

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

RADIO AND THE POLITICS OF MODERNITY: A HISTORICAL
STUDY OF LISTENING IN URBAN UGANDA, A CASE OF
RELATIONSHIP SHOWS

by
PENLOPE SUSAN KEMANZI

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for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies
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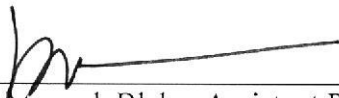
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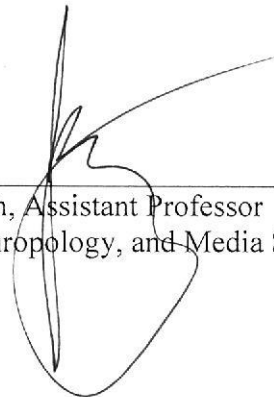
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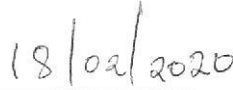
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An undertaking of this kind is never your own effort. I am beholden to the following people for the contributions noted with great gratitude below:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Penlope Susan Kemanzi for Master of Arts
Major: Media Studies

Title: Radio and the Politics of Modernity: A Historical Study of Listening in Urban Uganda, a case of Relationship Shows

Radio is described as the most widespread electronic medium not only in Africa but in the world. However, its continued existence has gone through a test of time with the emergence of other media technologies that have posed as a threat to its survival. Recent studies have described the radio as an old medium on the verge of obsolescence in the digital age. And yet over the last decade, late-night relationship shows, and other entertainment shows have grown enormously popular in Uganda. The popularity of these radio programs challenges common distinctions between so-called “old” and “new” media. This study takes on a historical and discourse analysis approach on radio and listenership among urban dwellers in order to understand how radio industries and technologies through the production of relationship shows have challenged the above notion.

This study aligns with a body of scholarship that has challenged the idea that radio is a fallen medium. It sheds light on how radio has continued to be part of people’s social life, especially amidst competition from the other media technologies. Studies on the radio in Uganda have emphasized the top-down narrative since radio was introduced in Uganda during the colonial period as a political platform. Most of the scholarship focuses on governments, political ideologies, colonial systems, and companies without considering how these industrial, technological, and political changes have affected the everyday listener.

Hence my research appraises the aural experience in the period of the digital age, and as such, to give a new definition of radio as a tool of social interaction, intimacy, and interconnectivity among the listeners for the everyday cultures in Uganda, and specifically among urban dwellers.

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ABBREVIATIONS.

A.C.M.E	African Centre for Media Excellence
BBC	British Broadcasting Council
CBS Radio	Central Broadcasting Service
HRNJ-Uganda	Human Rights Network for Journalists
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
OSIEA	Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa
UBC	Uganda Broadcasting Services
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistic
UCC	Uganda Communications Commission

This work is dedicated to my Father, The Late Mr Bagonza Boniface Apuuli, your inspiration is bearing fruits, your spirit and legacy will always live on, and My mother Mrs Jane Bagonza.

INTRODUCTION

“The hard thing for all of us who regard radio as a crucially important area of study-one that still remains neglected; nonetheless, we must excavate, reconstruct, and preserve what we can” (Douglas, 1999, p.ix).

I have always been interested in traditional media, especially radio, intrigued by its contribution to the social life of the everyday listener, wondering how media could have social and cultural consequences. With the fast-forward changing media landscape in Uganda, I was concerned about how radio would catch up with the new developments. Most importantly, I was captivated by the popularity of the relationship shows (late-night) on various radio stations in the country. These shows have become spaces where listeners share their most profound relationship issues to get advice from the presenter and other listeners of the show. Back in my home country, at the beginning of every new week, just like every other Late Date show fan, I always looked forward to the next episode of the show on Capital FM hosted by DJ. Ronnie Sempagi from 8 pm to 12 am. The show had a considerable listenership back then (1 and half decades ago)and it still does today. His fans had dubbed DJ Ronnie as the “Love Doctor” or “Dr. Love” because of his deep baritone and calm character as he treats his listeners and callers during the show. He had a personal warmth that made you feel like he shares your pain.

On the Late Date show, a person would call Ronnie and ask him to call a loved one, and to mention the name of their partner. DJ Ronnie had perfected the art of making that happen effortlessly, getting the other person to say their lover’s name. It was often heartbreaking for the caller to hear their one and only love mention someone else’s name. It was not unusual to hear male callers’ breakdown in tears and weep live on-air as their lovers couldn’t identify them.

Apart from that, callers would call in looking for soulmates, and to request their favorite romantic ballads. However, to make the show more engaging DJ, Ronnie also allowed listeners to call and provide advice to the previous couple or caller, which made the radio show engaging and interactive. Before his untimely death, DJ Ronnie had connected a thousand souls, mended broken hearts, and helped more people to find soulmates, a legacy that the *Late Date show* is still portraying to-date.

I was curious to understand why these shows have become popular. Why do people listen to them? Why are they popular on the radio rather than other media, like television for example? How are they structured? In order to appreciate these shows and their contribution to listening to the radio in urban areas despite the presence of other digital media, I chose to position them within a more significant history of listening in Uganda and particularly among urban dwellers. This is an area that has been studied little. Douglas (1999) restates that listening has been an area of inquiry that has been under appraised compared to seeing, and yet it deserves to be explored since it has central importance on personal identity and understanding who we are. It is through listening that we cultivate cultural values and establish collective practices. Hence this research explores radio listenership among urban dwellers in the vast evolving media landscape in Uganda, asking how radio has continued to impact people's everyday life.

Scholars like Kalule (1999) and Matovu (1996) undertook studies on listenership in Uganda. They focus on the first several years after the proliferation of private stations in the country. However, a lot has changed ever since. The current study seeks to understand how radio has contended with a more crowded mediascape, especially with the contribution of digital technologies. It asks: how has radio continued to remain relevant in urban areas in Uganda? How

has the presence of other media technologies impacted the radio listening practices of everyday people? Hilmes (2018) asserts that “radio has always been a uniquely border evading medium, and in its new digital form, it takes the sound work into new spaces, places, forms and users” (p.420). Therefore, as Manyozo, Nassanga, & Lopes (2010) contends, the implication of digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) cannot be ignored because they have fostered new forms of listening among audiences. They have influenced social interactions, and, as a result, radio in urban Uganda has shifted from being a passive informative medium to an active medium. In other words, it has altered the top-down structure of radio programming and allowed more listeners feedback and participation that has taken listenership to a whole new experience.

In this historically oriented study, I look to the theoretical lessons from scholarship on the western world, especially as it relates to listening. From this broader perspective, I narrow down to the African context to understand how radio broadcasting was received in the African setting. I have been especially inspired by the comprehensive historical approach by Susan Douglas (1999) in *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*. In this work, she studies the boom of radio in America in the 1930s and unpacks the pleasure of listening to the radio. She shows how this feeling created a sense of belonging among the American people as radio became both a tool of nation-building and a companion to ordinary people. In this model, she shows how radio actively contributed to social and national life in the United States, even as people passively listened to it. The tension between active and passive listenership has been at the center of many studies on the radio. Despite the different models of listening illustrated by radio scholars, radio has shifted from being a passive medium to an active medium with the arrival of mobile phones, telephones and digital technologies. Kalyegira (2013) asserts that after

the liberalization of media in Uganda, radio became the “social media” even before the arrival of digital social media platforms. Hence, radio as a medium has continued to be one of the most consumed media in the world, and it has been very instrumental in changing and building societies as listeners have actively engaged with broadcast signals.

Based mainly on discourse analysis and archival research, this study explores the act of listenership among urban dwellers in Uganda. It examines the contribution of relationship shows to the interactivity that we associate with radio today. It argues that these shows have partly enhanced radio’s continuous existence despite the presence of visual media like television and later the arrival of social media platforms and other digital media technologies. Research on radio has been limited by a single-medium approach, not only in Uganda but in the different parts of the world. This study is, thus, in part an attempt to bring a media studies approach to bear on the medium of radio.

Scholars such as Douglas (1999), Lacey (2000), and Arceneaux (2016) have revealed that there are inadequate studies on radio listenership. They have shown that radio as a medium is continuously evolving. Hence, it should neither be neglected nor assumed as a failing medium. They have further cautioned scholars not to overlook radio history and the contribution of radio in contemporary times, as it continues to be an active, flexible and affordable medium to consume. My research, thus, intervenes in the global debate on radio listenership and its impact on the social and cultural practices of everyday people living in the urban city.

With the arrival of digital technologies, there have been contradicting debates about the fate of radio due to the advent of more visual technologies. At the heart of these debates is the question of whether radio will be replaced by the flashier technologies or will be a forgotten

medium. For instance, Sayle (2017) contemplates the place of conventional media, especially radio, in the fast-changing technological landscape, which she calls the “visual reality” (Sayle, 2017, para 2). She argues that “technology is creating a lot more “hands-free” time for consumers and radio needs to figure out where a predominantly audio-based channel fits into a world where everything is becoming audiovisual” (para 3), or else it risks getting lost in the sea of new platforms becoming available. In this study, I argue against this assessment and insist that the focus should not be about technologies replacing each other, because scholars like Edgerton (2006) have shown that linear, teleological histories of technologies often overlook the realities on the ground. Hendricks (2010) affirms this argument stating, “when television came into existence, it didn’t replace the medium of radio, more so when the video began being used on the internet, it did not replace the medium of television” (p.5). Therefore, I agree with the body of scholarship, including Taha (2016) and Srinivasan & Diepeveen (2018), who have appreciated the integration of these digital technologies not as a means of upending traditional media like radio but for these mediums to converge and integrate. Moyo (n.d) has argued that “the technological transformations have had some profound ramifications on radio’s institutional culture and practices, especially with regards to the way radio produce and disseminates its content and interacts with the audience. (p.13). For example, we can partly appreciate the success of programs like the relationship shows because of the interactive spaces that radio has provided between the everyday listener and the presenters of the shows. This interactive space is due to the presence of mobile phones and social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, which have in turn created free spaces for people to share their stories. Margaret (2002) recommends that in order to improve radio programming, radio industries need to consider listeners’ interests and feedback, which I believe is where telecommunication technologies and the online presence

of radio stations on social media platforms have the potential to enhance feedback and allow user participation in creating program content. The convergence of radio with digital technologies has empowered ordinary people to tell their stories themselves through radio. Thus, the new form of radio has challenged the old hegemonic structure of radio by increasing listener's participation in creating radio content and fostering social interactions.

A. Definition of Terms

As we dig deeper into understanding the dynamics in the changing media landscape in Uganda, which has been primarily influenced by political, social, and economic factors, it is necessary to define the commonly used terms in the thesis and to set up a clear understanding of the topic.

According to Snyder (2016), modernity in the west during the first half of the 20th century referred to new formats for new thoughts, innovation ways of writing and thinking, and the development of new products and technologies. Hence, I use this term in my work to describe what is assumed as modern in terms of “old vs. new” innovation and technologies precisely in media technologies. Douglas (1999) and Sterne (2003) challenge how technology determinists in recent studies have connotated the idea that modernity has been primarily a “visual” experience. Part of this discrepancy has to do with the priorities of many scholars, who over-emphasize the significance of digital technologies, notwithstanding that the circulation of sound has also been central to modern life. In this case, hearing and looking create different forms of feeling as Sterne (2003) asserts “The history of audile technique thus offers a counternarrative to romantic or naturalistic accounts that posit sight as the sense of intellect and hearing as the sense of affect, vision as the precise, localizing sense and hearing as the

enveloping sense”(p.95). Therefore, I agree with the argument of Sterne and Douglas that modernity is not primarily visual; hence radio in its new form still reappears as innovative and modern technology.

More so, In viewing the history of technology, there has been an emphasis on the power of understanding the world today as primarily “visually- modern,” since many academic studies have advanced the claim that modernity has been visually experienced than sonically. Peters and Peters (2018) argue that in instances where the sense of vision has been given priority, especially disciplines such as anthropology, studies on radio and other issues related to sound have been entirely absent or disregarded as an old media, outdated almost seemingly unworthy of our attention. Hence the term “old media” has been implicated in the idea of sound technologies while so-called new media have been associated with visual technologies. This is, in fact, an idea that much of the radio scholarship has refuted. In fact, Johnson (2007) argues that the arrival of radio during the print period became an instrument of power that outflanked a medium that specialized in the skills of reading. Thus, it challenged print media as a primary site of power, which is one of the keys to understanding modernity (p.114). Consequently, such a vantage point deconstructs the idea that modernity is all about the visual because the development of sound recording was a confirmation of modernity as an era.

Radio broadcasting in Africa dates back to the colonial era; Taiwo (2010) argued that in the African discourse, colonialism and modernity are used interchangeably to describe the discourse about Africa. Thus, listening to the radio in the African context was linked to modernity because it was a technology that was introduced by colonial agents to foster their colonial mandate in imperial regions. Hence, Larkin (2008) explains that radio, which we tend to

think of now as a domestic phenomenon, began its life in African countries as a public technology. “In its early years,” he writes, “the vast majority of Hausa could only listen to the radio by gathering around public loudspeakers at certain times of the day” (p.48). This is a tradition that is observed in most African societies, and in Uganda as well. In the dawn of radio, radio brought people together to listen collectively to news from all over the world. Mhlambi (2015) maintains that “Radio could account for a whole world out there in the presence of one’s home, therefore, actively situating African listeners into a modern-global imaginary of listeners” (p.5). In this case, radio brought news from faraway places nearer; in its new form in the African setting, radio was a new kind of modern colonial encounter, and it redefined the nature of the African civilization.

It is also important to mention the distinction between media industries and telecommunication companies or industries since the latter is sometimes confused with being media industries. Havens and Lotz (2017) elaborate that “Media industries create content while telecommunication industries primarily provide technological infrastructure and interfaces through which we access media content” (p.6). Thus, companies like Google, Apple have traditionally been telecommunication industries but not media industries, while radio, television, magazines, and newspapers are media industries through which content is created and disseminated.

New ICTs have brought new forms of creating, distributing, and dissemination of radio content; Thus, it is crucial to define what is digitization, integration/convergence, and media globalization. According to Havens and Lotz (2017) digitization refers to a technical process or a technical specification describing the way media are recorded, transmitted, and accessed; hence

digital media are those media that translate the content of media. Convergence generally refers to the coming together of the formerly distinct media delivery system (Kalodzy, 2006 cited by Moyo, n.d, p.25). Verweij (2009) describes it as “integrated production, multi-skilled professionals, multi-platform delivery and active audiences” (p.7). In other words, convergence can be perceived as being principally about “multi-platforming,” where media texts and audiences start to move seamlessly across different media. On the other hand, media globalization is the capacity of worldwide communication infrastructure to send messages anywhere in the world almost instantaneously, this capacity of instant communication makes coordination of media production, distribution and aggregation much more efficient (Havens and Lotz, 2017, p.221).

Having defined the broader terms, it is essential to narrow down to the media industry in Uganda. According to HRNJ (2012), Uganda has a vibrant and dynamic media industry covering lively interests and views. With the liberalization policy, the radio industry, in particular, experienced a wave of change with the arrival of various radio stations, and these include; public, private stations and community radio. The public station is defined as a state-owned and government-controlled station. In 1953 The British colonial government established the first public radio station in Uganda. According to Margret (2002), Radio Uganda right from its inception was associated with the citizenry; however, to a greater extent it was meant to benefit the government of the day, and in 1956, the station stopped relying on BBC services and started compiling and producing content in the local languages. Currently, UBC radio broadcasts in over 24 languages and has five more stations across the country. Private radio stations are mainly commercial and independently owned stations by businesspeople, and currently, politicians have embarked on starting up individual radio stations in their constituencies. Unlike public radio,

which focuses on politics and reliable news, private stations mainly concentrate on entertainment-based programs such as social and music programs. There over 250 licensed Private stations in Uganda, as indicated in the strategic report of the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC). Community radio according to Manyozo et al. (2010) are stations whose concept of participation is rooted in the participatory development communication studies, in this case, community radio has quickly found a niche in the creation of multi-directional participatory communication that is involving the local community who are treated as citizens rather than consumers. That said, community radio stations focus more on the needs of the citizens than making revenue. The above-defined terms appear as recurring themes throughout the thesis, and they needed to be well-defined to provide a profound understanding of the study.

B. Structure of the Chapters

This study explores the radio industry in Uganda, and the contribution of relationship shows to the popularity of radio among urban dwellers despite the existence of other media industries in the country. It is structured in three body chapters which in turn connect to the main argument of the study. Chapter One provides a historical overview of radio in Uganda, mainly in Kampala. Beginning with the colonial period and extending into the present, it examines radio's transformation from a public to a private medium as more people could afford to own a radio set. In this chapter, I explore three remarkable periods in the history of radio in Uganda and how each period shaped radio listenership and created ways and models of consuming radio. In order to understand the central theme of this study, which is about the late-night relationship shows. These radio shows emerged on the airwaves due to the proliferation of private stations that introduced new programs to differ from the program structure of the state-owned broadcast (Radio Uganda), their programs focused more on entertainment, music and social wellbeing of

the listeners. Also, within this change, I consider how radio has, at various points, competed with other industries, including television and print, and how radio has coped with the new developments of emerging information and digital technologies. Chapter Two scrutinizes the role of radio industries in imagining their listener's needs. In this chapter, I primarily consider commercial stations, whose primary goal is to generate revenue from their consumers. Despite this linear financial model, I show how stations think about their audience's needs so that they can survive a competitive media market that offers many choices to consumers who have a limited amount of time. Lastly, in Chapter Three, I illustrate how radio networks have integrated with the new technologies to enhance the production of relationship shows, which have become popular on most radio stations in Kampala. These shows have reinforced the concept of interactivity, connectivity, social interaction and affection for radio listeners and the presenters of the show. According to Birsen (2012), today's radio broadcasting has shifted from public spaces, it is enjoyed by all groups of people (adults and youth), and it has become a domestic consumed media, easy to access and affordable by the people.

Radio now accompanies people to their most personal areas (at home, in the car, and on the road) by addressing their personal requirements at different times during the day.

Radio channels addressing the needs of special listener groups are increasing. Young adults, the most active radio listeners, prefer private radio stations (McLuhan, 2007, p 349, cited by Birsen, 2012).

These chapters together shed light on how radio, in its new form, and through the production of relationship shows in particular, has challenged the top-down hegemonic structure by enabling listeners to be part and parcel of generating content. The proliferation of more private stations

coupled with the increased penetration of mobile phone subscribers and internet subscribers has enhanced interactivity among the audience. Berger, Banda, Duncan, Rashweat, & Zenaida (2009) assert that “the emerging change in media is interactivity, linked thus far to the widespread dispersal of cellphone access. From talk radio call-ins, through to SMS contributions, African audiences are responding to media content in ever-increasing numbers” (p. 9). Radio has become not only a tool for political dialogues but also entertainment and social interaction in people’s everyday life.

CHAPTER I

THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN UGANDA: A HISTORIZATION OF LISTENERSHIP

A vital stakeholder in the radio industry is its listenership, which carries a lot of influence. (Alcon, 2013, p.29)

The history of radio in Uganda cannot be described as a story of life and death but a history of readapting and reconfiguration. Recent studies Jacob (2018) and Megan (2017), among others, have emphasized that radio is on the verge of collapsing and being replaced by today's flashier digital technologies, mostly in developed countries. These works are typical of a strand of media studies that emphasizes technological change over almost everything else. As Megan argues "It is one thing to ensure our media executions use these new technologies, but the traditional media (radio) channels, where we often place our media, need to evolve to facilitate this as well, or risk getting lost in the sea of new platforms becoming available" (p.1). But, over the last decade in Uganda, late-night relationship shows, and other entertainment shows have brought a new boom of radio among listeners and have grown enormously popular due to the proliferation of private radio stations in the country. This study aligns with a body of scholarship that has challenged the notion that radio is a fallen medium. According to studies conducted by Chibita (2013), Ipsos (2018), Goretti, Linje and Claudia (2013), and Mwesige (2004), the radio is still a vital communication tool in Uganda and its contribution to the social practices of everyday people should not be disregarded.

Nonetheless, radio continues to be defined as a traditional medium to distinguish it from the "new" technologies, such as the internet and social media platforms. Hendy (2008) argues

that “radio’s artistic potential has overtly been neglected due to the attention given to visual media” (p.135). Hence, in viewing the history of technology, visual media such as the television and, more recently, the internet and social media platforms have been perceived to be modern; however, culture and evolution are more intertwined than we suppose. What we listen to and how we listen to something are essential parts of what makes us modern, sentimental, and social beings. Hence, several scholars have challenged this notion of attributing visual media solely as “modern” technologies. Sterne (2003), Edgerton (2006), and Douglas (1999) have criticized the way writers studying media technologies have given attention to visual technologies over sound technologies. This does not necessarily mean that there are no direct studies on sound, but recent studies have provided more urgency to the eye than the ear. The attention given to visual media has been overwhelming, hence exposing a gap in sound studies. However, Bessire and Fisher (2013) have refuted these claims arguing that radio does not figure as an old medium on the verge of obsolescence in the digital age. Instead, radio reappears as a vibrant, complex field of mediation (p.364). In this case, before we focus on classifying these two concepts ‘old’ and ‘new,’ we need to understand when the term ‘new media’ was first used.

Smith and Hendrick (2010) argue that the word “new media” has been used for decades. The history of audile technique thus offers a counternarrative to Romantic or naturalistic accounts that posit sight as the sense of intellect and hearing as the sense of affect, vision as the precise, localizing sense and hearing as the enveloping sense if it is to be defined at “face value” (p.6). The term was popularized by communication scholar Marshall McLuhan in 1953 to talk about recent technologies of communication. Nevertheless, “the term emerged in the late 1990s when it began to be used as an all-encompassing description for emerging and digital technologies” (Smith and Hendrick, 2010, p.4). Therefore, the term ‘new media’ is used to

distinguish between digital media and analog media. Such a distinction need not necessarily mean that the new media are taking over other forms, but several scholars have made such a claim in their work (e.g., Megan, 2017; Dia, 2002). But how does radio, which is the focus of this research, fit into this context of “old” and “new”?

Radio since its arrival as a popular medium has survived along with other media such as television and print media, and the history of audile technique thus offers a counternarrative to romantic or naturalistic accounts that posit sight as the sense of intellect and hearing as the sense of affect, vision as the precise, localizing sense and hearing as the enveloping sense more recently digital media. Arceneaux (2016) emphasizes that “radio offers a multi-lived tapestry that foreshadows the countless innovation in modern forms of electronic media” (p. 343). Nevertheless, there could be a better way to contextualize the power of the voice and modernity by understanding the historical impact of radio and listening, and how its survival in the history of media has provided pleasure and emotional attachment for its listeners.

Johnson (2007) offers such a model by comparing print media and the power of sound. He argues that the arrival of radio during the print period became an instrument of power that outflanked a medium that specialized in the skills of reading. Thus, it challenged print media as a primary site of power, which is one of the keys to understanding modernity (p.114). Such a vantage point deconstructs the idea that modernity is all about the visual because the development of sound recording was a confirmation of modernity as an era. For instance, Douglas (1999) asserts that the arrival of radio brought relief and pleasure and fostered a sense of imagination among the listeners. She writes, “we were taken out of ourselves through radio, yet paradoxically hurled into our innermost thoughts “(p.22). Hence, radio in its early days brought a

new era of modernity, and in this case, the debate should shift from “visual and modern” to how radio in its new form can be reconfigured to fit in this era of digital technologies regarding the production of content, distribution, and utilization.

Thus, this chapter aims to illustrate how radio in Uganda, mainly in Kampala, has historically coped with new developments, either with competition from other existing media such as television and print media or integrating with the information technologies, mainly mobile phones, social media platforms, and the internet.

The changing media landscape in Uganda cannot only be tied to the emergence of information technologies but also the arrival of other media like television, which recently shifted to digital broadcasting. Also, the presence of print media that was, in fact, available before the arrival of the first radio station in the country. These media have affected the radio industry differently. Radio has also been shaped by the influence of social and political factors that will be further highlighted in this chapter.

This research focuses on the success and popularity of relationship shows that have become popular on several radio stations in Kampala. These programs have changed the social aspect of radio and influenced the main stakeholder of the radio industry, namely its listenership. These shows have appealed to different kinds of audiences, and their popularity has partly contributed to the continued survival of radio in Kampala amidst competition from other media such as television and the internet. However, to understand the contribution of these shows, we need to recognize the more extended history of radio in terms of industrial practices and listening practices that have developed over time. More so, I highlight the changing dynamics that have taken place in radio’s past to appreciate the impact of these relationship shows. Their popularity

and contribution to the active listening of radio among urban dwellers despite the presence of other media should not be overlooked.

Radio has undergone several stages that this study seeks to build from in order to denaturalize the idea that radio is a fallen medium and a taken-for-granted in everyday life. In opposition to that idea, I argue that the focus should not be on the ‘new’ vs. ‘old’ media debate but rather on the changing developments within the radio industry and how they have shaped its continuous existence today. Thus, the combination of radio with digital technologies has partly enhanced radio listenership among urban dwellers. Radio is still and continues to be an entertainment, information, and affective tool for its millions of listeners in Uganda.

Radio broadcasting in Uganda has unfolded over three remarkable periods: the advent of radio in the colonial history of Uganda in the 1900s; the liberalization of the media industry that led to the emergence of private radio stations across the country in the 1990s; and later the arrival of the internet which has shaped the new forms of engaging with radio. I will elaborate on these different periods in the history of radio and examine how they have contributed and shaped the continuous consumption of radio in Uganda, mainly in urban areas where access to other media is possible.

A. The Advent of Radio in the Colonial History of Uganda

Uganda broadcast media traces its origin back to 1953 with the establishment of Uganda Broadcasting Services, which was first established by the British colonial administration to air shows from Radio Uganda and to support the imperial agenda of the colonial government (Chibita and Pieter, 2007, cited by Brian, 2013, p.11). “In a bid to suppress the opposition

pressure posed by the local press, the British government set up the first radio service in 1953” (Chibita and Pieter, 2007, p.13). This was a move to overturn the nationalist groups that had emerged at the time, who used print media to disentangle themselves from colonial rule to gain political independence. As such, print media played a considerable role in achieving democracy, even though low literacy rates limited its reach. Alcon (2013) asserts that “It is because of the lack of a good standard of education, which was limited to a privileged minority, that a small elite were the ones to engage with the press and stimulate the campaign for independence” (p.13). He further notes that:

Although the print media did much to initiate the process of liberation, it is worth noting that many Ugandans were illiterate or were only educated at a basic level. Although the people “were filled with a keen desire to better themselves” (Walker 1917)

Therefore, the incapability for the population to engage with the print media explains why the print media was effortlessly replaced by radio a few years later after it was established, since listening to the radio did not require one to be educated. Consequently, radio became inclusive for all classes of society, regardless of education level.

It should be noted that the print media predates the broadcast media by half a century. The local press played a crucial role in amplifying their bid for independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Gariyo, 1992, p.51). Therefore, the mandate for the British colony to establish the radio was to counteract the anti-colonial and pro-independence voices that used the indigenous language press as a powerful outlet for political mobilization (Brian, 2013, p.8). The print media played a dominant role in sabotaging the British motives before the radio was established. Even though the print media played a considerable part, it was not able to penetrate more due to low levels of literacy; few

people were able to read and engage with the press. Hence, the arrival of radio was, in a way, a form of liberation for those people who did not know how to read. The radio offered a chance to listen. Thus, its aural broadcast made it easy for people to consume.

Mwakawago (1986) describes that “Even a small radio set can be listened to at any one moment by a group of individuals without jostling, with a newspaper even two people cannot read a single copy comfortably” (p.86). However, due to its sole broadcast in English, the radio in its early days became unpopular among the masses, and the print media continued to thrive since the different newspapers were written in indigenous languages. Mwesige recounts, “When radio was first introduced, was replaying BBC broadcasts, The British broadcasts were exclusively aired in English ” (Mwesige, 2010, p.20). Later, when the situation changed, with the introduction of the transistor radio in Africa, there was an increase in broadcasting into several languages, and worth noting, the British acknowledged Radio Uganda to include broadcast in the indigenous language. Hence radio won its place in the hearts of masses, and it became more influential than the print media. As a result, radio is credited for playing a prominent role in spearheading the country’s independence later in October 1962.

According to Open Society Institute (2010) and Beatrice (1996), Radio Uganda later in the 1980s started transmitting programs on five channels: Red, Blue, Butebo, Star FM and Magic FM. The three main channels (Red, Blue, and Butebo) comprised a national network of 18 FM- and MW-based radio stations. Except for Star FM, which broadcasted exclusively in Luganda, the Red, Blue, and Butebo channels started airing in 14 languages and today UBC radio broadcasts in 24 different languages grouped by region. Broadcasting in many languages ensured that all ethnic groups could be reached in their mother tongue,

which Radio Uganda (UBC Radio) has successfully implemented to date. Chibita and Kibombo (2012) revealed in their findings that “the majority of respondents listed their mother tongue as their most preferred broadcast language” (p.27). Broadcasting in indigenous languages increased listenership among the people, and listeners were able to follow up on social and political events happening in the country

During the post-colonial period, the top agenda for radio was to adopt a strong spirit of nationalism and social responsibility. Mwakawago asserts that “radio became a medium which afforded to reach a wide number of people and helped in the creation and enhancement of the new identity of different ethnic groups in the country” (1986, p.83). Hence, radio flourished due to its portability, accessibility, and affordability. Indeed, radio was and is still known as the primary source of information for 65 percent of Ugandans, as indicated in the findings of various scholarly and industrial studies (Open Society Institute report, 2010, p.18; Ipsos, 2018, p.3).

Like any other African state, after the colonial era, Radio Uganda remained fully controlled by the state throughout the different regimes. It should be noted that Uganda’s media industry has been influenced by political and social factors, which will be further reflected in this chapter. “It is a country that has transformed from a country tormented by a troubled past to one praised for its potential with impressive economic growth” (BBC Media Action Report, 2012, p.3). Despite several challenges facing the media industry in Uganda, such as state oppression and censorship, which have continued to-date, the sector serves as a watchdog by providing essential information about the social-political state of the country. Moreover, radio fosters public dialogue and addresses the social concerns of Uganda’s population. Radio has been central to this role since it first made its appearance in 1953.

As noted by several media scholars in Uganda (e.g., Chibita 2013; Matovu 1990; Otiso 2006; Tabaire 2007), media freedom was not guaranteed in Uganda after independence until early in the 1990s as I will discuss in the next section; thus, radio became an instrument of political propaganda aimed at serving the interests of the incumbent elite. Moehler and Singh (2011) argue that government-owned media in Africa have a history of subservience to authoritarian regimes, unlike privately-owned media outlets. This is the case both in Africa and around the world as privately-owned stations tend to be more responsive to the public, critical of the state, and open to opposing perspective (p.276). Birsen (2010) emphasizes that legal regulations of the media industry by the state are a process generally experienced globally (p.119). Likewise, Taha (2016) explains that “on numerous occasions, the Southern African governments used broadcast media as instruments for repression and perpetuation of authoritarian rule. Thus, the struggle over the control and use of broadcast media can be conceived as a power struggle” (p.136). Therefore, state control on media platforms is not only a challenge in Uganda but has occurred globally and in various African states, as well.

Lastly, until the liberalization of the media industry, Uganda had one radio station broadcasting in several languages across the country and was under the state control by different regimes that came into power after independence. In the next section, I elaborate more on what transpired after the liberalization of the media industry and how it gave way for the advent of privately-owned radio stations in the current NRM government lead by President Museveni, who has been in power for over 30 years to-date.

B. The Liberalization of the Media Industry in 1990

The media industry in Uganda has endured the test of time, even during the various changes of governments that Uganda has endured after the colonial period. The liberalization of the communication sector in the early 1990s led to an explosion of media (ACME, 2010, p.19). The government-controlled broadcast media until 1994, when the current regime liberalized the media industry. Even though there are still cases of state censorship. Following the economic liberalization programs of the early 1990s, the airwaves opened to commercial competition in one African country after another (Vokes, 2007, p. 806), including Uganda. Tabaire (2007) contends, “While the regimes of Obote I and Museveni may seem liberal in comparison to Amin, it is important to recognize that very real struggles for press freedom took place under these governments” (p.194). And it is also considered that in comparison with the previous regimes, Museveni’s government has allowed freedom of expression at a relatively higher level.

According to the ACME report (2010), the constitution was promulgated in 1995, and it was the first time in which the country’s supreme law expressly guaranteed freedom of the press and other media. It specified, “The constitution included a clause under the article 29 (1) of the media and journalism law guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media, previously the constitution only spoke of freedom of speech and other media” (ACME report, 2010, p.1). In tandem with these developments, the radio industry has since progressed with the advent of more privately-owned radio stations, which have allowed listeners to enjoy a wide range of programs and entertainment. Unlike the UBC Radio (Radio Uganda), which was mainly concerned with news, politics, and current affairs, private stations have mainly concentrated on entertainment-based programs such as local music, comedy shows, relationship shows, commercial advertising, among others. Timothy

(2013) explains that “Ugandans who in recent years had resigned themselves to an increasingly stale, Radio Uganda with its programming dominated by politicians, politics, and policy, we're treated to a breath of fresh air” (para 2).

The first two private radio stations to air were Radio Sanyu and Capital radio in 1994. Both aimed for more entertainment and music than Radio Uganda. According to the Uganda Communications Commission report (2018-19), there are over 250 licensed radio stations in Uganda. There are two large media conglomerates: The Vision Group and Nation Media Group (NMG). Each house bundles of television, radio stations, and newspapers. For example, *New Vision* is one of the leading newspapers in the country owned by the Vision Group, and the Nation Media Group has a competitive paper called the *Daily Monitor*. Radio stations include X-FM, Radio West, among others for the Vision Group, while Dembe FM and KFM fall under The National Media Group. The state partly governs the Vision Group; however, the NMG is independently owned by Aga Khan Foundation based in Kenya. Other non-profitable radio stations include community radio stations and religiously based radio stations. This study focuses on Kampala, which is the country's capital. It has approximately 100 radio stations that account for 40% of the national total (Brian, 2013, p.7). In the initial phase of the FM boom, notably from the early 1990s to the first part of this decade, apart from the two media conglomerates mentioned above, FM stations are predominantly owned by private businesspeople, and recently a new trend has emerged of politicians setting up FM radio stations targeting their constituents. (Open Society Foundation, 2010, p.18).

Despite the growing number of private stations, independent stations have continued to face government repression. The freedom of the press has not been fully applied. For example, the closure of the CBS radio station was a directive from the state accusing the radio of inciting

violence among the masses. The riots erupted in Kampala in September 2009 following the confrontation between the central government and the authorities of the kingdom of Buganda. Tom (2010) indicated, On September 10 and 11, 2009, the council shut down CBS and three other stations, Ssubi FM, Radio Two (locally known as Akaboozi), and the Catholic Church's Radio Sapientia, accusing them of inciting violence. While the other three eventually resumed broadcasting, CBS remained closed, and most of its staff were left unemployed.

Similar cases of closing radio stations have continued to occur where several stations and news tabloids were closed for allegedly being criminalized for publishing false statements and causing alarm among the public in the NRM regime. Also, the regressive social media tax, which was introduced in July 2018 as a means by the government to regulate space for people to have free interaction, more reason to frustrate the freedom of expression. “Yoweri Museveni said we want the freedom of the press, but we cannot have enemy agents working against us here” (Tabaire, 2007, p.207). In other words, the same government that granted freedom of the press has gone ahead to jeopardize it.

A recent report on the assessment of Uganda media development conducted by UNESCO (2018) reported that Uganda’s legal and policy framework is not conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism, and diversity of the media. Therefore, there is still a continuous struggle for the right of the press in the country. Thus, the constant presence of censorship in the media industry exposes loopholes on how the media functions, and this might have an impact on how media houses operate, and how this censorship in particular affects radio listenership, which is the primary purpose of this study. For example, the CBS report (2016) revealed that they lost a considerable number of listeners due to the closure of the station, after which it took them almost

a month to be back on the air, and so, people had to listen to other radio stations and their listenership was greatly affected.

Since the liberalization of the communications sector in the mid-1990s, telecommunications, and broadcasting have grown side by side, as mobile telephones also became a boom for broadcasting. Keller (2003) stresses that the use of ICTs brought a new era of “democratization of radio communication and fostered user-friendly dialogue” (p. 9). The advent of ICTs especially mobile telephones has enhanced a new form of active listening because people can call in and participate in public debates, previously they had to rely on sending in letters to the stations, which also limited the section of the audience who did not know how to read and write. Therefore, the arrival of mobile phones has allowed radio to be more inclusive and fostered listeners' active participation on a big spectrum.

The increasing number of radio stations in Uganda is not only for entertainment purposes. Instead, radio has also continuously played an instrumental role in nation-building. Scholars elsewhere (Douglas 1999; Hirsckind 2006; Alcon 2013) have appreciated the role that radio played in creating national unity. Anderson (1983) underscores the role that the print-capitalism played in spearheading the nationalism spirit by bringing communities that spoke a diversity of languages together, but we cannot ignore that radio further conserved national unity among the people who listened to the same programs and enjoyed the same music.

Uganda’s traditional oral society was conducive to how people learned and engaged with others. In fact, these qualities inherent to Ugandan culture helped the radio achieve success after independence. The oral tradition is important because it was the primary method through which African civilization was passed on from one generation to another. Therefore, the radio played an

indispensable role in achieving this because it involved both listening and talking collectively. Alcon (2013) illustrates that Uganda's history was based on legends and folk tales handed down by mouth and songs, another aspect which radio adopted to and provided easily to its listeners. Hence, people would gather to listen to the radio that hosted similar programs. Additionally, traditional music in Uganda was not merely for entertainment perspective but also cultural importance, and this explicitly explains why local music has continued to appeal to a considerable number of listeners not only for entertainment but as means to conserve their culture. Mwakawago (1986) asserts that “African people are very musical and extroverts” (p.7). The aspect that radio has continued to provide to its listeners to-date. As Timothy (2013) writes:

The FM stations became a rallying point for the public, old and young, and they set the national entertainment mood as well as reflect it. The social life that had felt stagnant for several years was infused with excitement and a feeling of optimism, at least in the southern half of the country. The radio stations were, so to speak, the first social media before the Internet made its appearance in Uganda.

Thus, the advent of private stations provided options for listeners to listen collectively, enjoy a variety of music from different tribes in Uganda, and enjoy more stations that promoted local music and local programs.

Also, Uganda is known as a country that has a diversity of languages. The radio played a vital role in broadcasting in different languages. For example, UBC Radio (Radio Uganda) was and is still credited for broadcasting in over 24 languages, which other private stations have not been able to accomplish. Thus, Radio Uganda’s commitment to providing programming, which

was linguistically comprehensive by a broad range of Ugandans, did much to unite Ugandans who listened and learned other languages over the radio and being united people without having to sacrifice their cultural ideals. Brian (2013) asserts that “Radio was identified as a ‘very effective teacher’ who influenced the listeners to engage socially, and politically on the national level but, also preserve and celebrate the diversity of language, (p.20). In short, when a million people listen to the same subject matter, it makes them feel and think alike. This resonates with what Anderson (2003) refers to as creating ‘imagined communities’—the component that radio has continuously played over the years. The liberalization of the radio industry has fostered the creation of local radio stations in different parts of the country through which radio is preserving local languages since other mediums like television and internet are using the official English language, and a few televisions stations have incorporated local languages like ‘*Luganda*’ which is commonly spoken in the city. Therefore, radio is still a medium that audiences have praised for language pluralism.

Radio broadcasting has gone through a series of changes, as described above. It was initially an instrument of the colonial government in most African countries but, later in the 1990s there was an economic boom, and most African countries liberalized their media industry which led to the arrival of new privately-owned stations from one public radio station that was characterized by state control and the top-down control of radio broadcasting.

In the next section, I discuss the advent of information technologies and how these have reconfigured radio listenership from a traditional passive device to a more active device that has transformed radio programming through engaging the listeners to be part of creating content and enhanced user participation. Since this research focused on the urban dwellers who are in the

position to consume other media, it is essential to understand how radio is being joined by other technologies in competition or complementing each other. My objective in this study was to examine the latter.

C. The Dawn of New Technologies including Social Media

Radio as a medium has evolved through several stages; thus, we cannot discuss the success of radio in contemporary time without mentioning the role of information communication technologies, internet, and social media platforms, which have integrated well with the radio industry. In this study, I focused on the use of mobile phones, the internet, and the power of social media platforms that have engaged and blended well with radio, connecting it to its listeners. The advent of telecommunication technologies like the mobile phone, which became more popular than the telephone due to affordability, the internet, and later the arrival of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter has altered the hegemonic structure of the traditional radio. Far from killing the radio in Uganda, these communication technologies have enhanced feedback from the calls; listeners have connected with radio presenters and increased social interaction.

According to the 2013-2014 Postal, Broadcasting and Telecommunication annual report released by the Uganda Communications Commission, mobile subscriptions were standing at 19 million, and the number of internet users in the country was at 8.5million users up from 2.8 million users registered five years prior. These numbers are expected to rise as more people are getting exposed to the use of smartphones and the internet especially in urban areas. The use of ICTs has dramatically enhanced user participation and social interaction between listeners and radio networks. Thanks to mobile phones, listeners have transitioned from being passive to

active participants in generating radio content. This partly explains the boom of relationship shows on several radio stations which have attracted an enormous listenership because of the program structure that allows radio listeners to provide content for the shows, how these shows have enhanced radio listenership will feature in chapter three.

The incorporation of FM radio features on mobile handsets and online radio has facilitated private listening and, more so, given listeners more options of accessing radio, not only from the radio set. Radio gradually withdrew from public spaces to private spaces like cars and listening alone on mobile phones from anywhere. Thus, people can enjoy listening to the radio from the comfort of their vehicles or bedrooms unlike before when radio was listened to collectively in a public setting. Brian (2013) emphasizes:

due to the arrival of modern ICTs; radio as medium has improved, not only in terms of audio quality, access and reach, but also in terms of programming with an increasingly diversified and modern Uganda many listeners are engaging with the radio stations more and more as technology becomes more affordable and accessible (p.31).

Even though the penetration of ICTs is still limited to a considerable number of people, especially in rural areas, radio sets are way cheaper than television and do not require electricity to have them. Hence the device is still the most affordable medium in this era. Other challenges include poor infrastructure and affordability of mobile phones, therefore, limiting a considerable audience from enjoying these services in rural areas; however, most people living in urban areas have better chances of utilizing these communication technologies.

Despite the challenges radio stations are facing from other competition of similar stations targeting the same audience, radio is not facing a massive competition with other media like television and print media. According to audience measurement studies conducted by Ipsos

report (2018), Uganda Bureau of Statistic report (2014) and the Geopoll (2017) radio is still by far the most listened to medium both in urban and rural areas with 85% of both men and women indicating that they consume radio more than other media. Newspapers and television followed by 36% and 34%, respectively. Perhaps this explains why radio has been defined as both the “mirror of society” and “a mouthpiece of the general public in Uganda” (Brian, 2013, p.34). In Chapter Three, I explore how the relationship between digital technologies and radio, have enhanced the concepts of user interaction, connectivity and affect. More so, their contribution to the success of relationship shows on several radio stations.

In conclusion, the position of radio Uganda and particularly in the urban areas, is still very instrumental; therefore, radio’s future will depend on to what extent it will continue to influence its listeners. Also, media scholars in Uganda need to conduct more research on its listenership since this area has limited studies available, as I noticed during my field study.

The liberalization of the airwaves has been a great move; however, it comes with a challenge of many players tapping in the market. Most radio stations are copy-cutting programs from the already existing ones, which compromises the quality of these programs and hence, leads to the closure of those stations that cannot survive in the competitive market. Duke (2018) underscores that “Continuity is vital, but repetition is a killer.” This can only be resolved if more research explores the listener's needs to understand which target audience the radio networks are serving and what do they prefer to listen to. One of the Reports (2016), *FM stations in Uganda: Quantity without Quality*, highlights that very few radio stations in Kampala conduct listenership surveys. They also lack procedures that ensure quality programming and production. Ideally, in order to keep radio relevant, it is necessary to embark on qualitative studies on listenership and audience assessment studies.

CHAPTER II

RADIO NETWORKS AND LISTENER'S NEEDS

“The main goal is to attract new subscribers while retaining current users, Afterall, commercial media companies are economic institutions and thus are driven by profit; however, their ultimate goal is to serve their audience needs” (Hendricks, 2010, p.14)

In the 1990s, due to global economic trends combined with liberalization of the broadcasting sector, radio in Uganda shifted into a commercial phase. This shift enabled the advent of privately owned radio stations from a single publicly-owned state station (Chibita, 2013; Matovu, 1990). Since then, radio in Uganda has continued to evolve as an essential medium consumed both in public and private spaces. Since the emergence of new private stations, there are now over 100 stations available in the greater Kampala and 250 stations across the country (UCC, 2015). The increasing number of radio stations creates an ecology of competition among the different stations but also competing with other existing media in Kampala. The shift to the commercialization phase leaves radio networks in Uganda with two primary motives: to make money and serve the needs of the listeners. Haven and Lotz (2017) have argued that in the process of making money, media industries aim to create content that contributes to the dialogue and discussion about important issues in society (p.5). Therefore, like any other commercial industry, media industries, including radio industries, are rooted in making profits. In circumstances where the radio is facing competition due to emerging digital technologies and more media available for people to choose from, the industry needs to pay attention to the changing media landscape in order to keep radio relevant. Therefore, the radio industry needs to keep in mind that, the mandate of radio is to inform, educate, and entertain. This chapter explores how the radio industry has imagined their audience, and how they have

actively tried to attract listeners to radio, despite competition with other media in Kampala. In this case, I illustrate how the radio and technology changes have established different ways through which radio stations can maintain their listenership. For example, I describe how relationship shows have become one mechanism that radio stations in Kampala are using to appeal to their listeners.

In this chapter, I focus on the role that the radio industry, specifically radio stations in Kampala, have played in maintaining listeners. Competition does not arise only from the increasing number of radio stations but also from the growing number of other media that urban-dwelling audiences have access to, including television and the internet. One of the challenging realities that we cannot overlook is that the new emerging communication and digital technologies have given people more media to choose and to consume. That said, we have a lot of online platforms to watch and listen to. As Keller (2003) notes, “One of the notable consequences of the melding of new ICTs and radio has been the emergence of a new alternative communication paradigm” (p.4). Hence, the radio industry has to find appropriate measures to be innovative. Indeed, the existence of other media applies incredible pressure on radio stations to keep radio listeners engaged. This chapter focuses on urban listeners in Kampala, Uganda, residents of this city have a wide range of different private radio stations broadcasting both in local and English languages. As a result, competition is intense, as listeners have a lot of options to choose from.

This chapter is informed by individual studies and industrial research conducted by media research firms on the audience measurement and listenership attitudes of radio listeners. The surveys conducted by media firms reveal how the radio industry imagines its listeners since most

of the radio stations in Kampala are private (BBC report, 2012, p.5). As such, they are commercial networks that have their revenue streams tied on their audience for them to survive. Hence, radio networks imagine their listeners as consumers for them to generate revenue.

With the help of the data obtained by media research firms such as Ipsos and GeoPoll, radio networks are able to access audience measurement studies conducted by these media firms. Geopoll and Ipsos are independent media research firms, which conduct audience measurement studies for media industries to use. Hence, radio stations receive audience ratings on listenership for them to know when to place adverts and at which time people listen most to the radio. For instance, Research on audience measurement reveals when listeners are listening at a particular time and at what time they listen most. The terms used are *audience reach* and *audience share*. Ipsos (2018) defines *audience reach* as the number of times one switches-on and out of the station for at least 5minutes while *audience share* is how long one spends listening to a specific station. This information is valuable to different stations, and it is sold to them to know where to place an advertisement and which programs to include at a given time. Due to the commercialization of radio stations in Uganda, Kawenja (2013) has argued that concern has focused on the quality of content and the style of programming to influence advertisers so that radio stations can generate revenue (p.33). Hence, aside from satisfying the needs of the listeners, radio stations have to consider how their audiences will generate revenue for them.

However, qualitative studies (e.g., Beatrice, 1997; Tulina 1999) on the radio industry have revealed that listeners are dissatisfied with commercial media due to the many commercials that air on private stations. As I analyzed different radio industry reports, for example, Mama FM Audience Report (2018) and CBS Focus Group Discussion Report (2013), the respondents

revealed that they are compelled to switch from one radio station to another because of the many advertisements played on the radio. They further specified that sometimes producers interrupt programs or music to place a very distressing ad (CBS report 2013, p. 16). Due to these kinds of revelations, I realized that listeners listen to radio not just as ‘background noise’ but for a purpose. Radio is thus, a companion tool for many people—one that helps them relax, listen to music, politics, and mostly connect to other people with similar interests. Beatrice (1996) conducted a study on the public station Radio Uganda listenership in comparison with the new private stations that had just emerged three years after the liberalization of the broadcasting media. In her qualitative research, respondents revealed that they still preferred Radio Uganda because it is a public station and therefore does not have as many advertisements as Capital FM and Sanyu FM, which depended on adverts to make a profit and sustain operations. Indeed, the interruption of adverts during programming disrupts listeners’ attention. As Douglas (1999) argues, “There is a reason to believe that people hate radio commercials because they disrupt our intimate relationship with radio” (p.40). Private stations aim to generate revenue; hence, they target the time when most people are listening to play commercials. And yet, paradoxically, too many ads cause a great sense of violation and compel listeners to switch from one radio station to another. One way in which the radio industry has attempted to attract/maintain their listeners despite the media competition is to allow user-generated content, broadcast relationship shows, and fit in the schedule of working middle-class urban dwellers.

A. Listener’s choice and Loyalty

This section highlights the importance of allowing user-generated content, where radio listeners become part of creating the content for the radio shows, the implication of having

professional and experienced radio presenters, and lastly the role of language, specifically radio stations adopting to broadcasting in indigenous languages as a means to maintain their audience.

Radio stations have sought to maintain and even increase the flow of their revenue by developing quality programming and allowing listeners to participate in creating content. Listeners prefer radio stations that focus on the listener's needs by broadcasting local content. As Beatrice (1996) argues, “If you want people to listen to your programs, then stations need to put listener’s condition of reception into consideration” (p. 6). For example, as we will see later in Chapter 3, KFM radio allows its listeners to participate in creating content for the *K-Drive Show*, a relationship show that has accrued a considerable listenership (National Media report, 2018/2019, p.5). Radio has become a tool of socialization that has given listeners space to share their intimate relationship stories, which cannot be found on other visual media like television. Listeners feel safer on radio than TV since their identity is not fully exposed. Thus, the radio becomes a safe space for listeners to share their personal life and daily experiences. Goretti, Linje, and Claudia (2012) have argued that “given the convergence of traditional radio with ICTs, the very definition of radio is changing, whereby it is no longer just conventional radio producers that create content now ordinary listeners have been empowered to participate by sending in their stories thus challenging the hegemonic control on content” (p.259). Likewise, Keller (2003) indicates that the head of programs for independent private stations hailed the presence of telephones (fixed and cellular) to enhancing “user-friendliness” among radio presenters and their listeners in Senegal. Hence, allowing listeners to be part of creating the program content attracts them to listen to their favorite programs and radio stations.

On the other hand, radio stations have received recommendations from their focus group studies about the inclusion of listeners in creating content. Mama FM (2018), a community radio station, also conducted a training program on audience research in 2018, and among the recommendations that respondents gave to improve the quality of their programs was to include listeners in creating program content (p.8). Respondents noted that most programs aired on Mama FM were conducted and created based on the presenter's knowledge and ability; hence, they do not reflect the needs of the listeners (Mama FM Report, 2018, p.1). According to this study, as a community radio station, Mama FM presenters need to consider including listeners in the creation of content that suit audience needs. Encouraging participation in content creation is beneficial as it ensures that the material is locally meaningful and could even lead to positive social change (Goretti, Linje, & Claudia, 2012, p.259).

It should be noted that creating content that fosters social change does not necessarily mean creating informational content but also, entertainment content which takes the most significant share of listenership to the radio. Haven and Lotz, (2017) argue that “many observers distinguish between entertainment and information services, with the latter typically identified as more important for the proper functioning of democratic societies” (p.7). However, this should not be the case. Entertainment media is likely to play a significant role in shaping the attitudes of social issues. This is another way radio stations in Kampala have sought to appeal to their listeners. In his study, Tulina (1999) noted that 67% of the respondents listened to the radio because of entertainment, mainly music (p. 26). The findings further indicate that 88% of the programs on the radio that appeal to listeners are entertainment and music programs. Even though this study was conducted 20 years ago, it aligns with the recent report findings from Ipsos (2018) and the National Media report (2018), which reveals that 65% of radio listeners in

Kampala are interested in entertainment and music. This elucidates that listeners' interests do not drastically change over time. A listener commented that "radio creates a feeling of nostalgia through the kind of music played, especially *golden oldies*, which remind them when they were young" (Hargrave 1994, p.8). The capital city is known as a hub of entertainment in Uganda. Therefore, radio stations are compelled to find the best entertaining music to keep their listeners hooked. For example, during the relationship shows, listeners are allowed to select the song choices they want to listen to. They can send the song requests through SMS messages, call-in live on air or send them on the shows social media pages for their songs to be played, which attracts the attention of the listeners to stay tuned as they wait to listen to their request. Hence, involving listeners, particularly during the love shows segment to select the music they want, has kept listeners hooked to their favorite stations. And so, radio has kept its mandate as a source of entertainment for listeners to enjoy all kinds of music that appeal to people's everyday life.

In addition to engaging listeners to participate in generating the content, radio stations have invested in recruiting professional presenters who engage listeners on the shows. Previous work on radio has further disclosed that the listener's relationship with radio is based very much on the relationship with the presenter, one listener said, "yeah, it's the DJs that make the show" (Hargrave, 1994, p.9). One of the famous and most preferred DJ on Capital was DJ Ronnie, who hosted *The Late-Date Show*. According to David and Moses (2009), "Ronnie effortlessly made the caller feel comfortable in sharing their story and making them feel like he is also sharing their joy or their pain" (para 2). They maintain that at the time of his sudden death, DJ Ronnie was arguably Capital FM's most significant attraction. As we can see, radio presenters are a vital part of what makes a given program exciting and appealing for the listeners because presenters create a sense of intimate connection with their listeners. Hence, "the impact of the new radio has

enhanced intimacy on the lives of people from all walks of life” (Hilmes, 2011 p.54). Listeners have hailed their favorite presenters of certain shows. For instance, Baguma (2003) gives an account of one of the longest-serving radio presenters at Radio Uganda, the first radio station in Uganda. He notes that Ms. Nakabuubi served at radio Uganda for over 35 years before moving to CBS radio. It should be noted that her excellent radio program known as *Ebilowozo bya abawuliriza* (Listeners’ Thoughts) had the highest listenership because she exercised professionalism, and her programs were educative. Baguma (2003) further explains that this program appealed to listeners because they had a chance to call and ask questions on a range of issues that affect them, more reason for having a vast listenership identify with her program, which has followed her to the new station. John, a listener to this program, commented that radio should be educative though most presenters promote immorality in the name of entertainment, and other radio stations treat them to a foreign culture (Baguma, 2003). Consequently, the most successful radio stations in terms of listenership have attracted their listeners by recruiting professional presenters and also maintaining presenters who have substantial experience in radio presenting, which has become a means for them to maintain/appeal to their listeners.

Similarly, Beatrice, (1996) in her study revealed that one of the reasons Radio Uganda was thriving at the time was because of its professional presenters, who created excellent content for their programs, which in turn kept attracting more listenership than other radio stations like Capital FM and Sanyu FM. which had recently emerged at the time. Her study was conducted twenty years ago. It informs this research because it reflects the time when the broadcasting sector was experiencing the advent of more private stations in the country after the liberalization of the media sector. Nevertheless, twenty years later, Capital Radio has become one of the most preferred radio stations and beats UBC Radio, formerly Radio Uganda, with the highest number

of listeners because it recruited youthful and skilled presenters that appeal to its target audience. This revelation has appeared in the current audience measurement studies conducted by Geo Poll (2019) and Ipsos (2018). From such numbers, we might conclude that in order for the radio to be relevant and a continuously evolving medium, the industry must invest in having qualified presenters exercising professionalism and providing the best content to their listeners. It takes a presenter to be creative for listeners to listen attentively and follow up. For this reason, radio is not regarded as “background noise” but rather as an information and entertainment device for the listeners.

Previous studies have illustrated how language is a significant factor in building strong nations and societies; it is against this background that radio stations have maintained their listenership through broadcasting in local languages. According to Keller (2003), the arrival of private radio stations introduced a new approach to radio production by inaugurating a truly “local” form of communication due to the systematic use of national languages. Likewise, radio in Uganda has become a tool for preserving indigenous languages since other mediums like television broadcast in the English language. In countries like Rwanda or Kenya, where people have a common language, it is more manageable; however, in Uganda, there is a range of diversity in language. Due to diverse languages, there is a growing number of radio stations in the country because of different languages spoken in various regions.

Nevertheless, in Kampala, the commonly used languages are English and Luganda since most people living in the capital understand these languages well. Despite the prevalence of both languages, Luganda remains more popular. For example, radio stations like CBS and Simba FM have higher listenership since they air their programs only in Luganda. Though the type of

language used does not necessarily fit all kinds of people as revealed by the Ipsos Report (2018), graphical data shows that respondents aged between 15-30 prefer listening to English stations while respondents aged 35 and above prefer Luganda stations consequently, this has compelled radio stations like Capital FM and Radio One, which was previously broadcasting their programs only in English except for a segment of Luganda news to start operating ‘sister-stations’ whose programs are all in Luganda to cater for the needs of all their listeners. In giving national languages a central place in their programming, radios have played an essential role of inclusiveness, given that radio reaches all groups of people, those educated and non-educated thus attracting more listenership, which has contributed to its continuous relevance despite other players in the market. For example, for the renowned relationship shows radio stations have programs that cater to all kinds of audiences, similar shows are aired in English and other in Local languages particularly in Luganda since the language is the most spoken in the city. More description of the shows is reflected in Chapter 3.

In this section, I have examined how radio has sought to maintain and grow their listenership by allowing audience participation in generating program content, programming in national languages, and employing professional and skilled presenters. In the next section, I illustrate how radio networks have structured radio schedules given their demographics to fit in the logic of the workday of the middle-class urban dwellers. Like the reasons outlined above this strategy seeks to uphold radio listenership despite the competition with other media networks.

B. When and Where do we Listen

In this section, I articulate how the schedule and programs are placed based on the time where and when most people are listening in. Since urban dwellers have a variety of choices to make when it comes to which media to consume, it is imperative for radio industries to pay attention to know what time most people listen and where do they listen from. Furthermore, I include the role played by demographics in listenership and how far radio stations can reach their audience.

Industrial research reveals that the positioning of programs on radio stations reflects and is determined by the time when most people are available to listen to the radio. My focus in this research has been on urban dwellers. According to UBOS (2016), Most people living in the capital are in formal employment; they have standard working hours from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The schedule for broadcasting specific programs is crucial for radio networks to target their listeners. They include the time element in their surveys since it assists the radio stations in identifying what time most people listen to the radio. According to studies conducted by Chibita and Richard (2013) and Girma, Natha and Zeyau (2018), most people listen to the radio in the morning hours between 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM and the evening between 9:00 PM and midnight, which aligns well with what is indicated in the industrial research. Thus, radio stations have to capitalize on these hours to broadcast programs that are appealing to the listeners. The data provided by media research firms reveals that most people listen to the radio from home and at night, which corresponds well with the time when most relationship shows are airing. The report further indicated that listeners have less time for radio during the weekend because they have other things to do, such as attending events and parties or going to church. As mentioned above, this research aimed at understanding some of the ways how radio industries have tried to attract and maintain radio listenership through (by) broadcasting relationship shows, which are

not usually aired on other mediums. Hence, relationship shows fit with the working schedule of urban dwellers, who have enough time to tune in and relax as they listen to the radio after a long day at work. Radio stations in Kampala, such as Capital FM, KFM, Digida FM, Beat FM, Dembe, and Sanyu FM, are among those that air relationship shows every day between 10 pm to Midnight, Monday to Friday. Kalule (1999) asserted that respondents said, “they love these kinds of shows because they air at the right time when they have returned from work that is between 9 pm-12 midnight” (p.33). And in the recent findings, 25% of the respondents from the report conducted by National Media Group, (2018-2019) specified that listeners love the *K-Drive Show* on KFM radio they are interested in relationship shows because they depict and relate to their everyday life.

On the other hand, Mama FM report (2018) highlighted in its recommendations that listeners urged them to add relationship shows to their new programs. Due to the nature of Mama FM as community radio, their focus and program structure are based on broadcasting educative programs for women. This station emphasizes news and sharing and success stories of women who have achieved significant accomplishments in their careers. For this station, radio is a means of empowering local women. Although listeners appreciated these programs, they suggested that if Mama FM wanted to increase its audience, they would need to air relationship shows like *Okusoma Embaluwa Yo 'lunaku*” (loosely translated as *The Letter of the Day*), a program aired on Beat FM in the local language. In *the Letter of the Day*, radio listeners send letters and usually, they are about family and relationship issues. This show is among the most listened-to program on Beat FM. Hence, the listeners urged the head of Mama FM to incorporate similar radio shows so that they can improve their listenership.

As I mentioned above, industry research shows that most people listen to the radio from their homes. In the radio scholarship, scholars have discussed the place of radio in people's homes, which plays an influential role in listening. Media scholars such as Spitulnik (2002), Hirschkind (2006), and Larkin (2008) have shown that places where people listen to the radio, differ due to social and cultural factors. Hence the question of where people listen from is imperative to foster attentiveness of the listeners, Douglas (1999) and Hargrave (1994) have illustrated that listeners' experiences are shaped by listening to the radio in private places, especially in the car or while driving since it enables them to listen attentively. As a result of these intimate spaces, the listeners engage in private and active listening to the radio, especially when the shows are about social issues that people relate with. Indeed, such an observation, underscores why programs like relationship shows have become popular since they are listened to privately, at a time when people are relaxing, and not busy. That said, the place of radio in peoples' homes has shifted from public areas to private, especially in Africa. As we saw in the previous chapter, listening to the radio started from public spaces, and it has shifted recently to secluded areas in homes, on mobile smartphones, and even to people's bedrooms. According to different surveys conducted by UBOS (2016), UCC (2016), and Ipsos (2018), in terms of accessibility, 88% of the people listen to the radio from the radio set in their homes and a small percentage listen from their mobile phones which have FM features. Moreover, 75% listen from home more than other places, such as public taxis or public spaces. This kind of revelation is crucial to radio stations so that they can provide and schedule programs for their listeners that capitalize on the intimacy of private listening. Also, the incorporation of FM radio features on mobile smartphones has improved the means of accessing and listening to the radio; it has boosted private active listening among other things.

As discussed above, the place of listening to the radio has changed over time. Radio has become more of a domestic device unlike in its early days when it was consumed publicly. Larkin (2008) explains that radio, which we tend to think of now as a domestic phenomenon, began its life in Nigeria as a public technology. In its early years, the vast majority of Hausa could only listen to the radio by gathering around public loudspeakers at certain times of the day (p.48). This phenomenon also applied to Uganda. However, with developments in information and communication technologies, as well as the progress of the radio industry, the incorporation of FM radio to other devices like mobile phones has boosted private active listening. Thus, we see the privatization of radio not just in terms of the industry but also in terms of listenership. Men usually listened to the radio collectively while women were doing house chores (Vokes,2007,p.817). However, with the recent shift to private listening, women can enjoy listening to the radio in private; thus, the percentage of both male and female listenership as indicated in the industrial research is evenly balanced between men and women (Ipsos, 2018. P. 30). As I have shown in the previous chapters, radio was dominated by programs that were mainly about news and politics, which were not appealing to all genders but, with the liberalization of the media industry, new radio stations have fostered the emergence of new programs such as relationship shows, and these shows appeal to both male and female listeners, which helps to explain the steady growth of female listeners in the data provided.

Another compelling point to consider when determining how radio stations have imagined and attracted their audience is the target audience their programs are serving. According to the World Bank Report (2017), Uganda is ranked among the countries in the Sub-Saharan region with the highest youth population, with an estimated 48.9% of Ugandans less than fifteen years old (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013, cited by Brian, 2013, p.29). Also,

UBOS (2016) projects Uganda's total population in 2017 at 37.6M, with youth (18-30 years-old) constituting roughly 22% of the population; meanwhile, children below 18 years of age represent 55% of the population meaning youth numbers will continue bulge. And most of these youth are living in urban areas, especially Kampala (Affairs, 2017, p.1). This explains why X-FM, according to the Ipsos report (2018), has a relatively high listenership compared to other radio stations. This particular radio station targets the youth; even their show presenters are youthful. Essential to note is that the youth are more aware of the current digital trends and popular culture. As a result, they are more engaged with modern life compared to adults 45 years-old and above. Brain (2013) suggests that “the youth love the internet and social media, meaning they are extremely interactive” (p.30). Therefore, for radio industries to survive, they have engaged the youthful Ugandan population and have focused more on “light content,” including music, and relationship programs. However, Bashariza (2007) revealed that people over the age of 45 are not consuming radio because the programs do not seem appealing to them. This can be attributed to the idea that radio stations in urban areas have paid more attention to youthful programming. Therefore, it is crucial for radio stations to have a balance in their programming to satisfy all kinds of listeners. This can be effectively done if they invest more in audience research to rule out their listeners' needs and expectations.

Finally, access, coverage, and the clarity of a radio station comprise another essential factor that the radio industry has considered in order to attract bigger audiences. The further the signal, the bigger the listenership. Consequently, radio industries have gone ahead and increased the scope of their radio frequencies further to other parts of the country beyond the central region to improve their visibility. The two stations, Capital FM and CBS, for example, have extended their services beyond the central region. As a result, they have higher listenership. The Ipsos

report (2018) reveals that Capital FM and CBS have extended their coverage beyond Kampala; thus, they have an extensive listenership compared to other stations that only cover the greater Kampala. However, their ranking can be attributed to the extension of their coverage to other parts of the region, which has grown the number of their listeners. The liberalization of the media in the 1990s has fostered the advent of more radio stations in the country, which increases competition among the stations themselves. Therefore, radio stations are compelled to extend their signals to other regions as a means to increase their scope.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to explore how radio industries imagine their listeners to keep radio relevant alongside other competing media among the urban dwellers. In this chapter, I argued that the commercial purpose of the radio industry is to generate income, which in turn helps it to remain relevant within the broader media economy. This research is informed by published reports by media research firms, individual studies and archival content. It aimed at understanding how radio stations have tried to attract and maintain their listenership to beat the competition with other media but also with one another.

As shown in the previous chapter, radio audience studies conducted by radio scholars in Uganda and other media research firms have revealed that radio in Kampala continues to be the most consumed media among urban dwellers. Radio has functioned both as an informative and entertainment tool to satisfy the social benefit of listeners. Margret (2002) asserts that “radios can only function as a public sphere in mediating messages and as a representation. This means that the listener’s interest and information needs should be represented well in all aspects of programming” (Margaret, 2002. P.24). Radio networks have tried to achieve this kind of structure through creating programs that are listener-friendly such as relationship shows that

engage listeners to participate in creating content, selecting their music, which turns them into everyday listeners.

CHAPTER III

RADIO AND ICTS ON THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE: THE CASE OF RELATIONSHIP SHOWS

It is not the media that is changing; it is the delivery systems that change; the tools that we use to access media change as technology changes. (Smith & Hendricks, 2010, p.6)

The media landscape in Uganda, and particularly in Kampala, has undergone a continuous change, years after the liberalization of the media industry. Kampala is the country's capital and has over 100 radio stations that account for 40% of the national total (Global Pulse, 2017, p.7). Radio is one of the most consumed media in Uganda and, as I argue, has undergone structural transformations from a passive medium to an active medium. It is worth noting that the advent of private stations in Uganda in the 1990s created a different feel of what radio was before and what it is today. A mix of local and international music, entertainment, and relationship shows have become the mandate of private stations. The technologies around us are continuously changing and evolving as new technologies become available. Considerable improvements in gathering, producing, and delivering content are occurring daily. Traditional media such radio have become an outstanding example of rather than an exception from this continuous change.

I agree with the body of scholars (e.g., Armbrust, 2012; Edgerton, 2006; Hendricks, 2010 Sterne, 2003) who have challenged the notion that “new media” are taking over traditional media such as radio. However, I argue that emerging digital technologies have shaped how radio networks have interacted, produced, and delivered radio programs. Hendrick (2010) asserts, “it is

not the media that is changing; it's the delivery system that changes" (p.6). As I show, the growing number of mobile phone subscribers and internet users has forged a powerful connection between listeners and radio presenters. It has captivated more interaction, user-generated content, and listener's participation in radio programming, especially relationship shows on several radio stations in Kampala. This, in turn, has given radio a whole new meaning within the context of urban Uganda

In this chapter, I illustrate how radio networks have integrated with new technologies to enhance the production of relationship shows that have become popular on most radio stations in Kampala. Mainly, I focus on the use of mobile telephones and social media platforms that have boosted the success of radio popularity. I focus on relationship shows in particular. In the previous chapter, I highlighted how radio networks had maintained their listenership by allowing listeners participation in generating content. This chapter elaborates more on how radio industries and technologies through the creation of relationship shows have made this possible. In other words, allowing listeners to be participants in creating content, especially on social issues such as relationship shows, is one way of emphasizing the idea of inclusion and participatory communication. The study is a contribution to the global debate on how information technologies are influencing radio's institutional culture and practices within the context of urban dwellers in Kampala.

My research reveals how the convergence of communication technologies with radio production has contributed to the success of social interaction and relationship shows, and the continuous consumption of radio among urban dwellers. It exemplifies the importance of media integration rather than focusing on distinguishing between old and new media, this chapter

instead, illuminates what Hendrick (2010) refers to as the convergence of new technologies with the way media is being distributed across multiple media platforms. “Theoretically, convergence has empowered ordinary people to tell their own stories themselves through radio” (Hendrick, 2010, p.13). This is evident in the way relationship shows that are leading the airwaves on radio stations across the country are structured and presented. This chapter unpacks the aural experiences of contemporary consumption of radio without falling into the traps of “old” vs. “new” technologies. It illustrates the magic of the act of listening itself, the idea of entering the world of sound that makes one draw their own imaginations and vision.

In the next section, I discuss the role of interactivity and how it has shaped the connection between listeners and presenters. I claim that the new form of radio communication has transitioned from being a passive medium to an interactive medium with the emergence of modern tools of production and distribution. Then, I examine the notion of affect and attentiveness that these relationship shows trigger among listeners, describing how the arrival of social media platforms and mobile telephones have considerably contributed to boosting the notion of affect and attentiveness among radio listeners.

A. Interactivity

The traditional radio has undergone a transition from having passive listeners to active listeners, and this transition in part has been possible because of the emergence of mobile telephones that enhance the listener's participation during the shows. I use the term ‘passive audience’ to explain the listeners engagement with the radio and it’s presenters. Radio in it’s early days was passively creating/giving information, without its listeners being part of creating

content or giving constructive feedback on the programs that were broadcasted, but, with the arrival of ICTs, this structure has changed, and listeners have become active participants in creating programs and engaging with the presenters. According to the statistics from the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) (2016), the number of telephone users in Uganda has increased, putting Uganda in the second position in the East African region after Rwanda. This means that Uganda is on track to reach 100% of mobile telephone connections in the country. Worth noting is that the use of cable telephones never gained much traction in Uganda before the rise of mobile telephony. Therefore, the increasing number of mobile telephone users has eased the work of radio stations to reach out to their listeners through live telephone calls during the shows or recording of them. For example, according to the National Media Report (2018/19), the *K-Zone on KFM Radio* is one of the most popular shows listened to in Kampala. It is aired in English, designed and created by listeners. That is, the presenter known as Doreen receives a letter from the listeners through WhatsApp or in the form of a text message (SMS). She reads it on air, shares it on the show's social media pages, such as Facebook or Twitter, for other listeners to provide their feedback. In most cases, she calls the person and speaks to them live on air, giving an overview of their situation. Then, the listeners call in during the show to share their advice for the person.

Besides reading letters, listeners have the chance to request their favorite songs during the show. Timothy, a media scholar and one of the first serving radio presenters in Uganda, asserts that "songs about love, heartbreak, and loneliness will continue to be the most listened-to in the world" (*Daily Monitor*, 2016). The idea of giving listeners a chance to select their music makes them feel that they are part of the program, and it keeps them interested. The show also allows people who are looking for partners to call in and search for lovers. On November 21, 2019, for

example, a listener called Winnie posted on the *K-Zone* page searching for a man to date. In most cases, the presenter calls the person to share details of what qualities they are looking for in a partner. All these segments keep the listener hooked, attentive, and able to participate in the show, which makes the radio show more enticing and renowned to the audience.

As indicated in the National Media Report (2018/19), this show has the highest number of listeners. We might attribute this high listenership to the interactivity between the listeners and the presenter. The listeners feel like they are part of the show. It allows them to connect with their presenters and to share their issues with other listeners. Douglas (1999) suggested that this relationship between listeners and presenters creates an “imagined community” whereby radio listeners share the same thoughts, music, and love over radio programs. This mood establishes a connection between listeners with radio.

Hence, the existence of mobile phones has partly reinforced an interactivity role between listeners and presenters. As Bonini (2013) remarks, “before the existence of telephones, radio did not know its listeners” (para 1). We might suggest, therefore, that the new form of radio has allowed radio to know its listeners through unprecedented active interaction in urban Uganda. The *K-Zone* host commented in the National Media Report (2018/19) that people’s feedback aids her in making the show much better and satisfy her listener's needs. We can see how the advent of the mobile telephone has created an active audience for radio. Ordinary people did not quickly adopt the use of landline telephones since they were known to be used in offices but not in homes, and a few people could afford them, but with the arrival of mobile telephones, they are affordable, which has increased their usage. Willem (2013) reveals that with the dawn of mobile phones in Zimbabwe, radio programmers have been able to get more feedback through phone

calls from listeners than ever before. He writes, “I feel that new technology has been an inclusive kind of radio and more interactive. Because before it was only concentrating on the landline, it was only concentrating on the elite” (p.6). The same change has been evident in the radio environment in Uganda. Radio stations have received more feedback and listener participation due to the increase of mobile telephone users.

These developments, however, are not just limited to the expansion of mobile telephony in the country. Indeed, radio stations also use Facebook pages to receive feedback about the shows, another format used to receive substantial feedback from the listeners. Therefore, mobile phones and social media platforms have enhanced the notion of interactivity and connection among listeners who have enthusiastically participated in a range of radio programs, especially on topics about relationships and dating.

The integration of ICTs with radio has democratized the arena of cultural citizenship, because of the extension of the boundaries of the public cultural spheres, where communities of interest can participate. It is vital to investigate how the internet and social media platforms have boosted social interaction on the radio. According to UCC’s (2016) strategic report, the number of internet subscribers in urban areas is increasing very fast. This means that urban dwellers can readily access the internet and use social media platforms. Most of the radio stations in Kampala have social media platforms where they can reach out to a range of audiences. For instance, Capital FM’s *Late-Date*, Sanyu Radio’s *Love Zone show*, and KFM’s *K-Zone Show* Facebook pages are some of the pages with the highest number of followers. For instance, the *Late-Date Show* on Capital FM has a Facebook page with over 31,000 followers, and this creates a

comfortable space for those users who are not able to call-in directly during the show to participate and provide feedback about the caller's situation.

Facebook users can fully participate in the program by sending in their comments on Facebook platforms, and the presenter reads them live on air. For example, on each post, published on the social media page for Capital FM, Sanyu FM, and KFM, over 300 people comment on each post. The participatory culture of these radio shows is emphasized even further in the new updated version of Facebook, which has introduced badges or tags such as 'Top Fan' or 'Top Commenter' which appear on the profile names of those people who comment frequently. The badges identify the users as the loyal fans of the page, which is both fascinating and inspiring to the fans to keep engaged with the radio show topics. Encouraging participation in content sharing and listeners phoning to give their feedback ensures that the content is locally meaningful and beneficial to the listeners. Hendrick (2010) emphasizes that "the future of the traditional media is impacted by the technology that provides consumers with the content they want when they want it" (p. 10). Therefore, the popularity of relationship shows has boosted social interaction on radio and preserved listening culture among urban dwellers.

The notion of connectivity between the listeners and the presenter is entirely concerned with their interaction. This level of interactivity involves listening to a favorite program/and even talking to them on air or engaging with them online. This interaction has created a feeling of connectedness. For some people in Uganda, radio has become a companion, as they tune in to the device to relax and destress from their daily anxieties. Douglas (1999) illustrates that radio has initiated different models of listening and that the listening process is not the same for all of us. In one of the letters to the editor, a writer called Tracy commented on her dissatisfaction with

other local stations after the disconnection of BBC Radio. She claimed that “in the BBC, I had a 24-hour companion who spoke to me something different each time. He (BBC) was intellectually stimulating without being lecture-room boring or overly formal. He had something for each occasion, serious and recreational” (*Daily Monitor*, 2012). She loved the station because of its timely, efficient, and professional manner compared to local stations. To her, BBC radio was her companion because she became emotionally attached to it since it exhibited efficiency and professionalism. Douglas (1999) says, “People listen to alter bad moods or sustain good ones” (p.31); therefore, radio is not merely background noise but both an informative and entertaining tool. With this kind of feedback from listeners, it helps to shape how radio stations can satisfy their listeners’ needs to keep them captivated with the device. More so, it challenges the hegemonic control of content production by radio presenters and producers.

It is essential to mention that, with the advent of mobile telephones, which have enhanced interaction on radio, radio has redefined the concept of community. It is no longer tied to the geographical location due to the easy access of FM radio in different parts of the country. It should be noted that for economic reasons, there has been rural-urban migration; people have moved from different parts of the country to look for better employment opportunities in urban places. In this case, radio has become a tool for bridging the geographical gap between people living in the city to connect with their family members. Radio has provided space for listeners to connect and seek advice, especially for those in long-distance relationships. It allows people to call through radio programs to send regards to their family members living far away from them. On November 5th 2019, for example, on the *Late-Date* show, the presenter was following up on Regina’s situation. She had raised an issue a month prior, lamenting the fact that she and her fiancée in a long-distance relationship. She lives in the upcountry while her partner lives in the

city. However, the fiancée wasn't engaged in the relationship. When they called him on-air, it seemed he had moved on. DJ Daniel, the host of the *Late-Date* show, called Regina again to find out how she was coping. This kind of gesture where the radio presenter follows up on his listeners. It makes one feel like the presenter is concerned about the listeners' situation and it builds a strong connection between the presenter and his/her listeners.

On the lighter note, some listeners feel satisfied when the presenter connects them on air with their loved ones living in distant places, and it makes them feel close. Hence, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the move by radio networks to extend their signals further has enabled them to reach a wider audience, and to allow listeners to listen to radio stations in the city even when they are not living in the same geographical location. It has enabled rural listeners to keep up to date with what is trending in the city, not just in terms of news but also society.

Willems (2013) argues that before the mobile phones became popular in Zambia, listeners used to interact with their presenters through writing letters to the station, due to the widespread of labor migration and extensive urbanization in Zambia. In this way, Zambians used to communicate with their families through radio which is a common scenario for people living in urban areas. However, what has made this interaction more fascinating is the increase in the use of mobile phones, which have enabled listeners to phone-in directly on-air, this development has affirmed this connectedness not only between presenters but with their distant family members. Letters are also a form of media, but mobile telephony has expanded the reach and speed of such rural-urban interconnectivity. In the case of relationship shows, couples who are in long-distance relationships make 'surprise calls' to their partners and others, and they ask the presenter of the show to speak to their partners live on air, which has created a feeling of

connectedness and building a lasting relationship for couples who are in long-distance relationships. For example, every year on Valentine's Day, presenters give a chance to all those couples in a long-distance relationship to call live on-air and wish their spouses or send love messages to their distant partners. Hence radio has promoted social interaction and bringing people closer.

Also, listening to the radio has been demographically gendered. Radio listenership among both males and females has become evenly distributed due to the new modes of consuming radio, which has been enhanced by the arrival of communication technologies. According to Ipsos (2018), the percentage of women listening to the radio at night is evenly equal to men. That is, 70% of men listen more to the radio between 6 pm -10 pm compared to 67 % of women who listen during the same time. The slight difference is an enormous turn since listening to the radio, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, was dominated by men than females in African societies, given the fact that few people/homes had radio sets. In one of the op-eds Alex (2017) a writer, was giving his personal experience how they were privileged to have a radio set in the whole neighborhood back in the days he recounts:

I realized that despite the humble condition that my family was in, we were so privileged that we were among the very few who owned a radio in the entire Kigarama village. The memories of this big, short, and medium wave 'National' radio sitting on one of the windows of our living house every evening whenever news time clocked are still vivid in my mind. We would position the radio in a place where people across and in the neighborhood could access the contents of what was being broadcasted (*Daily Monitor*, 2017).

This situates the real African style of how radio was listened to, in its early days owning a radio gave one a respective status in the village, it brought people together to listen collectively, but later on, radio became more affordable, and now with radio features on mobile telephones everyone can access radio, and listen from anywhere, anytime.

The increasing number of both women and men listening at night rather than other times of the day can be attributed in part to the broadcasting of relationship shows, as I have already mentioned. This is because the relationship shows relate to both men and women. This contrasts with a time when radio was known for political shows and foreign music, which took up the most prominent slots of the airtime. Due to the liberalization of the industry, radio has witnessed a shift from this routine with the dawn of private stations. The radio has become more of an entertainment tool with local music and relationship programs, which have attracted diverse audiences. As I analyzed several Facebook pages of different stations, I realized comments from both men and women in posts. At the same time, the posts received are evenly distributed between males and females. For example, in a week, they post five letters, and from those three out of five can be from women or men. The posts are selected on a first come- first serve basis. The presenter makes sure that they balance the gender so that all sexes can benefit from the show. This elaborates that the popularity of relationship shows can be ascribed to the idea that the shows attract both men and women compared to other programs.

Furthermore, with the arrival of the internet, radio stations in Kampala have established their online presence. Over fifteen FM stations in Kampala broadcast over the internet, including Capital FM, CBS radio, KFM, Galaxy FM, Radiocity, Power FM, among others. Digital broadcasting is allowing these stations to reach a broader audience. “If we reflect on how we

maintain our family relationships, friendships and relationships with our colleagues, how learning, work, and leisure take place, everything is done nowadays with the use and help of technologically based communication media” (Hepp et al., 2018, p.4). For example, During the “request hour” which airs live on the *KFM* Facebook page, listeners who live abroad send in their song requests and comments while they listen live from the States or wherever they are. Therefore, radio stations broadcasting over the internet have aided Ugandans who are in the diaspora to enjoy local stations wherever they are and to keep connected to their families and to what is happening in the country.

Apart from the presence of radio stations broadcasting over the internet, some radio stations have further introduced live streaming on the radio during programs through their social media pages like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In these instances, listeners who have access and can afford internet on their computers or handheld gadgets can see presenters appearing live on air, which has brought a new wave of audio-visual radio in Kampala thanks to the arrival of social media and the internet. Megan (2017) questions what radio industries are doing to adapt to the new audio-visual technology to keep abreast with new developments. But this audio-visual technology has already been adopted by some private stations in Kampala. For example, since September 2019, the *K-Zone* show has adopted a visual element where the host streams some part of the shows live from the studio using the station’s Facebook page, especially when she is receiving a live call from the listener. She reads the Facebook comments live, which motivates Facebook users to stay active and engaged. This form of adapting to streaming live shows is also common on Capital FM, RadioCity, Dembe FM, which use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for an experience that is both audio and visual.

The first audio-visual radio in Kampala known as *NXT Radio* was launched last year, and it has brought a new wave of streaming live radio programs. This audiovisual experience allows the radio audience to decide whether to listen or watch it live as you please provided, they have internet. The producer noted that “the internet fully powers the newly unveiled NXT radio, always online 24/7 in a bid to serve a wider population over the internet” (Humphrey, 2018, n.p.). Even though *NXT radio* has not introduced relationship shows, it still asserts itself as radio, not something else, and has so far appealed to a broad audience online. The arrival of this kind of audio-visual radio is a proof that radio industries are engaging with new technologies, and are continuously finding new ways of keeping radio as medium relevant, but not to be forgotten and replaced in this digital age.

Also, the Uganda Communications Commission is in a plan to launch digital radio after the successful launch of digital television in Uganda. As part of the digital migration process, which was commissioned in 2005, Uganda targets 2020 as the time to make the leap into digital audio broadcasting. Digital radio, or high-definition radio, converts analog audio into a digital signal and transmits it to an assigned channel on the AM or, more often, FM frequency ranges (*Uganda Business News*, 2017). These developments are an indicator of how the traditional media are continuously advancing and integrating with new technologies to fit the changing media landscape. While the radio industry is preparing to shift to digital radio, this is an indication that that radio is still relevant to the people, and these improvements are meant to make it stand out among other media that is consumed. Willems (2013) illustrates that:

the rise of the internet and mobile phones has given old media institutions a chance to transform themselves from top-down, challenging the hegemonic structure of media

institutions into participatory organizations that more regularly interact with their audience via new media (p.2).

Hence, radio has become a key ingredient for many city dwellers, who enjoy everyday pleasures and active engagement, which contribute to the overall urban experience.

As I have discussed above, the integration of information technologies with radio networks have challenged the top-down control of content creation and allowed user-generated content, boosted interactivity among listeners, and fostered the success of relationship shows that have enhanced social interaction. In the next section, I go into detail on how interactivity and connectivity have created another form of listenership, which is attentiveness and affection among radio listeners by way of listening to relationship shows, which have become popular on various stations in Kampala.

B. Affect/Emotions

Kunreuther (2014) describes the voice as a “figure of speech” that initiates intimacy, consciousness and the presence associated with it (p.74). Hence sensory capacities enhance hearing soulfully, emotionally and intimately through audio sounds like radio. According to Hirschkind (2006), “listening invests the body with affective potentialities, depositing them in preconscious folds of kinesthetic and synesthetic experiences and in doing so, it endows it with the receptive capacities of the sensitive heart” (p.69). Relationship shows arouse emotional attachment, as evidenced when listeners call in to give their personal experiences relating to what the caller is going through. Callers also use radio as a comfortable space for getting relationship advice. The similar scenario is elaborated in Hirschkind’s (2006) ethnographic study. He

emphasizes the importance of listening to the sermon cassettes in Egypt and recounts from his interviewees that listening to these recorded sermons helps them to relax and create a close relationship with God. The author suggests that memory is not built upon ideas and much less upon visual images but rather on the reactivation of gestures, understood as sensory sediments of prior perception (Hirschkind, 2006, p.79). Since the relationship shows at the heart of this study mostly air at night, I argue that the pleasure of listening to the shows comes not only from hearing the battling parties reveal the most intimate details of their failing relationships but also from the commentary and questions from the listeners calling in the show. Douglas (1999) defines this form of listening as *associational listening*, “where concepts are linked together, not according to our brains but rather according to events or periods in our lives” (p.34). For example, On October 25, 2019, on *The Late-Date* show Facebook page, a user called Elamu Daniel expressed gratitude to the host of the show, saying, “thanks to the show it has changed my life and making relationship decisions.” During the show, listeners call in searching for relationship partners and one of the users expressed their appreciation towards the station saying, “thanks for hooking us up with the lovers of our lives, thanks for the entertainment, long live 91.3 capital FM”. These shows effortlessly helped listeners to learn and unlearn from issues that affect their everyday life.

The concept of attentiveness has altered the listening culture, whereby the relationship shows require one to listen and follow with attention. Hirschkind (2006) refers to this notion as “listening with the heart” (p.82). He explains that “listening imbues the body with affective potentialities, and relaxed attentiveness of this auditory practice invests the body with emotional intensities” (p.82). Hence, this affect can only be achieved through aural practices. Furthermore, listening to the radio has more recently undergone changes as radio has been drawn more into

private spaces. As I stated in the previous chapter, the idea that radio is consumed more domestically rather than publicly has enabled private listening. This can also be ascribed to the fact that with the emergence of new technologies, FM radio features have been incorporated mobile telephones, which has enabled people to listen more privately. Listening creates one set of emotions, but also when this listening is put into interactivity spaces, it encourages more listening and attention because listeners are interested in participating and engaging with the show. These seemingly contradictory patterns—intimacy and interactivity—exist in harmony in contemporary radio listenership in Kampala.

It is important to note that people listen and interact with radio in different ways due to social and cultural factors. Douglas (1999) elaborates how the entry of radio enhanced private listening in the boom of radio in the American context. It made its entry into people's homes, and people were able to listen from their cars privately. Moores (2009) adds that during the 1930s in Italy, radio was introduced as a mass medium, but later radio made its entry into the homes of people, which Jacque Donzelot referred to as “the withdrawal to the interior space” (p.24) as people needed headphones to listen to the device. On the contrary, in the African context, radio was heard to collectively and publicly. For example, In Uganda, not everyone could afford a radio much less have many options of stations to listen to. Consequently, those who owned radios in the village would gather with other locals to listen to the radio. It was after independence in Uganda when the new structural adjustment program was introduced, that enabled the emergence of privately-owned radio stations. More so radio sets have become affordable for the middle working class who live in urban areas. “It was later after 20 years that most households were able to buy their private radios” (Richard, pg. 812). But the advent of earphones came after the emergence of mobile telephones. In other words, until the increase of

cellular phones, headphones were not used in domestic homes. This pattern runs contrary to the American case, where headphones entered the home with the early spread of radio, only to disappear and then reappear decades later.

Nevertheless, the dawn of smartphones, with radio features available, has enhanced and drawn people to enjoy listening privately. Despite the different modes of listening, still, the radio plays an important role in bringing people to listen together, whether individually (using headphones) or collectively (listening from a loudspeaker). Since radio has made its way into people's private spaces, it has initiated a new approach to how people choose to listen to the device. Thanks to the changing communication technologies, the way of consuming radio has taken a different shape and has become more private and intimate, it has evoked a sense of intimacy where one can listen to programs such as relationship shows in the comfort of their homes without being interrupted. Therefore, the availability of these digital and communication technologies has provided more ways of listening to the radio in private spaces, in this case individual listening initiates "active engagement," and requires the attention of the listener to enjoy these kinds of shows.

Lastly, the primary aim of this chapter was to explore how the integration of radio with other communication technologies has changed the experience of listening to the radio, and, more so, to deconstruct the notion of old versus new media. Edgerton (2006) argues that the term technology has often been linked to innovation. He notes that "when we think of information technology, we forget a postal system, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio" (p. xvi). He refers to them as "reserve technologies," and this misconception of old versus new media has contributed to such reserve media being neglected, including the radio. Nevertheless,

for many scholars the allure of “new” technologies is too tantalizing to give up. However, it is essential to understand media as a blend of both old and new technologies. As I noted above, mediums cannot survive independently; they exist in an ecology of other media, technologies, and protocols. Thus, the combination and adaptation of new technologies should be a means of preserving mediums like the radio, as it still plays a significant role in society today. I also highlight the role played by the popular relationship shows and how these shows have wholly unpacked the themes of interactivity, connectedness, affection and intimacy for radio listeners due to the integration of radio technologies and digital technologies.

Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated how the use of mobile phones, the internet, and social media platforms has shaped and changed the way people consume radio in contemporary times. Arceneaux (2016) emphasizes that even “though the traditional radio faces competition from satellite radio, online radio, and audio platforms, the radio still offers a rich, multi-lived tapestry that foreshadows the countless innovations in modern forms of electronic media; nonetheless, it has survived through changing the way it delivers its content along the way” (pg. 343). Therefore, it is vital for media scholars not to overly shift from old media to the new media, but rethink the history of technology, embrace new media along side old press. I have shown that the preservation of radio has been effective in part because of the power of the interactivity fostered by telephones, internet, and social media platforms. Consequently, the emergence of online streaming, podcasts, online radio, and satellite radio should provide an opportunity to reflect on the radio’s long existence rather than overlooking it, and this will allow media scholars to further refine our understanding of listening practices themselves.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to appraise the aural experience of listening to the radio in the boom of digital technologies among Ugandan urban dwellers in Kampala. As such, it sought to give a new definition of radio as a dynamic tool for everyday social life among listeners. To accomplish this objective, I explored the contribution of relationship shows and how their popularity has partly helped the radio to survive alongside other media technologies available for the audience. The study clarifies how relationship shows have created feelings of affection, connectedness, interactivity among radio presenters and their listeners.

The existence of ICTs and their increased penetration among urban dwellers have, on the one hand, contributed significantly to the above discourse. The presence of mobile telephones, internet, and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have enhanced content creation especially for the relationship shows. The structure of these shows suits the demographics of the listeners, and the radio shows have become intimate spaces whereby listeners feel comfortable to share their personal relationship stories as I have illustrated in the last chapter. Indeed, the arrival of ICTs has allowed users to tell their own stories the way they want, embraced user interaction and user generated content, thus, challenging the hegemonic structure of early radio.

In addition to the above observations, my research joins the debate among global radio scholars about the fate radio as a so-called “traditional medium.” I have deconstructed the idea that radio is a failing medium on the verge of collapsing. The study further refutes the claim made by technology determinists that digital technologies are replacing conventional media such as radio. I illustrate that it should not be a question of competition or which media replaces the

other instead, media industries need to pay attention to how these mediums can complement each other. I further explore how radio in its new form is still considered a modern technology, given that sound and vision create a different feeling within the human body; that is, sight creates a sense of intellect and hearing boosts the sense of affect. Landsberg (2015) defines affect as an experience of being moved by issues or actions which we feel a personal state (p.18). Thus, and this resonates to how listeners relate to each other's experience of the relationship stories shared on the shows because they recount to the situation the other person is going through. The relationship shows thus, turn into space where people feel interconnected. Radio in African and elsewhere in the world continues to be an effective medium and source of information, entertainment for a wider audience. Radio in its contemporary times has continued to reinforce and preserve culture, language, a tool for nation-building, and make people faraway feel closely connected due to the rise of digital technologies.

Penetration of these information and communication technologies in the country is still limited to certain places due to poor infrastructure, especially in rural areas where there is a lack of electricity along with challenges in maintenance and issues of affordability. As a result, the use of the internet and television is still a challenge for people living in rural areas. Nevertheless, people living in the urban centers upon whom this research centered can access media technologies like the internet and mobile phones. And in this case, they have a variety of media to consume given their access to a vast landscape of technologies and media forms.

Lastly, the research describes the historization of listening in Uganda amidst the evolving media landscape that has gone through various stages, from one public state-owned radio station to over 200 privately owned stations that have commenced due to the liberalization policy.

Despite the state censorship and the frustration of media freedom, radio is and continues to be the most consumed media among urban dwellers. Alcon (2013) argues:

The prevalent corruption and lack of regulation and accountability, not to mention the interference by governmental bodies coupled with inadequate radio studies and research, are the biggest challenges to the radio's progress. (p.27)

Therefore, for radio to continue being an active medium, there is need for radio industries to invest in comprehensive and qualitative research on radio and audience studies, in order for the medium to remain vibrant and influential.

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