

8 'Radio locked on @Citi973'

Twitter Use by FM Radio Listeners in Ghana

Seyram Avle

In many places, radio remains a social institution that binds local communities together (Girard 2003; Moyo 2013a, 2013b; Mudhai 2011; Willems 2013). Of the 'newer' technologies that have proliferated globally since the 1990s, mobile phones' reach in both industrialized and non-industrialized countries remains a salient fact. As has been shown elsewhere (for instance, Girard 2008; Gagliardone 2015), mobiles are key to the evolved mediascape observed in Africa. In Ghana, since privately-owned radio station Joy FM began the practice of including phone-in song requests in the early 1990s, with listeners calling the station to request songs for friends and loved ones, new and networked media have steadily become part of industry practice over the last two decades (Avle 2011; Coker 2012). The question that remains is how audiences use other forms of new media, particularly social media, to engage with and participate in terrestrial radio content.

These other forms such as social network sites (e.g. Facebook), microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), and a range of web-enabled platforms (such as Whatsapp) are already used by radio stations to connect with their audiences. The increased participation encouraged by producers and also initiated by listeners not only speaks to the market logics of commercial radio (Willems 2013) but also signals a slow shift towards the everyday use of web-enabled technologies for a segment of the African population. As has been discussed extensively, these sorts of merging of media technologies and content represent media convergence (Jenkins 2006; Deuze 2006; Jenkins and Deuze 2008; Willems 2010, 2013). Jenkins (2004: 33; 2006) has argued that convergence is 'more than simply a technological shift'; it represents a 'cultural shift' as well. Convergence culture sees a blurring of consumption and production; a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes in media. In the converged media space, radio is not separate from new media and the affordances of social media map well onto the display of sociality on live broadcast radio.

This chapter presents empirical evidence from Ghana, specifically the ways that some audiences listen and engage with radio via the microblogging site Twitter. I examine a sample of 299 public tweets that listeners of an Accra-based radio station, Citi FM, posted online between 25 and 29 December 2013. I show how the prosaic ways of tweeting and publicly

addressing others on the platform work to enhance the sociality of radio in Ghana. Internet use in Ghana is still relatively low—at the end of 2013, only about 12 percent of the population used the internet (ITU 2015)—and so we are at best in the early days of understanding the ways that audiences engage with multiple media and become users of online content. However, the glimpse we get of those listening and tweeting while listening to radio demonstrates that, like audiences elsewhere in world, those in Africa merge multiple media in ways that make sense to them. The context of low usage in Ghana (and indeed Africa) does not negate the experiences and expressions of those online now. If anything, it gives us a contemporary on-going view of how old and new media come together in the everyday, and provides analytical purchase for later, when more people are online, to see how specific processes become (or do not become) popular. This chapter's contribution then, beyond providing another context through which we might compare media cultures, is that it offers a contemporary glimpse of how audiences, acting as users (Livingstone 2003), interact with a sociable medium (radio) through social media. By examining tweets of listeners online, I show the ways that interactivity intersects with sociability on-air and provide evidence of the ways in which African audiences are incorporating new technologies into existing practices as they become available.

Twitter Use by Listeners of CITI 97.3 in Ghana

Radio's continued significance in Africa is as notable as the increased use of new information and communication technologies across the continent. Local language, community and commercial radio appear to be the most widespread forms since the 1990s when many states opened up the market for private ownership of media. Local language radio is sometimes seen as divisive, which it can be under some circumstances, such as the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007 and during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (Kellow and Steeves 1998; Ismail and Deane 2008; Li 2004; Makinen and Wangu Kuiru 2008). However, it also has the potential to hold 'emancipatory appeal in relation to open, free and fair discourse' (Mudhai 2011: 257). In Ghana, one is as likely to find local language radio in urban areas as English speaking stations. Radio in Ghana is highly reflective of socio-economic and cultural changes within the nation. The point at which radio, mobiles, and internet uses converge is one that demonstrates the deeply embedded radio culture in Ghanaian society and the emerging integration of new media practices into its structures.

Terrestrial, commercial radio in Ghana is still an 'industrial production', as Bruns (2008) terms it, and thus new practices via social media work within the established socio-cultural parameters set for engagement and participation through the industry. Commercial radio in the country is vibrant, lively and covers everything from politics, sports and entertainment to talk, news, etc. There is certainly no lack of opinion on radio airwaves—from

politicians defending their actions or making accusations to people reporting incidents on the streets and hosts clamouring for one thing or the other. Joint consumption practices, i.e. listening with others—either in a private or a public space—are fairly common. This may have been obliterated in some other places (Mudhai 2011) but in Ghana, as is likely in other African contexts, one is wont to hear radio in public transportation (especially the minivans called *trotros*), in open market places, hairdressing salons, in both rural and urban spaces.

Convergence, from within industry practices, characterizes how radio stations create and distribute their content and how audiences access and participate in radio. Empirical work on institutional practices in radio and the digital turn in different African contexts is on the uptake, more so on audience participation via new media. For instance, Chiumbu and Ligaga (2013), using data from South Africa, have argued that new media technology use in radio has played a role in radio stations now seeing their audiences as publics. Willems (2013) reminds us that the use of Facebook by Zambian stations furthers professional goals, while Mabweazara (2013: 232) has argued that while the range of options for reception has increased through the use of new media, 'traditional forms of reception remain in force' in the South African context. These and others have started to do what this volume aims for: providing accounts of the ways that 'old and new media converge in the everyday lives of Africans within a rapidly globalising context' (Willems and Mano, this volume). The range of contexts enriches the process of theorizing media cultures in Africa.

In Ghana, Coker's (2012) work produced a close reading of text message (SMS) responses to radio panel discussions (RPDs) for two of Accra's radio stations (Joy and Peace FM). He argued that the increased use of mobiles facilitated a culture of self-expression, motivated by ideological formations and expressions of dissatisfaction about personal, social and national issues, among other things. Research on internet use in Ghana has been ethnographic and interview-based, with a population of urban youth often found in internet cafés (see for instance Burrell 2012a, 2012b; Fair *et al.* 2009; Slater and Kwami 2005). These studies have argued mainly that users tend to see the internet as a means for chatting, for personal socio-economic gain through—often labelled as questionable—practices with foreigners online. However, this perception seems to be changing as the broader context of internet use in Ghanaian society shifts and different kinds of access—including home, office and mobile web—continue in line with different kinds of uses. As more diverse populations get online and research user practices in relation to other media continue, it is likely we will find that, as elsewhere, new information technologies are 'a fountain of connections for imagining and reconfiguring the self, the family, the community, and the nation' (Fair *et al.* 2009: 30). Below I will detail how audiences of one Accra-based, English-speaking station in Ghana interact with the station via Twitter, focusing on the various conventions displayed, the topics given

attention and the interactivity between listeners and the station, as viewed in commenting and sharing via addressivity and retweeting.

Twitter

Twitter is both an SNS and a microblogging site. In the last decade or so, social network sites (SNSs) have facilitated new forms of interactivity both online *and* on air. Ellison and boyd (2013: 157) define an SNS as a

networked communication platform in which participants 1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site [emphasis theirs].

The use of the noun form of the word ‘network’ instead of the verb form (‘networking’) is a crucial distinction in understanding how such sites serve as a platform (or space) for different kinds of sociality to take place. It also highlights the centrality of one’s network, one that is (often) publicly articulated, and affords the opportunity to view others’ networks. Ellison and boyd’s labelling of ‘user-generated content’ is also relevant; SNS users write, post, remix, forward, and share in all kinds of content that they find relevant to their lives and, in their estimation, to those of their online ‘friends’ or ‘followers’. SNS users are not just individuals; companies, governments, educational institutions, military establishments, etc. all now use SNS in a similarly personalized way. Sites like Facebook and Twitter are increasingly a space where producers and consumers of all kinds of goods and services interact.

Gathering a large number of ‘followers’, ‘fans’ or ‘friends’ on SNSs represents a potentially large listenership or broad audience for a media producer. A radio programme host now has more content (text messages, tweets, Facebook posts) to parse through for selection, and can simply read or take what comes through first or sounds most interesting. Social media participation is an added entry point that could result in conversation with a listener which in turn may or may not get included in the content that is put on air. While listening to radio shows on Citi FM (or any other elite station in Ghana), it is striking how fluidly programme hosts move across multiple conversations—with audiences via text and online sources, with co-presenting studio hosts, as well as with phoned-in public officials or journalists. This dexterity acknowledges that both radio and social media respond to an underlying aspect of human communication—sociality—and thus complement one another where possible.

Twitter started in 2006 and now has over 310 million active users who tweet in 40+ languages (Twitter 2016). Its structure allows short messages

of 140 characters to be shared to a list of 'followers' in either a private (i.e. visible to only those in the list of followers) or public manner (anyone on the internet who searches the Twitter platform). Built to function like SMS on mobile phones, Twitter is accessible via various modalities, for instance, directly from the website, through short codes via SMS, or through third party applications for computers, phones or tablets and is not limited to specific kinds of internet access or protocol or even phone type.

Brock (2012: 535) points out that Twitter's simplicity makes it stand out and its 'perceived affordances [...] help to shape cultural uses of the service'. Among these uses are 'following', i.e. adding people to one's stream, 'retweeting' (or forwarding another person's tweets to others), replying (by specifying the person responded to) and the use of the hash tag to signal topics. Following can be viewed as a 'directed friendship model' where self-presentation 'takes place through ongoing "tweets" and conversations with others, rather than static profiles [...]. The potential diversity of readership on Twitter ruptures the ability to vary self-presentation based on audience, and thus manage discrete impressions' (Marwick and boyd 2010: 3). This is crucial to understanding how the diversity of one's imagined audience, whether consciously or unconsciously, shapes how one presents one's self through updates and conversation.

Twitter users combine talk of daily activities with seeking out and sharing information. Rather than a one-way stream of updates, short conversational exchanges occur often, with some longer ones involving multiple participants. The use of the @ sign 'as a marker of addressivity' (Honeycutt and Herring 2009: 1) allows users to direct messages or tweets to specific users, and the ability to follow people facilitates tracking of conversations despite the large number of tweets and the speed with which they are posted. Citing Werry's (1996) work on Internet Relay Chats, Honeycutt and Herring (2009) describe addressivity as the way a user indicates who a message is targeted at by typing the person's name at the beginning of the message. Werry (1996) noted that in a multi-participant public environment, a high degree of addressivity is necessary to get the addressee's attention (cf. Honeycutt and Herring 2009). Addressivity then is 'a strategy for creating cross-turn coherence online' (Honeycutt and Herring 2009: 2). On Twitter, this functions as a dual signal to the intended addressee as well as indicating in some instances who the message is about. Addressivity, then, indicates who is targeted and included in a message in a 'noisy' environment such as Twitter (Honeycutt and Herring 2009).

To share information, users can also 'retweet' another user's posts to their own followers, either by putting 'RT' before the copied text or using the Twitter auto retweet function where one does not lose character count. In some cases, as seen in the sample examined for this chapter, one can simply put quotation marks around a copied tweet and name the originator in another tweet.¹ In general, the diversity of abiding by the most commonly used conventions on Twitter poses a challenge to analyzing content but this

is not insurmountable. The more pertinent issue is that the variability highlights the evolving practices and user conventions on the site, as well as the multiple understandings that users bring to them.

Citi FM (Accra)

Citi FM is an English-speaking Accra-based commercial radio station that started broadcasting in November 2004, operating out of a busy part of the city near the central business district. The station's programming, both on and off air, is heavily focused on business and public affairs. It produces and airs its own documentaries on historical subjects and frequently designates monthly themes that cut across programmes, for instance 'management development month' for June 2014. Like other commercial stations, it is run primarily as a business that sells audiences to advertisers and traditional journalistic values, as they operationalize these, are part of the product value chain. Various issue-driven programmes are supposedly 'backed by innovative listener-driven on-air programmes, and exciting promotions with vibrant audience participation' (Citi FM 2014). The station claims on its website that it is 'well-noted to be listener-focused with innovative on-air programmes, promotions, outdoor events and comprehensive news'. This is supported by a list of awards such as the 2012 'Most Innovate Newsroom in Africa' at the 16th Telkom Highway Africa Awards, 'Best Radio Programme' for Eye Witness news by the Chartered Institute of Marketing Ghana, 'New Radio Station of the Year' and 'Talk/Interactive Show of the Year' for the Citi Breakfast Show, both in 2007 by the BBC.

Elite stations like Citi FM in Ghana take a very involved web approach. Their 'About Us' pages are far more detailed, their websites have more diverse content, and their social media presence is more palpable. The social media pages in particular are dynamic, partly due to the formats of the popular SNSs that use the same interface regardless of country. More importantly, it is where one can assess interactivity between the station and its audience, in conjunction with what goes on-air. Even though all stations include phone calls and SMS messages from their audiences and interviewees, elite stations draw from social media more and incorporate that content into live programming.

Those most likely to use the social media tools the station prefers fall within the demographic bracket of urban-based youth between the ages of 18 and 35. Facebook's analysis of the station's most engaged 'fans' and 'friends' shows them to be between the ages of 18 and 24, and Sysomos (a proprietary web analyser) reports that Citi FM's Twitter followers are about 75–80 percent male and 90 percent based in Ghana.² A study of Twitter use by Africans claims that Accra is the most active city in West Africa, and that the average age of people tweeting from Africa is between 20–29 years (Portland Communications 2012: 2015). About half of tweets sent from the continent are from mobile devices, reflecting the ITU's

observation that mobile internet access grew over 40 percent between 2010 and 2014 (Portland Communications 2012; ITU 2015). In general then, Citi's tweeters look like other African tweeters both in demographics and access—youthful, urban, and mobile. How these young people respond to the station on social media is related to what goes on on-air.

To see how Twitter use reflects participation and the underlying sociability between broadcasters and audiences, tweets related to the search term @citi973 were downloaded using the statistical software NVivo's NCapture web browser add-on. The Accra-based English-speaking radio station, Citi FM, is the station being examined, with their handle on Twitter being @citi973. Citi FM reaches the same audience as stations that have received attention in the literature, such as Joy FM (Avle 2011; Coker 2012). The tweets that were retrieved were published between 25 and 29 December 2013. I created a public account and followed a number of Ghanaian radio stations in order to do this. NCapture returned 299 public tweets using @citi973 as the search term.³ This was done so that other users' mention of the station handle could be downloaded, instead of just those that the station retweeted from its account.

To properly code each tweet or retweet, a number of factors such as the username and who was mentioned had to be identified to make sure that audience-generated ones could be separated from those published by the station and its staff, some of whom are fairly active users on Twitter. According to NVivo, the system selects a number of tweets based on traffic and tweets available from Twitter, and this data is then imported straight into NVivo for coding. This produced a surprisingly limited number of tweets relative to other similar queries by the researcher on other Twitter data tools. However, the decision to retain this set was based on the fact that the sheer number of tweets is not the most pertinent reason for download but it was enough to give a range of tweets from different users across different days and times.⁴

I coded through NVivo with the aim of providing a detailed and contextualized look at how this particular audience interacts with the radio station through tweets. The goal was not to provide a generalizable account of the audience, and given that social media—especially Twitter—is a 'noisy' environment that is subject to variability (Honeycutt and Herring 2009). For instance, the time of day that the tweets were downloaded from and events happening both online and offline related to the topic or person, etc. render any snapshot as just that—a snapshot, not an exhaustive or generalizable observation. However, useful observations such as the character of tweeting exchanges and the situation prompting them can be gleaned for insight into the practices of audience participation in radio and convergence culture.

Existing Twitter research on audiences and users has used a range of methods to analyze content. For those seeking to understand users' motivations, reasons and strategies for tweeting, interviews have gleaned that information directly from users (e.g. Marwick and boyd 2010). Others, such as Brock (2012), have analyzed both the discursive elements of, and the

interface of Twitter itself as a platform, to critically analyze representations of race on the platform. In some cases, the search terms on the Twitter API return the most relevant tweets and these are content-coded via textual analysis (e.g. Best and Meng 2015). Some studies, such as Java *et al.*'s (2007), examine both the content and motivations of Twitter users, combining an analysis of why and how people use Twitter. Essentially, the main motivation and question guiding the research leads the methodological choices. For this chapter, the goal was to be able to see how listeners were publicly responding to radio content via Twitter. The advantage of examining just the tweets of audiences allows us to evaluate to what extent listeners are 'producing' radio content online. How they use the conventions and affordances of Twitter helps us see the ways that they respond to the sociality of the broadcasters on air. By examining what they tweet and what they respond to in the African context, we get closer to understanding how media culture is evolving in contemporary Africa.

Each tweet was content-coded into categories based on expectations of addressivity, i.e. messages directed at the station, in response to on-air content, online content or a general comment. They were also coded for topics and retweets (a measure of sharing or shareability) to see which themes garnered attention and/or resulted in some audience activity. Retweets were coded in the same way as the original tweets in terms of addressivity, but separately for shareability. This way, we do not double count the substantive text but are also able to see which ones are most retweeted or shared by users. Citi FM's staff tweets were treated separately from its audience, and to do this, I searched through the user information provided, cross-checked with available information on the station's website to ascertain who was a staff member and who was not. The time the tweet was sent indicates to what degree the participation was synchronous or near synchronous, given the ephemeral nature of radio broadcasts. I listened to live programmes before, during, and after the downloads to get a better sense of how the tweets functioned on live broadcasts. I have included these in the analysis below.

Citi FM Audience Tweets

Most tweets were from within Ghana, with a few coming from the United States and the United Kingdom. There were a total of 113 unique users identified for the total of 299 tweets and retweets. The audience ranged from light users with low numbers of followers and/or people following to those with thousands of both. Most had tweets numbering in the hundreds but these depend on a number of factors beyond the scope of this paper such as when they joined Twitter, how often they tweet daily, etc. Most of the biographical information provided gave vague descriptors of the owners of the handle with a mix of real names and nicknames. Reasonable guesses could be made that a name was real when it was provided in full, and which ones were nicknames as the latter were often written in stylized forms like the username 'YúnG•—•TRØY®'.

Addressivity

Tweets mentioning the station @citi973 as intended addressee were the primary indication of interactivity or participation from the audience. Often placed at the beginning of messages, they included a range of inclusion, i.e. either solely addressing the station, including specific personalities at the station, as well as or including friends/followers of the user or addresser. These multi-participant messages sometimes became conversations where participants took turns to address one other. Addressivity thus captures the social aspect of listening and interacting with radio, i.e. talking back and asking questions of the station and its staff.⁵ Coding of the content of tweets addressing the station revealed two primary modes: tweets sending general messages or information and comments related to on-air or online content.

Those tweets that were directed at specific station workers or programme hosts were more likely to be responded to, whereas those addressing the general station might be retweeted but in general were not as involved in conversations. This might be a function of who manages that account as presumably the programme hosts focus on their own professional but personal accounts. The station's staff tended to tweet more personalized messages than the general station handle or account. Programme hosts in the sample talked about their shows but also addressed or replied to individual audience members who sent messages to them.

General messages sent in concerned issues such as the functionality of the station's tools, e.g. '@Citi973 ur webpage is misbehaving on my android 3:-)2 why [*sic*]', or sending information to the station such as this user alerting the station about a road accident: '@Citi973 accident at McCarty junction [*sic*]'. Others were simple phatic messages such as the rather laconic '@Citi973 hi'. Content-specific tweets, on the other hand, mainly referenced on-air or online content. For example, this tweet '@nathanquao2211 @citi973 @garyalsmith are you guys discussing about the match or you're talking about how arsenal is going to win [*sic*]' was sent in during a sports discussion about an upcoming fixture for the English Premier League, and was directed at the two studio hosts of the programme as well as the station in general. Another example expresses dissatisfaction with the kind of music being played on the station: '@Citi973 wat happens to promoting local content. U not local music today on brunch [*sic*]'. As is to be expected, most of these tweets coincided with the programme schedule outlined on the station's website.⁶

Sharing

This comprised tweets that indicated a sharing of radio-related content. These were coded separately from retweets even though technically retweeting means sharing something from another person with others. This is because these types of messages tended to use a different presentation style that included referencing specified others, with a description or note

about something from the station, often in affective language. An example of an affective statement ‘Hope for today on @Citi973 so inspiring. #hopefortoday [*sic*]’ demonstrates this, as does ‘Loving Lauryn Hills music on @Citi973 @[anonymized] [*sic*]’. In the first example, the listener does not specify or address any particular user but shares to their followers (and to the public) how they feel about the programme ‘Hope for today’. In the second example, the user directs the message about what he likes on Citi FM with another user @[anonymized]. While on the one hand one could argue that these are comments on content, they differ in that they do not address the station directly but rather make commentary on or about the station to named or unnamed others (i.e. the general public).

Retweeting conventions differed across users. For instance, a few users put quotation marks in front of news items tweeted by the station to signal that they had copied and pasted the content: ‘@Citi973: New genetic clues for arthritis <http://t.co/YqXAxmJsgw> #CitiNews’. Others put ‘RT’ in front of the copied tweets as previously was the convention on Twitter before the service created an automatic labelling feature that identifies retweets without the user losing character count. To be careful to code only audience retweets, those identified as having originated from the accounts of the station’s staff were put in a separate category.

Overall, audiences retweeted general news items the most, followed by tweets by guests who had been on a programme or were scheduled to be on one. For instance, this message from @ReconnectGH got several retweets in the sample: ‘We’ll be on @Citi973’s breakfast show tomorrow, talking #ReConnectGH. Tune in to find out what to expect at Movenpick tomorrow’. News items such as ‘John Paintsil’s Infiniti SUV stolen on Christmas Day <http://t.co/DpGHjVDHpg> #CitiNews’ was also retweeted a number of times, with a few adding commentary to the retweets.

Topics

Four main topic areas emerged from the available tweets: sports, entertainment, general messages, and news. The last topic mainly came from the station, and the tweets were accompanied by a URL and the hashtag #citinews denoting that they were culled news content from the station’s website. Sports tweets were mostly about the English Premier League and on-air discussions about upcoming fixtures. Fans of teams like Chelsea and Arsenal, slotted to play games around the time tweets were pulled, tweeted messages like ‘@Citi973 we’re mauling those Liverpool boys. I’m proud of @chelseafc’ and ‘@Citi973 #EPL I hope the gunners do a good job this afternoon. Two goals would be enough’. Tweets labelled as entertainment were concerned with music, with the majority referencing a concert organized by the station that featured a number of local artists. Called ‘Decemba-2-Rememba’ or ‘D2R’. Tweets generally made comments about performances they liked or told others about the event that took place on 24 December

2013. For example, 'What you missed at CITI's FM [*sic*] December to Remember Concert <http://t.co/2eUux6EnT0> cc @citi973 #d2r2013 @partycrewgh #partycrewgh'. Others mentioned music being played on on-air '@Citi973 we need more local music on brunch pls [*sic*]'. General messages, in addition to the phatic ones mentioned under addressivity, were greetings and wishes to friends. Given that the tweets were downloaded from 25–29 December, quite a few tweets and retweets sent holiday wishes to the station staff, as well as friends and presumably known others. For instance, 'RT @JustNanaama: @[anonymized] @benkoku @GhRainmaker @[anonymized] @jessicacitifm @RichardDelaSky @Citi973: Merry Christmas to you too'. Citi personnel often responded to general messages, such as the station worker @martincitifm who responded: '@[anonymized] Merry Christmas to you too sir, thanks for your loyalty. Do keep listening and have a fruitful new year. @Citi973'.

Listening and Tweeting as Sociable Interactivity

From the tweets directed at the station and programme hosts about on-air content, we see situational and context-driven participation from Citi FM's audience. 'Talking back' constituted contributions to discussions on listeners' favourite football teams, preferred music and entertainment, as well as complaints about how the station was doing one thing or the other, either on-air or online (website). Addressivity here reflected the very sociable relationship between the station (i.e. its workers and programmes) and its listeners. More specifically, sociability online exhibited a much more personal interaction, at least as viewed from the radio station's perspective, based on how staff responded versus the general account's interactions with audiences. Station staff or programme hosts tended to respond more directly to listeners than the station's general handle which focused more on sending news updates or retweeting information from its staff.

From looking closely at the station's official pages and those of its on-air personalities, there appears to be some difference in how listeners respond to tweets from the station's Twitter handle and how they talk to whoever the on-air personality is. Often, @citi973 tweets general news items or reminds listeners to tune into the station. These tweets get retweeted or commented on. The strategy is also used on the Facebook page. However, one can get an easier read of commentary by clicking on the post and reading users' responses to the station and to one another. By crosschecking the time that tweets were sent with the on-air schedule, it was clear that some listeners were tweeting synchronously, such as during the sports shows, whereas others did so after an event had passed (e.g. about the Decemba-2-rememba concert). Hence, live participation on Twitter, while listening to programmes on CitiFM, made its way into live broadcasts. During shows that I listened to, hosts would often read comments from both Twitter and Facebook as well as from the application Whatsapp and SMS texts. These were not many as most programmes had distinct segments to be filled with studio content.

However, it appeared that apart from the reading of news (separate from news analysis that also took place), most hosts acknowledged their listenership and chose to reference them across new media platforms. Here, the mere reading of messages into the content of the programme suggests some 'produsage' (Bruns 2008).

In convergence, 'produsage' or 'prosumption' is collaborative and feeds back into the production process in a continuous manner. Bruns (2008) argues that 'produsage' is community-based, participants' roles are fluid, products are continuous or ongoing (i.e. 'unfinished artefacts'), and they are thought of as common property but with individual merit. However, this differs slightly from audience participation in relation to 'traditional' media where feedback from listeners or readers (in terms of newspapers) has been incorporated into content for a very long time now at the editor's discretion. Institutional changes, particularly in programming and broadcasting conventions, and broader use of the telephone ushered in a space where private and public lives of audiences came together on radio. Broadcasts from the mass media (studio) came into homes but were increasingly accentuated by voices of listeners who could share their concerns with other listeners and unknown others in a simultaneously public and intimate way. This was especially true for talk shows and variety shows where audience participation was part of the content that spoke to audiences 'for the sake of sociability' (Scannell 1996). Given that audiences' voices are heard in relation to content produced by broadcasters, we can call this participation, regardless of the fact that it is limited by gatekeepers (editors and producers) and constrained by time (allotted on-air time) within an institutional context (how many calls are allowed in order for a show to go on).

Today, radio, for the most part, still operates under these 'industrial production' conditions (Bruns 2008). Instead of 'gatewatchers', gatekeepers in the form of programme editors and producers still decide who gets on air (*ibid.*). Audience feedback may be built into the programme but to what degree it actually changes what producers do in the long term depends on institutional, social-cultural, economic and political exigencies on the station and its listenership. These limitations on participation have not changed dramatically with the introduction of mobile phones, given that the specific institutional and industry formats described above remain. However, they have changed the options available to participate. In theory, more people—at least in places where landline telephones relative to mobile ones are not as available—can now contribute to radio programmes through calling and texting. The number of calls or texts that can be read out or picked up remains as an add-on to programming content, unless the entire programme is about speaking with as many listeners as possible. And even then, only a fixed number may be heard per time on air, relative to how many are sent in. Regardless, for those listeners who were constrained by the inability to call in from a landline, especially in parts of the world where access was limited, mobiles provide a way to talk to one's favourite station, send a message to

a politician, wish someone a happy birthday, complain about a situation in their specific locality etc., and have the satisfaction that those wishes or messages have been sent out.

Likewise, the affordances of social media allow the audience more flexibility. In one way, a tweet functions the same way as an SMS in the sense that the host can decide to read out a message within the programme or not. At the institutional end, the producer or programme host now has more content—text messages or tweets—to parse through for selection if that is the process, or they may simply read or take what comes through first. Social media participation is an added entry point that could result in conversation with a listener, which in turn may or may not get included in the content that is put on air. Responding via a tweet, however, might increase the audience beyond those listening live to include those following the station's activities and on-air broadcasts asynchronously. This functions in a similar way to comment boxes on news items posted on stations' websites, except the feedback is attached to content that remains clearly visible for a while whereas social media feedback on on-air content is largely ephemeral. Thus, while there are still gatekeeping and programme format limitations, there are added points of participation for audiences where relatively new technologies like mobile phones and social media are available and audience feedback is incorporated into radio programming. The amount of audience participation involved in the tweets examined varied for different hosts but this did not appear to have any relation to the number of tweets generated during the duration of the shows (such as I observed for the sports shows in the data presented above). This 'gate-watching' is necessary given the constraints of airtime. Still, the sharing tweets suggest that not all tweets are designated for the hosts to read out. Rather, one could infer that they were sent out as an active way of engaging with the programme, and not necessarily to contribute to on-air content.

With the exception of the one tweet reporting a road accident, no news or report originated from listeners in the sample I analyzed. This should not be surprising as the station has more resources and is better equipped as a media institution to find and report general news on a more reliable or regular basis than an individual audience member can. However, given that we are thinking about 'prosumption' (Bruns 2008; Willems 2013), it is interesting to note that beyond the one tweet alerting the station to an automobile accident in the city, this sample showed little by way of independent reportage from the station's listeners. In general, it appeared that across the range of Twitter conventions used, listeners largely addressed a specified other and made comments on actual content produced by the station either on-air or online.

Sociable Interactivity

At its core, the relationship between broadcasters and audience is one that is social. Regardless of the particular aim or manifest content, there is a prior sociable commitment in the communicative form of every programme

(Scannell 1996). While, for instance, news may intend to inform, and thus the modes of address used are different from say, a variety talk show, the point is that even though there are different motives in broadcasting's communicative ethos, there is more to it than that. Broadcasters consider how they talk to both people who have no particular purpose or intention in tuning in and those who do so on purpose because the behaviour of the listening or viewing audience cannot be managed (Scannell 1996). Consequently, the communicative manner and style of radio is conversational, i.e. 'orienting to the normative values of ordinary talk in which participants have equal status and equal discursive rights'. You speak *to* listeners as opposed to *at* or *down to* them or else they will simply switch off. Radio must speak to the listener 'as someone in particular' (Scannell 1996: 24).

Clearly not all broadcasting is *just* for the sake of sociality/sociability but it is present in people-centred programmes. For instance, sports talk and variety programming like morning shows or 'drive time shows' which are partly informative and partly about talking to an audience for the sake of having a good time, involves interacting with those in the studio and the audience outside of it. Informal discursive styles show the sociable intent in programming output and are heard in the encouragement of, and engagement with, audience participation. The back and forth between producers/broadcasters and audiences/listeners/readers is interactivity, even as it demonstrates sociability. This interactivity is further enhanced through online avenues such as Twitter, where audiences act as users online while listening to on-air content, thereby engaging in what we can call sociable interactivity.

Using social media also increases radio's audience beyond those listening live to include those following the station's activities and on-air broadcasts asynchronously. Conversations continue on SNSs after they have been started on air. The topic might dissipate when a new one starts or as time goes on but in the hour or so following it, at least from my analysis of radio stations' tweets and comments, it continues as listeners respond to each other and the station personnel. This functions in a similar way to comment boxes on radio stations' websites in the early 2000s as well as on those of newspapers today. The difference with broadcasting is that the ephemerality of live content shortens the time that conversations may continue asynchronously, given that other participants may leave after the broadcast and not find it relevant to continue the conversation.

From the audience's perspective, there is an added level of 'public-ness' to interacting with a radio station via an SNS like Twitter. There is the potential on-air audience that might hear your contribution if it is read out, in addition to those at the particular station who act as gatekeepers and presumably have already viewed the content you sent in. It might matter if one's tweets are not read, in which case the listener might send in another message to complain (as seen in tweets sent to Citi FM), or it might just be a desire to send something out and be satisfied with the potential for it be seen or

heard by someone. In addition, one's followers or fans (i.e. network) on the SNS are an (imagined) audience, as is anyone with access to the particular platform if it is public. Just as one writes or speaks to an imagined audience that may or may not read the content of a book (Ong 1982) or a blog (boyd 2006), so too one's tweets or status messages may function as an expression of self, broadcast to imagined others who may or may not seek one out to respond. Whether users see Twitter as a personal or public space, users have an imagined audience that they tweet to and many tweet strategically (Marwick and boyd 2010). Tweeting to a radio station might be a personal way of enjoying content or connecting with known and unknown others over shared content.

Without speaking to listeners, though, we cannot know for sure when and why they decided to tune in and use Twitter to communicate with the station. What we can say however is that some kinds of content received specific kinds of participation from audiences in a way that connects radio's sociability with Twitter's interactivity. Future work could include an audience-oriented study wherein motivations for tweeting are examined, including an exploration of the types of imagined audiences tweeted to in relation to radio content. Another line of enquiry could be to analyze tweets in real time or capture tweets during a recorded show to see more nuances in how these observations turn out.

Conclusion

Twitter is a social space where connections are made and people tweet to friends, followers and for themselves. These are to both known and unknown others and Twitter thus combines elements of broadcast media and face-to-face communication where users must balance personal and public information among other strategies. Radio participation via Twitter is context-driven and situational. Tweets examined from the Accra-based station, Citi FM, largely related to on-air and online content produced by the station. A deliberate methodological choice was made to evaluate only the tweets of radio listeners without speaking to them to see what can be gleaned about participatory content. In this case, descriptions provide a typology or classification of content, without any claims to motivations, gratifications or other related concepts. The primary concern of social media has been disaggregated to see how Twitter users interact with radio at specific moments across a few days; specifically, what kinds of messages are being posted concerning radio listening and whom they are interacting with on Twitter.

The various displays of participation afford another level of sociality that, as has been argued, is inherent in radio (Scannell 1996) but also for social network sites (Ellison and boyd 2013). The display of sociality and the somewhat mundane nature of the tweets reminds us that not all media participation is about politics or the state. In the tweets across different

topics, there were expressions of individual enjoyment, frustration at a DJ's music choice, or sharing of news that is interesting, etc. Sociable interactivity takes place as Twitter's interactivity speaks well to radio's sociability, both in real time and after programmes have occurred. Listeners address programme hosts and known others in an easy casual manner that suggests that both radio and social media are part of the everyday. The convergence of old and new media here demonstrates audiences acting as both listeners and users of multiple media in an African context where low internet usage might perhaps suggest otherwise.

There is room for more work on these sorts of everyday practices outside of political talk and formal media (Willems 2010) in the literature on convergence in Africa. Even more so in the few studies that specifically examine Twitter use in an African context. These have tended to focus on those tweets relating to political discourse, collective action, and election activity such as within the contexts of the 'Arab Spring' and elections across West and East Africa (for instance Best and Meng 2015; Howard *et al* 2011; Christensen 2011). The more mundane and prosaic uses of Twitter are yet to receive committed research attention, and yet it is in their sorts of interactions and displays of sociality that we get a sense of the 'everyday'. In the quest to theorize media culture then, it is important to see what the everyday practices of user-audiences look like, in conjunction with previous work that has interviewed them, both separately and with radio producers.

Notes

1. Retweets may or may not be interpreted as endorsements of what was tweeted. This possibility has prompted some public figures and organizations to specify on their profiles that any 'retweets' from their account should not be read as such.
2. As of mid-2014 when I accessed the tool.
3. Public accounts are accessible by anyone on the internet. Twitter users can designate their tweets as private, going only to those who follow them. I considered these tweets the same way one would a call-in into a radio station, i.e. meant for public consumption and without expectations of privacy. Still, I anonymize tweets from non-public figures (i.e. Citi FM staff and radio personalities).
4. Another disadvantage of using this particular data tool is that one is unable to control the search parameters, at least relative to other tools, and thus has to make use of the various attributes collected. These are the username, the tweet ID, the user bio and information like number of followers and location, time and date of tweet, kind of tweet (i.e. tweet or retweet), and things like hashtags used, number of retweets and mentions associated with that tweet.
5. Given that the tweets were generated via the search term @citi973, all tweets analysed in the broadest terms technically fitted under addressivity. The crucial question being answered here is how audiences are addressing the station.
6. See <http://www.citifmonline.com/index.php?launch=programme> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).

References

- Avle, S. (2011) 'Global flows, media and developing democracies: The Ghanaian case', *Journal of African Media Studies*, 3(1): 7–23.
- Best, M. and Meng, A. (2015) 'Twitter democracy: policy versus identity politics in three emerging African democracies' (pp. 20–30), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD '15)*, New York: ACM Press.
- boyd, d. (2006) 'A blogger's blog: Exploring the definition of a medium', *Reconstruction*, 6(4), available from: <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/064/boyd.shtml> (last accessed: 20 November 2015).
- Brock, A. (2012) 'From the blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 56(4): 529–549.
- Bruns, A. (2008) 'The future is user-led: The path towards widespread produsage', *Fibreculture Journal*, 11, available from: <http://eleven.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-066-the-future-is-user-led-the-path-towards-widespread-produsage/> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Burrell, J. (2012a) *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafés of Urban Ghana*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Burrell, J. (2012b) 'Technology hype versus enduring uses: A longitudinal study of Internet use among early adopters in an African city', *First Monday*, 17(6), available from: <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3964/3263> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Chiumbu, S.H. and Ligaga, D. (2013) "'Communities of strangerhoods?': Internet, mobile phones and the changing nature of radio cultures in South Africa", *Telematics and Informatics* 30(3): 242–251.
- Christensen, C. (2011) 'Twitter revolutions? Addressing social media and dissent', *The Communication Review*, 14(3): 155–157.
- Citi FM (2014) 'Who are we?', available from: <http://citifmonline.com/citi-fm/> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Coker, W. (2012) 'Mobile communication and the culture of self-expression: the case of SMSing to radio in Ghana', *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 4(6): 123–133.
- Deuze, M. (2006) 'Participation, remediation, bricolage: considering principal components of a digital culture', *The Information Society*, 22(2): 63–75.
- Ellison, N.B. and boyd, d. (2013) 'Sociality through social network sites' (pp. 151–172), in W. H. Dutton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fair, J.E., Tully, M., Ekdale, B., and Asante, R.K. (2009) 'Crafting lifestyles in urban Africa: young Ghanaians in the world of online friendship', *Africa Today*, 55(4): 29–49.
- Gagliardone, I. (2015) "'Can you hear me?'" Mobile-radio interactions and governance in Africa', *New Media and Society*, 1–16, available from: <http://nms.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/04/07/1461444815581148.abstract> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Girard, B. (2003) (ed.) *The One to Watch: Radio, New ICTs And Interactivity*, Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- Girard, B. (2008) 'Community media and SMS text messages', *Radio 2.0 for development*, available from: <http://comunica.org/radio2.0/archives/87> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).

- Honeycutt, C. and Herring, S. C. (2009) 'Beyond microblogging: conversation and collaboration via Twitter', *Proceedings of the Forty-second Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-42)*, Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Press.
- Howard, P.N., Duffy A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M., Mari, W. and Mazaid, M. (2011) 'Opening closed regimes: what was the role of social media during the Arab Spring?' SSRN, available from: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2595096 (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- International Telecommunication Union (2015) 'Percentage of individuals using the Internet – Time Series by country', Geneva, ITU, available from: <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Ismail, J.A. and Deane, J. (2008) 'The 2007 general election in Kenya and its aftermath: the role of local language media', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3): 319–327.
- Java, A., Song, X., Finin, T. and Tseng, B. (2007) 'Why we twitter: understanding microblogging usage and communities' (pp 56–65), in *Proceedings of the 9th WebKDD and 1st SNA-KDD 2007 Workshop on Web Mining and Social Network Analysis*, New York: ACM Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2004) 'The cultural logic of media convergence', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(1): 33–43.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: NYU Press.
- Jenkins, H. and Deuze, M. (2008) 'Convergence culture', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(1): 5–12.
- Li, D. (2004) 'Echoes of violence: considerations on radio and genocide in Rwanda', *Journal of Genocide Research* 6(1): 9–27.
- Livingstone, S. (2003) 'The changing nature of audiences' (pp. 337–359), in A.N. Valdivia (ed.) *A Companion to Media Studies*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kellow, C.L. and Steeves, H.L. (1998) 'The role of radio in the Rwandan genocide', *Journal of Communication*, 48(3): 107–128.
- Mabweazara, H.M. (2013) "'Pirate" radio, convergence and reception in Zimbabwe', *Telematics and Informatics*, 30(3): 232–241.
- Makinen, M. and Wangu Kuiru, M. (2008) 'Social media and postelection crisis in Kenya', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3): 328–335.
- Marwick, A.E. and boyd, d. (2010) 'I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience', *New Media and Society*, 13(1): 114–133.
- Moyo, L. (2013a) 'Introduction: critical reflections on technological convergence on radio and the emerging digital cultures and practices', *Telematics and Informatics*, 30: 211–213.
- Moyo, L. (2013b) 'The digital turn in radio: a critique of institutional and organizational modelling of new radio practices and cultures', *Telematics and Informatics*, 30: 214–222.
- Mudhai, O.F. (2011) 'Survival of "radio culture" in a converged networked new media environment' (pp. 253–268), in H. Wasserman (ed.), *Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa*, London: Routledge.
- Ong, W.J. (1982) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, New York: Methuen.

- Portland Communications (2012) 'How Africa tweets', available from: <http://www.portland-communications.com/publications/how-africa-tweets-2014/> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Portland Communications (2015) 'How Africa tweets', available from: <http://www.portland-communications.com/publications/how-africa-tweets-2014/> (last accessed: 19 November 2015).
- Scannell, P. (1996) *Radio, Television, and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Slater, D. and Kwami, J. (2005) *Embeddedness and Escape: Internet and Mobile Use as Poverty Reduction Strategies in Ghana*, Information Society Research Group (ISRG) Working Paper No 4, Sheffield: DFID.
- Twitter (2016) 'Twitter usage/company facts', available from: <https://about.twitter.com/company> (last accessed: 30 July 2016).
- Werry, C.C. (1996) 'Linguistic and interactional features of Internet Relay Chat' (pp. 47–63), in S.C. Herring (ed.), *Computer-Mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Crosscultural Perspectives*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Willems, W. (2010) 'At the crossroads of the formal and popular: convergence culture and new publics in Zimbabwe' (pp. 46–62), in H. Wasserman (ed.), *Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa*, London: Routledge.
- Willems, W. (2013) 'Participation – in what? Radio, convergence and the corporate logic of audience input through new media in Zambia', *Telematics and Informatics*, 30: 223–231.