The Role of Development Communication in Enhancing Listeners' Participation in Community Radio: A Case Study of Forte FM Radio

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ABSTRACT This paper ascertains the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' participation in community radio, drawing on Forte FM radio in Nkonkobe Municipality in Alice, Eastern Cape. The aim of the paper was to ascertain how development programmes initiated by the community members can increase and enhance listeners' participation in the programming of Forte FM radio station. This paper adopts a qualitative research approach. Convenience and purposive non-probability samplings techniques were subsequently used to select samples for this paper. In-depth interviews were conducted with the radio station manager while one focus group discussion each was held with residents of Golf Course and Ntselamanzi areas with eight participants in each focus group, making a total of sixteen participants for the focus group discussions. The findings of this paper showed the relevance of development communication as a blueprint in enhancing listeners' participation. Listeners interviewed in the course of carrying out the focus group discussion at the two sampled areas were of the views that the community radio station has been helpful in facilitating the provision of social amenities, but emphasised that a lot has to be done in order to increase listeners' participation on the part of the radio station. Hence, Forte FM radio needs to intensify more efforts by consulting community members on development initiatives programmes in order to attract listeners' participation.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is vital to human existence. Like the oxygen systems human life, communication helps to sustain human society. Without it no society can progress and survive. It is a tool for social interaction' which helps to promote collective actions and other social behaviours that make life meaningful and interesting to everyone. The popular American slang expression "Man cannot *not* communicate" shows the indispensability of communication. Hence, in the absence of verbal communication, interpersonal communication abounds. Communication is a variety of behaviour processes through which meanings are transmitted or derived from information. Communication is the core of our humanness. How one communicates with each other sharpens lives and the world. Human being relies on communication skills to resolve challenges that affect ones flexibility, integrity, expressiveness and critical thinking skills (Kass 2017). There is no communication without a message being passed across through communication chains like channels, context, feedback, and effect. In line with the above assertion, the most common means to pass across educative information to the marginalised communities is through community radio.

Radio is popularly known as one of the cheapest and best ways to reach the grassroots audience in targeted and useful ways. Aside its ubiquitous presence in most Africa homesteads (Ufuophu-Biri 2017). Radio as a medium and means of sending and receiving information has the ability of the listeners to "hear" content, context, passion, and pain in the words and terms used by the targeted communities (Webster 2011). Radio has the capacity to reach a large heterogeneous audience simultaneously and penetrates to the remote rural areas in the community. Radio is a vital instrument of choice for development communication activities, radio has been effective to send and receive health information, educate listeners on the essence of health campaigns and safety use of vaccines to save lives from numerous health challenges. This paper noted that, community broadcasters have the notion of improving the welfare of their listeners by performing the major characteristics and functions of a radio station, which are to educate, inform, entertain and persuade its listeners amongst others in community development programmes.

Gaynor and O'Brien (2017) noted that community radio stations provide significant community-building functions. Community radio

enables dialogue between different sections of a community, builds a common local background, and encourages the articulation of local cultural and political agendas. This can be achieved through the community public sphere and community broadcasting by contributing to cultural empowerment or cultural citizens. However, the example of Forte FM community radio station located in Alice, Eastern Cape shows that community media's primary assignment in motivating local dialogue and building community identity is not immune from hegemonic processes. Definitely, it is obvious that community media performs a community-building function with the use of common terms such as "sharing", "development", "participation", "association", "fellowship" and the "possession of a common faith" (Feinstein 2015). While terms such as "exclusion", "control", "competition", "conflict" and "enmity" are also applicable to community building and are often used than not in community media to enhance listeners' participation and community development. The objective of this paper is therefore to ascertain the role of development communication in enhancing Forte FM's listeners' participation in Nkonkobe Municipality in Alice, Eastern Cape.

Literature Review

Perspectives of Community Radio

Community radio has been defined and viewed from various angles by different researchers and media scholars. Tabing (2002:9) observes community radio as "one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community". Community radio, therefore is founded with the notion to serve as a succour for the people in a community, it is meant to serve as a source of eliciting information and providing programmes to educate, entertain and inform the community through an opportunity to be involved in programme implementation and activities taking place in the radio station. This definition clearly differentiates the modus operandi of community radio from mainstream media. The disparity being that while commercial and public service broadcasting (models) both treat listeners as objects to be captured for advertisers or to be informed, community radio aspires to treat listeners as subjects and participants (Mhagama 2016). Related to the above notion, significantly, radio stations are founded and controlled by the interest of community members to some extent. The community could be either geographical or a community of interest (Mori 2014). Nossek and Carpentier (2019) further asserted that community radio station is "a non-profit station currently broadcasting, which offers a service to the community in which it is located, or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of the community in the radio". This definition never underestimates the aim of community radio as being operated as a non-profit entity that gives room for participation of citizen members of the community. Furthermore, the radio station is under an association, thrust or foundation and it aims to serve and benefit that community (Gultom 2016).

This paper wants to note some imbalances on the rationale for community radio and mainstream media by different terms and areas used, and how it is being utilised based on the notion of founding the media in the specific geographical area of the universe. The earliest community radio stations to be founded were Radio Sutatenza in Columbia in 1947 and the Miners' Radio in 1949 in Bolivia, both in Latin America (Tsarwe 2014). These earliest models of community radios were known as 'People's Radio' or 'Popular Radio' and became the voice of the voiceless poor, and a tool for development (Mhagama 2016). In addition, landless peasants, urban shack dwellers, impoverished indigenous nations and trade unions used community radio to voice their concerns and to mobilise themselves in an attempt to alleviate their poverty (Mhagama 2016). Mhagama (2016) further postulates the disparity between "community radio" and "popular radio" literally. That is, community radio means a social function limited to democratising communication or a way of providing access to the public sphere (Fombad and Jiyane 2019), while popular radio implies a project of social emancipation, incorporating all social groups that are marginalised or excluded from power at a global level (Faisal and Alhassan 2018).

Contrary to the above assertion, it is obvious that there is an imbalance between the roles and attributes of community radio and popular

radio because access to mediated communications is a powerful way of rectifying past imbalances by giving voice to the disadvantaged people at the grassroots. Latin America further asserted some significant issues that underpinned the rationale behind the control of community radio stations and how the role of development and participation can be motivated (Yung and Leung 2014). For instance, Radio Sutatenza was founded and controlled by a Catholic Priest, which implies that it was privately owned by an individual. However, the founder Priest through his development initiative projects organised adult literacy campaigns, which gives room for community members' participation and also serves as a source of acquiring knowledge and social interaction. In contrast, the Miners' Radio of Boliva was established by the miners themselves through their civil society groups (Gultom 2016). They possessed amiable attributes among which are independent, self-sustained, self- managed and faithfully served the interest of their communities (Tsarwe 2014).

Trends of Community Radio Broadcasting Within and Outside South Africa

More recently, community radio broadcasting in African countries welcomed local involvement in decision-making through public avenues for the coming together of the grassroots societies (Ayeomoni and Aladejana 2016). The advancement of community radio broadcasting in South Africa is one of the dividends of the country's transition from monopolistic state to a democratic country in 1994, after the end of apartheid. This was due to the move to democratise the media wave as a development tool (Mhagama 2016). Media broadcasting has been operated by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in the throes of the apartheid before the establishment of public, commercial and community media (Gunner 2000).

Following the establishment of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act in 1993, it became the body responsible to oversee the issuance of broadcasting license, regulating and monitoring broadcasting programmes in South Africa, as well as policy making on broadcasting activities. The body made it a point of duty to protect both national and regional identity of citizens, for instance, the marginalised communities who were deprived of their rights during the apartheid era (Khan et al. 2017). The IBA set out to encourage the ownership and control of broadcasting services by people from previously disadvantaged groups (Chiumbu, and Ciaglia 2015). Hence, (Chiumbu, and Ciaglia 2015) reflects that the common citizens in a set community are being given the opportunity to be involved in the decision making of a broadcast media. However, this paper wants to argue against (Chiumbu, and Ciaglia 2015) opinion that, community radio does not involve the common citizens in the decision making of the broadcast media, but rather encourages the community to be part of its programmes through the media public sphere programs.

Community radio stations are classified as small scale decentralised broadcasting initiatives, which are easily accessed by local people, actively encouraged their participation in programming, and which includes some elements of community ownership or membership (Mwaniki et al. 2017). In line with the above definition of community radio, Bush Radio community radio in South Africa meets the criteria of how a community radio should represent its community as mandated by IBA. Bush Radio was rooted as an organisation that produces audiocassettes through its foundation as a community radio station. However, the Cassette Education Trust (CASET) produced and distributed cassette tapes, containing speeches from banned political activists, local music and revolutionary poetry in Cape Town in the early 1980s. Shortly, after the first National Democratic Elections in June 1994, CASET evolved into Bush Radio community radio, the first community radio project in South Africa. In addition, media programmes such as Cassette Education Trust (CASET), Theatre, Women's and Labour Movements, and community media initiatives, which include the Community Video Education Trust (CVET), and The Film and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) encouraged the community's participation through the conduction of training workshops, organised conferences and summits. All these provided platforms where participants were enjoined to express themselves on the inputs and outputs of the programming of the radio station (Fombad and Jiyane 2016). This paper wants to

note that community media is expected to provide an avenue where skills and knowledge can be acquired by the community members it intends to serve so as to enhance community participation and development.

A look at the historical background of the founding community radio in western Africa is also worth juxtaposing. In Ghana, a private media organisation had served as a major medium of receiving information in the country. In addition, in 1992 when the deregulation of broadcasting system in Ghana by the then Ghana Frequency Allocation and Board (GFAB), popularly known as the National Communication Authority (NCA), lifted a ban against the private media which gave rebirth to the emergence of print media in the country. However, the first independent community radio founded in Ghana was Radio Ada. The community radio had its first experience on air on February 1, 1998, which brought the community's voice to the limelight, after the government liberated the airwaves and licensed the non-governmental, commercial, and community non- profit media stations (Faisal and Alhassan 2018).

Some of the community media founded after Radio Ada were, Radio Peace in Winneba, Radio Progress in Wa, and Radio Builsa in Sandema, Upper East Region amongst others registered under the Companies Code Act 1963 of Ghana, and broadcast on different bandwidths. This paper wants to note that in Africa, community radio is an instrument of information for both citizens and the government to ensure a democratisation process that cut across the continent in 1990. The democratisation was meant to deregulate the broadcasting industry from the mainstream media, and authoritarian system of government that was controlling the media wave, and thereby encourage participatory and liberalised broadcast system (Faisal and Alhassan 2018).

On the other hand, in line with the establishment of community radio in East Africa, historically, East Africa has the oldest forms of community radio practices in Africa. These community radios practices include community-based print initiatives, theatre groups, video, community-based puppets, as well as organising of conferences and workshops. Community media initiative is a powerful instrument that encourages citizen participation and development activities for Kenyan citizens, which possesses a strong network (Kenya Community Media Network or KCOMNET). Theatre, varying from folk and forum theatres, street theatres, road shows, drama, community development and conventional theatre has its root and significance in Kenya community media, which has been the most successful oldest and relevant form of community media in Kenya (Samuels et al. 2017).

In a related view, the print community media include the Sasa Newspaper of Korogocho, Slum Newsletter of Majango, Chemchemi Newsletter produced by a Kenya Peace Movement (KPM), and others. Similarly, there are quite a number of community radio stations such as Lake Victoria Radio and Video, Homa Bay, and music productions that emerged from the community, as well as the Masemo radio project that features students, community members, and stakeholders within and outside Kenya (Metula and Osunkunle 2019). In a nutshell, this paper confirmed that community radio has been and will continually be an effective instrument for local developmental purposes in Africa. Community radio promotes and enhances the marginalised communities' development.

Participatory Development Communication Approach

Participation is central to the task of achieving development. Participation is the active involvement of target beneficiaries in the process of planning, implementing and follow-up of development programmes. Participation is an important element in any development programme. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full participation of the target group. Participation boosts listeners' sense of belonging and commitment as well as imbues the community with self-confidence and self-worth, which are elements of a successful development programme.

Development is not something that can be brought in from outside and thrust on people. Each society must define its own model of development in the light of its specific context, its culture, its resources and its value (Vhembo 2019). In line with the above, participatory development communication entails seeking the

active involvement and participation of community members or individuals in development initiatives through a strategic utilisation of various communication strategies that would enhance listeners' participation in community radio.

In addition to the above claims, participatory development communication is the process of involving the marginalised communities in identifying their development problems, discovering its many dimensions, identifying potentials solutions (or a set of action) and taking decisions on a concrete set of actions to equip or implement development (Vhembo 2019). Asuman and Diedong (2019) observed participatory development communication in the process of planning and using communication resources, channels, approaches and strategies in programmes designed to bring about progress, change development, and on the involvement of the people or community in development efforts. Participatory development communication is based on self-reliance and self-development. It seeks the involvement of people in their own development process. Participatory development communication emphasises on planning and implementation of development programmes by the intended beneficiaries. In addition, Etika (2019) noted that participatory development communication allowed people to identify or decide what their needs are, plan how to achieve their set goals, obtain whatever assistance that may come from government or municipality, thereby implement their plans on their own with the development communication leading from behind.

This paper wants to note that in participatory development communication, the development planner plays the role of a development facilitator, rather than as an expert. His task is to bring together all stakeholders, including community members, government, NGOs in dialogue and exchange of ideas on community needs that requires development interventions. In addition, the development planner promotes dialogue and horizontal exchange of ideas, views and opinions. Participation entails individuals being active in development programme processes by contributing ideas, taking initiative and articulating their needs and problems, alongside asserting their pressing needs and problems, and autonomy. Thus, all social groups as well as the community members are able to contribute to resolving their community problems. It is worthy to note that in participatory development communication approach, communities are not considered as beneficiaries of a development initiative rather they are perceived as stakeholders who have valuable contribution in the development process. Hence, the development planner collaborates and develops partnership with the communities to achieve a developmental goal. In line with the above, the role of community members in participating as decision-makers is of great significance to effect capacity building, and empowerment by portraying present social movement to help one another (Fledderus et al. 2014).

Theoretical Framework

From Modernisation Theories to Another Development Theory

Theoretical background is vital in examining the role of development communication in enhancing listener's participation in Forte FM radio station. Development projects are influenced by different theories regarding development work (Ettinger and Cohen 2020). This paper is guided by modernisation theory and an approach termed "another development". The "another" development paradigm has been defined as need oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on participatory development and structural transformations (Servaes and Lie 2015). The approach focuses on community participation in development projects.

Modernisation theory is based on development gap. The theory states that for third world countries to attain development, they have to pass through the process of modernisation. Modernisation to this school of thought is the solution to underdevelopment. Modernisation at the social system levels refers to the intense application of scientific knowledge and technology, specialisation of labour, interdependence of markets, and large concentration of capital and rising levels of material well-being (Milan 2009). However, the modernisation theory has been critically criticised for not encouraging citizens' participation at endogenous level. There was no room for marginalised communities to set their own development agenda or participate in the development

except as passive and pliant recipients of development messages (Howley 2013).

The premise of this paper is the idea that community radio stations such as Forte FM, which serves as a tool of community development should seek the active involvement and participation of community members and listeners' in development initiatives programmes, by utilising right communication tools in setting programs that would enhance listeners' participation in Forte FM programming. This approach can be termed as development work, making expert or development initiatives realise that they can also learn from receivers of the project, and that through face-to-face communication, which provides an avenue for listeners' involvement in development-related message, would create a positive result.

METHODOLOGY

This paper made use of a qualitative research method and descriptive research approach to ascertain the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' participation in the activities of Forte FM radio. Rahman (2017) notes that qualitative research is adopted in many ways, especially when dealing with several types of enquiries to aid understanding and thereby explaining the meaning of a social phenomenon, by providing a picture of a situation as it unfolds. Therefore, to ascertain the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' participation in the activities of Forte FM, people's voices were sampled qualitatively. In this paper, a descriptive research approach was adopted to ascertain the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' views. A focus group discussion was held among the residences of Golf Course and Ntselamanzi both in Alice, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa and in-depth interviews were conducted with the Station Manager of Forte FM. Two focus group discussions were conducted comprising of 8 participants that were purposively picked from each of the two selected residential areas making a total of 16 participants involved, ranging from the ages of 18 to 65 years, and comprising both males and females. The sampling frame focuses only on active listeners of Forte FM community radio station who participate in the community radio programmes. The data collected enabled the paper to gather a wide range of views on listeners' participation in media content and development activities of the community radio. The focus group discussion was conducted in English language and interpreted in IsiXhosa language, the acceptable and commonly used language in the community with the aid of a trained assistant.

Data Analysis

Golf Course Participants' Views on How Forte FM Has Contributed to Their Development

It was important to ask a critical question from the participants to know how Forte FM programmes have affected their lives, and the participants from the Golf Course focus group attested that the radio station programmes has a positive impact on the listeners. One of the participants actually opined that:

"The programmes of the radio station have brought some development to our residential areas, they help us by addressing and passing our grievances to the municipality in order to enjoy the basic social amenities as a community which includes availability of street lights, provision of water and street road inter-locking, amongst others."

Another participant stated that:

"The programming of Forte FM has affected us in a good way, because the radio station understood the community's needs and broadcast mainly what is happening in our surroundings and thus, guarantees our confidence to call-in-to live programmes."

The general view of all the participants in Golf Course was that the community radio is performing one of its objectives by bringing positive changes to the development of the community, unlike commercial or public broadcasting radio that gives no room for the contributions of the communities and with limited feedback. This view is also supported by Milan (2009), who noted that community radio stations are used to communicate developmental news in various ways through participation and publishing of development initiatives.

Ntselamanzi Focus Group Participants' Views on How Forte FM Has Contributed to Their Development

The views of the participants from the Ntselamanzi focus groups vary from the Golf Course views. Some residents' opinion about how Forte FM has contributed to their development was both positive and negative. However, they confirmed that the radio station has always been impactful in terms of information dissemination and sensitisation of the community on public awareness. One of the participants said that:

"The radio station has always been informative by communicating and passing announcements on the demise of a community member. It has also brought physical development to the community most especially, for the Victoria Hospital Road, which is currently under construction and at a fast pace."

The second participant that reacted negatively to how Forte FM has affected him revealed that their voices and narratives were not robust enough to have a positive impact on their welfare, especially lack of good roads and the streetlights problem. He said that:

"We have been experiencing power outrage on our streetlights for some couple of months which has not been fair enough."

Another participant in the same focus group discussion attested that:

"We love the way the radio station communicates in our local dialect (IsiXhosa), it makes us to feel at home without any disparity about the local happenings in our community."

This view is also supported by Fabian and Reestorff (2015), who suggested that community radio stations provide significant community building functions by enabling dialogue between different sections of a community, building on common local backgrounds and encourages the articulation of local, cultural and political agendas.

Bamigboye et al. (2017) also reflects that language' as a medium of communication is marketable if it has the potential to serve as a tool and means of which its users can meet their material needs.

This paper noted that, much of what has been said by Golf Course and Ntselamanzi focus group participants shows that Forte FM community radio has tremendously brought infrastructure development to the community and serves as a mouthpiece for the grassroots citizens. Never-theless, much is still expected on the part of Forte FM, based on the negative response gathered from one of the participants at the Ntselamanzi residential area. Hence, the basic needs of the community members in terms of an infrastructure facility have to be communicated to the right channel for proper action.

Golf Course Participants' View on Development Activities That Can Increase Listeners' Participation

The paper inquired about their views on some development activities that can increase listeners' participation, and the participants were of the view that it is the community that makes a community radio and that the community radio station cannot live up to expectations without the community. One of the participants suggested that:

"The community radio has been helpful in provision of social amenities, but emphasised that a lot has to be done in order to increase listeners' participation on the part of the radio station. This could be done by establishing some groups of people, comprising of members of the community in form of a committee who can give useful contributions on developmental programme to the radio station's programming. By so doing, members of the community will be granted the opportunity to increase their participation in the activities of the radio station."

Another participant noted again that:

"If the radio station could invite members of the community through public awareness campaigns to organised meetings that will address programming issues, I think this would increase Forte FM radio station's audience participation."

This view is also supported by Milan (2009), who opined that the community radio needs to be not only a channel to transmit to people, but also a means of receiving from them' not only an instrument to hear from or about the world, but the peoples voice, to make their voice heard.

Ntselamanzi Focus Group Participants' View on Development Activities That Can Increase Listeners' Participation

Much of what was said at the Golf Course focus group discussion was closely tied to the

views at Ntselamanzi. However, the participants revealed that Forte FM could increase listeners' participation in the community through their development initiatives. One of the Ntselamanzi focus group participants said that:

"The radio station should organise and increase its staff strength and organise trainings for the staffs, so that they can educate the community properly and invite more important personalities to their programming. Forte FM as a community radio station can increase listeners' participation by sending letters to the community where their views can be sought on a particular issue bothering the community through musical requests, greetings as well as phone-in-programmes."

He added that:

"The radio station should also go directly to the communities and ask them about their community's needs so as to meet their pressing needs."

This opinion was buttressed by another participant who noted that:

"The radio station should organise listening clubs where development programmes will be addressed to increase listenership rate, and thereby broaden listeners' knowledge in relevant areas. He also adds that Forte FM should try and organise a form of relieve material or gift items to their listeners' to encourage more participation."

Most of the participants also said that Forte FM radio needs to intensify more efforts on the community's needs and empowerment programme in order to increase its listenership rate.

This shows that participation is essential for development and empowerment through community radio. Listeners' participation in radio broadcast and programming is very important in community radio and when such platforms do not exist then comes a decrease in development and listenership rate of the concerned radio station. This view is also supported by Faisal and Alhassan (2018), who argued that for advocates of grassroots development, participation has become the benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of grassroots processes.

Golf Course and Ntselamanzi Participants' View on Development Communication that Enhances Listeners' Participation of Forte FM

The findings this paper gathered from both Golf Course and Ntselamanzi focus group discussions on development communication that enhances Forte FM's listeners' as the "only" community radio station serving the Nkonkobe municipality and its environs was generally interpreted as follows.

The participants at both Golf Course focus group discussion and Ntselamanzi focus group discussion reported that historically, there was no avenue for the voiceless to be heard on the radio, especially due to lack of access to the mainstreams media. However, they noted that with the availability of community radio, their voices are now heard, as they have a platform to air their views regularly. One of the participants from Golf Course said:

"One of the merits of Forte FM radio station is that it makes us to hear our voices, and heard in neighbouring towns across the municipality, and this makes us joyful."

Voice as expressed in the above statement implies having easy access to communication technology. Forte FM radio enhances the sending of correspondences and letters fast to the grassroots for expected actions. For example, one of the participants stated that:

"When a funeral message is to be communicated, we get the information as quick as possible without any constraints. In addition to this, recently at Peddie' about 120 rural houses and villages were faced with water challenges, and the message was communicated to the municipality with an immediate effect, and proper action was taken to put things in place."

The above statement was confirmed by the Programme Manager of Forte FM who attested to it. In view of this, the community radio station has played an important role to the community. The general views of all the participants at both Golf Course focus group discussion and Ntselamanzi focus group discussions was that, Forte FM motivates women's capability by granting them the opportunity to represent the community, which adds to the development of the community. Most of the participants also said that, Forte FM has promoted small-scale business advertisement on the radio station's programming. The availability of Forte FM helps the community to know what to buy and where exactly to get the desired product. This view is also supported by Robertson and Egdell (2018), who noted that, capability approach enables people's

freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing or being. Prilleltensky (2003) noted that community radio can enhance community capabilities and expand understanding that the key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangement should aim to expand people's capabilities.

Golf Course Participants' View on Participation as a Key Factor That Separates Forte FM and Other Radio Stations

The paper asked participants the difference between Forte FM radio station and other radio stations. The following responses were gathered. One of the participants said:

"Forte FM radio station affords us the opportunity to hear our voices on air, through letters and on social media. It also gives us the advantage of sending messages fast, enabling people to take immediate action while commercial radio cannot do so."

Another participant from the same focus group discussion opined that:

"Forte FM is a community in community radio. It is established to serve the interest of the community by providing timely information relevant to the community and its environments while other radios in the cities cannot broadcast such information."

All the above responses, reflects the legislative responsibilities a community radio such as Forte FM is expected to meet in its community.

Ntselamanzi Focus Group Participants' View on Participation as a Key Factor That Separates Forte FM and Other Radio Stations

In relation to the views gathered at Golf Course focus group discussion, participants of Ntselamanzi focus group discussion were of the same view in respect to the differences between Forte FM radio station and other radio stations. One of the participants was quoted below:

"Forte FM provides us local news from our environment, if not for Forte FM our voices cannot be heard on national broadcast. Community radio is used to announce stolen or lost property, to announce funeral messages most especially in our local dialect (IsiXhosa), which other radio stations cannot use local dialect to

communicate. We like Forte FM because it is helping us well, we can't get all this from other radio stations in cities."

From the response above, the community radio was portrayed by the focus group participants as an electronic platform for trading ideas, messages, and information for the community. However, the mainstream media or commercial broadcaster cannot offer the grassroots audience such a privilege. The views above is also supported by Mwaniki et al. (2017), who reflected that commercial and public service broadcasting both treat listeners as objects to be captured for advertisers or to be informed, while community radio aspires to treat listeners as subjects and participants. Community radio fills the vacuum that exists between the mainstream, commercial and public broadcasters through listeners' participation.

Radio Station Manager's Opinion on the Role of Participation in Development through Community Radio

The paper questioned the radio station manager on the role of participation in development through community radio. The station manager expressed that:

"Forte FM community radio is an effective tool to reach a large heterogeneous audience for development communication activities by endeavouring to provide informative, educational, and demand driven, as well as balanced content as the radio station mission implies."

In addition, participation has motivated development in the community in a number of ways such as communicating the community's challenges to the municipality and concerned authority for immediate actions. Others include sending and receiving of health information, educating listeners on the essence of health awareness to increase listeners' knowledge, and increase developmental news through participation, as well as publishing development initiatives to listeners'. In addition, community participation enhances good experience, and empowerment of grassroots communities through organisation of vocational skill development centres for the community.

From the views of the radio station manager, the paper noted that through the mission statement of Forte FM, it attains a developmental

role by providing programming content that is driven by demands of the community. Also, it acts as a platform for exchanging ideas and communications or discussions to address community issues. The role of participation has therefore increased development communication of the marginalised communities. In addition, a development initiative such as health awareness, which is paramount to life, has greatly informed the citizens.

Radio Station Manager's Opinion on How the Radio Station Offers Local People a Forum for Debating Community Development Challenges

The paper enquired from the station manager, on how Forte FM offers local people a forum for debate. The station manager revealed that:

"We bring personnel from the municipality or leaders in the community to the radio station to dialogue on community issues. By inviting the leader of each community, we are able to address the pressing issue and provide possible solutions."

This paper noted that the radio station serves as a source of building a peaceful co-existence between the leaders of the community and the members. In other words, Forte FM as a community radio increases its credibility by offering the community members a forum to debate their local challenges as indicated by (James, A.A., 2017). In addition, providing remedies to the challenges would benefit the community at large, because the community leaders are close and familiar with their challenges. The above view is also supported by Omwoha, (2014), who reflected that community radio stations are important for social and economic development, because they are familiar with the needs and wants of local areas and allow access to the media. Hence, Forte FM community radio is portrayed as a development tool operated by local or indigenous citizens to bring forth positive changes to the society.

Radio Station Manager's Opinion on What the Radio Station Can Do as Part of a Development Project to Enhance Listeners' Participation

When asked on what the radio station can do as part of development project, the radio station manager expressed that:

"The radio station should be a voice to the community, it needs to be an active voice but not a medium for authority, but to see and do what people want, not a microphone communication in any way but voice of the grassroots. The radio station is also a platform for those in authority to meet the marginalised society."

The manager adds that the radio station should also serve as skills development centre where the society can acquire vocational skills. In addition, the radio station manager expressed that part of what the radio station is also doing as development programme for the community includes presentation of wheelchairs to physically challenged persons' which is a programme organised annually to encourage the selected audience. Regarding what the radio station can do as part of a development project, Forte FM understood its primary assignment to not just be a megaphone to the community but to meet the community's need at the right time by creating skill development centres where both youths and adults can expand their capabilities and knowledge irrespective of age differences.

Radio Station Manager's Opinion on Development Issues Raised by People, and Brought to Authorities

When the paper asked the radio station manager's opinion on issues that were raised by the people and were brought to authorities' attention by the radio station, he reflects that:

"I can remember vividly, when the residents of Peddie, a location consisting of about 120 rural houses encountered pipe-borne water challenge, about 80 of the houses has no pipe-borne water, the message got across to us and we at Amathole District Municipality were proactive in resolving their issues."

The station manager also noted that similarly, at Raymond Municipality, the Mayor promised to provide water tanks to the affected residences. In addition, the radio station manager also revealed that some years back, there was a peaceful protest organised by the community on how Forte FM could increase its service delivery system to its audience and community at large. As aforementioned, the paper noted that Forte FM community radio station is really meeting the needs of the community as expected.

Forte FM radio station has the notion of improving the welfare of its listeners' by providing basic social amenities, and ensuring a peaceful co-existence between the communities and the radio station.

DISCUSSION

This paper portrayed the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' participation in Forte FM programming. One of the aims of a community media to its serving community is empowerment and development of the disenfranchised people and this paper has established this too. Empowerment can be said to be "a multi-level construct that describes a social action process for the people, to gain mastery over their lives, their organisations, and the lives of their communities" (Mawokomayi and Osunkunle 2019). In other words, discovery of one's talent and capabilities being transformed to actions leads to empowerment and this paper has confirmed that Forte FM also does this. This enables individuals to be involved in development activities and the participants have also confirmed this. However, it was reported from the interview conducted with Forte FM's radio station manager that the radio station serves as a source of empowerment to the community where vocational training can be acquired for development. The empowerment enabled the selected community members to be relevant technicians or experts in various fields. This therefore provides opportunities for listeners' empowerment and development as supported by Backhaus (2019). This can be interpreted as a means of empowering the community, to build their confidence and to freely express themselves on any grey areas in the community based on the topic of discourse. It was also reported that Forte FM motivates women's capabilities by granting them the opportunity to represent the community through public sphere debates in their programmes, and all these are evidences of participation and development in the community. Community media therefore helps to empower the excluded groups and thereby increase their capabilities for participation. In addition, community radio as a source of empowerment collaborates with localised firms to encourage public services from government. The organisation of empowerment programmes by Forte FM radio

to provide wheel chairs as an empowerment for the physically challenged persons, makes the radio station to also consider the basic needs of the community citizens and thus contribute to their empowerment and development.

CONCLUSION

This paper reflected on the role of development communication in enhancing listeners' participation in Forte FM. The focus group discussions with the listeners and the interview with the radio station manager portrayed radio as a vital instrument for participation to integrate the grassroots populace while facilitating their own development. The literature examined also reported that radio is one of the most common electronic devices for disseminating information. It was shown in this paper that a community radio was portrayed by the focus group participants as an electronic platform for trading ideas, messages, and information for the community and thus ensures dialogue and participation. From the opinions of the focus group discussions participants, Forte FM radio has been helpful in providing platforms for dialogue and constructive engagements between community members and relevant authorities towards the provision of social amenities to community citizens. It can therefore be said that participation is very important to both the listeners and the community radio station.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that community radio stations should always encourage participation of listeners, as it leads to empowerment and social development as reported by the focus group participants. This should include organising trainings where knowledge and relevant skills could be acquired by both the community and the staffs of the radio station, so as to impart the rightful knowledge to listeners, thereby expanding their capabilities. This is in line with the views of the participants who opined that vocational training should be encouraged to empower the marginalised communities.

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