Metro and 5FM are examples of this genre. Their programming is different from public radio stations, they are not primarily informative, but they are popularly known for playing music (Rothenbuhler and McCourt, 1987). Their broadcasting caters for everyone, but they are not people centered such as public broadcasters.

Community radio stations, also known as rural radio, has been in existence for more than 30 years (Mtimde et al., 1998). They have been known as the voice of the peasants and ordinary citizens, these are radio stations found in communities and broadcast within limited reach (Besette, 2004). They are well known for being able to broadcast for people at the grassroots level and they allow people to participate, discuss matters affecting the community (Besette, 2004).



Commonly, all three of these types of radio stations have news programmes. They are all interested in informing and keeping the public aware about issues or news happening around them. They all have journalists who gather news and report. Some radio stations, such as community radio stations, rely on big radio stations such as Ukhozi FM to report certain news to check to confirm credibility. They have weather and traffic updates after each news bulletin. This put more emphasis on the importance of the study because it is an indication that the news subject is important for research purposes.

### **Radio in the Digital Age**

The rise of technology seems to challenge radio in the modern media landscape (Undurraga, 2016). Technology and the media of public communication dates back and often intertwined (Pavlik, 2012). This has posed a question of whether radio holds any relevance in the digital age. The availability of media outlets on the Internet, smart phones and portable devices has made it almost impossible for one to sit and listen to radio. Scholars such as Russell Winer have echoed Tomas Undurraga (2016) that in the early part of the 21st century, the media landscape has been intensely affected by the introduction of new media, mainly digital media (Winer, 2009:110). Technology has made it easier for people to listen, watch and read news, get updated on issues around them through the Internet and social media. Bosch (2010:266) has argued, differently from Winer (2009), by seeing not only a threat from the rise of technology but view it working in favour of journalists, because it helps them reach bigger and new audiences. Technology has even changed the idea of who practises journalism, as in the case of citizen journalism. People take the role of being journalist today; they report news through social media even before journalists report them. “South African journalists, via community media and sometimes even tabloid newspapers, have long incorporated the idea of civic or community journalism, framing news in a way that facilitates people thinking about solutions, not just problems and conflict” (Bosch, 2010:269).

Technology has a great affect in the level of listenership in many radio stations, but it has reduced the amount of airtime bought by companies for advertising (Winer, 2009). Most radio stations, especially community radios, depends more on money accumulated through selling airtime, it is difficult in the new media age because companies use social media for advertising (Winer, 2009:110).

The rise of technology plays an advantageous role for radio stations and it has helped many journalists' work, either working for radio, newspapers or television, and it has often presented proficient ways for journalists to conduct their job (Pavlik, 2012). This can also be a good opportunity for radio journalists such as those working for SABC because through technology, it is easy for a SABC news reporter to report news anywhere. Through handheld and mobile devices, for instance, journalists are at an advantage and they can report even when they are in through the effects of technology radio is still relevant in the digital age despite the entire rise in new media. According to Tacchi (2000:291) it has become the ultimate media survivor, although it being questioned and doubted. Like many traditional formats from pre-digital days, radio has been able to evolve in the modern media landscape. Radio is still finding its way even when there are questions about its future in the digital age. The interest in radio studies recently, indicated by Tacchi, (2000:290), may be one indication that radio is here to stay. Radio now has, through the Internet, some new delivery platforms. Radio is available in cars, which is perhaps one of the important listening environments because people are always driving or on the road via public transport. It also lives in many offices and homes. Statistics indicate that there are 10 million radios in South Africa, which may be the reason radio station such as Ukhozi FM has more than seven million listeners (*City Press*2015)<sup>6</sup>. Through the aid of podcast radio content can now be saved and consumed by an audience beyond the power of the original signal (Hendy, 2000:219).

Such technology could be the reason radio is still relevant and stable. It has remained a tool, both in Europe and in South Africa, for enhancing public choice, democratic participation and interactivity (Hendy, 2000:218). Political parties continue to use radio for their election campaigns in South Africa and public broadcasters such as Ukhozi FM holds political debates during election campaigns (Southall, 2005). Technology and the Internet makes radio stations, such as Ukhozi FM available online anywhere in the world. Through Technology a loyal listener of a certain show can listen to it even outside South Africa through the Internet. There are cell phone software applications today that give one the opportunity to listen to many radio stations at any given time. The very same cell phones are the same devices that listeners use to comment and participate on radio programmes.

## **Radio in South Africa**

The history of radio in this study gives evidence of where South African radio is coming from, especially the establishment of the SABC. The history of broadcasting in South Africa can be clearly understood when separated by years and events the way they occurred in the broadcasting industry (Horwitz, 2001). The South African Railways in Johannesburg established the first South African radio station in December 29, 1923. The following year the Scientific and Technical Club in Johannesburg occurred. It was the same year that The Cape, Durban Organization and Peninsula Broadcasting Association started a similar service (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008). All the organizations had to function separately because of the limited areas they could cover and they were all frustrated by shortage of funds. As a result the Schlesinger organization, which had permission from the Government, formed the African Broadcasting Company in 1927, which incorporated the three broadcasting organizations (Scannell, 2001). The lack of funding for broadcasting influenced the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, to mandate an inquiry into all parts of broadcasting. Through the inquiry the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was established under Act No. 22 of 1936, in which made an emphasis that broadcasts should also be made in Afrikaans language since all programmes were presented in English (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008). The English and Afrikaans services, currently known as SAFM and Radio Sonder Grense (RSG), were for many years known as Radio South Africa and Radio Suid-Afrika. In 1950, the Springbok Radio was introduced and it became the most popular amongst the SABC's services, but the rise of television in the late 1970's resulted in a huge decline in listenership and the station closed at the end of 1985 (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008).

The rise of television in the 1970 did not kill the sound of radio entirely, South Africa still enjoy the sound of radio, which is available in many parts of the country. It is informative, entertaining, and a vehicle for change and service delivery. People can listen to all three types of radio stations and with the aid of technology and the Internet radio has a potential of reaching millions of South Africans and beyond. It is important to understand the early days of radio news in order to fully understand radio news today. The discussion below brings an understanding of news and radio news, especially in South Africa.

## South African Radio News

Radio news has a long history and scholars such as Andrew Crisell (1994) and Jim Hall (2001) before defining what is radio news they clearly defined the word news first. According to Hall (2001:41) “news is one of the defining institutions of the information society”. Nel (1999) in his book *Writing for the Media in South Africa*, indicates that the word news comes from a Greek word *neos*. The same word “news” in an English version came from the word new. News is the occurrence of events, news is different and they change as new things happen (Nel 2001). Harcup and O’Neill (2001) also argue that news items do not select themselves, although journalist speaks of ‘news’ as if they get to choose themselves. They both agree that news is the occurrence of events, but their difference in their opinion is the coverage of the occurrence of events. In agreement with Harcup and O’Neill (Stuart et al., 1978:53) elaborate on how journalist shape news, they report as if they are reporting the best and important occurred events when there are a lot of events that occur at a particular time. As a result the credibility of many journalists is questionable. The researcher leaves a challenge to other scholars, who are on the same field of research, and finds it very important for them to investigate how journalists shape news for readers, viewers or listeners.

In radio the structure of the time slots given for news heavily influences the selection of news items. Radio stations such as Ukhozi FM read news bulletins every hour, and there are ‘breaking news’ headlines every 30 minutes of each hour from 06h30 – 22h00. ‘Breaking news’ is not a new concept in radio news, it originated from what Schultz (2005) referred as the type of news that comes with alternative programmes that a radio station occasionally produces unscheduled. Radio stations report the occurrence of issues around a particular area or country. Unlike newspapers, radio has the opportunity to report news as they occur during the day, and if a story is breaking news it is made the top story and reported first and other stories reported later (Schultz, 2005).

The nature of radio news broadcasts, according to Barbie Zelizer (2004), vary from as little as a minute to as much as the station's entire schedule might allow and a practical example is SAFM radio that is constituted mainly by news programmes (SA FM Website, 2016).<sup>9</sup> This type of

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.safm.co.za/sabc/home/safm/aboutus>

radio station is devoted to news or talk shows but their content often feature newscasts, or bulletins, that normally occur hourly, which can take up to three and eight minutes in length. They vary, from a mix of local, national and international news (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009). Some talk shows include sport, entertainment, weather and traffic reports, which can also be combined into separate bulletins (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009).

### **Radio Bantu**

After decades of radio broadcast in South Africa a broadcasting service for Africans, or Bantu, was necessary (Hamm, 1991). Broadcasting to Bantu people was then initiated by the Native Affairs Department in 1940, with an aim to broadcast and communicate with Africans people and controlling rumours during the World War II (Hamm, 1991). According to Hamm (1991:148) the broadcasts were not available for everyone, but available mainly for Blacks who had subscribed to radio in the major cities. It was after the end of the World War II that the SABC proposed for radio programming that was inclusive of Black people. Radio today is available to everyone, including people in deep rural areas, who can access this medium even through their cellphones (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Radio Bantu facilitated the communication between Europeans and non-Europeans so that they can understand each other.

It is common cause among all sections of our European community that the Bantu peoples, who constitute four-fifths of the population, are our gravest responsibility. In these critical times it is becoming more urgently necessary every day for European and non-European to understand each other and to remove the difficulties in the way of co-operation. Hamm (1991: 148).

The government at that time realized that the only way to reach Africans, who were not all literate, was through spoken words. According to Hamm (1991:149) it was for that reason that broadcast to Bantu people was established as a national necessity. In 1952, the Rediffusion Service was established; broadcasts were made in three Bantu languages to the townships in Soweto, Johannesburg. A decade later broadcasts were also made in Tswana and North Sotho from Pretoria and in 1963 in isiZulu from Durban, and Xhosa from Grahamstown. Two years later broadcasting in Venda and Tsonga started from studios in Johannesburg and transmitted from stations in the Northern Transvaal province Hamm (1991). Broadcasting for Bantu people was a beginning of a voice for many ordinary Black people. Today there is community radio, which is argued to be a pulpit and a voice to the voiceless (Madamombe, 2005).

## Ukhozi FM

The name Ukhozi FM is relatively new but the radio station dates back to the first Zulu broadcast during the Second World War as mentioned under the history of Radio Bantu above. The radio station is well known for its three minutes news bulletin about the war, a broadcast at the Durban studios by King Edward Masinga who was the first broadcaster to read news (Mhlambi, 2008). These broadcasts were in Afrikaans and English programme. Mhlambi (2008) explains that Mr. Masinga convinced Hugh Tracey, an ethnomusicologist who was based in Durban working for SABC that Zulu people needed to know about the war in a language they understood and Masinga got to interpret the news in IsiZulu. In the 1960's the duration of the Zulu broadcasts became thirty minutes after the creation of the Radio Bantu station. Radio Bantu gave rise to vernacular programmes, which were categorised according to the different language groups in South Africa; thus, the Zulu programme was referred to Radio Zulu. The content on Radio Zulu was the same as it was during the three minute broadcasts, but the apartheid government continued placed restrictions on the content (Seery, 2012).

Today Ukhozi FM is one of the largest radio stations on the planet and the leading in Africa with its high listenership (Ukhozi FM Website).<sup>10</sup> It is a South African radio station, broadcasting nationwide and available for live streaming to the world (Ukhozi FM Website 2016). The station's main studios are in KwaZulu Natal, Durban. As indicated above the station accommodates different people, from young to elderly, in all parts of the country and beyond.

Lethiwe Nkosi (2014), in a study of *Black women in post-apartheid South Africa, Nation building and Radio* argued that the station, Ukhozi FM, was unmatched in its friendliness to its listeners, and that through its' platform it has created a connection with its listeners that has kept them glued to their cultural identity even in a modern world context. This suggests that Ukhozi FM has carried the mandate of being a public broadcaster. "It has been critically applauded for its useful content that is delivered with poise and deftness, affirming the cultural identity of its listeners, and its focuses on edutainment and infotainment as a guiding philosophy" (Nkosi, 2014). Ukhozi FM offers an interactive environment for its listeners, giving them access to news, current affairs, talk shows, music, drama, sport, education, weather and traffic, with much

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ukhozifm.co.za/sabc/home/ukhozifm/aboutus>

emphasis on local content (Ukhozi FM Website).<sup>8</sup> Mainly, the station's priority is to offer a foundation mainly built on uplifting its listeners, giving them power, comfort, escapism, connectedness and most importantly encouraging listeners to observe their culture. Ukhozi FM continues to maintain its number one spot as the country's most loved and listened radio station (Nkosi, 2014:10).

### **Media Regulation in South Africa**

Records of media regulations in South Africa were mostly recorded during the apartheid era (Fokane, 2003). Exploring the South African media regulation before 1993 and after 1993 in this chapter is very important. It provides a clear indication of how the media have been regulated before and after apartheid and how regulations have any effect in the work done by journalists. It also shows the extent in which the media regulations have allowed the public to have a voice and participate in the social and political life of the country. The study uses Ukhozi FM, a public radio, which was and still regulated by the state. Through unpacking the processes of regulation of the media it is easy then for the research to show the effects regulations have in participation of the public. It is useful to the study to find out whether the current ruling party, the ANC, since it has majority seat in the parliament has influence in the policies regulating SABC radio stations that benefit in its coverage.

#### *South African Media Regulation Before 1993*

Before the formation and implementation of the constitutional democracy in South Africa in 1994, broadcasting in the country was mainly regulated by the Broadcasting Act of 1976 (Fokane, 2003). This Act gave the Prime Minister of that time, ultimate control over policy formulation and powers, mainly on regulation and licensing of broadcasters. There was no democracy or power of the majority in policy formulation, shaping the broadcasting future of the country. The apartheid government had control of the regulation of broadcasting (Louw, 1993).

The regulation of the South African media not only applied to broadcasting, but it was also applied to print media. The government prevented anything that was anti-apartheid or critical of government from either aired on radio, published in print media or televised on television. Before it reached the public, all media content was to be checked by agencies of the state such as the Bureau for Information, and when there were irregularities actions were taken (Teer-

Tomaselli 1993). Some publications or newspapers, such as the *Rand Daily Mail*, were suspended and some were banned (Barnett, 1999). During the apartheid regime the content of media was controlled and the voice of the public, especially Black people who constituted the majority, was largely disregarded (Berger, 1999). The work of many journalists was affected; they had little freedom to publish or report news the way they happened, especially when it had negative impact on the apartheid government. Some publications and news outlets were banned up until the end of the apartheid government in 1994 (*The Independent*, 2010).<sup>11</sup> During the 1980s, successive states of emergencies banned many newspapers from reporting negatively about apartheid policies and stories that jeopardized the security of the apartheid regime (Lloyd, 2013). Some newspapers that were banned for six months from publishing and the banning of independent newspapers, such as the *Weekly Mail* in 1988 by the States President P.W Botha, affected freedom of expression of the newspaper and rights of the public (Lloyd, 2013).

In particular, news had little legitimacy, demonizing any opposition to the government as a “terrorist threat,” and discursively connecting the exiled liberation movement, the African National Congress, and its internal supporters as “communists” threatening not only to establish a Marxist state within South Africa, but also as working in concert with other movements internationally. (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005).

The media policies enforced by the apartheid government also had an effect on journalists. The media policy changes made it hard for editors to do their work, and they found it very hard to adapt to the changes introduced by the apartheid regime (Beck, 2013). During the apartheid government, the media functioned with difficulty because they had to be mindful of the law that were designed to make it almost impossible for any media outlet to publish any information without permission or checked by government (Beck, 2013). The country’s security policies prevented the media from publishing or showing the images of most wanted people such as Nelson Mandela and almost all anti-apartheid leaders. Anything that could cause a commotion regarding security issues was banned and many pictures of political leaders and activist, disappeared for a while (Beck, 2013). The media underwent great censorship, which is one of the reasons the researcher finds it important to examine the regulations on media before 1993, especially on radio, in order to be able to evaluate whether there are changes after 1994.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/fw-de-klerk-the-day-i-ended-apartheid-1886128.html#gallery>



The media ownership in South Africa contributed in the censorship of the media and stifled freedom of the press. The majority of the media houses in South Africa, especially print media, were owned by white South Africans and non-South Africans (Tomaselli, 2002). It is the same ownership that has delayed the transformation of the media even after 1994 (Berger, 1999). Even today it is evident that one of the most important factors regarding the role of media in de-racialisation, democratization and socioeconomic transformation concerns ownership and control (Berger, 2000). The ownership of the media during apartheid worked against de-racialization, democratization and socioeconomic transformation of the media, and as a result the media at that time, significantly contributed to the system of racist capitalism, the ideologies of racial oppression and class exploitation (Berger, 2000). Broadcasting prior to 1993 was monopolized by the state, which made it impossible to have radio stations broadcasting with public interest (Berger, 2000).

The way the media was regulated before 1993 indicates that the state broadcasting had no interest in the majority, with no public input. This indicates that the majority of the population had no influence in the content, something that has changed more recently. There was no public participation, which is witnessed today via social media, through emails, guest visits and through phone calls. The media was a tool for propaganda and advancement of the apartheid regime. Its ownership at that time suggests that the Black majority were used for consumerism by white dominated owned media.

#### *South African Media Regulation After 1994*

The end of the apartheid government in South Africa was celebrated not only because it meant the end of oppression, but it also gave voice to ordinary South Africans who were previously denied the opportunity to raise their concerns through the media (Madamombe, 2005). The media experienced many changes after the first democratic elections of 1994 (Barnett, 2004). The media houses were no longer entirely tools for certain groups of people but increasingly, the public had a say on what they consumed via media. The public also contributed on many radio shows and in newspapers through phone-in programmes and letters to the editor. Barnett (2004) argued that as policy formulation and control of the media changed, people were had a say on what was being represented in the media and the majority were represented, democratically, in policy reviews and making of the media. Barnett (2004) further argued that after 1994 there were

variety of programmes, such as educational programmes, youth programmes and children's programme, that were introduced and policies allowed it, which was something not there, especially in Bantu Radio stations, before 1994.

The introduction of new government in 1994 brought great changes in the broadcasting landscape, especially after the South African government established a new broadcasting legislation and amended the Broadcasting Act No. 73 of 1976.<sup>12</sup> The act gave rise to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act No. 153 of 1993<sup>12</sup>, which later became the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA). This statutory body powers' over the regulation and licensing of the broadcasting system, and removed the SABC's *de facto* power to issue licenses to other broadcasters. No longer was the SABC both a player and referee in the regulation of broadcasting. The IBA (and later, ICASA), was charged with defining three classes of broadcasting activities, namely, 'public', commercial' and 'community' broadcasters. The regulator was also mandated to "provide a charter for the South African Broadcasting Corporation Ltd; to establish the Frequency Spectrum Directorate in the Department; to establish the South African Broadcasting Production Advisory Body; and to establish a human resource capacity in policy development" (SABC, 2017).<sup>13</sup>

The object of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (No. 153 of 1993) was to create and develop a broadcasting policy in the Republic for the public interest, and would be able to contribute to democracy, the development of society, gender equality, nation building, provision of education and strengthening the spiritual and moral fibre of society (SABC, 2017).<sup>10</sup> The policy was also expected to ensure, improve and reinforce the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of South Africa.

The policy also spoke to the 'de-regulation' and 're-regulation' of broadcast stations (both television and radio) outside the ambit of the SABC. Some of the SABC's radio stations were sold to private consortia, while other 'greenfield' (i.e. new entity) licences were established (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005). These moves encouraged ownership and control of broadcasting

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<sup>12</sup>

<http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/WPFD2009/pdf/South%20African%20Broadcasting%20Act%20of%201999.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/portal/SABC/SABCROADCASTINGACT>

services through participation by persons from historically disadvantaged groups. The policy was also expected to ensure diversification of news, views and information and provide different entertainment and education programmes (Louw, 1993). The legislature paved for a clear description of roles and responsibilities in relation to policy formulation, regulation and the provision of broadcasting services (Lloyd, 2013). The regulator also devised the basis for future public policy goals such as the migration of broadcasting services from analogue to digital networks and the regulation of converged networks (Lloyd, 2013).

At the time of writing this dissertation, broadcasting in South Africa is now regulated by the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA), after the merger between the IBA and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority in 2000 (Lloyd, 2013). This was established by the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa Act, 2000 No. 13 of 2000.<sup>14</sup> The ICASA shown the interest of the public by giving licenses to more than hundred community radio stations, more than five commercial television channels and more than forty commercial radio stations in 2012 (Saarf, 2012).<sup>15</sup> These radio stations today cover different cities and towns, and most importantly, broadcast in local languages. The regulator has also managed to serve the interest of the public by being independent of political and commercial interests' influence. Lloyd (2013) argued that the role of ICASA is to reinforce the clause in the South African constitution that states that broadcasting must be independently regulated to avoid interference, and to ensure fairness and diverse views. The ICASA Amendment Act No. 3 promulgated in 2006 further amended the regulator's ways of doing things in the broadcasting and media industry (Moyo and Hlongwane, 2009). It is now a tool for a holistic enforcement and compliance of structures to reflect convergence between networks (Moyo and Hlongwane, 2009). The beginning of the ICASA Amendment Act No 3, together with Electronic Communications Act No. 36 of 2005, has amplified ICASA's functions in many areas, such as investigation, inspection, complaints handling, dispute resolution, adjudication, regulation, and conduct of market review studies.

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<http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/WPFD2009/pdf/Independent+Communications+Authority+of+South+Africa+Act,+2000.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.saarf.co.za/rams-technicalreports/technicalreport-2012A/data%20files/Main%20Contents/RAMS%20Tech%20Full%20Report%202012A%2020-24.pdf>

Despite the challenges faced in the broadcasting industry, especially in the SABC, the difference between nature of radio and television, the range of different services, and the formats of shows that were aired before 1994 compared to what is available now is amicable. However, the recent debate on the leadership and management of the SABC in 2016, contested by opposition parties, has created a stir and distrust from the people of South Africa. Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mmusi Maimane, in a debate around the issues of SABC leadership, stipulated that as a political party they are aware of poor management in the SABC and the removal of the, now former, SABC Chief Operations Officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng is a victory to the Democratic Alliance. (*Eyewitness News, 2016*).<sup>16</sup> Comments from the public though social media indicate dissatisfaction about how SABC and its leadership operate. However, there have been great achievements after 1994 within the broadcasting industry in South Africa. Today there is more than just radio but there is a platform where everyone can have a chance to voice out their views.

### **The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA)**

The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) is an Independent Judicial Tribunal which was established in 1993 by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) to regulate broadcasters and deal with complains from the public (BCCSA, 2017).<sup>17</sup> According to the BCCSA's Constitution, "it is a body corporate, capable of suing and being sued in its corporate name, and of performing all such acts as are necessary for or incidental to the carrying out of its objects, and for the performance of its functions and duties under its Constitution" (BCCSA, 2017).<sup>18</sup> The aims and objectives of the BCCSA are to make sure that high standards in broadcasting are adhered to. The commission also ensures that complains are settled against full members of the National Association of Broadcasters.<sup>19</sup>

Through the BCCSA the public is protected from any irregularities of broadcasters. The public can hold accountable any broadcaster, which is a member of the NAB, do not follow the code of conduct of the BCCSA. Ukhozi FM is also a member of the BCCSA<sup>19</sup>, and is regulated by this commission. The BCCSA is very important in the study because it enforces and ensures that Ukhozi FM adheres to the BCCSA code of conduct. The BCCSA ensures that public spheres

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<sup>16</sup> <http://ewn.co.za/2016/12/12/motsoeneng-may-not-hold-any-position-at-sabc-court>

<sup>17</sup> <https://bccsa.co.za/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://bccsa.co.za/bccsa-constitution/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://bccsa.co.za/signatories/>

such as *Abasiki Bebunda* are in line with the code of conduct of the BCCSA and serve the interest of the public.

### **Radio Talk show**

Talk radio is a representation of the public and their opinion; it is a platform from which private citizens can discuss their opinions on social issues (Barker, 2000:151). It is a radio format involving discussions about certain topical issues and consisting almost entirely of original spoken words content (O'Sullivan, 2005:719). Through talk shows people are able to discuss issues affecting their lives. It is a radio platform in which the public have an opportunity to address societal issues. According to Hutchby (1996:486)

In different shows, the space allotted to callers to forward their views is mapped out in different ways. For instance, some shows expressly address themselves to one issue per broadcast and the caller's role is to have a say on that issue while the host acts as a moderator, relating contributions together and drawing out differences and similarities between them.

The most popular talk radio in South Africa is Radio 702, which was established in the early 1980s. This Johannesburg-based radio station started as a music station until 1988 when it moved to a talk radio format (Broadcast Media, 2017).<sup>20</sup> However, there are a number of old and new talk radios in South Africa, which includes Cape Talk, 5FM, Highveld Stereo FM, Algoa FM, East Coast Radio, Good Hope FM. Many South African radios consist of all the formats, from being a music radio, talk radio, news radio and many more. The advancement of technology has allowed radio stations to be inclusive of all different formats. SAFM, for example, is mainly a news radio, but it has educational programmes and it broadcasts beyond just news (SAFM, 2017).<sup>21</sup>

Expressing and debating political issues in radio is not something new. Talk radio dates back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1935 a talk radio show, which was also a national current affairs forum, was the American Town Hall Meeting of the Air which used to broadcast every week (Hilmes, 1997). Talk radio is a format that allows the public to participate and it should not be misunderstood with radio news. It consists of discussions about current affairs issues and in a

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<sup>20</sup> <https://broadcast.media.co.za/talk-radio-702/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.safm.co.za/sabc/home/safm/schedule/details?id=ad60fb9b-be3d-425f-8f1f-2ad25f82774e&title=Morning-Talk>

democratic country such as South Africa, listeners are allowed to participate (Geller, 2012). Today' technology has broken the limits; people do not only call in to the station during the show, but they are able to use social media to engage in the discussions. Usually talk radio programmes are broadcast live; there is the host and sometimes guests in the studio as well as listeners at home. According to Geller (2012), talk radio shows should maximize audience interest and allow the listeners to express themselves freely. The nature of a talk radio, which is also applied by many South African radio stations such as Gagasi FM, Metro FM and Ukhozi FM, generally is organized into segments, depending how long the programme is, with each segment separated by a pause for advertisement. In public radio stations, such as Ukhozi FM and even commercial stations, the presenter normally play music to separate the segments of the programme. Francis Lee (2014), explains that there are variations of talk radio, but they include conservative talk, 'hot talk', liberal talk (increasingly known as progressive talk) and sports talk. In a talk radio show issues that are discussed they also vary from local, national and international issues.

### ***Abasiki Bebunda* as an Example of a Radio Magazine Programme**

A radio magazine programme consists of different items, topics, live shows and pre-recorded shows (Barbour, 2001). Barbour (2000) argues that while a radio magazine programme suggests a mixture, this mixture is not always made up of different topics. It can focus on a special topic or area; for example, politics, crime, development, economics, or football and the mixture will be items related to the same topic. Pennington (2000) echoes Barbour (2001) by suggesting that magazine programmes are a programme/s covering a variety of different items. "Rather like a published magazine, the programme will have longer and shorter pieces, and might include a regular round-up of consumer news, an interview, a discussion, an in-depth feature, a short 'filler' item" (Pennington, 2000: 9). Normally radio magazine is broadcast at a particular time on a particular day of a week or a month (McQuail, 2006). In the light of this definition *Abasiki Bebunda* on Ukhozi FM qualifies as a magazine programme because *Abasiki Bebunda* is broadcast at the same time, Monday to Friday 18:00 – 19:00, excluding weekends. Barbour (2001) and Pennington (2000) argue that there is not huge difference between a radio magazine's format and a talk radio programmes, a radio magazines format includes time for talks,

discussions and interviews. The difference between *Abasiki Bebunda* and other radio magazine shows is that *Abasiki Bebunda* has talks, discussions and interviews on news related issues.

A radio magazine aims to enhance public sphere, a concept that will be explained in detailed in the theoretical framework chapter, because it allows and covers a regular series of current affairs issues and concerns of the public. One of the characteristics of a radio magazine is that it is designed for everyone and mostly it has a broad general appeal. Magazine programmes are either 'live' or 'pre-recorded' broadcasts, although live programmes also contain a number of pre-recorded voices (Pennington, 2000). The duration of a radio magazine programme varies, *Abasiki Bebunda*, for instance, takes only an hour every Monday to Friday. Another characteristic of a radio magazine is that it has a signature tune, which is an attractive piece of music which is played as an intro and during the programme (McQuail, 2006). Magazine programmes are generally broadcast to a specific, but not limited, audience (McQuail, 2006; Barbour, 2001; Pennington, 2000).

McQuail (2006) adds that a magazine programme consist of a name and one or two presenters who direct the whole programme. In the beginning, the titles of the day's programme will be given by the presenters after the signature tune. A good magazine programme is characterized by having a good presenter, someone who is able to present the show to its simplest form so that all types of people can understand (Pennington, 2000). The presenter, according to (Pennington, 2000), should be someone who doesn't patronise listeners and someone who can break down complicated issues into a simple form so that even uneducated people in deep rural areas can be able to understand issues that are discussed in the show. Pennington's (2000) argument indicates that a radio magazine presenter should be someone who is able to articulate fluently with his/her audience and in studio visitors, someone who is able to challenge interviewees' and over contributors' views, if it is necessary, but should not do it with vindictiveness. This type of programme should also put its emphasis to audience or public participation (Lindgren, 2016). The programme should give the audience an opportunity to participate and make them feel involved.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has surveyed the debate amongst scholars on different issues that were indicated above. It has pointed to the important literature that is useful and linked to the subject of the

study. The history of radio, understanding of the invention of radio, and its purpose have been briefly alluded to. Work undertaken by other scholars on radio broadcasting, the rise of radio network reveals a great deal of attention in the area of radio studies. The work by different scholars indicates that the subject being studied in this research is not relatively new. Articles on radio in the digital age showed progress in radio and how the rise in technology has benefited and at the same time crippled the work of radio, especially, journalists within the media industry.

The history of radio in South Africa, Radio Bantu and the history of Ukhozi FM was summarized to provide an understanding of how broadcasting in isiZulu came into being, and the transitions and roles played by radio in the past decades in the black community. It is evident, through work done by scholars such as Teer-Tomaselli (2005), Horwitz (2001), Hamm (1991) and Scannel, (1990) that it has been a long journey for the South African broadcasting industry. The work of these authors brings an understanding of the industry before it is the way it is today. The change in regulation before and after 1993 indicates a huge transformation that has occurred in the media industry and helps in analyzing the extent to which the media is 'free' or is still regulated by few individuals, as it was before 1994. Examining radio news, talk radio and radio magazine was very important since it helps in analyzing whether the news data collected during the programme is aligned to what scholars such as Crisell (1994), Harcup and O'Neill (2001), Barbour (2000), Pennington, (2000), Hilmes, (1997) and Geller, (2012) define as radio news, talk radio shows and radio magazine programmes

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework employed by the study. The researcher finds the public sphere theory relevant theoretical framework to be used as lenses to view the study. It is borrowed because it shows relevance in the study and it illustrates how radio shows, such as *Abasiki Bebunda* create a public sphere platform where the public can engage on societal issues.



## Chapter Three

### Theoretical Framework: Public Sphere

The 'public sphere' is the lens employed to make sense of the key aspects of the current study. The researcher finds it appropriate to use this theory as a theoretical framework for the study since Ukhozi FM is a public broadcaster, and *Abasiki Bebunda* has created a platform in which the public can interact and discuss issues of their interest. As a public broadcaster, Ukhozi FM, is expected to promote and allow public participation. This theory should clearly define how *Abasiki Bebunda* is able to create public sphere for listeners on Ukhozi FM. *Abasiki Bebunda* as a current affair news programme and talk show is also expected to promote public access to the show, and encourage the public to engage with civic, social and political issues. The theory, as a framework through which to understand a particular case study, is expected to examine the extent to which the programme, *Abasiki Bebunda*, is a platform in which democracy and participation are exercised. The public sphere is a theory that helps out today's society to identify the issues of how and the degree in which mass media, especially in the role of journalism, can help citizens learn about the world, discuss how to responses to it and conclude with an informed decisions about what courses of action to adopt.

#### Public Sphere Theory

One of the prominent key theorists in the public sphere theory is the German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism, Jürgen Habermas. He is one of the most influential philosophers in the world, especially in the communication field (Susen 2011). The concept of public sphere, according to Habermas (1989), is a spectrum within social life in which public opinion can be established and made available to all. The discussions within the public sphere is classless and the connections between activists in the public sphere are formed through a mutual willingness to partake in issues that have public interest. Susen (2011) argued that in the public sphere there are open interactions between citizens in the political realm. Habermas (1989) also points out that public sphere and democracy are inseparable; people freely interact with each other publicly.

The public sphere according to (Habermas et al., 1974) is present in everyday discussions in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. In the public body formed, they behave as either professionals or business people uttering in matters of public interest. This public assemblage of individuals to discuss matters of their interest is possible when there is democracy that allows freedom of assemble, freedom of speech and allow public participation (Fraser, 1990). “Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion, that is with the guarantee of freedom of assembly, association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions about matters of general interest” (Habermas et al., 1974:1). In the public sphere, the public is allowed to have critical engagements (Habermas et al., 1974). Manuel Castells (2008), a social theorist and commentator of equal stature to that of Jürgen Habermas, has added that the ‘public sphere’ is a space of communication of ideas and projects in the society that, in most cases, are communicated with an intention to submit them to decision makers in the institutions of the society. The rise of globalization has introduced the level of the global civil society that has made the expressions of values and the interests of a particular society a global interest (Castells, 2008). As a result, the debates formed in public spheres have shifted from the national domain into a global domain. This emphasizes the importance of the public sphere in the society, and its importance and its role in shaping the society. According to Habermas’ contribution to a discourse, as well a theory of law and democracy, the public sphere is a platform for communicating information and points of view. It is for the same reason that Benhabib (1997) argued that the public sphere is an important consideration towards sociopolitical organization because it is an arena where the public come together as citizens and contribute their autonomous views to influence the political institutions of society.

Civil society is the organized expression of these views; and the relationship between the state and civil society is the cornerstone of democracy. Without an effective civil society capable of structuring and channeling citizen debates over diverse ideas and conflicting interests, the state drifts away from its subjects (Castells, 2008:1).

Fraser (2014) viewed the public sphere as an arena of public discourse. Fraser (2014) agreed that the concept of the public sphere can be helpful in building many societies and can be used as a tool to promote democracy and transparency from government officials. This means that Habermas’ concept of the public sphere has been employed by many theorists as a way of thinking about how to use the media as a space in which to correct or discuss issues that affect society. The concept of public sphere in Habermas’ view it was a conceptual resource that can

help overcome different problems in the society, such as corruption of politicians, by providing a theatre in modern societies, such as in South African, in which political participation is endorsed through the medium of talk (Fraser, 2014). It is an arena in which citizens debate and discuss their common societal affairs (Fraser, 1990). It is for that reason that the current study employs the concept as a theoretical framework to evaluate the extent to which *Abasiki Bebunda* has created a space in which citizens can exercise Habermas' concept, and help evaluate the extent to which it is similar to the public sphere that was conceptualized by Habermas. For Habermas, the public sphere should be understood as an analytic category, a conceptual device that, while pointing to a specific social phenomenon, can also aid us in analyzing and researching the phenomenon (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991). Dahlgren and Sparks (1991) further argued that for Habermas, the concept of public sphere signifies a specific social space, which arose under the development of capitalism in Western Europe.

### **Historical Background of Public Sphere**

The public sphere is both a historical and a critical idea. Aristotle situated public sphere within city-state polis as related to the public life of the political community, as opposing it to the private realm of the household (Aristotle, 2006). Public sphere as public life constituted in spatial-temporal setting of marketplace where citizens as equals gathered to discuss matters of common concern in polis.

The concept of the public sphere from the writings of Aristotle (2006) was referred to *publicus* in the Roman ruling system. Romans referred to *publicus* as an important dominion of a collective body of citizens in contrast to *privatus*, as denoting to the domain of the private household (Habermas, 1989). The difference between *publicus* and *privatus* in Roman ruling continued into the middle ages for separating the King or Feudal Lord's representations from oikodespotes/paterfamilias. In the middle age, the king or feudal lord represented himself before other people; the King or Feudal lord was the only public representation, and all others were spectators (Aristotle, 2006). This implies that there is no much separation of the public from private realms. The public sphere was represented by only King's public representations, but with capitalist economic advancements and the rise of the bourgeoisie the meaning and context of public sphere changed again in the 17th and 18th century (Habermas et al., 1974). The public sphere became

representative publicness as an independent domain in relation to the state and private life. The most important value of the public sphere was the opportunity created for public reasoning and engagements. The communicative use of the public reason began within the early bourgeois reading public sphere; constituted by a group of individuals in response to literature books they were reading (Triadafilopoulos, 1999). This group of individuals met in places such as salons and coffee shops which then became the centre of their debates (Habermas, 1989: 60).

This public communication was governed by rules in the process of exchange of point of views on issues of political concern. The important features of this communication were that the public had the same interest, which means they were held by one goal despite their different background. In *Abasiki Bebunda* participants, either from political parties or general public comes from different walks of life. The only glue that holds them together is the public sphere created by the show. The public sphere required active participation from the public, but access depended on one's communicative skills and knowledge (Arendt and Canovan, 2013). In that period, public spheres had converted to vehicles for civil society to communicative interests (Taylor, 1995). The same applies in *Abasiki Bebunda*, for one to be part of the public sphere they have to be able to communicate either through social media or calling into the studio. The public should be knowledgeable about the subject discussed. The evolution of the political public sphere began first in the political and social life of Britain and later it was introduced within the European bourgeois constitutional states as a way of safeguarding state authority via informed and critical discourse of the people (Keane, 1995). It has advanced to many parts of the world including Africa and South Africa.

The public sphere in civil society is encouraged by exchanging meanings and points of views towards deliberative and associative democratic process of decision making (Arendt, 2013). In viewing the public sphere as the first arbitrator between citizens and state, the above-mentioned view give emphasis to the prominence of public sphere to rules and functions of modern democratic political systems.

## **Theorizing Public Sphere**

Observing back over theoretical history of the public sphere from the time of Habermas to the present day, the public sphere remains one of those vague and indefinable concepts. It is not yet anchored in a clear, consistent, and bounded field of theory. Public sphere theory has been ambiguous for several reasons. Firstly, a very large number of factors and conditions, such as communicative skills and knowledge, that influence the realm of the public sphere (Villa, 1992). Villa (1992) points out that all the variables that influence the social and political processes of public sphere, economic processes involve the interaction. People need to have means of communicating in today's public sphere, such as the availability of the Internet, since much of the contemporary public sphere is made up of the Internet. Theorists when engaging on the public sphere should not only manage to point out the principles of communication, laws and political institutions; they must also manage to point out the nearly infinite varieties and complexity of human interactions, understandings, interpretations opinions, attitudes, values, behaviours, customs, prejudices (Villa, 1992). Secondly, because of the very practical importance of the issue of public sphere, the theory of public sphere has very largely focused on the function of the public sphere and on those strategies that have proven most effective for achieving its function, rather than on nuts and bolts that are necessary for the very existence of public sphere (Villa, 1992).

Not surprisingly, the concept of public sphere has many meanings. Between the growing multiple meanings, many have different political, social and philosophical connotations. There are at least two emerging streams of thought and both have something different to say on the concept of public sphere. There are those who analyse public sphere as micro-practices of communication that transpire between individuals and their social, political and economic environment in the context of shaping, criticizing and reproducing norms, meanings, values and identities (Holub, 2013). There are also those who focus on the public sphere as a whole with interconnections of actors, institutions and structures. Interconnections exist within and among these structures, individuals and groups that are constrained by these structures. Another possible way of making this distinction has to do with relative size; for example, the citizens are micro in relation to the politics and macro in relation to the individuals that interact within its structure. However, the principal problem that arises in the current theoretical development about the

macro-micro connection is that of the relationships between individuals and public sphere. To position it differently, the issue of the role of people in public sphere or relationship between structure and agency in the realm of public sphere (Holub, 2013).

There are two main theoretical positions about the macro-micro relationship, namely the descriptive and normative (Koçan, 2008). Descriptive conceptualizations of public sphere aim at reaching a general idea derived from specific instances that are products of historical development process of political society (Koçan, 2008). This way of understanding the public sphere strives to explain what the public sphere is and why it is that way, and how the public affects the political and social life. Normative conceptualizations of public sphere are acts of creating a concept by thinking and reasoning; they attempt to describe what the public sphere ought to be (Koçan, 2008). The difference between these theoretical positions is that descriptive theories of public sphere might seek to explain what causal forces have produced the structures of the public sphere; whereas a normative theory of public sphere elaborate on what structures of political and social life in connection to would be justifiable. In more simpler terms: descriptive theories of public sphere are about facts and normative theories of public sphere are about principles and values (Koçan, 2008).

### **Descriptive Theorization of Public Sphere**

A descriptive theory of public sphere is presented in an oversimplified way as if there were a single, well-defined type of public spheres that can be counted as a fact. The phrase "public sphere" is used in a variety of ways. The descriptive analyses of public sphere intends to explain the concept of public sphere and how public spheres have an effect on the social and political way of life of many people. There are three characteristic of descriptive theorization of public sphere that can be identified: The first kind of descriptive theory of public sphere, which can be called fact based, is quite simply a theory of what the content in a public sphere is all about (Koçan, 2008). The second kind of descriptive public sphere theory refers to explanatory approaches that attempts to explain why the public is the way it is (Dahlberg, 2004). For example, a very simple deliberative democratic theory might state that the content of the public sphere can best be explained by the structures of communicative action. The third kind of public sphere theories that are referred to as descriptive are theories about the consequences that will be

produced by a given structure of public sphere. This is the sense of descriptive theory that is most frequently invoked by democratic theories (Hernandez, 1997).

### **Normative Theories of Public Sphere**

Normative theories of public sphere are, by their character, evaluative (Fraser, 1990). A normative theory of public sphere takes a stand on the question whether active participation in public sphere is better than regulation (Fraser, 1990). These theories tend to be entwined with more general normative theories, such moral or political theories, although this is not necessarily the case. Utilitarianism, deontology and teleology are three of the most important general normative theories that have had an influence on theories of public sphere (Bernstein, 2012). Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that describes the best action as the one that maximizes utility (Mill and Bentham, 1987). Mill and Bentham (1987) define utility as the total amount of all pleasure that results from an action, minus the suffering of anyone involved in the action. Deontology is described as duty or obligation, rule based ethics (Alexander and Moore, 2007). Deontology is the study of that which is an obligation or duty and consequent moral judgment on the actor on whether he or she has complied (Alexander and Moore, 2007). Teleology is the philosophical way to define things in terms of their apparent purpose, directive principle, or goal (Gergely and Csibra, 2003)

### **Shortcomings of Public Sphere Theory**

Public sphere theory promotes open access, participation, and social equality, (Habermas, 1991). The conception of the public sphere concept puts emphases on its claim of being open and accessible to all. Indeed, the issue of accessibility is the integral part to the meaning of public sphere and public's participation. However, in the public sphere of Habermas' time women were excluded from official political participation, precisely based on ascribed gender status, while men were formally excluded only by property qualifications (Fraser, 1990). This is also applicable in the South African context. Some public platforms are not entire opened for everyone or every gender. Studies suggest that women continue to be under-represented in newsrooms across the country, as the majority of newsrooms are still white and male dominated (Geertsema, 2008). The full participation and access of woman is still limited, not only in South Africa, but in Africa as a continent (Porter, 2003). Many woman are still sidelined in discussions,

in community forums and in the media, where there are less woman contribution compared to those of man (Geertsema, 2008).

A public sphere is a space in which a group of people would set aside any differences, such as race or ethnicity, and speak to one another as if they were social and economic peers. It is then disappointing to learn that there are people who use either their power or position to manipulate the concept of the public sphere. Political parties such as the ANC dominate the realm of public sphere either in the newspaper, in radio news or in television through censorship and corruption. When some political party or certain groups of people are excluded from a public discussion, that particular public sphere does not serve its purpose.

### **Media and the Political Public Sphere**

The public sphere requires means for transmitting information to the public and influences those at the receiving end (Habermas, 1974: 49). Between the state and society lies the public sphere, “a network for communicating information and points of view” (Habermas 1996: 360). The communication between citizens, civil society, and the state, communicated through the public sphere guarantees that the balance between stability and social change is retained in the conduct of public affairs (McChesney and Waterman, 2007). Therefore the media is one of the important drivers for constituting and maintaining any public sphere (Bronner, 1989). It has an important role of facilitating the political public sphere and it is evidenced in the programme *Abasiki Bebunda* because there is more political coverage in the show compared to other news items, as indicated later in this dissertation in the chapter on data analysis. As a result, there is a high degree of interest from the public in discussions that happens on the media platforms such as those facilitated by *Abasiki Bebunda*. According to Habermas (in Bronner, 1989) there are two types of actors who correctly define a political public sphere, without whom a political public sphere could be possible. These are firstly, the professionals in the media industry, and secondly, politicians and audience. Bronner (1989) further argues that there are also five types of actors who make the media professionals and politicians appearance on the virtual stage of an established public sphere.

The first types of actors are the lobbyist who represents special interest groups. This type of people can come from an organization or from a certain community (Bronner, 1989). A good example of lobbyists can be spokespersons from different political organizations. When given a



chance, these types of people speak for the interest of their establishments. In a political public sphere, they represent their political party and they have at heart the best interest of their party members. During the news programmes such as *Abasiki Bebunda*, they form part of the political discussions and their intention is to shape the discussion and the direction of the public sphere created by the show to serve their party's interests. They are mostly professionals and they understand the media industry, which makes it easy for them to use it to the best interest of their group (Bronner, 1989).

The second actors are the advocates who represent general interest groups or marginalized groups that are incapable of voicing their interest effectively (Bronner, 1989). These types of people have the interest of the people in general and when they get a platform such as *Abasiki Bebunda*, they do not speak for themselves but they represent the middle class. They include church leaders, community leaders, and members of worker's unions and leaders of various community organizations. This group helps by making sure there is accountability within government officials and when given a platform they are critically of public issues.

The third group comprise of experts who are credited with professional or scientific knowledge in some specific areas (Bronner, 1989). They are normally invited in platforms such as *Abasiki Bebunda* instead of nominating themselves to be part of the public sphere. When invited to be part of certain discussions they only give advice and scientific and professional accounts on how things happen the way they happened. These are scholars, doctors, political analyst scientists, economists and similar professionals, and they form part of the respected class in the society. They are able to shape the community thinking through their credentials. They do not dominate the public sphere in the role of advocates, but they are the most listened in public discussions. There is a high level of public trust and belief in what they say because they have facts and knowledge to back their arguments. However, some people may feel intimidated when sharing a platform with this type of people, and as a result some people don't get a chance to voice their points.

The fourth group is made up of the moral entrepreneurs. This is the group that generates public attention for neglected issues (Bronner, 1989). This group of people is concerned with issues affecting marginalised communities, such as service delivery. In a public sphere, this group will always point out the issues that have been left out, with no one to attend to them. They are one

group that understand the community and supposedly, have also been affected by these kinds of issues. This type of actors in a political public sphere puts more emphasis on issues of development than on other topics of conversation. Examples of this people include non-profit organisations (NPOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the private sector people. The last actors are the intellectuals who are unlike advocates or moral entrepreneurs. They are also respected in the community since they have personal reputations in certain fields, for example, academics, writers, artists. They engage in social issues, unlike experts and lobbyists, when given a political public platform; their intention is to promote the public interest.

All the above-mentioned actors have their role in the political public sphere. They help in transmitting message to the public. They are known, trusted by the community and they have a wise following among the audience. They use the media, especially social media, to attract more people to be part of the political public sphere. They are important in a public sphere and they play an important role in shaping, building and contributing in the public sphere.

### **Public Service Broadcasting as an Example of Public Sphere**

Public service broadcasting can be defined by its qualities. According to Pieter Fourie (2003:149), “public service broadcasting is the provision of an impartial space for free expression and open debate”. It is also broadcasting for the interest of everyone and appealing to the tastes of the nation, regardless of how diverse the nation might be (Fourie, 2003). It is broadcasting that accommodates minority groups and provides good programming rather than focusing on increasing the number of people listening. Public service broadcasting should be all about liberating rather than restriction of programme makers from allowing the public to shape the programmes the way they want (Fourie, 2003). The most important element that defines public service broadcasting is its ability to be universal in its accessibility and to address audiences as citizens, not as consumers (Fourie, 2003). This element is feasible today because public service broadcasting works in a world where there is less technology limitations on the number of broadcasting channels and a world where technology offers the prospects of ever-greater choice and freedom of expression (Fourie 2003:148).

Public service broadcasting is broadcasting primarily for the public. It can be radio, television, or any other electronic media outlets (Scannell, 1990). Paddy Scannell (1990) argued that public service broadcasting operates at a national or local level; it depends on the country and the radio

station. The SABC is an example of a public service broadcaster. Scannell (1990) added that historically public broadcasting services were once the dominant in the British Commonwealth and parts of Europe, with the notable exception of the United States of America, it was the only form of broadcasting. In South Africa as well, the SABC was the only form broadcasting available between 1936 and 1994, with no other form of broadcasting allowed other than radio stations in the so-called Apartheid 'homelands'.

The main mission of public service broadcaster is speaking to citizen and engaging with citizen (Witherspoon and Kovitz, 1987). Different scholars such as Murdock (2004), Scannel (1989), Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli (1996) and Fourie (2003) have pointed out the model principles of a public broadcaster includes universal geographic accessibility and availability to all citizens, , including people in deep rural areas. The accessibility of the public service broadcaster to anyone suggests that the gap between people in the rural areas and those in urban areas should be closed. Everyone can have an equal chance to engage on societal issues using the public service broadcaster. Public broadcasting service and broadcasters should have a universal appeal to the public; it should not be exclusive but should be opened to everyone. (Mpofu et al., 1996). It should have features and programming that attract the public, inviting them to engage. The programmes of a public service broadcaster should also accommodate everyone, regardless of their different cultures, or race (Donders, 2011). Strine Syvertsen (2003) argued that public service broadcasters do not only need universal appeal to their public but they also need to convey attention to minorities. In public service broadcasting the voice of the minority should be heard and their opinion should be taken into consideration (Syvertsen, 2003). Syvertsen (2003) added that the obligations of public service broadcasters are to produce programmes that are socially and culturally valuable. Public broadcasters should contribute to national identity and sense of community, distance themselves from vested interests, but should promote the interests of the public (Fourie 2003).

However, the country now enjoys a choice of public service broadcasting, community broadcasting and commercial broadcasting, all of which have created a public sphere for their audiences within their programming. They have created platforms in which the public can discuss issues of politics, economy or social ills of the society. As Herman Wasserman and Arrie de Beer (2005:156) put it, "South Africa moved from an authoritarian state under oligarchic

white minority rule to a democracy on 27 April 1994. As the culmination of a process of negotiation that started in 1990, this historical movement brought to an end decades of repressive state regulation of the media”. As a result of the new constitution adopted in 1996 which included the Bill of Rights (South African Constitution, 2017)<sup>22</sup>, the rights the South African media have today are evidenced in the way it has freedom of expression. Freedom of the media has created freedom for the public as well; it is now possible to discuss issues without being afraid of any prosecution. The media today has access to certain government information (Wasserman and De Beer, 2005), even though total access of the media to information is still a challenge. In 2016, for example, South Africa witnessed the former SABC Chief Operating Officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng violating the constitution by introducing the editorial policy, which intended to prevent the public broadcaster from broadcasting pictures showing violence and destruction of public infrastructure (de Villiers, 2017).<sup>23</sup> It is essential for a public broadcaster to open a public sphere where people can have access to public information and allow people to be critical of issues around them.

It is most likely that when a public service broadcaster has the above-mentioned principles it will grow in listenership. The large number of listenership such as that of Ukhozi FM can be an indicate that the radio station, as a public broadcaster, has the public at heart, and in return the public love it and they listen to it. However, Ukhozi FM as a public broadcaster should not focus only in growing listenership but must be also concern with its programming (Foourie, 2003) .

While the application of certain principles, amongst the above mentioned, may be easy to apply, as in the case of accessibility, some of the principles may not be clearly defined in their nature or difficult to implement. In the context of a shifting national identity, the role of public service broadcasting may be unclear (Masenyama, 2006). Likewise, the subjective nature of good programming may raise the question of individual or public taste. People, mostly in a democratic country such as South Africa, may have different points of view on what should and should not be included in the programmes of a public broadcaster. Other issues concerning a public broadcaster may also be the two different views regarding commercial activity. One is that public broadcasting is incompatible with commercial objectives. The other is that public broadcasting can and should compete in the marketplace with commercial broadcasters.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/icasa-nullifies-sabcs-editorial-policy-20170309>

However, at the heart of the public sphere is the media system. In relation to the political system, the media system lies on its periphery, but its peripheral status makes the media system no less important politically (Wanta, 2004). The political system, such as the South African democratic system, relies on the mediascape not only to supply but also to sieve considered public opinion inward to its own decision-making processes, and outward to the audiences who hold communicative power and who therefore determine legitimacy (Wanta, 2004). Despite the public sphere supplying communicative power, the media system supplies media power. This media power normally lies in the hands of the media professionals such as journalists, editors, producers, and publishers (Habermas et al., 2004). These professionals can produce an elite discourse, and they can exercise their media power in several ways. It is important therefore, that the public sphere opened by the media be checked and criticized by the public. They can do it through choosing information and format, the shape and style of programmes, and in the effects of its diffusion, in agenda setting, or the priming and framing of issues.

The following questions continue to be critical for scholars to enquire about the public service broadcasting: the question of public service broadcasting communication's independence from both the government and the market; the extent in which new technology provide new ways to reengineer the mission of public service broadcasting; and the question of whether public service broadcasting has a place in our today's society. These and other related questions are the topic worth exploring and concern about the future of public service broadcasting. According to Fourie (2003:149), "the challenge is to redefine public service broadcasting in a changed world and media environment, and to justify its future". However, the biggest challenge is to have media platforms, such as the one provided by radio Ukhozi FM, being unable to create the public sphere desirable to people, a platform in which people can nationally and locally interact with each other on issues that are of concern to them. Habermas (1989) recognised active public citizenship in the emergence of what he termed the public sphere, an imagined space between the people and the state, in which the state is held accountable to the public. The concept of the public sphere promoted by Habermas intricate the assembling of private persons to discuss matters of common concern on a respectful and in a rational-critical manner.

## **Talk Radio as a Way in which Public Service Broadcasting Can Fulfill the Mandate of Public Sphere**

As stipulated in chapter two, talk radio is a radio format that permits the public to participate and should not be misunderstood with radio news. It consists of discussions about current affairs issues and allow listeners to participate (Geller, 2012). Talk radio shows can be presented by one or more presenters. The format often features live interviews with different guests as well as live listener participation in the form of inbound telephone callers. Other variations of talk radio shows can include format such as sports talk.

Today's technology has broken the limits; people do not only call in during the show, but they use social media to engage in the discussions. Usually talk radio shows are aired live; there is the host and listeners and sometimes guests in the studio. According to Geller (2012), talk radio shows should maximize audience interest and allow the listeners to express themselves freely. The nature of a talk radio, which is also applied by many South African radio stations such as Gagasi FM, Metro FM and Ukhozi FM, generally is organized into different segments, depending how long the programme is, with each segment separated by a pause for advertisement. In public broadcaster such as Ukhozi FM and Metro FM the presenter normally plays music to separate the segments of the programme.

It is in talk radio that Habermas problematised part of the relation of the media to the public sphere. Many theorists of the media such as McQuail (202), McGuigan (2002) and Lule (2013) have attempted to describe this relationship, arguing that the media have become the public sphere, with all messages, ideas, information and opinion mediated through the various and complex operations and constraints of media production. Talk radio shows have formed the forums in which public deliberation can take place. Normative conceptions of talk radio shows' role in democratic societies resonate with Habermas' conception of the public sphere, particularly in that of a space, in which issues of public importance can be discussed and the state can be held accountable (Cowling and Hamilton, 2010). Talk radio shows, such as *Abasiki Bebunda*, act as a platform in which the characteristics of public service broadcasting can be seen. It is mainly through talk radio shows that the public sphere theory of open access to information and debates around issues either of politics or community is exercised. It is through participation through discussions and comments of the public via social media, emails, call-ins

and studio visit that one can conclude that a public service broadcaster is broadcasting for the public (Ryan, 2001). It is evidential, in the case of *Abasiki Bebunda*, that talk radio shows play crucial role in providing a space for public discussion in contemporary democracies, although there is much criticism of their ability to fulfil this ideal (Cowling and Hamilton, 2010).

### **Public Sphere in *Abasiki Bebunda***

The theory of public sphere is in practice in *Abasiki Bebunda*. The current affairs show fulfils the mandate of a public sphere within a public service broadcaster and it has grown in its popularity not because it is aired during prime time but it is a show that people listen. It has more than 7.7 million listeners, 117 000 likes on Facebook and 36 000 followers on Twitter (Ukhozi FM website).<sup>24</sup> Drawing back to its production; the show is produced by a team of Ukhozi FM news producers, with help from the SABC news department and presented mainly by Mr. Bongani Mavuso and Tusokwakhe Mhlaba. It broadcasts news headlines happening across the country and abroad, especially when there is trending news happening outside the country. The key audience of the show is everyone who listens to Ukhozi FM, especially during *Abasiki Bebunda*. The participation of the audience in the show is ensured through hashtags on Twitter, calling directly to Ukhozi FM, through emails and comments on the show's Facebook page. Thus, the show has created a public sphere platform in which the public privately come together to discuss critical issues to them. This public sphere is controlled and moderated by the presenter because if the presenter does not read comments from social media, emails and didn't open a chance for calls in the show there will be no participation. However, it doesn't the public doesn't participate because they do participate through social media.

Despite the control and confinement of listeners, it is still possible for listeners to initiate a topic, pushing the producers to and the presenters to talk about it through the use of social media. Listeners have a say and a sense of belonging in the public sphere created by the show. This suggests that the public sphere created by the show is functional and the producers of the show do not only have power of shaping this public sphere, but the audience play a critical role too. It is the sense of belonging in the public sphere that the public comment freely. However, the presenters remain the ones who select comments and read them on air; who choose which calls

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ukhozifm.co.za/sabc/home/ukhozifm/aboutus>

and emails to air during the show; and who invite specific visitors to come onto the show. The extent in which the entire show is framed to suit a particular event or a certain issue that the producers and presenters believe should be part of the show also loads the power of message away from the public and into the hands of the producers and presenters. In *Abasiki Bebunda* public opinion is respected and allowed, although the access to all citizens suggested by Habermas is determined by the producers and the presenter of the show; nonetheless, there is access. It is in this show that the portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation where private individuals assemble to form a public body. Citizens act as a public body when they discuss in an unrestricted public sphere that has, with the surety of freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom to express and publish opinions about matters to general interest (Koçan, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

The public sphere theory suggest that *Abasiki Bebunda* as a current affairs news programme and a talk show should allow public participation in the discussions on issues concerning the public. Despite the theory's applicability in today's era, the concept has a different from why way in which it was conceptualised during its early stages. Much has changed; the public sphere created by shows such as *Abasiki Bebunda* allows even an ordinary citizen to be part of critical debates around issues of their interest. Today's public sphere is formed in the media; on the Internet and on radio, and people do not need to physically meet and discuss issues concerning the society. However, it is a very important theory to use as a lens to view the study, especially, *Abasiki Bebunda* because the show does not only report news, but there includes discussions from 'experts' and feedback from the audience. Using the theory as a lens helps in evaluating the extent in which the show accommodates the public and report news fairly. The chapter provided a scope of a public service broadcaster in order to evaluate whether the show is in line with the theory. The next chapter embark on the methodology of the study, explaining how the researcher collected data for the study.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Methodology and Data Collection**

“When we talk of research methodology we not only talk of the research methods, but we also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study. We explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others”.

(Kothari, 1985: 8)

The current chapter outlines and explains the research methods employed by the researcher, as well as the logic behind selecting these methods. It also presents and describes the research paradigms, the research design, sampling method, data collection techniques and data analysis procedures. It is a road map of the study, showing how the researcher reached the findings, which answers the research questions. Lastly, the chapter explains issues of validity, reliability and ethical considerations involved in the study.

#### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research approach in trying to acquire an in-depth appreciation of a specific social phenomenon (Neuman 2011). Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative approaches “present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship” (Neuman 2011: 39). Therefore, the results should be an accurate glimpse of the subject matter investigated. Qualitative research refers to research that seeks to understand how people make sense of phenomena that affects their lives (Blanche et al., 2006). It views the researcher and the researched as two equally important components of the same situation (Sarantakos, 2012). This approach is recognized through its features, such as precise description, analysis and interpretation (Neuman, 2011). In qualitative research the emphasis is on conducting detailed examinations of specific scenarios that arise in the natural flow of social life (Blanche et al., 2006).

It is through qualitative research approach that a researcher is able to explore a wide range of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understanding, experiences, and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that

social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of meanings that they generate. (Mason 2002:1)

This type of research method is suitable for the purposes of the study because in this research the researcher is an outsider, not an SABC employee, seeking to see the world of journalism and news reporting through the news programme *Abasiki Bebunda*. The subject studied in this research does not involve numbers or quantities and it is non-empirical. This approach allows content analysis and textual analysis which the researcher aims to use in the analysis chapter.

### **Research Design**

The thirty-fourth American President, Dwight D. Eisenhower once said “Plans are nothing; planning is everything” Eisenhower Quotes (2017).<sup>25</sup> A research project needs a road map for it to show what it intends to achieve and how it intends to achieve it. The name of the road map is called a research design, and “a research design is a planned structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems” (Kerlinger 1986: 279). It is also described as “a blueprint or detailed plan of how a research is to be completed” (Thyer 1993: 94). “This plan can be accomplished by rationalizing and balancing variables so they become measurable, choosing a sample of interest to the study, testing for hypothesis from all the data that have been collected and analyzing the results” (Thyer 1993: 94). The research design allows the researcher to answer questions of “validly, objectively, accurately and economically” (Kumar 2011: 94). The research design also outlines how the information collected can be analyzed and how the findings will be communicated. At each step, the researcher offers a rational and justification for selecting each method. In order to establish this chapter and the research there is a need to review the objectives of the research.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/d/dwightdei149111.html>,

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. The research explored the political news covered and discussed in *Abasiki Bebunda*, in July 2016.
2. The study's interest was to examine the content of the show and determine whether the coverage of political issues contains biases towards particular political parties.
3. To explore and critique, where necessary, the extent in which *Abasiki Bebunda* is a public sphere and allows public participation.
4. To provide critical feedback to SABC news, Ukhozi FM and *Abasiki Bebunda*.

## **The Qualitative Approach**

The study employs a qualitative approach, an approach that involves different types of designs, such as phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, case study and biographic method (Crisell, 1986). In this research, the researcher adopts a case study approach. A case study design is one that allows the collection of comprehensive descriptive data, which are usually qualitative in nature (Tellis, 1997). It may provide information on the unique features of particular individuals. It is a relevant approach to the study because the research uses content analysis to analyze the political content covered by *Abasiki Bebunda*. The programme, *Abasiki Bebunda*, is the case study of the research. To the researcher content analysis methodology of analyzing the data, with qualitative research approach will make it easy to examine words or phrases, themes within a wide range of texts from the political content of the show. In the study, there are neither human beings involved in acquiring data, nor questions asked to participants but the researcher collected the data through recording the show every Monday to Friday in July 2016. The research used this type of methodology because the study involves a public service radio which remains highly bureaucratic, with many gatekeepers impeding the work of researchers. Given the limited scope required of a master's research, and the short time allocated to its completion, the researcher believes that there is no need to include interviews in the research because the recording of the show constitute enough data that can produce sufficient amount of information. This methodology enabled the researcher from getting answers of the research questions.

### ***Advantages of Qualitative Approach in this Study***

The key elements of qualitative methodology approach are treating people more than just numerical symbols and statistical figures, losing the subjective nature of human beings. It has been able to withstand the test of time since it has grown in popularity amongst sociologists and social scientists up to date (Sarantakos, 2012:30). The advantages of qualitative methodology in this study are demonstrated by the following characteristics of the methodology:

The method allows the researcher and the research to employ research procedures that produce descriptive data, and allows the researcher to be critical in the data analysis. It allows the researcher to study realities of the study from inside instead of outside and the researcher approaches these realities without preconceived ideas and pre-structured models and patterns. This gives the study an opportunity to produce any results without predictions. It allows the research to use purposive sampling and it captures reality in interactions and meaningful interpretations of human actions. (Sarantakos, 2012:120).

### ***Sampling***

Choosing a study sample is a significant step in any research study because it is hardly practical, efficient and ethical to study whole populations (Marshall, 1996:522). Research studies use a sampling method because of limited time, people's availability and some section of the participants might not be of great significance in informing the study. Research methods should be defined by the research question, not by the preference of the researcher" (Marshall, 1996). The aim of sampling is to "draw a representative sample from the population, so that the results of studying the sample can then be generalized back to the population" (Marshall, 1996: 522). Sampling assists in focusing the study on specific characteristics of interest and is effective in the sense that the samples are studied more quickly than a larger population group (Fink, 2003:3).

The researcher uses purposive saturation sampling method in the study. Purposive or purposeful sampling in qualitative research is intentionally selecting a population or participants to meet the needs of the study (Boeije, 2009). Coyne (1997) in Boeiji (2009) argued that the cases or samples are purposefully selected because they can teach us a lot about the issues that are of importance to the research. In purposive sampling, samples are chosen with purpose in order for the researcher to explore the research question (Marshall, 1996). The process in purposive sampling involves the researcher being able to identify the relevant subjects, or in this case the recordings, who are relevant to the study (Sarantakos, 2012).

The sample in this study is purposive saturated sampling because in collecting the data, the entire programme/show was recorded every Monday to Friday for a period of a month. The entire show was recorded starting from 1 July 2016 until the end of July 2016. There was nothing left out unrecorded during chosen month; everything in the entire hour of the show was recorded. The total data collected amounted to four weeks, giving the researcher a total number of 20 hours of data. The researcher has purposefully chosen July for collecting the data and the choice of the month has no effect on the findings. The researcher chose July 2016 because it was a month before the South African local elections and the researcher expects more political party coverage and debates. There were twenty hours of the show's recordings in total, analyzed and it gave the researcher enough data. The rationale in choosing a month for collecting data is to give research enough data in order to make sound conclusions about the show. It will also help the researcher in trying to identify trends within the show and easily understand the show.

### ***Data Collection Method***

Data collection is a way of gathering and measuring information on specific variables in an established systematic fashion, which then allows one to answer related questions and evaluate outcomes (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). The data for this study was collected from Ukhozi FM current affairs show *Abasiki Bebunda* from the beginning of July 2016 until the end of July 2016. There were 20 hours of recordings recorded from the entire month. The show is aired every weekday from Monday to Friday between 18:00hrs to 19:00hrs.

The researcher bought the recordings of the show from SABC. The researcher found it important to buy the recordings for quality purposes and ensuring that there are no irregularities. The researcher the entire recordings for the month without choosing specific days or hours. The recordings were then stored in CDs and in a computer to avoid any irregularities that might occur. Collection of data for this study did not require permission because once the programme is aired it's in the public domain and anyone can record it. There was no gate keeping issues when collecting data for the study.

### ***Data Analysis***

Qualitative analysis entails segmenting and reassembling the data in the light of the problem statement (Boeije, 2009). It is very important for a researcher to find the best and accommodative way of analyzing the data. Data analysis determines the outcomes of the study and enables the researcher to have results. The study uses qualitative approach as a framework in analyzing the data of the study. Unlike quantitative data analysis, which places its importance on issues of validity and reliability, making sure measurements are stable and consistent and that there are no errors or bias present either from respondent or from the researcher (Dawson, 2002). Qualitative data analysis acknowledges that participants can be influenced in the research process. In this approach, the researcher is able to conceptualize the data in his or her own preferences and experiences to the study. Qualitative data analysis is unique and personal to each researcher. This method will also serve time for the researcher, especially in the allocated time for the study.

The study uses both content and thematic analysis methods in analyzing the data collected through recording the show, *Abasiki Bebunda*, in July 2016. The content analyzed in the study is recordings containing news reports, discussions, interviews and participation from the public. The two methods suit the study because the researcher analyzes the actual content of the recordings. One of the objectives of the study is to examine the types of news covered in the show. In using content analyses, it is easy for the researcher to find out the political issues discussed in the show. Within the text, political themes were recognized, e.g. political issues on services delivery, political party conferences, and political party's issues form part of the political items. From the themes, it was therefore suitable, again, to use thematic analysis in analyzing the themes found within the political issues.

### ***Content Analysis***

Content analysis is a research analysis method in which ideas, meaning, and expression in a text are studied through examining patterns in elements of the text, such as words or phrases (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Researchers employ content analysis to closely examine messages individuals receive through diverse media including books, articles, magazines, speeches, television, commercials, and Internet pages (Babbie, 2013). Content analysis as a method helps in making inferences by objectively and systematically finding specified characteristics of

messages (McNabb, 2002). “This method offers a wide range of uses as it may be applied to almost any form of communication” (Babbie, 2013: 286). Content analysis assist researchers study presence or certain words and phrases in a text, allowing the researcher to make interpretations about rationale of a writer or a particular audience which a programme was designed for (Babbie, 2015). Through content analysis the researcher will be able to analyses a number of messages carried by the recordings of the show and be able to find out the political issues within the content, through common trends and patterns of words used, the number of times they have been used and their relationships (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

### ***Thematic Analysis***

Thematic Analysis gives an accessible and theoretically flexible methodology to analyzing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The study used a thematic analysis because it is a method that pays attention to describing both the implicit and explicit data, through a thorough process of identifying, analyzing and reporting pattern (themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method moves beyond merely recounting the data but recognizes both the unspoken and obvious ideas within data (Guest et al., 2011). This method of analyzing data involves two processes, the mechanical and the interpretive component, both inextricably linked (Hardy and Bryman, 2004:93). The mechanical process refers to “the physical activity of reading and rereading the data in search of key words, trends and themes that will help shape the analysis before any analysis takes place” (Hardy and Bryman, 2004:93). The interpretive process of the analysis occurs when researchers immerses themselves in the data, looking for the unarticulated meaning to it, based on the broader picture presented by the findings (O'Connor, 2015).

The researcher listened to all the recordings to identify all the political items within the recordings. In each CD, there were recordings for each day, which made up to twenty days and twenty hours. Political parties covered in the recordings were identified and from each recording anything that was non-political, such as entertainment, economics, sports and many more were excluded. The table below shows an example of how the data from each CD was transcribed analyzed and how the political content from the recordings was obtained:

**Table 4.1 - Showing Data Analysis**

<b>Item</b>	<b>CD Date &amp; Time Duration</b>	<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Topic/ Themes</b>	<b>Who was speaking</b>	<b>Commentators</b>	<b>Researchers notes and comments</b>
1.	01/07/16 18:05 (1:39)	ANC	Interview	Nkandla	Reporter, Party spokes person	Dr. Mngomezulu  (Political Analyst)	There were no comments from the public.
2.	02/07/16 18:25 (2:30)	DA	Interview on the Location	DA conference	DA political leader	DA spokesperson	More minutes than ANC

The table above shows how the researcher prepared the data for data analyses and the table forms part of the tools used to analyze the data. From the first CD to the 20<sup>th</sup> CD the political items were numbered from one to the last number continuously, it continues on the next CD once the current CD is over. This was done to avoid confusion on the analysis chapter, and to prevent the repetition of items and to make it clear which item number is the researcher referring to on the data analysis chapter. When the researcher refers to political items, he referred to anything that has to do with South African political parties and political issues involving them. Once the political item, for example, in item number one, has been recorded, the second column recorded the date in which the data was recorded and the duration of the political item recorded in order to show the different times allocated for each political party.

The third column shows the political parties which were covered in July and this helped the researcher to calculate the number of political parties covered during the period of July 2016. The fourth column is for the type of the news item, whether it is an interview in or outside the studio, a report or a file. This will help the researcher in determining people or political party individuals and the political parties that are invited in the show or conferences that the show covers. The fifth column indicates the political topics and themes of the show. Through the topics and the themes, the researcher is able to analyze the number of topics or themes per



political party e.g. Nkandla debate (ANC). The sixth column shows people who participated in adding information during the show and the political party they represent. This can be reporters, political leaders, the public, newsreaders and journalist. Through this column, the researcher is able to determine the number of political leaders who are given a chance to comment, the number of the general population that is allowed to participate through call-ins, emails or social media. The seventh column shows quotes made during the show. This can be either from political analyst, social media participants, experts, such as political analysis, politicians or guests. This enables the researcher to analyze the number or the type of people who have the significance in during the show and the political party they stood for or against. The last column consists of comments made by the researcher while listening to the recordings. This enables the researcher and making it easy during the analyzing period.

### **Research Trustworthiness**

In the study the researcher ensured credibility of the research through the use of research methods and information which makes the research dependable. Validity in research is attained by using research methods that have been tested before and have proved to work (Roberts et al., 2006). In the research credibility and dependability was maintained in the following ways:

#### ***Credibility***

A credible study is one which reflects the real phenomena as portrayed by the research participants (Mouton and Babbie, 2001). In the research, the participants' views from the recording and issues are presented in the findings as they are; they are also analysed, giving quotations from the participants (Dutta, 2008). The study does not involves interviews or questionnaires as to certain participants and as a result there is more credibility on this study since the researcher cannot shape the discussions during the show. Unlike in interview, the researcher can shape or influence the interviewee by asking probing questions, in this study the researcher analysed the recorded data.

#### ***Dependability***

“Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did” (Durrheim and Wassenaar, 1999:64). Spending more time transcribing, the tools of data analysis such as the table and the data analysis

method mentioned above provides dependability in the study. The notes made on the last column of the table above aided in accounting for every step of the research data analysis, enabling the researcher to remember.

### ***Limitations***

This study involves government radio station, Ukhozi FM, which has a lot of gate keeping in terms of data collection. The researcher finds it important for government institutions such as SABC to promote research and welcome students who are willing to conduct studies that will bring constructive feedback for the organisation. The data collected in this study contains both non-political items and political items, and it took more time for the researcher to analyze the political content. This is because the researcher had to listen for almost half an hour in other recordings without coming across any political items.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter clarified the research methods employed by the researcher, as well as the logical behind these methods. It also presented and described the research paradigms, the research design, the sampling method, data collection and data analysis procedures. It also visited the objectives of the study to ensure that the data collection methods, design and data analysis has a link and they correspond with the objectives. Lastly, this chapter explained issues of validity, reliability and ethical considerations involved in this study. The following chapter will present the research findings and the analysis thereof.

# Chapter Five

## Data Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter strives to analyse the findings obtained from the data collected as indicated in the previous chapter. To this end, the literature and theoretical arguments presented in chapter two and chapter three links to arguments made in this chapter. This chapter engages the research put forward by different scholars in chapter two regarding the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa and the Independent Broadcasting Authority of South Africa. Talk radio, politics and the media in South Africa, radio news, and radio in the digital age link with the findings, especially under the structure of the show. The chapter draws on the concepts of the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), radio magazine programmes and the role of the media in a new South Africa in order to provide a critique of the programme, *Abasiki Bebunda*.

In analyzing the data, the chapter applied the methodology outlined in chapter four. Content and thematic analysis helped unpack the data and uncover the structure of the programme. The public sphere theory helped to analyze the news coverage in the programme by identifying the time given to each news item and political party, the political themes found in the data, the public participation during the show and the type of news items covered in this show. The chapter intends to bring out constructive critique and to assess whether the SABC news and Ukhozi FM, especially *Abasiki Bebunda* team, provides a viable public sphere for its listeners.

### A Recap on the Objectives of the Study

The high number of people listening to radio in South African suggests that radio news remains important to the majority of South Africans. The Audited Bureau of Circulation of South Africa (ABCSA) released a newspaper circulation statistics for the period January-March 2016 which revealed an estimated 12.4 million people in South Africa read commercial newspapers and 5.5 million people read community newspapers (ABCSA, 2016).<sup>26</sup> In comparison, radio listenership in South Africa is estimated to more than 30 million people per week who between them own

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.marklives.com/2016/05/abc-analysis-q1-2016-the-biggest-circulating-consumer-mags-in-sa/>

more than 10 million radios sets (*City Press*, 2015). Ukhozi FM on its own has a listenership of over 7 million listeners (SAARF 2015).<sup>16</sup> Among other evidence, this is an indication that South Africans are highly dependent on radio. Thus, they are also highly dependent on the integrity of South African journalists who informing them of national and international events through the medium of radio. The current research explored the political news/issues covered and discussed in *Abasiki Bebunda*, as one of the Ukhozi FM's flagship programmes. The study's interest has been to examine the political content of the news show and determine the extent to which, if at all, the news coverage contains biasedness towards particular political parties.

The study used content analysis methodology to critically analyze the content of the programme. Recently, much criticism has been levelled against journalists and media houses that are seen to be affiliated with specific with political parties, with claims that their reporting ends up as being biased (Davis 2014). While this is true of many countries with similar media issues (Mbindwane, 2015), the difference between South Africa and other countries is that the South African media falsely projects themselves as unbiased. This is not only pretentious but also fraudulent, considering that the unsuspecting public still believes the media do not hold any prejudice or bias on any matter. Daily, the public is flooded with political opinions disguised as news stories Mbindwane (2015). It is through such research and its findings that the hidden agendas of the media can be unpacked.

The aims of the study have been summarized in the methodology chapter above

### **Background on Data Collection**

Data for this study was collected from Ukhozi FM current affairs show *Abasiki Bebunda* from the beginning of July 2016 until the end of July 2016. There were 20 hours of recorded programming, representing the entire broadcast time period of the programme from the entire month. The show was aired every weekday from Monday to Friday between 18:00hrs to 19:00hrs.

The researcher initially planned to record the show using a recorder at home, recording the show from a radio. However, the researcher faced difficulties on the quality of the recordings because of the different environments where the recordings were recorded. The researcher then bought the recordings from the SABC. Obtaining the recordings from the SABC ensured quality of the

recordings and avoided mistakes in labeling the CDs. The researcher requested recordings of the entire month (July 2016). There was no choice; the entire programme was recorded during the hour of the show. Collection of data for this study did not require permission because the public broadcaster has no obligation on material that is in the public domain and anyone can record it. As a result, there were no gate keeping issues when collecting data for this study, but the researcher requested and paid for the recordings without any challenges.

The table below (Table 5.1) is a summary of the main political stories broadcast over the research period. Only stories concerned with political parties are recorded here. Following the presentation of this record, the researcher delves into an analysis of the data.

**Table 5.1 showing data collected from *Abasiki Bebunda* show July 2016**

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>CD Date and Time</b>	<b>Political Party involved</b>	<b>Type of Item</b>	<b>Topic/Theme</b>	<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Comments from Experts and Public</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Item 1 (CD 1)	CD 1 1 July 2016 17:30 Time: 1hr:06min	IFP NFP DA ANC EFF	Outside Broadcast	What are political parties going to do for Gauteng people as they go for elections? How are they going to win votes of people of Gauteng?	Presenter – Dumsani Ndimande, ANC, Mr. Ngobese – IFP, Bheki Gumbi – NFP, Shadreck Mkhonto – DA, Dali Mpofo – EFF	There were no comments from any experts since it was a debate between parties.  There public was given a chance to comment during the course of the debate	Five big S.A political parties involved in the debate.  The debate shows more critics towards the ANC leadership.  No comments from social media. All political parties involved were given a chance.
Item 1 (CD 2)	DC 2 4 July 2016 Time: 15min:36sec	NFP	Interview	The exclusion of the NFP from the 2016 local government	Presenter - Bongani Mavuso, Sibusiso Mcwabe	No comments	

				elections.	speaking on behalf of the NFP		
Item 2 CD 2	CD 2 4 July 2016 Time: 6 min:17sec	IEC	Interview	The failure of the NFP to pay to be part of the local government and the preparation of the elections 2016	Presenter Bongani Mvuso,  Nomsa Masuku – Deputy Director of IEC	No comments from NFP	
Item 3 CD 2	CD 2 4 July 2016 Time: 8 min: 15 secs	ANC	Interview	ANC meeting with all elected to be counsellors in KZN.	Presenter - Bongani Mavuso, Super Zuma – ANC Secretary in KZN	No comments from NFP	
Item 1 CD 3	CD 3 5 July 2016 Time: 4 min	Local Elections- the fight of Inkandla area by political parties	Report by SABC Journalist		Presenter- Bongani Mavuso  SABC Reporter and Journalist Vusi Makhosini	Nonhle Mkhulisi from the ANC,  Thamsanqa Ntuli from the IFP,  Zwakele Mcwango from	

						DA	
Item 2 CD 3	CD 3 5 July 2016 Time: 8 mins	ANC Mandla Mandela opening case against the DA	Interview	Mandela Family opening a case against the DA for using Mandela's voice on their campaign	Presenter - Bongani Mavuso,  Mfundo Mdihagha speaking for the Mandela Family, Zwakele Mcwango from the DA		The show allowed both parties involved to speak for themselves.
Item 2 CD 3	CD 3 5 July 2016 Time: 4 mins	NFP – Arrest of NFP members	Report	NFP riot against the exclusion of the NFP from being part of the voter's role for the 2016 local government elections.	Presenter - Bongani Mavusi,  SABC Journalist and Reporter Vusi Khumalo reporting in Ulundi area.	Lushai Buthelezi – NFP Member,  Nkululeko Mthethwa – NFP Member,  Sphamandla Ntombela – NFP National Working Committee Member.	
Item 3 CD 3	CD 3 5 July 2016 Time:	IFP – Burning of Factories in Mandeni	Report	Burning of Factories in Mandeni Area, IFP Leader	Reporter – Bongani Mavuso, SABC	IFP leader Mr. Buthelezi,  John Richardson –	



	3:52			Buthelezi pays a visit.	Reporter and Journalist – Cyril Mnguni	Sugarcane Farmer, Steve Fobs from Business Against Crime	
Item 1 CD 4	CD 4 6 July 2016						Nothing political was covered but economics and people were allowed to comment
Item 1 CD 5	CD 5 7 July 2016 Time: 2:30	ANC	Report	Inkandla report about President Zuma paying pay back the money.	Presenter - Tusokwakhe Mhlaba, Bridget Shange and Slindokuhle Khumalo – Producers  reporting – SABC Busi Chebombe and Bridget Shange	DA Leader Musi Maimane, Alfa Lise – DA	ANC refused to comment
Item 2 CD 5	CD 5 7 July Time: 4:55	NFP	Report	NFP exclusion from the local elections	Presenter – Tusokwakhe  Reporter – SABC Khalesakhe	ANC – Super Zuma,  NFP - Joshua Mazibuko,  Bheki	Public comments were read from twitter and allowed to call in and make comments on the

					Mbense	Mngomezulu – Political Analyst	issue
Item 1 CD 6	CD 6 8 July 2016 Time: 1 hr 30 min	ANC DA IFP EFF	Outside Broadcast – Mhlathuze Uthungulu District	Political Debate - Manifesto	Presenter – Dumsani Ndimande, ANC- Nonhle Mkhulisi, DA Mavis Mdluli IFP – Sedrik Xulu EFF – Scelo Madwe	Xolani Bhengu – Public Member Mfolozi Area, Mthokozisi Thusi – Public Member, Lindo Phungula - Public Member, Simo Mngadi - Public Member, Sihle Magubani – DA Member, Khabe Ntuli – ANC Member	
Item 1 CD 7	CD 7 08 July 2016 Time: 12 Min	NFP	Interview over the phone	NFP exclusion from the 2016 local government elections, the case with their	Presenter - Bongani Mavuso, NFP - Njabulo		No comments from the NFP finance Xolani Ndlovu phone was off.

				lawyers	Mlaba		
Item 2 CD 8	CD 8 11 July 2016 Time: 6:02	ANC	Report	President Zuma Speaking in France	Bongani Mavuso – Presenter,  SABC Reporter Langa Dlamini		
Item 3 CD 8	11 July 2016 Time: 8:20	ANC	Telephonic Interview	The killing of ANC leaders	Bongani Mavuso – Presenter,  Sihle Zikalala KZN PEC Chair		
Item 1 CD 9	12 July 2016 Time: 5:03	IFP	Report	Housing Crisis	Presenter Bongani Mavuso –  Blessed Gwala – IFP  SABC Reporter – Nhlanhla Nxele	Live comments from the public in a form of interviews.	Live comments from the public as interviews and commentators
Item 2 CD9	12 July 2016 Time: 4:18	ANC	Report	The ANC opposing the decision of the SABC on broadcasting	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso  SABC	ANC Secretary General – Gwede Mantashe comments on	

				violent stories or pictures on TV.	Reporter – Busi Chibombe  SABC Reporter and Presenter – Tusokwakhe Mhlaba	the issue, Ja	
Item 3 CD9	12 July 2016  Time: 4:30	NFP	Report	NFP wants the IEC to change its decision from preventing it to be part of the 2016 local elections	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso  SABC Reporter – Vusi Makhosini, NFP – Bheki Gumbi, NFP Chair in KZN – Victor Mlotshwa		
Item 1 CD 10	CD 10 13 July 2016			SASSA scandals	Bongani Mavuso		No political items but there were more comments from the public via social media, emails and call ins
Item 1 CD 11	CD 11 14 July 2016				Presenter- Tusokwakhe Mhlaba		No political items

Item 1 CD 12	CD 12 15 July 2016  Time: 5:30	NFP	Interview	The court ruled against NFP on its request to be part of the 2016 local government elections.	Tusokwakhe Mhlaba, Bheki Gumbi - NFP		Reporter read comments of the public on social media and allowed calls from the public
Item 1 CD 13	CD 13 18 July 2016  Time: 6:30 min	ANC	Telephonically Interview – With ANC Official in Mnambithi	Killing of ANC Candidate in Mnambithi	Presenter- Bongani Mavuso, Mthambisi Khumalo – ANC Ukhahlamba Region		
Item 2 CD 13	CD 13 18 July 2016  Time: 5	International Political News	Report	Nkosazana Zuma unavailability to lead African Union (AU) for a second term	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso,  SABC Reporter- Sarah Gimani and Thembeke Simelani	Political analyst – Bheki Mngomezulu	
Item 1 CD 14	CD 14 19 July 2016  Time: 3:50	ANC	Report	Killing of ANC Candidates and Councilors	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso,  SABC Reporter - Mbuso	ANC KZN Secretary – Super Zuma, IEC official in KZN – Mawethu	

					Mkhize	Mozari, Political analyst – Madoda Fikeni	
Item 1 CD 15							There is no political coverage. However, there were guest in the studio and the public was allowed to participate.
Item 1 CD 16	CD 16 21 July 2016 Time: 60:00	ANC	Studio interview – President Zuma	Campaign of the ANC and the preparation of the ANC towards the 2016 local government elections	Presenters - Tusokwakhe Mhlaba and Patrick Dalinjebo from Umhlobo Wenene FM		The interview was live broadcast over four radio stations.  The public participated via social media
Item 1 CD 17	CD 17 25 July 2016 Time: 3:00	ANC	Report	Killings of ANC 2016 local government elections candidates	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso  SABC Reporter – Khalessakhe	ANC Veteran in KZN – Mavuso Comments	
Item 2 CD 17	CD 17 25 July 2016 Time: 6:20	IFP	Phone Interview by the Presenter	Killing of IFP Candidates	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso,  SABC Reporter,		

					IFP Leader at - Mthambisi Mamola		
Item 1 CD 18	CD 18 26 July 2016 Time: 4:20	DA	Report	DA Rally	Presenter – Tusokwakhe SABC Reporters - Busi , Slindokuhle Khumalo	DA Leader – Musi Maimane quoted during the rally.	
Item 1 CD 19	CD 19 27 July 2016 Time: 60:00				Presenter – Bongani Mavuso		There was no political content but there was a discussion/interview on the readiness of IEC to host the elections. The public participated via social media and call ins
Item 1 CD 20	CD 20 28 July 2016 Time: 3:32	NFP	Report	NFP request for prayer/blessings from King Goodwill Welting	Presenter – Tusokwakhe, SABC Reporter – Vusi Khumalo	NFP National Chair – Bheki Gumbi speaks to the SABC reporters	
Item 2 CD 20	CD 20 28 July 2016	ANC and DA	Report	Member of DA moved their membership to	Presenter – Tusokwakhe	ANC KZN Chair – Sihle Zikalala	Twitter comments from the public

	Time: 6:10			ANC	Mhlaba, SABC Political Reporter – Vusi Makhosini	comments, ANC KZN Secretary – Super Zuma comment, DA KZN Leader Mzwakele Mncwango	
Item 3 CD 20	CD 20 28 July 2016 Time: 3:10	All South African political parties	Report	All 13 Political parties expected to divulge information about their sponsors	Presenter Tusokwakhe,  SABC reporter – Lulama Matsha		
Item 4 CD 20	CD 20 28 July 2016 Time: 3:14	DA	Report	DA Campaign in KZN	Presenter - Tusokwakhe  SABC Reporter - Mbuso Mkhize	DA Spokesperson – Hanyfosay  Comments from the public during the campaign  DA leader in KZN - Zwakele Mncwango	
Item 1 CD 21	CD 21 29 July 2016 Time:	ANC  DA  EFF	Political debate on local elections between	Political Debate at UKZN Howard College	Presenter – Bongani Mavuso	ANC - Super Zuma -  DA - Zwakele Mncwango	The public is allowed to comment and ask questions to the political parties



	1hr30	IFP	parties			EFF - Mhlambi Dlamini IFP - Mdu Nkosi Political Analyst – Lukhona Mnguni (UKZN)	
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## **The Structure of the Show**

Drawing from the data recorded from the show, *Abasiki Bebunda*, for a period of twenty one days in July 2016, the show is well structured. It follows a certain structure every day and when there are changes, the presenter of that particular day indicates those changes in time to the listeners. The show is separated into two main segments. The two segments are separated by a short news bulletin break, which occurs every day regardless of any change that occurs to the show. The first segment is between 18:00hrs to 18:30hrs, and the second one is right after “amanqampunqampu”, translated as a short news bulletin. The show took place every Monday to Friday between 18:00 – 19:00. However, in July there were only two days which it took place thirty minutes earlier than the usual hours in order to accommodate a political debate.

The show’s time slot is very crucial, which could be one of the biggest reasons the show has such a large listenership. The time slot is in the late afternoon, during prime time, when everyone is back at home from work and some people are still on their way from work. Its time slot ensures that it amongst the most listened shows on radio. At this time people are listening to the radio to get traffic updates, weather updates, trending stories. Furthermore, this is the ‘drive time’ slot when many people listen to this show in cars or public transport. In chapter two in this study on the subheading “radio at a digital age”, scholars argue that: Broadcast radio is no longer the only platform for information. With the advent of digitalization, information is converged over multiple platforms, specifically those delivered through the Internet: social media apps on mobile phones, tablets, computers and the like (see Undurraga 2016). While some theorists have argued that these changes have damaged radio news content (e.g. Winer, 2009), others have argued that digitization has increased the possible transmission of radio news (see for example Bosch 2010).

People can now listen to radio on small devices such as a cellphone or a car radio. This could be another reason the show is popular and has a huge number of listeners. The show is unlike *Ezanamuhla*, a morning current affairs show in Ukhozi FM, most people during this show are most likely to be relaxed instead of rushing to work. There is a better opportunity that the show could have more people listening than any other news current affairs shows on Ukhozi FM.

The show had two presenters namely, Mr. Bongani Mavuso and Mr. Tusokwakhe Mhlaba, during the time of data collection. It also had a team of SABC producers together with

journalists who produce and report news during the show. The show is a full discussion of current news affairs and it focuses on different news items. SABC reporters gather news across the country and abroad, and report them back in the show in the afternoon. For example, on days such as the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, political item number three, SABC journalist Vusi Khumalo reported news about the National Freedom Party (NFP) in Ulundi area. As indicated in chapter two under “Radio Talk Show” subheading, the show has an introduction, where the presenter introduces himself and the team. He then introduces the topics for discussion for the day.

For example, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016 Tusokwakhe Mhlaba introduced himself, mentioned time and the main political topic of the show as follows:

*“Isikhathis sikhomba kushi izuzu engamashumi nanhlanu ngaphanmbi kokuthi lihlangane ihora lesithupha ntambama, asikubingelele bese siyakwamukela ohlelweni olusipesheli njengoba siqhubeke sikulandisa kabanzi mayelana nokhetho lomaspala kuleli laseningizimu Afrika”.*

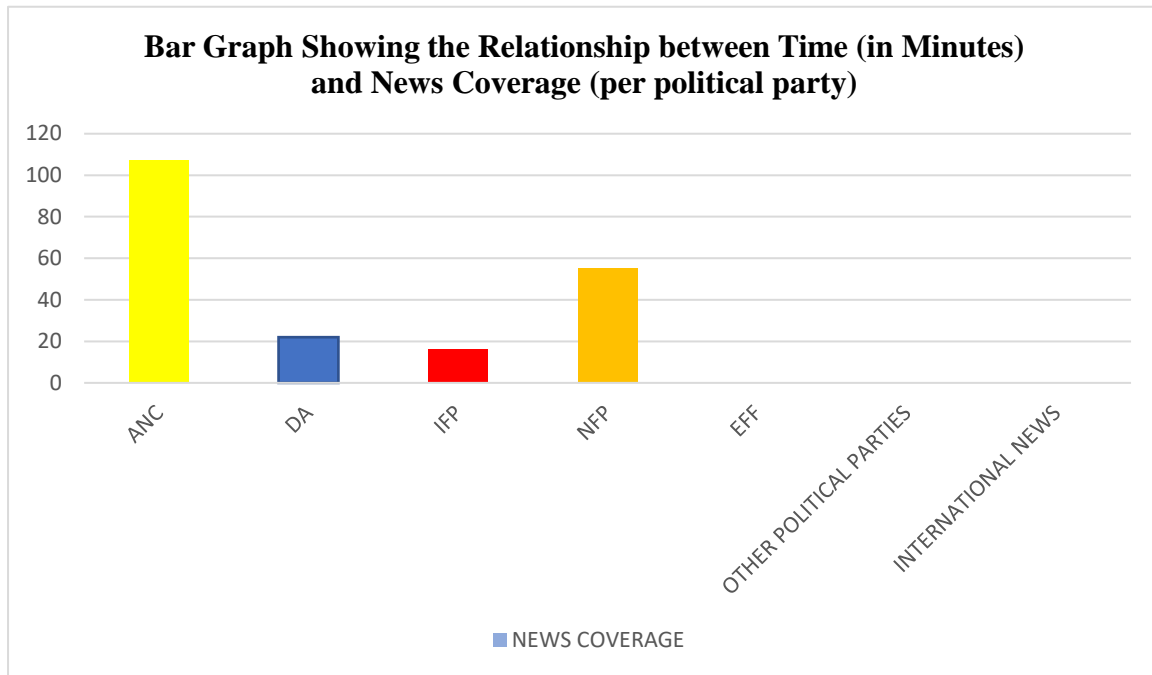
Translation:

“The time is 17:10 tonight, greetings and welcome to the special show as we continue to give you details about the South African local government elections”.

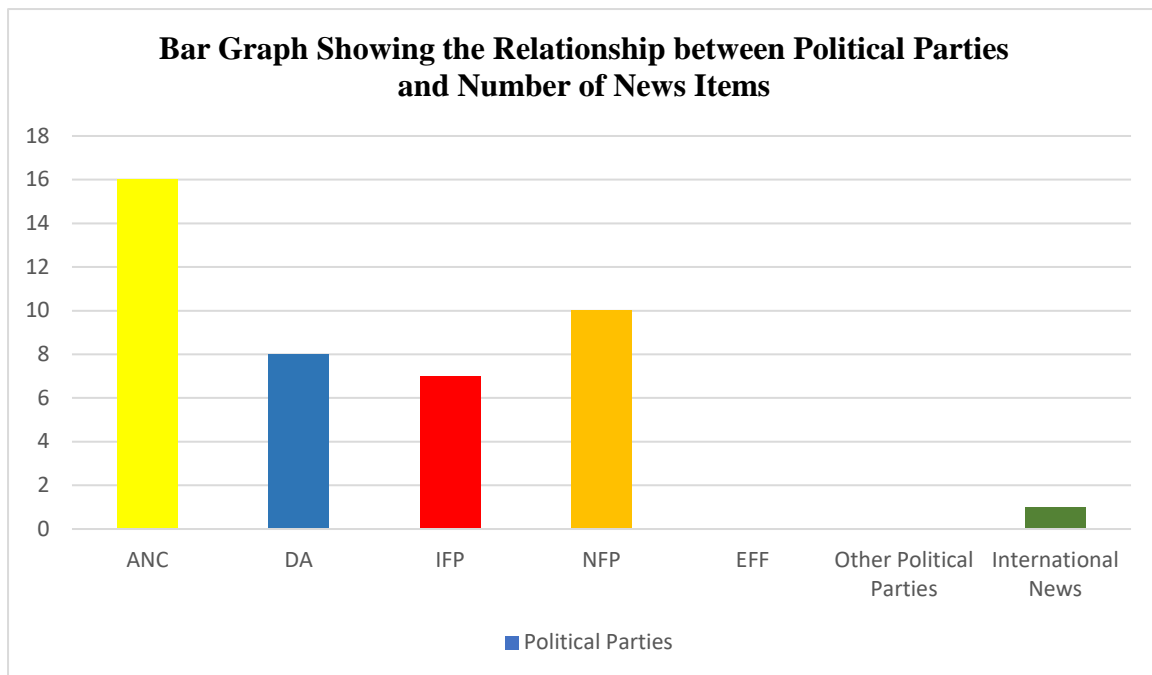
### **Political News Coverage**

The first question posed by the study is, “what political issues are covered by the show?” The data shows that the show covered a number of news items such as economics, sports, crime, service delivery, international politics, health issues and local political issues. The bar graphs below indicate the number of political news items per political party and the time given by the show to each political party in July 2016.

**Figure 5.2 time allocated to each political party**



**Figure 5.3 indicating the number of political news items per political party**



The bar graphs above showed political parties interviewed over the period under review (July 2016), and indicates whether the party representatives were invited or had their news covered by the show. The numbers of political items recorded in the bar graphs above are only political items in which a political party had coverage either alone or together with another political party. The time when a political party was covered together with another political party is not counted. For example, if the Democratic Alliance (DA) received coverage because it made a comment on a story of the African National Congress (ANC), then it was not counted as part of its' own coverage. This is on account of the fact that particular political party was covered because of that certain political party. The above coverage is also exclusive of political items such as political debate, for instance on July 1, 2016, July 8, 2016 and July 29, 2016, because the majority of the major political parties were all covered during these debates.

Data from the above bar graphs shows that the ANC had the largest number of political items recorded and it received more air time compared all the other political parties taken together. It was followed by the National Freedom Party (NFP), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The Economic Freedom Front (EFF) had no coverage in July 2016, except during political debates stipulated in the above dates.

The results provided by the data showed that out of thirteen political parties in South Africa, only four political parties were covered in the show. This indicates that the show was biased against other political parties and is it did not represent the principles of a public broadcaster. There was nothing that could have stopped the show from covering from each political party in 24 days. In chapter two of the current study, under "the media regulations after 1994", Madamombe (2005) argued that the end of apartheid government in South Africa did not only meant the end of oppression, but it also gave voice to ordinary South Africans previously denied the opportunity to raise their voice. Barnett (2004) added that the media experienced many changes after the first democratic elections of 1994 and added that policy formulation and control of the media changed around that time. As a result, people had power over the content represented in the media, and the majority had representation, democratically, in policy-making concerning the media. However, *Abasiki Bebunda*, in July 2016, reflected a neglect that was tantamount to censorship of political parties' other than the ANC in regard to news coverage. As previously mentioned in chapter four, the month under review was extremely important in terms of the political developments of the time. July 2016 was a month before the South African local government elections, therefore there were

supposed to be many political parties covered in this show, since as the afternoon drive programme, it was one of the most listened to on radio. The show should have served as a public sphere, which Habermas (1989), in chapter three of this study, defined it as a realm of our social life in which public opinions are formed. If a public sphere forms a platform in which a group of people would be able to set aside any differences, such as race and ethnicity, they would also be able to speak to one another as if they were social and economic peers. It is then disappointing to learn that there were political parties who used either their power or position to manipulate the concept of this public sphere. Political parties such as the ANC and other parties have dominated the realm of public sphere in the show *Abasiki Bebunda*. As a result, the less coverage of many political parties, or certain groups of people in such public discussion, has defeated the purpose of the public sphere.

There were number of political parties excluded during a critical month, a month where all-political parties were campaigning and reaching out to their followers, and this suggests that there were many people excluded from this show. Millions of listeners, the public, could not hear the representatives from their political parties, nor did not know what was happening in their political parties. *Abasiki Bebunda*, as a current affairs news programme, failed to share current affairs of all the political parties in July 2016 for listeners to learn more about their preferred political party and for the public to vote wise, despite the fact that many political parties shared their manifestos at that time.

The show covered international political news once, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2016. However, the international political news was about the former African Union leader, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who is also a South African politician. Dlamini-Zuma is a prominent member of the ANC, and the coverage may well have been related to her party affiliation, rather than the need for international coverage. Nevertheless, the relative lack of coverage could indicate that the show focused more on local news, although the excessive local political news could have been influenced by the local elections at that time.

Out of twenty-one days there were only five days during which there was no political news coverage in the show. This shows that the show also covered non-political items such as items on crime and service delivery, although there was a great deal of news.

One can conclude the show was primarily political in its news coverage; it covered mainly local news and it was pro-ANC in its coverage. The data implied that there is a need for the

producers to work hard in gathering and balancing news coverage, without which the show would cover only political news.

Even though Schultz (2005) has argued that radio is unlike newspapers; in that it has the opportunity to report news items as they happen and if a story is breaking news, radio is able to broadcast its news first, it would seem that *Abasiki Bebunda* did not fulfill the public service mandate of balancing news sourced from local, national and international spheres. This is true even of political coverage, of which there was mainly local news.

### **Time Allocated Per Political Party**

Political news had a total number of 206.37 minutes out of 1331 minutes of the show in July 2016. This constitutes 15.5% of the total number of minutes of the show in July 2016. The time presented by the data indicated that the show had enough time to give each South African political party a minimum of 1.2% of its total 15.5% news in July. However, many political parties did not get any time; the show excluded eight out of thirteen political parties. As indicated in Figure 5.2 above, the ANC had 108.05 minutes, DA had 22.74 minutes, NFP had 55.53 minutes, IFP had 16.05 minutes and EFF had 0 minutes, except only the times it was covered with another political party.

According to the data presented in figure 5.2, the ANC was given more time than any other political party. Adding together the time allocated to the other political parties do not reach the time given to the ANC alone. This shows that the ruling party is also ruling in the SABC, especially in Ukhozi FM and *Abasiki Bebunda*. The President of the ANC alone was given an hour on 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2016 in a live studio interview of the ANC president in Cape Town that occupied the entire programme; no other news was reported during the show. To make it special for the ANC President, the broadcast was a joint broadcast of Ukhozi FM, Mhlobo Wenene FM, True FM and Ligwalagwala FM.

Ngokukhethekileyo usasazo esulubambele eSea point eKapa. Usasazo lwezikhululo ezine zesinguni, Ukhozi FM, Umhlobo Wenene FM, Ligwalagwala FM kunye ne True FM. Lolu usasazo olukhethekileyo njengoba kusele izinsuku eziyishumi ngaphambi kokuba sibambe unyuro lohulumeni basemakhaya kulolonke leli leningizimu Afrika. Kanti namuhla siyakuthi sihlale naye omongameli we ANC, amongameli u Jacob Zuma. *Abasiki Bebunga* (21 July 2016)

Translation:

“In a special broadcast today we give you the show in four different radio stations, Ukhozi FM, Umhlobo Wenene FM, Ligwalagwala FM and True FM. This is a special broadcast as there are we are left with ten days before the 2016 local government elections. Today we are with the president, Jacob Zuma.”

The above quote indicated that the show gave the ANC preference and more time than any other party. It also suggested that the public sphere, as argued by Habermas to be a platform where citizens can share ideas and talk about issues of the society, is now a space for a few individuals; it has become ground for a particular political party. Drawing back from arguments of scholars such as Witherspoon and Kovitz (1987), Murdock (2004), Scannell (1989), Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli (1996), Donders (2011), Mpofu (1996) and Fourie (2003b) in chapter three, they argue about the model of a public broadcaster and pointed out the following principles; a public broadcaster should have geographic accessibility, even in deep rural areas. Everyone should have a chance to engage on societal issues in a public broadcaster. Public broadcasters should have a universal appeal to everyone and their programming should attract the public. A public broadcaster should accommodate everyone, regardless of their culture or race.

*Abasiki Bebunda*, Ukhozi FM and the SABC has allowed the ANC to be the ruling party even in the public broadcaster, Ukhozi FM. They have allowed the ANC to dominate the political news coverage. In a study, almost similar to this one, done by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2016 on “how the SABC failed the public in its coverage of the 2016 local government election”, they learnt the following about the SABC:

The analysis concluded that the SABC’s coverage was characterized by overwhelming bias in favor of accredited national leaders at the expense of local candidates and the electorate; a greater focus on personalities and conflict rather than electoral issues; poor representability of women actors; and a glaring urban/rural divide. The SABC, as a public broadcaster, is expected to play a key role in profiling candidates running for office and providing the audience with information on these candidates. However, the SABC gave prominence to the national political leaders of the three main parties – Jacob Zuma (ANC), Mmusi Maimane (DA) and Julius Malema (EFF) and mayoral candidates of the major metros – thereby limiting exposure of rank and file members, specifically the contesting ward councilors, the actual focus of the local elections (HSRC, 2016).<sup>27</sup>

One could argue that the ANC has been allowed to have priority since it is the ruling party with the majority votes. However, Muirhead (2016) argued that the SABC calls itself a public broadcaster, but does not seem able or interested in actually producing public-interest

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/review/hsrc-review-march-2017/2016-govt-election>



broadcasting that covers all the establishment interests in the country. He further argued “that media works best when it reflects society but in South Africa what we see too often in the coverage is a battle for power and privilege. Some use the media to entrench their power and others use it to preserve their privilege” (Muirhead, 2016).<sup>28</sup> The results from the data indicate that the producers of the show were biased when choosing what news to report. According to Nel (2001), in chapter two of this study, news is the occurrence of events; therefore news differs from time to time, and changes as new things happen. Journalists working on *Abasiki Bebunda* did not report news items as they occurred; nor did they attempt to balance the coverage of political coverage according to the number of new items that occurred in different political parties. This also shows that Harcup and O’Neill (2001), surveyed in the literature review chapter, were correct when arguing that news items do not select themselves, although journalist speaks of news as if they get to choose themselves.

### **Content of the Show**

The show covered various themes ranging from political news, conferences, international news, economics, sports news, entertainment news, community news, crime and elections. It had local, national and international news. The content of the show was gathered and covered differently, for example, there were live broadcasts in various places, studio interviews, reports by the SABC journalists, and telephonic interviews. The show did not cover every theme from the list above at the same time, but it covered a few themes each day. For example, on July 1, 2016 the show was an outside-broadcast of a live a political debate for the entire hour. July 21, 2016 there was a studio interview with President Jacob Zuma as a guest the entire hour. Some days the show would have two or more items throughout the hour. For example, July 25, 2016 there were two political items and there were other non-political items as well. This suggest that the show needed more time because there is nothing much it could do in an hour, considering that there were also adverts, news bulletins, traffic updates and weather updates within the same hour.

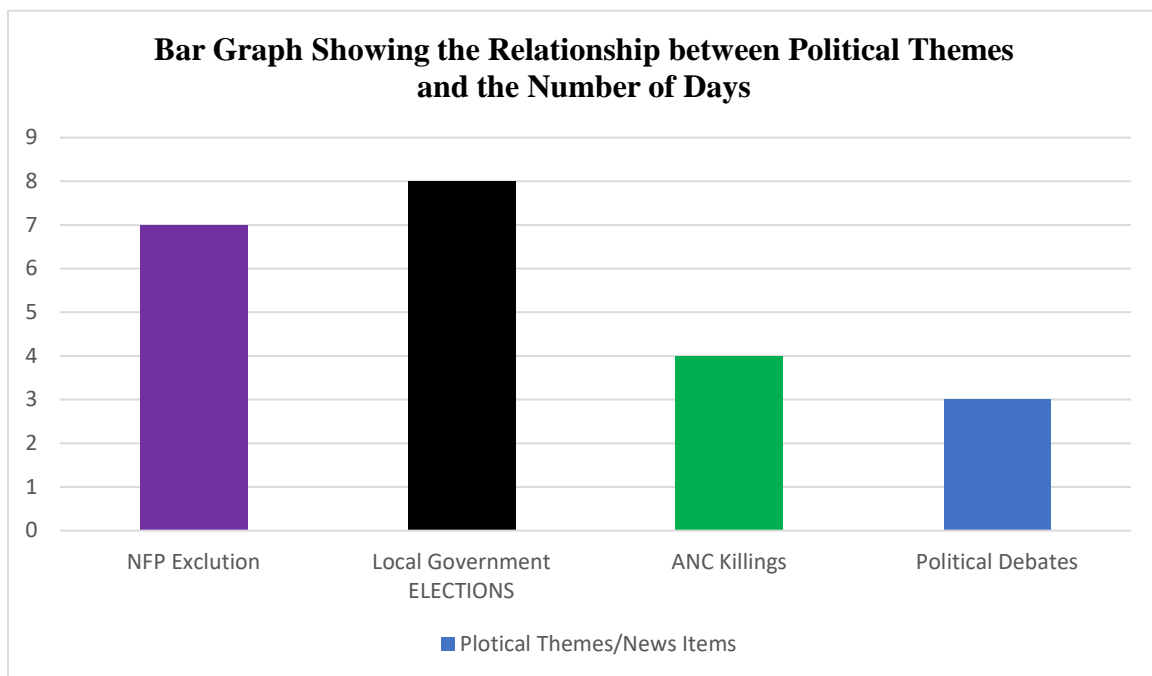
In July 2016, the show had different political news items or themes covered. The data showed that news items around the ANC; NFP exclusion from the local elections; killings of ANC political candidates; service delivery; political debates and political elections were the major issues that received the most attention of the show. These political themes did not only appear for a number of days but they were also given more time. The NFP exclusion from the

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-03-08-a-view-from-outside-is-south-africas-media-transformed/#.Wf4R-rpuLcs>

local government elections news appeared for seven days out of twenty-one days (33.3%) in July 2016. News on the 2016 local government elections appeared for eight days in twenty-one days (38.1%). The news about the killing of ANC political candidates for the local government elections appeared four times out of twenty-one days (19%). The show covered political debates three times in twenty-one days (14%).

**Figure 5.4 shows the themes that were mostly covered in July 2016 by the number of days it appeared in the show.**



Key:

NFP Exclusion ■ Local Government Elections ■ ANC Killings ■ Political Parties ■

Out of 1320 minutes of the show the political content of the show, consist of 447.94 minutes (34%). This suggests that the majority of the programme, more than a quarter of the show, was concerned with political content. One could also argue that the study has results for only one month out of twelve months, which implies that the results could change if the study was

for a longer duration. This is one of the shortcomings of the methodology used in the study and it is a gap for other scholars to study the show extensively.

### **Public Participation**

Amongst other questions, the study intended to answer the means by which public can be allowed to participate in the broadcast Ukhozi FM as a public service broadcaster is expected to promote public participation. *Abasiki Bebunda* have created a public sphere through the show, which according to Habermas (1974) is in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. The private individuals during the hour of the show, irrespective of their area of residence, re able to come together to form one public body called listeners. Through the Internet they are able to communicate via social media about issues discussed in *Abasiki Bebunda*. They are able to communicate beyond the broadcast airtime time of the show. Through social media the presenter can post a topic for discussion even before the show starts and members of the public sphere (*Abasiki Bebunda*) can start discussing it. Fraser (1990) also added that this public assembling of individuals to discuss matters of their interest is possible when there is democracy that allows freedom of assemble, freedom of speech and the allowance of public participation. However, freedom of speech in *Abasiki Bebunda* depended, and was in the hands of the presenter reading comments send in by listeners, answering calls or reading emails coming from the public. Even though, in theory, anyone was able to discuss matters on the social media accounts of the show, those who are not able to access social media only depended on the presenter reading comments from other people.

Based on the data collected, the evidence indicates that the show allowed public participation during the broadcast. The public called in, sent emails, and comments via social media and the audience contributed and were included in live broadcast. Crisell's (1986) argument, in chapter two of this study, that radio is a blind medium in which both listeners and presenters cannot see each other or receive interactive messages, and that radio consist of just noise and silence, does not apply in this show. The show also consisted of live broadcasts outside its studios and when reporting, it reported recordings of live interviews with listeners in different areas. Deducing from the listener's participation on this show it is evidential that the show was a national radio station. It featured different people, commenting from different places in South Africa. On 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2016, the show had a studio interview with President Jacob Zuma, linked to three other national radio stations. This disrupted and shapes the history of

Radio Bantu and the history of Ukhozi FM in a different way from what scholars have argued in chapter two of the study. It also implies that the issue of language barrier was not a problem in this show. People from other provinces are able to participate in an isiZulu orientated radio station.

However, in July 2016, the show had only six days out of twenty-one days of the month where the public got a chance to participate during political coverage. These days were the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016 in an outside broadcast of a political debate, followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, on a report about the exclusion of the NFP from the local government. The 7<sup>th</sup> of July was followed on 12 July with a live interview with the IFP about housing crisis. The last one was 15 July when the presenter read comments of the public from social media regarding the court ruling against the NFP being part of the 2016 local government elections. On July 20 the presenter read Twitter comments from the public on an issue of members of the DA moving to ANC, and lastly, July 29 on a live debate at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Howard College. The low level of public participation during political coverage indicates that the show allowed, but did not encourage, participation during political news coverage. This could be as a result of too much content when it time for political items and there are many commentators during this theme.

Furthermore, in the six days of public participation, two of the days the show was forced to allow the public to participate because the format was a political debate and it cannot be a debate without the public participating. On the other three out of six days, the presenter read comments from social media, which also indicated that the presenter had the liberty to choose the social media platform from which to read, and choose whose comments to read. Therefore it can be concluded that the public sphere created by the show was different from the ideal type of the Habermas public sphere. “Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion, that is with the guarantee of freedom of assembly, association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions about matters of general interest” (Habermas et al., 1974:1). In the public sphere created by *Abasiki Bebunda*, the public did not behave as a public body when they discussed issues, because they were not in an unrestricted public sphere. There was no guarantee of freedom to express their opinion because the presenter controlled, or did, not read every comment from the public through social media, via emails and through phone calls. It meant this public sphere was restricted in terms of freedom of expression. People participated, but the show producers and the presenter controlled their contribution.

The low level of participation from the public could be have caused by loss of interest on the part of the public on political issues. However, was unlikely, since July 2016 was a month before the government local elections, and many political parties were interacting with and reaching out to their followers. The data reveals differently: when the content is non-political, there was a high level of participation through telephone call, emails and social media. On the 12st of July 2016, for example, the show reported a scandal from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) for the entire hour of the programme; and this elicited a large number of calls from the public, as well as many social media comments and emails which were read during the show. There was also more participation in the show on 19 and 27 July 2016, when the public participated via social media. Moreover, the presenters had a major role to play in terms of public participation on the show, because some presenters decided to read comments from social media, read emails and answer calls from listeners while others reader fewer listener responses. It is a shortcoming of the study that it could not investigate the extent to which the presenters were able to influence public participation. The only part shown by the data is that it was the presenter of the show who decided to take calls or invite listeners to participate through calls and social media. It could be concluded through the information presented by the data thus far, that the presenter had a role in the participation of the public. The public was given time to participate during the show and also encouraged to continue participating even when the show is over.

There is no evidence from the data that the public had influence on the political content covered in the show. In all the recordings the presenter introduced the team that had produced the show. In July 2016 the presenter did not mentioned the influence that the public, through social media or through an email, had in shaping content, or had influencing any of the themes/topics. This suggested that the production team of the show, together with the SABC news department, made their own journalistic decisions on what was (and was not) newsworthy. This also suggested that the SABC news department had their own right to report or not report on any event. Thus, despite the public being able to freely participate in the public sphere created by the show, they were only able to do so if the SABC news department allowed it. If the producer or the presenter forgot to give the public time to comment, or read their comments on air, there would be no participation and sharing of views about a common interest. There were also other additional effects such as time that has influence on the show allowing the public to participate and marking the public sphere open to many people. Another important factor is the amount of content covered in the show. On

some days the show had more content than on others, which could then make it impossible to allow the public to debate some of the issues reported in the show.

The show serves its purpose of being a news current affair show or programme because it informs the public. It falls on the margins of a radio magazine and it meets the requirement of a public broadcaster, despite that the large number of coverage of the ANC. As mentioned in chapter three of the study, the show allowed the public to participate and it has created a public sphere but the public sphere has shortcomings. The show broadcast news as one of their key objectives. The data revealed that the show covered different themes and also manage to allow the public to also participate. The amount of political content compared to other themes covered in the show could be an indication that the show has not turned into a public relations platform for political parties. The content within the political theme indicates that that the show reported news, in most cases, instead of allowing political parties to use the show as a platform for public relations. Despite that the data showed that the ANC received more time compared to other political parties, but the party kept on reporting news happening in the ANC instead of marketing the ANC.

## **Conclusion**

*Abasiki Bebunda*, as a news current affairs show, has different themes and different types of news it covers. It has local, national and international news. It is not only a news programme but it also report news on sports or weather. Amongst the TOPICS revealed by the data, political themes around NFP exclusion from the 2016 local government elections, service delivery, killing of ANC candidates and political debates appeared often. The data revealed that the show was well-structured for its listenership, especially, and its' timeslot made it very attractive to the listeners. It has a team of producers, reporters and presenters, which makes it very informative and validated because it is not a one man's show and his ideas. The political content comprises 34% of the total news covered in the show. The show covers political content from different parties and from different levels. It has local, national and international political news. The chapter revealed that amongst the political coverage in the show, there is more political coverage given to certain political parties, particularly, the ANC. The chapter revealed that the show is bias to certain political parties because there are a lot of political parties that are not covered in the show. However, even amongst those that got covered in the show, they are not given the same time. Some political parties, such as the ANC and the NFP had more coverage in July 2016.

The study revealed that the public broadcaster allows public participation and it has created a public sphere, a platform where the public can discuss matters of their interest. The public were able to discuss issues of their interest in this show, for examples, in the political debates championed by the show. The public opinions from social media were read during the show and calls from the public were taken and people were allowed to voice out their opinions. However, during political coverage there is less participation from the public compared to other themes, such as service delivery. The study indicates that the show is still a current affairs show not a platform for political parties to use it as their political public relation tool. Despite the show's inability to be transparent regarding the coverage of all political parties and public participation but the show is still a vehicle for news reporting. Although the show is in a public radio and has opened a public sphere but the public does not have power to set the agenda and to shape what is being covered in the show.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study explores the political coverage in *Abasiki Bebunda* in July 2016 with an aim to answer the following research questions; what political issues/news does *Abasiki Bebunda* cover, does the programme show transparency in reporting news and investigate whether the show cover certain political parties more than others, how far does the show allow participation of the public during this show and to find out if the show still serve its purpose of being a news programme or it has been turned in to a platform where political parties conduct their public relations and use it for their political gain? The study conducted in Durban is a content analysis and adopted a qualitative approach. Conducting the research, the researcher used the show *Abasiki Bebunda* as a case study in exploring the political coverage in the show and answering the research questions. The data was collected through recording, bought from SABC, the show throughout July 2016. The methodology employed by the research successfully produced the desired results.

Chapter two provided a debate amongst scholars on different issues that were indicated above. The literature revealed important resembling usefulness for the other chapters. The history of radio has brought a clear understand of the invention of radio and its purpose. One of the works shown by radio in this study is the ability of radio to inform the public on current issues. In the study, it has been evidential that radio has become a platform in which people can interact and share their opinion on issues affecting them. Work done by other scholars on radio broadcasting, the rise of radio network reveals a lot of change in the way radio is today from what it has been in the past decades. Radio can now reach a lot of people and different places as compared to years ago, especially in South Africa. Ukhozi FM, for instance, it is listened by different people from different provinces across the country and abroad. The rise of technology has been helpful in the broadcasting industry and its impact is evidential because listeners today do not only listen to radio on their smart phones but they can also interact with the presenter and other listeners at the same time. Relating to the work by different scholars in chapter two of the study, indicates that the subject being studied in this research is not relatively new but there is a gap for new work.

The history of radio in South Africa, radio Bantu and the history of Ukhozi FM brought an understand of how broadcasting in isiZulu come into being and the transitions, roles played



by radio in the past decades in the black communities. Scholars such as (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005; Horwitz, 2001; Hamm, 1991; Scannell, 1990), has shown that it has been a long journey for the South African broadcasting industry. Their work brings an understanding of the industry before it is the way it is today. The regulation before and after 1993 indicates a huge change that has occurred in the media industry and the changes are validated by the availability of radio programmes such as *Abasiki Bebunda* where the public can interact and participate freely without being regulated by government. The study confirmed, through social media participation, emails and calls from listeners, that the media and radio at large is now free. There is more participation from the public compared to radio before 1993, where the public didn't have much to contribute. Radio news, talk radio and radio magazine was very important since it helps in analyzing whether the news data collected during the show is aligned to what scholars such as Crisell (1994), Harcup and O'Neill (2001), Barbour (2000), Pennington, (2000), Hilmes, (1997) and Geller, (2012) view radio news, talk radio shows and radio magazine programmes.

Public sphere theory used by the study indicated that *Abasiki Bebunda* as news current affairs programme and a talk show should allow public participation on discussions around issues of their interest. It became a point of reference in finding out whether *Abasiki Bebunda* has created a public sphere, a platform where the public can participate in discussions during the show. The study revealed that Ukhozi FM and the programme have allowed even an ordinary citizen to be part of critical debates around issues of their interest. When people called into the show they mentioned their area, which validates that anyone from anywhere had a chance to participate or add something in the show. The public was also able to be part of political debates which were live. The public participated through calling during the show and via social media. The public sphere theory played an important role as a lens to view the study of news political coverage in the show. Through this theory the study was able to obtain the scope in which a public service broadcaster should open platforms such as the one created by *Abasiki Bebunda*. It was easy to evaluate whether the show is in line with the theory that advocates for open access of information and freedom of participation. However, the data revealed that even though the public was able to participate through social media and calls during the show, there were few participants during political coverage compared to the number of participants during other themes such as crime or service delivery.

## Recommendations

It is important to highlight the impressive work done by the show in keeping the public informed and providing current affairs news to the nation. Most importantly, the show has allowed the public to engage, especially on issues that concern themselves. It is different from other shows that other radio stations has because listeners are not only consumers but they take part in the makeup of the show. There is time given to listeners to constructively play a big role in the show, instead of asking for a song or asking the presenter to greet their loved ones. In other radio shows, with similar intentions such as *Abasiki Bebunda* the presenter would play songs and create a discussion that doesn't have value in the lives of the public. *Abasiki Bebunda* reflects what a public broadcaster radio programme should be. There is no doubt that the show has reached millions of listeners, especially because Ukhozi FM is estimated to have more than seven million listeners. The show, through its political coverage, it has made many political to be accountability since they are scared of being exposed. In the political debates covered before the 2016 local government elections political parties were able to account and make promises to their followers. Questions from the public were answered, for example, some political parties were able to clarify few problems, such as the exclusion of the NFP from the 2016 local government elections. The show covered a lot of local political content which suggest that the show has adopted the resolutions of the SABC for more local content in music and programming.

Despite the achievements, mentioned above, there is a need for improvement. The show need to balance the coverage between political parties because the study revealed that there were few political parties which were covered. The show need to add more time to accommodate more other political news and more public participation. There is a great need for the public to be given enough time to participate through all platforms. During July 2016 there were few people calling and those who participated through social media were able to do so because the presenter was able to read their comments. The show need to add 30 minutes more because there is a lot of content covered by the show. It could also reduce the number of adverts played during the show.

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