

**ETHICAL BROADCASTING STANDARDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTING:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

BY

KGABO JONAS NONG

DISSERTATION

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SUPERVISOR: MR AC MANGAKA

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR BD SEADIRA

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DECLARATION

I, Kgabo Jonas Nong, hereby declare that the study titled: **“ETHICAL BROADCASTING STANDARDS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY”**, which I hereby submit to the University of Limpopo in fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Media Studies has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work and all the sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete references,

Signature:



Date: 07 July 2025

DEDICATION

This dissertation is wholeheartedly dedicated to the Almighty God, whose guidance, strength, and presence have been my source of inspiration throughout this journey. I am deeply grateful for His blessings, which have sustained me during the challenges and triumphs of compiling this study. This work is also dedicated to all the participants who contributed valuable time and insights during the data collection process. Your input was instrumental in shaping the findings and enriching this study. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to myself in recognition of my perseverance, dedication, and hard work. The countless hours spent researching, analysing, and writing are a testament to my commitment to academic excellence and personal growth.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the ethical standards in South African podcasting. It analysed how podcasts navigate the principles of media ethics such as respect for privacy, harm avoidance, truthfulness, and the prevention of defamation. The study also explored how podcasting's unregulated nature contributes to the dissemination of controversial content, including misogynistic remarks, derogatory statements about the LGBTQI+ community, and the objectification of women. The theoretical framework entailed two theories, namely; the Diffusion of Innovation and Media Policy Theory. This qualitative study used content analysis and semi-structured interviews for data collection from a total of five (5) radio presenters. The findings of this study indicate the significant gaps in ethical adherence in *Podcast and Chill with MacG* with content prioritising sensationalism over ethical considerations. The lack of regulation in podcasting is identified as a contributing factor to the perpetuation of harmful narratives impacting societal attitudes and public trust in media. The study concludes by recommending that South African podcasts adopt ethical practices that promote inclusivity, respect, and accountability. Furthermore, it suggests collaboration among regulatory bodies, content creators, and advocacy groups to ensure the sustainable growth of podcasting as a medium that reflects democratic values and fosters positive societal change.

Keywords: Podcasting, media ethics, media regulation, podcasting practice, *Podcast and Chill with MacG*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LGBTQ = Lesbians Gays Bisexuals Transgender Queer

DOI = Diffusion of Innovations

BCCSA = Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa

ICASA = Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

FCC = Federal Communications Commission

SATRA = South African Telecommunication Regulatory Authority

IBA = Independent Broadcasting Authority

IRA = Independent Regulatory Authority

RSS = Rich Site Summary

GBV = Gender-Based Violence

FHDC = Faculty of Higher Education Committee

TREC = Turfloop Research Ethical Committee

SABC = South African Broadcasting Corporation

ICCPR = International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

EFF = Economic Freedom Fighters

ANCYL = African National Congress Youth League

CIC = Chief-in-Command

COVID-19 = Coronavirus Disease 2019

FBP = Film and Publication Board

COSAS = Congress of South African Students

SAFTAs = South African Film and Television Awards

ICT = Information and Communication technologies

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored ethical standards and media ethics in South African podcasting. In recent years, the techniques and practices of audio media delivery have radically changed. Traditionally, radio has been known as the primary source of audio information delivered to the public through radio waves. Podcasting seems to coexist with radio and is now an attractive audio platform used in different settings for different reasons (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022:684). Thus, the rise of podcasting as a medium has brought new challenges regarding ethical considerations.

The accelerated development of information technologies that characterise modern society has implicitly contributed to new opportunities for producing and transmitting radio broadcasts (Marcu, 2019:80). Podcasting is among the more recent methods of transmitting radio messages. According to Aleem, Saeed, and Farooq (2021:54), “technological advancement has brought about the convergence and divergence of media, creating a rather dynamic and complicated contemporary media landscape”. As such, technological developments have enhanced the production and delivery of podcasts.

Today’s podcast directories, such as YouTube, iTunes, and Spotify, which have emerged as technology advances, allow users to stream, download, and subscribe to podcasts (Bottomley, 2020:58). Podcasting is increasingly popular as an accessible, low-cost medium for in-depth commentary on arts and politics (Mkhabela, 2021). Popular podcasts in South Africa include *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, *Musa Khawula’s Pope of Pop Culture*, *The Hustler’s Corner*, *Everything Music SA*, *Limpopo Podcast*, *The Money Show*, *The Gareth Cliff Show*, and *True Crime South Africa*, to name a few.

The presence of podcasting in South Africa became more noticeable in 2021, largely due to increased internet penetration and smartphone access (Mkhabela, 2021). Furthermore, podcasting has become crucial for documenting and reappraising cultural and social issues in South Africa. Podcasts, which are widely available in South Africa, are detailed, unfiltered, and uncensored, and because of their length,

are not constrained by the timeframes of traditional media outlets (Mkhabela, 2021). In addition, South Africa has a complex history of social and political problems, including apartheid, inequality, and persistent challenges related to race and gender (Ndimande, 2016:45). Podcasts have the potential to contribute positively to conversations about these issues, but there is also a risk that they may perpetuate harmful stereotypes or contribute to the marginalisation of certain groups.

According to Rei-Anderson (2023), the largely unregulated medium of podcasting allows podcasters to broadcast content without adhering to industry standards or legal restrictions. While this unregulated broadcasting environment appears to promote free speech, it can ultimately undermine the principles of freedom of speech and expression (Anka, 2021). In the absence of regulatory oversight, podcasters can disseminate content that may contain hate speech, fake news and defamatory statements, raising significant ethical concerns. Without industry standards to guide them, podcasters have the freedom to produce and distribute content that may not align with ethical journalistic principles (Tennant, 2023).

Moreover, this lack of regulation can lead to the spread of harmful narratives that perpetuate misinformation and prejudice. For example, hate speech against marginalised communities, misinformation about critical social issues, and defamatory content targeting individuals and groups can thrive in such an environment. Therefore, the critical need for ethical journalistic principles and media ethics in podcasting becomes evident. Implementing guidelines and standards that promote accuracy, fairness, harm avoidance, and responsibility in content creation is essential to safeguarding the integrity of the medium. Such measures would protect the rights of individuals and ensure that podcasting contributes positively to the discourse in society.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South African podcasting has become a popular platform for airing controversial and ethically sensitive content, including misogyny, LGBTQI+ discrimination, and the objectification of women. The core problem lies in the proliferation of harmful discourse that perpetuates social prejudice and contributes to a toxic media culture. Although there is increasing public and scholarly recognition of these issues, a critical gap

remains in our understanding of how South African podcasters engage with ethical responsibilities in their content creation processes.

Current academic literature on digital media ethics has begun to explore these dynamics globally (e.g., Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Tennant, 2023; Ferrer, Shaw, & Lorenzetti, 2021), yet few studies specifically address the South African podcasting context. For example, a study by Motsaathebe in 2023 focused on the evolving trend in radio with a focus on podcasting content and style of presentation. The role of presenters and the type of content of this podcast were seen as some of the factors that make it successful.

Currently, South Africa's media landscape lacks comprehensive regulations and frameworks specifically designed to address the unique ethical issues associated with podcasting. This regulatory void allows harmful content to be disseminated intentionally or unintentionally without accountability. As podcasting continues to grow in influence, it becomes imperative to investigate the ethical considerations and decision-making processes of podcasters. Doing so can help establish practices that promote inclusivity, respect, and diversity while ensuring that the medium evolves responsibly.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Aim of the study

This study aimed to explore the ethical standards in South African podcasting by analysing how podcasts navigate the principles of media ethics.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine the ethical standards upheld by the South African podcasters.
- To analyse the ways South African podcasters interpret and apply media ethics.
- To formulate the recommendations for enhancing ethical standards in South African podcasting.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, aligning with Creswell's (2013) emphasis on the systematic collection of diverse empirical materials such as narratives and media texts that convey experiential meanings. Given that podcasts function as cultural texts capable of eliciting various interpretations from audiences (Spinelli & Dann, 2019), they are well-suited for qualitative inquiry. An exploratory research design was chosen to investigate the underexplored ethical standards within South African podcasting, particularly in light of its unregulated nature. This design facilitated an open-ended, flexible examination of the complexities surrounding ethical content creation, which enabled the development of new insights and future research directions.

The study population included five (5) episodes from the *Podcast and Chill with MacG* YouTube channel and five (5) selected South African radio presenters. This podcast was selected for its broad public reach, popularity, and controversial content that frequently features ethically sensitive material such as hate speech and defamatory remarks. Radio presenters were included to provide a comparative perspective, given their adherence to ethical broadcasting regulations such as those outlined by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA). A nonprobability sampling method was used to select five episodes from the podcast that exemplify ethical challenges, and five radio presenters whose professional experiences in regulated environments could inform the study's ethical inquiry.

Data were collected through qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Content analysis was applied to the selected podcast episodes to identify themes and patterns related to ethical principles such as truthfulness, harm avoidance, and respect for privacy (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In parallel, semi-structured interviews with five radio presenters enabled an in-depth exploration of ethical practices within regulated media. These interviews allowed for structured yet flexible dialogues on how ethical standards are navigated and provided a comparative framework for understanding podcasting's ethical landscape. Thematic analysis was employed to synthesise findings from both methods, categorising data into themes that reflect recurring ethical issues and offering insight into the broader implications for media accountability in South African podcasting.

1.5 Quality Criteria

1.5.1 Reliability

According to Coleman (2022), reliability refers to providing sufficient information and documentation of the methods used, enabling the study to be scrutinised and replicated. The study ensured that the data collected were valid and interpreted accurately to minimise bias. All collected data and ideas were represented authentically and transparently. The data were shared openly by allowing room for constructive criticism. Every piece of information, including questions and answers, was communicated honestly. When reporting findings and outlining procedures, no data or information was fabricated, ensuring the integrity of the study's results.

1.5.2 Validity

Validity entails ethically aligning research purposes, orientations, and methodologies to ensure the production of high-quality research. According to Abrahamson, Berkowitz, and Dumez (2016), inductive inference involves actively shaping research to achieve its intended purposes and making it meaningful by contributing to the understanding and transformation of the world. To uphold ethical standards, the researcher acted in good faith, offering well-founded prescriptions and recommendations based on the most reliable information available to address the study's objectives effectively. To ensure validity, the researcher also provided comprehensive information about the study's context, enabling other scholars to determine whether the foundational settings are comparable to their research and whether the findings can be reasonably generalised or justified within similar contexts.

1.5.3 Credibility

Credibility, according to Korstjens and Moser (2018:120), "is the degree of certainty that can be conveyed about the accuracy of the study's findings". Credibility determines whether the research findings represent believable information acquired from the original data of the participants and are a valid interpretation of their initial perspectives. The respondents had the freedom to choose whether the findings highlighted their perceptions and approbation, and the researcher ensured that the credibility of the study was upheld.

1.5.4 Objectivity

Objectivity ensures an appropriate balance between various aspects of research quality, including relevance and credibility, while acknowledging potential tensions and striving for complementarities. In contrast, confirmability emphasises that the study's findings accurately reflect the experiences of the participants rather than the biases or preferences of the researcher (Bryman *et al.*, 2008). To uphold these principles, the researcher ensured that factual information about the phenomenon under analysis was presented accurately.

Furthermore, the study aimed to measure or test precisely what was intended, maintaining rigour and focus. The researcher relied on triangulation by incorporating multiple data sources, such as podcast content, interviews with radio presenters, and literature, to corroborate findings and reduce the influence of personal bias. The use of direct quotes from participants further enhanced confirmability by ensuring that the study reflected the perspectives and experiences of the informants rather than the researcher's interpretations.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are among the most critical components of research, as their absence can jeopardise the success of a research project (Bryman *et al.*, 2008). The researcher sought permission from the participants through a consent letter, ensuring voluntary participation and emphasising that individuals would not be coerced into taking part. All participants were treated with respect and dignity throughout the research process.

1.6.1 Respect for Individuals

The study was grounded in a deep respect for the autonomy, dignity, and personal agency of all participants involved. Given that data collection involved direct interaction with individuals through interviews, it was imperative to uphold ethical standards that protect participants' rights. Participation in this research was strictly voluntary, and no individual was coerced into taking part. Before the commencement of data collection, all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative repercussions. The researcher was attentive to the

emotional and psychological comfort of the participants, creating a space where they could express themselves freely or decline to answer specific questions if they felt discomfort. The commitment to respecting participants' values, needs, and preferences was maintained throughout the research process, in line with human research ethics protocols.

1.6.2 Honesty

Honesty was a guiding principle in all phases of the research, from data collection to analysis and reporting. The researcher ensured that all responses provided during interviews were documented accurately and without omission or alteration. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives in their own words, thereby avoiding the imposition of researcher bias or leading responses. Furthermore, during the presentation of findings, no information was manipulated to support preconceived narratives. This approach ensured the integrity of the data and upheld the ethical standards of qualitative research as advocated. The researcher also refrained from any deceptive practices, such as withholding the true purpose of the research or misrepresenting how the data would be used.

1.6.3 Objectivity

The researcher maintained a high degree of objectivity throughout the study by employing systematic procedures for data collection and analysis. In qualitative research, absolute neutrality may not always be attainable; however, reflexivity and critical self-awareness were employed to minimise researcher bias. All video content and interview data were analysed based on thematic consistency rather than subjective interpretation. Citations and references to external sources were meticulously recorded and integrated where appropriate, ensuring that all ideas and data were traceable to their original context. The presentation of both supportive and contradictory data points further affirmed the researcher's commitment to intellectual honesty and balanced interpretation, as encouraged by methodological standards in social sciences (Evans, 2013).

1.6.4 Informed Consent

According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006), “Participants have a right to know what the research is about.” The researcher prioritised informed consent as a foundational element of participant engagement. Before any data collection began, participants were provided with detailed information sheets explaining the study's objectives, methodologies, expected duration, potential benefits, and any foreseeable risks. These documents also outlined how confidentiality would be maintained and how data would be stored and used. Consent forms were distributed and signed by participants, ensuring their understanding and agreement to partake in the study under transparent conditions. The researcher also emphasised that participation was entirely optional and that individuals could revoke their consent at any stage. This process ensured that participants were aware of their rights and empowered to exercise them throughout the research.

1.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the growing discourse on media ethics in the rapidly evolving podcasting landscape in South Africa. As an unregulated medium, podcasts have become a powerful platform for shaping public opinion, addressing social issues and influencing cultural narratives (Aufderheide, Lieberman, Alkhalouf & Ugboma, 2020). However, the lack of a regulatory framework raises concerns about the ethical challenges they pose, such as the dissemination of harmful content, stereotyping and invasion of privacy. This study focused on *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, South Africa's most popular podcast, and critically examined how ethical principles are managed — or neglected — in unregulated media. It highlighted the consequences of prioritising sensationalism and audience engagement over accountability and illustrated the wider implications for public discourse, social cohesion and the promotion of respectful representation in the media.

The study highlighted the gap between regulated and unregulated media environments. It provided a comparative perspective that could inform strategies for ethical improvements in podcasting by incorporating insights from radio presenters who operate within established ethical frameworks. This cross-media analysis has the potential to guide policymakers, media practitioners, and content creators in

developing standards that uphold media ethics while preserving the creative freedom that characterises podcasting. Moreover, the study emphasised the need for education and training in media ethics for podcasters, promoting a culture of accountability and inclusivity in the South African podcasting industry. It advocated the development of voluntary ethical guidelines and collaborative efforts between creators and regulatory bodies to promote ethical practices. Ultimately, this study contributes to the overarching goal of ensuring that podcasting, as an important part of the digital media ecosystem, reflects democratic values, respects diversity and promotes responsible content creation.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.8.1 Podcasting: is an audio content creation made available on the internet for immediate streaming on different platforms or downloading directly to the listener's device (Tidal, 2021).

1.8.2 Media ethics: is a branch of philosophy (or mass communication) concerned with morally permissible actions and those that are not (Wilkins & Christians, 2020).

1.8.3 Unregulated media: platforms that operate without formal oversight or regulatory frameworks, allowing unrestricted content creation and distribution (Tennant, 2023).

1.8.4 Defamation: the act of making false or harmful statements about an individual that damage their reputation, typically without evidence or consent (Helmreich, 2023).

1.8.5 Smash: refers to casual sex or the desire to have sexual intercourse with someone (Bark, 2024).

1.8.6 Misogyny: prejudice, hatred, or discrimination against women, often manifesting through objectification, derogatory remarks, or systemic inequality (Richardson-Self, 2021).

1.8.7 LGBTQI+ Representation: refers to the portrayal and inclusion of individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in media content (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015).

1.8.8 Privacy: the right of individuals to keep their personal lives and information free from public exposure without their explicit consent (Yanisky-Ravid & Lahav, 2016).

1.8.9 Sensationalism: the use of provocative or exaggerated content to attract audience attention, often at the expense of accuracy, fairness, or ethical considerations (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2013).

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER ONE: Problem in Perspective

This chapter entailed an overview of what the study was about, which included the background and motivation of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives, significance of the study and the definition of key terms.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

This chapter gave an account of a comprehensive review of the literature that underpinned this research and highlighted the gap that justified the necessity of the study. This chapter explored existing scholarship to establish a foundational understanding of the key concepts and themes central to the study. The literature review offered an overview of the relevant theories, frameworks, and empirical studies that addressed the ethical dimensions of media, with a particular focus on unregulated platforms such as podcasts.

CHAPTER THREE: Theoretical Framework

Chapter three provided a detailed theoretical framework with a supporting perspective towards the identified research problem.

CHAPTER FOUR: Research Methodology

Chapter four detailed the methodology employed in the research, outlining the qualitative research design, the study population, the sampled podcast episodes and interview participants, the area of study, the sampling procedure, as well as the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Additionally, it discussed the quality criteria used to ensure the rigour and credibility of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presented and analysed the data collected from qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews with radio presenters.

CHAPTER SIX: Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

This final chapter provided the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the overall study based on research findings.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter provided the background and motivation of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research methodology, and ethical considerations. Therefore, there was hope that this study would contribute significantly towards filling the academic gap in this area of study since there are few studies, to the researcher's knowledge, that researched the ethical standards in podcasting.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an in-depth review of relevant literature to provide a comprehensive foundation for achieving the study's objectives. It examines key topics related to podcasting, including its definition, historical perspective, and the critical importance of media ethics. These discussions provide insights into podcasting's potential as a tool for both empowerment and disruption, framing its dual capacity to inform and entertain while also presenting ethical challenges. The emphasis on media ethics is particularly relevant to this study because it explores the principles that guide responsible content creation and dissemination. Moreover, the literature review offers critical perspectives that inform the study's focus on addressing ethical lapses in podcasting by analysing ethical considerations such as privacy, truthfulness, defamation, accuracy, inclusivity, and harm avoidance. Through these discussions, the chapter provides a broader understanding of the topic, objectives, and purpose of the study. It summarises the existing knowledge to identify gaps in the current literature and determine the significance of the research.

2.1 PODCASTING

2.1.1 Defining podcasting

Scholars have defined podcasting in various ways, but the core concept remains consistent. Harris and Park (2008) describe podcasting as the creation of audio content that is made available online for immediate streaming or direct download to listeners' devices. Similarly, Wambui (2020) views podcasting as a method of distributing audio content that subscribers can access regularly on their computers. For Sullivan (2019), podcasting shares characteristics with traditional media forms—while it is an audio medium like radio, it is delivered automatically to listeners via subscription, much like magazines or newspapers.

Sullivan, Aufderheide, Bonini, Berry and Llinares (2020) offer a similar explanation, noting that podcasting is a technology that is used for distributing, receiving, and listening to on-demand audio content created by traditional publishers such as radio stations, publishers, journalists, and educational institutions. Complementary to this,

Markman (2014) defines podcasting as a method of transmitting audio and/or video files through so-called RSS feeds that can be downloaded and later played on various devices. Thus, the definition of podcasting expanded over time to include various forms of downloadable audio content. Moreover, the term podcasting has evolved and been used in multiple contexts to describe an on-demand audio platform: digital audio files that can be downloaded through Really Simple Syndication (downloadable radio programme on the Internet, downloadable audio programmes broadcast on the radio, a programme and an episode (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022).

While podcasting is defined as downloadable on-demand content, the term podcast as defined by Dhiman (2023) can be a series of episodes that are digitally programmed and formatted that focus on a specific theme or topics such as social issues, politics, business, culture, religion, technology, start-ups, motivation, inspiration, or celebrity gossip. Furthermore, podcasts are a way of making decentralised audio content widely available online. Christopher Lydon has explained it this way: “It is a space where people could speak raw language and express angry attitudes that most of the population wanted to hear and believe in” (Prokopović, 2021:19). Being authentic, being political, and speaking the way we speak at home, podcasting is a great gift from the internet (Martinoli, 2020; Prokopović, 2021).

2.1.2 The historical perspective of podcasting

According to Sullivan (2019), the emergence of podcasting can be traced back to the historical development of RSS (Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication). To understand the origins of podcasting, one must understand RSS, a digital channel that allows users to effortlessly subscribe to and receive updates from various serialised online content sources (Story, 2022). Originally developed by Dan Libby and Ramanathan V. Guha at Netscape in 1999, RSS served as a text-based tool that enabled automatic updates from blogs and various websites (Sullivan, 2019). Markman and Sawyer (2014) affirm that RSS, being both free and user-friendly, allows individuals to discover, subscribe to, and listen to the latest content without having to visit specialised storage platforms or websites. Netscape played a crucial role in popularising RSS by integrating it into its browser and displaying headlines and links from different websites in a unified window, a distinctive feature of its browser (Sullivan, 2019).

Nevertheless, Netscape eventually abandoned control of RSS to the developer community (Singer, 2019). Subsequently, “software developer David Winer took over and introduced RSS 0.92 in 2000, a revised version of the RSS web syndication format explicitly designed to include digital audio files in RSS feeds” (Bottomley, 2016:164). Cochrane (2005) further reveals that the defining moment for the integration of RSS into podcasting occurred around the year 2000, after Adam Curry and Dave Winer developed a primitive form of on-demand audio entertainment using RSS feeds to automatically download audio files from the Internet (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Dave Winer introduced the concept of “enclosure”, which allowed URL addresses to be passed to an aggregator. Moreover, in September 2003, Winer implemented a feed of enclosures and linked it to a software script he developed called “iPodder”, which enabled the transfer of MP3 files from Userland Radio’s website to Apple’s iTunes software (Sullivan, 2019). This progression reflects the diffusion of innovations in the development and integration of RSS into podcasting.

According to Sterne, Morris, Baker, and Freire (2008), the addition of media supplements to RSS by software developers Dave Winer and Adam Curry enabled media aggregators to locate and create directories for web content through the feed. This technology provided the framework for distributing audio content in a way that was not only convenient but also easily accessible. Motsaathebe (2023) states that the first documented podcast was in 2004 when Adam Curry used the RSS feeds to push MP3 files to subscribers of his online show. Thus, Adam Curry’s introduction of an RSS-to-iPod “podcatcher” programme called iPodder, as well as the debut of the first podcasting programme *Daily Source Code*, are often seen as key moments in the medium’s widespread adoption (Chen, 2009).

Weber (2020) notes that the name “podcast” originates from the technology developed by Apple, specifically for the iPod. In Addition, the term ‘podcasting’ itself is a made-up word of “iPod” and “broadcast”. Hammersley (2003) further posits that this emerging medium was revolutionary as it freed listeners from the constraints of time and place and allowed them to engage with programme creators actively. In addition, the year 2005 became the “year of the podcast” (Bowers, 2005), as it was named “Word of the Year” by the *New Oxford American Dictionary* in 2005 (Rosell Aguilar, 2021). According to Friess (2015), the emergence of podcasting as the new medium was

solidified in June 2015 when Apple upgraded to iTunes 4.9, the first version of the software to offer fully integrated podcast support; Apple's new podcast directory made it easy for ordinary users to search for and subscribe to podcasts. There are two periods of podcasting development: the first was between 2004 and 2014 when already broadcast radio programmes were published as podcasts, and the second period, beginning in 2014, when the content intended only for online platforms was produced and the podcast developed as an independent and original media form (Lindeberg, 2019). In South Africa, podcasts have become a significant aspect of the radio landscape as they play a significant role in diverse types of content following each podcast's niche area (Motsaathebe, 2023). Rime, Pike, and Collins (2022) state that Ben Hammersley's recognition of this phenomenon as a liberating force for listeners emphasises the profound impact that podcasting has on the traditional broadcasting paradigm.

2.1.3 The Development and Adoption of Podcasting in South Africa

2.1.3.1 Early Innovations in South African Podcasting

The rise of podcasting in South Africa parallels global trends in digital media evolution. With the advent of the internet in the early 1990s, individuals began exploring digital platforms for self-expression, akin to the early radio enthusiasts of the 1920s (Bolter, 2019). Among the pioneers was 2oceansvibe, which professionalised and commercialised internet broadcasting. This platform evolved into a multifaceted media and news centre, offering 24/7 live streaming through its 2oceansvibe radio platform (Nkoala & Motsaathebe, 2023).

Another milestone in the South African podcasting landscape was the establishment of CliffCentral, an online hub dedicated to podcasting and internet radio. Founded by Gareth Cliff, a former 5FM presenter, CliffCentral has since become a significant player in the podcasting space. Cliff, known for his provocative style during his tenure at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), transitioned to the online space to create an unregulated digital public sphere. His move was fuelled by his desire to connect directly with audiences through platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter), bypassing traditional broadcasting constraints (Macguire, 2014; Cliffcentral.com, 2022).

2.1.3.2 The Emergence and Popularity of Podcasts in South Africa

The adoption of podcasting in South Africa gained momentum around 2015 and 2016 (Van der Merwe, 2021). However, the medium truly entered mainstream culture in 2021, as podcasts increasingly documented and analysed cultural and social issues (Mkhabela, 2021). This shift was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when lockdowns disrupted traditional media consumption patterns. Podcasts became a critical source of connection and engagement during a period of isolation and uncertainty (Moldes, Dineva & Ku, 2022). As people sought both information and entertainment amidst widespread social distancing measures, podcasts offered a flexible and accessible medium to address these needs. The format's adaptability allowed creators to quickly respond to evolving societal concerns, covering topics ranging from public health updates to personal reflections on the pandemic experience. Furthermore, podcasts bridged the gap left by restricted physical interactions, fostering virtual communities where listeners could find solace, relatability, and intellectual stimulation during an unprecedented global crisis (Moldes, Dineva & Ku, 2022; Mkhabela, 2021). This responsiveness to social and cultural needs solidified podcasting's role as a pivotal medium in South Africa's evolving digital landscape.

2.1.3.3 Constraints and Opportunities

Despite its growth, the development of podcasting in South Africa is shaped by ongoing challenges, particularly those related to technological access and affordability. Limited internet connectivity, especially in rural areas, and the high cost of data continue to constrain the production and consumption of podcasts (Africa Podfest, 2021). Internet penetration in South Africa, while increasing, remains unevenly distributed, with rural communities often experiencing slower and less reliable connections compared to urban areas (Hendricks & Mims, 2018). Furthermore, data costs in South Africa remain among the highest in the world, making consistent streaming or downloading of podcast content financially burdensome for many individuals (Africa Podfest, 2021). These challenges are compounded by limited digital literacy in certain segments of the population, where potential listeners may lack the knowledge to access or navigate podcast platforms effectively. Nevertheless, the increasing affordability and availability of smartphones, combined with greater internet

access, have opened new opportunities for podcast creators to reach diverse audiences (Mkhabela, 2021). This shift has been further supported by innovative initiatives such as community-based podcasting workshops and the development of local podcast directories, which aim to bridge the accessibility gap and foster greater inclusivity in the podcasting landscape (Africa Podfest, 2021).

2.1.4 Accessibility of Podcasts through YouTube

According to Bonina, Koskinen, Eaton and Gawer (2021), the evolution of information technologies has significantly shaped and transformed modern society, particularly in the way information is accessed and shared across platforms. Among these, YouTube has emerged as a key player in the widespread adoption of podcasts. Launched on February 14, 2005, YouTube has become one of the most popular video-sharing websites globally, boasting over one billion users and hundreds of billions of views (Ghafar, Ishaq & Anees, 2023). The platform empowers billions of users worldwide to discover, create, watch, and share videos (Braun et al., 2017). Unlike traditional audio-only formats, podcasts on YouTube often incorporate visual elements such as images, subtitles, and timestamps, enhancing user experience and accessibility (Jacobson, 2021). This integration of multimedia features has expanded the reach of podcasts and enriched their content delivery. Thompson and Weldon (2022) highlight that YouTube's accessibility has facilitated unprecedented levels of cross-cultural communication and idea exchange, revolutionising global interactions in ways that were previously inconceivable.

As in many other countries, there is a growing podcasting scene in South Africa, with content creators increasingly turning to platforms such as YouTube to distribute and publish their shows. This trend reflects the growing popularity of podcasts as a medium for storytelling, information sharing and entertainment among South African audiences (Motsaathebe, 2023:161). Millions of user-generated content creators access the platform for several types of content, including podcasts. This is evident in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, which has 1.2 million subscribers on YouTube.

2.1.5 The Difference between Podcasting and Radio

The relationship between podcasting and radio is a focal point in podcasting literature. According to Berry (2016:7), podcasting sounds like radio while at the same time laying a stake in its sense of uniqueness, which might contradict traditionally held concepts of what 'radio' is, while often remaining a function of the radio industry. On the other hand, Dubber (2013:13) points out that radio encapsulates a multifaceted entity that is not just a medium of communication, but an interplay of institutions, practices, and the concrete transmission of signals. At its core, radio embodies a historical continuum of technological innovation and cultural significance, serving as a conduit for the dissemination of information, entertainment, and social discourse (Dubber, 2013).

One key difference between podcasts and radio is the stronger sense of personal connection found in podcasts. Nkoala (2023) noted that podcast listeners actively choose and subscribe to the content they prefer. Although radio and podcasts sound different, they share common listening and distribution practices. According to Berry (2016:10), podcast and radio audiences seek audio entertainment, and there may be occasions when both audiences consume the same content. However, podcasts can also be in video form, posted on video streaming services such as YouTube.

YouTube, among other platforms, gives podcast audiences a different path that begins with making a series of decisions about what they want to hear or watch (Nkoala, 2023). This makes podcasting a 'pull' medium, where the listener is more actively involved in the process of selection and planning (McClung & Johnson, 2010:82). A study by Markman (2012) found that the desire to "make radio was the most frequently cited reason for starting a podcast". For example, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is hosted and co-hosted by former radio hosts. This suggests that radio has some appeal, but podcasting has an even greater appeal, largely because it allows participants to "make radio on their terms" (Markman, 2014:20).

According to Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022:699), podcasting has evolved into a more sophisticated and unique medium with different user segments, providing an alternative, stand-alone audio platform for communication and marketing campaigns. Unlike traditional radio, which often appeals to a broad audience with standardised content, podcasting allows for more personalised and niche-oriented content that

caters to specific interests and needs of different user segments (Marcu, 2019:80). Furthermore, one of the main differences is the length and structure of the content because traditional radio programmes have a fixed length and structure while the length of a podcast varies depending on the developer's concept (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022:699). This means that podcasts do not necessarily have a fixed structure as they allow for greater flexibility in the creation and delivery of content.

Radio operates within a framework of regulations set by government bodies or independent regulators (Tennant, 2023). In South Africa, for example, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) oversees the regulation of the broadcasting sector, and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) handles complaints related to content broadcast on radio and ensures that ethical standards are met. Regulatory oversight of broadcasting is rooted in the public interest, as radio stations have traditionally held licenses that grant them access to limited spectrum resources (ICASA, 2017). Ethical guidelines often include restrictions on hate speech, defamation, language use, misinformation, profanity, and other content that may be considered harmful or offensive to the public (Ullmann & Tomalin, 2020:69).

According to Motsaathebe (2023), the fact that podcasts are not regulated in the same way as traditional radio gives their presenters more freedom to use language more freely and address topics that may be regulated on traditional radio, which tends to appeal to the youth rather than the older generation. The internet and digital platforms have democratised content creation, which allows individuals and organisations to produce and distribute podcasts without the need for a traditional broadcasting license (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). As a result, podcasts are not subject to the same level of regulatory control as traditional radio.

Thus, podcasters typically have more freedom to create and distribute content, which can lead to a variety of perspectives and topics that would not find a place in the more regulated environment of broadcasting, such as radio (Tennant, 2023). The lack of strict regulation in podcasting also means that ethical standards can vary widely. Furthermore, podcasters are often responsible for self-regulation and there may be instances where controversial or harmful content is produced without oversight (Klonick, 2019:2418). This has caused debates over the requirement for regulations or

industry standards for addressing ethical dilemmas in the podcasting sphere (Tennant, 2023).

2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PODCASTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.2.1 Podcasts as a Medium of Public Communication and Information Dissemination

Public communication channels and digital broadcasting media are becoming increasingly diverse, including podcasts. In recent years, podcasts have become a communication channel that is very well-received by the public in South Africa (Mkhabela, 2021). Apart from being relatively new, podcast content has become increasingly in demand since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued to this day (Hutabarat, 2022). According to Zellatifanny (2020), the emerging trend of distributing audio content on-demand via podcasts could have several benefits for users in South Africa: Podcasts can be a medium that delivers information that opens up new insights and thoughts, they can deliver more personalised content than other media, they can be used as alternative media to disseminate information, they offer great monetisation opportunities, they can complement traditional radio and video-based platforms, and they can be accessed safely and conveniently due to relatively low bandwidth requirements.

A study by Hutabarat (2022) found that the existence of podcasts is one of the answers to people's information needs. This is supported by the uses and gratification theory, as it explains that audiences are seen as active and purposeful individuals. These individuals are the users and listeners of podcasts and are responsible for choosing the media they use to satisfy their needs. Uses and gratification theory thus examines the extent to which media can fulfil the needs of the audience (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andi, Robertson & Nielsen, 2021). According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2021), the flow pattern of information and communication distribution in society is dominated by online media and social media. Podcasts are one of the online media used by South Africans.

The current use of podcasts in addition to information media is also a medium to provide entertainment to the public (Hutabarat, 2022). Podcasts can work well for the public when combined with inviting sources as entertainment in discussions. Chan-

Olmsted and Wang (2022) found that entertainment and information-seeking are the most important motives for the consumption of podcasts. This shows that podcasts can be a medium of entertainment and information related to many who start listening to podcasts when they need entertainment, and are useful for providing information to listeners (Renisyifa, Sunarti & Pebriyanti, 2022).

Edison Research (2022) reported that approximately 40% of individuals are monthly podcast listeners, marking a significant 37% increase from 2021. Sang, Lee, and Park (2020) suggest that podcast listeners are more likely to be young, urban, affluent, educated men who typically listen to podcasts at home on YouTube and are drawn to them for their diverse perspectives. Among news consumers, 11% listen to podcasts, with these individuals often showing a strong interest in politics and a tendency to lean left politically (Sang *et al.*, *ibid*). The most popular podcast in South Africa is *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, which covers a broad spectrum of topics, including politics, social issues, current affairs, and celebrity gossip. This podcast has become a significant medium for providing information and entertainment in the country. It has many subscribers, and millions of viewers have recently hosted an event to celebrate reaching one million YouTube subscribers (Adekunle, 2023; Motsaathebe, 2023).

2.2.1.1 Role of podcasts in alternative media and citizen journalism

The role of podcasts in alternative media and citizen journalism is increasingly significant, with research on media substitutability and complementarity providing a theoretical foundation for understanding this phenomenon. Cha and Chan-Olmsted (2012) have found that consumers' motivations for engaging with one medium can influence their interaction with other forms of media. As demonstrated by Rogers (1995), technologies that serve similar functions and meet the same needs are in the same technology cluster. Within such clusters, the adoption and use of one technology can have a profound impact on the adoption and use of others (Rogers, 1995). This dynamic interaction may result in either a displacement effect, where one medium supplants another, or a complementarity effect, where multiple media coexist and complement each other, depending on the specific characteristics of the media and the motivations driving consumer behaviour (Lee & Lee, 2015). For example, as the amount of entertainment continues to increase on podcasts, consumers seeking

entertainment from radio may switch to podcasts, and their usage of radio may decrease as a result (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022).

According to Prokopović (2021), the emergence of Web 2.0 and the accompanying rise of social media have driven the development of online journalism in different directions. Before the advent of Web 2.0, online journalism initially struggled to establish its legitimacy alongside traditional forms of journalism (Allan, 2006). However, the introduction of Web 2.0 and subsequent technological innovations have facilitated the emergence of new forms of journalism, including mobile journalism, drone journalism, and others intertwined with social media and, more recently, artificial intelligence. Prokopović (2021) also noted that podcasts are a way of widely distributing decentralised audio content online.

In the context of citizen journalism, podcasts have emerged as a powerful medium that not only complements but also, in some cases, displaces traditional forms of news consumption. Citizen journalism, as defined by Carr, Barnidge, Lee, and Tsang (2014), involves ordinary individuals—who are not professional journalists—actively participating in news gathering, writing, and dissemination. As such, podcasts are a field in which many people can try themselves – that is, it can be amateurs who want to talk about a certain topic i.e., *Comedy, Society and Culture, News and Politics, Arts, Sports, Health, Business, Education, Kids and Family, Religion, Music, Games and Hobbies, Personal Journals, Fashion and Beauty, Science and Medicine, Technology and TV & Film* (Prokopović, 2021). The proliferation of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X/Twitter has significantly broadened the scope of citizen journalism (Park, 2017). Podcasting has gained prominence among these platforms, fundamentally altering how news is produced, consumed, and distributed.

The rise of podcasting as a medium for citizen journalism has facilitated the emergence of new voices in the media landscape—voices that often address topics and perspectives ignored by mainstream outlets (Newman *et al.*, 2021). This shift has empowered citizen journalists to cover news and current events that may be overlooked by traditional media through podcasts, thereby contributing to a more diverse and inclusive media ecosystem (Einhorn, 2015; Park, 2017). The increasing use of podcasts for citizen journalism also underscores the medium's growing influence in shaping public discourse, as podcasts have become an essential tool for

breaking major stories that capture public attention. Thus, as podcast content continues to evolve, it not only challenges established media but also enriches the broader landscape of alternative media and citizen journalism.

2.2.1.2 Political and social commentary in South African podcasts

The increasing disengagement of voters from the political process and the growing distrust of politicians, political parties and the media have long been a central theme in political marketing research (Savigny, 2008; Scammell, 2014; Tranová & Veneti, 2021). Although the advent of new media technologies has provided politicians with innovative tools to manage their public image, disseminate their messages, and encourage interaction with their constituents (Bossetta, 2018), these advances have not necessarily led to increased political engagement (Tranová & Veneti, 2021). In the context of South African podcasts that focus on political commentary, these issues take on particular significance. South Africa's unique socio-political landscape, characterised by historical tensions and ongoing struggles with corruption and inequality, exacerbates the challenges of promoting genuine political engagement through digital media (Branch & Mampilly, 2015).

While podcasts provide an easily accessible avenue for political discourse, they also highlight generational differences in the way political information is consumed and processed. Research has shown that digital media consumption introduces a new dimension of generational differences in the impact of news on political participation (Andersen *et al.*, 2021). Younger generations, who are more likely to consume political content through podcasts and other digital channels, may experience a different level of political efficacy than older generations who rely more heavily on traditional media. This generational shift raises questions about the long-term impact of digital media on political engagement and the potential of podcasts to either bridge or deepen these divides (Ranová & Veneti, 2021). In the South African context, where trust in political institutions is particularly fragile, political podcasts could play a crucial role in either reinforcing or challenging existing narratives.

For example, the podcast *Podcasts from the Edge*, hosted by Peter Bruce, a seasoned South African newspaper editor and commentator, features weekly interviews with the country's leading political and social experts. In each episode, Bruce aims to explain

the complexities of South Africa's current events, offering clear and concise explanations for listeners who have limited time to engage (Player FM, 2024). Furthermore, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* featured the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Party's Chief in Command (CIC) Julius Malema in July of 2022 to discuss politics, Winnie Mandela, African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), EFF, Corruption and Cyril Ramaphosa (YouTube, 2024). The episode gained more than two million views on YouTube. This shows that Web 2.0 applications and podcasts have indeed offered new opportunities to politicians to shape their image (Rahat & Zamir, 2018), to craft and communicate their messages, and to obtain a more personalised, permanent, informal, and interactive type of communication with citizens (Harris & Harrigan 2015; Tranová & Veneti, 2021).

According to Gutmann and Thompson (1996), exposure to a variety of viewpoints can broaden citizens' understanding of politics and promote deliberative democracy. Traditionally, people obtained political information primarily through mass media such as television and newspapers. However, in the contemporary media landscape, people can readily select their preferred news sources from a wide array of options, and these patterns of news consumption are evolving with advancements in communication technologies. Thus, the increase in audience choice not only enables exploration of diverse perspectives and encourages alternative discourses, but also contributes to fragmentation, as individuals often gravitate towards information that aligns with their views—a phenomenon known as selective exposure (Kim, Kim, & Wang, 2016).

2.2.2 Cultural Dynamics and Audience Engagement

Edison Research's (2022) study on digital media consumer behaviour in South Africa reveals that 48% of consumers in key commercial hubs are aware of podcasts, and 36% have engaged with this medium by listening to a podcast. This data reflects a growing familiarity with podcasting in these regions, suggesting a potential for further expansion (Africa Podcast, 2022). However, the literature on global media consumption raises concerns about the dangers of cultural imperialism. The global flow of media remains highly imbalanced, with most of the audio-visual content being exported from developed nations—especially the United States—to developing countries. This disproportionate flow of media content has the potential to standardise

and homogenise media cultures worldwide, diminishing the diversity of local cultures and perspectives (Taneja, 2013). The Africa Podcast (2021) report shows that podcasting has afforded many the space to tell stories that have been otherwise neglected and/or marginalised, allowing them to articulate the world and their experiences.

Thus, it is crucial to include and centre perspectives from beyond the Euro-American context to challenge existing representations of Africa and Africans (Dovey, 2018). Podcasts are uniquely suited to disrupt these homogenising narratives, as they empower individuals to create and distribute content with relative ease, often catering to specific, niche audiences. In South Africa, podcasts such as *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, *Hustler's Corner*, *L-Tido podcast*, *Limpopo Podcast*, and *B-hive Podcast*, among others, exemplify this potential by amplifying diverse voices and narratives, particularly using indigenous languages.

According to Dovey (2018), these platforms can contribute to a richer and more authentic portrayal of African experiences, challenging the dominance of Euro-American media perspectives and narratives. Furthermore, these South African podcasts serve as examples of how digital media can be used to resist cultural imperialism and promote media pluralism. They highlight the potential of podcasts to counterbalance global media streams that have historically favoured content from the developed world. This makes them more inclusive and representative of diverse cultures and experiences.

A study by Van der Merwe (2021) highlights the significant rise of podcasting in South Africa in recent years, underlining the growing interest in and demand for digital audio content. Although accurate data on listenership remains difficult to determine, the significant increase in corporate advertising spend shows the growing appeal and market potential of podcasts in the country (PwC, 2022). This trend is also confirmed by the Africa Entertainment and Media Outlook 2022 report, published by PwC in October 2022, which shows that advertising revenue for podcasts recorded an impressive growth rate of 30.4% in 2020 (PwC, 2022; Nkoala, 2023). This rapid growth reflects a broader trend in the media landscape where advertisers are increasingly recognising the value of podcasts as a medium to reach an engaged audience.

Furthermore, Bottomley (2015) distinguishes podcasts from traditional radio, noting that one of the key features developing the para-social intimacy of podcasts is their inherent opt-in nature. Unlike radio, where listeners often encounter content passively, podcasts require an active decision to engage, fostering a more personalised and intimate connection between the content and the listener. This opt-in dynamic not only differentiates podcasts from other forms of audio media, but also contributes to their growing popularity as a medium that resonates with audiences on a deeper level.

2.2.2.1 Role in preserving and promoting Indigenous cultures and languages

In recent years, the emergence of indigenous language podcasts has represented a transformative shift within the South African media landscape (Alegi, 2012). These podcasts create a vital space for indigenous language speakers to reclaim their voices within a digital media environment that has traditionally been dominated by English. They offer a platform to share stories, discuss issues pertinent to their communities, and promote cultural preservation (Nkoala, 2023). Indigenous language podcasters can reach broader and more diverse audiences, effectively challenging the predominance of English-language content in the podcasting world by harnessing the potential of the digital public sphere (Florini, 2020; Nkoala, 2023).

Furthermore, these podcasts are not only means of communication, but also serve as important platforms for storytelling, cultural expression and knowledge sharing within indigenous language communities. They play a crucial role in the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous languages and provide a digital space in which cultural traditions, oral traditions and community knowledge can be shared and preserved (Abel, 2015). In this way, indigenous language podcasts contribute to a more inclusive and representative digital media landscape in South Africa and foster a new sense of identity and community among indigenous language speakers.

2.2.2.2 Community Inclusion

Community inclusion through podcasting represents a dynamic shift in how individuals and groups engage with media and society, particularly in contexts where traditional media has long been state-controlled or monopolised by dominant cultural narratives. According to Africa Podfest (2022), South African audiences are increasingly drawn to podcasts not just as a form of entertainment, but as a means to build and sustain

community networks. This affinity for podcasts highlights the role they play in amplifying marginalised and underrepresented voices, giving a platform to narratives that might otherwise remain silenced. The ability of podcasts to facilitate community-building lies in their adaptability and accessibility, which makes them a valuable tool for grassroots movements, local storytelling, and cyber advocacy. In a society where political, cultural, and historical narratives are often shaped by state media, podcasts offer an alternative medium for individuals to reclaim and redefine their identities, challenging dominant perspectives.

This trend is deeply connected to the enduring legacy of the oral tradition in African cultures. As Royston (2012) notes, oral forms of communication—whether through music, storytelling, or cultural exchanges—continue to permeate modern media forms. This historical significance of oral traditions is evident in various contemporary mediums, such as talk radio, television, blogging, and digital poetry. These platforms all reflect the influence of spoken word, with podcasts representing the latest evolution of this long-standing cultural practice. The intimacy of voice, the personal nature of podcast storytelling, and the freedom from visual distractions make podcasts an ideal medium for promoting cultural exchanges and ensuring that historically marginalised voices can be heard in the digital age.

In this context, podcasts do more than provide entertainment—they function as virtual communities where individuals can engage in self-expression, advocate social justice, and challenge prevailing power structures. Royston (2012) argues that contemporary media culture is increasingly reflective of an “oral resurgence,” where platforms such as podcasts allow for more participatory and inclusive forms of communication. Podcasts give listeners not only the opportunity to hear diverse perspectives, but also the ability to form connections with others who share their experiences and viewpoints.

Moreover, the role of podcasts as alternative spaces for community engagement is particularly significant in the African context. Van der Merwe (2020) emphasises that state-controlled media in many African nations often shapes national identity in ways that marginalise certain groups or perspectives. In response, podcasts and community radio provide alternative spaces for storytelling, where individuals can share personal narratives, engage in cultural critique, and contribute to the construction of more inclusive and representative national identities. These platforms become sites of

resistance, where consumers are not merely passive recipients of media but active participants in the creation of meaning and culture.

2.2.3 Challenges and Barriers to Podcasting in South Africa

Podcasting in South Africa, much like in other parts of Africa, faces a range of technological and educational challenges that hinder its broader adoption and growth. According to Africa Podfest (2022), one of the primary obstacles is the issue of internet and mobile penetration. While mobile usage and internet connectivity have been on the rise, these improvements are not yet sufficient to fully support the expansion of podcasting as a mainstream medium (Hendricks & Mims, 2018). Internet access, particularly in rural areas, remains inconsistent and costly, limiting the reach of podcasts to urbanised regions with more reliable infrastructure. Furthermore, even in areas with adequate internet access, data consumption remains a significant barrier. Podcasts require substantial data to stream or download, which can be prohibitive for many potential listeners, especially considering the excessive cost of data in South Africa compared to other parts of the world. As a result, despite increasing access to mobile devices, the ability to listen to podcasts regularly remains restricted for a substantial portion of the population (Africa Podfest, 2022).

Another critical challenge facing the podcasting industry in South Africa is the linguistic diversity of the country. With twelve official languages, the creation of podcasts in multiple languages is essential to cater to a wider audience (Nkoala, 2023). However, this linguistic diversity also fragments the potential listener base because podcasts in different languages may only appeal to specific demographic groups. While many podcasts are available on international platforms such as YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify in English, this limits accessibility for non-English speakers who make up a huge portion of the South African population. According to Nkoala (2023), to expand the audience base, podcasters would need to create content in languages other than English, which can be resource-intensive and presents additional logistical challenges in production, marketing, and distribution.

Educational barriers further complicate the situation. Although the concept of podcasting may be somewhat familiar to many, there is still a lack of understanding regarding how to access and consume podcasts, particularly among those who are

less technologically literate (Gachago, Livingston & Ivala, 2016). This is compounded by the general lack of awareness about the existence of local podcasts because the medium is still relatively new in many parts of the country (Africa Podfest, 2022). This shows that there is a need for concerted efforts to educate the public about what podcasts are, how they work, and the benefits of consuming content through this format (Gachago *et al.*, 2016). Until this knowledge gap is addressed, the potential for podcasting to reach its full audience remains limited. Fox and Karianjahi (2021) argue that the inability to educate potential listeners is a key barrier that must be overcome for podcasting to gain more popularity in South Africa.

2.2.3.1 Regulation and legal challenges

In South Africa, the regulation of podcasts differs significantly from that of traditional broadcasting. The country's media laws and regulatory bodies, such as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), focus primarily on broadcasting and traditional media, which include television and radio. These regulations contain strict guidelines for content transmitted over the airwaves or through other traditional media channels. However, podcasts, especially those that have not previously been broadcast via these regulated channels, are in a legal grey area. Unlike traditional radio, which is subject to specific content standards, licensing requirements and oversight mechanisms, podcasts are not bound by the same rules. This distinction is largely because South Africa's current media regulatory framework is not yet fully adapted to the digital landscape, where podcasts have become a popular form of content distribution.

2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHICS IN BROADCASTING MEDIA

As the globalised and rapidly developing world continues to develop, journalism is undergoing significant changes while constantly pursuing its enduring mission of providing the highest quality information (Wasserman & Ndlovu, 2020). Over the past two decades, the media landscape has expanded with the introduction of numerous new media tools, a trend that continues to grow day by day. The most striking development in this sector is undoubtedly the rise of internet publishing, which has redefined the way news and information are disseminated (Knight & Cook, 2013). Ford (2018) emphasises that the emergence of new communication technologies,

particularly those enabled by the internet, has expanded opportunities for democratic participation. However, this shift to online communication also brings with it significant challenges, particularly concerning the trust and credibility of news and information presented on digital platforms (Barrett & Lynch, 2020).

In the context of media broadcasting ethics, these changes have far-reaching implications. According to Pavlik (2008), the proliferation of digital media channels has led to complex ethical dilemmas that were previously less present in traditional broadcasting. For example, the immediacy and reach of internet-based media have increased the consequences of ethical breaches, such as the spread of misinformation or invasion of privacy (Pavlik, 2008). The lines between professional journalism and amateur content creation have blurred, making it more difficult to enforce ethical standards that used to be easier in a controlled, professional broadcasting environment. The global nature of the internet also raises questions about the application of ethical standards in diverse cultural and legal contexts. Thus, what is considered ethical in one country may be considered unethical in another (Weaver, 2001).

2.3.1 The Concept of Ethics

According to Singh and Sharma (2018), ethics is a code of values that guides people's everyday lives and is therefore especially important for a moral and healthy life. Ethics is the analysis of correct behaviour, responsible practice, and fair human interactions in the light of the best available principles, and it is also about practical judgment, the application of principles to problems and decisions. Furthermore, the word ethics arose after the Greek philosophers divided the world into three areas: Aesthetics, Epistemology and Ethics (Hutchings, 2018). Aesthetics was concerned with the analysis of beauty, epistemology was devoted to knowledge, and ethics focused primarily on the study of what is good for people and the community (Hutchings, 2018). Theoretically, ethics is the analysis of the language of ethics, the forms of ethical reasoning, and the objectivity of moral principles (Singh & Sharma, 2018:252).

In practice, ethics is "applied ethics," the study of principles for areas such as business management, scientific research, and professional practice (Dimock & Tucker, 2004). In the context of media, ethics can be defined as a set of moral principles or values

that guide the behaviour of journalism (Lowenstein & Merrill, 1990:186). The first step in the development of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other people. Ethics is the self-restraint that must be voluntarily practised by journalists to maintain and promote people's trust to maintain their credibility, and not betray people's faith and trust.

2.3.2 Media Ethics

According to Nwaoboli (2023), media ethics signifies media professionalism; hence, journalists need to adhere to their profession's ethical principles, especially because journalism acts as the public's conscience. Lowenstein and Merrill (1990:186) define media ethics as follows: "A branch of philosophy (or mass communication) concerned with morally permissible actions and those that are not. It helps media professionals determine what is right and how to choose the best of several alternatives." Media ethics also encompasses journalistic ethics. Kieran (2002) posits that without ethics or a code of conduct, everything is useless. Therefore, the media are also affected if they do not have a code of conduct because they have the onerous duty to uphold the overriding interest of democracy. According to Tilak (2020), every media organisation has the right to choose the moral principles that guide its reporting.

The emergence of media ethics as we understand it today began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During this time, journalism emerged as a rapidly expanding field and became one of the most influential forces in shaping public opinion, serving as an important intermediary between the public and governments through mass communication (Gordon, Kittross, Merrill, Babcock & Dorsher, 2012). As journalism gained prominence, journalists began to form professional organisations and establish ethical codes to raise standards and protect the profession from outside pressures. These ethical guidelines, which emerged from the joint efforts of journalists and media organisations, provided a solid foundation for professional journalism (Gordon *et al.*, 2012). They emphasised the importance of putting the public interest first, maintaining impartiality in reporting, distinguishing clearly between news and opinion, and preserving editorial independence (Tilak, 2020).

Furthermore, the late 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by significant social, political, and technological changes (Gordon *et al.*, 2012). The Industrial Revolution, the rise of mass literacy, and the expansion of democratic governance created a new

public that was hungry for information. This period saw the rapid growth of newspapers and the birth of modern journalism, characterised by the professionalisation of the field and the rise of investigative reporting. Journalists, recognising their pivotal role in society, sought to establish standards to ensure their work's credibility and reliability.

As a result, “the foundation of media ethics encompasses key principles and values such as impartiality, honesty, merit, objectivity, transparency, accountability, justice, equality, prioritising the public interest, professionalism, frugality, and effectiveness, as well as the avoidance of gifts and bribery” (Kaplan, 2009:345). When news and broadcasting activities are conducted in alignment with these principles, the practice is referred to as ethical management. Given its nature, news broadcasting demands a unified approach characterised by continuity and a keen sense of responsibility. According to Day (1991), the following reasons are why ethics should be studied in journalism:

2.3.2.1 Eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility

Media freedom carries the risk of leading journalists away from fulfilling their duties responsibly. Therefore, the study of ethics is crucial, as it guides journalists in exercising media freedom while upholding their responsibilities. Additionally, ethics serves as a tool to help journalists maintain a balance between freedom and accountability.

2.3.2.2 Developing analytical skills

Analytical thinking in ethics is essential for sound judgment. To effectively uphold ethical principles such as minimising harm and ensuring fairness, journalists must critically examine these values to apply them consistently and deliberately. Fundamentally, the study of ethics enhances one's capacity for reasoning. An individual must be able to justify their ethical decisions.

2.3.2.3 Recognising ethical issues

Certain situations can present significant challenges in determining the appropriate ethical principles, making it difficult for media professionals to navigate complex scenarios. The unpredictable nature of these dilemmas requires media professionals

to be able to apply ethical standards in a flexible and nuanced way, tailoring their approach to the specific circumstances they face. Given the diverse and sometimes conflicting values in media work — such as balancing the public’s right to know with the protection of individual privacy, or the pursuit of truth while minimising harm — rigid adherence to a single ethical rule often falls short. Instead, media professionals must exercise sound judgment, weigh various ethical considerations, and make contextual decisions that meet the highest standards of integrity. Adapting ethical principles to each situation’s nuances ensures that media work remains responsible and ethically sound, even in the most challenging circumstances.

2.3.2.4 Stimulation of moral imagination

This approach emphasises the importance of encouraging media professionals to internalise the ability to prioritise sound decisions and ethical principles. Media professionals can more easily and effortlessly navigate through complex situations without hesitation by providing a mindset that instinctively prioritises ethical considerations. This internalised ethical compass streamlines their decision-making process and fosters a deep sense of empathy and compassion for those affected by their work. Additionally, when media professionals develop genuine compassion for the people and communities they cover, they are more likely to take actions that minimise potential harm. Compassion is a fundamental element that helps journalists make decisions that protect people’s dignity and well-being, ultimately leading to more responsible and humane journalism.

2.3.3 Ethical Values

According to Kieran (2002), media professionals must cultivate and internalise the ethical values that guide them in their work and adhere to professional standards. These values, such as impartiality, harm avoidance, accuracy, transparency, and accountability, form the cornerstone of responsible journalism and are essential to maintaining public trust. However, the mere existence of ethical principles is not enough (Telsaç, 2022). Robust systems must also be in place to ensure that these principles are consistently applied in practice. To prevent news and publications from breaching ethical standards, it is crucial to create effective mechanisms for self-regulation (Telsaç, 2022). These mechanisms, which may include editorial guidelines,

codes of conduct and internal review processes, provide a framework for journalists and media organisations to manage complex ethical dilemmas, especially in the field of podcasting, where there is no formal regulatory system made by the regulatory bodies.

Furthermore, the importance of both internal and external ethics cannot be overestimated in this context. According to Floyd and Arthur (2012), internal ethics refers to the ethical practices and standards that are maintained within a media organisation. This includes the daily decision-making processes of journalists, editors and managers who must constantly weigh the ethical implications of their actions. External ethics, on the other hand, encompass the broader regulatory framework and industry standards that govern media practices on a national or global level (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). These include laws, regulations and oversight bodies that hold media companies accountable to the public. In practice, the ethical landscape of media management is often shaped by a complex interplay of professional and personal values (Kieran, 2002). Senior executives in media organisations, who are responsible for making critical decisions, frequently draw upon their own ethical beliefs and experiences. These decisions are typically influenced by a combination of established professional standards and individual values, creating a dynamic and sometimes challenging ethical environment.

However, it is also important to recognise that media executives may occasionally be swayed by their own goals and agendas, which can diverge from established ethical standards. According to Telsaç (2022), this can occur when personal ambitions, financial pressures, or external influences lead to decisions that prioritise short-term gains over long-term ethical considerations. In such cases, strong internal and external ethical frameworks become even more crucial, as they counterbalance potential conflicts of interest and help maintain the public's trust in the media (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). In addition, as the media landscape continues to evolve — particularly with the rise of digital platforms and social media — the need for ethical vigilance is greater than ever (Ess, 2013). The speed at which information is disseminated in the digital age increases the risk of ethical breaches, making it imperative for media professionals to remain steadfast in their commitment to ethical standards. Thus, developing new ethical guidelines that address the unique challenges of digital media, such as

misinformation, privacy concerns and the influence of algorithms, is important for the future of ethical journalism (Christodoulou & Iordanou, 2021).

2.3.4 The Principles of Media Ethics

Media practitioners have the responsibility to provide truthful, balanced, factual, and objective information to society while avoiding conflicts of interest and respecting society's privacy (Plaisance, 2013). Furthermore, the principles of ethical journalism provide a solid foundation for the dissemination of information from all sectors of the media and the journalism community. Friend and Singer (2015) note that responsible journalism requires that accurate information be shared only after a thorough and dispassionate examination of the facts ascertained and presented without misrepresentation or distortion. The Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ) provides journalists with ethical guidelines to use in the line of reporting news and information (Herald, 2017). These guidelines include:

2.3.4.1 Truthfulness

Truthful and honest communication is the basis for competent and ethical communication. Media professionals have a great responsibility to the public and are held accountable for the information they provide. They must report professionally and ethically, and their primary goal is to report the news truthfully (Tompkins, McKendree & Beekman, 2018). Truthfulness refers to the quality of being honest and open. This means that media houses are only credible and unbiased if they report accurate and verified news to avoid legal disputes, loss of trust and a decline in market share (IvyPanda, 2020).

According to the Society for Professional Journalism, journalists should:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work and verify information before releasing it.
- Provide context by taking exceptional care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing, or summarising a story.
- Gather, update, and correct information throughout the life of a story.
- Avoid defamatory advocacy and commentary.
- Boldly tell a story of the diversity and magnitude of human experience.

- Avoid stereotyping.
- Never deliberately distort facts or contexts, including visual information.

McBride and Rosenstiel (2013) state that the importance of truthfulness in podcasts goes beyond mere journalistic integrity; it is fundamental to maintaining audience trust and upholding ethical standards in communication. Furthermore, truthfulness is paramount because the audiences rely on the accuracy and reliability of the content presented. Just as in traditional journalism, factual inaccuracies or intentional distortions can misinform the public, erode trust in the podcast, and undermine its credibility (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2013). In addition, podcasts often feature guests who express their opinions, share subjective experiences, and provide their expertise in specific areas. While such subjective perspectives are valuable, they should be based on truthfulness. Morris and Patterson (2015:220) emphasise that “the digital nature of podcasts allows for wide distribution and easy accessibility, making them vulnerable to manipulation or exploitation for nefarious purposes”.

In an era dominated by the rapid dissemination of fake news and misinformation, the reliability and accuracy of podcasts emerge as a crucial defence against the proliferation of falsehoods and propaganda (Morris & Patterson, 2015). Podcasts hold the potential to influence public opinion significantly. When grounded in factual integrity and ethical journalism, podcasts can counterbalance misleading narratives (McBride & Rossenstiel, 2013). However, without stringent fact-checking processes and accountability mechanisms, podcasts risk becoming conduits for the very misinformation they are positioned to combat.

2.3.4.2 Accountability

Accountability in journalism means that journalists are held accountable for their actions. Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers, and themselves (Society for Professional Journalists, 2014). Accountability also involves a deep sense of responsibility to the audience. Thus, podcasters must be mindful of the content they produce, especially when dealing with sensitive topics such as mental health, race, gender issues, politics, or personal narratives. Providing appropriate warnings and context for potentially triggering material can demonstrate a commitment to the audience’s well-being (Gupta, 2023).

2.3.4.3 Harm Avoidance

The Society for Professional Journalists (2014) emphasises harm avoidance as a fundamental principle of journalistic ethics and highlights the obligation of media professionals to minimise any potential harm to the public. This principle is an essential component of ethical journalism as it ensures that the pursuit of truth and the dissemination of information do not come at the expense of unnecessary harm to individuals, groups, or society as a whole.

Journalists should show compassion for those who may be affected by the news coverage by using heightened sensitivity when dealing with sex victims, consider cultural differences, avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication, balance the public's needs for information against potential harm and discomfort (Society for Professional Journalists, 2014).

According to Herald (2017), television news broadcasters often use a seven-second delay in their live broadcasts to avoid potential harm that might occur in the process of live broadcasts. This delay serves as a protective measure and allows broadcasters to censor or prevent the broadcast of content that could be upsetting or harmful to viewers (Herald, 2017). However, in the modern landscape of digital media, with the proliferation of social media platforms and virtual environments, the boundaries of journalism have blurred. Increasingly, citizen journalists around the world have taken on the role of content creation, producing, and distributing videos to a wide audience without the structured oversight typical of traditional journalism (Barnes, 2012). Podcasting, for example, offers users the opportunity to create and share video content, bypassing the traditional control mechanisms of broadcast media. Unlike traditional news stations, platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Live do not have a seven-second delay mechanism in their live feeds, which can lead to the unfiltered dissemination of potentially harmful content to the public.

2.3.4.4 Respect for privacy

The boundaries between public and private spaces in journalism are continually challenged by the emergence of new cases that raise ethical concerns. Traditionally, it is understood that certain areas of an individual's life—such as health, family,

relationships, sexuality, financial status, property matters, political beliefs, and religious convictions—are inherently private and, as such, should be shielded from public scrutiny (Martins, 2014). These domains are considered personal and are generally acknowledged to fall outside the scope of legitimate public interest. However, as journalism evolves alongside technological advancements and shifts in societal norms, these boundaries are increasingly tested.

Furthermore, the rise of digital media, social networks, and the 24-hour news cycle has blurred the distinction between public and private life (Schrøder, 2018). This shift has led to the frequent intrusion of journalism into areas once deemed private, as the demand for immediate, sensational, and often personal content grows. Moreover, the widespread use of social media platforms by individuals to share aspects of their personal lives publicly complicates the traditional understanding of what constitutes confidential information (Martins, 2014). Journalists may find themselves navigating a complex landscape where the voluntary public disclosure of private matters by individuals raises questions about whether these areas should still be considered off-limits to media coverage.

2.3.4.4 Fairness

According to Brewer (2006), fairness in journalism involves thoroughly exploring all perspectives of an issue and accurately conveying the findings. Journalists must examine their motivations and ensure that personal biases, feelings, or emotions do not influence the content they report, the sources they consult, or the aspects of the story they emphasise. They must also carefully consider the language and tone they use to avoid misrepresenting or unfairly reporting the facts.

2.3.5 Regulatory Bodies and Ethical Standards

Ethical standards and broadcasting regulations play a significant role in the South African media landscape. They serve to uphold democratic principles, promote diversity, and protect against the abuse of media power (Hlongwa, 2019). With a history of censorship and propaganda during apartheid, the introduction of sound ethical standards and regulatory frameworks has been important in promoting a media environment that is accountable, transparent, and inclusive (Thompson, 2016). According to Raboy, Buckley, Mendel, Duer, Price and Siochrú (2008), ethical

standards function as a moral compass for the conduct of media practitioners and organisations and ensure that journalistic integrity and professionalism are upheld. In the context of broadcasting, adherence to ethical standards means a commitment to accuracy, fairness, balance in reporting, harm avoidance, respect for privacy, truthfulness, accountability, as well as respect for the dignity and rights of individuals (Raboy *et al.*, 2008). In addition, broadcasting regulations in South Africa are designed to prevent the concentration of media ownership and promote diversity of content and perspectives.

Through mechanisms such as licensing requirements, ownership restrictions and limitations on cross-ownership, regulators seek to promote a pluralistic media landscape that reflects the country's diverse population (Thompson, 2016). For example, broadcasting regulations protect vulnerable groups, such as children, from harmful or inappropriate content. Furthermore, regulators seek to strike a balance between freedom of expression and the need to protect audiences from content that could incite violence, perpetuate stereotypes, or undermine social cohesion through the introduction of content standards and watershed regulations (Rayboy *et al.*, 2008).

In a country with a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and histories such as South Africa, ethical guidelines provide a framework for journalists to produce shows that contribute positively to the unity and understanding of South Africa's diverse communities (Hailey, 2008). Against this backdrop, the development of a robust regulatory framework specifically tailored to podcasting is essential to mitigate ethical challenges and maintain the credibility of the podcasting industry. Furthermore, the development of ethical standards adapted to podcasting would provide podcasters with clear guidelines for the responsible production of content. The introduction of legal frameworks would also benefit listeners, as they would have the assurance that they are consuming content that meets ethical standards. Tennant (2023) notes that this is particularly important at a time when the impact of misinformation and disinformation is palpable. Podcasters can contribute to a more trustworthy and responsible media environment, improving the overall quality and integrity of podcast content.

Moreover, adherence to ethical standards is integral to upholding the principles of free expression while respecting the rights and dignity of individuals in a democratic society (Baker, 2010:251). The responsible handling of information, fact-checking, and

avoiding the spread of misinformation contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of podcasting in South Africa. According to Ward (2019:164), regulations complement ethical standards by providing a legal framework that ensures accountability and fairness. Da Costa (2012) posits that media regulations strike a balance between the freedom of expression and protecting the public from harm. Regulatory measures include guidelines on hate speech, defamation, and the protection of individual privacy (Da Costa, 2012). However, South African podcasts occupy a special position outside the conventional regulatory structures that apply to traditional forms of media such as radio and television (Samanga, 2022). This regulatory divergence means that podcasters in South Africa operate in an environment where explicit ethical standards and formal regulations that characterise more established media channels do not exist. According to Rei-Anderson (2023), the inherent flexibility and accessibility of podcasting have contributed to its rapid expansion and fostered an ecosystem that is not only dynamic but also potentially vulnerable to ethical challenges.

The explosive growth and increasing integration of podcasting into the broader media landscape underscore the urgency of addressing the lack of explicit ethical standards and a legal framework specifically tailored to this medium (Robson, 2023). Thus, the absence of explicit ethical guidelines in South African podcasting leads to a degree of uncertainty that could compromise the integrity of the industry. Podcasters operate in a space where the boundaries of acceptable content are not clearly defined, leading to varying ethical practices ranging from rigorous fact-checking to the use of explicit language and hate speech (Jacobson, 2021). Such differences reflect the need for a comprehensive examination of the ethical landscape of podcasting to ensure the creation and consumption of responsible content.

2.3.5.1 Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)

South Africa has pioneered the establishment of Independent Regulatory Authorities (IRA) in the communications sector, starting with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in 1993 and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) in 1995 (Moyo, 2009: 279). The two IRAs were merged in 1999 to form the ICASA. Thus, the broadcasting sector in South Africa is regulated by the ICASA, which is the main point of contact for economic and social regulation of broadcasting (Ramahlo, Pillay & Madzimure, 2022:15). In performing its duties, ICASA

is entrusted with several powers and responsibilities that were previously divided between the IBA and SATRA. These powers include formulating and implementing regulations, allocating spectrum, issuing licenses, and enforcing industry compliance (White, 2006). Therefore, by consolidating these functions under a single regulator, ICASA aims to streamline the regulatory process and promote more coherent and effective oversight of the communications sector (Ramahlo *et al.*, 2022).

ICASA's main objective is to monitor and regulate the communications industry in the public's best interests. In fulfilling this role, "ICASA takes over the functions and powers of the former regulatory authorities (IBA and SATRA) for broadcasting and telecommunications" (White, 2006:8). In addition, ICASA's role as a regulator is crucial in ensuring that the communications sector operates efficiently, transparently and for the public interest. The authority acts as a guardian of the public interest. It seeks to create an environment in which communications services are not only accessible but also meet high standards of quality and fairness.

Podcasts distributed through platforms such as YouTube operate without the necessity of obtaining specific licenses, thereby circumventing the regulatory requirements that traditional broadcasting entities must adhere to. Consequently, the ICASA does not actively enforce industry standards or compliance measures within this digital distribution framework (BCCSA, 2023). This regulatory gap arises because YouTube, as a prominent content distribution platform, does not mandate licensing for podcast creators, facilitating a more democratised and accessible means of content dissemination.

However, the lack of licenses and regulatory oversight has significant implications for both content creators and consumers. Without enforced industry standards, there is an increased risk of inconsistent content quality, the spread of misinformation and potential intellectual property rights violations (Jacobson, 2021). In addition, the lack of compliance mechanisms can hamper the ability to regulate objectionable or harmful content, jeopardising public trust and safety (Ramahlo *et al.*, 2022). This regulatory gap also complicates the enforcement of advertising standards and disclosure of sponsorship, which are typically overseen by regulators such as ICASA, which can affect the transparency and credibility of sponsored content.

2.3.5.2 The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA)

The BCCSA was established in 1993 by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and officially recognised by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in 1995 as a formal tribunal in terms of Section 56(2) of the IBA Act 1993. The BCCSA is a critical mechanism for upholding the ethical and professional standards expected of broadcasters in the country, thereby promoting responsible and ethical practices. Through broadcasters' voluntary compliance with the BCCSA Code of Conduct, the BCCSA ensures that broadcasters are held accountable for their actions and content, thereby protecting the interests of viewers and listeners (Venter, 2007:30). In the event of disputes or complaints, the BCCSA steps in to impartially assess the issues at hand and, depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, find a fair and equitable solution through arbitration or mediation (BCCSA, 2023).

In response to the dynamic changes in the broadcast landscape, the BCCSA has demonstrated an initiative-taking approach by extending its regulatory reach to encompass the rapidly growing world of online content (Radelius, 2015). This move reflects an acknowledgement of the evolving nature of media consumption and the increasing significance of digital platforms in the dissemination of content. The BCCSA's efforts to include online content under its regulatory umbrella mark a crucial step in ensuring that the principles of accountability, fairness, and public interest are upheld across new and emerging media formats (Radelius, 2015).

However, this extension of regulatory oversight is not without its challenges and limitations. The BCCSA's regulatory framework, which was initially designed to govern traditional broadcast media such as television and radio, may struggle to fully address the unique characteristics of digital content, particularly in the context of podcasts and other on-demand media. Furthermore, podcasting presents a distinct regulatory challenge. As a medium that allows for the creation and distribution of content outside the conventional broadcast ecosystem, podcasting often operates in a regulatory grey area (Tennant, 2023). While the BCCSA has extended its oversight to some online content, podcasts—especially those not affiliated with traditional media outlets—remain largely unregulated. This lack of formal oversight means that podcasters have

considerable freedom in terms of content creation, but it also places a greater onus on them to self-regulate and adhere to ethical standards independently (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2021).

Moreover, the rapid pace of technological advancement and the growing diversity of online content further complicate the regulatory landscape. The BCCSA, like many regulatory bodies worldwide, is faced with the ongoing challenge of keeping up with these changes (Rammutla, 2010). The development of updated content formats, platforms, and distribution channels often outpaces the ability of regulatory frameworks to adapt, leading to potential gaps in oversight. This situation is exacerbated by the global nature of digital content, where media produced in one jurisdiction can be easily accessed in another, complicating the enforcement of local regulations.

The current situation underscores the need for a more comprehensive and adaptable regulatory approach that can effectively address the complexities of digital content. While the BCCSA's efforts to include online content within its purview are commendable, there is a clear need for further evolution of the regulatory framework to ensure that it can adequately cover all forms of media, including podcasts (Beebeejaun, 2023). This might involve the development of new guidelines specifically tailored to digital content, greater collaboration with international regulatory bodies, and incorporation of technological solutions to monitor and enforce standards more effectively.

2.3.5.3 The Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media

The media in South Africa enjoy the freedom to scrutinise the forces that shape society independently. This freedom allows citizens to make informed judgments on current issues, a role that is explicitly recognised and protected in the South African Constitution. According to the Press Council (2022), section 16 of the Bill of Rights sets out the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media, freedom to receive and impart information or ideas, and freedom of artistic creativity. These freedoms are the foundation of a dynamic and open society, and they enable the media to function as watchdogs over those in power, inform the public and contribute to the nation's cultural and intellectual discourse (Curran, 2005).

According to Alegi (2012), podcasting has become an important medium for the expression of opinion and dissemination of information in South Africa. Thus, with its relatively low barriers to entry and wide reach, it has become a powerful tool for journalists, podcasters, and citizens alike to exercise their Section 16 rights. This is because podcasting allows for the exploration of diverse topics, from politics and social justice to arts and culture, in a format that is accessible and engaging to a wide audience. Furthermore, the freedom to create and distribute podcast content is a direct extension of the constitutional protections afforded to traditional media, providing podcasters with the opportunity to offer alternative perspectives and contribute to public discourse (Jacobson, 2021).

However, the right to the freedom of expression is not without its boundaries, and this is particularly relevant in the context of podcasting (Sterne *et al.*, 2008). The South African Constitution explicitly limits this right where it intersects with the potential for harm. Specifically, freedom of expression does not extend to the incitement of imminent violence, or the advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender, or religion that constitutes incitement to cause harm (Press Council, 2022). For podcasters, this means that while they are free to explore and discuss a diverse range of topics, they must do so within the constraints of these legal boundaries.

In the unregulated space of podcasting, the responsibility to adhere to these legal and ethical standards falls heavily on the content creators themselves. Podcasters must be vigilant in ensuring that their content does not cross the line into incitement or hate speech, even as they push the boundaries of free expression. This self-regulatory approach is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the medium and ensuring that it continues to serve as a force for good in society (Tennant, 2023).

2.3.5.4 The right to freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is an important aspect of podcasting. This fundamental freedom, which enables people to freely express their ideas, beliefs, and thoughts, is essential to the democratic ideal. Article 19 of the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) recognises the right to freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, highlighting the importance of this right on a worldwide scale (Joseph & Castan, 2013; Van Vollenhoven, 2015). The international legal framework

set out in the ICCPR provides the fundamental foundation for the right to freedom of expression, and it emphasises the idea that this right is not absolute. Rather, it is subject to restrictions that are necessary to protect the rights and reputation of others, national security, public order, or public health (Bellamy, 2014:1019). This nuanced approach recognises the delicate balance required to preserve the essence of freedom of expression while mitigating potential harm.

This right gives podcast creators the ability to investigate a wide range of topics offer alternative viewpoints, and participate in public conversation (Bellamy, 2014). It encourages inclusivity and pluralism by creating an engaging and dynamic podcasting environment where voices from different origins can be heard. However, Tennant (2023) points out that this freedom simultaneously requires accountability and responsibility. Although podcasting provides a platform for open dialogue, the content distributed comes with ethical considerations and potential consequences (Dawkins, 2023:1). Graham (2022:211) states that “a balance between freedom of expression and responsible behaviour is important to maintaining the integrity of the podcasting field because podcasts can reach a wide audience and the impact their content can have on society cannot be underestimated”. It is therefore important to adhere to ethical standards and ensure that content respects legal boundaries, avoids the spread of misinformation, and does not promote hate speech or discrimination.

2.3.6 Ethical Frameworks in New Media

Ethical standards in traditional journalism, such as accuracy, impartiality, and accountability, have long been the pillars of responsible reporting (Ward, 2011). These standards are designed to ensure that the information disseminated to the public is dependable, balanced, and free from undue influence. However, the emergence of new media platforms, including podcasts, has disrupted these established norms, necessitating a re-evaluation and adaptation of ethical principles to fit the digital context. According to Rioux-Ranger (2023), one of the most significant ethical dilemmas in podcasting is the potential for spreading hate speech, defamation, controversy, and misinformation. Given the informal nature of the medium, there is a risk that podcasters may unintentionally or even intentionally spread false information. This is particularly concerning in the context of long-form discussions, where complex issues are explored in depth but may not always be fact-checked.

Another ethical dilemma in podcasting relates to the portrayal of individuals and groups. Podcasters often engage in storytelling and interviews that involve discussing the personal lives of others (Lindgren, 2016). This raises ethical concerns about privacy, consent, and the potential for harm. For instance, when discussing sensitive topics such as trauma and abuse, podcasters must carefully consider the impact of their content on both the individuals involved and the audience. Ethical podcasting requires a commitment to respecting the dignity and privacy of those whose stories are being told, as well as a thoughtful approach to handling sensitive material. Privacy and consent are critical ethical considerations in podcasting, particularly given the medium's emphasis on personal storytelling and intimate conversations. The use of personal narratives in podcasts can be a powerful way to connect with audiences, but it also raises significant ethical questions about the boundaries of privacy and the importance of obtaining informed consent (Hess, 2021).

2.3.7 The Role of Self-regulating in Podcasting

According to the European Broadcasting Union (2019), self-regulation refers to the voluntary adoption of ethical guidelines and practices by content creators to ensure that their work adheres to certain ethical norms. In podcasting, self-regulation can involve the establishment of internal codes of ethics, adherence to journalistic standards, and responsiveness to listener feedback. Furthermore, one of the key aspects of self-regulation in podcasting is the development of ethical guidelines that reflect the unique characteristics of the medium (Tennant, 2023).

Unlike traditional media, where editorial processes are often formalised and hierarchical, podcasts are typically more fluid and decentralised (Sullivan, Aufderheide, Bonini, Berry & Llinares, 2020). This requires podcasters to take an initiative-taking approach to ethics, setting clear standards for themselves and their collaborators. For instance, some podcasts have established editorial guidelines that emphasise accuracy, fairness, and respect for privacy, while others have adopted practices such as issuing corrections or clarifications in response to listener feedback (McClung & Johnson, 2010).

Another important aspect of self-regulation is the role of the podcasting community in upholding ethical standards. According to McClung and Johnson (2010), the

podcasting industry is characterised by a strong sense of community and the creators often support and learn from each other. As a result, this community-driven approach can help to promote ethical practices because podcasters can share best practices and hold each other accountable. However, the effectiveness of self-regulation depends on the willingness of podcasters to engage in ethical reflection and to prioritise ethics over other considerations, such as commercial success (Hulin & Stone, 2013).

Tennant (2023) conducted a study investigating how podcasters in New Zealand regulate their content and the motivations behind their approach. The findings revealed that these podcasters incorporate journalistic principles into creating and disseminating their content, and they actively engage with ethical and editorial dilemmas during the production process, aligning their decisions with their understanding of their audience's needs and preferences. According to Tennant (2023), this reflective process is shaped by their worldviews, experiences, and perspectives as media consumers.

2.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided an extensive exploration of the key concepts and frameworks underpinning the study. First, a definition of podcasting was provided and its historical development was traced, including its emergence as a dynamic medium characterised by technological advances such as RSS feeds and platforms such as YouTube. The chapter also sheds light on the introduction and development of podcasting in South Africa by highlighting its growing role as a medium for cultural preservation, public communication and citizen journalism. Comparisons have been made between podcasting and traditional radio to illustrate the benefits of podcasting, such as the personalised content and unregulated nature that allows for greater creative freedom.

The chapter further discussed the societal impact of podcasts, emphasising their role in disseminating information, fostering community engagement, and providing a platform for marginalised voices. It explored ethical challenges in broadcasting, such as misinformation, defamation, and harm avoidance, highlighting the significance of media ethics in ensuring responsible content creation. Finally, the literature review addressed the regulatory landscape, including the gaps in oversight for digital media,

and the pressing need for tailored ethical frameworks to guide the podcasting industry in South Africa. The subsequent chapter focuses on the role of the theory in the study.

CHAPTER 3: ROLE OF THE THEORY IN THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study adopted the Diffusion of Innovation and the Media Policy Theory. A theoretical framework in the study clarifies the concepts within the study and highlights the concepts of the existing knowledge. Corbin (2014) defines a theory as a comprehensive framework that includes interrelated hypotheses, concepts, definitions, and recommendations. This framework aims to provide a holistic perspective on phenomena by making connections between different variables, with the goal of both explaining and predicting those phenomena. The key role of theory in research is to guide the researcher (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:36). In addition, the theoretical framework highlights the understanding of the study and how the data are interpreted.

3.2 THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS THEORY

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory of 1962 was appropriate for this study because it provides a framework for understanding how new ideas, technologies, or practices are adopted and spread within a society or specific audience. Podcasting, as an emerging and rapidly growing medium in South Africa, represents an innovation in the media landscape (Royston, 2023). This theory enabled an exploration of how podcasting has gained traction among content creators and audiences by highlighting the factors that influence its adoption, such as its accessibility, creative freedom, and ability to address topics that are overlooked in traditional media.

Rogers (1962) introduced the first model of diffusion, defining the diffusion of innovation as the process through which an innovation is communicated over time through specific channels among members of a society. Rogers (2003) further elaborated that for adopters, innovation can be any idea, practice, or object perceived as new by individuals or other members of a community. As one of the most influential theories in communication and technology, the theory focuses on how information about innovation is distributed and adopted.

Moreover, the theory's emphasis on communication channels and social systems aligned with the study's focus on the ethical implications of podcasting. Podcasts are

a unique communication channel that relies on social networks and digital platforms for dissemination. The theory helped the researcher to contextualise how podcasts, as a form of innovation, influence public discourse and societal norms by reaching a wide audience through digital ecosystems. This perspective was crucial for understanding the ethical challenges associated with the rapid spread of content that may include hate speech, defamation, or controversial statements.

Rogers (2003) also emphasises that communication is a process where participants create and share information to achieve mutual understanding. In the context of diffusion, mass media and interpersonal communications serve as the primary channels for disseminating information. The theory outlines five stages in the innovation adoption process: knowledge acquisition, persuasion, decision-making, implementation, and confirmation. During this process, mass media channels are particularly influential at the knowledge stage, while interpersonal communication becomes more critical during the persuasion stage (Grett & Jakobs, 2021).

One of the key elements of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory is the categorisation of adopters into groups such as innovators, early adopters, and the majority. This study benefitted from applying these categories to the podcasting industry by identifying podcast creators such as *Podcast and Chill with MacG* as innovators or early adopters who have harnessed the unregulated nature of the medium to experiment with bold and controversial content. The theory helped in explaining how their success has encouraged other creators to adopt similar formats, shaping the evolution of podcasting in South Africa.

Marcella (2000) describes information and communication technology (ICT) as a complex and diverse array of goods, applications, and services utilised for producing, distributing, processing, and transforming information, encompassing telecommunication and broadcasting. The application of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory in this study was particularly significant, as innovative products or ideas, such as podcasting, impact various levels of stakeholders—including podcasters, individuals, communities, organisations, and the nation—regardless of the specific form of innovation.

According to this theory, it is not the technology itself that disrupts the operations of an established firm but rather the fact that the new innovation renders the business strategies of the older technology obsolete. This explains why an innovation can be disruptive for some firms while being sustaining for others. Dimmick *et al.* (2009) argue that a new standard thrives, grows, competes, and succeeds by fulfilling consumer gratifications and offering innovative solutions to existing or emerging needs. Similarly, Cha and Chan-Olmsted (2012) assert that in a digitalised society, consumers have a wide range of alternatives, with numerous channels and diverse video platforms providing varied content options. The Diffusion of Innovation theory has the following assumptions:

- Innovations are adopted within the context of a social system where interpersonal relationships, norms, and cultural values influence how individuals accept or reject the innovation.
- The dissemination of innovation relies on effective communication through mass media and interpersonal channels. Mass media play a significant role in creating awareness, while interpersonal communication helps persuade individuals to adopt the innovation.
- The theory assumes that the adoption of innovation occurs in knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation.
- An innovation's adoption is influenced by its perceived characteristics, namely; relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability.
- People adopt innovations at different rates, categorised into five groups: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. These groups have distinct characteristics that influence their willingness and speed to adopt an innovation.
- The theory assumes that not all innovations will achieve widespread adoption. Factors such as social resistance, cultural incompatibility, or lack of perceived benefits can lead to rejection or failure.
- The diffusion of an innovation often leads to significant shifts in social structures, cultural norms, and economic practices, which may disrupt existing systems while creating opportunities for new ones.

- Influential individuals or groups within a social system play a critical role in accelerating the adoption process by endorsing or demonstrating the innovation to others.

In the digital age, the application of Rogers' (1983) Diffusion of Innovations Theory is critical for analysing the penetration and adoption of digital technologies and services, particularly in the realm of communication and media. This theory provides a framework for understanding how innovations, such as podcasting, spread within societies and how they influence access to and engagement with digital platforms. Moreover, this theory serves as a model to evaluate the uptake of podcasting as a digital communication service in South Africa. Podcasting represents a significant shift in media consumption and it allows creators and audiences to bypass traditional broadcasting constraints.

This theory enabled the study to explore how podcasting has gained traction as an innovative platform, how it appeals to different adopter categories (e.g., innovators, early adopters, and early majority), and the role it plays in shaping public discourse and societal norms. By applying Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, this study examined podcasting as a digital development in communication and technology. It investigated how podcasts are adopted by content creators and audiences and how their unregulated nature influences ethical practices and societal impacts. The theory thus provided a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of podcast adoption and its broader implications in the evolving digital media landscape.

3.3 THE MEDIA POLICY THEORY

Freedman (2008) defines Media Policy Theory as focusing on the actions of the government, civil society, experts, media ownership, and regulation. This theory was particularly valuable in this study because it provided a framework for analysing how the governance and regulation of media impact the ethical standards and practices within the industry. The study explored the ethical challenges arising in the unregulated podcasting space concerning issues such as hate speech, the LGBTQI+ community, misogyny, and defamatory content. According to Segura and Waisbord, (2016), Media Policy Theory allows for an examination of how media content is shaped by the influence of government regulation, civil society, and media ownership, and

how these factors contribute to the dissemination of content. Since podcasting in South Africa lacks formal regulation, applying this theory helped to identify the potential need for policy frameworks that can guide ethical practices in the sector by ensuring that podcasters are held accountable for their impact on public opinion and societal norms.

Legally enforced rules are developed through a process that involves multiple stakeholders each playing a crucial role in shaping the final policy decisions. These stakeholders include regulators, civil society organisations, corporations, and the public. Freedman (2008) emphasises that the policy-making process is inherently collaborative, with various groups contributing to the formulation of media regulations and policies. In addition, Adam and Kriesi (2007) highlight that the Policy Network, a more contemporary approach, draws heavily from the Inter-Organisation Theory. This theory emerged as a response to the increasing influence of non-state actors in the policymaking process as governments collaborate with specialised interest groups that possess access to valuable resources. According to the theory, these policy networks are instrumental in decision-making within specific policy domains. These stakeholders, by their resources and expertise, hold significant sway in shaping media policy decisions, which are then backed by the state's legitimate authority to enforce them.

Policy, in this context, refers to the various ways in which public authorities seek to influence or regulate the structures and practices of media. This can involve shaping media ownership, content distribution, and ethical standards, all of which contribute to the overall framework within which media operates. The Policy Network Theory suggests that the evolving nature of media policy is driven by state actors and the interactions and negotiations among diverse groups, each with their interests, goals, and resources.

Historically, distinct regulatory frameworks governed different media sectors, including print media, radio, television, public broadcasting, and telecommunications (Lunt & Livingstone, 2011). Each sector operated within its own set of rules designed to address its unique challenges and dynamics. However, the advent of digital technology has led to a convergence of these once-separate media platforms within a unified digital infrastructure. This convergence has blurred traditional boundaries and

created markets and platforms that are often underregulated or lack comprehensive oversight (Gadinis & Jackson, 2006). Although regulatory frameworks continue to exist, they frequently struggle to keep pace with the rapid advancements in technology. Innovations in digital media and communication tools have created a dynamic environment where existing policies become outdated or inadequate in addressing emerging challenges. Hagemann, Huddleston Skees and Thierer (2018) note that this regulatory lag has given rise to significant issues, including widespread copyright violations, as digital platforms make it easier to share and reproduce content without proper authorisation. Furthermore, the unregulated nature of many digital spaces has facilitated the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, which undermine public trust and contribute to the polarisation of society (Mwangi, 2023). Online platforms also provide an environment for harmful behaviours such as online harassment, cyberbullying, and hate speech, which can lead to serious social and psychological consequences for individuals and communities.

In South Africa, ICASA is tasked with overseeing and regulating the media landscape and ensuring that media houses operate within the framework of established guidelines and principles (White, 2006). Arabatani, Labafi, and Khajeheian (2012) assert that media policy serves as a framework defining how media institutions understand and fulfil their societal roles. Media policy is formed significantly by both media owners and government influences, creating a dynamic interplay between corporate interests and public governance. In the South African context, the ruling political party plays a considerable role in forming media policy.

Simeon (1976) explains that politicians operate within a structure constrained by the mandates of public administration, which are often tied to the goals and ideologies of the ruling party. Consequently, media policies may reflect broader political priorities, potentially leading to biases in the regulatory process. As Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon (2019) note, bureaucracy and administrative processes can complicate policy design, often struggling to balance the benefits across diverse social groups and individuals.

In the context of this study, these dynamics raised critical questions about the role of regulatory bodies and political influence in addressing ethical challenges. While ICASA plays a central role in regulating traditional media platforms, its influence does not

extend to the podcasting industry, which operates in a largely unregulated environment. This gap in regulation highlights the limitations of current media policies in adapting to new and emerging digital platforms. The role of government and political interests in media policy-making further emphasises the complexities involved in creating equitable and inclusive frameworks that can address the ethical lapses observed in platforms such as *Podcast and Chill with MacG*.

According to Adam and Kriesi (2007), the emergence of the network approach has diminished the dominance of political actors as the most influential policymakers in the formulation and implementation of policies. This shift has blurred the traditional distinctions between the roles of private and public actors in the policymaking process. In contexts where governments are weak or lack sufficient resources and expertise, the responsibility for policy formulation is often delegated to various networks, with the state primarily assuming an oversight role.

Arbatani *et al.* (2012) emphasise that the policymaking process is particularly significant in the fields of communication and media, as it shapes societal norms and influences public opinion. The involvement of diverse networks—including civil society organisations, corporations, media owners, and regulators—ensures that multiple perspectives are incorporated into policy design. However, this collaboration can also lead to conflicts of interest, especially when private entities with vested interests exert disproportionate influence over policy outcomes.

With the weakening influence of state actors in directly shaping policy, the responsibility of regulating emerging media, such as podcasts, may fall to networks of industry leaders, civil society, and advocacy groups. This shift highlights the changing dynamics of media governance and raises questions about how ethical standards can be maintained in an environment where the state plays a minimal role and private interests dominate the policymaking process. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analysing how media policies evolve and the impact they have on promoting responsible and ethical media practices.

Levy (1999) emphasises that the rapid pace of technological advancement in the communication industry, coupled with the emergence of new services, market opportunities, and the convergence of the telecommunications and broadcasting

sectors, consistently necessitates the development of updated policy initiatives. These advancements reshape the way media is consumed and distributed. Levy's assertion highlights the dynamic nature of the communication landscape which requires policymakers to adapt continuously to maintain relevance and ensure effective governance. The following are the assumptions of the Media Policy Theory outlined by Freedman (2008):

- Media policies are designed with the assumption that the media serve as a public good, playing a critical role in informing, educating, and entertaining society. It assumes that media systems should align with broader societal interests rather than purely commercial or political goals.
- Effective regulation is necessary to ensure that media systems operate ethically and fairly. Media Policy Theory assumes that government bodies, regulatory agencies, or independent organisations are essential for creating frameworks to govern media practices and content.
- The theory assumes that media policies must balance the principles of freedom of expression and access to information with the need to protect individuals and society from harm, such as misinformation, hate speech, or exploitation.
- Media systems and technologies are constantly evolving, requiring policies to be flexible and adaptive to keep pace with advancements in communication technology and shifting societal norms.
- Media policies should promote diversity, inclusivity, and pluralism in media content and ownership. This assumption underscores the need for equitable representation of different social, cultural, and political groups within the media.
- Effective media policies are the result of collaboration between various stakeholders, including governments, civil society, industry players, and the public. This collaborative approach ensures that policies reflect a range of interests and priorities.
- Media Policy Theory assumes that media acts as a watchdog over political and corporate power, holding them accountable to the public. Policies are therefore needed to maintain the independence and integrity of media systems.
- The theory assumes that globalisation and technological convergence require policies to address cross-border media flows and the merging of telecommunications, broadcasting, and digital platforms. It also assumes that

international cooperation may be necessary to manage global media challenges.

- Media policies operate under the assumption that media systems must be accountable to the public, ensuring transparency in operations, content standards, and ownership structures.

3.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided an in-depth examination of the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study, focusing on their relevance to understanding the ethical challenges and dynamics of podcasting within the South African media landscape. Two key theories were explored: Diffusion of Innovations Theory and Media Policy Theory, both of which provide complementary perspectives on the evolution and regulation of media platforms like podcasting. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory was applied to explain how podcasting, as an emerging media innovation, has been adopted and integrated into society. The theory highlights the stages of innovation adoption—knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation—and identifies the factors influencing this process, such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. This framework helped contextualise how podcasting has gained popularity in South Africa by addressing the role of early adopters and the platform’s appeal as an unregulated space for creative freedom. It also provided insights into the societal implications of podcasting, including its potential to reshape public discourse and challenge traditional media practices.

Moreover, the Media Policy Theory was used to analyse the role of regulation and governance in media practices. The theory emphasises the influence of stakeholders such as governments, regulatory bodies, civil society, and media owners in shaping policies that govern media content and operations. This framework was particularly relevant for understanding the lack of regulation in podcasting and its implications for ethical standards. The chapter explored how the convergence of telecommunications and broadcasting sectors as well as the rise of digital platforms has created regulatory gaps resulting in content that contains hate speech, misinformation, and defamation to proliferate unchecked. Media Policy Theory further highlights the need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to develop adaptive, inclusive, and forward-thinking policies that address these challenges. These theoretical frameworks

provided a robust foundation for analysing the research problem. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory provided insights into the adoption and societal impact of podcasting, while Media Policy Theory framed the discussion of regulatory challenges and ethical accountability in this evolving media space. These theories collectively underscored the necessity of addressing the ethical issues in podcasting through targeted policies, education, and collaboration among media stakeholders.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology and design adopted in this study and the detailed strategy used to achieve the study's objectives. It also presents the data collection tools, the sampling methods and the population. In addition, the steps taken to ensure the quality criteria are explained. This study aimed to explore the ethical standards in South African podcasting.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research to systematically gather diverse empirical materials, including cultural texts, visual representations, and narratives. It aimed to explore both everyday and complex aspects of individuals' experiences and their associated meanings. (Cresswell, 2013). Podcasts are media texts that convey messages to audiences who derive various meanings and interpretations from them (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Thus, podcasts can be categorised as materials suitable for analysis using qualitative methods. In this study, a qualitative approach was employed due to its alignment with the study's thematic focus, which was to explore the ethical standards and media ethics within the South African podcasting industry. As a result, this method allowed for an in-depth exploration of how these media ethics are perceived.

Babbie (2010) asserts that qualitative data is primarily collected in the form of spoken or written language rather than numerical data. This linguistic and textual information allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the social context of the world around them through detailed analysis of how language, imagery, and utilised sounds. By examining these elements, researchers can uncover the subtle complexities of social phenomena (Cresswell, 2013). In this study, Babbie's assertion about qualitative research guided the researcher in exploring ethical dilemmas and media ethics within South African podcasts. The spoken content of these podcasts provided rich data, which enabled the researcher to analyse the narratives, discourses, and rhetorical strategies employed by podcast hosts and guests. This analysis aimed to identify the underlying ethical frameworks, cultural and political influences, and how

these factors shape the presentation and perception of ethical issues in the media landscape of South Africa. Through this qualitative approach, the researcher was able to emphasise the significance of media ethics in broadcasting, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of media ethics in the South African context.

4.2.1 Advantages of the Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative research method proved to be particularly effective in this study due to its ability to take place in natural settings, providing researchers with an authentic understanding of the participants' experiences and contexts (Creswell, 2009). By engaging directly with individuals in their real-life environments, qualitative research allows for a deeper exploration of the phenomena being studied, offering insights that are often inaccessible through quantitative approaches. This is especially useful when examining complex social issues, such as media ethics, where the subtleties of human experience and behaviour are key to understanding underlying dynamics.

Qualitative research was well-suited to uncovering emerging trends, patterns, and issues within specific populations, making it highly valuable for this study, which sought to understand the ethical challenges and practices within South African podcasts (Du Plooy, 2002). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data, qualitative research emphasises the richness of data derived from participants' words, actions, and experiences. This approach enables researchers to explore complex behaviours and phenomena in-depth by providing comprehensive descriptions of participants' emotions, experiences, and perspectives while interpreting the meaning behind their actions and decisions. Furthermore, qualitative research is particularly advantageous for capturing diverse perspectives and meanings. It allows the researcher to analyse not just the 'what', but also the 'why' and 'how' of individuals' behaviours, which is essential for examining ethical standards and practices in media. As Rahman (2017) points out, qualitative research provides flexibility, allowing the study design to evolve as new themes or insights emerge during the research process. This adaptability is crucial when exploring a dynamic and rapidly evolving field such as podcasting, where issues of media ethics, representation, and regulation continue to shift.

4.2.2 Disadvantages of the Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research approaches, while offering valuable insights into complex social phenomena, are not without their criticisms. One common critique is that qualitative research may overlook or fail to fully capture the contextual nuances of the studied subjects. Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative methods, by focusing on interpreting meanings and experiences, can sometimes prioritise subjective interpretations over a more objective understanding of the context in which these meanings are produced. This subjective interpretation can lead to concerns about the depth of context being adequately represented, potentially distorting the findings by overemphasising personal or isolated perspectives rather than a broader societal understanding.

Another major criticism of qualitative research is its limited generalisability, especially when the study relies on smaller sample sizes. Rahman (2017) points out that qualitative studies often involve a limited number of participants, and as such, the findings may not be easily generalised to larger populations. While qualitative research excels in providing in-depth, context-rich insights, the results may not always be applicable beyond the specific context or group under study, leading to challenges in drawing broader conclusions about social or cultural trends. Furthermore, the labour-intensive nature of qualitative research is another major disadvantage. Mohajan (2018) explains that qualitative research involves intensive data collection and analysis, typically requiring long hours of transcribing, coding, and interpreting data. Unlike quantitative research, which can rely on numerical data and statistical methods to produce results that can be easily validated, qualitative results are less straightforward and harder to verify objectively. This can make the findings more susceptible to researcher bias, as interpretations are often influenced by the researcher's perspective, and the process lacks the replicability found in more standardised research methods.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design serves as a roadmap outlining the steps to be taken during the research process. May (2011) notes that research designs are strategies implemented by researchers to generate valid, objective, relevant, and cost-effective responses to research questions. May (2011) also emphasises that research designs serve two

primary purposes. First, they are employed in research methodologies to conceptualise an operational plan for conducting various procedures and tasks necessary to complete the study. Second, they ensure that these procedures are sufficient to yield valid, objective, and accurate answers to the research questions.

According to Creswell (2014), research designs encompass all types of inquiry applicable to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research approaches as they provide specific guidelines for conducting procedures within a research study. Patton (2002) postulates that all components of the research come together to form a cohesive method for data collection and analysis. The selection of a research design is driven by the research aim and objectives. For this study, the researcher employed an exploratory design to enhance their understanding of ethical standards and considerations within South African podcasts. This type of research is particularly useful for identifying new insights and generating hypotheses for further investigation. Thus, exploratory research provides a flexible approach to exploring complex issues, allowing researchers to delve into the complexities of the subject matter.

On the other hand, Aaker, Kumar, Day, and Leone (2011) argue that exploratory research is preliminary and is employed when researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of the problem, identify viable alternatives, or determine related variables that warrant further study. This initial phase of research is crucial for setting the stage for more detailed and focused subsequent investigations (Aaker *et al.*, 2011). In this study, an exploratory research design was justified by the need to investigate the ethical landscape of South African podcasts thoroughly. Because podcasting is still in its initial stages and ethical guidelines are still developing in the field, the researcher was able to gather an abundance of qualitative data and identify important themes and patterns by using an exploratory method. As a result, the study provided insight into the industry's present ethical standards and established the framework for further investigation and strategies to promote ethical conduct in podcasting.

4.4 SAMPLING AND POPULATION

4.4.1 Population of the study

Du Plooy (2007) defines a population as a group of individuals or objects with similar characteristics. However, given the often-large size of populations, it is impractical for researchers to sample every individual or object due to the prohibitive costs and time required. Watson and Hill (2015) posit that entities within a particular population typically possess a common, unifying characteristic or trait, which necessitates the selection of a representative sample for scientific studies. The concept of population provides the basis for deriving a sample, and the conclusions drawn from the sample results are then generalised back to the broader population (Du Plooy, 2009). This approach ensures that the research findings reflect the entire population, despite only a subset being directly studied. Sampling allows researchers to make valid and reliable inferences about the population without the need to investigate every member, thereby enhancing the efficiency and feasibility of the research process.

The population for this study included the episodes of the YouTube podcast channel *Podcast and Chill with MacG* and radio presenters. The inclusion of this channel was due to its publication of content featuring elements such as hate speech, controversy, and defamation. This podcast was chosen among other South African podcasts because it covers a wide range of topics that significantly influence public opinion. Moreover, it is the most popular podcast in South Africa with over 1.27 million subscribers on YouTube.

Furthermore, the inclusion of five radio presenters in the study allowed for a comparative analysis between the regulated world of traditional broadcasting and the largely unregulated realm of podcasting. By gathering insights from radio professionals, the study aimed to formulate recommendations that could guide the ethical practices within the podcasting industry, thus, bridging the gap between established media regulations and the emerging dynamics of digital media platforms such as podcasts. This dual focus enabled a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for ensuring ethical content creation in both traditional and new media landscapes.

4.4.2 Sampling

In qualitative research, a subset of the population is selected to represent the entire target population under study. This selection is made to gain an understanding of the broader population (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). According to Watson and Hill (2015), the primary function of a sample is to enable researchers to study specific individuals or objects from the population so that the findings can be generalised to the entire population. This study employed non-probability purposive sampling. Neuman (2007) affirms that qualitative research methodologies use non-probability purposive sampling techniques, where the researcher selects the sample based on personal judgment and preferences.

The choice of sampling method significantly impacts the generalisability of the research results. In qualitative research, the composition of the sample influences how well the results can be transferred to the study's population. Consequently, the composition of the study population influences further generalisation to the target population. By carefully selecting a representative sample, researchers aim to ensure that their findings and conclusions are transferable to the wider context, thus increasing the validity and reliability of their study (Bless *et al.*, 2006).

In this study, the researcher employed non-probability sampling, a method that was especially appropriate for the research objectives, as it allowed for the purposeful selection of specific radio presenters and podcast episodes that were most relevant to the study's focus on ethical issues in South African media. Non-probability sampling enabled the researcher to target participants and content that provided the most insightful and meaningful data, rather than relying on random sampling, which may not capture the depth or specificity required for this type of analysis.

Given the often-controversial nature of *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, which includes discussions involving sensitive topics such as hate speech, profanity, and defamation, it was crucial to select episodes that specifically illustrated these ethical concerns. By focusing on episodes where these themes were most prominent, the researcher was able to delve deeper into how the podcast engages with ethical issues and how these issues are presented to its audience. This targeted approach ensured that the study captured the nuances of how controversial content in podcasting can influence public

discourse and societal norms, while also addressing the ethical implications of such content.

The inclusion of radio presenters in the sampling further enriched the study by providing a comparative perspective between the regulated environment of traditional media and the unregulated nature of podcasting. This allowed the researcher to explore how ethical guidelines and practices differ between these two media platforms, ultimately helping to identify potential strategies for improving ethical standards in the growing podcasting industry.

4.4.2.1 Purposive sampling

In March 2024, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* had 539 podcast episodes on YouTube. Given the extensive number of podcast episodes and the considerable length of each episode on the *Podcast and Chill with MacG* YouTube channel, the researcher selected a sample size of five (5) episodes. This decision was influenced primarily by the nature of the ethical issues presented in each selected episode. The selected episodes were chosen because they prominently feature content that raises significant ethical questions, such as discussions involving hate speech, profanity, and defamation. The physical and logistical challenges associated with analysing long video content also played a critical role in determining the sample size. Conducting a thorough qualitative analysis of these long podcast episodes required time and effort, including detailed transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. By focusing on a smaller number of episodes, the researcher devoted adequate attention to each episode and ensured a comprehensive examination of the ethical issues at hand.

Table 1: The selected podcast episodes

Episode	Topics discussed	Length (Time)	Link
Episode 309	Jub Jub on Ndikhokhele, Amanda Du Pont, Kelly	2:07:08	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFHxD7pspHU

	Khumalo, Prison, Uyajola 99		
Episode 350	Edwin Sodi, Minnie Dlamini, Toss, Vusi Nova, DJ Zinhle, Q & A, Brenda Fassie	1:08:58	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVbHbd-Zcbg&t=595s
Episode 220	Dr Wouter Basson, Johan Rubert, Somizi, SAFTAs, Siz Ngesi	55:33	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Llo-q1C1Sil
Episode 242	100K plaque, Nota in a Holding Cell, Emtee, Black Coffee, AKA	1:20:30	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWEacw33dUg&t=4252s
Episode 573	Trump Assassination, Sir Gayton Mackenzie, Moshe Ndiki, Malaika, Kabza vs Momo, Eminem	1:29:04	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urqKwJ_eyHM&t=3196s

Source: Adapted from MacG's official YouTube channel (2024)

Selecting a manageable sample size also allowed the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis without compromising the quality and rigour of the study. Each episode can be examined to determine the extent to which it adheres to or deviates from the journalistic ethical principles. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the ethical landscape in South African podcasting. Furthermore, the smaller sample size allowed for a more focused analysis of podcasters' responses to ethical dilemmas, their decision-making processes, and the overall impact of their content on audiences.

Furthermore, five (5) radio presenters were interviewed to provide valuable insights and perspectives that would inform the formulation of recommendations for ethical practices in podcasting. These radio presenters, who operate within a regulated broadcasting environment, were selected for their experience in navigating media ethics in traditional media. Their input allowed for a comparative analysis between the ethical frameworks of established radio broadcasting and the largely unregulated nature of podcasting. By examining their views on content regulation, ethical challenges, and responsible media practices, the study sought to draw lessons from their experiences to guide the development of ethical standards and practices in the podcasting industry. This approach aimed to bridge the gap between traditional media regulations and the emerging dynamics of digital media, ultimately contributing to the creation of more accountable and responsible podcasting practices.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

4.5.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1278), qualitative content analysis is a “method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. Content analysis, being indigenous to communication research, is regarded as one of the most significant research techniques in the social sciences (Fourie, 2009). It aims to analyse data within a specific context, considering the meanings attributed by individuals, groups, or cultures. It is for this reason that qualitative content analysis was employed in this study. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis relies on the symbolic qualities of the data to determine the antecedents or consequences of communication. According to Mayring (2014), this approach makes it possible to

analyse the underlying context, which is not directly observable and thus enables a greater understanding of the content. “Through systematic coding and the identification of themes and patterns, qualitative content analysis makes the unobserved context of the data analysable, nuanced interpretation of the material” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278).

In this study, qualitative content analysis was used to explore the ethical issues in selected episodes of the *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. This method enabled the researcher to systematically classify and interpret the content of these episodes and identify recurring themes and patterns related to media ethics. In this way, the researcher examined how media ethics are portrayed and addressed in the podcasts and how these portrayals comply with or challenge journalistic ethical principles. Moreover, the archived podcast episodes used for this study were available on YouTube and freely accessible to the public. Using a purposive sampling method, the researcher first reviewed the titles and descriptive text associated with the episodes on the website. This initial screening process aimed to identify the episodes that best conveyed the information relevant to the research objectives. The selection process was facilitated by the researcher’s prior familiarity with the podcast channel. As an enthusiastic follower and fan of *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, the researcher had already watched and analysed numerous episodes, including the four selected for this study.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to deliberately select episodes that signified certain ethical concerns, such as hate speech, controversy, and slander. By focusing on episodes known to raise these issues, the researcher was able to ensure that the data collected directly aligned with the objectives of the study. This method simplified the selection process and improved the relevance and depth of the analysis. Data was collected by watching all the episodes selected for the study, which were then systematically coded and recorded using a codebook. A codebook is an important data collection tool that contains a comprehensive list of codes used to effectively organise and analyse the data. The data was categorised, with each concept clearly defined, thoroughly explained, and supported with relevant examples (Hampsten, 2017).

4.5.2 Semi-structured interview

Unlike structured interviews, where questions are pre-determined and follow a rigid format, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility by incorporating open-ended questions. This allows the interviewer the freedom to explore deeper responses and seek further elaboration when needed (Hancock *et al.*, 2009). According to Hashemnezhad (2015), those conducting semi-structured interviews generally have a set of expectations about the direction and outcome of the conversation, while still allowing for organic flow and discovery. This flexibility made the method particularly suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to collect comprehensive and detailed information without being confined by a fixed set of questions. By using open-ended questions, the researcher was able to encourage radio presenters to express their perspectives fully, thus obtaining richer information about their views on media ethics. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, using a semi-structured interview schedule.

Moreover, the semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to adapt questions in real-time based on the flow of the conversation, which is particularly useful when dealing with sensitive or evolving topics such as defamation, hate speech, and the regulation of controversial content. For example, if a radio presenter raised an unexpected point, the researcher could follow up with probing questions to better understand their stance, thereby gaining a richer understanding of the ethical dilemmas they face in their professional roles. This adaptability contributed to the depth of the data collected and provided a more comprehensive picture of how ethical standards are applied in South African media.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Thorne (2008), data analysis is a process in which data is broken down into its basic components to reveal its characteristics, elements, and structure. This study used the thematic analysis method to systematically examine the data obtained from content analysis. Alhojailan (2012) describes thematic analysis as a qualitative method of analysis that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) in the data. It consists of searching for and identifying themes that emerge from the description of a phenomenon. Moreover, these themes are composed of codes with a

common reference point and a high degree of generality, so they unify ideas related to the topic under investigation.

On an interpretative level, the thematic analysis reveals the underlying meanings and elements of the participants' subjective understanding (Alhojailan, 2012). The thematic analysis was utilised to emphasise the significance of media ethics in South Africa. In this process, the data collected from the content analysis and semi-structured interviews were categorised based on themes and sub-themes by focusing on aspects related to media ethics such as truthfulness, harm avoidance, defamation, accountability, fairness, and respect for others.

4.6.1 Steps of analysing data thematically

- **Step 1: Familiarising with the data**

The researcher began the thematic analysis by watching the entire podcast episode several times. This process was done after completing the data collection, as explained in section 4.5. The analysis process began with an initial familiarisation phase aimed at familiarising the researcher with the data set collected using content analysis. The thematic analysis was used to identify characteristic components that contribute to the formulation of the discursive themes. The data were systematically organised and categorised based on similarities and differences using methodological differences (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Furthermore, this systematic classification facilitated the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content and familiarise themselves with all facets of the data set, which provided a solid foundation for the subsequent thematic analysis.

- **Step 2: Generating the initial codes**

Upon familiarisation with podcast episodes from *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, an initial structured coding process followed. The researcher identified and codified truthfulness, accountability, harm avoidance, impartiality, respect for others, and related data from the episodes linked with the research objectives. Specific instances and key points were identified and assigned initial codes. For example, codes such as hate speech, defamation, biases, and remarks on the LGBTQI+ community were identified from the podcast episodes. Furthermore, the categories were refined to

ensure they accurately represented the data and were distinct. Detailed definitions were developed for each category to guide consistent coding.

- **Step 3: Search for themes**

After listening to sampled podcast episodes, the researcher transcribed the content to obtain a text-based representation of the discussions. This transcription enabled a closer examination of various elements within each episode, such as the language used, the context of statements, and the thematic structure of the episodes. The researcher looked at the transcripts again and used a highlighter to mark all the descriptions relevant to the study's objectives. Using these marked sections, each unit of meaning was identified. Similar units were grouped into piles, and each pile was labelled with categories (themes) using keywords or phrases from the highlighted text. All missing categories were then identified. The researcher delved into the transcripts, paying attention to the conversations and the ethical dilemmas or principles that came up in each episode, identifying instances where ethical principles such as transparency, truthfulness, and accountability were upheld or violated by the hosts and guests. Furthermore, the researcher synthesised these various themes and identified overarching patterns or trends that characterise the podcast episodes.

- **Step 4: Reviewing potential themes**

At this stage of the analysis process, the researcher conducted attentive quality control to ensure the accuracy and coherence of the themes identified in the coded data. Moreover, the entire data set was reviewed and reread without referring to the previously assigned units or categories. This approach helped to maintain objectivity and provided a fresh perspective on the data. Braun and Clarke (2023) affirm that when re-reading the text, each unit of meaning and category that had been established in the initial coding phase should be carefully reviewed. Thus, the units were appropriately sized, and the categories accurately reflected the essence of the data related to the research objectives. Furthermore, the units and categories were redistributed as necessary to ensure that they were neither too small nor too large, allowing for a more balanced representation of the content.

- **Step 5: Defining themes**

In the final refinement of the themes, the researcher focused on ensuring that the themes accurately reflected the essence of the data and met the research objectives. This involved iterative refinement and definition of the themes and potential sub-themes until the researcher was satisfied with their clarity and relevance. To define each theme, the researcher asked what was unique and distinctive about it and sought to identify the core concepts or patterns that distinguished one theme from another. The researcher developed criteria to evaluate the quality of each theme, considering factors such as importance, significance, and relevance to the research objectives. The goal was to develop themes that were meaningful, impactful and provided valuable insight into the research topic. To achieve this, the researcher created clear and concise working definitions for each topic that got to the significant part.

4.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

4.7.1 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:120), “credibility refers to the degree of certainty that can be conveyed about the accuracy of the results of a study”. In the context of this study, which aimed to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the podcast *and Chill with MacG* with a focus on journalistic media ethics, ensuring credibility involves several methodological considerations and strategies to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. Prolonged engagement with the data is critical. This includes engaging deeply with the podcast episodes to gain a thorough understanding of the content and context. Repeated listening and viewing of the episodes allowed the researcher to develop a more comprehensive and accurate coding of the ethical issues. Prolonged engagement with the episodes helps to identify subtle patterns and themes that might be missed in a superficial analysis, increasing the credibility of the study.

4.7.3 Transferability

Transferability in this study was ensured through dialogue with previous and existing literature relevant to the research topic. According to Creswell (2017:202), “transferability refers to how well the findings of qualitative research can be applied to different research topics or areas, emphasising the adaptability of the gathered information to different contexts”. To achieve this, the researcher engaged in an

extensive review and synthesis of scholarly works, critically compared emerging findings with established theories and models, and provided thick, rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and processes. This methodological rigour enabled readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the study's insights to other settings.

4.7.4 Reliability

When a data collection tool is reliable, it consistently yields the same results whether it is used by one investigator or several, and whether applied in the same context. To reflect the genuine values of the attributes being examined and to reduce errors, the data-gathering tool should be accurate and stable (Polit & Beck, 2006). In this study, the researcher enhanced reliability by piloting the data collection instrument with a small, representative sample before the main study, refining the tool based on feedback, and maintaining consistent procedures throughout data collection to ensure stability and accuracy.

4.7.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research ensures the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings. Confirmability, in particular, focuses on ensuring that the findings authentically represent the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's biases or preferences (Bryman et al., 2008). To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher maintained an audit trail of data collection and analysis procedures, systematically recorded decisions made throughout the research process, and presented factual information about the phenomenon under investigation with accuracy and transparency.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are among the most critical components of research, as the absence of this aspect can jeopardise the success of a dissertation (Bryman *et al.*, 2008). The researcher sought permission from participants through a consent letter, ensuring voluntary participation and emphasising that individuals would not be coerced into taking part. All participants were treated with respect and dignity throughout the research process.

4.8.1 Respect for Individuals

This study relied on people for data collection. Therefore, their participation were voluntary and based solely on their consent. The researcher respected all the rights, needs, values and preferences of the participants. They were permitted to decline participation in this study if they felt uncomfortable, and their choices were honoured.

4.8.2 Honesty

The study prioritised honesty in all scientific communications by ensuring that data were neither fabricated nor misrepresented. Intellectual property was respected through proper referencing and quoting of previous research, thereby avoiding plagiarism. Throughout the research process, each chapter was subjected to plagiarism detection using Turnitin software to identify any ethical or professional lapses. Upon receiving the reports, the researcher revised the necessary sections to achieve the minimum acceptable percentage of originality for each chapter of the dissertation.

4.8.3 Objectivity

The researcher presented and interpreted participant information and video content information in an unbiased manner, and all sources were explicitly referenced, and there were no modifications or biases in the presentation of collected data and ideas. All data and ideas collected were presented as they were (Evans, 2013).

4.8.4 Informed Consent

According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006), “participants have a right to know what the research is about.” The researcher ensured that participants were fully informed about the nature of the research, its purpose, and its benefits.

4.8.5 Permission to conduct the study

The researcher obtained a clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo Research Ethics Committee (TREC) before the data collection process.

4.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter described the research methodology by detailing and sequencing the selection of the research design, the sampling process, the criteria for selecting the sample population and the methods used for data collection and analysis. An attempt to ensure the quality of the study by discussing the requirements for maintaining lofty standards. The following chapter is dedicated to the interpretation and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected in this study through qualitative content analysis and interviews. It is structured into three main themes: the first addresses the significance of media ethics in broadcasting, the second examines the influence of podcasts in South Africa, and the third presents radio presenters' recommendations for enhancing ethical standards in South African podcasts. This approach facilitated a thorough data exploration, directly aligning with the research aim and objectives outlined in Chapter 1, sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2. This study explored the ethical standards in South African podcasting. It analysed how podcasts navigate the principles of media ethics such as respect for privacy, harm avoidance, truthfulness, and the prevention of defamation.

The study also explored how podcasting's unregulated nature contributes to the dissemination of controversial content, including misogynistic remarks, derogatory statements about the LGBTQI+ community, and the objectification of women. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and emerging themes related to the study's focus. The researcher first familiarised himself with the data before generating initial codes to capture key elements. Following this, a systematic search for recurring themes was conducted, with these themes being reviewed and evaluated against the coded data. Irrelevant or extraneous aspects of themes were removed during this phase, leading to a refined and precise definition of the themes and sub-themes. Further details of this process are outlined in Section 4.6.1.

The subheadings and themes presented in this chapter focus on the following objectives:

- To examine the ethical standards upheld by the South African podcasters.
- To analyse the ways South African podcasters interpret and apply media ethics.
- To formulate the recommendations for enhancing ethical standards in South African podcasts.

5.2 An Overview of Podcast and Chill with MacG

The *Podcast and Chill with MacG* was established in 2018, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and celebrated its first podcast episode in July of the same year. Since its establishment, the channel has released over 500 podcast episodes and steadily grown its audience base with over 1 million subscribers on YouTube (Podcast and Chill Network, 2023). The show is hosted by MacGyver Mukwevho, who is known by the nickname MacG, which is also the eponymous name of the podcast series and co-hosted by Sol Phenduka and Ghost Lady, with the latter maintaining her anonymity by disguising her identity on screen. Known as South Africa's number one podcast, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is characterised by controversial interviews with guests and open discussions between the three hosts, which occasionally focus on specific topics (Motsaathebe, 2023). The podcast airs on YouTube on Mondays, where the hosts catch up on current events and discuss everything without boundaries.

Furthermore, the show sometimes features celebrity guests who are interviewed about their personal and professional lives and their general experiences. A key aspect of the podcast is the hosts' lively, bold, and outspoken nature, who freely express their opinions on any topic under discussion. Due to their long-form format, interview and conversation-based podcasts, Mkhabela (2021) noted that South African podcasts offer in-depth, uncensored, and unfiltered content, free from the constraints of traditional media time limits. The podcast primarily targets young audiences interested in celebrity gossip and comedic content (Motsaathebe, 2023).

Figure 1



Table 3: The Taxonomy of Selected Episodes

Episode 309	Jub Jub on Ndikhokhele, Amanda Du Pont, Kelly Khumalo, Prison, Uyajola 99
Episode 350	Edwin Sodi, Minnie Dlamini, Toss, Vusi Nova, DJ Zinhle, Q & A, Brenda Fassie
Episode 220	Dr Wouter Basson, Johan Rubert, Somizi, SAFTAs, Siz Ngesi
Episode 242	100K plaque, Nota in a Holding Cell, Emtee, Black Coffee, AKA
Episode 573	Trump Assassination, Sir Gayton Mackenzie, Moshe Ndiki, Malaika, Kabza vs Momo, Eminem

5.2.1 Tone

The tone used in *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is casual, cheerful and humorous. It is marked by a friendly conversational style that feels unscripted and spontaneous. This resonates with listeners who enjoy unfiltered discussions. Humour is a central component and often delivered with an irreverent, edgy approach. This use of humour can make the podcast feel relatable and authentic, as if the hosts are speaking directly to friends rather than an anonymous audience. However, when talking about contentious issues such as gender, ethnicity, or sexuality, the tone often goes into areas that some listeners find unpleasant. While this unfiltered humour resonates with those who appreciate a “say it like it is” attitude, it has also attracted criticism for its perceived insensitivity and disregard for ethical boundaries. The edgy tone in *Podcast and Chill* aligns with a growing trend in digital media where audiences seek out content that is not censored. The host’s willingness to discuss taboo topics without toning down their opinions creates a sense of authenticity that is rare in regulated media environments.

5.2.2 Language Use

The primary language used in *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is English; however, the podcast often incorporates South African indigenous languages. This incorporation is particularly evident when guests engage in conversations using their home languages and when culturally specific topics are discussed. The podcast is characterised by its liberal use of explicit and vulgar language. This tone aligns with the unfiltered and candid style of the show, which aims to challenge traditional media norms and appeal to younger audiences who value raw, unpolished content. However, Tsumele (2021) highlight that the frequent use of profanity and explicit terminology can be polarising. Older and more conservative audiences may find the language offensive or inappropriate, and it creates a barrier to intergenerational consumption. For instance, the explicit discussions and language make the podcast unsuitable for family settings, particularly when watching with teenagers, as the topics and tone may cause discomfort and awkwardness (Tsumele, 2021). The dominance of vulgar language also raises broader questions about media ethics and audience segmentation.

5.3 THEME 1: ANALYSING THE WAYS SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTERS INTERPRET AND APPLY MEDIA ETHICS

A central focus of the researcher's analysis of the podcast episodes was evaluating the podcasters' adherence to media ethics. This theme examines the application of journalistic principles in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, specifically emphasising key ethical considerations such as respect for privacy, avoidance of harm, prevention of defamation, and commitment to truthfulness.

5.3.1 Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

The principle of respect for privacy asserts that individuals have a right to keep their personal lives, particularly intimate relationships and deeply traumatic experiences, out of the public domain and confidential unless there is an overriding public interest in disclosing them (Yanisky-Ravid & Lahav, 2016).

The following analysis examines the conversation from episode 309, featuring Molemo "Jub Jub" Maarohanye. It focuses on the ethical implications of the dialogue, focusing on themes such as respect for privacy, the handling of sensitive topics, and the

potential perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. This study found a notable absence of respect for privacy and confidentiality in the content of South African podcasts. Personal details about public figures are discussed without consideration for the individuals involved. Conversations frequently delve into sensitive aspects of people's lives, such as their sexual relationships, past traumas, or personal challenges, without obtaining consent and considering the potential harm that such disclosures might cause.

5.3.1.1 Molemo Maarohanye's Episode 309: Violation of an Individual's Privacy

The analysis of episode 309, which the hosts called "the most anticipated episode ever", violated people's privacy. This episode featured musician and reality TV host Molemo Maarohanye, known professionally as Jub Jub. It has lived up to the expectation as it gained nine hundred thousand views within the first twenty-four hours of its release. It created a lot of controversy because of the topics that were discussed. The conversation subjects ranged from Jub Jub's musical career and experiences in prison to his personal life, including revelations about his past intimate relationships. However, the subject that took a controversial turn and made significant public reactions and debates on X (formerly known as Twitter) was open disclosures about his romantic involvement with the actress Amanda Du Pont. During the conversational interview, the host asked Jub Jub if Amanda Du Pont was one of the women he had been sexually involved with. Jub Jub confirmed the affair, much to the surprise of the co-hosts (Sol).

Figure 2



Episode 309 with Jub Jub Maarohanye

The dialogue below clearly highlights the lack of respect for the privacy of Amanda Du Pont:

MACG: "Which ladies are you smashing then? Was it Amanda Du Pont?"

JUB JUB: "She was one of them."

SOL: "Whoa! You were smashing that?"

MACG: "Yeah! Before he went to jail."

SOL: "Oh! Damn"

MACG: "How was that relationship like?"

*JUB JUB: "Uh I mean it was good um I f**ked up because... I dated Amanda, she was still an after, um we dated when we dated we, the relationship went up for about three years..."*

MACG: "Oh! Wow! That's a long time bro, that's a long time."

JUB JUB: "Then we stayed together in the south um..."

MACG: "You stayed together? Damn, this was serious bro. I thought it was hit-and-run"

JUB JUB: "I thought so too up until eish... [laughter] I thought so too but yeah um and then yeah I, I, I uh, we moved in together, she moved up to where she was staying uh stayed together..."

This dialogue highlights a clear breach of privacy, with the hosts and Jub Jub openly discussing intimate details about Amanda Du Pont without her consent. The conversation is driven by sensational revelations, which disregard the ethical responsibility of maintaining respect for privacy and confidentiality. The word "smashing" in the context of this conversation refers to casual sex or the desire to have sex with someone (Bark, 2024). Therefore, the use of the term "smashing" reflects a casual and objectifying attitude toward intimate relationships, reducing them to mere physical encounters rather than acknowledging the emotional and personal dimensions involved. In this context, the use of street language trivialises the

relationship between Jub Jub and Amanda Du Pont by framing it as a conquest rather than a meaningful connection.

Furthermore, MacG's direct question: "Which ladies were you smashing then? Was it Amanda Du Pont?" sets the tone for the invasive nature of the discussion. The use of slang terms such as "smashing" further underestimates the topic and reduces a private relationship to a sensationalist anecdote. In the same way, Jub Jub's subsequent responses reveal private details about their past relationship, which would have otherwise remained private. This revelation is met with excitement and amusement from the hosts as indicated by statements such as "Damn, this was serious, bro" and laughter, which further undermines the gravity of exposing someone's private life without their consent. Thus, the conversation with Jub Jub shows the ethical pitfalls that arise when entertainment value is placed above respect for the boundaries of the individual. Public discussion of private matters can lead to considerable emotional distress for Amanda Du Pont. Sharing these personal details without her consent has resulted in reputational damage and emotional discomfort (Canham, 2021).

5.3.1.1.1 Audience Feedback and Criticism of Episode 309

The conversation between MacG and Jub Jub regarding Jub Jub's relationship with Amanda Du Pont raised concerns among some of the audience members. The study found that some audience members expressed discomfort with the way MacG asked Jub Jub about his past sexual relationships in the comment section of the video from YouTube.

Notably, Chizzy1111 commented, "*The only mistake Jub Jub did in this interview, was when MacG asked 'who were you smashing, Amanda Du Pont?' and he responded 'she was one of them,' instead of saying, 'nah, that was my girlfriend, I wasn't smashing, I was in a relationship with her.'* Sometimes being mature about situations will save you a lot of trouble." Another audience member (Jobe1888) commented, "*I think Amanda was hurt and dragged McGee's name but in the same breath...Sol and MacG need to watch it with the little misogynistic snide comments. This is not the first time it's been raised and chillers themselves have admonished them before. Just watch it guys. We love the podcast but really...learn to read the room regarding such topical issues".*

The audience's comments illustrate the sentiment that the language and framing of the discussion in the episode could have been handled more thoughtfully and this suggests that a more mature approach might have mitigated the negative fallout from such a sensitive revelation. *Podcast and Chill with MacG* has shown that the private lives of public figures are disclosed in a way that can make it difficult to distinguish between responsible journalism and entertainment. Dealing with sensitive and personal topics in podcasts requires balancing open conversation with the risk of defamation. Although some audiences find the candid style appealing because of its directness and perceived authenticity, the approach also highlights the ethical challenges of publicly exposing intimate details about other personalities. This approach raises critical questions about privacy, consent and the general responsibility of podcast platforms when dealing with such content.

5.3.2 Harm Avoidance

Avoiding harm means that podcasters must ensure that the pursuit of truth and the dissemination of information do not come at the expense of unnecessary damage to individuals, groups, or society (Elliott & Spence, 2017). This principle states that while the pursuit of truth and accurate reporting is important, podcasters must also consider the potential negative impact of their content on individuals, groups, and society. This responsibility includes a commitment to ethical storytelling that considers the welfare of those affected and goes beyond the facts to assess whether the dissemination of certain information could lead to unnecessary harm.

5.3.2.1 Episodes 220, 302 and 305: Characterisation of the LGBTQ+ Community and Attack on Amapiano Artists

a) Representation of Vulnerable Communities

The study found that in episodes 220 and 302, the hosts joke about the appearance of transgender people. They use derogatory language and incorrect terminology to reinforce harmful stereotypes. Furthermore, these episodes demonstrate how LGBTQ+ issues are ridiculed and misconceptions are perpetuated rather than providing a thoughtful and accurate portrayal. The remarks on the LGBTQ+ community in *these two episodes* depict the podcast's distinctive nature, which is both humorous and unfiltered when addressing sensitive issues. The hosts' approach to

topics related to gender identity and sexual orientation reveals a clear lack of understanding and insensitivity. Instead of promoting a meaningful dialogue that contributes to public education around LGBTQ+ issues, the hosts frequently reduce these topics to the level of humour and objectification.

There is a significant negative remark about the LGBTQ+ community in episode 220, as MacG, Sol Phenduka and Ghost Lady discuss Siv Ngesi and Caitlyn Jenner's transition. The panel discusses a debate from X and proceeds to make an inaccurate comparison between Siv Ngesi performing in drag and Caitlyn Jenner's gender transition. During the conversation, Ghost Lady conflates Caitlyn's gender identity with her sexual orientation while also misgendering her. Sol then questions why Caitlyn "couldn't just be a man" to date women. Ghost Lady adds that transgender individuals' transition because they "want the parts," referring to gender confirmation surgery—a misconception, as gender identity is not inherently tied to undergoing surgical procedures such as top or bottom surgery (Selvaggi, Ceulemans, De Cuypere, VanLanduyt, Blondeel, Hamdi, Bowman & Monstrey, 2005).

b) Episode 220: Misconceptions About Gender and Transgender Identity

The following conversation depicts several problematic comments and misconceptions regarding gender identity, sexuality, and transgender experiences. It is riddled with misinformation, misgendering, and false equivalencies, which demonstrates the host's lack of understanding about transgender individuals and the distinctions between gender identity and sexual orientation.

SOL: "She's just being a woman, a modern-day woman who's on Instagram who's living her life"

MACG: "So, does it mean that Siv is gay now?"

SOL: "No, it doesn't mean... You can, you can't have a drag person, he might be, you don't know... But him rocking drag does not confirm that Siv is gay"

MACG: "Mmm! I see. Until he comes out like Caitlyn Jenner?"

GHOST LADY: "You see that's a good example, like you see how Caitlyn said though, I don't even know now.... She said she still gonna date women"

MACG: "Yes."

GHOST LADY: "So, does it mean that now you've transitioned to be a man? I mean to be a woman? No, she still claims would be with women. Last time I've heard."

SOL: "Damn! So, you gonna have your sex change and just be a woman. Now she's a lesbian. Wow! Why can't she just be a man and be with a woman? Even if you prefer her strapping up and be with you. But why... You need to go through, you know? There's men who do that."

GHOST LADY: "Yes, but if she just wants the parts, if you want the parts."

It is evident that the hosts exhibit a limited understanding of transgender identities and transitions, as demonstrated by their confused remarks about sexual orientation. According to Capuzza and Spencer (2017), transgender and gender-diverse people are widely underrepresented in the media. Thus, the representations of transitions in the podcasting medium are significantly important because they offer a cultural foothold for individuals whose gender journeys are different.

c) Episode 220: Mockery and Stereotyping of the LGBTQI+ Community

Ghost Lady and Sol further ridicule the queer community by mocking the LGBTQI+ acronym, referring to it as "LGBQ – TRZ." Sol then brings up the story of former G-Unit member Young Buck's relationship with a trans woman using derogatory language and humour that perpetuates harmful stereotypes. He employs offensive terms such as "shemale" and "woman with a d*ck," which are widely considered disrespectful when referring to transgender individuals. Despite acknowledging that "shemale" is a derogatory term, Sol continues to use inappropriate language, while MacG visibly laughs and reinforces the mocking tone.

Ghost Lady also adds to the discussion by saying that LGBTQ+ includes "many more letters." MacG then shares a story about Wayne Rooney allegedly engaging in sexual

activity with a transwoman, to which Sol makes a crude remark, attributing Rooney's "ball control" to the encounter and misgendering the transwoman by referring to the incident as Wayne "lying on a man's chest." This dialogue demonstrates the insensitivity of the hosts toward LGBTQ+ topics, particularly regarding transgender individuals, further marginalising a minority group through offensive humour and misrepresentation. The dialogue below portrays the hosts joking about the LGBTQ+ community.

Figure 3



MacG and Sol in episode 220

SOL: "The LGBTQ-TRZ...."

GHOST LADY: "Yes, there's a lot of, there's a lot more letters in that LGBTQ"

SOL: "Interesting fact, one of the former members of G-unit Young Buck used to see a trans-person."

GHOST LADY: "Yes, I saw that."

MACG: "What?"

SOL: *“Yeah! So eh, ay, I think it's she-male but I think that's a bad term. We don't use that term but a trans-person. So, a woman with a d*ck.”*

GHOST LADY: *“No, but it could be a trans-female”*

SOL: *“Yeah! But he saw a woman with a d*ck.”*

MACG: *“[Laughs]”*

SOL: *“Yeah dawg, he came out and 50 Cent I remember he was dragging him.”*

MACG: *“Yeah [Laughs]”*

GHOST LADY: *“50 always does that “*

MACG: *“...Wayne Rooney as well.”*

SOL and GHOST LADY: *“Wayne Rodney?”*

MACG: *“Yes”*

SOL: *“That's where he gets his ball control from.”*

MACG: *“[Laughs]”*

SOL: *“He's laying on a man's chest. Manchester... And he's a Manchester legend [laughs]”*

MACG: *“[Laughs]”*

According to Howansky, Wilton, Young, Abrams and Clapham (2021), transgender individuals experience stigmatisation through the application of gender stereotypes. Sevilla Requena (2024) notes that this stigmatisation is further compounded by the use of slurs and acts of misgendering which expose deep-rooted societal issues of misunderstanding and disrespect toward transgender individuals. Thus, the use of slurs and misgendering in episode 305 reveals a societal issue of misunderstanding and disrespect toward transgender individuals. Despite attempts by Ghost Lady to correct Sol by suggesting the term “trans-female,” Sol continued to frame the conversation dismissively and reinforce harmful narratives.

From an ethical perspective, their discussion is an example of the need for sensitivity and inclusivity in the treatment of LGBTQ+ issues in the media. Furthermore, the podcast's failure to respectfully address LGBTQ+ issues alienates and offends audiences who are members of or supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Responsible media should promote awareness and educate audiences on the importance of using correct terminologies and avoiding derogatory language.

5.3.2.2 Language Sensitivity and Inclusivity

An analysis of episodes 220 and 307 further revealed an ongoing struggle with language sensitivity and inclusivity, particularly concerning the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, Sol Phenduka referring to a transgender woman as “a woman with a d*ck,” demonstrates a lack of sensitivity toward transgender identity and experiences. This terminology reduces a transgender woman's identity to physical anatomy and risks perpetuating stereotypes and stigmas associated with the transgender community. The phrasing violates the principle of respectful and inclusive language, which is a cornerstone of ethical media representation. In broadcasting, media ethics advocate for language that respects individuals' identities and experiences. The use of inclusive language is particularly essential in unregulated formats such as podcasts.

This phrasing undermines the ethical obligation of respect and inclusivity that media platforms should uphold. A study by Ward and Wasserman (2015) shows that respectful language is not only a matter of politeness but also a fundamental principle of ethical media representation which requires that individuals be portrayed in a way that affirms their dignity and humanity. Thus, the use of terms that marginalise transgender individuals fails to meet this standard contributing to societal biases that hinder efforts toward equality and acceptance. The delivery of such remarks during the episodes highlights the normalisation of language that trivialises or invalidates transgender identities, further exacerbating the marginalisation of an already vulnerable group.

5.3.2.3 Episode 305: Attack on Amapiano Artists

The analysis of episode 305 revealed that podcasters frequently employ a generalising approach when criticising specific groups of people. In this episode, MacG shares his experiences with Amapiano music artists and states that he “hasn't

had a good experience” with them and that “it’s never been good dealing with them.” His remarks reflect this tendency, as illustrated in the following comment:

Figure 4



Sol Phenduka and MacG criticising AmaPiano artists

MACG: “I wanna talk about piano guys, I haven’t had a good experience with these piano guys. It’s either they are late for an interview or like... it’s never been good dealing with them. But it seems like they lack professionalism, like across the board.”

In this instance, MacG generalises about *Amapiano* artists to convey personal experiences. This kind of statement presents a significant ethical concern because it lumps the entire group of *Amapiano* artists together “lacking professionalism”, which leads to unfair harm to other *Amapiano* artists who may not be guilty of such behaviour. According to Plaisance (2013), harm avoidance in journalism requires precision and care in language so that critiques are directed only at those responsible and are based on specific substantiated incidents. The ethical dilemma lies in publicly criticising a professional group in a way that could damage their reputation without offering clear details and evidence to justify such a broad claim.

A similar instance in which harm avoidance is overlooked while talking about *Amapiano* artists was found in episode 309 during a conversation with Jub Jub. Their

conversation illustrates how generalised critical statements were made about *Amapiano* musicians without considering the potential harm to the industry in general:

MACG: "What's the biggest lesson you've learnt from prison?"

*JUB JUB: "Treat everybody the same, you don't know what tomorrow holds for you. Wabon, uhm! Don't ever think that you sh*t ice cream, don't ever think you're better than anybody else"*

MACG: "Please tell these Piano guys bro, Yoh! They think they have arrived"

*SOL: "They think they are f**king superstars. Like they are inventors of this industry. Like no one came before them and no one will come after them"*

MACG: "Literally [Laughing]"

*SOL: "... B*sterds, b*stards, f**king hell."*

JUB JUB: "They make you angry boy? [Laughing]"

SOL: "Too much. One of them cancelled an interview today 45 minutes before the interview."

The tendency to generalise the entire group of *Amapiano* musicians is depicted by the use of phrases such as "they think they are f**king superstars" and "they think they have arrived". This language frames the group as a monolithic entity and casts them as arrogant without acknowledging individual differences within the genre. Such generalisations can have several adverse effects. Firstly, they can influence public perception of these artists in ways that may be unwarranted, especially for those who may not align with the traits being ascribed to the group as a whole. Given *Podcast and Chill's* popularity, these remarks are likely to be widely heard, consequently shaping how audiences perceive the *Amapiano* community.

The portrayal made here can impact how the audiences engage with the genre and potentially lead to a less supportive view of these musicians. Furthermore, the language used here creates an "us versus them" dynamic which positions the podcast hosts as commentators from outside the *Amapiano* genre who perceive themselves as justified in critiquing its artists. The broad statements detract from an opportunity

for constructive criticism and genuine dialogue. The commentary misses the chance to address specific behaviours and trends within the industry constructively by dismissing an entire group with phrases like “f**king superstars”.

5.3.2.4 Episode 242: Misogynistic Comments

In episode 242, MacG sat with his co-host Sol Phenduka, and interviewed Nota Baloyi. The episode had a segment in which the three men played a game “Who would you marry, have sex with or kill?” How this works is a person gives out three names of who would they rather get married to, have sex with or kill. In this case, the three men had to pick between Bonang Matheba, Thando Thabethe and Boity. MacG immediately said he would marry Bonang and hesitated between his two remaining options when asked who he would have sex with. Sol was surprised by the hesitation knowing how MacG infamously lashed out at Thando Thabethe in the past for calling him homophobic during his transphobic scandal. No love was lost as Sol and Nota both said they would “kill Thando”. However, MacG’s answer differed as he replied that he would “kill” Boity and the problem with her is that she slept with everyone. The dialogue below depicts the conversation between Sol and MacG playing a game.

Figure 5



Episode 242: Conversation with Nota Baloyi

MACG: “I’d marry Bonang...”

*SOL: "Whoa! For real? Okay, okay. Even though she had stones under your bed? [laughter]... But You're Venda, you can deal with that sh*t, right?"*

MACG: "Ehh! Kill... Kill..."

SOL: "You can't kill Boity, you can't kill Boity, you can't kill Boity..."

*MACG: "My problem is everyone has f*cked Boity."*

The entire premise of the game is inherently problematic as it objectifies women, reducing them to their perceived sexual desirability. According to Seabrook, Ward, and Giaccardi (2019), sexual objectification dehumanises women, portraying them as mere objects without agency or emotions, which can contribute to a culture of sexual violence. Similarly, Gervais and Eagan (2017) argue that the sexual objectification of women fosters violence by teaching society to treat women as objects rather than individuals and by altering cultural norms regarding how men perceive and interact with women. MacG's comment exemplifies harmful slut-shaming, where a woman's worth is unfairly judged based on assumptions about her sexual activity, perpetuating damaging stereotypes and reinforcing gender-based biases.

The conversation also highlights the podcast's frequent use of controversial remarks to engage its audience at the expense of ethical standards and respect for the individuals discussed. While humour and shock value are central to the podcast's style, these approaches carry significant responsibility when applied to sensitive and demeaning topics. The podcast's influence extends to a large and impressionable audience, many of whom may adopt the podcast's views and values (Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2008). Consequently, these discussions risk normalising harmful attitudes toward women by reinforcing ideas that women, especially those in the public eye, are fair game for judgment and disparagement.

a) Episode 350: Comments About Minnie Dlamini

Comparably, in episode 350, the study found that MacG made a vulgar remark where he insinuates that Minnie Dlamini, a well-known South African media personality, “sells her body” to make money. His comment suggests that women, particularly public figures such as Minnie Dlamini, are dishonest and deceptive if they present themselves as hard-working professionals. At the same time, he insinuated that their success is rooted in the commodification of their bodies. This narrative promotes a dangerous double standard as it both objectifies women and accuses them of dishonesty for asserting agency over their own identities. It reinforces a misogynistic framework that punishes women for being successful while simultaneously judging them for how they achieve that success—whether perceived or real. Below is the dialogue between the hosts about Minnie Dlamini.

Figure 6



MacG talking about Minnie Dlamini

*MACG: “There is no difference between Minnie and Zodwa Wabantu. They’re both selling p*ssy. One owns it, one doesn’t. Do you get it? And that’s where my issue is. If you’re selling p*ssy, just say yeah, I’m selling p*ssy that’s how I get my sh*t. Who are we to judge? We’re not God, we’re all hustling and we’re all trying to get money.”*

GHOST LADY: “But does she owe anyone an explanation though?”

MACG: “She does because she paints herself as this saint and as this person who works hard for her money. Imagine how many girls want to be like Minnie Dlamini or Mhlali? They’re selling false dreams.”

The claim that women such as Dlamini are “selling false dreams” highlights a broader problematic notion that is often targeted at women in public life—that their success, derived from their appearance and personal choices, is somehow less legitimate. This critique aligns with a long history of shaming successful women and discounting their accomplishments based on assumptions about their personal lives, and it fails to recognise the hard work and agency behind their careers, thus reducing their achievements to sexualised perceptions.

From an ethical standpoint, comments that demean women and perpetuate harmful stereotypes directly contradict the principle of “avoiding harm” in media ethics (Elliott & Spence, 2017). The misogynistic statements perpetuate a culture of disrespect, objectification, and violence against women, which contributes to a broader societal issue of gender-based discrimination. The specific comment made by MacG promotes patriarchal notions that a woman’s worth is tied to her sexual history. This is the narrative that has been extensively critiqued in feminist literature for its role in policing and shaming women’s bodies and autonomy (Daya, 2009).

5.3.2.5 Truthfulness

Truthfulness also means not misrepresenting the people or situations in the story to readers or viewers (Nwe, 2017). The analysis of the truthfulness theme in episode 573 revealed that MacG presented unverified information as fact—information based on hearsay from an unnamed source—failing to uphold basic journalistic standards of evidence and reliability. Hearsay, as defined in legal and journalistic contexts, refers to information gathered from others not substantiated by direct evidence (Freeman & Vazquez Llorente, 2021). MacG alleged that a source close to Nkosazana Daughter informed him that Master KG is the singer’s baby daddy. Below is his comment:

Figure 7



Discussion about Sir Trill, Master KG and Nkosazana Daughter

MACG: “Someone in Botswana told me and they are very close to Nkosazana Daughter. Apparently, that’s not Sir Trill’s kid. It’s Master KG’s kid, Bro, I kid you not bro, she was a surrogate.”

Relying on a second-hand account from a “source close to Nkosazana Daughter” does not meet evidentiary standards, as it lacks verifiability and is susceptible to inaccuracies and biases. MacG’s claim that “someone in Botswana” provided this information fails to establish the source’s credibility and undermines his trustworthiness as a content creator. This reliance on hearsay testimony contributes to the spread of misinformation and highlights a disregard for verifying sensitive information before sharing it publicly. The situation illustrates a breach of both truthfulness and the principle of minimising harm, central tenets of responsible media ethics. Unfounded speculation about the paternity of Nkosazana Daughter’s child, which MacG linked to her alleged break-up with Sir Trill, places both public figures at the centre of damaging rumours. This can adversely affect their reputations and mental well-being, potentially causing distress in their professional and personal lives.

a) Unverified Health Claims Presented as Facts

The analysis of episode 305 revealed an instance where unverified health claims were presented as factual statements during a discussion about plastic surgeries. In this episode, the hosts and guest, Tebogo Thobejane, discuss the prevalence of cosmetic

procedures during which Thobejane asserts that “everybody is getting their body done.” This statement is misleading as it generalises the popularity of plastic surgery without evidence to support the claim for demographic variations in cosmetic surgery rates. Such unverified statements can create a distorted perception for the podcast audiences by implying that cosmetic surgery is a normative practice when participation varies significantly by individual preferences, socioeconomic factors, and cultural norms. Furthermore, presenting generalisations as factual claims can influence audiences, particularly young audiences who may feel pressured to conform to these perceived beauty standards without understanding the full scope or risks of such procedures. Podcasters need to qualify statements and differentiate between opinion and fact, especially in instances where topics related to health are discussed. Thus, podcast hosts should consider their responsibility to prevent the spread of misinformation and maintain public trust.

During the discussion, Sol raised a question about the cost of plastic surgery, to which MacG humorously responded: “R27,000, the ones in Hillbrow.” This remark is misleading because it implies a standard price for a highly variable procedure without clarifying that the actual cost of plastic surgeries can vary widely depending on several factors, such as the type of surgery, the surgeon’s experience, and the clinic’s location. Truthfulness requires that information be presented accurately and with the necessary qualifications to help the audience form realistic expectations (Wilson & Sperber, 2002).

b) Defamation

Defamation of character refers to the act of making false or damaging statements about an individual that harm their reputation (Ardia, 2010). The analysis revealed that defamation of character is a prevalent issue in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. Episode 309 exemplifies this through the controversial statements made by Jub Jub about his former partner, Kelly Khumalo. In this episode, Jub Jub alleges that Kelly Khumalo practices *muti*, a South African term for traditional charms (Petrus, 2011). This claim is both damaging and defamatory because it touches on sensitive cultural beliefs and insinuates negative connotations about Kelly Khumalo’s character. The statement below indicates Jub Jub’s claims about Kelly Khumalo:

JUB JUB: “Look, it’s not anything new; everybody knows Kelly uses muti. So, everybody knows she uses muti, and I guess maybe she used that for me to stay.”

Figure 8



Jub Jub on Kelly Khumalo and their relationship

This statement suggests that Kelly Khumalo practices witchcraft, using *muti* to manipulate their relationship. Accusations involving *muti* are often seen as controversial in South Africa, as they can carry social stigmas and implications of supernatural interference (Ashforth, 2005). Thus, by associating Kelly Khumalo with these practices without evidence, Jub Jub risked casting her in a negative light, potentially alienating her from certain parts of the public who may view *muti* as taboo and manipulative. The implication that Kelly Khumalo used supernatural means to control their relationship is both defamatory and damaging to her reputation, as it insinuates deceit and manipulation without offering any concrete evidence to support such claims.

Furthermore, Jub Jub intensifies his accusations by saying, *“But all of us who date Kelly end up dying.”* This extreme and inflammatory statement implies that Kelly Khumalo is in some way responsible for the harm or death of her former partners. This is an extremely serious and damaging allegation that could have significant consequences for her public image and private life. Such an allegation, which lacks any factual basis, meets the legal definition of defamation of character as it falsely portrays Kelly Khumalo as dangerous.

5.4 THEME 2: THE INFLUENCE OF PODCASTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.4.1 The Impact of Podcasts on Facilitating Political Discourse

The analysis looked at the impact of podcasts in promoting political discourse and found that podcasts indeed have effectively demonstrated their capacity to inform South African audiences about critical national issues. For instance, on July 18, 2022, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* featured Julius Malema, the leader and Chief-in-Command of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), in their 371st episode. This episode provided a conversation about South African politics and personal insights from Julius Malema himself. During the discussion, Malema shared that his political journey began at nine, a passion that quickly led to him being elected as the chairman of the Youth League branch in Seshego. By 14, he had risen to the position of regional chairman, as indicated in the following dialogue.

MACG: “So, what jobs were you doing ko Seshego before you got into politics?”

JULIUS MALEMA: “I didn’t do any job; I did politics when I was very young at nine years because the ANC had something called young pioneers, Masupatsela Sisulu.”

SOL: “I mean at 14 you were the chairperson, right? Of the Youth League branch in Seshego?”

JULIUS MALEMA: “Yes”

Sol: “Didn’t you face challenges of leading people who were older than you? Because as a 19-year-old I’m sure it’s tough to listen to a 14-year-old.”

JULIUS MALEMA: “In all the structures I've led, I've led people who were older than me erm, I don't know where I got the wisdom but the majority of the time, I was either the youngest or the second youngest. So, the same thing when I became the president of COSAS when I became the president of the Youth League, I led with people who were older and at school, erm, remember we went to school with very old people. People could go... leave school, go to work, raise some money and come back and then pay for their own fees. and when you were older and strong like this one is uh carrying weights I become your friend and I start telling you some ideas of how things can be done and you're like this young man is proper so from there you're my bodyguard you're not aware that no one can touch me because I've got this guy and even when we say we're going on strike the grade 12 will want to resist or no can be told by these boys yeah so I'm going to call this old one so let's go and show them yeah and then they come so it has always been my life only now in the EFF do I come into contact with people that I'm older than.”

In this case, Julius Malema reflected on his early leadership roles leading people older than himself, a dynamic that shaped much of his political career. He talked about how he gained respect and influence from a young age despite his youth and how these experiences impacted his later leadership positions. In addition to discussing his political journey, he addressed broader socio-political issues, particularly focusing on the psychological impact of apartheid-era trauma and explaining why many black South Africans still harbour a deep-seated fear of white people. During the conversation, he reflected on how this fear manifests in everyday interactions, even for someone in his position.

Julius Malema: “You know why black people are scared of white people? It's not a joke. Even me, when I see a white person, my attitude changes—like we're traumatised people. Then my political conscience has to kick in... but otherwise, the first reaction is this...”

MACG: “Our accents change.”

JULIUS MALEMA: “Yes...”

Malema highlighted the racial dynamics that still influence social interactions in South Africa by sharing an example involving his security team. He explained that he had a white security member who instinctively knows to move to the front when Malema and his team seek access to a venue or event. According to Malema, the presence of a white individual ensures smoother and quicker access, as they are less likely to be questioned or scrutinised. In contrast, black security members often face unnecessary interrogation, which delays the process. This is demonstrated by his statement.

JULIUS MALEMA: I've got a white security guy, when he sees there's going to be a problem, he moves to the front because they [white people] are going to open up... I tell him no, don't move to the front, let this one go, but you'll find that the black guy is still explaining where he was born... Black people are generally very scared of white people.

This example shows Malema's view on the deep-rooted racial hierarchies that persist, where white individuals are still perceived to have an inherent advantage in commanding respect and access, while black individuals continue to face barriers. Furthermore, this exchange illustrates how deeply entrenched social and psychological dynamics persist in post-apartheid South Africa. Malema emphasised how black people, despite political advancements, remain intimidated by white authority, and points to economic power structures like the so-called "Stellenbosch Mafia," suggesting that control of the country remains in white hands. He explained that the influence of wealthy white families, such the Ruperts, extends into nearly every aspect of daily life, underscoring the enduring disparities in power and economic control in South Africa.

MACG: "They essentially are running the country."

JULIUS MALEMA: "Yeah, it's theirs... none of us in this room woke up this morning without using something that comes from the Reubens."

This dialogue provides more details on Julius Malema's perspective regarding the intersection of race, power, and economics in South Africa, while also demonstrating how podcasts allow for candid discussions on such sensitive and complex issues.

5.4.2 The Social Impact of Podcasts

The study found that South African podcasts play an important role in democratising access to information and providing a platform for diverse perspectives. The analysis revealed that they empower citizens by providing uncensored discussions on pressing societal issues and personal experiences that are often underrepresented in mainstream media. For instance, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* featured Professor J.J. Tabane on their 356th episode to discuss critical issues affecting South Africa, such as load-shedding, corruption, the economy, and unemployment. During this episode, the hosts engaged in an explicit conversation that dissected the systemic challenges contributing to the country's ongoing energy crisis, the pervasive culture of corruption in government and public institutions, and the economic stagnation that exacerbates unemployment rates. The discussion with Professor Tabane provided the audience with a nuanced understanding of these complex issues and offered both critique and potential solutions. The dialogue below depicts the discussion between the host (MacG) and the guest (Prof. J.J. Tabane) regarding load shedding.

MACG: so, I read an article on The Star recently uh they were talking about President Cyril Ramaphosa's tenure for the past four years. So, I want to get your uh... Insight into these things let's start with load shading. What's your take on that?

PROF. J.J. TABANE: Well, you know President Ramaphosa was a chairperson of what was called the War Room a politician life what is called the War Room some of them don't know what it is because they've never been in a war but the War Room basically is where you now stop everything and you bring different people from different places put their heads together to solve something. So he was given to share the whole room on load shedding right and we all know what has happened so it means that these failure started when he was chairing the War Room on Eskom right I don't know whether you can blame him because he's not a technical person and so on he has also said things like there was sabotage at Eskom and also said things like load shedding will be a thing of the past so on load shedding there's a general failure and it's a serious failure because energy said they are Centre of any economy right but I think he'll sort

it out I think that whatever you may think of the Raiders is he's been the longest person at Eskom.

This kind of content illustrates the growing role of podcasts in South Africa as platforms for intellectual engagement and civic dialogue. They provide a space where important national issues are dissected and debated in an informal yet impactful setting, reaching listeners who might not engage with traditional news outlets. According to Mkhabela (2021), podcasts in South Africa have become crucial in documenting and dissecting cultural and societal issues. Furthermore, the comments from the audience revealed that the topics covered in this episode were cutting-edge. For instance, the majority of the audience commented and appreciated the podcast for covering South African societal issues that are affecting South Africans.

“Simply love this podcast. Prof 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌, WE NEED THIS PLATFORM AS SOUTH AFRICANS... I agree 100%, May we be the participants, not spectators, better investment to educate a future SA contributor then to splash in entertain cicles with evidently what becomes surplus for the few. CORRUPTION should not be a career...Great variety of topics, GBV discussion 🙌🙌” @hlobi9659

Another audience member commented:

“This was a very erudite interview, even though I would have like for JJ to elaborate more on his points but I understand cause of time. I like the fact that we are learning more around the dynamics of politics as the youth and I think it's high time we pertain on politics, just like JJ said whatever we do involves politics.” @bongamandla6767

It is clear from these comments that the podcast episode resonated strongly with the audience, particularly in addressing pertinent South African societal issues. The comment highlights appreciation for the podcast’s educational value and its role in fostering active participation in societal matters rather than passive observation. It also praises the diversity of topics covered, including discussions on gender-based violence (GBV) and political dynamics, which are crucial for informing and engaging the South African youth.

5.4.3 The Impact of Podcasts in Preserving Indigenous Languages

According to Malatji (2019), “African languages have not been given a deserved space that is due to them in traditional mass media such as radio, television, magazines, and newspapers in the past, and these forms of media were used to marginalise African languages for many years in South Africa”. Qualitative Content Analysis results revealed that South African Podcasts offer a platform for the development and proliferation of content in diverse South African indigenous languages, thereby promoting linguistic diversity and cultural expression. Choice of language is central to people’s definition of themselves concerning their natural and social environment. This means that language on its own defines a people’s identity (Masvopo, 2021).

Indigenous language podcasts have the potential to capture the narratives, experiences, and cultural perspectives that are often overlooked or underrepresented in mainstream media (Nkoala, 2023). *Podcast and Chill with MacG* demonstrates linguistic diversity and actively contributes to the preservation of South Africa’s Indigenous languages. Its hosts bring together a rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, MacG, whose home language is Tshivenda, collaborates with Sol Phenduka and Ghost Lady, who speak isiZulu. This mixture of languages ensures the multilingual nature of South Africa and also shows the flexibility and inclusivity of Indigenous language use in modern media.

The podcast series incorporates a signature tagline, *Hee ndaa... bare mene? At the beginning of every episode*, a Tshivenda phrase that translates into “Greetings... how are you?” This shows the podcast’s commitment to integrating indigenous languages into its content and acknowledging and celebrating the linguistic heritage of its host, MacG, while inviting listeners into a culturally rich dialogue. Furthermore, using an indigenous greeting shows the podcast’s effort to maintain authenticity and connect with a diverse South African audience and emphasise the importance of linguistic inclusivity in the podcasting landscape. Furthermore, the podcast frequently features South African celebrities who, on occasion, engage in their native languages when interacting with the hosts. For example, in episode 236, the podcast welcomed South African rapper Big Zulu, and throughout the interview, both the host and guest incorporated isiZulu into their conversation. The podcast’s emphasis on linguistic

inclusivity shows the podcast's ability to narrate people's experiences using South African indigenous languages.

5.5 THEME 3: ENHANCING ETHICAL STANDARDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTS: RADIO PRESENTER'S PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the data collection process, the researcher successfully conducted five interviews with radio presenters from various radio stations. The primary aim of these interviews was to gather insights and perspectives that would inform recommendations for improving the ethical standards of podcasts in South Africa. The positive aspect of these radio presenters was their familiarity with the broadcasting ethical standards and media ethics. As a result, that made them relevant and suitable subjects within the confines of this study.

5.5.1 Ethical Standards Upheld by Podcast and Chill with MacG

The radio presenters were asked about their views on the ethical standards upheld by *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. A majority of the presenters believed that there is a part that is being upheld, and some standards are maintained. They express the following views:

There is a part of the ethical standards that is being upheld within the podcast. The podcast focuses more on accuracy which is why they have employed a fact-checker to make sure that they have some level of truth and accuracy. It is however important to know that this is just a piece of physical standards in the media landscape. The podcast is popular for being controversial as a result of misinformation, libel and slander, and defamation amongst others. I would say that there's an attempt to adhere to some Media ethics considering the effect checker issue, but there needs to be room for growth in ethical Broadcasting (Radio Presenter 1).

Radio Presenter 2 said,

What I've observed on Podcast and Chill with MacG is that it represents a unique approach to media which is characterised by its informal and unfiltered style of presentation. It has issues such as the lack of adherence to principles such as fairness, respect, and accountability. Also, the podcast frequently uses vulgar

language that lacks sensitivity, particularly toward marginalised groups. So, in my view, Podcast and Chill could benefit significantly from implementing a stronger ethical framework that balances its informal tone with greater responsibility toward its audience and the individuals discussed in its content.

Radio Presenter 3 said, “*they are maintained to how the standards of podcasts need to be conducted. They follow some of the media ethics and regulations especially when it comes to accuracy with the help of their fact-checker. But I think some of their content doesn't have the truth because they recently accused Nkosasana Daughter of cheating without any concrete evidence*”.

According to Radio Presenter 4,

Podcast and Chill with MacG have sparked mixed reactions in terms of ethical standards. MacG's podcast is known for its candid discussions and sometimes controversial topics, often addressing issues that mainstream media tends to avoid. However, there are concerns about the podcast's approach to sensitive subjects such as gender, race, and celebrity gossip, which can at times perpetuate harmful stereotypes and misinform listeners. While the podcast is a platform for free expression, it's important for hosts like MacG to recognise the power they have in shaping public discourse and to consider the potential impact their words have on society, especially in a diverse country like South Africa.

Radio Presenter 5 was of the view that:

Podcast and Chill is the first podcast in the country, which shows great advancement of media space within the country and became popular on the African continent, it has been informative, helpful and very optimistic. Many people made careers from the interviews there and others got the assistance needed. Politically informs us about the current crisis within the country, discussed and debated. However, the defamatory allegations against them were not them being bullies but guests on the show opening up and sadly they cannot control what guests say especially if it's of public interest.

Therefore, the main reason radio presenters in this study view that *Podcast and Chill with MacG* do not uphold ethical standards is that South African Podcasts are not

regulated and they lack journalistic ethics. As Hodges (1994) points out, ethics in journalism involves not only distinguishing between right and wrong, but also establishing norms for behaviour that ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. These ethical norms are particularly important for maintaining public trust and promoting responsible journalism. Thus, the lack of formal regulation and adherence to journalistic ethics can result in content that may prioritise sensationalism or entertainment value over factual accuracy, fairness, and objectivity.

The absence of a governing body for podcasting in South Africa means that *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is not held to the same standards as those in traditional media outlets like radio and television. As stated by Dowling, Johnson and Ekdale (2022), a lack of accountability leads to ethical lapses because presenters may feel less compelled to uphold the rigorous ethical standards that are expected of their counterparts in regulated sectors. As Radio Presenter 5 said, a critical aspect of this issue is the increasing role of podcasts in shaping public opinion, especially in an era of rapidly changing media landscapes. *Podcast and Chill with MacG* has a wide reach and influences public discourse on social, political, and cultural matters. This makes ethical considerations in podcasting particularly important, as misinformation or biased opinions can significantly impact listeners' perceptions and behaviour.

5.5.2 The Role of ICASA and Other Regulatory Bodies in Addressing the Unique Ethical Issues Within Podcasting

When asked whether the current South African media regulations adequately address the unique ethical issues in podcasting, a majority of the radio presenters expressed that the South African regulatory bodies only focus on traditional media outlets. They express the following perspectives:

No, because podcasts have their channels and don't belong to any traditional network, they are free to announce anything and elaborate on anything without being worried about following regulations. Unlike TV, which has BCCSA, podcasts do not have the same
(Radio Presenter 2).

Radio Presenter 1 believed that: *"The Constitution of South Africa mandates ICASA to regulate telecommunications, broadcasting and Postal Services. Such provisions allow ICASA to establish a regulatory framework and guidelines for the podcasting*

space, since at the moment there are no regulatory frameworks and guidelines that unequivocally focus on podcasts. But unfortunately, this is not the case, hence we're here discussing issues of ethics in podcasting [laughs]".

South African media regulations, particularly those governed by bodies like the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), are generally designed for traditional media, and do not directly address the unique nature of podcasting. Podcasting is an evolving space with limited oversight, and while there are broadcasting laws that could apply to podcasts that generate substantial income or gain significant viewership, these regulations often don't account for the freedom and informality that podcasts represent. In practice, ethical issues like misinformation, hate speech, and sensationalism often go unchecked, suggesting a gap in regulation. South Africa might need more tailored regulations to ensure accountability without stifling the freedom of expression that podcasts represent (Radio Presenter 3).

No, current South African media regulations do not adequately address the unique ethical issues within podcasting. The primary reason lies in the nature of podcasting as a relatively unregulated medium compared to traditional broadcasting platforms such as radio and television, which are governed by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA). Podcasts operate in a digital space that lacks the structured oversight applied to traditional media, allowing creators significant freedom but also leaving gaps in accountability (Radio Presenter 4).

No, because issues such as impartiality, objectivity, balance, bias, privacy, stereotyping, taste and decency, obscenity, and freedom of speech are now much rooted in podcasting, and it has contributed so much to more legal issues such as defamation (Radio Presenter 5).

The above expressions indicate that the current South African media regulators, such as ICASA and BCCSA, do not adequately address the unique ethical issues within the podcasting landscape. This is because podcasts in South Africa operate in a largely unregulated digital space (Motsaathebe, 2023). This lack of oversight creates a significant gap, which allows for content that may lack the journalistic ethics, such as impartiality, and ethical accountability seen in traditional media. Issues such as misinformation, hate speech, defamation, and bias are particularly prevalent in the

podcasting realm where the informal and independent nature of the medium enables creators to disseminate content without the checks and balances that govern more established forms of broadcasting.

In conjunction with what was expressed by Radio Presenter 5, Tsumele (2021) noted that the fact that podcasts are beyond ICASA's mandate essentially allows this new crop of broadcasters to say anything they want without being subject to the same regulations that govern traditional radio stations and TV channels. Traditional media outlets such as radio and television are held to rigorous standards of impartiality, accuracy, and ethical conduct, which are enforced by regulatory bodies such as ICASA and the BCCSA (Govenden, 2009). These bodies ensure that content adheres to established norms, such as protecting public interest, preventing hate speech, and promoting fair representation of diverse views.

However, podcasts, being largely independent and often hosted on digital platforms with global reach, operate in a much less structured environment. This freedom from regulation means that podcasters can produce content without the same constraints and accountability mechanisms that apply to traditional broadcasters. The lack of oversight also means that issues such as bias, defamation, and breaches of privacy can go unchecked, as podcasters are not held to the same journalistic standards as their counterparts in traditional media (Tennant, 2023). As Radio Presenter 5 suggested, this unregulated space has led to an increase in legal concerns, such as defamation cases that could have been prevented with more stringent oversight.

5.5.3 The Need for Ethical Codes for Podcasts

Radio Presenters were asked about the potential need for an ethical code specific to South African podcasts. The majority of radio presenters believe that the ethical code will ensure a safe media space. They expressed the following sentiments:

Radio Presenter 1 believed that: *“An ethical code in podcasting spaces is necessary. We have seen their influence to an extent that they have caused misinformation, slander, and defamation. Regulatory framework or code would have been making sure that the audience and the general public are protected from any potential harm that the platforms may cause.”*

Positive, the code would definitely ensure a perfect safe media space and avoid more defamatory issues within podcasting and most importantly uproot cyberbullying. I believe podcasting needs an ethical code from the BCCSA and regulated within the code, online content can either be built or destroyed hence, it is imperative that podcasting engineer a positive influence on society (Radio Presenter 3).

Radio Presenter 2 said:

Given the rapid growth of podcasting in South Africa and its increasing influence, there is a strong case for an ethical code specific to podcasters. This code could help guide creators in navigating sensitive topics such as race, gender, politics, and mental health, ensuring that content is both responsible and mindful of the diverse South African audience. Such a code could promote respect for cultural differences, prevent harmful stereotypes, and discourage the spreading misinformation. However, it's crucial that any code be flexible enough to allow for creative freedom, as podcasting is often seen as a platform for open, unfiltered discussion. This balance would be essential for an ethical framework that supports both responsibility and freedom.

Accordingly, the opinions of the radio presenters in this study indicated a strong consensus that podcasting in South Africa requires an ethical code to address the significant challenges posed by the unregulated nature of the medium. The radio presenters recognised the growing influence of podcasts and the potential for harm caused by misinformation, slander, defamation, and cyberbullying. There was a clear understanding that, while podcasts offer valuable creative freedom and a platform for unfiltered discussion, they also carry ethical responsibilities, especially as they increasingly shape public opinion and influence societal discourse.

As indicated by Radio Presenter 4,

The establishment of a voluntary, community-driven code of ethics would allow podcasters to self-regulate while retaining their creative independence. It could also provide a platform for education, dialogue, and reflection on ethical challenges specific to South African society. Ultimately, such a framework would elevate the professionalism of podcasting in the country and ensure it contributes positively to public discourse.

This is in conjunction with the study by Tennant (2023), which found that podcasters in New Zealand self-regulated their content by applying journalistic principles to the production and distribution of their content. That is, they considered ethical and editorial quandaries as they arose during the production process, and this consideration was bound up with a sense of the needs and disposition of their podcast audience.

Radio Presenter 5 said, *“Podcasts need ethical codes because they do not respect people’s privacy, especially when reporting issues that are fragile to other people. Podcasts cross the line many times and create a rift in society.”* Generally, the radio presenters collectively highlight the need for a tailored regulatory framework that addresses the unique characteristics of podcasting while ensuring ethical content creation and accountability. They emphasise that, as podcasts gain influence and play a significant role in shaping public discourse, there must be mechanisms in place to prevent harmful practices such as misinformation, defamation, cyberbullying, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. The presenters agree that such a framework should balance the inherent freedom of expression and creative autonomy that podcasts offer while also protecting the audience from potential harm and promoting responsible content creation.

5.5.4 Leveraging Established Media Regulatory Frameworks to Inform Ethical Podcasting Standards

A majority of the radio presenters collectively expressed the view that existing broadcast media regulatory bodies can be extended to cover the podcasting space by leveraging their existing frameworks to guide the ethical regulation of this new medium. They saw podcasting as a natural evolution within the broadcasting landscape and argue that organisations such as the BCCSA and ICASA are well-positioned to provide guidelines and enforce standards. They expressed the following sentiments:

Podcasting, as a new form of broadcast media, can benefit from the existing regulatory frameworks and bodies already established in the broadcasting space. This approach would not require creating an entirely new regulatory structure but rather adapting the current

guidelines to suit the unique characteristics of podcasts
(Radio Presenter 1).

Similarly, Radio Presenter 2 suggested that *“introducing a podcast broadcasting license, alongside the application of broadcast rules, could help structure the podcasting space ethically and professionally and ensure that creators are accountable for their content”*. Radio Presenter 3 highlighted the relevance of regulatory principles upheld by traditional media bodies such as the BCCSA and even global organisations like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). These principles—fairness, accuracy, impartiality, and the avoidance of harm—are universally recognised standards that could be attuned to the podcasting medium.

Radio Presenter 4 echoed the foregoing sentiment by suggesting that *“media regulatory bodies could provide specific guidelines on content creation, advertising, and complaint resolution for podcasts. They propose that ICASA could issue licenses for podcast broadcasters, thus bringing them under the purview of existing media regulations. This would align podcasts with other forms of broadcast media, ensuring consistency in ethical standards and accountability”*. Radio Presenter 5 added:

I think other bodies such as the Film and Publication Board (FPB) could contribute valuable insights into how podcasting should be regulated ethically. These organisations have experience in media ethics and content classification, and they could help develop a framework for podcasting that ensures fairness, accuracy, and accountability. They could also provide guidelines on issues like the treatment of minors, privacy, and defamation, while also addressing the growing concerns around hate speech and disinformation.

Therefore, the radio presenters advocated integrating podcasting into the existing regulatory frameworks governing traditional media in South Africa. They believed that by adopting the principles and practices of bodies such as the BCCSA, ICASA, and FPB, podcasting can maintain its creative freedom while addressing ethical concerns and protecting audiences from harm. This technique would enable podcasts to evolve as a credible and responsible medium within the broader media landscape.

5.5.5 Balancing the Freedom of Expression with the Responsibility to Avoid Harm

The radio presenters agreed that while freedom of expression is a fundamental right, it is not absolute and must be exercised with care to avoid causing harm to individuals and society. They advocated a balance between freedom and ethical responsibility, with varying opinions on the mechanisms to achieve this equilibrium. They expressed the following opinions:

Every right comes with a responsibility. There are also limitations to freedom of expression and that cannot be a corner through which people use the Freedom of expression of course harm to the public. It is podcasters' responsibility to make sure that they practice their rights responsibly and take necessary training in which they can be able to learn and practice on media ethics so that they do not cause harm to their audience and the public (Radio Presenter 1).

Radio Presenter 2 was of the view that: *“Podcasts cannot balance freedom of expression without a regulatory body. They need a body to pull them in line and ensure they follow strict guidelines.”* On the other hand, Radio Presenter 3 said:

I think balancing freedom of expression with responsibility in South African podcasts could be achieved through a combination of self-regulation, audience engagement, and the development of ethical guidelines. Podcasters should be aware of the potential harm their words can cause, especially given South Africa's complex social issues, such as inequality, racism, and gender-based violence.

Radio Presenter 4 added: *“I think the only way to balance freedom of expression with the responsibility to avoid harm is through placing podcasts under codes of BCCSA and ICASA”.* Radio Presenter 5 believed that:

South African podcasts can better balance the freedom of expression with the responsibility to avoid harm by adopting a framework rooted in ethical broadcasting principles and cultural sensitivity. First, radio presenters suggest that podcasters must recognise that freedom of expression is not absolute; it comes with the obligation to respect others' dignity and avoid perpetuating harm, especially in a diverse society like South Africa. I think one way to achieve this balance is by establishing

internal editorial guidelines. These guidelines should include standards for respectful language, the verification of information, and the fair representation of all communities, particularly marginalised groups. For example, when discussing controversial topics, podcasters can provide balanced perspectives by inviting informed guests or experts to contribute to the conversation.

The analysis shows a common consensus that freedom of expression in podcasting must be balanced with the responsibility to avoid harm. However, the proposed mechanisms for achieving this balance are inconsistent. Some participants argue for external regulation by bodies such as ICASA and BCCSA, while others suggest self-regulation through ethical training and internal guidelines. This split depicts a wider debate in media ethics about the effectiveness of external regulation versus industry-led accountability. A study by Berg (2021) supports this by noting that freedom of expression is the primary motivator for individuals to venture into podcasting. However, Berg emphasises that such freedom must be balanced with the responsibility to avoid causing harm. This means that podcasters have to ensure that their content does not perpetuate misinformation, promote hate speech, or contribute to societal divisions. The participants in this study suggest the following guidelines to ensure balancing freedom of expression with the responsibility to avoid harm:

- **Responsibility and Ethical Awareness**

Radio Presenter 1 emphasised the inherent responsibility that accompanies the right to freedom of expression. They highlighted that podcasters must practice their rights conscientiously by undergoing training on media ethics. This approach aims to ensure that content creation does not harm audiences, especially in a society where unregulated speech can have significant consequences. The presenter believed that ethical education and awareness are vital for promoting responsible podcasting practices, suggesting that ethical training should be an integral part of content creation in this medium.

- **The Role of Regulatory Bodies**

Radio Presenters 2 and 5 argued for the necessity of external regulation to balance freedom of expression and responsibility. They contended that without a formal

regulatory body, podcasts risk crossing ethical boundaries and this leads to harmful consequences. They saw organisations such as the BCCSA and ICASA as crucial in providing oversight and enforcing strict guidelines. According to Presenters 2 and 5, regulatory oversight would establish a framework that holds podcasters accountable and aligns them with broader media standards.

- **Self-Regulation and Ethical Guidelines**

According to Cohen-Almagor (2017), the transactional nature of the World Wide Web makes regulation very difficult if not impossible. Against the backdrop, Radio Presenter 3 proposed a middle ground suggesting a combination of self-regulation, audience engagement, and ethical guidelines as a way to balance freedom and responsibility. They emphasised the importance of podcasters being aware of the societal impact of their content. Furthermore, issues such as inequality, racism, and gender-based violence require careful handling, and ethical self-regulation could help podcasters navigate these sensitive topics responsibly. This perspective recognises the potential of self-regulation to maintain creative freedom while mitigating harm through proactive measures.

- **Ethical Broadcasting Frameworks**

Radio Presenter 4 advocated placing podcasts under existing regulatory frameworks, such as those governed by the BCCSA and ICASA. They believed that aligning podcasts with traditional broadcasting standards would ensure adherence to ethical principles, such as fairness, accuracy, and respect for human dignity. This approach shows the need for podcasts to adopt cultural sensitivity and ethical broadcasting principles to safeguard against harm in a diverse society.

- **The Way Forward**

Radio Presenter 3 further elaborated on how podcasters can balance freedom of expression with responsibility by adopting internal editorial guidelines. These guidelines could cover respectful language, fact-checking, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives, ensuring that podcast content is not only engaging but also ethically sound.

5.5.6 Recommendations for the Ethical Guidelines for South African Podcasts

Radio presenters were asked to recommend the ethical guidelines for South African podcasts. Their recommendations and perspectives collectively underlined the urgent need for South African podcasters to adopt media ethics and implement structured guidelines to ensure responsible and credible content creation. They expressed the following views:

Radio Presenter 1:

The South African podcasters need a bit of exposure and training into Media ethics so that they may have knowledge and understanding of universal ethical issues such as accuracy through deception accountability and many other universal ethical standards. When one has knowledge and understanding of the universal ethical issues and makes sure that they are addressed within their podcasts, it is only then that their podcasts would adhere to ethical principles and standards.

Radio Presenter 2 focused on specific ethical behaviour, *“I recommend truthful broadcasting, the use of proper language without vulgar, respect of people’s privacy and empathy”*. Expanding on these guidelines and principles, Radio Presenter 3 suggested a broader set of guidelines including *“fact-checking, respect for privacy, avoiding hate speech, ensuring inclusivity, and handling sensitive topics with care (e.g., mental health)”*. Radio Presenter 4 elaborated on the operational aspects of ethical podcasting thus:

I have a few guidelines that we already abide by here at our station. The first one is adherence to truthfulness and accuracy. I believe that Podcasters should commit to verifying information before presenting it as fact. This could involve fact-checking claims, especially those involving public figures or sensitive issues such as health, gender identity, and cultural practices. Clear disclaimers should also accompany discussions of opinions or unverified claims to prevent misinformation. The second guideline I recommend is respect for privacy. I think podcasters must protect the privacy of individuals and avoid sharing personal details or intimate information without explicit consent. The third one is the use of inclusive language, podcasters should refrain from using derogatory terms that could harm

marginalised communities, such as the LGBTQ+ community or those from specific cultural backgrounds. The last guideline I recommend is harm avoidance. We all know that some podcasters have radio background and they know the importance of avoiding harm so harm avoidance must be adhered to all the time.

Radio Presenter 5 tied ethical adherence to the long-term success and credibility of podcasts. They stressed that: *“upholding ethics and standards in podcasting is essential for building a reputable and successful show. By ensuring accuracy, respecting privacy, avoiding plagiarism, and promoting transparency, you can create a trustworthy and credible podcast”*. Therefore, the radio presenters collectively propose a well-rounded framework for ethical podcasting, combining foundational training with actionable guidelines. Their recommendations addressed both the internal processes of podcast creation—such as fact-checking and privacy protection—and broader societal responsibilities, such as inclusivity, harm reduction, and audience engagement.

5.5.7 The Role of Audience Feedback and Engagement

When asked about the role that the audience could play in holding podcasters accountable, the radio presenters unanimously agreed that audience engagement can be a mechanism for ensuring ethical podcasting practices. They believed that the audience is not merely a passive consumer of content but an active participant who can influence the ethical direction of podcasts through feedback and constructive criticism.

Radio Presenter 1 suggested that *“audience feedback can be Central to ethical podcasting. We live in a world now where we are in a symmetrical communication setting and frameworks that include orients cannot just be done in a vacuum but have to concern the audience in the process of making sure that their frameworks can get ethical podcasting”*. The presenters stressed that ethical podcasting cannot be achieved in isolation but requires the inclusion of the audience in shaping content standards. This sentiment suggested the necessity of creating systems that allow audiences to voice their opinions and influence the ethical orientation of podcasts. Radio Presenter 2 added: *“As a fan of podcasts, I think audience feedback is crucial in holding podcasters accountable for their content because they sometimes say*

offensive things. Social media and comments sections are great platforms for listeners to challenge problematic views and encourage more thoughtful discussion”.

Radio Presenter 3 said: *“Encouraging listener feedback helps create a sense of community. When listeners feel that their voices are heard and valued, they are more likely to become loyal followers who actively participate in discussions and share your podcast with others and Interactive elements like Q&A sessions, polls, and shout-outs can make your podcast more engaging”.* A key perspective from Presenter 3’s analysis was the idea that active audience involvement can strengthen the relationship between podcasters and audiences. This participatory approach can ensure that the audiences are not just passive receivers of content but an integral part of the podcasting ecosystem. Moreover, Presenter 3 highlighted that audience participation can inherently empower the audiences to hold podcasters accountable. The study conducted by Jacobson (2021) shows that through accessible channels of communication, audiences can voice concerns provide constructive feedback and prompt podcasters to reflect on and address ethical missteps. This feedback mechanism can set out a form of self-regulation and allow podcasts to maintain a balance between creative freedom and ethical responsibility.

Radio Presenter 4 added that, *“audience feedback and engagement can play an important role in upholding ethical standards in podcasting. The audience can act as a moral compass for podcasters by providing real-time insight into how their content is perceived and whether it aligns with societal expectations and ethical norms. When listeners voice concerns about harmful or insensitive remarks, it can prompt podcasters to reflect, correct, or clarify their statements, thereby fostering accountability”.* Radio Presenter 4’s views suggested that podcasters who actively engage with audience feedback are more likely to build trust and credibility, as they demonstrate a commitment to addressing ethical concerns. In essence, Radio Presenter 4’s perspective emphasised the audience’s pivotal role in shaping ethical content in podcasting.

Radio Presenter 5 believed that, *“Reporting on issues of value rather than gossip. The audience has the role of advice podcasts to present issues that benefit them”.* Radio Presenter 5 brought a unique dimension to the discussion by pointing out the audience’s potential to shape the thematic direction and substantive focus of podcasts.

The audience can proactively encourage podcasters to prioritise discussions that hold societal value rather than merely acting as critics of problematic content.

5.5.8 The Role of Podcasts Platforms in Promoting Ethical Standards

The radio presenters were asked to propose ways in which podcast platforms, such as YouTube, could support ethical practices among South African podcasters. A recurring theme in their responses was the need for collaboration between these platforms and regulatory bodies to enforce ethical guidelines and principles.

Radio Presenter 4 suggested that podcast platforms should actively partner with local regulatory authorities, stating, *“Podcast platforms can partner with the BCCSA and regulate all podcasts under ICASA.”* This view shows the importance of aligning platform policies with existing media oversight frameworks to ensure accountability.

Radio Presenter 1 emphasised the global nature of platforms such as YouTube and Spotify, which operate across jurisdictions with varying legal requirements. They proposed a localised approach: *“YouTube and other broadcasting platforms such as Spotify are global establishments that exist in different countries where there are different legislations. I think it would be important for these platforms to appoint teams in each country to popularise the need for reporting if and when a platform user is acting against the law.”*

Radio Presenter 3 envisioned a collaborative evolution of ethical standards involving multiple stakeholders: *“In the next few years, we may see a clearer framework emerge, potentially driven by collaborations between podcasters, regulatory bodies, and civil society groups. These guidelines could evolve in response to emerging issues, such as the spread of misinformation or the rise of online harassment. Podcasters will likely face increasing pressure to maintain ethical standards as their platforms grow in influence, and the public demand for accountability will push for more robust regulations.”* Practical enforcement mechanisms were highlighted by Radio Presenter 2, who suggested punitive measures for guideline violations: *“By creating guidelines that will be followed and making sure that if those guidelines are crossed, they block one’s account until they follow the right guidelines.”*

Radio Presenter 5 stressed the importance of culturally sensitive community guidelines and robust content moderation. They proposed:

Platforms should have clear community guidelines with cultural sensitivity that outline expectations around ethical behaviour, including issues like hate speech, misinformation, and defamation. I also think that content moderation and reporting mechanisms can help YouTube enhance content moderation by implementing more robust reporting and review systems that allow listeners to flag content violating ethical standards, such as discriminatory remarks and harmful misinformation. Also, I think partnering with local regulatory bodies like the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) could help align platform policies with national media regulations.

5.5.9 The Future of Ethical Guidelines in the South African Podcasting Landscape

A majority of the presenters believed that the podcasting space in South Africa will inevitably be regulated in the future, compelling podcasters to adhere to ethical standards. Their perspectives reflect a shift toward greater accountability and structure within the industry. Radio Presenter 1 emphasised the growing academic interest in media ethics and the need for regulation in the podcasting space, stating, “*Given that the ethical issues within podcasts are an area of interest within academic discourses, especially in the media ethics space, it is just about time that there may be recommendations into regulating the podcasting space.*” This perspective highlighted the role of scholarly discourse in driving regulatory advancements.

Radio Presenter 2 said: “*I envision them being more like our ICASA and BCCSA where harmful portrayals are reported to relevant offices. These regulatory bodies for podcasts must also allow podcasters to have licenses for their shows*”. Education and training in media ethics, according to Radio Presenter 3, could be instrumental in shaping the future of podcasting in South Africa. They proposed that as the industry grows, ethical training should be prioritised to address issues such as defamation, sensitive portrayals, and public impact. They stated, “*Media ethics training could help creators understand the ethical implications of their content, especially in a diverse and complex society like South Africa.*” Such training, delivered through universities,

media organisations, or workshops, could foster a more informed and responsible podcasting culture.

Radio Presenter 4 predicted significant changes in the podcasting space as it becomes regulated. They asserted that regulation is achievable given the medium's rapid growth and increasing popularity, stating, *"I believe the podcasting space will definitely change and be regulated, as it has grown and many people are much more into it than actual TV news for updates."* Radio Presenter 5 envisioned a future where ethical guidelines would be formalised, either through self-regulation by creators or through industry-wide frameworks. They proposed standards that emphasised *"truthfulness, fairness, and respect for diversity,"* underscoring the need for ethical principles that foster inclusivity and credibility within the podcasting industry.

5.4.10 Emerging Ethical Considerations in the Growing South African Podcasts

The radio presenters were asked about the ethical considerations that will become increasingly important as the South African podcasting industry grows. The following opinions were expressed by the radio presenters:

Well, given that the ethical issues within podcasts are an area of Interest within academic discourses especially in the media ethics space, it is just about time that they may be recommendations into regulating the podcasting space (Radio Presenter 1).

I envision them being more like our ICASA and BCCSA where harmful portrayals are reported to relevant offices. These regulatory bodies for podcasts must also allow podcasters to have licenses for their shows (Radio Presenter 2).

I believe podcasting space will definitely change and be regulated, I believe we can archive that as it has grown and many people are much more into it than actual TV news for updates (Radio Presenter 3).

I envision a future where ethical guidelines become more formalised, either through self-regulation by podcast creators or through industry-wide frameworks that set standards for truthfulness, fairness, and respect for diversity (Radio Presenter 4).

- **Academic and Regulatory Focus**

Radio Presenter 1 framed the issue within the comprehensive context of academic discourse, particularly in media ethics, demonstrating that ethical concerns in podcasting are gaining scholarly attention. Their statement suggested an anticipation of academic recommendations leading to actionable regulatory measures. This perspective tied the evolution of podcasting ethics to ongoing scholarly contributions, positioning academia as a potential catalyst for regulatory development.

- **Institutional Regulation and Licensing**

Radio Presenter 2 envisioned a structured regulatory framework for podcasts comparable to traditional media bodies such as ICASA and BCCSA. They proposed frameworks for addressing harmful portrayals and suggested licensing as a potential solution. This viewpoint highlighted the importance of institutional oversight to formalise accountability within the podcasting space. Introducing a licensing system could serve as a means to monitor content creators and ensure adherence to ethical and professional standards.

- **Shifting Media Landscape**

Radio Presenter 3 focused on the transformative nature of podcasting and predicted that its rapid growth and increasing popularity would necessitate regulatory changes. They noted that podcasts are becoming a preferred medium for news and information, potentially surpassing traditional media outlets such as television, as Newman and Gallo (2019) noted. This observation pointed to the urgency of developing ethical guidelines to manage the influence of podcasts as a primary source of information in South Africa.

- **Self-Regulation and Industry Standards**

Radio Presenter 4 advocated formalised ethical guidelines, whether through self-regulation by creators or industry-wide standards. They accentuated the need for principles such as truthfulness, fairness, and respect for diversity. This balanced approach recognised the creative freedom inherent in podcasting while illustrating the responsibility of podcasters to uphold ethical standards that reflect societal values. It

also suggested that collaboration among creators and stakeholders could lead to a sustainable regulatory model.

5.5.11 The Role of Education and Training in Enhancing Media Ethics for South African Podcasting Industry

Radio presenters were asked what role education and training on media ethics could play in shaping the future of South African podcasting. They expressed the following opinions:

I think education and training in media ethics is Central to the development of ethical podcasting. At the centre of unethical podcasting, is illiteracy and not training in the space of Media. There are several podcasts that are hosted by qualified Media practitioners who adhere to media ethics as opposed to podcasts that are hosted by individuals who have no educational background in media ethics (Radio Presenter 1).

Those who have studied media ethics should be employed to help podcasters regulate ethics and acquire licenses while making sure they follow the guidelines of the streaming licenses (Radio Presenter 2).

Training in media ethics is crucial for podcasters to understand their responsibilities and avoid harmful content. Education would ensure more informed, responsible podcasting in South Africa (Radio Presenter 3).

I think Media ethics education can provide podcasters with a strong foundation in key principles such as fairness, accuracy, respect for privacy, and the avoidance of harm (Radio Presenter 4).

- **Addressing the Gap in Media Literacy**

Radio Presenter 1 showcased the disparity between podcasts hosted by qualified media practitioners and those created by individuals without formal training in media ethics. They attributed unethical podcasting practices to a lack of education and training, suggesting that media literacy is essential for encouraging responsible content creation. This observation pointed to a comprehensive structural issue within the podcasting industry, where the absence of formalised training often leads to ethical

lapses.

- **Promoting Responsibility through Education**

Radio Presenter 3 illustrated the importance of education in developing informed and responsible podcasting. They argued that training in media ethics would help podcasters understand their responsibilities and minimise the risk of harmful content. This perspective aligned with the notion that knowledge is a foundational tool for addressing ethical dilemmas and ensuring accountability in content creation.

- **Leveraging Expertise in Media Ethics**

Radio Presenter 2 pointed out the potential for employing individuals trained in media ethics to support podcasters. Their suggestion to involve trained professionals in regulating ethics, issuing licenses, and enforcing guidelines highlighted a practical pathway for embedding ethical principles into podcasting practices. This view recognised the expertise required to maintain ethical standards and suggested that external oversight could complement podcasters' efforts to adhere to guidelines.

- **Foundations of Ethical Practice**

Radio Presenter 4 elaborated on the principles that media ethics education could instil in podcasters, such as fairness, accuracy, respect for privacy, and avoiding harm. This detailed perspective suggested that ethical training would address immediate concerns and provide a robust decision-making framework aligned with societal and professional standards.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The 'media ethics theme' in the *Podcast and Chill with MacG* explored the hosts' adherence to journalistic principles such as privacy, harm avoidance, truthfulness and inclusivity. The analysis revealed frequent breaches of ethical standards, particularly through invasive discussions of individuals' private lives without their consent, derogatory remarks about marginalised groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, and misogynistic objectification of women. Furthermore, sensationalism and unverified claims, often presented as entertainment, intensified reputational damage and reinforced harmful stereotypes. Episodes discussing intimate relationships, gender

identity, and speculative gossip highlighted the tension between the podcast's candid style and the ethical responsibility to minimise harm and respect dignity. This analysis highlighted the far-reaching societal implications of media practices and the urgent need for accountability on unregulated platforms.

Building on the ethical considerations in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, the impact of podcasts in South Africa highlights their potential as influential platforms for civic engagement, cultural preservation, and societal reflection. The podcast has played a critical role in facilitating political discourse by hosting prominent figures such as Julius Malema and Professor J.J. Tabane, allowing candid discussions on racial dynamics, economic inequalities, and systemic challenges. It also promoted societal awareness by unpacking issues such as corruption and energy crises, resonating strongly with audiences seeking refined insights into national problems. In addition, the podcast's celebration of indigenous languages exemplifies its contribution to cultural preservation, featuring multilingual dialogues and integrating greetings and phrases in Tshivenda, isiZulu, and other languages.

As a continuation of the theme on the impact of podcasts in South Africa, the importance of enhancing ethical standards in podcasting emerged as a crucial focus for the podcasts' sustainable growth. Meanwhile, interviews with radio presenters demonstrated widespread concerns about the lack of regulation, with *Podcast and Chill with MacG* exemplifying both the platform's potential and its pitfalls. Respectively, the radio presenters noted that while the podcasts demonstrate occasional adherence to accuracy through fact-checking, they often neglect broader ethical principles, such as respect for privacy and inclusivity. Thus, the unregulated nature of podcasting creates opportunities for misinformation, defamation, and harm. Proposals for addressing these challenges included establishing suited ethical guidelines, leveraging existing regulatory frameworks (such as ICASA and BCCSA), promoting self-regulation, and incorporating media ethics training for creators. These measures aim to balance creative freedom with accountability and ensure that South African podcasts positively contribute to public discourse while upholding societal values.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 provided a comprehensive interpretation and thematic analysis of the data by detailing the study's findings. It highlighted the importance of media ethics in broadcasting, focusing on how these principles are applied, upheld, or undermined in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. The chapter also explored the broader impact of podcasts in South Africa and incorporated ethical recommendations from professional radio presenters. The subsequent chapter summarises the findings, draws conclusions, and provides the recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This previous chapter presented a detailed qualitative content analysis on *Podcast and Chill with MacG* and perspectives of radio presenters on South African podcasts' ethical standards. Following the analysis, the summary of the findings is hereby discussed with reference to the aim and objectives of the study. This study was conducted to explore the ethical standards in South African podcasts and formulate ethical recommendations. This chapter also presents the conclusion, which is derived from the study findings, followed by the recommendations and direction for future research.

6.2 RE-STATEMENT OF THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

6.2.1 Aim of the study

This study aimed to explore the ethical standards in South African podcasts. This was achieved through an intense analysis of *Podcast and Chill with MacG* episodes, which proved beyond doubt that South African podcasts, especially *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, do not adhere to broadcasting media ethics. This highlights a broader challenge within the South African podcasting landscape regarding adherence to media ethics.

6.2.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- examine the ethical standards upheld by the South African podcasters.
- analyse the ways South African podcasters interpret and apply media ethics.
- formulate the recommendations for enhancing ethical standards in South African podcasts.

6.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA ETHICS IN BROADCASTING

This section of the chapter presents the importance of media ethics in broadcasting, including adherence to media ethics in podcasting, handling of controversial topics, respect for marginalised groups, and the cultural standards of *ubuntu*.

6.3.1 Adherence to Media Ethics in Podcasting

Adherence to media ethics is a cornerstone of responsible broadcasting and it ensures that content is engaging, respectful and fair (Plaisance, 2013). *Podcast and Chill with MacG* depicted significant lapses in this regard. A recurring issue was the lack of respect for privacy and confidentiality involving public figures. This is evident in Episode 309, where intimate details about Amanda Du Pont were divulged without her consent. Furthermore, Jukes (2017) noted that sensationalising personal information for entertainment undermines journalistic integrity by prioritising shock value over individuals' well-being. These violations draw attention to the ethical challenges posed by unregulated media platforms.

Another crucial ethical principle that is overlooked in *Podcast and Chill* is harm avoidance. According to Johannesen, Valde and Whedbee (2008), ethical broadcasting involves considering the potential consequences of discussions on individuals and their well-being. Episodes of the podcast frequently showcase insensitivity when addressing contentious topics such as mental health, gender identity, and celebrity controversies. The casual tone and unfiltered format amplify the risk of harm, with the podcast neglecting the broader implications of its content on societal perceptions and the individuals involved. Therefore, the consistent prioritisation of entertainment over ethical responsibility underscores the pressing need for adherence to media ethics in podcasting.

Likewise, adherence to media ethics is not just a framework for responsible content creation but also a means to build credibility and trust with audiences. South African podcasters should align their content with ethical principles that could elevate their role as thought leaders in South African media. Consequently, this would involve implementing self-regulation practices such as editorial reviews and ethical training for the hosts to ensure discussions respect privacy, minimise harm, and promote inclusivity. Adherence to media ethics is important for promoting a media landscape

that values integrity and respects the diverse fabric of society as podcasts continue to shape public opinion (Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

6.3.2 Handling of Controversial Topics

The analysis of *Podcast and Chill with MacG* in Theme 1 highlighted significant ethical challenges in the handling of controversial topics. The podcast leverages sensitive subjects such as personal relationships, gender identity, and cultural beliefs to fuel sensationalism and entertainment. For instance, in Episode 309, the discussion of Molemo “Jub Jub” Maarohanye’s relationship with Amanda Du Pont openly delved into private and intimate details without her consent. This approach disregarded ethical principles such as respect for privacy and confidentiality. Similarly, controversial discussions surrounding LGBTQ+ issues, as seen in Episodes 220 and 305, illustrate a lack of sensitivity and inclusivity.

Hosts frequently employed derogatory language, reinforced stereotypes, and mocked gender identities for comedic effect. Furthermore, the podcast’s approach to gender dynamics reflects misogynistic undertones. This is depicted in episode 242 where women are objectified during a game where hosts evaluate their sexual desirability. Furthermore, discussions about prominent women, such as Minnie Dlamini in Episode 350, included unfounded and demeaning accusations, which compounded issues of defamation and reputational harm.

The podcast’s handling of controversial topics sometimes prioritises entertainment value over responsible journalism. By framing sensitive subjects in a manner that provokes shock and amusement, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* misses opportunities to create meaningful discourse and risks alienating segments of its audience. Hess (2009) argues that ethical handling of controversial topics requires balancing openness with respect and promoting informed and inclusive discussions while avoiding harm to individuals and communities.

6.3.3 Respect for Marginalised Groups

A significant ethical challenge highlighted in *Podcast and Chill with MacG* is the lack of respect for marginalised groups, which manifests in the podcast’s language and approach to sensitive topics. Episodes such as 220 and 305 illuminate the podcast’s

failure to address issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation with the necessary sensitivity and understanding. In these episodes, the hosts use derogatory language and perpetuate harmful stereotypes about the LGBTQ+ community, such as mocking transgender identities and misrepresenting gender transitions. Furthermore, remarks such as referring to a transgender woman as “a woman with a d*ck” misgender individuals and reduce their identities to stigmatising terms.

These incidents show a disregard for the dignity and struggles of marginalised groups while reinforcing societal biases and contributing to their marginalisation. The casual humour employed downplays serious issues and misses an opportunity to promote meaningful dialogue that can educate audiences about diversity and inclusion. Moreover, media ethics emphasise that platforms with significant influence must exercise care to avoid perpetuating harm to vulnerable populations. Instead of fostering constructive conversations, the podcast reduces significant matters to comedic fodder.

According to Sevilla Requena (2024), media representations that ridicule gender identity contribute to the dehumanisation of transgender individuals, perpetuating stigma and exacerbating societal exclusion. This aligns with Ward and Wasserman’s (2015) findings, which emphasise that respectful and inclusive media practices are vital for shaping perceptions and attitudes toward marginalised groups. Moreover, the podcast’s discussions often rely on sensationalism, which exacerbates harm. Episode 305, for instance, includes derogatory comments about the LGBTQ+ acronym and perpetuates misconceptions about gender and sexuality. This reflects a lack of commitment to truthfulness and inclusivity—key tenets of ethical media practice (Elliott & Spence, 2017). Failure to challenge stereotypes through accurate and empathetic portrayals signals a missed opportunity for the podcast to contribute positively to public understanding of LGBTQ+ issues.

This lack of respect extends beyond LGBTQ+ individuals to broader marginalised communities. In episodes discussing gender-based issues, such as the objectification of women in Episode 242, the podcast engages in casual misogyny. The podcast perpetuates patriarchal narratives that degrade women framing women’s worth in terms of their sexual history or appearance, as seen in comments about public figures such as Boity and Minnie Dlamini. To address these ethical concerns, platforms such

as *Podcast and Chill* must adopt a more inclusive and sensitive approach to content creation. Incorporating media ethics training for hosts and adhering to ethical guidelines could ensure that marginalised groups are portrayed with dignity and accuracy. Such efforts would align with principles outlined by Plaisance (2013), who argues that media ethics are essential for minimising harm and encouraging equitable representation.

6.3.5 The Cultural Standards of Ubuntu

According to Metz (2015), *Ubuntu* is a Southern African philosophical concept rooted in the Nguni Bantu languages which emphasises communal values, interdependence, and shared humanity. Often summarised as “*I am because we are*”, *ubuntu* reflects the belief that an individual’s well-being is intrinsically tied to the well-being of the community fostering a sense of collective responsibility, mutual respect, and empathy (Ndlovu & Sibanda, 2020). Thus, *ubuntu* encourages mutual respect and valuing every individual’s contribution. Media upholding this ethos provides platforms for diverse opinions for marginalised groups and ensures representation and equity in the public sphere.

In addition, this philosophical framework stands in stark contrast to the recurring ethical lapses identified in *Podcast and Chill with MacG* within Theme 1. *Ubuntu* advocates preserving human dignity and promoting mutual respect, yet the podcast frequently engages in discussions that undermine these principles, especially concerning respect for privacy, harm avoidance, and defamation. For example, the discussion of private and intimate details about Amanda Du Pont and Kelly Khumalo in Episode 309 directly contradict the essence of *Ubuntu*. Exposing such personal matters without consent disregards the individual’s dignity and privacy thereby failing to uphold the respect and empathy foundational to this cultural standard.

In this context, the recurring failure to navigate sensitive topics responsibly reveals a gap between the podcast’s content and the cultural values it operates within. Incorporating *Ubuntu* into podcasting ethics would necessitate an approach grounded in empathy, mutual respect, and the avoidance of harm (Ndlovu & Sibanda, 2020). This alignment could transform the podcasting landscape into a medium that entertains and enriches society by promoting cultural awareness and ethical

accountability. Ultimately, bridging this gap would promote a media environment more reflective of South Africa's values of unity and humanity.

6.4 RADIO PRESENTERS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING ETHICAL STANDARDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTS

6.4.1 The Current Ethical Challenges in South African Podcasting

The study highlighted the significant ethical challenges in *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. Issues such as defamation, misinformation, breaches of privacy, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes were identified as prevalent. These challenges stem from the lack of regulatory oversight, which allows podcasts to operate with relative freedom compared to traditional media (Tsumele, 2021). For instance, some episodes feature unverified claims and insensitive discussions on topics such as race, gender, and mental health. Moreover, Breaches of privacy represent a significant ethical concern in podcasting. Episodes of *Podcast and Chill with MacG* have been criticised for disclosing personal information without consent for sensationalist purposes. This violates privacy norms fundamental to media ethics (Yanisky-Ravid & Lahav, 2016). This is as a result of an unregulated media space that gives podcasters the freedom to prioritise engagement metrics over ethical considerations.

Misinformation is another critical challenge. According to Kotze and Loubser (2017), South Africa is a polarised socio-political climate. Therefore, the dissemination of unverified claims can exacerbate divisions and erode public trust in media platforms. For example, allegations made without evidence on *Podcast and Chill with MacG* have contributed to the spread of rumours, emphasising the importance of accountability mechanisms that ensure factual integrity in podcast content (Freeman & Vazquez Llorente, 2021). The unregulated nature of podcasts contributes significantly to these ethical lapses. Unlike traditional media, which is subject to oversight by regulatory bodies such as ICASA and BCCSA, podcasts operate in a digital space that lacks structured accountability (Motsaathebe, 2023). As highlighted by Dowling, Johnson, and Ekdale (2022), the absence of external checks creates an environment where ethical lapses can proliferate unchecked. This emphasises the urgency for a regulatory framework tailored to the podcasting medium.

6.4.2 The Need for Regulatory Framework

Radio presenters consistently highlighted the regulatory gaps in the South African podcasting industry, emphasising the absence of oversight compared to traditional media platforms governed by bodies such as ICASA and BCCSA. This lack of regulation has allowed unethical practices, such as hate speech, defamation, and cyberbullying, to proliferate unchecked (Tennant, 2023). As indicated by radio presenter 1, South African podcasts operate outside the boundaries of existing broadcasting norms, which prioritise fairness, transparency, and accountability. Adapting the frameworks of traditional media for the podcasting medium could bridge the accountability gap and align podcasts with established media ethics (Radio Presenter 1).

The unregulated nature of podcasts has been identified as a major contributor to the spread of harmful content (Govenden, 2009). In the digital space, creators have significant freedom to produce and distribute material, often without adhering to standards of impartiality or accuracy. Radio presenter 2 noted that regulatory mechanisms such as licensing and registration systems for podcasters could serve as accountability measures to ensure adherence to ethical practices.

Radio presenter 2 further argues that regulatory frameworks should not only address punitive measures, but also encourage educational initiatives. For example, guidelines on content moderation, respectful language, and privacy protection could be developed in collaboration with civil society and media experts (Elliott & Spence, 2017). These frameworks would help ensure that podcasting, as a growing medium, contributes positively to public discourse without infringing on creative freedoms. An important consideration is the balance between regulation and freedom of expression. Excessive control may stifle creativity, which is a defining feature of podcasting (Berg, 2021).

Examples from other countries demonstrate the value of regulatory measures tailored to digital media. In New Zealand, podcast creators apply journalistic principles to their content through self-regulation (Tennant, 2023). Similarly, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland has extended media oversight to include online content creators, setting

precedents that South Africa could adapt to its unique socio-political landscape (Kerr, 2021).

6.4.3 Audience as Ethical Stakeholders

The role of audience engagement emerged as a key sub-theme, with radio presenters emphasising that audiences are not passive consumers but active stakeholders who can assist in shaping ethical content. According to radio presenter 2, audiences can hold podcasters accountable by voicing concerns about harmful and insensitive content through social media feedback channels. This participatory model of accountability can promote a sense of community and encourage podcasters to reflect on the ethical implications of their discussions. In addition, radio presenter 4 concurs that audience-driven feedback could serve as a form of self-regulation and bridge the gap between creative freedom. However, reliance on audience feedback also has limitations. Not all listeners engage critically and constructively, and vocal minority opinions can sometimes skew content creation toward populism or sensationalism. Moreover, podcast audiences' critiques can reflect broader social biases complicating efforts to uphold universal ethical standards (Elliott & Spence, 2017). To mitigate these challenges, podcasters must balance audience input with ethical principles by ensuring that feedback is integrated thoughtfully and responsibly.

6.5 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section provides an analysis of the theoretical framework and the assumptions and assertions of the theories are evaluated in light of the research findings. As introduced in Chapter 1, there are two key theories in this study namely, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Media Policy Theory. The study's findings are derived from the research objectives.

6.5.1 The Assumptions of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory, proposed by Everett Rogers, provides a framework for understanding how new ideas, technologies, or practices are adopted within a society. The theory is grounded in key assumptions: innovations diffuse through a predictable process, the adoption rate varies among individuals and groups, and certain characteristics of the innovation influence its acceptance (Kaminski, 2011).

Applying these assumptions to the findings of this study reveals critical insights into how podcasting, as a relatively new medium in South Africa, has been adopted and integrated into media and cultural landscapes.

According to Kaminski (2011), one core assumption of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory is that the characteristics of the innovation—relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability—influence its adoption. The findings indicate that podcasting's relative advantage over traditional media, such as accessibility and freedom from regulatory constraints, has accelerated its adoption in South Africa. For instance, *Podcast and Chill with MacG* offer unfiltered and informal discussions that appeal to audiences disillusioned with conventional media's perceived limitations (Tsumele, 2021). However, this freedom also presents ethical challenges, such as misinformation and privacy breaches, as identified in the study. Compatibility with the digital habits of younger, tech-savvy audiences has further contributed to podcasting's popularity, highlighting its alignment with existing cultural and technological trends.

The DOI Theory further categorises adopters into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggard adopters (Woodside & Biemans, 2005). Accordingly, the findings of this study suggest that early adopters of podcasting in South Africa are predominantly young, urban, and digitally literate individuals seeking alternative content to traditional media. This demographic aligns with the early adopter profile, characterised by openness to new technologies and a desire for innovation (Rogers, 2003). Moreover, the role of audience engagement, emphasised in the study, reflects the participatory nature of early adopters who actively shape and influence the content they consume. This dynamic interaction between podcasters and their audience enhances the medium's diffusion by promoting a sense of community and co-creation.

Moreover, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory emphasises the importance of communication channels in spreading innovations (Kaminski, 2006). In this study, platforms such as YouTube have been instrumental in disseminating podcast content. This demonstrates the role of digital channels in facilitating rapid diffusion. Viswanathan, Malthouse, Maslowska, Hoornaert and Van den Poel (2018) note that social media platforms also act as secondary communication channels that amplify reach through audience interaction, episode sharing, and engagement with

controversial content. However, the findings reveal that while these channels enhance diffusion, they also magnify ethical concerns, such as the spread of misinformation and sensationalism, which can hinder the medium's credibility.

The adoption of podcasting in South Africa also aligns with the theory's assumption that social systems and cultural contexts influence diffusion. Likewise, the findings of this study highlight how podcasts address societal issues, such as race, gender, and politics by providing a platform for long-format discourse. This cultural resonance facilitates adoption within social systems that value alternative narratives and open dialogue. However, the study also revealed that the lack of regulatory oversight within South Africa's podcasting landscape presents challenges, as unethical practices can undermine trust and slow adoption among more sceptical audiences.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory also posits that the rate of adoption depends on how well the innovation overcomes barriers and meets the needs of potential adopters (Woodside & Biemans, 2005). While podcasting has achieved rapid growth in South Africa, ethical challenges identified in the study, such as privacy breaches and defamation, could impede long-term adoption. Addressing these concerns through ethical training and regulatory frameworks could sustain the medium's growth and enhance its societal impact.

6.5.2 The Assumptions of the Media Policy Theory

Media policy theory focuses on how media systems are structured and regulated within society with an emphasis on the role of policies in shaping media practices, content, and societal impacts. The theory assumes that media policies are essential for establishing guidelines that ensure ethical standards, fairness, and accountability in media production and consumption (Freedman, 2008). The Media Policy Theory's assumptions provide a framework for understanding the ethical challenges faced by podcasts, particularly in South Africa's unregulated podcasting environment.

One key assumption of Media Policy Theory is that regulation and oversight are necessary to maintain ethical standards and accountability within the media landscape. As discussed by the radio presenters, the absence of formal regulations for podcasts in South Africa has led to widespread ethical lapses such as

misinformation, defamation, privacy violations, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. The lack of a regulatory body, such as ICASA or BCCSA, results in podcasts operating without the oversight that traditional media outlets are subjected to allowing for the unchecked spread of controversial and damaging content. This gap in regulation shows the need for policies that could govern podcasting ensuring that content adheres to ethical journalism principles such as respect for privacy, truthfulness, defamation and harm avoidance.

Another assumption of Media Policy Theory is that media policies should reflect the needs of the public and serve the broader societal good, promoting diversity, inclusion, and the protection of vulnerable groups. In *Podcast and Chill with MacG*, instances of derogatory remarks about the LGBTQ+ community and objectification of women exemplify the failure to uphold inclusivity and respect for diverse audiences. Media Policy Theory argues that policies must be designed to safeguard against harmful practices and ensure that media content does not perpetuate discrimination or misinformation. The findings of this study suggest that a lack of formal policy oversight contributes to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and exclusionary content, highlighting the need for policies that promote cultural sensitivity and ethical standards in podcasts.

Furthermore, media policy theory asserts that media regulation should be adaptable to the evolving nature of media technologies and platforms. The study's findings show the increasing influence of podcasts in South Africa, particularly in shaping political discourse and public opinion. Podcasts, as informal and rapidly evolving media platforms, do not conform to traditional media models, necessitating the development of new regulatory frameworks that consider their unique characteristics. As noted by radio presenters, existing media policies are ill-equipped to address the ethical complexities of podcasting. This gap in regulation points to the need for policy innovation that can keep pace with technological advancements in media and ensure that emerging platforms such as podcasts are subject to the same ethical standards as traditional media.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study has explored the ethical standards and social impact of South African podcasts with a particular focus on *Podcast and Chill with MacG*. Through a thematic analysis, the research revealed significant ethical lapses, including defamation, misinformation, and invasion of privacy, highlighting the need for a structured ethical framework in the podcasting landscape. While podcasts are a powerful platform for unfiltered discourse, cultural preservation and audience engagement, these benefits are overshadowed by a lack of regulatory oversight and ethical standards.

Recommendations for improving ethical standards include integrating podcasts into the existing legal framework, encouraging self-regulation through community-established codes of ethics and promoting media ethics training for creators. Radio presenters also cited audience feedback as an important tool to hold podcasters accountable and encourage the responsible content creation. These measures can help balance the freedom and creative flexibility inherent in podcasting with the ethical responsibility required to protect public trust and create a positive social impact. Overall, the study highlighted the transformative potential of podcasts in South Africa as platforms for cultural expression, civic engagement and entertainment. However, realising this potential requires a commitment to ethical content creation and accountability.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following recommendations to address the ethical challenges in South African podcasting:

- **Establish Regulatory Frameworks for South African Podcasts**

Regulatory bodies such as ICASA and BCCSA should extend their mandates to include podcasts. This would involve developing tailored guidelines addressing ethical concerns such as misinformation, defamation, privacy violations, and hate speech. A licensing system for podcasters could also be introduced to ensure accountability while maintaining creative freedom.

- **Encourage Self-Regulation**

Podcasters should collaborate to establish voluntary, community-driven codes of ethics. These codes would provide creators with a framework for addressing ethical dilemmas while preserving the informal and conversational nature of podcasting. Examples include disclaimers for unverified claims and guidelines for handling sensitive topics responsibly. Furthermore, podcasters can follow and abide by YouTube community guidelines to regulate their content

- **Strengthen Platform Moderation Policies**

Platforms hosting podcasts, such as YouTube should implement robust content moderation policies. These policies should include reporting mechanisms for hate speech, misinformation, and harmful content, with clear penalties for violations. Platforms can also collaborate with local regulatory bodies to align their guidelines with national media standards.

- **Balance Freedom of Expression with Ethical Responsibility**

Podcasters should recognise the importance of balancing creative freedom with societal responsibilities. Internal editorial guidelines can help achieve this balance by ensuring respectful language, accurate information, and fair representation of marginalised communities.

- **Foster International Collaboration and Learning**

South African regulatory bodies and podcasters should also collaborate with international counterparts to learn from established frameworks in countries with regulated podcasting landscapes. Best practices, such as New Zealand's self-regulation model or Ireland's integration of podcasts into media oversight, could inform local adaptations.

- **Promote Media Ethics Training for Podcasters**

Workshops, training programmes, and formal education in media ethics should be prioritised for current and aspiring podcasters. These initiatives should cover topics

such as fact-checking, cultural sensitivity, privacy protection, and harm avoidance to ensure creators are equipped to produce ethical content.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE



Mr Kgabo Nong

Department of: Communication, Media and
Information Studies

University of Limpopo

Private Mail Bag X 1106

Sovenga, 0727

Jonasnong35@gmail.com

Cell: 081 895 4721

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Before participating in this research, the researcher will discuss the study with you and provide this consent form for your review. You will be invited to sign this form if you decide to participate.

I, Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____, voluntarily agree to participate in this research project from the University of Limpopo. I understand that the purpose of this research is to gather information on ethical standards in South African podcasts and recommend strategies for promoting ethical practices within the industry.

Additionally, I understand that:

1. My participation is entirely voluntary, and I will not receive any financial compensation for my involvement. I may withdraw at any time if I feel uncomfortable, and doing so will not affect my relationship with the researcher.

2. I have the right to decline to answer any question that makes me uncomfortable.

3. My responses may be recorded with my permission. If I am uncomfortable with audio recording, the researcher will instead document my responses in writing.

4. The information I provide will be used strictly for research purposes. I also have the right to request a copy of the final research once it is completed.

5. I am entitled to remain anonymous to ensure the confidentiality of my responses.

_____	_____	_____
Participant	Signature	Date
(Full Name)		

I, Kgabo Nong, have clearly explained the scope of this research to the participant and outlined their rights regarding participation in this study. They have voluntarily agreed to participate in this research.

Kind Regards,

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Signature	Date

FORMULATING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTS

1. What are your views on the ethical standards upheld by *Podcast and Chill with MacG*?

2. Do you think current South African media regulations adequately address the unique ethical issues within podcasting? Why or why not?

Please elaborate on your answer.

3. What are your views on the potential need for an ethical code specific to South African podcasters?

4. How do you believe other media regulatory bodies might inform ethical podcasting standards in South Africa?

5. How could South African podcasts better balance the freedom of expression with the responsibility to avoid harm?

6. What specific guidelines do you think could help South African podcasters enhance ethical standards?

7. In your opinion, what role could audience feedback and engagement play in upholding ethical podcasting?

8. Can you suggest ways in which podcast platforms (like YouTube) could support ethical practices among South African podcasters?

9. How do you envision the role of ethical guidelines evolving in the South African podcasting space over the next few years?

10. In your view, what ethical considerations will become increasingly important as the South African podcasting industry grows?

11. What role do you think education and training in media ethics could play in shaping the future of South African podcasting?

END OF INTERVIEW

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX 2: FHDC APPROVAL LETTER



University of Limpopo
Faculty of Humanities
Executive Dean

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: Satsope.maoto@ul.ac.za

DATE: 27 September 2023

NAME OF STUDENT: NONG KJ
STUDENT NUMBER: [201924994]
DEPARTMENT: MA - Media studies
SCHOOL: LANGCOM

Dear Student

FACULTY RATIFICATION OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2023/7/2/4.2.3)

I have pleasure in informing you that your MA proposal and Ethical Clearance application was ratified at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 31 July 2023.

TITLE: *The Necessity of Broadcasting Ethical Standards in South African Podcasting: An Exploratory Study*

Note the following:

Ethical Clearance	Tick One
In principle the study requires no ethical clearance, but will need a TREC permission letter before proceeding with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	√
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

Prof RS Maoto,
Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities
Director: Prof MJ Mogoboya
Supervisor: Mr AC Mangaka
Co-supervisor: Dr BD Seadira

Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX 4: TREC LETTER



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: tukiso.sewapa@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 04 December 2023
PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/1698/2023: PG

PROJECT:

Title: The Necessity of Broadcasting Ethical Standards in South African Podcasting: An Exploratory Study
Researcher: KJ Nong
Supervisor: Mr AC Mangaka
Co-Supervisor/s: Dr BD Seadira
School: Languages and Communication Studies
Degree: Master of Arts in Media Studies

PROF D MAPOSA
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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APPENDIX 5: TURNITIN DIGITAL RECEIPT

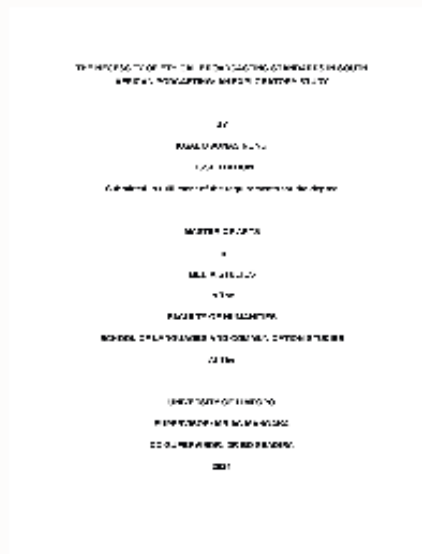


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APPENDIX 6: EDITOR'S LETTER



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Re: Certificate of Editing

I hereby advise that I edited a dissertation titled: "THE NECESSITY OF ETHICAL BROADCASTING STANDARDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PODCASTING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY" by KGABO JONAS NONG. My editorial interventions entailed, among other aspects, the following:

- English academic language editing, including grammar, spelling, tenses and subject/verb agreement. Efforts were made to ensure that UK English instead of US English was used consistently in the text. Therefore, verbs such as "organize", "emphasize", "realize" and "behavior" were spelled thus, "organise", "emphasise", "realise" and "behaviour", respectively.
- Style and full reference editing according to the Institution's style guide. Here, I checked consistency in the formatting of in-text references and the list of references, including checking that all the sources cited in text were duly acknowledged and that all the sources on the list of references appeared in the text. Addressing inconsistencies in the use of font types and sizes throughout the document.

Please note that I have not had sight of the manuscript since editing, with Kgabo either accepting or rejecting suggested changes or corrections, as is usual. Unless tampered with prior to your reception of the edited work, I trust you will find the editing quality in order.

Regards
Prof Moffat Sebola,

A small, rectangular image of a handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moffat Sebola'.