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Monitoring the media since 1993

Radio News Diversity Project

May 1998

Introduction

The notion of diversity is very popular within the realm of the media and its relationship with society. For the media to be democratic, it is often argued, it must be diverse. This is a common argument propagated by human rights groups, freedom of speech advocates and media policy experts. Diversity is thought to promote democracy on two counts. Firstly, it is the opposite of a monopoly - either by the state (as in propaganda) or commerce because it offers choice. Secondly, diversity in and of the media would be a reflection of the diversity in society. However diversity is a sufficiently complex notion to make these assertions weak, especially at the level of media policy and planning.

Media policy in South Africa is concerned with the creation of an environment in which the disadvantages of the past are redressed, the media reflects the diversity of population and freedom of expression is promoted. But diversity in ownership, while satisfying the above criteria, may not result in a diversity in content. Different stations, owned by different sectors can potentially end up with the same music and the same news. Consequently to simply advocate a diversity of owners and format, will not necessarily guarantee diverse media content.

Diversity in media content, especially that of news and information programmes is crucial. The media, as a primary source of news and information in our society does have a large role in influencing the political, social and cultural agenda's of the country. A limited range of news and information necessarily limits the diversity of information available to the public who as voters and tax payers have the right to be informed in order to make decisions in their lives.

Since the IBA's inception in 1994, the licensing of new community and private radio stations has been widely welcomed as an indicator of the greater diversity of information and entertainment available to listeners. In terms of their licence conditions all stations licensed by the IBA have had to provide regular news bulletins and information programmes as part of their line-up, and the expectation has been that this would result in a wider and more diverse range of news stories, sources and areas of reporting. By providing news and information, the IBA hoped to ensure that all radio stations served the public's information needs. Thus the IBA, through the community licences it issued attempted to allow as diverse a range of radio stations as possible, with the aim that these would provide a varied and valuable source of information and entertainment to the South African public.

The private radio environment has also been steered towards providing a diversity of content by the IBA with the privatising of six SABC radio stations and the licensing of several new commercial stations. The private radio industry at the moment is therefore poised, for the first time, to provide a real range of programming, news and information.

However the MMP's research in the past has found that a greater number of media outlets does not necessarily reflect a greater diversity of news and sources of news, and hence an improvement in the quality of information being broadcast. In our monitoring of community radio during the 1995 local government elections we found community radio to be disappointing, relying on larger, commercial media outlets for their news which meant that they added little information to the range and quality of news available to listeners.

The aim of this study was, therefore, to examine the quality and diversity of news and information being broadcast by South African radio stations. Through an investigation of the sources, selection, level of community participation, extent and local content of news and information programming, the study reveals whether the range of radio stations which have been licensed offers a variety of news and information, of value to the communities being served. The private stations would be similarly scrutinised in the context of their greater resources and access to news sources, their accountability to the public as private rather than community radio stations and the quality of their news.

Methodology

Selection

The study involved the planned monitoring of 12 radio stations, 4 private and 8 community. The private stations were selected as follows: **SAfm** was selected because it is the flagship PBS station of SABC radio. It has also enjoyed a good reputation for its news and current affairs. Likewise **702**, as the only independently broadcast source of news available for a long time, has been held in high regard. Against these two established radio stations, **Kaya FM** and **Classic FM** were selected, as they were the first two of the newly licensed radio stations to come on air in Gauteng. At their licensing hearings **Kaya** had promised to provide a more Africa-centred approach, while **Classic** was aiming at providing a "different angle" on news.

The Gauteng bias of the private stations was determined by the fact that of the newly licensed radio stations around the country, only **Kaya** and **Classic** were on air when our monitoring period began.

The community radio stations were selected because of their developmental orientation and because they were all recipients of funding from the Open Society Foundation. The study attempted to select stations from a variety of geographical and socio-economic situations. **Soweto Community Radio**, and **Alx fm** (Gauteng), **Bush Radio**, **Radio Zibonele** and **C-Flat** (Western Cape) were selected as urban stations. **Radio BBT** (Bloemfontein), **Radio Mafisa** (Rustenberg) and **Radio Bushbuckridge** (Mpumalanga) were selected as more rural or less urban based stations.

Monitoring

A five week monitoring period was planned beginning 1 September 1997 and ending on 3 October. In studies like this one, the accuracy of the results is enhanced if more data is captured, especially over a longer period of time. Further, in order to make comparisons more valuable, the 7am, 1pm and 6pm bulletins of the commercial stations were selected as well as one hour of current affairs programming. For **702** and **SAfm**, this was the 7-8am slot, while **Classic's** main current affairs period, 6-6:30pm was also monitored. As **Kaya** does not have a fixed weekday current affairs programme we did not include them in this section of the comparative analysis. Over weekends only the stations' 1pm bulletins were monitored. Because the stations are all accessible in the Gauteng area, they were recorded and monitored off-air.

In monitoring community radio, our aims were different. The study was less concerned with a comparative analysis of the different stations news bulletins, especially as several of them subscribed to the same network news service. Instead the study hoped to measure the range of news and information programming rather than a closer measurement of individual news items. For this reason the stations were to be monitored for a four hour period each day, which would include news bulletins, current affairs and other information programming. Each station would be asked to advise us on the best four hour period of coverage which we should monitor. Although this monitoring covered more on a daily basis, we selected to monitor community stations for the same five week period to achieve uniformity.

However because of the limited range of the community stations it was not possible to monitor them off-air. All broadcasters are required by the IBA to keep recordings of their broadcasts for the past 30 days and so the stations were requested to supply the MMP with these recordings of their programmes for our monitoring. The recordings were collected and returned to the stations via a reputable courier service.

Data Capture

All the monitors selected for the study were senior Media Studies students. Monitors were selected to monitor stations which broadcast in their first language and in the case of community stations, their second languages as well. Several monitors had experience monitoring for the MMP and other organisations before. Monitors received training in monitoring community as well as commercial radio. Weekly meetings were held during the monitoring period where monitors and the researchers reported back on their progress. Issues and problem areas were discussed and solved and monitoring reports reviewed.

The data from the monitoring was captured on a comprehensive form which included the following information.

- The date and time of the broadcast
- The item number (sports news, although often covering several sporting events was considered one item for the purpose of this study)
- A summary of the item
- The origin of the item. Items were categorised into International, Africa, National or Regional. An item originating from the Western Cape, on **Classic** fm, a regional Gauteng station, would be categorised as a National news story. Only a story which originated from within the region in which the station broadcast would be categorised as being a Regional news story and only if it was not of national significance. For community radio, **local** items were items which originated within the approximate geographic area of the community station or where national or regional items which had significance on a local level and this was stressed by the community station, were reported. For example a story of water provision in another region would be localised if it mentioned the water provision situation within the area of the community station.
- The study focused on the diversity and range of stories in terms of their origin and their content. Furthermore, the accuracy of the research required that the monitoring be uniform across monitors and their monitoring of each station. To facilitate this and to make comparisons, the stories were coded into topics which covered the wide array of items reported. These topics were also clustered into certain areas as follows:
 - A. Economics and business
 - B. Politics
 - C. Diplomacy
 - D. Disaster (e.g. earthquakes, famine, typhoons, accident, tragedy)

- E. Conflict, political violence, demonstrations
- F. Corruption

These first six codes were designed to include mainly international news and were consequently quite broad in definition. Virtually all economic reporting that we monitored included significant amounts of international information (as to be expected from exchange rates and the globalised functioning of stock markets) and thus was categorised under topic code A.

Politics included all non-violent political reporting, while code C (diplomacy) was there to group together United Nations, Organisation of African Unity and other international bodies with similar diplomatic functions. Peace talks were also classified under code C. Disaster stories, were expected to feature prominently and included both natural and unnatural ones as well as tragedy. Code E was for all violent political conflict as well as war and civil unrest. Code F was for African and South African Corruption.

The following codes were more specific to South Africa:

- G. Crime (Including SAPS, Safety and Security & legal stories)
- H. South African National politics - Including S.A. Government & Parliament
- I. Provincial government
- J. TRC

TRC items were classified as code J if the subject of the story was the TRC rather than any criminal actions which perpetrators may have committed. Stories where amnesty applicants were being prosecuted for their alleged crimes were classed as crime stories.

- K. Labour, strikes
- L. Education
- M. Housing
- N. Local government and rates / services (e.g. electricity, roads etc.)
- O. Gender
- P. Racism
- Q. Media
- R. Human Rights
- S. Sport
- T. Arts & Culture
- U. Health

V. Environment
W.General

All the above codes could overlap with National and Provincial political stories. Our monitors were directed to be as specific as possible in the classification of an item. For instance, a trade union protest march may well have had a political element, but it would be placed under code K (Labour, strikes) rather than code H or I. Code H and I were designed to “catch” items relating to national and provincial politics. Anything which could not otherwise be coded by monitors was categorised under W (general). All items coded were reviewed by a project researcher. The reliability of the monitoring for this project was calculated at 89%

- All items topic coded as G and all items which originated from Africa were subject to careful analyses of the discourses of the item, valued as being either a positive, fair or negative representation of the item. This was included to evaluate the quality of coverage of crime (which can easily be sensationally reported) and Africa (which historically, has been very negatively portrayed in South African media).
- Finally a brief analysis of the item, news bulletin or information programme was included. This was to give the monitor space to point out their reasons for their categorisation of the item as well as points of interest. For example a monitor may have noticed that in a particular bulletin every item was police, or crime related. This would be noted. Or the monitor may comment on the poor technical quality of the news bulletin (incorrect sound bytes, no sound, feedback from the microphone, confusion over names etc.)

For the commercial stations more emphasis was placed on capturing detailed information on the form, while for the community stations the stress was on a less detailed but a more encompassing monitoring assessment, particularly because of the lack of consistent reports over the period monitored. This meant that for community stations only the origin of items was included and the topic codes allocated for crime and for items originating from Africa.

A database was set-up and information from the monitoring forms was input into it. The database was then able to generate statistical and graphic results of the quantitative monitoring. The more qualitative monitoring was assessed and discussed in meetings with monitors and brief preliminary reports on each station were written up.

Information Gathering

Two researchers were employed to cover the two areas, commercial and community. Researchers visited the stations and interviewed management at each station, incorporating the information garnered from the monitoring process. Other role players in the radio industry were also interviewed and consulted on different aspects of the research.

Community Radio

Introduction

The MMP's approach to the study of the community stations drew on the IBA's position paper released in June 1997 on Community radio licenses. The IBA is charged in its Act with ensuring that "when viewed collectively" broadcasters provide regular news and actuality programming on matters of public and political interest. The IBA position paper for community radio emphasises this, and adds that community stations do this, "especially about events and issues at a local level".

The IBA in our interpretation, needs to ensure the diversity of news and information programming through a wide range of news programming and that community broadcasting emphasises community and local news, as the national and regional commercial and PBS broadcasters provide a substantial amount of international, national and regional news.

However the aim of the project was not to catch out community stations providing the wrong kind of news. Rather it was an assessment of how much diversity across stations and within station's programming there really is and to find the reasons for the diversity or lack of it.

Our research did find that stations in several instances were not complying with their licence conditions. As we were not trying to reveal their mistakes and since our aims were to develop and improve broadcasting this report will not implicate any individual station in any wrong doing.

The MMP wrote to the stations in August requesting their participation in the research and followed this up with a telephonic introduction. All the stations except one, welcomed the research and all except for two were fully prepared to allow us to make use of their licence-requirement recordings. We had been warned by individuals from within the community broadcasting sector not to trust information provided in programming log sheets which stations send to the IBA, as these are often falsified. We were however confident that the monitoring of the stations for a five week period would reveal any inconsistencies between their programming log sheets and what they actually broadcast.

The station which was not happy about co-operating was suspicious of our intentions. This was partly due to significant managerial and programming problems within the station as well as a result of frequent outside intrusion into the running of the station. All the stations exhibited unease about their relationship with the IBA. They either felt unfairly victimised or that they received insufficient support from the IBA.

Despite that fact that all the stations were required to have a full time station manager, contacting station managers and station staff proved to be difficult. Predictably, those stations which were better resourced proved to be the most accessible.

In two cases, changes in the management of the community station meant that the process of co-operation had to be re-negotiated. In one case the station manager failed to inform anyone else at the station of the arrangement. His resignation on the day monitoring was due to begin came as a surprise both to the MMP and to the station concerned and consequently our monitoring for that station began two weeks late.

In all cases, the community stations' staff were over-worked and mostly volunteers. At **Radio Mafisa**, the radio news editor was also the newspaper editor and had to split his time between the two, as well as read the news. The arrangement for the collection of the recordings was based on a contact person at each station who informed the MMP of the best time and date to collect recordings and ensured that the tapes were correctly labelled. In most cases this did not eventuate. Most of the recordings supplied were incorrectly labelled, were not from the times agreed upon by the station management and the MMP and were occasionally over two months old. In some instances our monitors would receive up to 16 tapes with eight hours recorded on each, unlabelled and often requiring time consuming monitoring to identify the dates and periods when the recordings were made.

As a consequence of these issues, recordings, as far as the MMP was able to verify - based on information given to us by the station and what we could discern from the tapes, the following periods were monitored for each station:

<u>Station</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Times</u>
Bush Radio	1/9 - 3/10	2pm - 6pm
Alx Fm	3/9 - 7/9	7am - 11am
	26/9 - 3/10	7am - 11am
Radio Mafisa	1/9 - 18/9	12am - 2pm

		30/9 - 3/10	7pm - 9pm
		14/10 - 20/10	12am - 2pm
Radio BBT		9/9 - 1/10	7pm - 9pm
			9am - 11am
Radio Bushbuckridge		1/9 - 24/9	7pm - 9pm
			9am- 1pm
Soweto Community Radio		1/9 - 3/10	2pm - 6pm
			8am - 12am
C-Flat		21/10 - 31/10	1pm - 5pm
Radio Zibonele		2/9 - 19/9	9am - 2pm
			5am - 9am
			9am - 12am
			12am - 4pm

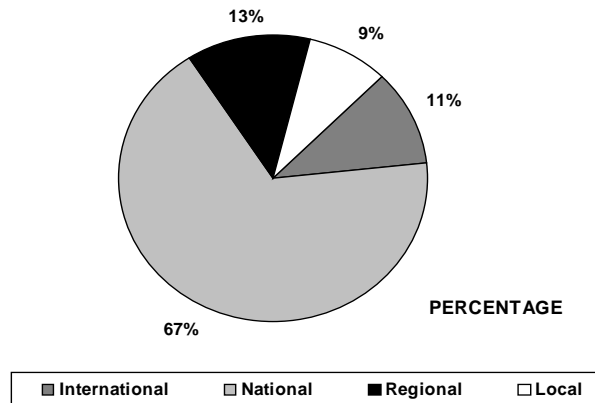
The problems outlined above and the consequently shorter monitoring period completed for several of the stations meant that for three stations, **C-Flat**, **Alx fm** and **Radio Zibonele**, the amount of news information data captured proved too limited to provide a fully representative sample. However similar content analysis conducted by CASE (*Where are the women:1995*) captured similar quantities of information on which they based their findings. Further, the IBA in its annual assessment of each community station only monitors three days worth of material. Thus, while the monitoring period was unfortunately shortened for several stations, the amount monitored was greater than that which the IBA uses to evaluate the performance of the stations. It is interesting to note that the IBA requires programme logsheets from the community stations which they also examine. However the MMP was told by a number of stations in this study and by others, that these log sheets are often incorrectly filled in, information omitted or invalid information submitted. The accuracy and reliability of these log sheets is therefore open to question and for the purpose of this study, unreliable.

Community Radio News

Origin of News

The primary focus area of this section was to provide information with regard to the news content of the community radio stations involved. Based on the information provided by the monitoring of the community radio stations, calculations were made on the percentage of news that was of International, National, Regional (or provincial) and Local origin. The results of these calculations are reflected in the following graphs.

FIGURE 1: NEWS CONTENT OF ALEX FM

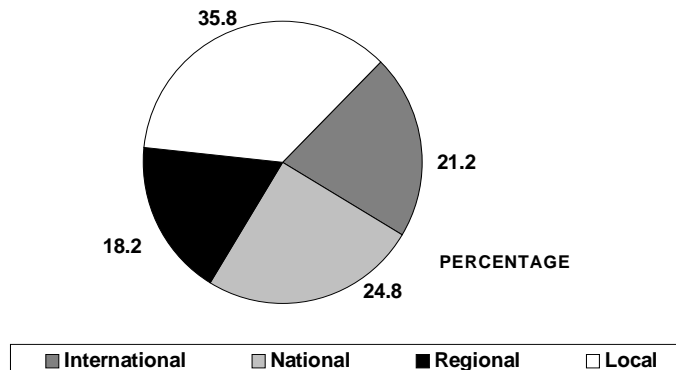


The Origin spread of coverage in this graph reveals **Alx fm** news to be dominated by National news (67%), reflective of the stations dislocation from its community and its reliance on Network Radio News Service(NRS) bulletins. The monitoring of **Alx fm** and especially of its poor record of local news echoes an IBA Monitoring Department report on **Alx fm** from August 1997 which stated:

“The continues (sic) failure by the ALX FM management to address the problems highlighted in this report seems to point to a lack of commitment to run the station in the interests of the community.”

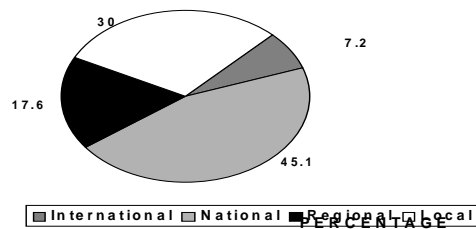
As a station ideally situated within the geographical and social centre of the Alexandria community, it is especially marked how little local news input there has been in Alex FM bulletins.

FIGURE 2: NEWS CONTENT OF RADIO MAFISA



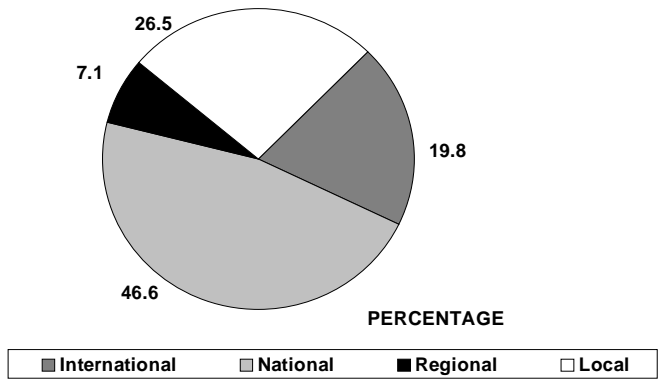
Radio Mafisa's coverage represents a significant amount of Local coverage (35,8%). **Mafisa's** news is gathered from three sources, NRS news, the SAPS and local organisations. **Mafisa** shares its resources with a local newspaper, however, morale is low as the paper is short of funding and has reduced its frequency of output. The radio news editor is also the paper's editor, which leaves him little time to work on developing other news sources. Our analysis of **Mafisa's** local news did show a reliance by the station on the SAPS as a source of local news, especially crime. **Mafisa's** good relationship with the SAPS has also been used to provide the community with crime prevention information.

FIGURE 3: NEWS CONTENT OF BBT



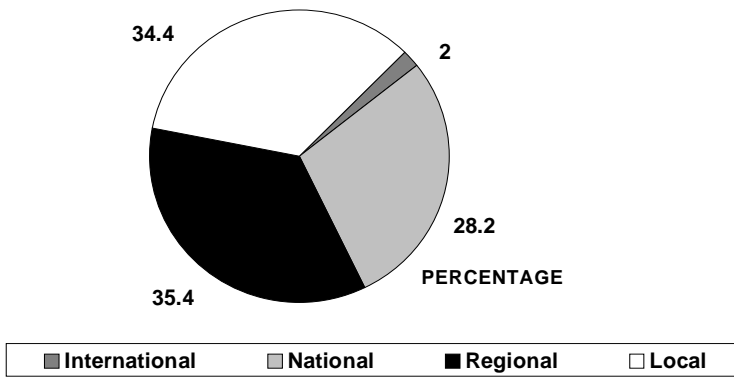
BBT's news displayed a similarly substantial amount of Local news (30%). Our analysis of **BBT** news found that **BBT's** local news covered a diverse range of topics, including educational issues, poverty and crime. **BBT** Regional news was also good, reflecting a strong emphasis on issues pertinent to the Free State province.

FIGURE 4: NEWS CONTENT OF RADIO BUSHBUCKRIDGE



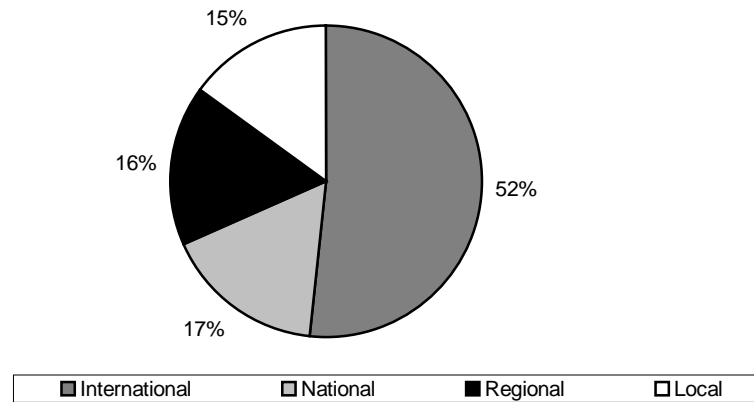
Radio Bushbuckridge, reflected slightly lower Local news (26,5%) and little Regional news (7,1%). The substantial amount of National news comes from the NRS service. Bushbuckridge’s rural location meant much of the news it received from NRS and other national sources would be national and because of its separation from the central city of the Mpumalanga region meant that it is difficult for the station to gain access to Regional news events and news. An analysis of the Local news revealed a wide range of topics reported. Education issues, crime, the environment and community issues were often reported. Community issues were often more akin to community announcements rather than news items, but were featured in news bulletins, occasionally as the first item.

FIGURE 5: NEWS CONTENT OF SOWETO COMMUNITY RADIO



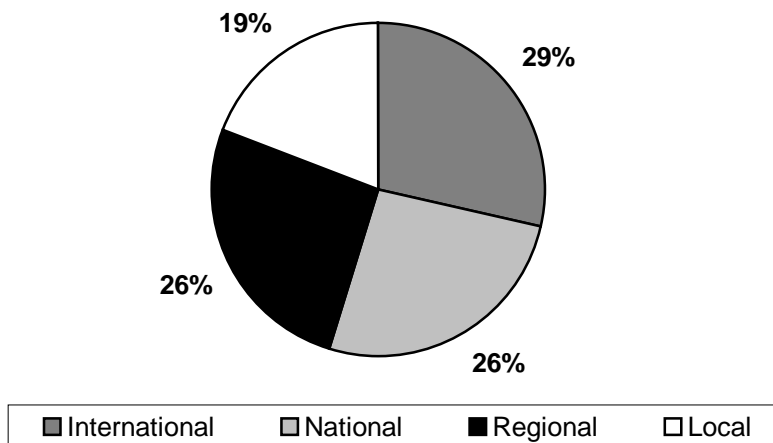
Soweto Community Radio (SCR) has a dynamic and efficient news department. This includes trainees from nearby training colleges and local volunteers. Although **SCR** makes use of NRS and other print and broadcast media, it also made considerable efforts to “localise” news by quoting local representatives when reporting Regional and National news. For example regional educational issues were often localised through interpretation by local educators, teachers and pupils. **SCR** is also regularly invited to governmental press conferences and the station therefore has greater control over the reporting of regional issues as well. The community focus of the station means that International news features less prominently (2%).

FIGURE 6: NEWS CONTENT OF BUSH RADIO



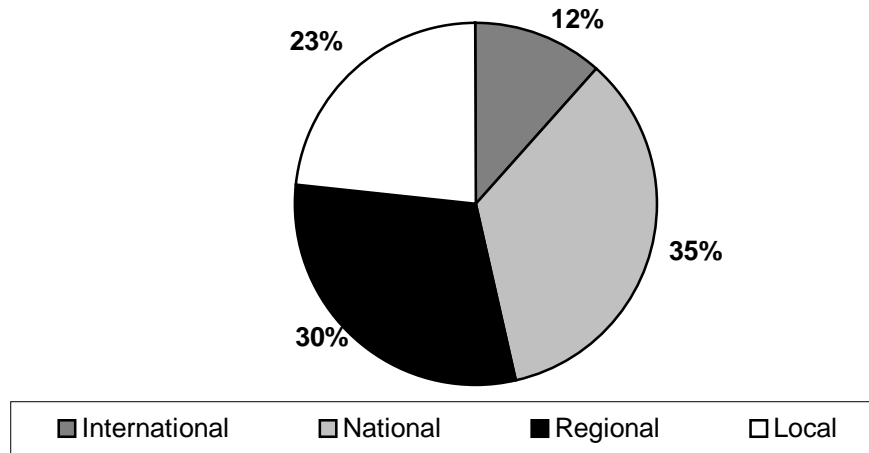
Bush Radio's disappointing percentage of Local news (15%) is largely because of the substantial amounts of International and National news they provide. The station carries a programme called Community Information Network which carries interviews and stories from the community. However the station admitted to being unsure of their audience and stated the need for audience research. This suggested dislocation and human resource shortages in the news room mean that the station does not get the same level of community activity in the gathering and supplying of Local news which the other stations enjoyed.

FIGURE 7: NEWS CONTENT OF C-FLAT



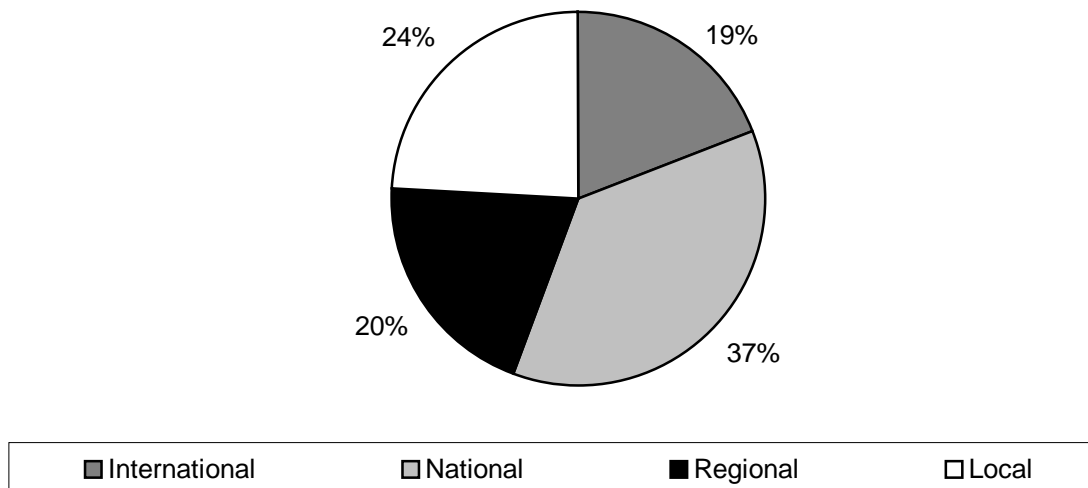
C-Flat's news spread reflects a slightly more significant percentage of Local news (19%) than **Bush Radio**. Our research indicates that this is partly due to the stations' main sources of news: NRS and the Internet. Local news gathering suffers from a lack of human resources - according to Ayisha Behardien from **C-Flat** this is largely due to the low status of news at the station. Volunteers are more interested in being presenters than news reporters. Interestingly enough this preference has a gender bias attached to it. Jeanne du Toit notes that the preference towards being a presenter is part of the "perpetuation of a 'DJ culture' within ... community radio." (Du Toit: 1996. 29) This 'DJ culture' Du Toit states, is dominated by men and consequently women more frequently fill the other roles in many community stations - news readers etc. However Du Toit suggests that this demonstrates that it is the women who have a greater sense of "responsibility towards the development of their community."

FIGURE 8: NEWS CONTENT OF RADIO ZIBONELE



Zibonele’s Local (23%) and Regional (30%) news is drawn from community volunteers. The station’s locatio in the heart of Khayelitsha means it has a close relationship with its community. It does make use of SAPS crime information, but operates its own crime information network as well. Its largest drawback is the limited range of its transmitter which only has a radius of 3 kilometre’s. This means that large parts of Khayelitsha are unable to receive the station’s signal and consequently unable to interact with other residents through the station.

FIGURE 9: NEWS CONTENT OF 8 COMMUNITY STATIONS



The above pie-chart reflects the averages of news content for the eight stations examined. Overall 44% of all news is Regional and Local - a positive sign that the stations are providing news diversity from listeners by adding to the range of

news available to listeners from national and regional radio stations. The proximity of the stations to their community, resource limitations in their news-rooms and attitudes towards news reporting all influenced the amount and range of Local news.

Topics Covered

This section examines the topics covered and summarises the common ones, pointing out the main reasons for the coverage they received.

News items on International issues included:

- death and funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales;
- death and funeral of Mother Theresa ;
- trade between South Africa and foreign countries, including arms, oil etc.
- international diplomacy, e.g. United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO);
- Political conflict in Angola;
- conflict in the Middle-East and Gulf-areas;
- sports;
- gold price;
- announcement of the name of the city to host the Olympic Games in 2004;
- annual Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Malawi;
- death and funeral of former Zairian President, Mobuto Sese Seko;

News items on National issues included:

- crime, violence and political conflict;
- Cape Town's failure to win the Olympic bid;
- the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and applications for amnesty;
- launch of a new political party by Bantu Holomisa and Roelf Meyer;
- sports;
- new policies and legislation in the country and debate in this regard;
- celebrations of Heritage Day and Arbour Day;
- forthcoming election of a Deputy-president for the African National Congress (ANC);
- election of Marthinus van Schalkwyk as new leader of the National Party (NP);
- the debate about Cape Town or Pretoria as the seat of Parliament;

- educational information on national issues, e.g. health and environmental affairs;
- initiatives by the South African Police Service (SAPS) to address the problems of crime in the country;

News items on Regional issues included:

- crime, violence, and political conflict;
- missing people;
- election of a new Premier in Gauteng;
- sports;
- celebrations of special days/weeks in the region, e.g. Heritage Day, Arbour Day and International Literacy Week;
- meetings, training courses, festivals and/or seminars to take place in the region;
- traffic and road safety;

News items on Local issues included:

- crime and violence;
- sports;
- deaths and funerals;
- meetings, ceremonies, festivals, training courses, etc. taking place in communities;
- role and activities of specific organisations, initiatives and institutions in communities e.g. Child and Welfare Society, childminding projects, and projects aimed at the unemployed;
- traffic and road safety;
- missing people;
- community's responsibility with regard to specific issues, e.g. combating crime, violence against women and children, various health-related issues and the environment.

Three trends in the news content as summarised above are worth noting:

- * The prevalence of crime and violence news stories, as well as stereotypical 'bad news' stories like strikes, tragedies and disasters
- * The preponderance of international news stories focusing on political conflict in the Middle East
- * The wide range and quality of local news.

The substantial amount of crime reporting is of concern. Crime itself is very often sensational and reflects negatively on the status of the society, the efficacy of the

police force and the ability of the government to deal with it. Consequently it is highly valued as news. Furthermore, crime is a national issue which has been part of the national news agenda for some time. However when news bulletins become dominated by crime reports the bulletins themselves are in danger of becoming sensationalist and limiting. The crime reports cease to be individual, accurate news stories. Instead the bulletin quickly becomes a political comment and an unbalanced world view emerges.

The coverage of political conflict in the Middle East is common because it is substantial, due largely to the international political and financial interest tied to the region. It is a very frequently disseminated source for international news, both within South Africa and around the world.

Despite the often numerical domination of International and National news, the information value of Local news is often excellent. **Zibonele**, for instance, carries crime reports which alert residents to the presence of criminals in certain sectors and acts as a warning system to them. Educational and other issues which don't get as much National and Regional radio news attention receive frequent attention in community radio news.

News Sources Used

The following observations can be made based on our monitoring and research.

- International, national and regional news are obtained from Sapa's Network Radio news Service (NRS) and mainstream national media (both electronic and print).
- Regional news is sourced from the NRS and regional media (including regional radio stations) and from various role-players in the region, e.g. role-players in the Provincial governments, regional offices of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and organisations operating in the region.
- Local news is provided by local residents (e.g. items on lost persons, deaths and funerals), local organisations (e.g. residents' associations, sports clubs and local civic associations), police stations, schools.

What is evident from our research and monitoring is that extensive use is made of the NRS for news or simply newspapers and other radio stations. Several stations admitted to listening to commercial and SABC radio stations in order to "keep up" with events. What is of concern about the reliance on NRS for news is that the stations therefore source their news from the same place as regional and national radio which means that the range of news becomes necessarily limited.

Extensive use is also made of police reports. We found that the SAPS are, more and more frequently, making use of community radio stations to release information on crime to the public. Our research also found that the SAPS were the most frequently reported and quoted source of news across both commercial and community stations.

Local news comes largely from local organisations and individuals who volunteer news and information to the stations. The best levels of local news came from stations which are physically more accessible by the community they serve. The more distant they are, the lower their Local news content. But the stations physical proximity is no guarantee of good Local news. The commitment of the stations to serve their communities plays a substantial part in ensuring that their news is covered on community radio. The news desks of almost all the stations are understaffed, under-equipped and under-trained. The hard working news editors do not have the resources at hand to provide for more and better news gathering. In spite of this the quality of local news is usually very good. The commitment and determination of news staff at the stations results in Local news which is often informative and wide ranging.

As a result of the lack of human and technical resources, the news desks of the stations frequently rely on the most accessible, reliable and easiest of sources for news: NRS, other media and the SAPS. Consequently the numerical balance of news reflects this.

Other Information Programming

Community radio relies on a combination of information, education and entertainment to fulfil its role in community development. The balance between entertainment and information, education and amusement varies from station to station. However all the stations the MMP monitored produced good information programming.

All the stations relied on a substantial amount of music programming (foreign and local) to keep their listeners entertained. All the stations also allotted time to personal dedications, messages and phone-in programmes. These programmes, although seemingly not very developmentally oriented, are particularly valuable. Through these programmes the community is able to communicate with itself and help build a sense of community and common interest.

Stations carried regular items on labour issues, education, health, gender issues, financial management, traffic, crime and other community announcements. Programming dedicated to women listeners was found on most stations to be valuable and informative, although sometimes stereotypical and confining. For

example, **Radio Bushbuckridge** carried discussions on how women are supposed to dress and why marriages fail. **Bushbuckridges'** audience is a more conservative one than that of urban stations and it had several programmes on the clash between tradition and modernity. On the other hand **Radio Bushbuckridge** did carry items on environmental conservation, as well as job training and creation and retirement planning.

Radio Zibonele carried similarly conservative programming around gender issues. However **Zibonele's** information programming tended to overlap into spiritual counselling. For example phone in programmes often advised listeners to pray for assistance with their employment, financial and domestic problems rather than seek other help. **Up to 3** hours per week of programming was sponsored and presented by a church grouping. This programming espoused the value of spiritual well-being, in some cases by using the testimony of the converted to convince listeners of their cause. Accompanying the religious programming was a substantial amount of local gospel music.

Soweto Community Radio (SCR) was more open about gender and other issues. It carried programming on sexually transmitted diseases, homosexuality and child abuse. Items and phone-in discussions on starting a small business, financial planning and business advice were also often featured. Health issues were well covered on all the stations, offering advice and information on topics ranging from Aids to eye care.

Like **Soweto Community Radio**, **BBT**, **Bush**, **Mafisa** and **C-Flat** all carried community driven programming. **BBT's** children's' programming was noteworthy, these programmes featured entertainment and information for children on, amongst other things, their role in the community as well as their personal security. **Mafisa**, **Zibonele**, **C-Flat** and **SCR** all included community crime prevention information. **C-Flat** has developed excellent links with Local authorities and reported important information on rates and service issues. All the Western Cape stations were particularly good in their coverage of the state of gangsterism in the region, including roving reports, phone-in programmes and research.

C-Flat made good use of studio interviews, while **Bush Radio's** community Information network was informative and well sourced as was their talk programme "Back Chat". Our monitoring of **Bush** did reveal a lesser emphasis on black communities in the footprint of the station.

Radio Mafisa's "Talk of Northwest" proved a similarly informative and valuable programme as those offered by other stations. The use of studio guests for in depth interviews and the emphasis on community issues meant the item added

to the knowledge and range of information given to **Radio Mafisa** listeners. **Mafisa's** women's programming, did tend to lean more towards entertainment. Talk shows on the plight of the elderly, contraception and municipal services were also held.

Of all the stations, **Alx fm** was the most disappointing. Aside from dedications and community announcements, information programming was less frequent during the period monitored. **Alx fm** did carry a press review in the morning but this was little more than a regurgitation of news from the **Citizen** newspaper. The station also gave some studio time to the local branch of SANCO.

In spite of resource limitations the community stations managed to produce a diverse range of information programming directed in the main towards the education and development of the communities they serve. Training and the development of gender awareness does need to be addressed at most stations, while the extent of religious programming at certain stations does need to be carefully monitored to ensure it does not replace information and educational programming.

CONCLUSION

- For most stations, Local news is substantial but not dominant
- Local news is informative and well reported
- The SAPS and crime were the most common sources of local news
- International and National news comes from the commercial media or from Network Radio News, a Sapa based radio news service
- The quality and diversity of local and localised news is hampered by the following:
 - inadequate technical resources especially recording equipment
 - a shortage of human resources
 - inadequate training
 - lack of funding
 - a dearth of news services other than Sapa/NRS
 - lack of commitment to community interest
 - physical separation between station and its community of listeners
- Other information programming is good but limited by the same considerations

Community radio stations serve as a valuable tool to inform people, and to contribute towards the involvement and development of communities. Their capacity to report a diverse range of news, both local, regional and national is reliant on the resources available. Unfortunately these are limited, but attention in certain areas would be fruitful in developing the capacity of community stations. These are:

- Capacity building and proper training of staff is necessary in order to enhance the constructive role that can be fulfilled by community radio stations.
- Training needs to be ongoing. Staff turnover at community stations is very high and new members and volunteers need to be trained all the time.
- The role of community radio as a training ground for the whole broadcasting industry needs to be recognised.

- Community radio news requires alternative and more developmentally focused sources of news. Unless or until this happens community stations will continue to struggle to provide more community directed and localised news.

Private Radio

The private radio environment has been steered towards providing a diversity of content by the IBA with the privatising of six SABC radio stations and the licensing of several new commercial stations. Thus the commercial radio industry at the moment is poised for the first time to provide a real range of programming, news and information. However while the diversity of format has been ensured, it is not necessarily true that a diversity in news and information content would follow. In order to determine the extent to which this is happening, the MMP selected three Gauteng radio stations, radio **702**, **Classic fm** and **Kaya fm**, and the national public broadcaster station, **SAfm**.

By comparing an established independent station with a reputation for good news reporting (**702**), the main English public broadcasting channel (**SAfm**), and two new stations (**Classic** and **Kaya**), we hoped to determine the range and diversity of information available to listeners in Gauteng over the monitoring period.

SAfm (A)

SAfm, as a public broadcaster has a greater responsibility to the public in terms of providing people with a diversity of opinions. In analysing these radio stations, we attempted to establish whether or not SABC Radio news is indeed offering listeners a diversity of news and opinions.

Beginning with the diversity of stories that are covered by **SAfm**(Chart A1), just over 30% of all of **SAfm's** news items are stories on Crime (G) & Disaster (D). The third highest percentage of stories covered were those surrounding the truth commission, followed by stories about conflicts, political violence and demonstrations at approximately 7%. These four topics were also found to account for the greatest coverage on most other radio stations as well. More than 70% of **SAfm's** news was spread over these 8 of the possible 23 topics we defined.

It is interesting to note the tendency of **SAfm's** stories to focus on the more dramatic stories of crime, disasters and conflicts, and how these topics are all firmly located within the dominant news discourse that "bad" news, has a higher news value. These figures cannot simply be interpreted to mean that **SAfm's** news is not challenging and offering a diversity of opinions. To determine this we need to examine how fair the stories are and whether or not they use more than one source. What can be noted is the range of stories that **SAfm** did not cover (in the monitored bulletins), most notably gender stories and stories about racism.

Examining the range of stories that **SAfm** did cover, and in particular their most covered topic - Crime (G) - we find, in conjunction with Chart A2, that the majority (60%) of stories covered were Fair. Where **SAfm** is different to the other stations is that it has the highest percentage of stories that were found to be Fair as compared to the other stations. However, if we consider graph H and that 60% of **SAfm's** stories are single sourced it would be difficult to argue that the stories offer a diversity of opinions.

While **SAfm** may have the fairest coverage of crime stories, there are some concerning factors, the lack of coverage of gender and race issues has already been mentioned, but **SAfm's** spread of news by origin (graph A3) reveals that 40% of the news is international while a mere 6% is African.

Again, such a small percentage of news covering the African continent must not be understood to mean that there is no news from Africa. If we narrow our focus and examine the breakdown of news stories on Africa we find that more than 63% of the stories on Africa cover disasters and other negative news topics (Chart A4). If we then examine Chart A5 we find that 39% of Africa stories were found to be Fair, 45% were Positive while 57% of African stories were Negative, in their representation of Africa (Chart A5). This is not to suggest that disasters that occur in Africa should not be reported but, clearly to focus almost exclusively on demonstrations and crime one cannot be representing a fair and balanced, indeed diverse, view of Africa.

When asked about coverage of Africa Sue Valentine, editor of **SAfm's** Current Affairs, said their foreign correspondence budget was small. She added that it had recently been cut in half which meant that **SAfm** could only afford about four items per day. In addition to this **SAfm** is allowed to use BBC correspondents at no cost, thus increasing **SAfm's** coverage of international affairs and excluding African issues.

Classic fm (B)

A classical music orientated station which includes jazz and choral music, **Classic fm** began broadcasting in September 1997. Charles Leonard (News Editor) said that their audience research revealed areas such as business, culture and human rights, which they aimed to focus on.

“We do not have a culture of human rights in our country despite having one of the best constitutions. We believe that the role of the media is to be the conscience of its society. The white media is too afraid to tackle issues because they are afraid of being labelled as racist as a result the journalism is mediocre.”

(Leonard Interview)

Leonard also mentioned their low crime coverage approach, which can be confirmed by our monitoring results discussed later. Their news is sourced from the Network Radio News, they also chase stories themselves and have stringers around the world. They are the only commercial music station that has a dedicated current affairs show every evening. Leonard mentioned that **Classic’s** coverage of Africa could be better. A reason for their limited Africa coverage that Leonard identified was that it is difficult to get through to some of the countries. However, they do try and get to the source that is directly involved in a particular story. They are making links around Africa in order to ensure better coverage of Africa.

Chart B1 shows the range of topic codes on **Classic** with TRC (J) coverage being the highest, followed by economics (A). The high TRC coverage could be attributed to the station’s commitment to the development of a human rights culture through their news reporting, as discussed by Leonard. The audience research which the station conducted revealed an interest in business coverage, and as a result their economic coverage is high demonstrating consumer influence on news content. Topic code D is again high due to Princess Diana’s death and other disasters, followed by E (conflict), relating to the Middle East ‘conflict’.

Chart B2 shows the range across topic codes of **Classic’s** Africa coverage with 36% of its coverage related to disasters (D). Coverage of crime (G) follows with 16% and diplomacy (C), conflict (E) and politics (B) all on 11%. It must be noted that Africa coverage on **Classic** only accounted for 5% of its total coverage. This can be seen on Chart B4.

The following Value Chart (Chart B3), shows that most of the small percentage of Africa coverage on **Classic** was Fair (69%) which is good. The spread of coverage across origin (Chart B4) shows that 51% of all coverage is National, followed by

International at 37%, Regional at 7% and as has been mentioned, Africa at 5%. Their coverage of Regional and African news was disappointing.

Chart B5 shows the spread of International and Africa stories across topic codes. Disaster (D) and Conflict (E) dominate International news owing to the high profile deaths and plane crashes as discussed with the other stations. Followed by Economics (A) and Politics (B). The little Africa coverage that there was on **Classic** was dominated by Politics (B) and Disaster (D). It is unfortunate that Disaster dominates even in so small a percentage of coverage, when other media, such as the **Business Day** incorporate items on economic developments and investments in Africa which impact positively on the representation of Africa. Considering **Classic's** economic focus more stories of this nature could be included on Africa to improve their coverage.

Radio 702 (C)

Radio **702** is a private radio station that has been operating in South Africa for the past 17 years. It's format is a talk radio format and it has news every half hour throughout the day. It is a medium wave regional radio station with a target audience of 25 - 49 year olds, in the AB income brackets.

Like the other private radio stations, as a commercial station **702's** interests lie ultimately in making a profit. This is important because it influences the way the news is constructed and what is deemed to be newsworthy. According to Jeremy Maggs, News Editor for **702**, the newsworthiness of an item,

“.. is ultimately about what interests our listeners. **702** is a commercial radio station and we rely solely on listeners out there and the advertising revenue that we bring in.”

(Maggs Interview)

Our purpose in analysing **702** is to determine the diversity in terms of news that an institutionalised, commercial radio station offers and also compared to the other stations monitored. **702** is particularly interesting as,

“our heritage separates us from other news stations in that we have been in the business for 17 years. At one point we were the only news show in town. We were the first choice of foreign correspondents. If there was anything happening anywhere in the world, in SA, there was only one place to go, **702**. The SABC at that time were not doing a particularly good job, they were not competition for us.”

(Maggs interview)

702's history as an independent radio station means that one cannot simply say that listenership and advertising are the exclusive determinants of the news selection. Maggs said later on, that while there are important stories that need to be covered, if it is not in the interest of 702 listeners they may have to alter their news.

".. we will however use our own judgement and insist that some stories do need coverage."

(Maggs Interview)

To further obfuscate the relationship between advertising and listenership with the creation of news, 702 employs the discourse of "breaking news". Using this discourse the listener is asked to believe that 702 is reporting what is happening when it is happening. This helps create the notion that what is in the news is only current, this is supported by the "eye witness account" style of reporting. Crime and disaster stories, because of their immediacy, lend themselves to this particular discourse of reporting.

Furthermore, by placing the emphasis on the speed, urgency and time constraints in which a story is produced. The role of the reporter in creating the news is made more objective. Implying that there isn't enough time for the reporter to alter the news that he/she is reporting on. This removes the choice made by the reporter in selecting the story. Maggs says,

"[W]hat separates us is that we have the ability to be on a story and get it very quickly to air. It is the one thing that I believe we do better than anybody else, even to this day. There is a much stronger editorial layer in other radio stations, whereas I trust the person at the desk to write, manage read and put that story to air as quickly as possible. We are better at breaking news than we are at generating news."

(Maggs Interview)

If we analyse Chart C1 we find that just under 60% of all of 702's news is spread across four topics (D,G, J, E), the highest of which is crime (G) which makes up 22% of the stories covered. This is followed by an additional 18% of stories covering conflict and political violence. "Breaking news" thus appears to limit the topics covered, and, because of its urgent nature stories tend to be negative. Accepting the assertion that the stories covered tend to be disaster stories, and taking into account the eye witness account style of reporting, disasters will generally be reported in terms of the aftermath that the reporter is witnessing. For example if one considers a crime story - that of a hijacking, an eye witness report will detail how and where the crime occurred, how many people were injured and what was stolen. Due to the urgency of the story as breaking news it

is unlikely that any analysis or positive aspects (such as the police investigation) will be detailed. If one examines Chart H one sees that **702** has the highest amount of negative coverage of crime where just under 50% of all crime news is negative.

The high level of crime reporting is a concern, in that, with the exception of **Classic fm** (which has a policy on low reporting of crime), crime stories make up approximately 20% of all stories covered (Chart C1) on 702 and between 17 and 19% (Chart E) on the other stations. It seems easy to argue that the reason for the high reporting of crime is due to the high level of crime in society and the stations are simply reporting on what is going on. To make such an argument however ignores two points. The first being that news stories are not simply objective reflections of what is going on in society, but a selected agenda of what is deemed to be newsworthy by editors. The second point is that while the responsibility of making the news lies with the station, the listeners and advertisers also affect the creation and content of the news, as mentioned above. An example of this is how **702** were told by advertisers and listeners that they did not want so much crime reporting. Maggs,

“.. we are a commercial radio station, we are in the business to make money so we took a decision to change the focus of programming slightly so that we reflected more than what was happening in terms of crime.”
(Maggs Interview)

Not only did **702** have to alter its focus on crime but as a result of a survey **702** conducted that told them crime was too high, Maggs said,

“.. our response is to cut down on crime stories because we have to take the opinions of our listeners and advertisers seriously.”
(Maggs Interview)

While Maggs not only admits to the interests of the advertisers and listeners being of great importance, he demonstrated how they can effect the news. Maggs also appears to conform to the notion that stories have an “inherent” news value. If one examines **702’s** coverage of Africa in Chart C2 we find that only 1% of **702’s** news are stories that cover Africa. Maggs admitted that their coverage was very low and said that he was in the process of developing an informal Africa news network. However, he states that,

“my motivation for putting Africa news stories on the air would be driven entirely by its intrinsic news value.”
(Maggs Interview)

The question that must be asked is how “intrinsic news value” is determined? It seems difficult to conceive that there are only sufficient “inherently African news stories” to make up 1% of 702 news.

Maggs asserts that the reasons for such poor coverage of Africa are in part an historical precedent, and also an internal focus on South Africa.

“I think that news agendas have been driven by what is happening in our own backyards. Mainly because of the richness of the news that we have available. I think that South Africans generally have been inwardly focused on South Africa.”

(Maggs Interview)

This explanation would account for 702’s high percentage of regional (26%) and national (36%) news. But how does 702 account for such a high value of international (37%) news? Also if one examines Chart C3 one finds that the range of topics covered on Africa are limited to 5. 63% of the news covers the topics of crime, disaster and conflict. Having said that, Chart C4 shows that 50% of 702’s coverage of Africa is fair - which is good. Interestingly 702 have no positive coverage at all offering the listener an unbalanced view of Africa where half of the news one hears is only bad news. If one examines Chart C5 of 702’s International and Africa coverage, the poor coverage of Africa is a stark contrast to the international coverage. Again it must be remembered that the Topic D, international coverage is particularly high due to the death of Princess Diana. Clearly there is little diversity being offered in terms of the Africa topics covered by 702.

It must be remembered, however, that we are not only concerned with examining the diversity of topics covered with respect to crime and Africa but also within the stories themselves. If one examines Chart 2 one finds that 65% of the stories on 702 use only one source, and 29% utilise two sources. One must surely question the likelihood of a story offering a diversity of opinions if only one source is used.

Kaya (D)

Kaya fm, the second new commercial Gauteng station monitored, began broadcasting in August 1997. It defines itself as an Adult Contemporary music and talk station aimed at the 25-49 age group. According to Paddi Clay (Programme Manager) the station is committed to news about Gauteng, South Africa, Africa and the world. Their news department is essentially a news and information department with the emphasis on integration. There are no

programs dedicated to any particular area of interest, instead they are integrated within the overall format. She claims that **Kaya** is 40% talk including their advertising and 60% music. Most of their news is sourced by their own journalists, press releases and Network Radio Services provides national and international news, and they also use the Internet. Clay stated that their programming is focused on an African Renaissance.

“It is an African station in the sense that it has its foot firmly in Africa.”
(Clay Interview)

This comment implicitly suggests that they have good and substantial Africa coverage.

Kaya does not have a fixed current affairs slot in the week, but attempts to integrate current affairs into their daily format throughout the week day. We therefore did not monitor current affairs on **Kaya**.

Chart D1 shows the range of news available on **Kaya**, across the topic codes. Crime (G) received the highest level of coverage, as on **SAfm** and **Radio 702**, followed by D (disaster) and J (TRC). The TRC has received consistently high levels of coverage on the stations monitored and Princess Diana’s death the first week of monitoring accounts for the high percentage of D (disaster) topic code. Topic code E (conflict, political violence) reflected mainly International and Africa stories, and similarly for code C (diplomacy). The General topic code (W) incorporated **Kaya**’s public service announcements and therefore bears mentioning as they were the only station incorporating these in their news format. Chart H shows that most of **Kaya**’s crime coverage was Positive (crime being actively challenged), with Fair and Negative coverage being similar.

Chart D2 shows African news on **Kaya** across the topic codes. E dominated (conflict, political violence) at 21% (owing to coverage of conflicts/violence in Algeria, Brazzaville and Egypt), followed by D (disaster) at 17% (owing to the death of Mobutu Sese Seko) and C (diplomacy) at 15% (with the UN and African states involved in diplomatic missions). This suggests that **Kaya**’s Africa coverage is still dominated by items which impact negatively on the image of Africa (which is still seen as a place dominated by conflict and violence), which are not sufficiently balanced by other stories which reflect positive aspects/events in Africa.

Chart D3 shows the values (Positive, Negative, Fair) attributed to Africa coverage. Most of the Africa coverage on **Kaya** is Negative (44%) which can probably be attributed to the high coverage of topic codes D and E, as discussed earlier. **Kaya** also carries a relatively high level of Fair coverage (36%) which could be increased by the station.

Chart D4 shows the spread across origin of stories, with National news accounting for 45%, International 24%, Regional 18% and Africa 13%. This evidence appears to contradict Program Manager Paddi Clay, who outlined **Kaya's** emphasis on Gauteng and African news when interviewed, yet which the monitoring results show to be disappointing.

Kaya does not have fixed current affairs programmes during the week, making conclusive monitoring of their current affairs segments which are spread throughout the day difficult. Clay did mention that they have a Sunday program called 'Sunday Mix' which includes a range of topics and correspondent reports from around Africa.

Chart D5 shows the spread across topic codes of International and Africa news. Princess Diana's and Mother Theresa's deaths, the sinking of a ferry in Miami, the plane crashes off the Namibian coast (D), and conflict and political violence in the Middle East and incidents in Northern Ireland (E) dominate International news, followed by Diplomacy (C) related predominantly to United Nations activities. Africa coverage was dominated by Political Violence and Conflict stories (E). This was followed by Disaster stories, owing to Mobutu Sese Seko's death. Although the volume of International news coverage is markedly higher, a relatively similar pattern of coverage can be seen in Africa coverage showing similar emphasis on certain topic codes, namely topic codes A to F. The exceptions are Crime (G) and Sport (S), with International sport coverage being higher than African sports coverage. This is an area which could be improved by **Kaya** in their emphasis on Africa.

Chart E: Comparative Range of News: All Commercial Stations

While there are marked differences between the stations, this graph shows how their coverage across all the topics is remarkably similar. Topics on the TRC (J) were all given at least 10% of all news casts, which considering the aims and importance of the TRC is very positive. Topic D is also uniformly high across the stations - mostly as a result of Lady Diana's death and the death of Mother Theresa. Conflict and political violence (E) made up at least 7% of news. Similarly all the stations carried very few stories on topics of Education (L), Housing (M), Rates & Services (N) Gender (O), Racism (P), Media (Q), and Human Rights (R). In a country still struggling to come to terms with a culture of Human rights, the sparse coverage of topics such as racism, Gender and Human Rights is of concern.

The topic of Crime is interesting as it is the most covered topic making up from between 17 to 22% for the three stations **SAfm, 702** and **Kaya**. **Classic**, most

notably has only 3% crime coverage, the bulk of it's news consisting of high coverage of the TRC (J) 15%, Conflict and political violence (E) and Economics & Business (A) 14%.

Chart F: Spread of Coverage over Time: Topic Code D (Disaster)

This graph illustrates the amount of coverage given to topic code D across the period monitored. The high coverage of D in the first week of monitoring was, as discussed earlier, due to the death of Princess Diana. **SAfm** and **702** carried much higher levels of coverage compared with **Classic** and **Kaya**. By the second week, levels of coverage dropped significantly, particularly on **SAfm** and **702**. The coverage in this week was of the deaths of Mobuto Sese Seko and Mother Theresa, including coverage of the investigation into Princess Diana's death which continued throughout the monitored period. The increase in coverage in the third week was due mainly to the air crash off the Namibian coast between German and US planes. Weeks two to five carried similar levels of coverage and comparatively reveal the exceptionally high levels of coverage afforded to the Princess Diana issue. Even though there was a large difference in the amount of coverage of Princess Diana's death, **Classic** and **Kaya's** coverage by week five is significantly lower to their coverage in week one. The line across the graph represents the mean or average of coverage of topic code D over the period monitored, showing that coverage across weeks two to five was closer to this average, particularly on **702** and **SAfm**.

Chart G: Current Affairs: Spread of Coverage across the Stations.

This graph represents how **702** & **Classic fm** cover a similar range of topics to a similar extent. **Classic** tends to give greatest coverage to Economics & Business (A), the TRC (J) and Conflict and Political violence (E) in both its news and current affairs programming. The only significant difference being in the coverage of Arts & Culture(T) - which has a shared similarity with the other radio stations in their current affairs programmes. The reasons for this may possibly be due to the issues being dealt with not being "hard news". The distinction being made here between hard and soft news being that hard news is news that is current, and event driven, as opposed to soft news which while current can often be discussed over a period of days as this news is usually about issues.

If one focuses on **702** one finds that **702** tends to concentrate on the topics of Disasters (D), the TRC (J) and South African National Parliament (H) - all three were also extensively covered in its range of news. There are two marked exceptions: Arts & Culture (T) received more coverage in the current affairs programme. The other exception is Crime (G) which received the greatest

attention in **702's** news and yet receives very little coverage in the current affairs programming. This is unusual as both **SAfm** (discussed later) and **Classic** give high coverage to certain topics in both their news and their current affairs programmes. Arguably if a certain topic is being focused on in the news (due to whatever process) it is reasonable to assume that that same topics should receive in-depth analysis in a current affairs programme. Considering the argument raised earlier about how **702's** concept of breaking news limits analysis, then if **702** is to offer a balanced and fair sense of the world (crime in this instance) an in-depth analyses of crime stories should be covered in the current affairs programmes. In addition to this an examination of Chart H shows that **702** has 30% of its crime coverage being Fair and 45% being Negative. It would appear then, that **702** offers little diversity in terms of its crime coverage, with marginal analysis and 45% of these stories being unbalanced reports.

As mentioned earlier, **SAfm** affords a similar level of coverage to Crime in both its news and its current affairs programmes. **SAfm's** Crime values on Chart H show that 60% of their news on crime is Fair. Not only is this the highest percent of Fair coverage across all the stations, but it also indicates that along with its current affairs programmes **SAfm** offers the listener the greatest diversity in terms of Crime coverage and information.

Continuing this comparison of **SAfm's** Current affairs and news topics range, with the exception of Racism (P) **SAfm** gives some coverage to all of the topics. In addition to this, while **SAfm** still covers the topics of Crime (G) and the TRC (J) they are covered to a lesser extent, with emphasis being placed on different topics. The topics of Economics and Business, (A) and Arts & Culture receive greater coverage in the current affairs programme than in the news.

Chart H: Crime Values Across all stations

This chart illustrates that purely in terms of crime coverage **SAfm** offers the listener the most balanced coverage as 60% of its stories are Fair. This is followed by **Classic** which has 55% Fair coverage. It must be remembered that **Classic** has less coverage of crime in general. **Kaya fm** appears overall to have a balanced coverage of crime stories, and the peculiarity of having the highest coverage of positively reported crime stories.

Chart I: Frequency of Sources per Story

Chart I shows the frequency of the number of sources used per story monitored. Approximately 60% of **SAfm**, **702** and **Classic's** stories have one source, followed by approximately 30% of their stories having up to two sources per story. The use of three or more sources per story are used less than 10% of the time on these

three stations. Over 90% of **Kaya's** news stories had only one source throughout the period monitored. The number of sources used per story positively impacts on the fairness and validity of it as more diverse opinions or viewpoints can be accessed.

Conclusions

In determining the range and diversity of information across the four commercial stations we can conclude that:

- With the exception of **Classic**, because of their low crime policy, **702**, **SAfm** and **Kaya** had high levels of crime reporting
- Most of the crime coverage on **SAfm** was, however, Fair. **Kaya's** coverage of crime was also balanced carrying the widest range of perspectives on crime.
- **702** however, had predominantly negative coverage of crime
- Overall, the stations representation of crime could be more diverse by looking at various angles on crime coverage.
- The range of topic codes covered was similar across the stations (with the exception of **Classic's** crime coverage), suggesting the potential for a widening of coverage, particularly to the incorporation of increased coverage of women and human rights.
- There tends to be a predomination of one source accessed by the stations per item. The increase of this will assist in the widening of opinions available to listeners.

- Coverage of Africa could be improved across the stations, particularly the new stations, **Classic** and **Kaya** who promised better Africa coverage in their license applications. Africa coverage should be improved both through an increase in coverage and an increase in the range of topics covered on Africa so as to begin challenging the representation of Africa as disaster and conflict-ridden.
- There appeared to be relatively consistent coverage of the TRC on the stations monitored.

This analysis found that the same discourse of news values runs through all four of the stations monitored. The similarity of topic choice suggested that the selection of news at the four stations is informed by an approach which results in the limiting of news and information diversity provided by the stations. The emphasis on 'bad news' and the poor quantity and quality in coverage on Africa illustrated the limitations of the news, as reported during the monitoring period.