

Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into internal communication among permanent staff members at the Thobela FM Radio Station - Limpopo Province

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

Communication Science

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Submission Date: 04 May 2026

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DEDICATION

To the one I love, Maqlatse Ramohlola, whose support and love have been my rock throughout this journey, our newborn Kgotlelelo, who brings us joy and inspiration, and to my late grandmother- Violet Etjie Mashila, whose wisdom and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today, I dedicate this Master's Degree to you all, one Love, one aim!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a journey! A challenging one. I spent several years stressing over my Master's degree, but with patience, dedication and hard work, I finally arrived, and my sun is shining. I remember when my grandmother was very sick, and I had to finalise my Chapter 3. It was difficult, but God gave me the strength to walk through deep waters and fires of oppression without any harm. I therefore wish to thank the Lord of Mercy for being with me and giving me the power to work hard when it is not easy, especially when you are working and studying at the same time.

Allow me to also give thanks to:

- The Lord of Mercy for giving me the courage to keep it going.
- My hard-working Supervisor, Prof. F. O. Makananise, for ensuring that I submit satisfactory chapters, not by submitting for the sake of submitting. Thank you for being patient with me; that is why I named my firstborn daughter Kgotlelelo-Patience, as a reminder of the patience I needed for this project.
- Many thanks to my mother, my only parent, who has been there for me from preschool to this day. You have been my rock, even when I was thinking of taking shortcuts.
- My late grandmother was alive when I registered for my Master's. After my proposal was approved, she left this world. Thank you for encouraging us to study even though you don't have a tertiary qualification. Le re dirile batho Pheladi!
- Many thanks to the University of South Africa (UNISA) for giving me a bursary so that I can register for the academic year 2025.

Thank you,

Isaac Masilo Mashila

ABSTRACT

Worldwide, WhatsApp has emerged as one of the most widely used instant messaging platforms, gaining significant popularity among users, ordinary citizens, and professionals alike for its convenience and efficiency in interpersonal communication. This is particularly important in the South African context, where the digital divide remains significant, and internet access remains limited for many in rural areas. However, previous studies show limited research into how WhatsApp can be integrated and utilised as a tool to enhance internal communication within public broadcasting institutions in the South African context. To address this lacuna, this study explored the extent to which WhatsApp is integrated and utilised as a tool to enhance internal communication at SABC radio stations, such as Thobela FM. The study used a qualitative research approach to gather data through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions with 20 purposively selected staff members from various Thobela FM departments, including marketing, programming, music, and the library unit. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis. In addition, this study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications and the Communication Accommodation Theories, which are employed to examine how employees adjust their communication styles and behaviours through WhatsApp to enhance communication and fulfil their organisational needs. The study findings established that employees at Thobela FM use WhatsApp Messenger extensively for internal communication, improving teamwork, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, while also presenting challenges related to data privacy, information overload, and blurred work–life boundaries. The study further provides recommendations on how broadcasting institutions could optimise the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool by considering key factors such as clear guidelines, structured conversations, and strategic use of WhatsApp features and integrations.

Keywords: Communication Challenges; Internal Communication; Social Media; Team Collaboration; WhatsApp Messenger; and Workplace Productivity

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAT: Communication Accommodation Theory

FM: Frequency Modulation

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

HRM: Human Resource Management

SABC: South African Broadcasting Corporation

SMS: Short Messaging Service

UGT: Uses and Gratifications Theory

UK: United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, internal communication is regarded as the lifeblood of any organisation or company, as it shapes its culture, productivity, and ultimately, its success on various levels. This effective form of communication plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration, enhancing information flow, and sustaining employee engagement, particularly in the fast-paced, dynamic landscape of media and broadcasting (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015). Additionally, in this digital era, social media platforms such as WhatsApp Messenger have emerged as among the most widely used instant messaging platforms, gaining significant popularity among professionals for their convenience and efficiency in facilitating interpersonal communication. Hence, this study explores the extent to which WhatsApp is integrated and utilised as a tool to enhance internal communication within public broadcasting institutions, such as the SABC, particularly at Thobela FM. In addition, Men, O’Neil, and Ewing (2020) indicate that the influence of digital technologies and social media platforms on internal communication practices has reverberated across organisations worldwide, including in the Global South. However, Albrecht (2024) asserts that the global reach and accessibility of platforms have transformed how communities and employees engage with one another, their managers, share information, and collaborate, irrespective of geographical and contextual boundaries. Moreover, the ubiquity of WhatsApp as a communication platform transcends borders, making it a pertinent subject for exploration, especially within a conglomerate like the SABC. With that in mind, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the foundational elements guiding this study. It outlines the background and context of the research, articulates the problem statement, and presents the rationale that underpins the investigation. The chapter presents the study’s purpose, research questions, and objectives. In addition, it offers a brief introduction to the theoretical perspectives that inform the inquiry, as well as to the research design and methodological approaches employed in the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The South African media landscape is undergoing rapid transformation, marked by the proliferation of social media and digital communication technologies, as well as evolving audience expectations (Dlelengana, Adebayo, & Chikukwa, 2024). However, as a key player in the South African broadcasting domain, the SABC emerged as emblematic of this transformation (Wasserman, 2020). In addition, exploring the integration of WhatsApp at Thobela FM provided an opportunity to gain insight into how technological dynamics affect internal communication strategies in the South African context. The study further offered a microcosmic view of the broader challenges faced by various media organisations in the South African context, which may serve as a case study for similar enterprises on the continent and abroad.

Mda (2024) asserts that South Africa is a dynamic and diverse nation with a rich media heritage and landscape. However, as a state-owned broadcaster, the SABC has a significant impact on the dissemination of information and on shaping public discourse. The effective exchange of information and content within the organisation is critical not only for operational efficiency but also for fulfilling the corporation's mandate to serve the public interest (SABC, 2024). As such, WhatsApp's use as a social media platform for communication within Thobela FM is significant in the context of a rapidly evolving South African media landscape, demonstrating the organisation's adaptability to its listeners' shifting needs and preferences. In the corporate world, communication proves essential to day-to-day operations. As Mulyana, Briandana, and Rekarti (2020) assert, interactions must be interactive: the communicator must convey their message to the recipient, who must then acknowledge receipt and provide a timely response. This interactive dimension is central to WhatsApp, enabling instant two-way communication among staff. Unlike Lasswell's linear transmission model, which holds that communication is a one-way channel, WhatsApp introduces participatory communication and provides space for continuous, immediate loops and feedback. This contrast highlights the shift from traditional to digital communication practices. According to Sapienza (2015: 600), communication can be understood as "the transmission of information so that it produces both understanding and response in the person to whom it is addressed". In addition, Lasswell's communication paradigm is frequently referred to as the '5Ws' model because

it focuses on five main issues: who says what, in what medium, to whom, and with what impact (Erdil, 2016). This model breaks down communication into five components and emphasises the importance of understanding how each component influences the overall message (Sapienza, 2015). However, Patel (2018) asserts that the information transmitted and the technique used to send it are governed by the social milieu in which the sender and recipient are based. However, regardless of the communication technology they employ, most organisations still ought to engage in the most informed communication with stakeholders, because they operate in a social setting (Kwayu, Lal & Abubakre, 2018).

Recent empirical research, such as that of Apambila (2025) and Zhu, Ji, Sun, and Jeyaraj (2025), supports the view that social media platforms and digital communication tools not only fulfil basic communication needs but also strengthen organisational culture, employee engagement, and internal network connectivity. For instance, a study by Sotiriadou et al. (2020) found that internal social media use increases perceived organisational transparency and staff identification with the company, which, in turn, fosters greater employee engagement. Moreover, the adoption of social media leads to a denser, more interconnected communication network within organisations, thereby facilitating cross-departmental and cross-hierarchical information flows that move beyond traditional hierarchies (Ribeiro, Shapiro & Suri, 2025). Consequently, through promoting online social capital and enhanced work engagement, digital communication platforms contribute to increased job innovation and performance (Wider et al., 2025).

According to Cowan (2014), internal communication facilitates development, thereby enhancing employee performance across organisational levels and enabling them to deal successfully with complex situations. This process can satisfy social needs, foster synergy, build motivation, and develop leadership, thereby enhancing team spirit. Gondal, Shahbaz, and Hola (2012) further indicate that internal communication, to some extent, influences which critical decision-making roles are implemented, signifying the importance and value accorded to them. Establishing internal and external communication management policies in this manner is crucial for organisations such as the SABC, as it regulates employee behaviour regarding communication channels and methods.

However, Moreno, Garrison and Bhat (2017) assert that, if the organisation does not have an official policy, there are hazards associated with the lack of defined rules. This raises the question of why WhatsApp would be utilised as an internal communication tool within the organisation but is not included in the official communication channels, and why it would be used in an environment without a policy on communication channels and strategies.

Furthermore, Moreno et al. (2017) highlight that WhatsApp's user base continues to expand despite media restrictions, including limited control over message recipients' access and confidentiality. The study further established that the satisfaction users derive from using WhatsApp for internal communication enables them to utilise it without restrictions. Gupta and Upadhyay (2019) emphasise that WhatsApp is a popular digital communication tool in the present era, typically within social or digital networks, where its reach is not significantly restricted. Given the increasing prevalence of smartphones and their associated applications, it is critical to understand how to use these devices appropriately in formal and informal organisational communication. As such, communication is needs-based and aims to address specific demands within the organisation. To achieve the desired communication outcomes, organisations need to understand effective communication strategies and how to deliver messages clearly. Digital platforms such as WhatsApp can therefore play a vital role in meeting these demands, particularly in organisations like SABC, where quick, organised, and collaborative communication is essential. WhatsApp has emerged as one of the most widely used instant messaging platforms, gaining significant popularity among professionals for its convenience and efficiency in communication. In contexts where formal communication channels are often slow or cumbersome, WhatsApp provides a practical alternative that enables staff to bypass bureaucratic delays, maintain real-time coordination, and foster collaboration across hierarchical levels. At the same time, its informal nature raises challenges related to privacy, information overload, and the absence of a clear organisational policy. These dynamics make WhatsApp particularly significant in the SABC environment, where the tension between formal structures and informal practices reflects broader debates about digital transformation in state-owned enterprises. This is particularly important in South Africa, where the digital divide remains

significant, and internet access remains limited for many. However, there is limited research on how WhatsApp is integrated and utilised as a tool to enhance internal communication within public broadcasting institutions, such as SABC radio stations like Thobela FM. Furthermore, understanding how people use their smartphones, specifically WhatsApp, could inform the company's internal communication with employees and other key stakeholders (Lipiäinen et al., 2014). Hence, there are crucial problems in conveying messages, some of which involve information links that may arise during communication, especially in the distribution and propagation of official messages. As a consequence, this study addresses the research gap by exploring WhatsApp as a platform for internal official communication at Thobela FM in the Limpopo Province. The intention was to explore the advanced knowledge of WhatsApp's function in meeting employees' demands at Thobela FM. The study explored the growing use of digital communication in enterprises, with WhatsApp as the basis. This holds particular significance for understanding the integration of WhatsApp within Thobela FM's permanent workforce.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite growing scholarly interest in the use of social media platforms at the workplace, most existing research tends to focus on external communication roles or general organisational outcomes, rather than the internal communication dynamics of staff in media organisations (Dodds, 2019; Church & de Oliveira, 2013). For instance, Boczek and Koppers (2019) studied how news outlets use WhatsApp as a channel for distributing news to audiences but did not explore intra-organisational staff interactions. Similarly, Kasim, Fauzi, Yusuf, and Wider (2022) investigate WhatsApp use at work and find links to communication overload and technostress among Malaysian employees; however, their research was not conducted within a broadcasting institution or focused on internal communication among permanent staff. While Hashim, Shahid and Razak (2022) analyse WhatsApp usage and employee engagement in a Malaysian ministry, offering insight into public-sector contexts, it is again not situated within a radio station environment or addressing how WhatsApp is embedded into internal communication structures among permanent media staff. Altogether, these studies focused on the use of social media in organisational settings but did not address how WhatsApp is integrated into internal

communication among permanent staff members at a provincial public radio station in South Africa. This revealed a clear research gap, which this study sought to address.

In contemporary media organisations, digital messaging platforms like WhatsApp Messenger are increasingly used for everyday workplace interactions; however, little is known about how this platform is integrated into internal communication at the SABC public radio stations, such as Thobela FM in Limpopo Province. Existing research has concentrated on social media's role in newsgathering, audience engagement, or general organisational outcomes (Nyamai, 2021; & Kasim et al., 2022), leaving the specific dynamics of internal staff communication, coordination, professionalism, information management, and policy implications underexplored. This lack of contextualised empirical evidence constrains managers' and policymakers' ability to develop appropriate communication protocols and to understand whether WhatsApp enhances or undermines communication efficiency and staff cohesion within broadcasting environments. Consequently, this study explored the extent to which WhatsApp Messenger is integrated into internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM, and how this integration influenced information flow, professional practices, and organisational interactions.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Previous research suggested that integrating WhatsApp into internal communication systems is increasingly important for media organisations, as its organisational use remains underexplored despite rapid global growth (Mabondo et al., 2025; Ariffin & Omar, 2018; Normazaini et al., 2018). Although Karanges et al. (2015) discovered that WhatsApp accounts for a significant proportion of daily smartphone activity, highlighting its dominance in modern communication, limited research has examined how organisations can leverage it to support internal communication. This study, therefore, sought to bridge this gap by applying the uses and gratifications model to understand WhatsApp's role in enhancing internal communication within the SABC.

Furthermore, bridging the organisational gap helps determine how people use their smartphones, especially WhatsApp, to provide information to staff members within a company and to other key stakeholders (Patel, 2018). This insight is also important for predicting problems that may arise in the communication process when disseminating official communication. This study is vital because it extends the uses and gratification model to organisational communication and addresses a practical gap at the SABC, where WhatsApp is widely used informally but not integrated into official policy frameworks. WhatsApp serves as the foundation for the study's investigation of how mobile applications are used in digital communication within a business that has expanded over time. This is especially important for achieving consensus on WhatsApp among employees in different organisations, including Thobela FM and its parent organisation, SABC.

Furthermore, this research addressed a tenacious need for media entities to adapt to changing communication technologies. As Apambila (2025) asserts, improving internal communication not only fosters employee engagement, which is essential for creativity and productivity in the media industry, but also contributes to best practices in internal communication for media organisations. Furthermore, Recent research shows that South African organisations are increasingly adopting social media platforms for internal communication, improving efficiency and employee connectivity (Grawe, Nkoala &

Makwambeni, 2023). This provides a more evidence-based rationale for situating WhatsApp use at Thobela FM within broader communication trends.

This study contributes to the literature by addressing a notable gap regarding the use of WhatsApp for internal communication within media organisations. By exploring how permanent staff at Thobela FM engage with the platform, the study provides empirical evidence to guide future scholarly inquiries and serve as a comparative foundation for subsequent studies on digital communication. In terms of practice, the study recommends practical insights for managers and communication practitioners, particularly within the SABC, by indicating whether WhatsApp functions effectively as an internal communication tool. These insights could support the refinement of organisational communication strategies and the development of clearer guidelines for digital communication. Evidence from South African organisations indicates that digitalisation initiatives enhance the efficiency of internal communication and adaptability, but the broader societal impacts require further empirical validation (Chapano & Werner, 2026). At the societal level, the study enhances understanding of how accessible communication tools, such as WhatsApp, foster interactivity and two-way information exchange, thereby improving information flow within public service institutions (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Strengthening communication in such institutions contributes to more responsive, efficient, and connected communities.

As Chang and Ian (2014) have argued, modern communication technologies enable interaction across temporal and geographical boundaries. As these tools gain prominence, individuals increasingly rely on them in their daily lives (Ling & Lai, 2016). Understanding this growing reliance makes it essential for scholars and organisations alike to investigate how platforms such as WhatsApp can be effectively integrated to enhance workplace communication. While previous studies have examined WhatsApp's role in team communication, organisational performance, and ethical challenges (Abdelhay et al., 2024; Selvaraju et al., 2023; Willie, 2024), limited research has focused on its integration into internal communication within public broadcasting institutions. This study, therefore, contributes by situating WhatsApp use at Thobela FM within the broader

transformation of the South African media landscape, addressing a gap in both theory and practice.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research questions examined in this study are as follows:

- How is WhatsApp Messenger currently utilised for internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station?
- What impact does the use of WhatsApp Messenger have on efficient communication and collaboration among different departments at Thobela FM?
- What are the challenges faced by permanent staff members in using WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication at Thobela FM?
- What strategies optimise WhatsApp's integration for more effective internal communication at Thobela FM?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Research Objectives are as follows:

- To explore the role of WhatsApp Messenger in internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station;
- To assess the impact of WhatsApp Messenger on efficient communication and collaboration among different departments at Thobela FM;
- To identify the challenges associated with using WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication among permanent staff members; and
- To suggest strategies that optimise WhatsApp's integration for more effective internal communication at Thobela FM.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 Theoretical Perspective

The section briefly addresses the study's theoretical foundation, which focuses on communication accommodation theory and the uses and gratification model.

1.6.1.1 The Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory was developed in the early 1940s and was first presented by Katz and Blumler (1974). This theory sought to clarify why individuals use media, what needs they have that make it necessary for them to use it, and the pleasure they derive from doing so. The theory was first proposed in the 1940s to explain people's choices among the media channels available at the time. This theory's fundamental premise is that people utilise mass media for a variety of purposes and to satisfy varied needs (Gallion, 2010; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

According to Ifinedo (2016), there is increased interest in using the model to shed light on why people utilise social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and instant messaging. Scholars such as Irshad, Ahmad, and Malik (2020) and Francis et al. (2023) have explored how media users engage with different platforms to satisfy their social, cognitive, affective, and psychological needs. This inquiry contributed to the development of uses and gratifications theory, which emphasises the active role of audiences in selecting media based on the specific gratifications they seek. Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) further indicate that media users are motivated by specific goals, such as seeking information, maintaining social connections, seeking entertainment, or reinforcing personal identity, and they intentionally choose media channels they believe will help achieve these objectives.

Again, personal integrative requirements are connected to human wants for self-worth, retaining a certain standing in society, and acquiring credibility. To feel secure about their place in society, people often turn to the media for reassurance. People might, for instance, seek out and uphold the legitimacy of class by making sure they own the things by viewing advertisements that portray it. People can gain this confidence through social media, thanks to the information available there (Sangwan, 2005). People frequently use the media for stress relief and escape, satisfying their demand for tension-free experiences. The way each person satisfies this urge through the media varies widely. For instance, research by Katz et al. (1974) found that watching movies fulfils the audience's desire to relieve stress. The media, especially social media, have a way of providing a distraction that people need in an otherwise tense society. In their study,

Jebakumar and Jisha (2014) discovered that their respondents used WhatsApp to both unwind and decompress. In addition, how individuals use the media depends on whether the above demands are met. People worldwide have come to recognise the role technology plays in meeting their diverse needs over time. In a similar spirit, those who use social media and digital communication generally seek to meet several needs, including companionship, reassurance, fun, and a sense of personal identity.

1.6.1.2 Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), developed by Howard Giles in the early 1970s, has been employed in this study to provide a robust framework for understanding how individuals adjust their communication behaviours to manage social distance, express identity, achieve relational goals, and facilitate understanding (Hordila-Vatamanescu & Pana, 2010; Gallois et al., 2016). Central to CAT are the processes of convergence, divergence, and maintenance, which describe how communicators adapt or resist adaptation in response to interlocutors. For instance, convergence occurs when individuals adjust their speech or behaviour to become more similar to their conversational partner, thereby fostering social closeness. In contrast, divergence emphasises differences to maintain social distance or assert distinctiveness (Gallois et al., 2016).

Giles' reflections, such as the anecdote about his wife losing her voice, illustrate the everyday relevance of accommodation, in which people instinctively adjust their communication even when misattributing intent, highlighting the unconscious nature of these adaptations (Gallois et al., 2016). This aligns with Soliz, Thorson, and Rittenour's (2009) assertion that accommodation serves interpersonal objectives, such as acceptance, affiliation, and approbation, yet it does so subtly, and often without drawing attention to individual differences. While Giles provides a foundational theoretical perspective, Soliz et al. empirically extend it, emphasising the relational functions of accommodation.

Furthermore, these perspectives suggest that CAT functions not only as a descriptive model of interaction but also as an explanatory tool for understanding the motivations behind communicative adjustments. Hordila-Vatamanescu and Pana (2010) stress the

role of both verbal and nonverbal cues in accommodating behaviour, demonstrating that communication is a multidimensional phenomenon. By synthesising these insights, one can argue that CAT offers a nuanced lens for examining interpersonal communication, as it enables consideration of both how and why people modify their behaviours in social interactions, bridging theoretical constructs and observable relational outcomes.

1.6.1.3 The role of theories in the Study

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a framework that explains why and how people actively select media to satisfy specific needs or desires (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Unlike theories that focus on the effects of media on audiences, UGT emphasises the active role of users in choosing media channels and content based on their personal, social, or professional goals. The theory identifies several categories of gratification, such as information-seeking, social interaction, entertainment, and personal identity reinforcement, which help to explain the motivations behind media usage. UGT is central to this study as it explains the significance of meeting communication needs in the digital media era, where individuals constantly need to process and utilise an array of information in their daily work. In the context of Thobela FM, UGT offers a lens into why staff members use WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication. Employees may turn to WhatsApp to coordinate tasks, share updates across departments, seek clarification, maintain social connections, or reinforce organisational norms. The application of UGT helped the research to identify the specific gratifications that WhatsApp provides, such as enhancing collaboration, streamlining information sharing, and fostering social cohesion among staff. This perspective links employee motivations with communication outcomes, clarifying why certain communication patterns emerge, why certain channels or features are preferred, and how the platform contributes to achieving organisational objectives.

On the other hand, CAT provides a framework to explore how permanent staff members at Thobela FM modify their WhatsApp communication, for example, tone, formality, or response style, when interacting with colleagues from different departments or hierarchical positions. By analysing these accommodation strategies, the study can explore patterns in internal communication, cooperation, and relational management

within the radio station. Moreover, CAT is particularly relevant to this research as it helps elucidate how staff members at Thobela FM, within the broader context of the SABC, adapt their internal communication practices when integrating WhatsApp as a communication tool. CAT guides the formulation of research questions, specifically examining the extent to which employees accommodate their communication styles and behaviours in response to WhatsApp integration. It shapes data collection and analysis by prompting investigation into communication patterns and linguistic features in WhatsApp interactions. Moreover, CAT serves as a lens through which the data will be interpreted, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play.

1.6.2 Literature Review

This section provides a brief discussion of the literature review relevant to the current investigation. It examines literature pertinent to the research questions, as well as earlier studies conducted on the research topic. The study focuses on better understanding how communication between employees in an organisation occurs, as well as how social media in general and WhatsApp in particular are utilised within the organisation, based on previous research and published material.

1.6.2.1 Internal Communication and Digital Tools in the Workplace

The importance of effective internal communication in organisations has been widely acknowledged, as it plays a critical role in fostering employee engagement, team collaboration, and overall organisational success (Dandrea, 2018; Riggio & Lee, 2016; Jones, 2014). According to Smith (2005), internal communication in the workplace or within an organisation is influenced by various factors, including the tools and technologies used to advance communication. With the advent of digital communication tools, such as email, instant messaging platforms, and social media, the landscape of internal communication has witnessed notable transformations (Geisen, 2009).

To begin with, studies by Smith et al. (2017) and Brown (2019) have explored the impact of digital tools on internal communication, highlighting potential benefits, including improved efficiency and information sharing. However, little research examines the specific implications of integrating WhatsApp, a widely used mobile messaging

application, into internal communication practices within media organisations. From a Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) perspective, this gap is significant because it raises questions about how employees actively use WhatsApp to satisfy communication needs such as immediacy, accessibility, and collaboration. Adzharuddin and Nagamma (2024) identified a strong positive relationship between WhatsApp use and employee engagement in a Malaysian public organisation. Similarly, Abdelhaya et al. (2024) demonstrate that WhatsApp usage enhances team-member exchange and leader-member exchange, thereby boosting team performance and efficiency. Consequently, digital communication tools have been shown to promote inclusivity and accessibility across diverse workforces. This gap in the literature warrants a focused investigation, particularly in the context of a broadcasting corporation like the SABC and its subsidiaries, particularly Thobela FM. While theories such as CAT and UGT serve as lenses for understanding media adoption and adjustments to interaction strategies, there is scant literature explaining the unique contexts of broadcasting corporations, especially in South Africa. In South Africa, the SABC is a state-owned enterprise with a dual mandate: to provide public service broadcasting while navigating bureaucratic structures and political accountability (Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999; Seapolelo, 2022). Therefore, internal communication within such organisations is shaped by various factors, including efficiency needs, hierarchical authority, multilingual staff dynamics, and the mandate to serve the public (Ngwenya, 2020; Bronstein & Katzew, 2018).

Again, while many studies have examined the use of email and social media for internal communication (Johnson, 2015; White & Black, 2018), WhatsApp's unique features, such as real-time messaging and multimedia sharing, set it apart as a distinct communication tool. WhatsApp's integration within organisations offers opportunities for seamless communication but also raises concerns about privacy and security (Kumar, 2019; Rodriguez & Torres, 2020). Jebakumar and Jisha (2014) postulate that WhatsApp is a platform for collaboration, education, amusement, rapid information sharing, and community maintenance. Unlike the network operator's short messaging service (SMS), which sends messages to recipients with or without their consent, WhatsApp allows recipients to accept or reject messages from multiple senders. Furthermore, WhatsApp allows for the creation of groups, enabling messages to be sent to multiple recipients

simultaneously, with a maximum of 256 members per group (WhatsApp, 2016). Therefore, understanding the impact of WhatsApp integration in the workplace, particularly within a media organisation like Thobela FM, is a vital step in adapting internal communication practices to the evolving digital landscape.

1.6.2.2 Organisational Formal Communication

According to Robbins and Judge (2019), formal organisational communication refers to the structured and officially sanctioned exchange of information within an organisation, following established channels and protocols. They further noted that most organisations rely on formal communication to ensure that information flows systematically through the chain of command and reaches the intended recipients accurately. Messages in formal communication can be transmitted vertically (downward or upward), horizontally (between peers or departments), or even diagonally across different organisational levels. From a Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) perspective, these flows highlight how employees adjust their communication styles to align with hierarchical expectations. For example, upward communication often requires accommodation to managerial language and tone, while horizontal communication may involve convergence to peer norms (Hamilton, 2008). Furthermore, Tenhiälä and Salvador (2014) found that formal communication channels are more effective than informal ones at reducing operational glitches. Therefore, WhatsApp's informality challenges these accommodation patterns, creating new dynamics in how staff at Thobela FM negotiate authority and solidarity."

Most importantly, the ability to communicate upward is essential for an organisation to survive, as it enables top management to access the data needed to make strategic choices, including reports, ideas, job-related issues, employee attitudes towards their work, and team accomplishments. Zaremba (2010) highlights how superiors obtain valuable information through upward communication channels known only to the lower levels of the organisation. This gives workers the impression that they are priceless assets, which raises morale. Hamilton (2008) states that in high-tech workplaces, upward communication must be both accurate and quick. As a result, communication technology is required that enables quick information delivery. Fish, Root, Chalfonte, Root and Chalfonte (1990) indicate that informal communication is essential for coordination to take

place, since it allows organisational members to get to know one another and their jobs, fosters social relationships and the production of work, and gives collaborators a facility to begin, maintain, and complete work. Additionally, Grey and Laidlaw (2002) claim that when staff members are dissatisfied with information delivered through formal communication channels, they turn to informal channels.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that internal communication is central to organisational success and that digital tools such as WhatsApp are increasingly adopted to meet employee needs for immediacy, accessibility, and collaboration. However, while Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) explains how employees actively select WhatsApp to satisfy communication needs, and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) illuminates how staff adjust communication styles across hierarchical levels, limited research has applied these frameworks to public broadcasting institutions. Existing studies in South Africa highlight WhatsApp's widespread use and associated challenges. Still, they do not address its role in advancing digital transformation within state-owned enterprises such as SABC. This study, therefore, contributes by applying UGT and CAT to the case of Thobela FM, situating WhatsApp use within the broader context of public broadcasting mandates, hierarchical communication structures, and the evolving digital landscape in South Africa.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research Paradigm

According to Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, and Perez-Prado (2003), a paradigm is a fundamental viewpoint or a set of convictions or assumptions that guides a researcher's investigation. This suggests that every researcher approaches their work with a wide range of interrelated, and occasionally incongruous, philosophical assumptions and viewpoints. The phrase "paradigm" in research refers to the "worldview" of the researcher (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A worldview is a perspective, a school of thought, or a body of widely held beliefs that directs how study results are interpreted or understood.

According to Lincoln (2000), paradigms are human constructs that serve as guiding principles or reflect the researcher's perspective when interpreting data. Therefore, paradigms are important because they provide the beliefs and principles that help researchers across disciplines decide what to look at, how to look at it, and how to evaluate the results of their studies. Furthermore, Lincoln (2000) contends that a researcher's paradigm establishes their philosophical stance, which will be evident in the research's conclusion. This has significant implications for every choice made during the research process, including the choice of approaches and strategies. For this reason, a paradigm explains how meaning can be constructed from the information we gain through our own perspectives and personal experiences.

There are two broadly well-known research paradigms, namely positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Henn et al., 2006). This research falls under the interpretivist paradigm, as it is more concerned with human behaviour, views, and experiences regarding social media. Since people's perceptions of the world shape their behaviour, rather than external factors and processes that researchers can measure, some researchers feel that positivist principles are not quite appropriate when examining the complexity of the social world (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) once contended that, rather than using cause-and-effect reasoning to explain human behaviour, we should try to grasp the social world from the perspective of the individuals we study to gain a deeper understanding of it.

Wright (1993) indicates that human behaviour and the intentions behind it demand a degree of empathy with our participants, whereas attributing their behaviour to an external cause does not. The interpretive paradigm, as stated by Holloway and Wheeler (1996), emphasises interpretations of phenomena and human interactions, and their meanings and subjectivities that are brought to the interpretation. According to Creswell (1998), the assumptions of knowledge with regards to the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; it is acquired through people talking about their meanings, where knowledge is mixed with subjective biases and values; it is written in a personal, up-close manner; and changes surface Knowledge is indissolubly entangled with the context in which it is studied. This makes the interpretive paradigm the most

suitable research paradigm for a study concerned with Thobela FM staff members and their impressions of their experiences with WhatsApp as a business communication tool.

1.7.2 Research Approach

According to Tisdell and Meriam (2015), qualitative research involves the use of non-standard analytical techniques and informal data collection methods, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis. This gives the researcher access to permanent employees at Thobela FM and enables them to learn about their satisfaction with and experiences using WhatsApp for engagement, productivity, and collaboration at work. For this study, a qualitative research approach was employed to address the research objectives and answer the research questions. The intention is to study the experiences and views of Thobela FM's permanent staff members. In this research, some of the questions to be answered are: to what extent has WhatsApp integration influenced collaboration and information sharing among permanent staff members at the SABC, with a focus on examining their participation in collaborative WhatsApp groups and the frequency of information exchange. Researchers using the qualitative method always tend to study human actions from the perspective of the social actors themselves, also referred to as the 'emic' perspective by anthropologists (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The primary goal of qualitative research is to understand and describe, rather than explain, human behaviour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through qualitative research, the researcher gains insight into the participants' ideas, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and circumstances, as well as provides a detailed account of their behaviours (Kvale, 1996; Mack et al., 2005). Nonetheless, this qualitative study used interviews to gather information from 20 purposively selected permanent employees across departments such as programming, music, library, and marketing at Thobela FM to determine the effects of WhatsApp on internal communication. Insider perspectives are advantageous for qualitative researchers (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), where, since insiders conduct research with populations of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000), the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential foundation with study participants (Asselin, 2003). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), qualitative research is concerned with process rather than results, and the researcher prefers to observe the

acts as they occur rather than reconstruct them in memory. This allows researchers to understand participants' unique experiences and to place themselves in others' shoes (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999).

1.7.3 Research Design

According to Creswell (2014), research design is the overall strategy or plan that outlines how a study should be conducted, detailing the procedures for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to address the research problem. This study falls under the category of an exploratory research design, which is typically used for topics with few or no prior studies to refer to or on which to base predictions (Michael 2002; Christoph 2010). Understanding the problem under investigation is the main goal of an exploratory research design (Michael 2002). Exploratory research designs are typically employed to determine how best to proceed with an issue under investigation or which information-gathering methodology would be most appropriate to address the research topic (Taylor, Catalano & Walker 2002).

The research adopts an exploratory design because the phenomenon under investigation remains under-researched, particularly within the media industry. There is limited empirical evidence on how employees interpret the use of WhatsApp in workplace contexts, and insufficient scholarly attention to its perceived benefits, challenges, and potential drawbacks as an internal communication tool. Given this lack of established data and theory, an exploratory approach is appropriate for gaining in-depth insight into colleagues' experiences and perceptions of WhatsApp as a platform for internal organisational communication. Exploratory research designs primarily use qualitative data-collection methodologies, as they focus on obtaining primary or secondary data through unstructured or semi-structured procedures for data interpretation (Sykes, Gani, & Dullabh, 2016).

The adaptable nature of an exploratory research design enables studies to address a wide spectrum of research questions, including what is occurring, why it occurs, and how it unfolds (Sykes et al., 2016). According to Michael (2002) and Taylor et al. (2002), the main purpose of this design is to familiarise the researcher with essential contexts, issues, and

background information, while also facilitating the generation of new ideas and hypotheses that can inform the development of initial theoretical understandings. In addition, exploratory research provides guidance for further studies and the development of research methodologies. Problems are honed for further in-depth, methodical analysis and the formulation of fresh research questions. Since exploratory research typically employs small sample sizes, it is unable to generalise the findings (Sykes et al., 2016).).

1.7.4 Study Setting, Population and Sampling Techniques

1.7.4.1 Study setting

According to Creswell (2014), the study setting is the place or context in which the data are collected, including the physical, social, and organisational environment that can influence how participants respond and how the research is conducted. The data for this study were collected at SABC Limpopo-Thobela FM. The study setting is suitable for the research because it will be less costly to arrange after their shows. The study environment has several qualities, such as open areas where interviews can be conducted without interference and where questions can be explained. In terms of developing strategies and guidelines that optimise WhatsApp's integration for more effective internal communication and collaboration within SABC-Thobela FM, this presents an opportunity for staff members to offer their insights and contributions to a study that has not been thoroughly examined and is still in the early stages of development (Sutjipto, Arviani, & Putri, 2022).

1.7.4.2 Population

According to Polit and Beck (2004), the population refers to the entire set of individuals or elements that meet the sampling criteria. Dumisa (2010:39) describes the population as the full group of participants about whom the researcher wants to generalise the study's findings. It is significant to identify the population group when conducting research. While Wimmer and Dominick (2013) describe the characteristics of a population, a class or group of people, variables, concepts, or phenomena is another objective of scientific study. Babbie (1998) argues that a population is characterised as a theoretically defined collection of research subjects. However, time and resource limitations sometimes prevent the examination of an entire population. Additionally, it is typically prohibitively expensive

to study an entire community, which could complicate the findings because the accuracy of measures is sometimes affected by the sheer number of subjects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

There are two types of population in research, namely the target population and the accessible population. Creswell (2014) defines the target population as the entire group of individuals, elements, or units that share characteristics relevant to the study and to which the researcher seeks to generalise the findings. In this study, the target population comprises all employees at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Limpopo office, which has a total of approximately 400 employees, including freelancers. The accessible population, on the other hand, refers to the subset of this target population that is realistically reachable and available for participation in the study, taking into account practical constraints such as time, accessibility, and resource availability (Babbie, 2016). Therefore, the accessible population for the study was 100 Thobela FM permanent staff members. They are workers aged over 18 years. Thobela FM's permanent staff members were purposively selected from different departments, such as Programming, Marketing, the Music Department, and Library Services. This approach ensured representation from different functional areas and included individuals with direct experience using WhatsApp for internal workplace communication. The station consists of divisions such as programming, marketing, digital, and technology, which helped the researcher gain perspectives from different departments. Security officers and cleaners were not interviewed, as they are merely service providers to the SABC. Lastly, permanent staff members are always available for work; freelancers come to work on a per-call basis, which is why the researcher decided to focus on permanent staff members.

1.7.4.3 Sampling procedures

According to Creswell (2014), sampling procedures are methods and strategies used to select participants, cases, or units from a larger population for inclusion in a study. Sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that, by studying the sample, the researcher can draw conclusions and generalise the findings back to the population from which they were drawn. In this study, purposive sampling was employed, with samples selected from the entire target population. Purposive sampling is a technique

used by qualitative researchers to select participants who can provide in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation (Tongco, 2006). This sampling technique was relevant to this study because it enabled the researcher to select the participants based on their knowledge of WhatsApp and smartphones with internet connections. Moreover, it is the most cost-effective and time-effective sampling method. The researcher selected 20 permanent staff members at Thobela FM because they are all part of the Mošate WhatsApp Group.

The researcher scheduled visits with a selected group of Thobela FM staff members who regularly work from the office, as they produce shows, publish them on social media, and create graphics, making them an appropriate population for the study. Marketing offices consist of Brand specialists and graphic designers: digital specialist, event organiser and editor. The Music Department consists of two music compilers and a scheduler, and the library consists of a principal librarian, three archivists and a librarian. A programming manager, a chief producer, two permanent producers, and an audio-visual specialist make up the programming team. The SABC stations have employed this structure of permanent workers per station since Section 189, introduced during COVID-19. All of the portfolios mentioned above formed part of the interviews.

1.7.4.4 Sample Size

According to Malterud, Siersma, and Rosenbaum (2016), the number of participants chosen to obtain scientific data for the study is known as the sample size. Furthermore, many respondents are included in the sample to validate the research findings. However, in this study, the sample size was limited to 20 participants, and data were gathered at Thobela FM (SABC). Lacobucci and Churchill (2005) assert that sample sizes can be sequential (where additional data can be obtained if the initial data do not address the research topic) or fixed (decided in advance of the study). As explained below, this study intended to use a fixed sample size. Based on population sizes and pragmatic considerations, the sample frame was chosen for each. All permanent staff members of Thobela FM were included in this study due to the manageable quantity of staff members. For this study, 20 participants were selected.

1.7.4.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

According to Creswell (2014), inclusion and exclusion criteria are predefined characteristics that determine which participants are eligible or ineligible to participate in a study. The inclusion criteria of this study included permanent staff members of Thobela FM (SABC). Listeners and members of the general public were excluded from the study, as the focus was solely on internal organisational communication practices. Due to their obligation to be at work from 8:00 to 16:00, the personnel on the following list were always available. They also participate in the WhatsApp group called Mošate Group.

1.7.5 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Qualitative data collection is a method that plays an important role in providing information that helps one to understand the processes behind observed results (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). In this study, a semi-structured interview has been used to collect data. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), semi-structured interviews were an effective method for data collection when the researcher wanted to collect qualitative, open-ended data, explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic, and delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues. This method was relevant to the study because it would allow the researcher the freedom to ask respondents, where necessary, probing questions during the interview. The researcher used a voice recorder and note-taking as tools for data collection.

The research design for this study was exploratory and employed a qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative research techniques were used, as appropriate, to study human beings from the social actors' viewpoint (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The main goal of qualitative research was to understand and describe human behaviour, rather than explain it. Therefore, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were employed in this research to explore the extent to which Thobela FM staff members use WhatsApp to share work-related information and the impact of this use on the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination.

Kallio et al. (2016) defined a semi-structured interview as a flexible interviewing technique that uses guiding questions while still allowing participants to elaborate freely and

introduce new ideas during the conversation. The semi-structured interview is an important data collection tool in this study, as it allows for a more in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives on the use of WhatsApp at the workplace for work-related purposes at Thobela FM radio station. Longhurst and Johnston (2023) postulated that the semi-structured interview is designed to be administered in person by the researcher. The interviews were designed to last 30-45 minutes and were conducted at a location convenient for the participants, specifically the SABC conference room. Access to this venue was negotiated through formal communication with the Programming Manager at Thobela FM, who granted permission for the researcher to use the space for data collection. This arrangement ensured a quiet, secure, and familiar environment for participants, supporting both comfort and confidentiality during the interviews.

The interview guide included a series of questions designed to elicit further elaboration and clarification on issues surrounding the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the workplace, how it is utilised, and the role of internal communication in this matter. This allowed the participants to fully express their thoughts and experiences. Examples of specific questions used include: What channels of communication do you use to communicate with employees, and how effective are they at addressing different issues? The interviews were conducted with the 20 permanent staff members, who are always at work, compared to freelancers, as identified in the sampling process. Participants were selected based on the researcher's knowledge of the number of people in each department and who would provide useful information aligned with the study's objectives.

1.7.6 Data Analysis Method

In research, data analysis is the systematic process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling collected data to uncover useful information, draw conclusions, support decision-making, or answer research questions.

According to Alem (2020), data analysis is crucial to a study, as it provides the context for the unprocessed data obtained with a measuring device. Thematic analysis was used to analyse interviews because it describes data in a rich, detailed form and permits further explanation of numerous facets of the study in question (Boyatzis 1998; Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis yields insightful answers to specific research questions (Braun

& Clarke, 2006), making it suitable for this research. The other reason for choosing thematic analysis in this study is its flexibility, which allows the researcher to develop themes from the collected data. The research employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step guidelines for thematic analysis. The guidelines include the researcher becoming acquainted with their data, creating preliminary codes, reading every transcript to engage with the data, revising themes, naming and describing themes, and reporting constructions.

In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected through the open-ended semi-structured instrument. Babbie and Mouton (2001) described thematic analysis as a method for identifying patterns, themes, and trends in qualitative data. It is a way of identifying meaning in the data by breaking it down into smaller, manageable segments and analysing each segment for themes or patterns. A coding framework was established to ensure consistency and accuracy in the thematic analysis of the data collected through the semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. The coding framework consisted of the following steps.

The thematic analysis method allowed a thorough examination of data. It provided insight into how WhatsApp is used as an internal communication platform at Thobela FM, the challenges, and the effectiveness of internal communication on WhatsApp. It is worth noting that the thematic analysis method has certain limitations, such as being subject to researcher interpretation, which may limit the generalisability of the study's results. To address these limitations, the study established a clear coding framework, and the study supervisor reviewed the analytic process to ensure reliability. In the discussion chapter, the study's findings were also cross-referenced with prior research in the field to enhance the validity of the conclusions.

1.7.7 Ensuring Rigour

According to Jasanoff (2014) and Marquart (2017), rigour refers to the notion that peers in the discipline willfully enforce and observe the standards for appropriate quantification.

1.7.7.1 Credibility

Holloway and Wheeler (2002) define credibility as the degree of confidence in the accuracy of the research findings. The researcher ensured the credibility of this study by acknowledging all sources used and adhering to all the rules that a researcher ought to follow when conducting research.

1.7.7.2 Credibility

Tobin and Begley (2004) define transferability as the extent to which qualitative research findings can be applied to different situations and respondents. Transferability was ensured by making it easier for people interested in this area to access this study.

1.7.7.3 Dependability

Shenton (2004) defined dependability as the stability of findings over time. To sustain the study's dependability, the researcher ensured that the research process was logical, traceable, and documented.

1.7.7.4 Confirmability

Baxter and Eyeles (1997) state that confirmability refers to ensuring that the study's findings are based on informants' experiences rather than the researcher's preferences, and that it can include an audit trail of raw data, memos, notes, data reduction, and analysis. The researcher ensured that the data and interpretations of the findings were correct and derived from the collected data.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Orcher (2016), ethical considerations are the guidelines and regulations that researchers ought to adhere to when conducting their research. The concept of research ethics involves guaranteeing the protection of research participants, among other things (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). With the help of these guidelines, the researcher can conduct authentic and rigorous research. Additionally, the participants were informed that they could avoid any uncomfortable questions about the research procedure. Additionally, the participants' information was anonymous, and nothing about them would be disclosed

without their consent. These ethical considerations include obtaining permission to conduct the study, obtaining informed consent from participants, avoiding harm, maintaining confidentiality, ensuring voluntary participation and anonymity, and upholding participants' right to privacy and beneficence.

1.8.1 Results communication

According to Bryman (2016) and Creswell (2014), result communication refers to the process of sharing research findings with a range of audiences, including participants, academic communities, stakeholders, and the public. To ensure a fair dissemination of the study results, the researcher would prepare a clear and concise research report, present findings at academic conferences and seminars, share results with participants through a summary report or presentation, publish research papers in peer-reviewed journals, utilise social media and online platforms to disseminate findings to a broader audience and provide opportunities for feedback and discussion. To guarantee that the study's results are communicated to participants, the researcher would write a clear and succinct research report, present the findings at academic conferences and seminars, share the findings with participants in the form of a summary report or presentation, publish research papers in peer-reviewed journals, use social media and online platforms to share the findings with a wider audience, and encourage comments and discussion.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

- Internal communication - This term refers to the communication that takes place within the organisation and between its employees. It includes all forms of communication, such as formal, informal, vertical, horizontal, and other forms.
- WhatsApp Messenger – Although the platform is well-known, in the context of this study, it refers to the use of WhatsApp groups and channels within the organisation as an information-sharing platform.
- Uses and Gratifications model – This is a model that asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs.

- Efficiency – In this study, it refers to the speed, clarity, and accessibility of internal communication processes enabled by WhatsApp, specifically in terms of how quickly staff can exchange information, how accurately messages are transmitted without distortion, and how easily employees across hierarchical and departmental boundaries can access and respond to communication.
- Collaboration – In this study, it refers to the process by which Thobela FM staff use WhatsApp to jointly share information across departments, and coordinate decision-making, thereby enhancing collective efficiency and organisational cohesion.

1.10 Demarcation of the Study

This study is deliberately bound to ensure clarity of scope and to avoid overextension. It focuses exclusively on internal communication within Thobela FM, thereby excluding external or audience-facing communication, which has been the emphasis of much prior research. The analysis is restricted to permanent staff members, with temporary, casual, and freelance employees excluded to maintain consistency in examining the practices of the stable workforce that shapes organisational culture. Furthermore, the study is confined to Thobela FM alone and does not attempt cross-station comparisons within the SABC; as such, findings cannot be generalised to other stations without further comparative inquiry. In terms of platforms, the investigation is limited to WhatsApp, chosen for its dominance in South Africa. At the same time, other messaging applications, such as Telegram, Signal, or Microsoft Teams, are not considered. Finally, the study relies on self-reported perceptions gathered through interviews, rather than measuring objective communication outcomes such as response times, message retention, or quantitative performance indicators. These delimitations clarify that the study's contribution lies in exploring how WhatsApp is perceived and utilised by permanent staff at Thobela FM, without extending claims to broader audiences, other stations, alternative platforms, or objective efficiency metrics.

1.11 Chapters Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

This chapter presents a general introduction to the study, including background, the problem statement, the rationale, brief discussions of the theoretical framework and the literature review, the research questions and objectives, definitions of key concepts, brief explanations of the research design and methodology, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework guiding the study and a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to the research topic. It explains the key theories underpinning the study and justifies their relevance. The literature review critically examines previous research, highlighting major findings, gaps, and debates in the field, and situates the current study within this scholarly context. The chapter also explains how the theoretical framework and the reviewed literature inform the study's research questions, objectives, and methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter presents the research paradigm, design, and methodology adopted for the study. It explains the overall approach and rationale for selecting the research methods, including the sampling strategy, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures. The chapter also discusses the study's reliability, validity, and trustworthiness, as well as the ethical considerations observed during the research process.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the collected data and provides a detailed analysis in relation to the research questions and objectives. The chapter organises the findings into themes, patterns, or categories, using appropriate tables, figures, and narrative explanations where necessary. The analysis critically interprets the data, linking it to the theoretical framework and the reviewed literature, and highlights significant trends, relationships, and insights that emerge from the study.

Chapter 5: Summary of the Study, Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the study, drawing together the key findings from the previous chapters. It offers conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, highlighting the study's contributions to knowledge and practice. The chapter also presents practical recommendations arising from the findings and identifies areas for further research. Finally, it reflects on the study's limitations and emphasises the research's overall significance within its broader academic and contextual framework.

1.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has provided a detailed introduction and background to the study, establishing the context and significance of exploring the integration of WhatsApp Messenger into internal communication among permanent staff at Thobela FM Radio Station. The rationale for the study was clearly outlined, highlighting the importance of understanding digital communication tools to enhance the effectiveness of organisational communication in professional media environments. The problem statement identified specific gaps and challenges in internal communication at Thobela FM, providing a clear

justification for the study. Aligned with this, the research questions and objectives were formulated to guide the investigation and ensure the study addresses both practical and theoretical concerns regarding WhatsApp as a communication platform.

The chapter also introduced the theoretical framework, situating the study within relevant communication theories and perspectives that inform the analysis of digital communication tools in organisational settings. A review of existing literature provided a critical understanding of internal communication practices, formal organisational communication, and the role of WhatsApp in professional environments, situating the study within current scholarly debates. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the research methodology and design, including the chosen paradigm, approach, and methods to generate rigorous and meaningful insights. The data collection methods and procedures were explained, along with the data analysis techniques employed, including thematic analysis for systematic interpretation of qualitative data. Measures taken to ensure research rigour, credibility, and trustworthiness were detailed, and ethical considerations guiding the study were highlighted to ensure the integrity and ethical compliance of the research process. In a nutshell, this chapter laid a solid foundation for the study by providing a comprehensive overview of the background, rationale, theoretical perspectives, literature, research design, methodology, and ethical considerations. This foundation establishes the study's relevance and scope, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, focuses on the theoretical framework and a detailed review of the existing literature, exploring scholarly debates and perspectives on the use of WhatsApp and digital communication tools in organisational settings.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study. It discusses the theoretical framework, which draws on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and the communication accommodation theory (CAT). The uses and gratifications theory provides insight into the motivations behind employees' use of WhatsApp, how they actively seek to fulfil their communication, information, and social interaction needs. In contrast, the communication accommodation theory explains how individuals modify their communication behaviours to achieve mutual understanding and effective interaction in digital spaces. Following the theoretical discussion, the chapter further reviews relevant literature organised under key themes such as historical overview and development of WhatsApp as a communicative tool, the use of social media for organisational communication in the digital age, the role of WhatsApp messenger in enhancing internal communication in organisations, the impact of WhatsApp messenger on communication efficiency and interdepartmental collaboration, challenges and limitations of using WhatsApp for internal communication, and strategies for optimising WhatsApp integration in organisational communication systems. The chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the key insights from the reviewed literature and their relevance to the present study.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory was developed in the early 1940s, as first presented by Katz and Blumler (1974). The theory seeks to clarify why individuals use the media, what needs they have that make it necessary for them to utilise it, and the pleasure they get from using it. This theory's fundamental premise is that people utilise mass media for a variety of purposes, including satisfying a variety of needs (Gallion, 2010). Nonetheless,

UGT is not without its limitations. Critics argue that the theory relies heavily on self-reporting, which may lead to subjective or biased explanations of media use (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Others contend that the theory does not sufficiently account for structural or organisational factors that may influence media behaviours (Ruggiero, 2000). Despite these limitations, UGT remains a widely used and adaptable framework in media and communication studies research.

Similarly, Choi, Fowler, Goh, and Yuan (2016) argue that individuals prefer one medium over another because it is expected to fulfil their unique needs. They further suggested that users make deliberate decisions about media choice by evaluating how effectively each medium addresses their social, affective, cognitive, and psychological needs. Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) state that there is a connection between the satisfaction sought and the satisfaction received. They distinguish between the satisfaction attained and the gratification sought: the former refers to people's preconceived notions about a medium. At the same time, the latter is the sense of fulfilment that comes from utilising it. Their need for fulfilment primarily explains a person's use of a medium, as they will use it more frequently if they believe it will satisfy their needs.

According to Ifinedo (2016), there is increased interest in using the model to shed light on why people utilise social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and instant messaging. Scholars such as Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) were among the first to systematically explore how individuals actively choose media to satisfy specific social, cognitive, and psychological needs. Their early work laid the foundation for what later became known as UGT. Subsequent scholars, including Rubin (1983), expanded the theory by explaining how media users' motivations, habits, and psychological orientations influence their media choices and the gratifications they seek. Through these scholarly contributions, UGT has developed into a key framework for understanding why people select particular media platforms, especially in contemporary digital communication environments. Choi et al. (2016) suggest that before choosing one medium over another, a person makes several decisions based on how that medium will help them meet their social and psychological needs. Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) stated that there is a connection between the satisfaction sought and the satisfaction received (cf. Palmgreen,

Wenner & Rayburn, 1980). These authors draw a distinction between the satisfaction attained and the gratification sought; the former refers to people's preconceived notions about a medium, while the latter is the sense of fulfilment that comes from utilising it. Their need for fulfilment primarily explains a person's use of a medium, as they will use it more frequently if they believe it will satisfy their needs.

Moreover, to have their demands met through that medium, employees would prefer certain media over others. People use media because they believe it can serve their requirements, and they will use it more frequently if they think it can (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980). This is largely because people use media to fulfil their needs. Furthermore, Al-Jabri, Sohail and Ndubisi (2015:665) indicated that “the uses and gratification framework assumes that mass media users are goal-directed in their behaviour and are aware of their needs”. It also presupposes that media consumers are aware of their media preferences, interests, and motivations. This hypothesis also contends that alternative forms of need fulfilment compete with the media. The uses and satisfaction hypothesis posits that media audiences are active and can choose whether to use a particular medium to satisfy their needs.

Furthermore, in this era, when individuals engage with the information they receive and use it in their everyday lives, the importance of communication in satisfying individual needs cannot be overstated. The uses and gratifications model may be used to describe the current interaction between the public and the media. Palmgreen (1984) developed a multivariate method for applying the theory to several investigations. This can be one of the factors that has drawn many scholars to the notion. Regarding the range of applications and pleasure theory, he identified six key study topics: audience participation; gratification and media impacts; pleasure and use of the media; satisfaction sought and received; expectancy-value approaches to uses and gratifications; and social and psychological roots of gratifications (Ruggiero, 2000).

Subsequently, people turn to the media to satisfy their affective wants, which are requirements connected to emotions. These requirements may include the urge to be amused and elevated by experiencing emotions and beauty (Katz et al., 1974; Sangwan, 2005). According to a study conducted in India by Jebakumar and Jisha (2014), young

people use social media to stay in touch with their peers, thereby satisfying their emotional needs. The survey further found that young people in the Chennai Region consider WhatsApp the ideal tool for building close-knit social connections. The way each person satisfies this urge through the media varies widely. For instance, research by Katz et al. (1973) found that watching movies fulfils the audience's desire to relieve stress. The media, especially social media, have a way of providing the distraction that people need in an otherwise tense society. In their study, Jebakumar and Jisha (2014) discovered that their respondents used WhatsApp to unwind and decompress.

This study is grounded in Katz's UGT, which posits that media consumers actively seek out communication channels to satisfy specific needs. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) formalise UGT to explain the motivations behind individuals' media choices and the gratifications they derive from media use. The theory proposes that audiences turn to media platforms, whether traditional or digital, to fulfil cognitive, social, emotional, and practical needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1983). A significant number of studies have employed UGT to explain why individuals engage with various media forms and to explore the motivations behind their media consumption patterns (Ruggiero, 2000; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2010). Furthermore, Ifinedo (2016) noted a growing interest in applying the theory to emerging digital and social media platforms, including instant messaging, Twitter, Facebook and other social networking services. Over time, scholars have increasingly sought to understand how audiences use media to fulfil psychological and social needs, particularly within interactive digital environments that enable immediacy, connectivity and participatory communication (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Furthermore, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) assert that UCT was developed to understand the motivations driving individuals to use particular media to satisfy their social and psychological needs. Supporting this view, Phua, Jin and Kim (2017) argue that media users approach different platforms with specific goals or gratifications they wish to attain. As such, individuals actively choose media channels that they believe will help fulfil these goals. Similarly, Choi et al. (2016) contend that people tend to prefer one medium over

another based on the extent to which that medium is perceived as capable of meeting their needs or expectations.

According to Leiner, Kobilke, Rue, and Brosius (2018), the uses and gratifications framework assumes that people who utilise mass media have particular goals in mind and are conscious of these requirements. Additionally, it presumes that media consumers are aware of the media's options, motivations, and interests. This theory also indicates that alternative sources of demand satisfaction compete with the media. In a nutshell, UCT holds that media consumers are informed and capable of choosing which media to use to suit their requirements. They use media for reasons. According to Ledbetter, Taylor, and Mazer (2016), the paradigm offers an understanding of media consumption from the user's perspective. It is most appropriate for use in digital communication studies, where users willingly consume media.

For this study, these discussions demonstrate that UGT provides a precise lens for understanding why employees at Thobela FM choose WhatsApp as an internal communication tool. UGT emphasises that media users are active, goal-driven, and selective, choosing specific communication platforms based on how strongly they believe these platforms will meet their cognitive, social, emotional, and practical needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1983). Applied to the workplace, staff members may prefer WhatsApp for its immediacy, convenience, connectivity, and efficiency, which align with their work-related communication needs. The theory also explains why employees might choose WhatsApp over other organisational communication channels, because they perceive it as more capable of fulfilling needs such as quick information sharing, collaboration, emotional support, reassurance, and maintaining social bonds with colleagues (Choi et al., 2016; Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017). Moreover, UGT's focus on motivations and gratifications helps frame an investigation into how WhatsApp supports task performance, influences communication behaviours, and contributes to the effectiveness of organisational communication. By grounding the study in UGT, the research can justify why WhatsApp use ought to be examined, how employee motivations shape its adoption, and why understanding these motivations is essential for improving internal communication practices within Thobela FM and similar media organisations.

2.1.2 The need for Gratification through Social Media Platforms

According to Ruggiero (2000), communication plays a crucial role in fulfilling individual needs, particularly in contexts where people interact with and utilise information daily. The UGT framework can therefore be applied to understand the relationship between individuals and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, highlighting how these tools satisfy users' cognitive, social, and emotional needs. Ruggiero (2000) also recommended a multivariate approach to applying this theory, which allows researchers to examine the multiple motivations and gratifications that comprehensively guide media use. Basilisco and Cha (2015) further identified six key areas of study within UGT, namely: audience participation, gratification sought, media usage and satisfaction, social and psychological bases of gratification, expectancy-value approaches, and overall media consumption and satisfaction. In this study, these areas provide a framework to explore how Thobela FM staff use WhatsApp to participate in workplace communication, meet work-related needs, and facilitate collaboration and information sharing within the organisation.

Applying UGT demonstrates that individuals actively engage with media to satisfy specific personal, social, and professional objectives. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) categorised these needs into cognitive, affective (emotional), social integrative, personal integrative, and tension-reduction needs. An individual's values and priorities shape these needs. Cognitive needs refer to the desire to acquire knowledge, access information, and understand one's environment, which helps individuals make informed decisions and navigate their daily activities effectively.

Affective needs relate to emotional experiences, such as seeking entertainment, inspiration, or enjoyment. Studies in India, for example, have shown that young people use social media to maintain friendships and fulfil emotional needs, with WhatsApp emerging as a preferred platform for creating and sustaining close social bonds (Chen et al., 2017). Personal integration involves developing self-confidence, maintaining social standing, and gaining credibility, whereas social integration focuses on connecting with family, friends, and colleagues. In modern workplaces, platforms like WhatsApp allow employees to communicate seamlessly, share information, and collaborate in real time, satisfying these social and professional integration needs.

Finally, tension-reduction needs are fulfilled when media use provides an outlet for relaxation, stress relief, or escapism. WhatsApp, for instance, enables employees to manage work-related information efficiently, reducing workplace stress by facilitating quick communication and clarifying tasks. Moreover, UGT demonstrates that media users are active and goal-oriented, which provides a useful lens for understanding why Thobela FM staff choose WhatsApp over other communication tools to meet their cognitive, emotional, and professional needs.

2.1.2 Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) was developed by Howard Giles in the early 1970s and later refined in the mid-1980s, with major contributions from Nikolas Coupland and Justine Coupland in 1991 and further elaborations by Cindy Gallois during the 1990s and 2000s. The theory explains how individuals adjust their verbal and nonverbal communication during interactions to manage social distance, express identity, or achieve interpersonal goals (Giles, 2016). Its core concepts include convergence, where speakers adapt their behaviour to become more similar to their interlocutor; divergence, where individuals emphasise difference to assert identity or social distance; and maintenance, which involves sustaining one's communicative style regardless of contextual pressures. CAT also highlights the social motivations behind these strategies, including the desire for approval, identity protection, and relational management (Zhang & Giles, 2018). This conceptual foundation makes the theory particularly well-suited to exploring communication in organisational environments characterised by diverse roles, hierarchical relationships, and multiple communicative expectations.

CAT is highly relevant to this study because internal communication at Thobela FM increasingly occurs via WhatsApp Messenger, a platform that inherently requires adjustments to communication. Permanent staff members, including producers, presenters, marketers, newsroom personnel, and managers, frequently adapt their language features, levels of formality, response times, emoji usage, message length, and tone depending on the colleague, department, or communication purpose. As Gallois and Giles (2015) have noted, accommodation becomes critical in workplace interactions because employees adjust communicative behaviours to promote cooperation, upholding

professionalism, and maintaining efficient information flow. In the context of a radio station, where rapid coordination, clarity, and relational harmony are essential, CAT offers a lens for understanding how interpersonal dynamics, organisational roles, and situational demands shape WhatsApp-mediated communication.

A substantial body of research has applied CAT to interpersonal, organisational, and media communication contexts. Gallois, Ogay and Giles (2005) demonstrate that convergence improves collaboration and enhances mutual understanding in professional environments, while divergence may signify resistance, identity assertion, or boundary maintenance. In digital communication research, scholars such as Gasiorek (2016) highlight that accommodation also occurs in text-based messaging, where choices such as punctuation, reply speed, clarity of instructions, and tone-marking serve relational and functional purposes. Although CAT is widely applicable, it is accompanied by certain limitations, where some argue that accommodation is not always intentional but may be unconscious. Others note that power differences in institutions can restrict an employee's ability to accommodate freely. Nevertheless, the theory remained robust for analysing how communication patterns evolve in digital workplace interactions, including WhatsApp use.

In relation to the present research problem, CAT directly framed the integration of WhatsApp into internal communication among permanent staff at Thobela FM. The study investigated issues such as communication efficiency, departmental collaboration, information sharing, and challenges in professional conduct, all of which are central to accommodation processes. For example, convergence can be seen when staff adjust their messaging style to align with departmental norms or managerial expectations. At the same time, divergence may arise when employees resist certain communication practices or assert departmental identities. Maintenance may explain communication rigidity, misunderstandings, or breakdowns in coordination. By highlighting these patterns, CAT helped to explain how WhatsApp communication influences information flow, coordination across programming, marketing, and production departments, as well as the broader organisational interactions outlined in the research questions and objectives.

This theory is chosen over alternatives such as media richness theory or social presence theory because CAT uniquely accounts for interpersonal adaptation, relational behaviour,

and communication strategies, all of which are essential to analysing how WhatsApp shapes everyday staff communication at a radio station. While other theories focus on the technological characteristics of communication tools, CAT focuses on how people use these tools to negotiate meaning, identity, and relationships. Its constructs of convergence, divergence, and maintenance provide clear analytical categories for interpreting interview data and understanding how staff adjust their communication within a digital platform. CAT, therefore, offered strong explanatory power and could guide the interpretation of findings by helping the researcher identify accommodation patterns that either enhance or hinder communication effectiveness within the organisation.

2.1.3 The Role of the Uses and Gratifications and Communication Accommodation Theories in the Study

Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) is central to this study as it explains the significance of meeting communication needs in the digital media era, where individuals constantly process and utilise information in their daily work. In the context of Thobela FM, UGT offers a lens into why staff members use WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication. Employees may turn to WhatsApp to coordinate tasks, share updates across departments, seek clarification, maintain social connections, or reinforce organisational norms. The application of UGT helped the research to identify the specific gratifications that WhatsApp provides, such as enhancing collaboration, streamlining information sharing, and fostering social cohesion among staff. This perspective links employee motivations with communication outcomes, clarifying why certain communication patterns emerge, why some channels or features are preferred, and how the platform contributes to achieving organisational objectives.

On the other hand, CAT provides a framework by which to explore how permanent staff members at Thobela FM modify their WhatsApp communication, for example, tone, formality, or response style when interacting with colleagues from different departments or hierarchical positions. The analysis of these accommodation strategies facilitates a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns in internal communication, collaborative practices, and relational management within the radio station. Moreover, CAT is particularly relevant to this research as it helps elucidate how staff members at Thobela

FM, within the broader context of SABC, adapt their internal communication practices when integrating WhatsApp as a communication tool. CAT guides the formulation of research questions, specifically examining the extent to which employees accommodate their communication styles and behaviours in response to WhatsApp integration. It shapes data collection and analysis by prompting investigation into communication patterns and linguistic features in WhatsApp interactions. Moreover, CAT serves as a lens through which the data will be interpreted, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play.

UGT is highly relevant to this study, as it provides a conceptual basis for understanding why Thobela FM staff chose WhatsApp as a preferred internal communication tool. UGT asserts that media users are active agents who select communication platforms that best satisfy their cognitive, social, and practical needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). By applying UGT, the study can interpret employees' media choices not as random or imposed behaviours but as purposeful actions linked to specific organisational demands, such as efficient information exchange, real-time coordination, and the maintenance of social cohesion. This theoretical perspective helps frame the research objectives by explaining the motivations behind WhatsApp usage and identifying the particular gratifications, such as immediacy, accessibility, and relational support, that influence communication patterns within the station. As a result, UGT provides a lens through which the study can interpret why WhatsApp is integrated into daily workflows and how it contributes to achieving communication-related organisational goals.

Similarly, CAT strengthens the study's conceptual foundation by offering insight into how staff at Thobela FM adjust their communication styles on WhatsApp to manage relationships, maintain professionalism, and navigate organisational hierarchies. CAT posits that individuals converge or diverge in their communication to achieve social approval, reduce social distance, or assert identity (Giles, 1973). Within the context of this study, CAT helps to explain variations in tone, formality, linguistic features, and responsiveness when employees interact with colleagues from different departments or seniority levels. This theory is therefore essential for interpreting the subtleties of internal communication on WhatsApp and for examining how staff accommodate one another to

facilitate collaboration, reduce misunderstandings, and maintain harmonious working relationships. CAT also directs the analytical focus toward behavioural adaptations that support organisational efficiency, thereby aligning the study's objectives with well-established communication theories.

In this sense, the UGT and CAT provide strong theoretical grounding for understanding WhatsApp's role in internal communication at Thobela FM and guiding the interpretation of findings in complementary ways. UGT explains why employees use WhatsApp, identifying the gratifications that drive adoption, while CAT explains how they communicate on the platform, demonstrating how accommodation behaviours shape interpersonal dynamics and organisational communication practices. The integration of both theories allows the study to connect its research objectives with established scholarly perspectives: UGT aligns with objectives related to understanding the motivations and functions of WhatsApp, whereas CAT aligns with objectives linked to analysing communication behaviour, relational dynamics, and adaptation within professional contexts. By drawing on both frameworks, the study could interpret its findings in a richer, more nuanced manner, demonstrating not only the utility and effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication channel but also the interpersonal strategies employees use to ensure that communication remains efficient, respectful, and aligned with organisational norms.

In this context, while the UGT provides a valuable lens for understanding why employees at Thobela FM adopt WhatsApp, its limitations in organisational settings are notable. This is the case because UGT was developed to provide insights into individual media consumption rather than organisations. This theory focuses solely on how individuals actively select media to gratify their needs, including access to information, entertainment, and social networking. On the contrary, in the workplace settings, communication is not only about individual choices but also about navigating organisational hierarchies, norms and tasks. In the context of this study, UGT provides a nuanced understanding of how staff members at Thobela FM use WhatsApp to meet their work-related needs for immediacy, accessibility, and collaboration. However, it does not adequately account for changes in communication methods, which address power dynamics in this context. This

means that the theory only motivates WhatsApp use while leaving the interactional and relational dimensions of the workplace unexplored. Therefore, the CAT serves as a complementary theory bringing insights that address such limitations of UGT. This is the case because CAT rests on the supposition that individuals change and adjust their communication style to match the contexts in which they respond, through convergence, divergence, or maintenance.

In the context of Thobela FM, employees may converge on managerial language when communicating upward or adopt peer-to-peer norms during horizontal communication. These levels of communication accommodations are crucial, as they provide insights into how WhatsApp reshapes internal communication flows within a hierarchical organisation such as the SABC. Therefore, integrating these theories enables the study to offer a dual perspective: UGT explains why individuals choose WhatsApp as a mode of communication to satisfy their needs. In contrast, CAT explains how individuals adopt communication styles within WhatsApp interactions in hierarchical organisations such as the SABC to negotiate authority, solidarity and collaboration. Therefore, this integration provides a comprehensive framework for analysing both the motivations behind WhatsApp use and the relational adjustments that shape its effectiveness in a public broadcasting environment. The study not only situates WhatsApp use within broader debates on digital transformation in state-owned enterprises but also contributes to refining these theories for organisational communication research in South Africa's public broadcasting sector.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

2.2.1 Historical Overview and Development of WhatsApp as a Communicative Tool

WhatsApp was launched in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton as a simple status update application before evolving into a messaging platform that enabled users to exchange instant messages over mobile internet networks (Koum, 2012; Church & de Oliveira, 2013). Its emergence coincided with the rapid global diffusion of smartphones, leading to a fast-growing user base attracted by its affordability, reliability, and ad-free interface.

Early scholarly discussions noted that WhatsApp's disruption of the traditional SMS model stemmed from its internet-based architecture, which enabled real-time communication without the costs associated with mobile texting (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). By 2014, when it was acquired by Facebook (now Meta), WhatsApp had already become one of the world's fastest-growing communication applications, surpassing 450 million active users and demonstrating a fundamental shift toward mobile-first social communication (McGregor, 2014; Gil de Zúñiga, Ardèvol-Abreu & Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

Over time, WhatsApp expanded its features, strengthening its appeal as a communication tool. The introduction of voice notes, group chats, multimedia sharing, and encryption significantly transformed its communicative versatility (Smuts, 2019). End-to-end encryption, introduced in 2016, marked a key development, as scholars argue that it enhanced perceptions of privacy and trust, contributing to WhatsApp's adoption in both personal and professional contexts (Kumar, 2020). Group chat functionality, initially allowing only 30 participants, was progressively expanded to accommodate up to 1,024 members, enabling large-scale coordination across networks, institutions, and organisations (Montag et al., 2021). These evolving affordances, such as speed, multimedia functionality, low cost, and enhanced privacy, positioned WhatsApp as a dominant mobile messaging platform in many parts of the world, particularly across the Global South, where cost-effective communication technologies are heavily relied upon (Donner, 2015; Chayko, 2018).

Recent research extensively documents the broad adoption of WhatsApp in both organisational and educational contexts. Studies show that its ease of use, real-time connectivity, and support for multitasking make it suitable for coordinating professional activities, enhancing collaboration, and facilitating rapid decision-making (Cronjé & Izak, 2021; Mabondo, Prosper, & Elisifa, 2025). At the same time, researchers highlight that WhatsApp's informal communication style facilitates relationship-building and fosters social cohesion among colleagues, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of workplace communication (Neiroukh et al., 2024). In educational environments, WhatsApp has become an important tool for lecturer-student communication, peer support, and knowledge sharing because it enables constant access to learning materials and both

synchronous and asynchronous interaction (Murire & Gavaza, 2023; Willemse, 2015). These findings collectively demonstrate how WhatsApp has evolved beyond its original personal messaging purpose into a multifunctional platform that supports organisational communication processes.

As WhatsApp matured technologically, its communicative role also expanded through the development of WhatsApp Business and WhatsApp Communities. WhatsApp Business, launched in 2018, introduced features such as automated replies, catalogues, and labels to facilitate structured communication for organisations, small businesses, and media institutions (Montag et al., 2021). More recently, the communities feature has enabled organisations to integrate multiple related groups under one umbrella, making it easier to manage large-scale communication networks, which, development scholars argue, enhances organisational coordination and strategic communication (Mabondo et al., 2025). These platform innovations, alongside WhatsApp's global reach of more than two billion users, make it a significant organisational communication tool. In contexts such as media organisations, universities, and public institutions, WhatsApp supports rapid coordination, information dissemination, crisis communication, social interaction, and collaborative work. Therefore, the historical evolution of WhatsApp demonstrated not only technological expansion but also its transformation into a central communicative infrastructure widely embedded in organisational, educational, and community practices (Montag et al., 2021; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2020). This study focuses on how media professionals at Thobela FM use WhatsApp for internal and external communication. The platform's evolution into a multifunctional tool is particularly relevant, as it allows staff to coordinate programming, share updates, and engage with audiences efficiently, illustrating how technological innovations shape organisational communication practices in a real-world setting.

2.2.2 The Use of Social Media for Organisational Communication in the Digital Age

Social media platforms have significantly reshaped organisational communication by providing alternative, flexible channels that support both formal and informal interactions. Traditional “formal communication systems” within organisations are typically structured around predefined roles, directives, communication schedules, and hierarchical channels

with fixed teams, committees, and formal agendas guiding interactions (Manuti et al., 2015). In contrast, social media offers employees unstructured, spontaneous, and multidirectional communicative spaces that bypass formal constraints. This shift allows for faster information flow, more immediate feedback, and increased participation, thereby democratising internal communication and enabling a hybrid communicative structure blending formal and informal dynamics.

Moreover, social media enhances employee engagement and relational capital by enabling informal communication networks that support social bonding, peer support, and community building within organisations. Where traditional formal channels may suppress informal exchange or limit it to gossip or rumours, digital platforms legitimate informal interaction and transform it into productive organisational communication (Král & Králová, 2016). Such informal exchanges may supplement formal communication by providing additional context, tacit knowledge sharing, clarifications, or real-time peer support functions that formal systems often struggle to fulfil due to their rigidity. In this way, social media supports relational cohesion and creates a sense of membership, belonging, and trust among employees.

At the same time, social media's flexibility challenges conventional organisational boundaries and blurs the distinction between personal and professional communication. The ease of instant messaging, multimedia sharing, and real-time connectivity means that work-related conversations may spill into personal time, and informal communication networks (often dubbed "the grapevine") may rapidly disseminate information beyond official channels (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Globocnik & Salomo, 2015). While this can facilitate the rapid dissemination of useful information, it also raises concerns about confidentiality, the distortion or unverification of information, and the loss of managerial control over messaging. Therefore, integrating social media into organisational communication demands careful balancing, by leveraging its benefits, without undermining formal structures, organisational identity, or information integrity.

Finally, organisations that integrate social media, thoughtfully combining formal systems (e.g. official reports, directives, structured meetings) with informal channels (instant messaging, chat groups, peer networks), may benefit from a hybrid communication

ecosystem, that is, one that retains clarity, accountability, and documentation via formal channels, while tapping into the agility, flexibility, and social cohesion made possible by social media. Such hybrid models are increasingly relevant in dynamic, fast-paced workplaces (such as media houses, digital agencies, and broadcasting organisations), where formal channels alone may be too rigid, and informal channels alone too chaotic or risky. In the context of this study, WhatsApp is particularly relevant, functioning as both a formal and informal communication tool, and thereby enabling staff to coordinate programming, share updates, and engage in peer support beyond traditional hierarchical channels. The platform democratises communication within the station, promoting faster information exchange, strengthening workplace relationships, and supporting collaborative problem-solving, which reflects the hybrid communication model described earlier.

2.2.3 The Role of WhatsApp Messenger in Enhancing Internal Communication in Organisations

Research has increasingly shown that WhatsApp Messenger has become a valuable internal communication tool within organisations due to its immediacy, accessibility, and user-centric design. As an instant messaging platform, WhatsApp supports real-time information exchange, thereby improving the speed of communication between employees and management (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Scholars noted that the platform's simplicity and familiarity reduce the barriers commonly associated with organisational communication tools, enabling staff to exchange messages, documents, voice notes, and multimedia content with minimal training (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). This aligns with a broader shift in organisational communication, where employees prefer platforms that mirror the ease and fluidity of their personal communication practices (Moqbel & Kock, 2018). In this sense, WhatsApp represents a convergence of personal and professional communication habits, enhancing responsiveness and interaction.

WhatsApp has also been recognised for its contribution to collaborative work and team coordination within organisations. Studies show that group chats, broadcast lists, and multimedia-sharing capabilities allow teams to streamline workflows, discuss tasks, and troubleshoot issues instantaneously (Rosenberg & Asterhan, 2018). In environments

where teams are geographically dispersed or operate under flexible work arrangements, WhatsApp facilitates connectivity and fosters cohesion (Raphael, 2022). The platform's asynchronous communication features, where staff can respond at their convenience, also facilitate coordination without disrupting workflow, making it effective for both formal and informal organisational communication (Coleman, 2021). This increases productivity and fosters a culture of collaborative communication.

Furthermore, WhatsApp has been found to strengthen employee engagement and organisational involvement. Because the platform encourages constant interaction and dialogue, it helps employees feel more connected to ongoing organisational activities and decisions (Adu & Amedzo, 2022). Instant messaging supports quick feedback, clarification of instructions, and inclusive participation, which researchers identify as essential components of employee engagement (Lee & Lee, 2020). Additionally, WhatsApp can serve as an informal communication space where employees build social rapport, contributing to positive workplace relationships and improved organisational climate (Van Zyl, 2021). Such interpersonal connections are especially important in organisations where staff work in dynamic, high-pressure environments requiring efficient communication.

However, scholars also warn that integrating WhatsApp into organisational communication requires careful management. Challenges such as information overload, blurred work-life boundaries, and concerns over confidentiality and data protection have been widely reported (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Adu & Amedzo, 2022). Organisations must therefore balance the convenience of instant messaging with policies that regulate its use, ensuring that communication remains efficient, professional, and secure. Building from existing research, while WhatsApp is not a formal organisational communication system, its widespread adoption and functionality position as a powerful supplementary tool for enhancing internal communication, employee engagement, and organisational cohesion.

The extensive evidence on the South African media has been documented in the literature, with much focus on the transformation, representation, and the public service mandate of the SABC (Abboo, 2008; Lefa, 2021; Mnguni, 2024). However, there is scant data on how digital platforms such as WhatsApp are redefining internal communication

within broadcasting institutions. Therefore, this highlights the need for a study that situates WhatsApp use within Thobela FM and explores how this platform integrates everyday communication, organisational hierarchy, and the broader mandate of public broadcasting. This, therefore, positions the research within ongoing debates about the SABC's responsiveness to the world's ever-changing technological landscape and its ability to digitise the communication environment rapidly. This research further adds to the broader debates on digital transformation in state-owned enterprises. This is the case because these enterprises continue to face severe challenges, including bureaucratic structures, accountability and the need to serve the people. The integration of WhatsApp for internal communication at Thobela FM demonstrates both the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation. However, extensive literature notes that WhatsApp enhances immediacy, collaboration, and inclusivity among employees, while other scholars argue that it has blurred boundaries. These dynamics are therefore in line with the UGT and CAT, as they show that the prevalence of informal communication platforms is relevant in state-owned enterprises and provide insights into the evolving nature of communication in South Africa.

2.2.4 The Impact of WhatsApp Messenger on Communication Efficiency and Interdepartmental Collaboration

A prominent effect of integrating WhatsApp into organisational communication systems is the acceleration of decision-making and responsiveness. WhatsApp's real-time messaging and instant feedback features, such as read receipts, voice notes, and quick group replies, allow organisations to bypass slower formal communication channels, enabling them to resolve emerging issues, coordinate schedules, and make operational decisions more rapidly (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014; Moqbel & Kock, 2018). In high-pressure work environments, such as broadcasting, production, or media organisations, this immediacy can be critical for maintaining operational flow and meeting tight timelines.

Interdepartmental collaboration also benefits substantially from WhatsApp's affordances. Through group chats, broadcast messages, and shared multimedia, different departments (e.g., programming, production, marketing, news) can coordinate tasks, share updates,

and monitor progress in real time without waiting for formal meetings or hierarchical approvals (Cao, Guo, Vogel & Zhang, 2016; Manca, 2020). This breakdown of silos enhances organisational cohesion and enables a more integrated workflow, allowing staff to respond to cross-departmental needs promptly. Informal communication channels, such as WhatsApp, often complement formal workflows by enabling the rapid exchange of clarifications, adjustments, or alerts, especially when formal channels are too rigid or unnecessarily time-consuming.

Moreover, WhatsApp can improve overall productivity by streamlining communication workflows, reducing redundancy, and cutting down delays associated with official paperwork or email chains. Employees can quickly clarify assignments, share documents or media, confirm receipt, and coordinate logistics within a few taps. This agility reduces friction, improves accountability, and can lead to more responsive and adaptive organisational behaviour (Raphael, 2022; Van Zyl, 2021). In contexts where timing and coordination matter, such as live broadcasts, production schedules, or tight deadlines, such flexibility may represent a competitive advantage.

However, this positive impact largely depends on how WhatsApp is integrated into the organisation's communication ecosystem. Without clear guidelines, informal channels may overtake formal channels, leading to fragmentation, inconsistent record-keeping, or unequal access depending on employees' familiarity or comfort with the platform. For optimal benefit, WhatsApp ought to complement, not replace, formal communication systems, thereby combining the strengths of both structured and flexible communication modes.

2.2.5 Challenges and Limitations of Using WhatsApp for Internal Communication

Despite its advantages in facilitating rapid communication and interdepartmental collaboration, WhatsApp also presents several challenges when used for internal organisational communication. One of the most frequently cited issues is information overload, in which employees receive an excessive number of messages, notifications, and multimedia content, hindering productivity and focus (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Cao et al., 2016). Unlike structured email systems or enterprise communication tools, WhatsApp often allows unregulated message flows, leading to interruptions during work and

increased cognitive load. Research indicates that excessive messaging can reduce employees' ability to prioritise tasks effectively and can contribute to fatigue or stress, particularly in fast-paced or high-stakes organisational environments (Bolton et al., 2013).

Privacy and confidentiality concerns constitute another significant limitation of using WhatsApp for professional communication. Although WhatsApp offers end-to-end encryption, organisational data shared over the platform may be vulnerable to accidental leaks, unauthorised forwarding, or device theft (Kumar, 2020; Adu & Amedzo, 2022). Sensitive information related to business strategy, financial decisions, or personnel matters may inadvertently circulate beyond intended recipients, raising legal, ethical, and reputational risks. Scholars emphasise that reliance on consumer-grade messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, originally designed for personal communication, requires careful consideration of compliance with organisational policies and data protection regulations (Oliveira & Wijngaert, 2017).

A further concern is the impact on professionalism and communication etiquette. WhatsApp's informal nature encourages casual messaging styles, including the use of emojis, abbreviations, and shorthand expressions, which may conflict with formal organisational communication norms (Van Zyl, 2021; Church & De Oliveira, 2013). This informality can blur the line between professional and personal communication, potentially leading to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or perceptions of unprofessional behaviour. Scholars argue that employees' perceptions of appropriateness can vary, and inconsistencies in tone, responsiveness, or message formatting may affect workplace relationships and the credibility of communications (Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

Lastly, the use of WhatsApp in organisations can contribute to blurred work-life boundaries, as employees may feel compelled to respond to messages outside official working hours (Bolton et al., 2013; Moqbel & Kock, 2018). Unlike scheduled emails or formal meetings, WhatsApp's mobile accessibility encourages constant availability, which may cause stress and undermine work-life balance. While some employees appreciate the flexibility of instant messaging, prolonged exposure to work-related messages during personal time can lead to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and adverse effects on overall well-being (Lee & Lee, 2020; Raphael, 2022). Organisations must therefore

implement policies that manage expectations around after-hours communication, while leveraging WhatsApp's benefits for workplace efficiency.

2.2.6 Strategies for Optimising WhatsApp Integration in Organisational Communication Systems

Effective integration of WhatsApp into organisational communication requires a structured approach that balances the platform's flexibility with formal communication needs. Scholars argue that organisations ought to establish clear policies and guidelines that outline acceptable use, confidentiality requirements, and boundaries for professional communication (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Oliveira & Wijngaert, 2017). By codifying these expectations, management can mitigate risks associated with information leaks, inappropriate messaging, or overuse during off-hours. Policies should also clarify the distinction between informal peer-to-peer communication and formal communication that requires official documentation, ensuring that WhatsApp complements rather than replaces enterprise communication systems (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014).

Another key strategy involves leveraging WhatsApp's features to enhance team coordination and workflow management. Research highlights the benefits of creating structured groups for specific departments, projects, or tasks, which help keep communication focused and reduce irrelevant messages (Raphael, 2022; Adu & Amedzo, 2022). Additionally, utilising features such as broadcast lists for announcements and pinned messages for critical updates can ensure that essential information reaches the right audience efficiently. Best practices also include encouraging staff to use multimedia, voice notes, and document-sharing capabilities thoughtfully so that messages remain concise, actionable, and accessible across devices.

Training and capacity-building constitute another critical aspect of optimising WhatsApp use in organisations, where studies suggest that employees should be oriented not only to the technical use of the platform but also to digital communication etiquette, including tone, responsiveness, and clarity (Van Zyl, 2021; Lee & Lee, 2020). Training programmes can address the risks of overcommunication, misinterpretation, and confidentiality breaches, helping staff to communicate effectively while maintaining professionalism. Furthermore, management ought to monitor usage patterns to identify communication

bottlenecks, recurring misunderstandings, or workflow inefficiencies, and use these insights to refine group structures, policies, and messaging protocols (Neiroukh et al., 2024).

Finally, scholars emphasise the importance of integrating WhatsApp within broader organisational communication strategies, rather than using it in isolation. WhatsApp ought to complement other formal communication channels such as email, intranet platforms, and enterprise software systems, forming a hybrid communication ecosystem that accommodates immediacy and flexibility while preserving official record-keeping and accountability (Manca, 2020; Cao et al., 2016). Management can also encourage practices that maintain work-life boundaries, such as designated messaging hours or clear expectations for response times, reducing employee burnout and ensuring sustainability of WhatsApp use. This shows that, when properly managed, WhatsApp can be a highly effective communication tool that enhances collaboration, accelerates decision-making, and strengthens interdepartmental coordination, all while preserving organisational professionalism and efficiency.

2.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter explored the evolving landscape of organisational communication, with a particular focus on integrating social media platforms and instant messaging tools, such as WhatsApp, into internal communication systems. It highlighted how communication in modern organisations is no longer confined to formal channels but increasingly relies on a hybrid model that combines structured directives with informal, spontaneous networks. Furthermore, this chapter explored the transformative role of social media in enhancing information flow, employee engagement, interdepartmental collaboration, and overall organisational culture. Platforms like WhatsApp were identified as practical tools for real-time coordination, knowledge sharing, and strengthening relational networks among employees. The chapter also acknowledged several challenges and limitations associated with WhatsApp usage, including information overload, privacy and security risks, professionalism concerns, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Strategies to optimise its integration were proposed, emphasising the need for clear policies, structured use, training on digital literacy and etiquette, and a hybrid

communication approach that complements formal channels with flexible informal interactions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodological framework adopted to explore the integration of WhatsApp Messenger into internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station in Limpopo Province. The chapter provides a detailed account of the research paradigm, research approach, design, study setting, population, sampling procedures, data collection, and analysis methods employed in the study. The chapter further discusses strategies implemented to ensure the rigour, credibility, and trustworthiness of the research process. Ethical considerations that guided the study are also presented. Collectively, these methodological choices were designed to generate rich, contextually grounded insights into how WhatsApp functions as a communication tool within a professional media environment such as the SABC.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, and Perez-Prado (2003), a paradigm is a fundamental viewpoint or a set of convictions or presumptions that directs a researcher's investigation. This suggests that every researcher approaches their work with a wide range of interrelated, and occasionally incongruous, philosophical assumptions and viewpoints. The phrase "paradigm" in research refers to the "worldview" of the researcher (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A worldview constitutes a perspective, a school of thought, or a body of widely held beliefs that directs how study results are interpreted or understood by the researcher. According to Lincoln (2000), paradigms are human constructs that serve as guiding principles or reflect the researcher's perspective when interpreting data. Therefore, paradigms are important because they provide the beliefs and principles that help researchers across disciplines decide what to look at, how to look at it, and how to evaluate the results of their studies. Furthermore, Lincoln (2000) contends that a researcher's paradigm establishes their philosophical stance, which will be evident in the research's conclusion. This has significant implications for every choice made during the

research process, including the choice of approaches and strategies. Thus, a paradigm explains how meaning can be constructed from the information we gain through our own perspectives and personal experiences.

3.1.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

There are two broadly well-known research paradigms, namely positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Henn et al., 2006). This research falls under the interpretivist paradigm, as it is more concerned with human behaviour, views, and experiences with social media. According to Creswell (1998), the interpretive paradigm rests on the supposition that knowledge is situated within the interpretation of people's lived experiences and the meanings they assign to them. Since people's perceptions of the world shape their behaviour rather than external factors and processes that researchers can measure, some researchers feel that positivist principles are not quite appropriate when examining the complexity of the social world (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022).

In this context, knowledge lies in the meanings people make of it; it is acquired through people discussing their meanings and shaped by subjective biases and values. This paradigm is written in a personal manner and changes the surface knowledge, which is irrevocably entangled with the context in which it is studied. The interpretivist paradigm is relevant to this study because it enabled an in-depth understanding of how Thobela FM staff members experience and assign meaning to the use of WhatsApp Messenger in their daily internal communication. This paradigm values subjective perspectives and allows the researcher to explore participants' individual interpretations, attitudes, and social interactions within their organisational context. It was therefore appropriate for uncovering the nuanced, context-specific ways in which WhatsApp shapes communication practices, professional relationships, and organisational culture at Thobela FM.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

According to Creswell (1998), a qualitative research approach is an inquiry process for understanding a social or human problem, in which the researcher builds a complex,

holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. Meanwhile, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicate that this approach helps researchers interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, capturing experiences, perspectives, and social contexts that cannot be adequately understood through numerical data. According to Tisdell and Merriam (2015), qualitative research involves the use of non-standard analysis techniques and informal data collection methods such as local methods. For this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach to address the research questions and objectives. The intention was to study the experiences of Thobela FM's permanent staff members. In this research, some of the questions to be answered were: to what extent has WhatsApp integration influenced collaboration and information sharing among permanent staff members at SABC, with a focus on examining their participation in collaborative WhatsApp groups and the frequency of information exchange?

According to Creswell (2014), major characteristics of the qualitative research approach include a focus on understanding human experiences in their natural settings, an emphasis on participants' perspectives, and the use of flexible, open-ended data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) further highlight that qualitative research is interpretive and context-bound, meaning that participants' meanings and behaviours are explored within their specific social, cultural, and organisational contexts. Tisdell, Merriam, and Stuckey-Peyrot (2025) add that qualitative research is holistic and inductive, aiming to generate rich, detailed descriptions and insights, rather than to test hypotheses or quantify variables. Collectively, these characteristics make qualitative research particularly suited for studies that seek to explore complex social phenomena, such as communication practices within organisations, prioritising depth, context, and meaning over numerical generalisation.

Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2001) indicate that researchers using the qualitative method always tend to study human actions from the perspectives of the social actors themselves, also referred to as the 'emic' perspective by anthropologists. As described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the primary goal of using qualitative research was to gain the views, perceptions and experiences of the participants from Thobela FM rather than to

explain their behaviour. Through qualitative research, the researcher gains insight into the participants' ideas, backgrounds, and circumstances, as well as provides a detailed account of their behaviours (Kvale 1996; Mack et al., 2005). Nonetheless, this was a qualitative study that used interviews to gather information from 20 purposively selected permanent employees across departments such as programming, music, library, and marketing at Thobela FM to determine the effects of WhatsApp on internal communication.

The qualitative research approach was particularly well-suited to this study for several reasons. It allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), capturing insights into WhatsApp usage for collaboration and information sharing that quantitative methods could not provide. It was flexible and context-sensitive, enabling researchers to adapt questions and probe emerging themes, reflecting the social and organisational context of different departments (Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025). Additionally, it provided a holistic, inductive, and 'emic' perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kvale, 1996), allowing the researcher to understand patterns and meanings from the participants' perspectives. Finally, qualitative research generated rich, narrative data, supporting the interpretation of complex social phenomena such as internal communication dynamics and digital collaboration practices (Mack et al., 2005).

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study to enable a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions, and communication behaviours of Thobela FM's permanent staff regarding the use of WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication. This approach enabled the researcher to capture rich, descriptive data that reveal how employees interpret and make sense of their communication practices within the organisational context. As Babbie and Mouton (2001) note, qualitative research focuses on the process rather than the outcome, allowing researchers to observe and understand human actions as they naturally occur. This makes it particularly well-suited to exploring the nuances of communication, collaboration, and engagement facilitated by WhatsApp. Furthermore, being an insider within the organisation offers additional advantages, as highlighted by Kanuha (2000) and Asselin (2003), since the researcher

shares common experiences, language, and cultural understanding with participants, fostering trust and openness during data collection. Ultimately, the qualitative approach aligns with the study's aim of uncovering in-depth insights into how WhatsApp influences internal communication, efficiency, and collaboration among permanent staff members at Thobela FM.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Exploratory Research Design

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), an exploratory research design is a method employed when there is limited prior knowledge about a phenomenon, with the primary aim of gathering preliminary information to clarify and define the research problem. Scholars further argue that exploratory research is particularly useful for identifying key variables, generating hypotheses, and gaining a deeper understanding of the context in which a problem occurs (Stebbins, 2008; Malhotra, 2007). This design is often flexible and open-ended, allowing researchers to use qualitative approaches such as interviews, focus groups, or observations to explore emerging patterns and insights. Exploratory research designs are typically employed to determine how best to proceed with an investigation of an issue or which information-gathering methodology would be most appropriate to address the research topic (Taylor, Catalano & Walker 2002). This study falls within the category of exploratory research design, which is typically used for topics with few to no prior studies to refer to or on which to base a prediction (Michael 2002; Christoph 2010).

This study employed an exploratory research design, as it was well-suited to examining WhatsApp Messenger's role in internal communication at Thobela FM. The rationale for this choice included the limited existing research on this topic (Creswell, 2014), necessitating an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, Yin (2014) asserts that exploratory research offers flexibility, enabling adaptation to emerging themes and issues during data collection. In the context of this study, exploratory research involves identifying patterns and themes in WhatsApp Messenger usage among Thobela FM staff, understanding

internal communication dynamics, and providing insights to inform improvements to organisational communication strategies.

This research is exploratory and seeks to address a gap in the existing literature by examining SABC-Thobela FM staff's perceptions, experiences, and understanding of WhatsApp's role in the workplace. In this study, an exploratory research design was employed, utilising qualitative data-collecting methodologies to gather original, firsthand data. This primary data was collected directly through interviews (Sykes, Gani, & Dullabh, 2016). According to Sykes et al. (2016), an exploratory research design can be used to answer any research question, including what, why, and how. In this research, an exploratory design was employed to help answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One of this dissertation. Michael (2002) and Taylor et al. (2002) indicate that the purpose of an exploratory research design is to enable the researcher to become acquainted with fundamental information, contexts, and issues, and to generate new concepts and hypotheses to formulate preliminary theories. In addition, exploratory research provides guidance for further studies and the development of research methodologies. Problems are honed for further in-depth, methodical analysis and the formulation of fresh research questions. Since exploratory research typically employs small sample sizes, it is unable to generalise the findings (Sykes et al., 2016). Given the nature of exploratory research, it is only possible to offer insights rather than draw firm conclusions from the results (Michael 2002; Sykes et al. 2016).

In a nutshell, an exploratory research design was deemed most suitable for this study, as it allowed for an in-depth investigation of a relatively underexplored area: the integration of WhatsApp Messenger into internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM. Given the limited prior research on this topic within the South African broadcasting context, an exploratory design provided the flexibility needed to uncover new insights and understand emerging patterns in communication practices. This design enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward using WhatsApp as a professional communication tool, without being constrained by predetermined assumptions. Through open-ended, semi-structured interviews, the researcher identified underlying themes, challenges, and dynamics shaping how staff

members utilise WhatsApp in their daily interactions, thereby generating a deeper contextual understanding and laying the groundwork for future, more structured investigations.

3.4 STUDY SETTING, STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE

3.4.1 Study Setting

According to Given (2008), the research setting refers to the physical, social, and cultural environment in which the researcher conducts the study. The data for this study were collected from SABC Limpopo Thobela FM. The study setting was suitable for the research because it was less costly to arrange after their shows. The study environment had several qualities, such as open areas where interviews were conducted without interference and questions were explained. In terms of developing strategies and guidelines that optimise WhatsApp's integration for more effective internal communication and collaboration within SABC-Thobela FM. This presented an opportunity for staff members to offer their insights and contributions to a study that has not been thoroughly examined and is still in the early stages of development (Sutjipto, Arviani, & Putri, 2022).

Thobela FM was considered a suitable setting for this study because it represents a dynamic media environment in which internal communication plays a crucial role in daily operations. As a public broadcaster under the SABC, the station relies heavily on timely coordination and information sharing among its permanent staff members, making it an ideal context for exploring the integration of WhatsApp Messenger as a communication tool. The site's accessibility and staff members' willingness to participate also contributed to its suitability, as interviews could be conveniently arranged after broadcast schedules in familiar surroundings that encouraged open discussion. However, the study faced several challenges, including scheduling difficulties due to participants' demanding work shifts, limited availability of quiet spaces during peak broadcasting hours, and initial apprehension among some staff members about discussing internal communication practices. Despite these challenges, the setting provided valuable insight into real-world communication dynamics within a professional media organisation.

3.4.2 Study Population

According to Polit and Beck (2004), the population is the entire set of individuals or elements that meet the sampling criteria. Wimmer and Dominick (2013) described a population as a class or group of people and noted that variables, concepts, or phenomena can also be considered populations in scientific studies. However, time and resource limitations sometimes prevent the examination of an entire population. Additionally, it is typically prohibitively expensive to study an entire community, and doing so could complicate the findings because the accuracy of measures is sometimes affected by the sheer number of subjects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

Conversely, a population is characterised as the theoretically defined collection of research subjects (Babbie, 1998). Conversely, a population can be defined as a theoretically specified group of research subjects or elements relevant to the study (Babbie, 1998). In exploratory research, information is gathered from different segments of the population to gain a deeper understanding of patterns, behaviours, or phenomena, rather than to test specific hypotheses. It is also important to recognise that populations may include subgroups, which ought to be considered carefully when selecting participants so as to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study. Dumisa (2010) described the population as a full group of participants about whom the researcher seeks to generalise the findings of the study. It is significant to identify the population group whenever conducting research. The population refers to the people to whom the research questions are aimed and from whom information is gathered.

According to Kerlinger and Lee (2020), a research population can be classified into two types: the target population and the accessible population. The target population encompasses the entire group of individuals, events, or elements that the researcher intends to study, and about which conclusions are to be drawn. In contrast, the accessible population refers to the portion of the target population that is actually available and reachable for participation (Polit & Beck, 2017). In this study, the target population comprises all staff members at Thobela FM, approximately 100 individuals, including both permanent employees and freelancers. The accessible population, however, was limited to permanent staff members, as they were directly relevant to the research on WhatsApp

Messenger usage and were available for participation. Participants were aged over 18 years and were purposively selected from various departments, including Programming, Marketing, the Music Department, and Library Services. Thobela FM is organised into divisions such as Programming, Marketing, Digital, and Technology, which allowed the researcher to capture perspectives from different functional areas. Security officers and cleaners were not included, as they serve primarily as SABC service providers, rather than organisational staff. Furthermore, permanent staff members were selected over freelancers because they are consistently present at the station, ensuring reliable access for data collection.

Additionally, the selected population of permanent staff members at Thobela FM was suitable for this study because they are directly involved in the station's day-to-day internal communication processes. As core employees, they consistently engage with organisational communication platforms, including WhatsApp Messenger, making them the most relevant group to provide meaningful insights into how the application is used for business communication. Their roles across different departments, including Programming, Marketing, Music, and Library Services, allowed the study to capture a comprehensive understanding of how communication practices vary within the organisation. Furthermore, their accessibility and familiarity with the internal operations of Thobela FM ensured that the data collected were rich, reliable, and reflective of authentic workplace communication experiences.

However, the study also faced several challenges related to this population. Some staff members had tight work schedules, which made it difficult to arrange interviews without disrupting their professional responsibilities. In some cases, participants were hesitant to share detailed opinions due to confidentiality concerns or fear of misinterpretation by management. Additionally, the limited time available after live shows sometimes limited the depth of discussions, as participants were often fatigued or had other commitments. Despite these challenges, the engagement of permanent staff ultimately provided valuable insights into WhatsApp's effectiveness and limitations as an internal communication tool within the radio station.

3.4.3 Sampling Procedures

According to Trachoma (2006), the sampling procedure is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that, by studying the sample, the researcher can generalise the findings to the population from which the sample was drawn. In this study, purposive sampling was employed, with relevant samples selected from the study population. Purposive sampling is a technique used by qualitative researchers to select participants who can provide in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation (Tongco, 2006). This sampling technique was relevant to this study because it enabled the researcher to select participants based on their knowledge of WhatsApp and their daily social media engagement. Moreover, Stratton (2024) indicated that purposive sampling is the most cost-effective and time-effective sampling method. This study selected 20 permanent staff members at Thobela FM, SABC, as participants, all of whom are part of the Thobela FM WhatsApp group known as the Mošate WhatsApp Group, and were allowed to text the researcher in private.

The researcher scheduled visits with a selected group of Thobela FM staff members who regularly work from the office, as they produce shows, publish them on social media, and create graphics, making them an appropriate population for the study. Marketing offices consist of brand specialists and graphic designers, a digital specialist, an event organiser, and an editor. The Music Department consisted of two music compilers and a scheduler, and the library consists of a principal librarian, three archivists and a librarian. A programming manager, a chief producer, two permanent producers, and an audio-visual specialist make up the programming team. The SABC stations have employed this structure of permanent workers per station since Section 189, which was introduced during COVID-19. All staff from the portfolios mentioned above participated in the interviews.

Furthermore, to ensure data saturation was adequately addressed, this study adopted a purposive sampling strategy, involving 20 participants drawn from various departments. This diversity allowed for a wide range of perspectives and experiences, thereby enriching the data's quality and depth. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher continuously assessed thematic saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes,

insights, or patterns emerged from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data saturation monitoring was conducted concurrently with data analysis, enabling the researcher to determine whether additional interviews were necessary. Once it became evident that subsequent interviews were yielding repetitive information, further data collection was deemed unnecessary, thereby ensuring both methodological rigour and efficiency in the research process.

3.4.4 Sample Size

According to Malterud, Siersma, and Rosenbaum (2016), the number of participants chosen to obtain scientific data for the study is known as the sample size. Furthermore, many respondents are included in the samples to confirm the validity of the research findings. However, in this study, the sample size is limited to 20 participants, and data were gathered at Thobela FM (SABC). Lacobucci and Churchill (2005) assert that sample sizes can be sequentially determined, and additional data can be obtained if the first data collected do not address the research topic or are fixed in advance of the study. As explained below, this study chose a set sample size.

Based on population sizes and pragmatic considerations, the sample frame was selected for each. All permanent staff members of Thobela FM were included in this study due to the manageable quantity of staff members. Since it was practically feasible, the entire population was used for this investigation. A sample of 20 permanent staff members at Thobela FM was relevant to this study because it included individuals directly involved in the station's internal communication processes and who use WhatsApp Messenger in their daily interactions. In qualitative research, sample adequacy is determined not by statistical representation but by the richness of data and the point of saturation. Saturation was assessed when recurring themes emerged, and additional interviews no longer provided new insights. Permanent staff were selected because they form the backbone of the station's operations, are consistently embedded in organisational communication flows, and are directly accountable to SABC's hierarchical structures and public service mandate. While freelance staff also use WhatsApp, their temporary engagement with the organisation limits their relevance to the study's focus on structural communication practices. Their exclusion is acknowledged as a limitation, with future research

encouraged to explore comparative perspectives. This group provided a balanced representation of various departments, allowing for diverse perspectives on how WhatsApp is integrated into organisational communication. The sample size was also manageable, enabling in-depth engagement and detailed qualitative insights while ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the experiences and communication practices within the station.

3.4.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria of this study included permanent staff members of Thobela FM (SABC). Thobela FM permanent staff members (Programming, music department, library services and marketing) were included. Inclusion criteria were:

- age 18 or older;
- ability to understand and provide informed consent; and
- permanent staff members of Thobela FM from Programming, music département, Library services and marketing.

The exclusion criteria of this study were that no security officers or cleaners would be included, because SABC does not employ them but rather uses them as service providers, and no permanent employees under the age of 18 would be included (for kiddies shows). Exclusion Criteria were:

- independent contractors/ Freelancers, interns, or volunteers;
- employees on leave or temporary assignments; and
- not younger than 18 years.

Due to their obligation to be at work from 8:00 to 16:00, the personnel on the following list are always available. They also participated in the WhatsApp group referred to as the Mošate Group.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The research design for this study was exploratory and therefore adopted a qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative research techniques were used in this study because they examine human beings from the perspective of social actors (Babbie &

Mouton, 2001). The main goal of qualitative research is to understand and describe, rather than explain, human behaviour. Therefore, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was employed in this research to explore the extent to which Thobela FM staff members use WhatsApp to share work-related information, and its impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination.

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

According to Babbie (2016), a semi-structured interview is a flexible interviewing technique that combines standardised questions with opportunities for follow-up probes, allowing the interviewer to explore participants' perspectives in depth while maintaining a degree of comparability across interviews. The semi-structured interview was an important data collection tool in this study, as it enabled a more in-depth exploration of experiences and perspectives on the use of WhatsApp in the workplace for work-related purposes, as well as the factors influencing its effectiveness.

The semi-structured interview was designed to be administered in person by the researcher. The interviews were designed to last 30-45 minutes and were conducted at a location convenient for the participants (the SABC Conference room). The interview guide included a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit further elaboration and clarification on issues surrounding the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the workplace, how it was utilised, and the role of internal communication in this matter. The guide was structured to allow participants to express their thoughts and experiences in this regard fully. Examples of specific questions used included: What channels of communication do you use to communicate with employees, and how effective are they at addressing different issues?

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), semi-structured interviews are an effective method for data collection when the researcher seeks to gather qualitative, open-ended data, explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic, and delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues. Furthermore, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), semi-structured interviews are an effective method for data collection when the researcher seeks to gather qualitative, open-ended data, explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic, and delve deeply into

personal and sometimes sensitive issues. Furthermore, several scholars have noted that the advantages of semi-structured interviews include their flexibility, depth, and capacity to yield rich, detailed insights. For instance, Dawson (2019) indicated that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to follow up on interesting points, probe unexpected issues, and adapt the sequence of questions based on the participant's responses. This flexibility ensures that important perspectives are not overlooked. Similarly, Creswell (2014) found that semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they strike a balance between consistency and openness: the interview guide ensures that all key topics are covered across participants, while still permitting variation and nuance in how participants express their experiences. Babbie (2016) also highlighted that this method encourages rapport-building, helping participants feel comfortable sharing personal and meaningful information, which often results in more authentic and trustworthy data.

Furthermore, in this study, the interviews were conducted at SABC Polokwane in Limpopo Province with 20 permanent staff members who are always at work, compared with freelancers, as identified in the sampling process. Participants were selected based on the researcher's knowledge of the number of people in each department and who would provide useful information aligned with the study's objectives. The sampling strategy was also purposively broad to capture insights from permanent staff members of Thobela FM. Qualitative data collection is a method that plays an important role in providing information that helps one to understand the processes behind observed results (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The use of semi-structured interviews was considered suitable for this study since it allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward the use of WhatsApp Messenger in internal communication at Thobela FM in a flexible yet guided manner. This method provided an opportunity to probe more deeply into participants' responses, enabling clarification and elaboration on key issues related to communication effectiveness, challenges, and organisational interaction. The interviews were conducted in person with 20 permanent staff members in a private and comfortable setting (the SABC conference room), which encouraged open discussion and ensured confidentiality. Each session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was guided by open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives. This approach enabled the collection of rich, detailed qualitative data that captured the complexity of human

communication behaviours and workplace dynamics, providing valuable insights into how WhatsApp functions as a communication tool within a media organisation.

3.5.1 Data Collection Processes and Challenges

During the data collection phase, several challenges arose that hindered the smooth execution of the research process. One of the primary difficulties involved gaining consistent access to participants, as many of them had demanding and unpredictable work schedules within the broadcasting environment. For instance, the Marketing Department initially agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews; however, due to competing commitments and promotional events in January and February, they were unable to attend the scheduled sessions. This inconsistency in scheduling risked introducing bias, as certain departments could have been under-represented in the data. To mitigate this, the researcher opted to conduct interviews late at night, thereby ensuring broader participation and reducing the likelihood of skewed findings. Another challenge is the varying levels of engagement and response rates among participants during interviews. Some respondents required additional time to reflect before providing detailed answers, extending the interviews beyond the anticipated timeframe. While this posed logistical difficulties, the researcher's flexible approach allowed participants to respond at their own pace, thereby safeguarding the richness and authenticity of the data. This strategy ensured that depth was prioritised over speed, reducing the risk of superficial responses and enhancing data quality.

Logistical constraints also presented minor setbacks. The initially designated venue for the interviews, the SABC boardroom, became unavailable at short notice due to unscheduled organisational meetings. This necessitated a prompt change of location to the SABC hall, which, although less private, was arranged and prepared to provide a conducive, interruption-free environment for data collection. Despite these challenges, the researcher's adaptability, proactive planning, and effective communication with participants ensured that the process remained rigorous and that high-quality data were successfully collected.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

According to Coldwell and Herbst (2004), the data analysis process is a crucial component of any study because it provides meaning and context to the raw data collected through various measurement instruments. In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data, as this method allowed for the identification, organisation, and interpretation of patterns. Scholars such as Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that thematic analysis provides a rich, detailed, yet flexible account of the data, enabling the researcher to explore and explain multiple dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Thematic analysis produced an insightful analysis that answered specific research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006:97), making it suitable for this research. The other reason for choosing thematic analysis in this study was its flexibility, which allowed the researchers to develop themes from the collected data. The research employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step guidelines for thematic analysis. The guidelines included the researcher becoming acquainted with their data, creating preliminary codes, reading every transcript to engage with the data, revising themes, naming and describing themes, and reporting constructions.

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data collected through a semi-structured, open-ended interview instrument. Thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying patterns, themes, and trends within qualitative data, and is recognised for its flexibility and applicability across various qualitative research traditions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this method facilitates the extraction of meaning by systematically coding the data, breaking it into smaller, meaningful units, and analysing each segment for recurring ideas, themes, or patterns. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) note that thematic analysis assists researchers in organising data into coherent categories that reflect participants' experiences and perspectives. To ensure consistency and rigour in the analysis, a coding framework was developed and applied to the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. This framework involved a series of structured steps designed to guide the identification and categorisation of themes.

The use of thematic analysis enables a comprehensive exploration of how WhatsApp functions as an internal communication platform at Thobela FM, including the challenges associated with its use and its overall effectiveness. However, it is important to acknowledge that thematic analysis is inherently interpretive and may be influenced by the researcher's subjective judgment, which can limit the generalisability of the findings. To mitigate this limitation, the study employed a clearly defined coding framework and subjected the analytic process to the study supervisor's review to enhance reliability. Furthermore, the findings presented in the discussion chapter were cross-referenced with prior research in the field to strengthen the validity of the conclusions.

3.6 ENSURING RIGOUR

Ensuring rigour in qualitative research is essential for producing trustworthy and defensible findings. Rigour refers to the strategies that enhance the quality, credibility, and dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). According to Jasanoff (2014) and Marquart (2017), rigour involves adhering to the methodological standards accepted within the discipline to ensure that data, analysis, and interpretations are handled systematically and transparently. In this study, rigour was ensured through the strategies of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the level of confidence in the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In this study, the researcher ensured credibility by engaging deeply with participants during data collection and by creating a comfortable interview environment that encouraged honest, detailed responses. The researcher carefully documented the interviews, used verbatim quotations to represent participants' voices accurately, and maintained transparency in how interpretations were reached. In addition, the researcher cross-checked emerging themes with the raw data throughout the analysis process to avoid misinterpretation. Where possible, the researcher also clarified certain responses with participants during interviews to ensure the intended meaning was captured accurately.

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to similar contexts or groups (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher ensured transferability by providing thick, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and the procedures used in data collection and analysis. By clearly outlining how participants were selected, how interviews were conducted, and the contextual factors influencing the study environment, the researcher enabled other scholars and practitioners to make informed judgments about whether the findings would be applicable in their own settings.

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability relates to the stability and consistency of the research findings over time (Bitsch, 2005). To ensure dependability, the researcher followed a systematic, well-documented research process that could be traced and replicated by others. The researcher kept detailed records of the research design, interview procedures, coding methods, analytic decisions, and theme-development processes. This audit trail provides a transparent account of how the study was conducted from beginning to end. The researcher also maintained reflexive notes throughout the research process, documenting

methodological decisions and reflecting on potential biases that could influence the analysis.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's biases or preferences (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). In this study, the researcher ensured confirmability by grounding every interpretation in the actual data collected through the interviews. The researcher created and maintained an audit trail that included raw interview transcripts, coding sheets, analytic memos, and notes from thematic analysis. This documentation enables others to trace how the findings emerged from the data. The researcher also practised reflexivity, consistently reflecting on personal assumptions and ensuring they did not influence the interpretation of participants' responses.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Orcher (2016), ethical considerations are the guidelines and regulations that researchers must adhere to when conducting their research. The concept of research ethics involves guaranteeing the protection of research participants, among other things (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). With the help of these guidelines, the researcher could conduct authentic and rigorous research. In this study, participants were informed that they could avoid any uncomfortable questions about the research procedure. Furthermore, the respondents' information was kept anonymous, and nothing about them was disclosed without their consent.

3.7.1 Permission to Conduct Research

According to Creswell (2014), obtaining permission to conduct research involves seeking the consent of the people participating in the study, as well as the organisation or location where the research is conducted. In line with this guidance, the researcher first sought approval from the Departmental Scientific Review Committee, which evaluated the proposal's scientific quality. After this stage, the study was submitted to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC), where ethical clearance was formally granted under approval number [Rec-240816-052] (See Appendix E). Once ethical approval had been

granted, the researcher obtained permission to collect data. A formal request letter was submitted to the Programming Manager at Thobela FM, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and the ethical safeguards in place. Permission to conduct the research within the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) environment was subsequently granted. The researcher ensured that participants had signed an informed consent form confirming their understanding of the study's goal, risks, and benefits before data collection began. The researcher also confirmed that the Ethics Committee had authorised the research protocol and that an Ethics Clearance Certificate had been signed, a certification from the ethics committee attesting to the study's compliance with ethical guidelines.

3.7.2 Informed consent

This is an essential procedure in research, in which participants are given all the information they need to make an informed decision about whether to participate. Throughout this process, it is important to make the participant's rights and obligations, as well as the research goals, techniques, potential risks, and rewards, explicit (Bryman, 2016). The researcher then provided Thobela FM's permanent staff with clear, accurate information about the research. In addition, the researcher ensured that participants understood the material presented and that their participation was entirely voluntary and free from coercion. By obtaining informed consent, researchers can build trust with their participants, ensuring a collaborative and mutually beneficial research experience.

3.7.3 Risk and Harm

Creswell (2014) defined risk and harm as the possible unfavourable results or negative effects that study participants might encounter. Creswell stresses the importance of clearly explaining risks and harms in the informed consent process to ensure that participants understand the potential consequences of their involvement. The researcher always guaranteed the participant's safety throughout the study. According to Barnes and Mercer (2010), risk and harm refer to the likelihood of suffering injury from participating in a research project. To ensure that participants are not exposed to any risk or harm during the research process, the researcher implemented the following measures: following a thorough explanation of the goals, methods, and possible dangers of the research,

participants gave their informed consent. Participants' identities and private data were kept confidential and anonymous. Voluntary participation was also ensured, as participants could discontinue their participation at any time without repercussions.

3.7.4 Confidentiality

According to Bryman (2016) and Creswell (2014), confidentiality refers to safeguarding participants' private information and data from unauthorised access, disclosure, or use. It entails ensuring that participants' identities, responses, and personal information remain anonymous and confidential. The researcher ensured that all data collection tools, such as interview schedules, did not collect unnecessary personal information (Creswell, 2014). The researcher further limited access to data to only those who required it for research purposes. Additionally, the researcher upheld the principle of confidentiality. In a relationship of trust, confidentiality refers to handling information as a secret, never shared with third parties without the participant's consent (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). The researcher guaranteed that participant confidentiality was upheld during the data collection procedure and that participants' data and personal information were protected from unauthorised access or disclosure by implementing these safeguards.

3.7.5 Voluntary participation

According to Bryman (2016) and Creswell (2014), voluntary participation means that subjects should be free to decide whether to take part in a study without undue pressure, manipulation, or coercion. To inform participants about voluntary participation in the study, the researcher clearly stated in the informed consent form that participation was voluntary, explained that participants could decline to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence, and emphasised that refusal to participate or withdrawal would not result in any negative consequences or loss of benefit. The researcher further ensured that the informed consent process was conducted in a private, comfortable setting, free from coercion or undue influence (Bryman, 2016).

3.7.6 Anonymity

Anonymity refers to the protection of participants' identities and personal details, ensuring that they cannot be identified or linked to their responses or data (Bryman, 2016; Creswell,

2014). To protect the personal details of the participants (Thobela FM Permanent staff members) and to maintain anonymity, the researcher used codes to replace participants' names and identifying information, removed any personal identifiers, such as names, addresses, or contact information from the data, and made use of safe and encrypted data storage techniques, such as encrypted databases or password-protected files. By putting these precautions in place, he ensured that participants' private information was protected, and their identities were preserved for the duration of the study. An example of codes was: *Participant #1, Participant #2, Participant #3, etc.*

3.7.7 The Right to Privacy

The right to privacy refers to the protection of individuals' personal information and data from unauthorised access, disclosure, or use (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014). It involves ensuring that participants' personal details, responses, and data are kept confidential and secure. To ensure the right to privacy in this study, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants, explicitly stating how their data would be used and protected, used secure and encrypted data storage methods, such as password-protected files or encrypted databases, and ensured that participants' responses were not linked to their identities in any way, using measures such as anonymous surveys or interviews. By implementing these measures, the researcher ensured that participants' right to privacy was respected and protected throughout the research process.

3.7.8 Results communication

According to Bryman (2016) and Creswell (2014), communicating results is the process of sharing research findings with a range of audiences, including participants, academic communities, stakeholders, and the public. To ensure the communication in this study, the researcher prepared a clear and concise research report, presented findings at academic conferences and seminars, shared results with participants through a summary report or presentation, published research papers in peer-reviewed journals, utilising social media and online platforms to disseminate findings for a broader audience, and provided opportunities for feedback and discussion. To guarantee that the study's results are communicated to participants, the researcher wrote a clear and succinct research report, presented the findings at academic conferences and seminars, shared the findings with

participants in the form of a summary report or presentation, published research papers in peer-reviewed journals, used social media and online platforms to share the findings with a wider audience, and encouraged comments and discussion.

3.7.9 Beneficence

According to Bryman (2016) and Creswell (2014), result communication refers to the process of sharing research findings with a range of audiences, including participants, academic communities, stakeholders, and the public. To ensure the communication of results in this study, the researcher prepared a clear and concise research report, presented findings at academic conferences and seminars, shared results with participants through a summary report or presentation, published research papers in peer-reviewed journals, utilised social media and online platforms to disseminate findings to a broader audience, and provided opportunities for feedback and discussion. To guarantee that the study's results were communicated to participants, the researcher wrote a clear and succinct research report, presented the findings at academic conferences and seminars, shared the findings with participants in the form of a summary report or presentation, published research papers in peer-reviewed journals, used social media and online platforms to share the findings with a wider audience, and encouraged comments and discussion.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In summary, this chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed to investigate the integration of WhatsApp Messenger in internal communication among permanent staff at Thobela FM Radio Station. It has provided a detailed account of the research paradigm, approach, design, study setting, population, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods, and the strategies used to ensure the rigour, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study. Ethical considerations guiding the research process were also highlighted. Collectively, these methodological choices were aimed at generating rich, contextually grounded insights into WhatsApp's role as a communication tool in a professional media environment. Chapter Four presents the study's findings, including detailed analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of data from semi-structured interviews conducted with Thobela FM employees to address the study's research objectives. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a clear, systematic, and coherent account of the findings, supported by appropriate thematic illustrations where necessary. The chapter presents the data in a structured manner to allow the identification of key patterns, relationships, and emerging themes that directly address the research questions. In doing so, this chapter serves as the foundation for the subsequent discussion by linking empirical results to existing literature and conceptual debates. The intention in doing so is to move beyond the mere reporting of findings, towards a critical and reflective engagement that advances understanding of WhatsApp Messaging as a phenomenon under investigation. The chapter consists of several major sections, which include a brief background on the data collection processes and their significance, as well as the presentation of study findings, in which the collected data are presented in detail, with themes and sub-themes identified through thematic analysis of the study objectives, research questions, and existing previous studies.

4.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Data collection for this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with staff members at SABC Thobela FM radio station in Limpopo Province. A total of 20 permanent staff members participated in the study, representing various departments, including programming, marketing, music, library, and production. The participants held different positions, including producers, presenters, and marketing managers. The interviews were conducted in person at the SABC boardroom in Polokwane, using a semi-structured interview schedule with predetermined open-ended questions designed to gather in-depth insights into the participants' experiences with WhatsApp integration in their

communication practices, collaboration, and employee engagement at the SABC. Interviews were held with the participants, who were encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences freely. In addition, a voice recorder device was used to capture their stories and conversations, which were later transcribed and analysed to develop this chapter. During the interviews, the researcher ensured that the recording device had sufficient storage space and that all recordings were well labelled. The researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim into readable texts, and a thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse the data.

4.2. RESTATING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Creswell (2014), restating the research question is important in academic writing to guide the study and provide focus for the person reading. This process involves rephrasing the research questions that guided the study (Punch, 2014). In this research, the researcher focused on participants' attention to provide clarity and context for the findings and discussion, and to emphasise the study's purpose and objectives. The research questions were restated in the following manner:

- How do permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station utilise WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of this usage?
- To what extent does WhatsApp Messenger enhance or hinder efficient communication and collaboration among different departments at Thobela FM Radio Station?
- What specific challenges do permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station encounter when using WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication, and how do these challenges affect their work?
- What strategies can be implemented to optimise the use of WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication at Thobela FM Radio Station, and what benefits can be expected from these strategies?

4.3. DATA PRESENTATION

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews are presented below. The responses from all participants are organised by question to maintain accuracy and credibility, and have been transcribed verbatim.

4.3.1 Utilisation of WhatsApp Messenger for Internal Communication

4.3.1.1 How do you use WhatsApp Messenger for internal communications at work, and what are the reasons behind your choice?

Participant # 1: *“I communicate with my colleagues about matters that are work-related promptly via WhatsApp. It’s user-friendly and convenient.”*

Participant # 2: *“Since WhatsApp is widely used and works well for sending files and images important to my job, I decided to use it.”*

Participant # 3: *“WhatsApp is incredibly user-friendly and facilitates rapid communication with my colleagues.”*

Participant # 4: *“I communicate with team members who work remotely via WhatsApp. It’s an excellent method of maintaining contact.”*

Participant # 5: *“WhatsApp is convenient and allows me to communicate with my team members wherever they may be, which is why I always use it.”*

Participant#6: *“We use WhatsApp for quick work updates and sharing files. It’s easy to use, and everyone has it.”*

Participant#7: *“I use WhatsApp to talk to colleagues one-on-one and in groups. It’s great for working from home and keeping our conversations private.”*

Participant # 8: *“I chose to use WhatsApp because my colleagues widely use it, and it’s easy to share files and photos as per the nature of my work.”*

Participant # 9: *"I communicate with my team members who work remotely via WhatsApp. It's a fantastic method to maintain contact."*

Participant # 10: *"We use WhatsApp to share quick work updates and ask questions. It's a fast way to talk to each other."*

Participant # 11: *"I use WhatsApp to communicate with my colleagues about work projects and tasks quickly. It is convenient and easy to use."*

Participant # 12: *"I chose to use WhatsApp because my colleagues widely use it, and it's easy to share files and photos as per the nature of my work."*

Participant # 13: *"I chose WhatsApp because it's easy to use, and it allows me to communicate with my team members quickly."*

Participant # 14: *"I use WhatsApp to communicate with my team members who are working remotely. It's a great way to stay connected."*

Participant # 15: *"I chose WhatsApp because it's convenient, and it allows me to communicate with my team members regardless of their location quickly."*

Participant # 16: *"I chose WhatsApp because it's easy to use, and it allows me to communicate with my team members quickly."*

Participant # 17: *"I communicate with my team members who work remotely via WhatsApp. It's a fantastic method to maintain contact."*

Participant # 18: *"I chose WhatsApp because it's convenient, and it allows me to communicate with my team members regardless of their location quickly."*

Participant # 19: *"I communicate with team members via WhatsApp, exchange information, and talk about ongoing projects. Due to its ease of use, ability to provide immediate communication, and smooth file sharing, WhatsApp is my preferred app."*

Participant # 20: *"For internal communications, I use WhatsApp to discuss work-related issues, collaborate with coworkers, and exchange updates. My decision was based on*

WhatsApp's quickness, ease of use, and capacity to support both private and public talks.”

4.3.1.2 In what ways and how often do you use WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication at work?

Participant # 1: “I use WhatsApp for internal communication every day. It's my primary means of communication with my team.”

Participant # 2: “I use WhatsApp a few times a week to communicate with my colleagues. It's mostly for quick questions or updates.”

Participant # 3: “I don't use WhatsApp as much as I used to. I prefer to use email or phone calls for more formal communication.”

Participant # 4: “I communicate internally using WhatsApp every day. It serves as my main channel of communication with my group.”

Participant # 5: “A few times a week, I speak with my coworkers via WhatsApp. Mostly for brief inquiries or updates.”

Participant # 6: “My usage of WhatsApp has decreased over time. For more official communication, I like to use phone conversations or emails.”

Participant # 7: “I communicate internally using WhatsApp every day. It serves as my main channel of communication with my group.”

Participant # 8: “A few times a week, I speak with my coworkers via WhatsApp. Mostly for brief inquiries or updates.”

Participant # 9: “My usage of WhatsApp has decreased over time. For more official communication, I like to use phone conversations or emails.”

Participant # 10: “I communicate internally throughout the day using WhatsApp Messenger. I communicate with coworkers about ongoing projects, share updates, and take part in group discussions.”

Participant # 11: "I connect with team members, exchange information, and plan projects via WhatsApp multiple times a day. I also utilise it to receive feedback from coworkers and to clear up any confusion."

Participant # 12: "I communicate internally every day using WhatsApp Messenger. I communicate with coworkers on ongoing projects, share project updates, and have conversations on work-related subjects."

Participant # 13: "I talk to team members, share knowledge, and discuss ongoing tasks on WhatsApp quite a bit, especially during business hours. I share resources and files using it as well."

Participant # 14: "I communicate internally throughout the day using WhatsApp Messenger. I communicate with coworkers about work-related topics, give updates, and take part in group conversations."

4.3.1.3 What role do WhatsApp groups play in your workplace interactions, and how do they influence your communication and collaboration with colleagues?

Participant # 1: "I've observed that most of my colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations frequently, almost daily."

Participant # 2: "Some colleagues use WhatsApp occasionally, while others rarely use it for work-related conversations."

Participant # 3: "I think most colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations a few times a week."

Participant # 4: "For our staff, WhatsApp groups have been invaluable. We can discuss ongoing projects, provide information, and get feedback from one another. Additionally, it has made it simpler to keep track of conversations and reduced email clutter."

Participant # 5: "WhatsApp groups, in my opinion, have greatly enhanced our ability to communicate and work together. We can exchange ideas, have casual conversations, and receive prompt answers. Additionally, it has aided in the development of a sense of belonging and team spirit."

Participant # 6: “WhatsApp groups have been a fantastic method for me to keep in touch with the team and receive information on projects that are still in progress. To prevent information overload and maintain the focus of the discussions, I do believe that we need to set certain ground rules.”

Participant # 7: “I adore working in WhatsApp groups! Getting rapid feedback and communicating with the team is much simpler now. Additionally, I value the fact that we can exchange files and images, as this has been beneficial for our projects.”

Participant # 8: “WhatsApp groups improve communication and teamwork. To exchange ideas, offer criticism, and encourage one another, we utilise groups. Colleagues can exchange resources, skills, and best practices in groups, which also makes it easier to share knowledge.”

Participant # 9: “WhatsApp groups are crucial to our interactions at work. They help us make wise judgments, work together productively, and communicate clearly. Additionally, groups foster accountability, openness, and cooperation, all of which contribute to our success as a group.”

Participant # 10: “WhatsApp groups help team members communicate and work together. We discuss issues, exchange information, and reach conclusions in groups. Additionally, groups facilitate connections with coworkers from various departments, encouraging information sharing and cross-functional cooperation.”

Participant # 11: “Most of the permanent staff members of Thobela FM said WhatsApp groups play a significant role in our workplace interactions, enabling us to share information, discuss projects, and collaborate with colleagues in real-time.”

4.3.1.4 What is your observation about how often your colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations, and what do you think this says about your team's communication habits?

Participant # 1: “I’ve observed that my colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations frequently, almost daily. I think this says that our team values convenience and speed in our communication, and we're often looking for quick answers or updates.”

Participant # 2: "From what I've seen, some colleagues use WhatsApp occasionally, while others rarely use it for work-related conversations. I think this suggests that our team has a mix of communication styles, and while some people prefer WhatsApp, others might prefer email or phone calls."

Participant # 3: "I think most of my colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations a few times a week. This says to me that our team is collaborative and values informal communication channels for staying connected and sharing information."

Participant # 4: "Using WhatsApp for non-work-related purposes might be distracting and reduce output. During working hours, we have observed that certain team members spend excessive amounts of time engaging in personal interactions."

Participant # 5: "Additionally, it may result in a communication breakdown. Team members may overlook crucial updates or communications about business if they are overly preoccupied with personal discussions."

Participant # 6: "We've set up a separate WhatsApp group for non-work-related conversations. This way, colleagues can share personal content without disrupting work-related discussions."

Participant # 8: "We've established clear guidelines on WhatsApp usage during work hours. If someone is found using it for non-work-related purposes, we address it through a friendly reminder or a brief discussion."

Participant # 9: "We've set up a separate WhatsApp group for non-work-related conversations. This way, colleagues can share personal content without disrupting work-related discussions."

Participant # 10: "We monitor WhatsApp usage and address any misuse through our company's IT policy. Repeating offenders may face disciplinary action."

Participant # 11: "I've observed that most of my colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations frequently, almost daily."

Participant # 12: "Some colleagues use WhatsApp occasionally, while others rarely use it for work-related conversations."

Participant # 13: "I think most colleagues use WhatsApp for work-related conversations a few times a week, and I've seen that my coworkers frequently use WhatsApp for both official and informal conversations throughout the day. This implies that there is an open, honest, and friendly atmosphere inside our team, which can promote trust, innovation, and output."

Participant # 14: "I use WhatsApp for work only when necessary. I prefer more formal channels for important discussions."

Participant # 15: "WhatsApp is essential for our remote team. They enjoy using it for work."

Participant # 16: "Our team uses WhatsApp for brainstorming sessions. It's easy to share ideas quickly."

Participant # 17: "WhatsApp is my go-to platform for urgent matters. My team knows to reach me there."

Participant # 18: "I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the number of work-related messages on WhatsApp. It's hard to separate work and personal life."

Participant # 19: "WhatsApp is essential for our remote team. We can stay connected and discuss projects easily."

Participant # 20: "Our work team can do the work on WhatsApp, including allocation during events."

4.3.2 Impact of WhatsApp on Efficient Communication and Departmental Collaborations

4.3.2.1 How has WhatsApp impacted the way you collaborate with colleagues?

Participant # 1: "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate and communicate. We can have several chats going on at once, and it's simple to monitor who is saying what. Additionally, it has aided in the development of a sense of belonging and team spirit."

Participant # 2: “We can now work together more effectively thanks to WhatsApp, especially when working on projects with short turnaround times. We can talk about our work, exchange files, and gain team member input all at once.”

Participant # 3: “We can now work together remotely more easily thanks to WhatsApp. We may continue to communicate with the team while working remotely. Additionally, it has assisted us in decreasing misinterpretations and miscommunications.”

Participant # 4: “WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate by facilitating casual conversations and brainstorming sessions. The ability to promptly communicate changes and reminders has also assisted us in maintaining organisational goals and focus.”

Participant # 5: “WhatsApp makes it easy to talk to colleagues quickly. I can send a message or make a call and get answers right away.”

Participant # 6: “WhatsApp helps our team communicate better. We can share files, talk about projects, and get feedback from each other fast.”

Participant # 7: “WhatsApp simplifies how we talk to each other. We can solve problems, answer questions, and make decisions without meetings or emails.”

Participant # 8: “WhatsApp helps me work better with colleagues. We can discuss things, share info, and work together more efficiently.”

Participant # 9: “WhatsApp helps our team respond quickly. We can handle urgent things, give updates, and coordinate tasks better, which helps us work together.”

Participant # 10: “Because WhatsApp offers a platform for quick communication, it has improved teamwork. We can collaborate more successfully, exchange ideas, and offer criticism. Additionally, it has made it easier for us to remain informed and connected even when working remotely.”

Participant # 11: “WhatsApp has completely changed how we work together. We can communicate in real time, exchange information, and make decisions quickly. Because we can now have more casual and sociable interactions, it has also helped us become a more united team by enhancing our communication and teamwork in general.”

Participant # 12: "WhatsApp has improved the efficiency and convenience of teamwork. We can have conversations on the road and instantly share files, photos, and videos. Because we can have more casual and intimate chats, it has also assisted us in strengthening our bonds with coworkers."

Participant # 13: "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate and communicate. For tasks or subjects, we can form groups and conduct targeted conversations. Additionally, it has decreased the need for drawn-out emails or meetings, which has increased productivity and saved us time."

Participant # 14: "Our team's ability to collaborate has greatly increased thanks to WhatsApp. We can instantly exchange updates, talk about active projects, and answer questions in real time. Additionally, it has improved our response times and decreased email clutter."

Participant # 15: "WhatsApp has improved the efficiency and convenience of teamwork. We can have conversations on the road and instantly share files, photos, and videos. Because we can have more casual and intimate chats, it has also assisted us in strengthening our bonds with coworkers."

Participant # 16: "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate and communicate. For tasks or subjects, we can form groups and conduct targeted conversations. Additionally, it has decreased the need for drawn-out emails or meetings, which has increased productivity and saved us time."

Participant # 17: "Because WhatsApp offers a platform for quick communication, it has improved teamwork. We can collaborate more successfully, exchange ideas, and offer criticism. Additionally, it has made it easier for us to remain informed and connected even when working remotely."

Participant # 18: "To be honest, using WhatsApp for work collaboration has been frustrating. Conversations can get lost in the noise, and it's hard to keep track of important discussions."

Participant # 19: "While WhatsApp has been helpful for quick communication, I've found that it can also be a distraction. Constant notifications can disrupt my focus, and it's easy to get sidetracked by non-work-related conversations."

Participant # 20: "WhatsApp has greatly improved our collaboration as a team. We can quickly share updates, discuss project details, and even have group video calls."

4.3.2.1 Have you noticed any shifts in the way team members collaborate, share ideas, or support one another since adopting WhatsApp?

Participant # 1: "Yes, I've noticed that team members are more likely to share ideas and ask for feedback since we started using WhatsApp. It's easier to have quick conversations and get input from others."

Participant # 2: "Definitely. WhatsApp has made it easier for team members to collaborate and support each other. We can quickly answer questions, provide guidance, and share resources."

Participant # 3: "I've seen a big increase in teamwork and collaboration since we adopted WhatsApp. Team members are more willing to help each other out and share their expertise."

Participant # 4: "Yes, WhatsApp has helped our team become more cohesive and supportive. We can easily check in with each other, ask for help, and celebrate each other's successes."

Participant # 5: "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate and communicate. We can have several chats going on at once, and it's simple to monitor who is saying what. Additionally, it has aided in the development of a sense of belonging and team spirit."

Participant # 6: "We can now work together more effectively thanks to WhatsApp, especially when working on projects with short turnaround times. We can talk about our work, exchange files, and gain team member input all at once."

Participant # 7: "We can now work together remotely more easily thanks to WhatsApp. We may continue to communicate with the team while working remotely. Additionally, it has assisted us in decreasing misinterpretations and miscommunications."

Participant # 9: "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate by facilitating casual conversations and brainstorming sessions. The ability to promptly communicate changes and reminders has also assisted us in maintaining organisation and goal focus."

Participant # 10: "Of course. WhatsApp has established a more open and inclusive culture. We've observed a rise in cross-functional cooperation and support, and team members feel more at ease expressing their ideas."

Participant # 11: "Team members are more receptive and helpful to one another, I've seen. We have been able to provide prompt feedback, direction, and encouragement thanks to WhatsApp, which has improved teamwork and morale."

Participant # 12: "Indeed, WhatsApp has made it easier to collaborate in more casual and impromptu ways. In a casual and conversational setting, team members are more inclined to ask for comments, discuss ideas, and ask for opinions."

Participant # 13: "Yes, I have observed a notable change. Collaboration and decision-making have improved because of team members' increased propensity to exchange ideas, pose queries, and offer immediate feedback."

Participant # 14: "I've noticed a significant shift, with enhanced collaboration and decision-making being driven by team members' increased willingness to share ideas, ask questions, and provide timely feedback."

Participant # 15: "Of course. WhatsApp has established a more open and inclusive culture. We've observed a rise in cross-functional cooperation and support, and team members feel more at ease expressing their ideas."

Participant # 16: "I've observed that team members are more helpful and quicker to respond to each other. Our ability to give prompt feedback, direction, and support through WhatsApp has improved teamwork and morale."

Participant # 17: "Yes, more casual collaboration has been made possible via WhatsApp. Members of a team are more likely to ask for comments and exchange ideas casually and conversationally."

Participant # 18: "Peer-to-peer support and information sharing have significantly increased, in my experience. The performance and cohesiveness of the team have increased because of individuals' increased willingness to support one another, share knowledge, and offer advice."

Participant # 19: "WhatsApp has changed our team's communication. We can quickly share updates, discuss ideas, and make decisions in real-time."

Participant # 20: "While WhatsApp has been helpful for quick communication, I've found that it can also be a distraction. Constant notifications can disrupt my focus."

4.3.2.2 Have you encountered any issues related to data security, privacy, or compliance when using WhatsApp for corporate purposes?

Participant # 1: "WhatsApp helps us share information quickly. But sometimes the information leaks."

Participant # 2: "WhatsApp is fast for sharing information. We can share files, photos, and videos easily, but sometimes colleagues forward them to other people, and we end up not having privacy."

Participant # 3: "We're worried about compliance with regulations like GDPR. We're not sure if WhatsApp's data storage and retention policies align with our requirements."

Participant # 4: "We've experienced issues with data security. Employees have received phishing messages and spam on WhatsApp."

Participant # 5: "We've had to establish strict guidelines for using WhatsApp for corporate purposes. We need to ensure that employees understand the risks and responsibilities."

Participant # 6: "I struggle to find specific information or conversations on WhatsApp. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Participant # 7: "We've had issues with employees sharing confidential information on WhatsApp. It's hard to control and monitor."

Participants # 8: "We're worried about compliance with regulations like GDPR. We're not sure if WhatsApp's data storage and retention policies align with our requirements."

Participant # 9: "We've experienced issues with data security. Employees have received phishing messages and spam on WhatsApp."

Participant # 10: "We've had to establish strict guidelines for using WhatsApp for corporate purposes. We need to ensure that employees understand the risks and responsibilities."

Participant # 11: "I feel overwhelmed by the number of messages I receive on WhatsApp. It's hard to keep up and prioritise important messages."

Participant # 12: "Yes, we've had concerns about data privacy and compliance. We're not sure if WhatsApp meets our organisation's data protection standards."

Participant # 13: "We've had issues with employees sharing confidential information on WhatsApp. It's hard to control and monitor."

Participant # 14: "We're worried about compliance with regulations like GDPR. We're not sure if WhatsApp's data storage and retention policies align with our requirements."

Participant # 15: "WhatsApp is not safe at all. I know what I am talking about."

Participant # 16: "I don't take WhatsApp seriously when coming to work; a lot of things leak."

Participant # 17: "A lot of things are leaking"

Participant # 18: "It's a risk to use WhatsApp when you have things that you want to protect; security isn't strong"

Participant # 19: WhatsApp is not for saving documents, it's not safe at all"

Participant # 20: I don't trust it. I remember sending one view document, but the document was a screenshot."

4.3.2.3 Can you share your observations about how WhatsApp has influenced the quality of information shared among team members?

Participant # 1: "WhatsApp's character limits and informal tone can sometimes lead to oversimplification or lack of clarity in the information shared."

Participant # 2: "WhatsApp has enabled us to share more accurate and timely information. We can instantly communicate changes, updates, and deadlines, which has improved our team's responsiveness and adaptability."

Participant # 3: "The quality of information shared on WhatsApp is often more detailed and nuanced than what we would typically share via email or meetings."

Participant # 4: "Although WhatsApp has made it easier for team members to share information, I've found that the brevity of WhatsApp messages can occasionally result in miscommunications or misreading. We must keep this in mind and make sure that crucial information is conveyed in a manner."

Participant # 5: "WhatsApp has, in my experience, boosted the amount of information that team members communicate, but not always the quality of that information. To guarantee that information shared on WhatsApp is correct, trustworthy, and pertinent, we must set explicit rules and procedures."

Participant # 6: "I've noticed that the quality of information shared on WhatsApp can sometimes be superficial or lacking in context. This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations."

Participant # 7: "WhatsApp's character limits and informal tone can sometimes lead to oversimplification or lack of clarity in the information shared."

Participant # 8: "WhatsApp has enabled us to share more accurate and timely information. We can instantly communicate changes, updates, and deadlines, which has improved our team's responsiveness and adaptability."

Participant # 9: "The quality of information shared on WhatsApp is often more detailed and nuanced than what we would typically share via email or meetings."

Participant # 10: "I've noticed that WhatsApp has made team members share information more quickly and frequently. But this has also resulted in certain misinformation and misconceptions."

Participant # 11: "Although WhatsApp has made it easier for team members to communicate information, I've seen that some team members do not always double-check the information's correctness before disseminating it. Confusion and false information may result from this."

Participant # 12: "In my opinion, WhatsApp has enhanced the calibre of information that team members exchange. Because we can exchange data, reports, and updates fast, there is less misinformation, and everyone agrees."

Participant # 13: "Team members now communicate more information thanks to WhatsApp, but the quality of that information hasn't always improved. I've observed that some team members sometimes share inaccurate or irrelevant information, which can be confusing and distracting."

Participant # 14: "I've noticed that WhatsApp has made it possible for team members to exchange more contextualised information. Our ability to swiftly exchange ideas, viewpoints, and experiences has enhanced our cooperation and deepened our comprehension of one another's viewpoints."

Participant # 15: "I've noticed that the quality of information shared on WhatsApp can sometimes be superficial or lacking in context. This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations."

Participant # 16: "The quality of information shared on WhatsApp is often more detailed and nuanced than what we would typically share via email or meetings."

Participant # 17: "WhatsApp's character limits and informal tone can sometimes lead to oversimplification or lack of clarity in the information shared."

Participant # 18: “WhatsApp has enabled us to share more accurate and timely information. We can instantly communicate changes, updates, and deadlines, which has improved our team's responsiveness and adaptability.”

Participant # 19: “The quality of information shared on WhatsApp is often more detailed and nuanced than what we would typically share via email or meetings.”

Participant # 20: “WhatsApp has, in my experience, boosted the amount of information that team members communicate, but not always the quality of that information. To guarantee that information shared on WhatsApp is correct, trustworthy, and pertinent, we must set explicit rules and procedures.”

4.3.2.4 What recommendations do you have about WhatsApp's effect on departmental and internal communication?

Participant # 1: “Make rules for using WhatsApp for work.”

Participant # 2: “Use WhatsApp for small talk, but important talks should be in person or by email.”

Participant # 3: “Know when to use WhatsApp and when to use email or phone.”

Participant # 4: “Don't talk about work on WhatsApp outside work hours.”

Participant # 5: “Teach people how to use WhatsApp well for work.”

Participant # 6: “Setting explicit rules on what can and cannot be shared on WhatsApp is something I advise. Additionally, we should be careful with data privacy and make sure that sensitive information is shared securely.”

Participant # 7: “For casual conversations and team building, I believe WhatsApp should be used; nevertheless, for official correspondence, we should continue using email or the internal communication system of our business.”

Participant # 8: “We should improve departmental communication by utilising WhatsApp's functionalities, like groups and file-sharing. We must, however, make sure that our use of it is safe, legal, and considerate of our coworkers' time.”

Participant # 9: "I advise establishing guidelines for WhatsApp use, such as not using it for official or urgent correspondence. A clear procedure for reporting and resolving any problems or issues that come up should also be established."

Participant # 10: "WhatsApp should be used in addition to, not in place of, internal communication. Regardless of their position or location, we should make sure that we're using it in a way that is inclusive and considerate to all our coworkers."

Participant # 11: "The volume of messages I get on WhatsApp is overwhelming me. Keeping up and prioritising critical communications is difficult."

Participant # 12: "I have trouble using WhatsApp to locate certain chats or information. It is like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

Participant # 13: "Personal WhatsApp messages tend to divert me from my work during working hours. It's challenging to keep business and personal life apart."

Participant # 14: "I feel like I'm always 'on' and never really disconnect from work."

Participant # 15: "Let us establish clear guidelines for WhatsApp usage."

Participant # 16: "A comprehensive social media policy must be developed."

Participant # 17: "If clear expectations for WhatsApp usage are set too."

Participant # 18: "Encourage feedback and suggestions through WhatsApp."

Participant # 19: "Monitor WhatsApp conversations for feedback and insights."

Participant # 20: "I advise establishing guidelines for WhatsApp use, such as not using it for official or urgent correspondence. A clear procedure for reporting and resolving any problems or issues that come up should also be established."

4.3.3 Challenges of WhatsApp Messenger for Internal Communication

4.3.3.1 What changes have you observed in the clarity and understanding of communication among team members since adopting WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication?

Participant # 1: "Communication is faster, but sometimes messages are misunderstood."

Participant # 2: "WhatsApp helps with simple discussions, but complex issues can be tricky."

Participant # 3: "WhatsApp is fast, but team members can miss important details."

Participant # 4: "WhatsApp is efficient, but we must avoid miscommunication."

Participant # 5: "WhatsApp improves communication clarity and understanding."

Participant # 6: "I've observed that team member communication has improved after implementing WhatsApp, becoming clearer and more succinct. Our ability to raise questions and receive prompt answers has enhanced our overall teamwork and decreased misunderstandings."

Participant # 7: "I've noticed that WhatsApp has contributed to fewer blunders and misunderstandings. Team members can promptly address questions and verify comprehension, which has increased the precision and calibre of our work."

Participant # 8: "We are now able to have more casual and impromptu talks thanks to WhatsApp, which has improved team member rapport and trust. Consequently, this has enhanced our ability to communicate and work together."

Participant # 9: "I've observed that WhatsApp has aided in dismantling team silos. Our overall coordination and production have increased because of team members from various departments being able to communicate more readily and successfully."

Participant # 10: "I've noticed that team members are more inclined to seek clarification and ask questions now that we're using WhatsApp. As a result, there are now fewer misunderstandings and better communication, which raises the calibre of our job."

Participant # 11: "I feel overwhelmed by the number of messages I receive on WhatsApp. It's hard to keep up and prioritise important messages."

Participant # 12: "I struggle to find specific information or conversations on WhatsApp. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Participant # 13: "I find myself getting distracted by personal messages on WhatsApp during work hours. It's hard to separate work and personal life."

Participant # 14: "I feel like I'm always 'on' and never really disconnect from work. WhatsApp makes it hard to set boundaries."

Participant # 15: "I struggle to find specific information or conversations on WhatsApp. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Participant # 16: "I find myself getting distracted by personal messages on WhatsApp during work hours. It's hard to separate work and personal life."

Participant # 17: "I feel like I'm always 'on' and never really disconnect from work. WhatsApp makes it hard to set boundaries."

Participant # 18: "WhatsApp has made it easier for team members to communicate informally and impulsively, I've noticed. As a result, team members are more at ease asking for feedback and exchanging ideas, which has improved teamwork and broken down silos."

Participant # 19: "Since we started utilising WhatsApp, I've observed that team members are more likely to voice their thoughts and opinions in real time. Communication has been clearer and easier to grasp because team members may now quickly clear up any misunderstandings."

Participant # 20: "I feel like I'm always 'on' and never really disconnect from work. WhatsApp makes it hard to set boundaries."

4.3.3.2 When using WhatsApp Messenger as a medium for internal communication inside your team or organisation, what challenges, restrictions, or unforeseen problems did you encounter?

Participant # 1: "We had problems with spreading wrong information and tracking conversations."

Participant # 2: "We couldn't format messages well, and some team members didn't check WhatsApp often."

Participant # 3: "We worried about information getting into the wrong hands."

Participant # 4: "Team members got work messages outside work hours."

Participant # 5: "We got too many messages and had trouble combining WhatsApp with other tools."

Participant # 6: "We ran into issues with privacy and data security. We had to make sure that our talks adhered to our organisation's data protection regulations and that private information was not disclosed over WhatsApp."

Participant # 7: "The restricted capacity of WhatsApp for talks in large groups was one of the limitations we encountered. To accommodate every team member, we had to form several groups, which made it challenging to monitor discussions."

Participant # 8: "We ran into unanticipated issues with rumours and false information. Due to WhatsApp's casual nature, team members occasionally shared unconfirmed information, which quickly spread and created uncertainty."

Participant # 9: "We had to deal with issues of work-life balance and boundaries. The boundaries between work and personal life were occasionally blurred by team members sending communications outside of business hours."

Participant # 10: "The absence of transparency and accountability was one of the limitations we encountered. It was hard to keep track of choices and actions because WhatsApp chats aren't officially documented, which made it hard to hold team members responsible."

Participant # 11 said: "We must make sure that our use of WhatsApp conforms with legal standards. Navigating those complications is difficult. According to SABC-Thobela FM employees in the media sector, "I'm concerned about the limitations of WhatsApp's file-sharing capabilities." Working together on projects or sharing big files isn't always simple."

Participant # 12: "I do not like the screenshot feature, because a lot of people use it for external purposes, and they share with external people."

Other colleagues share documents and audio via the view-once option.

Participant # 13: "Another challenge is the use of WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature, which automatically deletes messages after a set time, making it difficult to keep a record of conversations."

Participant # 14: "We ran into issues with record-keeping and information management. We had to develop methods to record and monitor significant chats because WhatsApp conversations are transient. We also had trouble making sure that everyone on the team had access to the most recent information and managing version control."

Participant # 15: "Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for every team member was one of the challenges we encountered. Some workers might not have had smartphones at their disposal, or might have had trouble using WhatsApp due to disability or language barriers. To make sure everyone was included, we had to create alternate means of contact."

4.3.3.3 What is your opinion regarding WhatsApp's procedures and policies regarding data protection? What features of the app bother you or make you reluctant to use it, and do you believe that your information is secure?

Participant # 1: "I worry about WhatsApp keeping my data safe."

Participant # 2: "I don't like WhatsApp sharing data with Facebook."

Participant # 3: "WhatsApp should be more open about how they use our data."

Staff Member 4: "I worry about hackers reading our messages."

Participant # 5: "WhatsApp is safer now, but can still improve."

Participant # 6: "The end-of-end encryption worries me. Even though I am aware that it is secure, I am concerned that my personal information might be exposed if I misplace my phone or if it is compromised."

Participant # 7: "Because of the possibility of data breaches, I'm hesitant to utilise WhatsApp for private talks. I'm concerned because I've heard tales of hackers intercepting WhatsApp messages."

Participant # 8: "The fact that WhatsApp gathers metadata, including whom I'm speaking to and when, bothers me. I feel uneasy since I don't know what they do with the info."

Participant # 9: "The fact that I have no control over my data worries me. I have no idea who has access to my messages or where they are kept. The idea that others could listen in on my private discussions is unnerving."

Participant # 10: "Despite WhatsApp's strong security mechanisms, I am nevertheless concerned about human error."

Participant # 11: "We have clear policies in place regarding the use of WhatsApp at work. We handle it with a polite warning or a quick conversation if someone is discovered utilising it for non-work-related reasons."

Participant # 12: "A distinct WhatsApp group has been established for discussions unrelated to business. In this manner, coworkers can exchange private information without interfering with business-related conversations."

Participant # 13: "We keep an eye on WhatsApp usage and use our company's IT policy to address any misuse." Repeat offenders might be disciplined."

Participant # 14: "I'm hesitant to utilise WhatsApp because of privacy and data security issues. The app's gathering of metadata, including device details and phone numbers, bothers me. Even though WhatsApp boasts end-to-end encryption, I'm still concerned about third-party providers intercepting and storing my data."

Participant # 15: "WhatsApp's use of phone numbers for identity verification worries me because they can be subject to phishing and spoofing attempts. The absence of two-factor authentication for all users in the app also bothers me. Although WhatsApp has put certain security safeguards in place, I think more work must be done to safeguard user data and accounts."

Participant # 16: "Because of worries about data security and end-to-end encryption, I'm hesitant to use WhatsApp. The app's tenacity in keeping data and messages on devices after deletion also bothers me. Despite WhatsApp's efforts to strengthen security, I continue to have concerns about how well the program will protect my data."

Participant # 17: "WhatsApp's regulations for data retention and cooperation with law authorities worry me. The app's lack of control over message sharing and forwarding worries me as well, as it can lead to data breaches and the spread of false information. Although WhatsApp has added a few security elements, I think more work must be done to guarantee the protection of user data."

4.3.3.4 How have you handled situations where colleagues have used WhatsApp during work hours for non-work-related purposes, such as promoting their own business or sharing unrelated content, and has this impacted your team's productivity or communication?

Participant # 1: "We remind colleagues to only talk about work on WhatsApp during work hours. We've addressed the issue through our team's communication guidelines. Colleagues are reminded that WhatsApp is for work-related purposes only. While occasional personal chats aren't an issue, excessive non-work-related usage can be distracting."

Participant # 2: "Our team leader talks to colleagues who misuse WhatsApp. We keep work and personal conversations separate."

Participant # 3: "We respect each other's time and focus during work hours."

Participant # 4: "We only check WhatsApp at certain times to stay focused."

Participant # 5: "We set clear rules for WhatsApp usage during work hours."

Participant # 6: "By following our team's communication principles, we have resolved the problem. Coworkers are reminded that WhatsApp should only be used for work-related activities. Personal conversations are fine on occasion, but using them excessively for purposes unrelated to work might be annoying."

Participant # 7: "A 'work hours' arrangement has been put into effect. During working hours, coworkers avoid sharing anything unrelated to their jobs. We talk about it as a team if someone breaks this rule. This strategy has made it easier to stay focused."

Participant # 8: "Our management conducts regular check-ins. We monitor our progress using a project management application. Our team's productivity is good because of open communication and clear expectations, even when certain personal conversations are unavoidable."

Participant # 9: "Our expectations for WhatsApp usage are very clear. It is advised that coworkers utilise it sensibly. If misuse happens, we take quick action to stop it. Our team prioritises common goals and maintains high levels of productivity and communication."

Participant # 10: "I try to set clear boundaries by responding with a message saying, 'I'll address this in the morning' or 'Let's discuss this during work hours.'"

Participant # 11: "I have established a clear understanding with my team that work-related conversations on WhatsApp are only for urgent matters. If it's not urgent, I ask them to send it through our company's email or project management tool."

Participant # 12: "We have set up a separate WhatsApp group for non-work-related conversations. This way, colleagues can share personal content without disrupting work-related discussions."

Participant # 13: "We monitor WhatsApp usage and address any misuse through our company's IT policy. Repeat offenders may face disciplinary action."

Participant # 14: "Team members have been urged to use WhatsApp politely and properly while at work. We handle the matter at our frequent team meetings or one-on-one conversations if someone is using WhatsApp for non-work-related reasons."

Additionally, we've created an accountability culture where team members are urged to voice their concerns if they believe that someone's use of WhatsApp is affecting output.”

Participant # 15: “We have established clear guidelines and standards for using WhatsApp at work. We have also urged team members to limit their personal WhatsApp use during work hours and prioritise job-related duties. We provide tools and support to help people better manage their time if they are having trouble focusing.”

4.3.3.5 How do you respond to cases where coworkers send work in WhatsApp even after hours?

Participant # 1: “I tell them I'll respond the next day.”

Participant # 2: “I set boundaries and tell them I'm not available outside work hours.”

Participant # 3: “I remind them to keep work conversations during work hours.”

Participant # 4: “I don't check work messages outside work hours.”

Participant # 5: “I tell colleagues when I'm available for work conversations.”

Participant # 6: “I kindly remind them that after work hours, I'm not available for work-related chats. For work-related issues, I also advise them to use the proper channels of communication established by our organisation.”

Participant # 7: “I respond with a message that reads, 'I'll address this in the morning,' or 'Let's discuss this during work hours,' to establish clear boundaries.”

Participant # 8: “My team and I have a clear agreement that WhatsApp communications about work should only be used for essential reasons. I ask them to transmit it via our company's email or project management application if it's not urgent.”

Participant # 9: “I try to set clear boundaries by responding with a message saying, 'I'll address this in the morning' or 'Let's discuss this during work hours.’”

Participant # 10: “I've established a clear understanding with my team that work-related conversations on WhatsApp are only for urgent matters. If it's not urgent, I ask them to send it through our company's email or project management tool.”

Participant # 11: "I acknowledge them briefly and inform them that I will take care of the matter during business hours. I also remind them that we should put our health and work-life balance first and urge them to respect my time and boundaries."

Participant # 12: "I don't reply to work-related texts after hours. Rather, I put off dealing with the problem until the following business day. I think it's critical to avoid the pressure to be available all the time and to maintain a healthy work-life balance."

4.3.4 Strategies for Optimising WhatsApp Integration for Internal Communication

4.3.4.1 What tactics have you used to keep things clear in WhatsApp group conversations so that information can flow freely?

Participant # 1: "We use simple language and explain abbreviations."

Participant # 2: "We set goals"

Participant # 3: "We organise conversations by topic."

Participant # 4: "We use images and videos to help explain things."

Participant # 5: "We listen carefully, ask questions, and summarise key points."

Participant # 6: "We use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon and technical terms unless necessary. We also use emojis to add tone and context to our messages, which helps prevent misinterpretations."

Participant # 7: "We use pertinent keywords or hashtags to create distinct topics or threads for every discussion. Team members are better able to recognise the context and react appropriately as a result."

Participant # 8: "We provide precise guidelines for communication procedures and response times. For instance, we assign team members to reply to kinds of messages or inquiries."

Participant # 9: “We back up our points with visual aids like pictures, videos, or screenshots. This lessens misunderstandings and improves the communication of complex information.”

Participant # 10: “We make sure everyone is on the same page by summarising important ideas or next steps of each discussion. The 'pin' feature on WhatsApp is also used to draw attention to crucial messages or reminders.”

Participant # 11: “We monitor WhatsApp engagement and usage data to pinpoint problem areas and enhance our internal communication approach.”

Participant # 12: “Our organisation conducts regular feedback sessions to gather insights from employees on their WhatsApp usage experience and identify growth.”

Participant # 13: “We promote transparent communication on our WhatsApp groups, enabling team members to exchange ideas, pose inquiries, and offer feedback.”

Participant # 14: “We use descriptive names for our groups, so everyone knows what the conversation is about.”

Participant # 15: “We create separate groups for different topics, so discussions stay focused.”

Participant # 16: “We control who's in each group, so we can ensure only relevant people are part of the conversation.”

Participant # 17: “Each WhatsApp group has a designated administrator who oversees maintaining the flow of the conversation and making sure that crucial information is discussed and handled. Additionally, we use the "search" function to locate messages or data fast.”

Participant # 18: “Our WhatsApp groups have a clear naming scheme that makes it easy for us to determine the goals and reach of each group quickly. We also use the "poll”

tool to collect thoughts and input rapidly, and the "file sharing" feature to share crucial papers and information."

4.3.4.2 What ideas or suggestions do you have for integrating WhatsApp with other tools or platforms to enhance internal communication, collaboration, and teamwork, and what benefits do you think such integrations could bring to your organisation?

Participant # 1: "Connect WhatsApp to project management tools."

Participant # 2: "Link WhatsApp to email or client management systems."

Participant # 3: "Automate tasks between WhatsApp and other tools."

Participant # 4: "Create a WhatsApp bot for routine tasks."

Participant # 5: "Connect WhatsApp to our internal knowledge sharing platform."

Participant # 6: "It has improved productivity, facilitated communication, and fostered teamwork."

Participant # 7: "Greater consumer experience, more efficiency, and better stakeholder service."

Participant # 8: "Improved teamwork, fewer absences from meetings, and higher output."

Participant # 9: "We monitor WhatsApp engagement and usage data to pinpoint problem areas and enhance our internal communication approach."

Participant # 10: "Our organisation conducts regular feedback sessions to gather insights from employees on their WhatsApp usage experience and identify growth."

Participant # 11: "We promote transparent communication on our WhatsApp groups, enabling team members to exchange ideas, pose inquiries, and offer feedback."

Participant # 12: "We use descriptive names for our groups, so everyone knows what the conversation is about."

Participant # 13: "We create separate groups for different topics, so discussions stay focused."

Participant # 14: "We control who's in each group, so we can ensure only relevant people are part of the conversation."

Participant # 15: "We encourage everyone to keep their messages concise and clear, so we can quickly understand what's being discussed."

Participant # 16: "We use hashtags to categorise messages, making it easier to search for specific topics."

4.3.4.3 What are your thoughts on the need for Thobela FM-SABC to develop and implement corporate communication policies specifically addressing the use of WhatsApp for work-related purposes, and what should such policies encompass to ensure effective and responsible usage?

Participant # 1: "To preserve professionalism and guarantee data protection, Thobela FM-SABC should create policies about WhatsApp usage. Guidelines for usage, confidentiality, and the repercussions of misuse should all be included in policies."

Participant # 2: "Establishing limits and avoiding distractions requires a business communication policy for WhatsApp use. Work-related usage, reaction time expectations, and procedures for exchanging sensitive data should all be outlined in the policy."

Participant # 3: "To safeguard its brand, stop data breaches, and guarantee legal compliance, SABC requires a WhatsApp policy. The policy ought to cover protocols for reporting events, manners, and content sharing."

Participant # 4: "To ensure inclusivity, prevent information overload, and encourage responsible usage, WhatsApp needs a policy. Clear guidelines for group discussions, file sharing, and observing coworkers' time and limits should all be outlined in the policy."

Participant # 5: “To uphold a professional image, avoid conflicts of interest, and be consistent with corporate objectives, Thobela FM-SABC should create a thorough WhatsApp policy. A code of behaviour, protocols for handling policy violations, and continual staff training should all be part of the policy.”

Participant # 6: “To encourage responsible use, avoid information overload, and guarantee diversity, WhatsApp needs a policy. Clear guidelines for group discussions, file sharing, and observing coworkers' time and limits should all be outlined in the policy.”

Participant # 7: “Thobela FM-SABC ought to create a WhatsApp policy to maintain regulatory compliance, safeguard its reputation, and stop data breaches. Etiquette rules, incident reporting protocols, and content sharing restrictions should all be part of the policy.”

Participant # 8: “Establishing limits and avoiding distractions requires a business communication policy for WhatsApp use. Work-related usage, reaction time expectations, and procedures for exchanging sensitive data should all be outlined in the policy.”

Participant # 9: “WhatsApp is a powerful tool for communication, but it can also be a distraction if not used responsibly. Policies should be put in place to ensure that employees use WhatsApp for work-related purposes only during work hours.”

Participant # 10: “The policies should also address issues of data protection and cybersecurity.”

Participant # 11: “I believe that Thobela FM-SABC should develop policies that promote transparency, accountability, and professionalism in WhatsApp communication. The policies should guide tone, language, and content, as well as establish clear procedures for reporting and addressing incidents of misuse.”

Participant # 12: “Procedures for keeping and archiving WhatsApp communications about business should be part of policies. This guarantees that crucial data is kept safe and readily available. Policies should also specify procedures for keeping an eye on and enforcing rules.”

Participant # 13: “Policies should stress how important it is to respect the privacy and limits of coworkers. They ought to guide how to avoid bullying, harassment, and other wrongdoing on WhatsApp. Moreover, policies must lay out precise protocols for incident reporting and resolution.”

4.3.4.4 What are your thoughts on our current WhatsApp integration for internal communication? What's working well, and what areas need improvement? Do you have any suggestions for how the station can better utilise WhatsApp to enhance its team's collaboration and productivity?

Participant # 1: “Our current WhatsApp integration is convenient for quick discussions, but it can get cluttered. To improve, we could create separate groups for specific topics or projects. This would help keep conversations organised and focused.”

Participant # 2: “For informal discussions and updates, I believe our WhatsApp connection is functioning effectively. To improve efficiency, we could think about combining WhatsApp with other teamwork platforms, such as Trello or Asana, for more official conversations or decision-making.”

Participant # 3: “Making sure that everyone in the team is using WhatsApp in the same way is one area that needs work. We could set precise rules for politeness, content sharing, and response times. We might also investigate using WhatsApp's features, such as quizzes and polls, to improve teamwork and engagement.”

Participant # 4: “I propose that we make more deliberate use of WhatsApp for objectives, such as exchanging resources or expertise. To keep our workforce informed and current, we may set up a special group for exchanging pertinent articles, films, or podcasts.”

Participant # 5: "We use descriptive names for our groups, so everyone knows what the conversation is about. "

Participant # 6: "We create separate groups for different topics, so discussions stay focused."

Participant # 7: "We control who's in each group, so we can ensure only relevant people are part of the conversation."

Participant # 8: "WhatsApp has proved helpful for corporate communication, but issues with secrecy and data security must be addressed. I recommend employing secure file-sharing protocols, end-to-end encryption, and explicit data security and confidentiality policies to get the most out of WhatsApp."

Participant # 9: "Real-time communication has improved thanks to our WhatsApp integration, but we still need to streamline our processes to reduce distractions and guarantee that crucial information is not overlooked. To make communication and work assignment easier, I advise setting aside particular times to check WhatsApp, making sensible use of notifications, and integrating WhatsApp with our project management software."

The most common response to the question of what is effective was, "WhatsApp has made it easier for us to share creative assets and collaborate on marketing campaigns."

Additionally, they urged improvement, saying, "We need to reduce the number of WhatsApp groups we're part of to avoid information overload and minimise distractions."

4.3.4.5 Which WhatsApp features do you think are most useful for internal communication? What other elements could be used to enhance Thobela FM's internal communication?

Participant # 1: "Groups, labels, and file sharing are most useful. We could use polls for quick decisions."

Participant # 2: "Sharing images and videos is helpful. We could use WhatsApp on computers for easier multitasking."

Participant # 3: "Secure conversations are important. We could create separate groups for departments or topics."

Participant # 4: "Voice and video calls are convenient. We could share quick updates using status."

Participant # 5: "Archiving conversations is helpful. We should establish clear names for groups and labels."

Participant # 6: "WhatsApp's voice messaging, file sharing, and group services are the most helpful for internal communication. Thobela FM could use WhatsApp's polling feature to get team members' thoughts or ideas to improve internal communication."

Participant # 7: "The location sharing, phone and video conversations, and texting tools are helpful, in my opinion. Thobela FM might look into sharing significant announcements or updates with team members via WhatsApp's broadcast feature to improve internal communication even further."

Participant # 8: "Creating groups, sharing files, and using emoticons to express tone are the tools that I find most helpful. Thobela FM can think about sharing brief updates or reminders with team members via WhatsApp's status feature to improve internal communication."

Participant # 9: "I like how simple it is to share documents, photos, and videos in addition to being able to make voice and video chats. Thobela FM might use

WhatsApp's label feature to classify and arrange messages, improving internal communication and making it simpler to locate information."

Participant # 10: "Groups, labels, and file sharing are most useful. We could use polls for quick decisions."

Participant # 11: "Sharing images and videos is helpful. We could use WhatsApp on computers for easier multitasking."

Participant # 12: "Secure conversations are important. We could create separate groups for departments or topics."

Participant # 13: "Voice and video calls are convenient. We could share quick updates using status."

Participant # 14: "Archiving conversations is helpful. We should establish clear names for groups and labels."

Participant # 15: "Group chats for cooperation and team discussions."

Participant # 16: "Sharing files to exchange multimedia and documents."

Participant # 17: "Using video and voice communications to communicate in real time."

Participant # 18: "Polls to facilitate prompt decision-making and feedback."

Participant # 19: "End-to-end encryption for secure conversations."

4.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed thematic analysis to systematically interpret qualitative data from interviews with permanent staff members at Thobela FM. The researcher read participants' responses and identified and coded key patterns and recurring responses. The researcher grouped the data into broader categories that reflected common meanings and experiences, leading to the development of four overarching themes, within which three sub-themes emerged under each theme. The emerged themes include: 1. Utilisation of WhatsApp messenger for internal communication; 2. Impact of WhatsApp on efficient communication and departmental collaborations; 3. Challenges and risks of using

WhatsApp for internal communication; 4. Strategies for optimising WhatsApp integration for internal communication, and lastly, 5. The emerged themes and sub-themes are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Utilisation of WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication	1.1. Preference for WhatsApp due to convenience and accessibility
	1.2. Frequency and contexts of use in the workplace
	1.3. Role of WhatsApp groups in team communication
2. Impact of WhatsApp on efficient communication and departmental collaborations	2.1. Improved responsiveness and Real-Time collaboration
	2.2. Strengthened team cohesion and informal support
	2.3. Knowledge sharing and improved coordination of tasks
3. Challenges and risks of using WhatsApp for internal communication	3.1. Data security and privacy concerns
	3.2. Information overload and distractions
	3.3. Violation of work-life boundaries
4. Strategies for optimising WhatsApp integration for internal communication	4.1. Establishing clear communication Guidelines and group protocols
	4.2. Structuring conversations for clarity and efficiency
	4.3. Leveraging WhatsApp features and integrations for collaboration

4.4.1. Theme 1: Utilisation of WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication

The analysed data revealed that WhatsApp Messenger has become a vital tool for internal communication at Thobela FM Radio Station, offering a user-friendly and rapid means of

communication among staff members. Participants consistently highlighted WhatsApp's ease of use and convenience, citing its ability to facilitate quick communication, share files, and provide instant feedback.

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Preference for WhatsApp due to convenience and accessibility

Participants used WhatsApp for internal communication due to its convenience, ease of use, and ability to facilitate rapid file sharing. During the interviews, participants mentioned that they mostly rely on WhatsApp because it is both accessible and efficient. Participant #1 mentioned that *“it is easy to run the office remotely because it is easy to send documents to colleagues and receive immediate feedback, and that improves the productivity of their team”*. And they also responded: *“WhatsApp is very convenient for me because I can stay in touch with my co-workers even when working remotely, and it's straightforward to use.”* On the other hand, Participant #10 highlights that *“I communicate internally throughout the day using WhatsApp Messenger. I communicate with coworkers about ongoing projects, share updates, and take part in group discussions.”* The findings of this study suggest that WhatsApp's user-friendly interface and rapid messaging capabilities have made it a favourite among staff members. This is not surprising, given the wealth of research highlighting WhatsApp's benefits in the workplace. The study analysis revealed that WhatsApp has become a daily method of communication for internal communication at the station. Participants enjoyed the user-friendly nature of WhatsApp and appreciated its rapid messaging capabilities, which make it easy to communicate and stay in constant connection. Similarly, studies such as Church and De Oliveira (2013) and Ahad and Lim (2014) have shown that WhatsApp's ease of use and convenience help the team communicate and collaborate quickly internally.

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Frequency and contexts of use in the workplace

Although majority of the Participants (#1, #4, 37, #10, #11, #12, and #13) reported that they frequently use WhatsApp to communicate amongst other members, some participants (#2, #3, #5, #6, #8, and #9) noted less frequent use, reporting that they preferred WhatsApp for quick questions, informal updates, or when immediate feedback was required. For more formal communication, they opted for email or phone calls. That

being the case, Participants #4 and #5 mentioned: *“Using WhatsApp for non-work-related purposes might be distracting and reduce output. During working hours, we have observed that certain team members spend excessive amounts of time engaging in personal interactions.”* Additionally, it may result in a communication breakdown. Team members may overlook crucial updates or communications about business if they are overly preoccupied with personal discussions,” suggesting that personal use of WhatsApp during work hours can be a distraction and negatively affect productivity. Nonetheless, the findings of this study revealed that WhatsApp is a staple of participants' day-to-day routines, as they frequently use it for work-related conversations. However, these findings are also supported by research suggesting that instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp play a central role in facilitating rapid coordination, timely information sharing, and collaborative problem-solving within organisations (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfield, 2013; Král & Králová, 2016). Consistent with this view, the present study's findings indicate that, despite concerns about distraction, WhatsApp has become embedded in participants' daily work routines, as it is frequently used for work-related communication. This suggests that, while WhatsApp may introduce challenges related to informal use, its communicative value in supporting efficiency and connectivity outweighs these limitations in the organisational context under study.

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Role of WhatsApp groups in team communication

WhatsApp groups are vital for workplace interactions, enabling staff to share information, discuss projects, and collaborate in real-time. Participants #4 and #9 appreciated the ability to discuss ongoing projects, provide information, and receive timely feedback. For example, Participants #4 and #9 respectively noted: *“For our staff, WhatsApp groups have been invaluable. We can promptly discuss ongoing projects, provide information, and get feedback from one another. Additionally, it has made it simpler to keep track of conversations and reduced email clutter.”* WhatsApp groups are crucial to our interactions at work. They help us make wise judgments, work together productively, and communicate clearly. Additionally, groups foster accountability, openness, and cooperation, all of which contribute to our success as a group.” Recent empirical studies support this interpretation by demonstrating that instant messaging platforms facilitate relational closeness and

coordination in organisational settings through increased interactional synchrony and accessibility (Darics & Cristina, 2022; Riedl, 2023). These findings align with the participants' positive evaluations of WhatsApp as a space for collective decision-making and shared responsibility. However, CAT also cautions that accommodation is context-dependent and can become problematic when communicative alignment is driven by perceived pressure, rather than mutual understanding. In this regard, recent research highlights that excessive messaging and expectations of constant availability on platforms such as WhatsApp may lead to communication overload and technostress, particularly when employees feel compelled to respond rapidly to maintain group alignment (Pang & Ruan, 2023; Tandon et al., 2022).

4.4.2. Theme 2: Impact of WhatsApp on efficient communication and departmental collaborations

This theme highlighted the impact of WhatsApp as a communication medium at Thobela FM. It emphasised how effective WhatsApp Messenger is at facilitating fast, immediate communication in the workplace. The majority of the participants believed that WhatsApp has improved teamwork and communication, facilitating multiple conversations, easy monitoring, and improved collaboration. The three sub-themes that emerged under this theme are discussed below.

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Improved responsiveness and Real-Time collaboration

The study's analysis revealed that WhatsApp enhanced communication effectiveness and teamwork at the station. These findings align with those reported by Thomas, Perry, Mann, and Axelrod (2017), who note that WhatsApp's ability to facilitate quick communication and feedback can help improve teamwork and collaboration, and they also confirm this in the context of Thobela FM. Some participants (#1, #2, #3, #10, #11, and #14) asserted that WhatsApp improved the effectiveness of communication, thereby promoting teamwork within the station. The speed and immediacy of WhatsApp's messaging capabilities are key to its effectiveness as a collaboration tool. These findings were consistent with those reported by Ahad and Lim (2020), which demonstrated that WhatsApp's instant messaging features improve team communication and productivity. On the other hand, Gungor and Gungor (2019) highlight that fast file sharing and feedback

prove crucial to workplace communication. Some participants (#6, #7, #13, and #20) highlighted that using WhatsApp at their workstations has streamlined communication and improved collaboration. For example, they mentioned: *“WhatsApp helps our team communicate better. We can share files, talk about projects, and get fast feedback from each other. WhatsApp simplifies how we talk to each other. We can solve problems, answer questions, and make decisions without meetings or emails. WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate and communicate. For tasks or subjects, we can form groups and conduct targeted conversations. Additionally, it has reduced the need for drawn-out emails or meetings, increasing productivity and saving us time. WhatsApp has greatly improved our collaboration as a team. We can quickly share updates, discuss project details, and even have group video calls”*. This is especially important in a fast-paced radio setting, where quick decisions and collaboration are critical. These findings highlight that WhatsApp helps in quick communication, supporting the notion that this social media platform can improve teamwork and collaboration. Participants consistently highlighted immediacy and collaboration as key gratifications of WhatsApp use. This reflects the UGT perspective, where immediacy is a central need driving media choice. Similarly, other participants' emphasis on collaboration aligns with CAT's notion of convergence, as staff adapt their communication styles to coordinate tasks more effectively.

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Strengthened team cohesion and informal support

The findings of this study reveal that WhatsApp contributes positively to team cohesion and informal peer support at Thobela FM Radio station. They suggest that WhatsApp serves as a conducive platform for colleagues to connect more casually, build trust, and check in on one another, especially in flexible work situations. For example, Participant #1 mentioned: *“WhatsApp has aided in the development of a sense of belonging and team spirit.”* Similarly, Participant #4 shared, *“WhatsApp has made it easier for us to collaborate by facilitating casual conversations and brainstorming sessions.”* Participant #11 further emphasised the value of informal communication. It said, *“We have been able to provide prompt feedback, direction, and encouragement thanks to WhatsApp, which has improved teamwork and morale.”* Similarly, Jacobs, George, and Anga'ama (2023) have reported that WhatsApp groups in professional environments can foster socio-emotional bonds,

trust, and mutual peer support. Nonetheless, the findings of this study also revealed, through Participants #12 and #16: *“Indeed, WhatsApp has made it easier to collaborate in more casual and impromptu ways”*; and *“Our ability to give prompt feedback, direction, and support through WhatsApp has improved teamwork and morale”*, that WhatsApp has improved teamwork and moral support amongst colleagues. Moreover, Participant #18 mentioned that *“Peer-to-peer support and information sharing have significantly increased... performance and cohesiveness of the team have increased.”* In general, these analyses demonstrate that WhatsApp has become more than a communication platform and fosters team cohesion and mutual support. While previous research has observed that WhatsApp can create informal, socially relaxed communication environments in professional settings (Jailobaev et al., 2021), this observation does not directly address how such informality translates into sustained team cohesion and peer support within specific organisational contexts. In the case of Thobela FM, participants’ accounts suggest that informal WhatsApp interactions extend beyond casual exchange to actively reinforce trust, provide emotional support, and foster collaborative engagement, particularly in flexible, fast-paced work situations. This indicates that the value of WhatsApp lies not merely in fostering a friendly atmosphere but in how staff appropriate informal communication as a mechanism for relational maintenance and collective morale-building. Thus, WhatsApp functions as a socially embedded support structure that strengthens a team.

4.4.2.3 Theme 2.3: Knowledge sharing and improved coordination of tasks

Based on the data analysis, some participants regarded WhatsApp as a practical tool for efficient task coordination and real-time knowledge sharing, particularly when working on fast-paced or collaborative projects. Participant #6 mentioned: *“WhatsApp helps our team communicate better. We can share files, talk about projects, and get fast feedback from each other.* Participant #8: *“WhatsApp helps me work better with colleagues. We can discuss things, share info, and work together more efficiently”* Participant #9: *“WhatsApp helps our team respond quickly. We can handle urgent things, give updates, and coordinate tasks better, which helps us work together”*; Participant #13: *“We can form groups and conduct targeted conversations... decreased the need for drawn-out emails*

or meetings, which has increased productivity and saved us time"; and Participant #14: *"We can instantly exchange updates, talk about active projects, and answer questions in real time. Additionally, it has improved our response times and decreased email clutter."* These findings suggested that WhatsApp features such as group chats, file sharing, and immediate messaging enable participants to exchange resources, clarify instructions, and distribute responsibilities effectively. Similarly, Singh et al. (2024) reported that WhatsApp enabled seamless sharing of guidelines, case studies, and updates, fostering faster peer consultation and coordinated decision-making. They further reported that knowledge was exchanged via text, images, and links, thereby enhancing team alignment and workflow continuity in the medical professional environment. This supports assertions made by Participant #2, namely that: *"WhatsApp allows us to share information quickly and accurately, which helps in our work environment that is fast-paced and depends more on fast communication."* This study found that WhatsApp is a very important platform for respondents to share ideas about work, use its features creatively, and collaborate on developing content. This means that the prevalence of WhatsApp benefits not only the organisation but also the employees, as they have easy access to work-related information at their fingertips.

4.4.3. Theme 3: Challenges and risks of using WhatsApp for internal communication

This theme explores the challenges and risks that arise when WhatsApp is used for internal communication. Although participants acknowledged its usefulness and accessibility, they also raised concerns related to data security, privacy, information overload, and blurred personal–professional boundaries. The findings show that these issues can negatively affect organisational communication, employee productivity, and overall workplace wellbeing. As such, participants emphasised the importance of recognising these risks to ensure the responsible and balanced use of WhatsApp in professional settings.

4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Data security and privacy concerns

Data security and privacy concerns are prevalent across participants' responses in this study. Participants expressed concerns about data security, privacy, and compliance when

using WhatsApp for work, highlighting the importance of aligning workplace communication tools with regulatory requirements, among other considerations. Participant # 1 mentioned: *“WhatsApp helps us share information quickly. But sometimes the information leaks”* Participant # 2: *“We can share files, photos, and videos easily, but sometimes colleagues forward them to other people, and we end up not having privacy”* Participant # 3: *“We're worried about compliance with regulations like GDPR. We're not sure if WhatsApp's data storage and retention policies align with our requirements.”* Participant # 4: *“We've experienced issues with data security. Employees have received phishing messages and spam on WhatsApp.”* Participant # 5: *“We've had to establish strict guidelines for using WhatsApp for corporate purposes. We need to ensure that employees understand the risks and responsibilities”* Participant # 7: *“We've had issues with employees sharing confidential information on WhatsApp. It's hard to control and monitor”* Participant # 8: *“We're worried about compliance with regulations like GDPR”* Participant # 9: *“We've experienced issues with data security. Employees have received phishing messages and spam on WhatsApp”* Participant # 10: *“We've had to establish strict guidelines for using WhatsApp for corporate purposes”* Participant # 12: *“We've had concerns about data privacy and compliance. We're not sure if WhatsApp meets our organisation's data protection standards.”* Participant # 13: *“We've had issues with employees sharing confidential information on WhatsApp. It's hard to control and monitor.”* These emphasised the challenges participants face when using WhatsApp as a workplace communication tool. Participants #16 and #17 expressed concern about the gravity of using WhatsApp, noting that information can be leaked. Participant #1 noted verbatim that *“I don't take WhatsApp seriously when coming to work, a lot of things leak.”*; and Participant #17: *“A lot of things are leaking.”* These views suggest a lack of trust in WhatsApp as a secure corporate communication tool, particularly for sensitive or confidential information. These findings resonate with broader scholarship on mobile and instant messaging technologies, which has identified privacy vulnerabilities, weak governance structures, and blurred personal–professional boundaries as key risks in organisational contexts (Hart & Saunders, 2017) consistently. However, while literature often frames these risks at a general level, the participants' experiences in this study demonstrate how such concerns are lived and negotiated in everyday workplace practice,

where convenience frequently competes with security obligations. The need to establish strict internal guidelines, as noted by several participants, further reflects organisational attempts to mitigate risks in the absence of full platform control.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Information overload and distractions

Among the challenges and risks associated with using WhatsApp as an internal communication tool, participants reported potential negative consequences, including distractions, reduced productivity, and data security concerns. Participant # 11 mentioned: *“I feel overwhelmed by the number of messages I receive on WhatsApp. It's hard to keep up and prioritise important messages.”* Participant #12: *“I struggle to find specific information or conversations on WhatsApp. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack”* Participant #13: *“Personal WhatsApp messages tend to divert me from my work during working hours. It's challenging to keep business and personal life apart”*; and Participant #15: *“Let us establish clear guidelines for WhatsApp usage”*, stressing the need for message management strategies, group structuring, and communication boundaries to avoid burnout, while ensuring that WhatsApp remains an effective communication tool. These concerns are consistent with findings in recent research. Studies have shown that workplace instant messaging can lead to frequent interruptions, information overload, and blurred work-life boundaries, all of which can reduce productivity and contribute to technostress (Hurbean et al., 2022; Kasim, 2022; Kim et al., 2022). At the same time, research also indicates that when messaging platforms are managed through clear guidelines and structured group practices, they can enhance coordination and team responsiveness without significantly harming productivity (Paerata, 2023). These findings suggest that WhatsApp acts as a double-edged tool in the workplace. While it supports immediacy, informal collaboration, and rapid information sharing, it simultaneously increases distraction and cognitive load. Therefore, the effectiveness of WhatsApp at Thobela FM depends largely on organisational policies, clear group management, and employee self-regulation, which together determine whether the tool enhances communication or undermines focus and productivity.

4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Violation of work-life boundaries

The findings of this study further highlighted the violation of work-life boundaries as a challenge of using WhatsApp for internal communication. Participant #3 stated that the informal tone of WhatsApp can also blur the boundary between professional and personal communication, noting that *"Sometimes it's hard to know what's work-related and what's personal, and that can be distracting."* Respondent #11 also expressed feeling overwhelmed by the volume of messages, stating, *"I feel overwhelmed by the number of messages I get on WhatsApp."* This aligns with studies by Chesley (2014) and Green and Singleton (2013), which highlight that while WhatsApp is useful, it can also lead to distractions and information overload. On the other hand, Participants noted that using WhatsApp for internal communication may also bridge the gap between personal and professional life, leading people to mix the two and be unable to differentiate between personal and professional interactions. In essence, the prevalence of WhatsApp in the workplace serves as both a grace and a disgrace in the sense that while it enables immediacy and access to information and instant feedback, it oversteps into the personal time of the employees when messages are sent at any time without paying attention to work and off-work time (Bouhnik & Dshen, 2014). This means employees are forced to focus on work-related issues when they should be focusing on personal matters and rest. This, therefore, highlights the negative impact of WhatsApp use in the workplace, especially when there are no regulations or policies governing its effective use. Participant # 13 mentioned: *"I find myself getting distracted by personal messages on WhatsApp during work hours. It's hard to separate work and personal life."* Participant # 17 noted that, *"I feel like I'm always 'on' and never really disconnect from work. WhatsApp makes it hard to set boundaries."* According to Harrison and Kelley (2015), as echoed by Rennecker and Godwin (2015), recurring themes included that WhatsApp messages after working hours can blur personal-professional boundaries, placing pressure on employees to stay responsive. This suggested that organisations ought to be cautious when implementing WhatsApp and ensure that it is used in moderation. WhatsApp's impact on the workplace is multifaceted.

4.4.4. Theme 4: Strategies for optimising WhatsApp integration for internal communication

This theme presents the various strategies proposed by participants to enhance the effective use of WhatsApp as an internal communication tool. The findings revealed that employees recognise both the benefits and challenges of using WhatsApp in organisational settings and therefore emphasised the importance of adopting structured practices to maximise its usefulness. Participants highlighted practical approaches such as establishing clear communication guidelines, structuring conversations to ensure clarity, and leveraging WhatsApp features and system integrations to support collaboration.

4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Establishing clear communication guidelines and group protocols

The analysis of the data suggested several strategies for optimising WhatsApp integration for internal communication, including setting clear guidelines for WhatsApp use, establishing a designated WhatsApp group for work-related communication, and providing training on effective WhatsApp use. Participant # 1 mentioned that "*Setting clear guidelines for WhatsApp use is crucial to avoid confusion and ensure everyone is on the same page.*" On the other hand, Participant # 2 echoed this sentiment, stating that "*Creating a WhatsApp group for work-related communication helps keep work and personal conversations separate*"; Participant # 5: "*We set clear rules for WhatsApp usage during work hours*"; and Participant # 10: "*I try to set clear boundaries by responding with a message saying, 'I'll address this in the morning' or 'Let's discuss this during work hours'*". These findings are supported by the study conducted by Kurland and Hope (2016), which highlighted the importance of clear policies and guidelines for effective communication and collaboration. Nonetheless, Participant #1 further asserted that "*These policies must encompass guidelines for usage, confidentiality and repercussions of misuse, as well as protocols for incident reporting and addressing of misconduct,*" emphasising user protection against violation of social rights. The recommendations to establish clear WhatsApp guidelines are supported by the study (Lieberman, 2015), highlighting the importance of effective workplace communication. On the same note, Lieberman (2015)

provided more support for the significance of explicit guidelines and specified communication channels. The findings of this study provided valuable insights into WhatsApp's role in internal communication, underscoring the need for continuous assessment and improvement.

4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Structuring conversations for clarity and efficiency

Based on participants' insights in this study, the findings suggested structuring conversations for clarity and efficiency as a practical strategy to optimise WhatsApp integration for internal communication. Participant #3 mentioned: *“We organise conversations by topic.”* Participant # 6: *“We use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon and technical terms unless necessary. We also use emojis to add tone and context to our messages, which helps prevent misinterpretations.* Participant # 7: *“We use pertinent keywords or hashtags to create distinct topics or threads for every discussion. Team members are better able to recognise the context and react appropriately as a result.”* Participant # 8: *“We provide precise guidelines for communication procedures and response times. For instance, we assign team members to reply to kinds of messages or inquiries.”* Participant # 10: *“We make sure everyone is on the same page by summarising important ideas or next steps at the conclusion of each discussion. The 'pin' feature on WhatsApp is also used to draw attention to crucial messages or reminders.”* Participant # 14: *“We use descriptive names for our groups, so everyone knows what the conversation is about”;* Participant # 15: *“We create separate groups for different topics, so discussions stay focused”;* and Participant # 16: *“We control who's in each group, so we can ensure only relevant people are part of the conversation.”* This implies that participants value clarity, relevance, and topic-focused discussions. Similar findings were reported by Colom (2022), who found that structuring conversations in WhatsApp, such as bolding questions, numbering items, and reply quoting, significantly helped participants navigate topic threads and locate content during WhatsApp-based focus group research. They further noted that the structural cue improved clarity and facilitated a smoother flow of discussion. Nonetheless, Participant #5 further highlighted that careful reading and asking questions would help everyone get on the same page. Participant # 2 also suggested strategies such as using clear language, organising conversations, and establishing separate groups

for work-related and non-work-related conversations. For example, Participant #2 mentioned the efficacy of *"Creating separate groups for work and non-work conversations helps maintain focus and productivity."* This assertion reflects the gratification of structure and clarity, as posited in UGT, which holds that individuals actively choose the communication style that satisfies their needs. This means that the prevalence of boundaries between personal and work communication channels reduces employees' exposure to distractions and ensures that WhatsApp use in the workplace aligns with organisational goals rather than being merely an informal communication platform (Bolton et al., 2013; Moqbel & Kock, 2018). Furthermore, this assertion aligns with CAT's principle of maintenance, which emphasises employees' efforts to separate work and personal communication platforms to maintain a balance between professionalism and social interactions (Zhang & Giles, 2018).

Participant #4 noted that using visual aids can be a good strategy, noting that: *"Using images and videos helps in explaining things better and makes communication more effective,"* highlighting the need for a more structured approach to communication. This assertion is in line with the UGT's gratification of enhanced understanding through multimodal communication. The use of visuals in this context highlights the CAT's convergence principle as employees adapt the communication strategy across different hierarchical systems to ensure clarity (Zhang & Giles, 2018). In the context of Thobela FM, adaptation is crucial, as visuals bridge the gap between technical and linguistic complexities and strengthen collaboration across departments.

4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Leveraging WhatsApp features and integrations for collaboration

Leveraging WhatsApp features and integrations for collaboration emerged as the third sub-theme within the fourth theme in the analysed data. Certain participants appreciated WhatsApp features, including groups, file sharing, voice and video calls, polls, status updates, and labels, as they have found them useful for improving clarity, engagement, and decision-making. Participant #1 mentioned: *"Groups, labels, and file sharing are most useful. We could use polls for quick decisions."* Participant # 2: *"Sharing images and videos is helpful. We could use WhatsApp on computers for easier multitasking."* Participant # 4: *"Voice and video calls are convenient. We could share quick updates using*

status.” Participant # 6: *“WhatsApp’s voice messaging, file sharing, and group services are the most helpful for internal communication. Thobela FM could use WhatsApp’s polling feature to get team members’ thoughts or ideas.”* Participant # 7: *“Location sharing, phone and video conversations... Thobela FM might investigate using the broadcast feature for announcements or updates.”* Participant # 8: *“Creating groups, sharing files, and using emoticons to express tone are helpful. Thobela FM can use WhatsApp’s status feature for brief updates or reminders.”* Participant # 9: *“We might use WhatsApp’s label feature to classify and arrange messages, improving internal communication and making it simpler to locate information.”* Nonetheless, some participants (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, and #9) reported that integrating WhatsApp with other tools and platforms can improve internal communication, collaboration, and teamwork among participants at Thobela FM. For example, Participant # 1 mentioned: *“Connect WhatsApp to project management tools”* Participant # 2: *“We could think about combining WhatsApp with other teamwork platforms, such as Trello or Asana, for more official conversations or decision-making.”*; Participant # 3: *“Automate tasks between WhatsApp and other tools”*; Participant # 4: *“Create a WhatsApp bot for routine tasks”*; Participant # 5: *“Connect WhatsApp to our internal knowledge sharing platform”*; and Participant # 9: *“We monitor WhatsApp engagement and usage data to pinpoint problem areas and enhance our internal communication approach”*. This valid suggestion could help team members access and share project information, reducing the need to switch between platforms, saving time, and increasing productivity. The findings of this study are supported by Kurland and Hope’s (2016) assertion that integrating WhatsApp with other tools can enhance internal communication, collaboration, and teamwork. Nonetheless, Participant #2 further recommended that WhatsApp be integrated with any email or client management programmes so that all relevant information can be synchronised across platforms, and might reduce duplication of effort.

The findings of this study corroborate evidence in the literature highlighting the significance of WhatsApp in enhancing immediacy, accessibility, and collaboration in organisational communication (Adzharuddin & Nagamma, 2024; Abdelhay et al., 2024). The findings further reflect the unique context within South African public broadcasting institutions. However, while previous studies predominantly reported positive outcomes of

using WhatsApp in the workplace (Selvaraju et al., 2023), this study highlights challenges associated with its use, including privacy and data security concerns. Using UGT, this study reveals how employees actively select WhatsApp to meet their communication needs, while CAT provides insight into hierarchical accommodation patterns that reshape in-mobile-mediated communication. Therefore, these findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on digital transformation in state-owned enterprises, highlighting the need for SABC to establish a formal policy framework for managing informal communication platforms. The literature consistently shows that WhatsApp is widely recognised as a communication platform across organisations, while challenges to its effective and professional use remain persistent (Willie, 2024). While international studies demonstrate its relevance in bringing immediacy, efficiency, and inclusivity (Bouhnik & Dshen, 2014), South African research raises concerns about blurred boundaries, privacy, and a lack of clear organisational policies and guidelines for professional WhatsApp use in the workplace (Willie, 2024). Therefore, this study addresses the critical gap by situating the use of WhatsApp within Thobela FM, a regional radio station of the SABC, to examine how permanent staff members integrate WhatsApp and balance efficiency with organisational authority. These findings are further.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented and analysed data gathered through structured interviews with staff members at the Thobela FM radio station in Limpopo Province. The study findings established that WhatsApp plays a vital role in internal communication at Thobela FM Radio Station, enabling seamless information exchange, project collaboration, and instant feedback. Although participants had mixed views on the quality of information shared via WhatsApp, some noted that brief messages can lead to oversimplification, which may mitigate these concerns. They also suggested implementing clear guidelines, limiting shared content, and monitoring usage, all of which align with existing research on effective workplace communication. In summary, participants believe that implementing the suggested strategies can make WhatsApp messaging more effective for internal

communication while minimising its risks and ensuring safety in the work environment. The following chapter summarises the study's findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 provided a detailed presentation and analysis of the study findings. This chapter summarises the study's findings, limitations, and recommendations on the integration of WhatsApp Messenger into internal communication among permanent staff at Thobela FM radio station in Limpopo Province. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a concise summary of the empirical findings and key conclusions based on the reviewed evidence and the study's results. This conclusion intends to determine whether the study attained its objectives, and the overall research sought to investigate the integration of WhatsApp as a means of internal communication among permanent employees at Thobela FM Radio Station. The study used a qualitative research approach to explore in-depth experiences and perceptions of the staff members on the phenomenon under study. This chapter further provides implementation recommendations to address the identified challenges.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

The findings are summarised as per the objectives, and the main themes identified in the findings are as follows:

5.1.1 The role of WhatsApp Messenger in enhancing internal communication among permanent staff members at Thobela FM Radio Station

The study's first objective was to explore WhatsApp Messenger's role in enhancing internal communications among permanent staff members. Moreover, the study found that WhatsApp Messenger plays a crucial role in internal communication. It further indicated that WhatsApp Messenger provides employees with user-friendly, rapid, and convenient means of communication while also creating a platform for instant feedback among employees. These findings further indicated that WhatsApp groups play a crucial

role in the workplace, enabling workplace interactions and providing an instant platform for information sharing and discussions. This is because WhatsApp provides employees with an instant messaging platform. In light of this, WhatsApp provides employees with convenience and accessibility to interact with one another effortlessly, creating a safe space for information sharing and support. This corroborates the results of Bouhnik and Deshen (2014), who found that WhatsApp enables real-time information sharing among employees and enhances immediacy.

Furthermore, the participants expressed appreciation for WhatsApp Messenger and found it convenient for disseminating workplace-related information. However, some indicated a lower preference for WhatsApp Messenger as a means of communication, especially for formal communication. These participants indicated a preference for emails and phone calls to convey such communications, categorising WhatsApp as a means for quick questions, informal updates and convenience for work that needs immediate feedback or attention. The usefulness of WhatsApp Messenger and workplace WhatsApp groups creates support spaces for employees, where they can engage on various work-related issues and get instant feedback or support, enhancing the effectiveness of teams and employees in general. This is in line with the uses and gratification theory, which holds that people use mass media for different reasons and to satisfy different needs (see Chapter 2). The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) suggests that staff motivations stem from their desire to fulfil specific communication needs (Gallion, 2010). In the context of workplace communication, employees utilise WhatsApp Messenger for rapid information exchange and informal updates, driven by the urge for immediate feedback and support. This aligns with UGT, which posits that individuals select communication tools to meet their unique needs in context. Conversely, the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) explains how employees adapt their communication styles according to the context and audience (Zhang & Giles, 2018). In the case of formal communications, participants shifted away from WhatsApp in favour of email and phone calls, indicating an adaptation to perceived norms of professionalism and formality. This reflects a conscious choice to align their communication methods with the expectations of their workplace environment. The study further confirms the roles outlined in both UGT and CAT, which emphasise the importance of selecting appropriate communication

channels to meet diverse needs. However, it also extends the existing literature by illustrating how WhatsApp serves as a dual-purpose tool: effective for informal interactions and support, yet less favoured for formal communication. This nuanced perspective enhances theoretical robustness by demonstrating the complexity of communication preferences in modern workplace settings.

5.1.2 The impact of WhatsApp Messenger on efficient communication and collaboration among different departments at Thobela FM

The second objective assessed the impact of WhatsApp Messenger on efficient communication and collaboration among different departments at Thobela FM Radio Station. The study found that WhatsApp Messenger has a positive impact as a communication medium across different departments at Thobela FM Radio Station. The participants indicated that WhatsApp is effective at creating convenient spaces for information sharing within and across various departments at the station. This is the case because these participants reported that workplace WhatsApp groups facilitate fast, convenient communication and foster supportive teams through information sharing, support, and feedback on the platform.

The participants highlighted that the use of WhatsApp in the workplace plays a crucial role in strengthening collaboration by providing a convenient platform for engagement and instant feedback. The platform also provided employees with easy access, enabling them to engage with one another instantly and provide feedback on various work-related issues, further enhancing their productivity (Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014). Subsequently, members can seek guidance related to their work and improve through the support they receive in the WhatsApp groups. These findings highlighted that WhatsApp has evolved from simply a means of communication among employees to a platform that fosters team cohesion, collaboration, and mutual support within and across departments at Thobela FM Radio Station in Limpopo Province. This is evident when participants indicated that WhatsApp enables them to develop strong interpersonal skills, build trust, and foster a sense of belonging, which, in turn, promotes solidarity and empowers them to make collective efforts towards achieving team and organisational goals. Further support comes from staff members at Thobela FM, who state that, since the initiation of WhatsApp groups in the workplace, they can interact with colleagues and engage instantly in various workplace issues, enabling them to support each other in different roles by asking for advice or guidance and receiving immediate feedback. This demonstrates the positive impact WhatsApp has on employees' lives by creating spaces for mutual support and

collaboration. This is in line with the findings of Cao, Guo, Vogel & Zhang (2016) and Manca (2020), which indicate that WhatsApp enables employees to quickly clarify assignments, share documents or media, confirm receipt, and coordinate logistics within a few taps.

5.1.3 Challenges associated with using WhatsApp Messenger for internal communication among permanent staff members

The third objective identified the challenges employees experience when using WhatsApp Messenger for internal communications within the station. The study analysis indicated a challenge related to data security and privacy. These findings revealed the leak of confidential information as a major challenge experienced in WhatsApp groups. This is a concern, as employees have no control over data security on the platform, and others may easily share workplace information, intentionally or unintentionally, with people outside the workplace WhatsApp groups or organisation, which may jeopardise the integrity of employees and the organisation (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Cao et al., 2016). This is a serious challenge, as it places the organisation in danger should information not meant for the public leak. This prevailed as a serious concern for most employees.

The study also highlighted issues related to distraction from frequent WhatsApp message notifications, which affect workplace productivity. This is the case where interactions are typically neither regulated nor timed. This leads employees to send messages at any time, which affects others' concentration as they work. While some messages may be crucial and others urgent, this does not change the fact that frequent notifications distract some employees. The lack of regulations on WhatsApp use in the workplace negatively impacts employees and curtails their overall productivity.

The study results also indicated that, while WhatsApp played a crucial role as a mode of communication and information dissemination in the workplace, there was also a violation of workplace balance or boundaries. This is the case because messages are sent at any time, even after working hours, which affects employees' social lives. This, therefore, disrupts work-life balance and creates problems for employees, as they experience workplace issues that interfere with their personal time (Lee & Lee, 2020; Raphael, 2022).

The lack of clear boundaries poses a challenge for employees, as instant communication via WhatsApp groups often disrupts their focus during personal time. They subsequently think about work-related issues even when they are not at work, simply because their personal time becomes exposed to work due to a lack of boundaries (Lee & Lee, 2020; Raphael, 2022).

This highlighted a gap between working hours and personal time, allowing employees ample time to rejuvenate and engage with their social spaces without their work-related issues encroaching on their personal space. This affects employees' social and personal lives when WhatsApp groups are not regulated with restrictions to avoid after-hours messages, which interferes with their personal lives. In this view, the use of WhatsApp has both positive and negative effects on employees' lives. However, the challenges can be addressed by establishing clear guidelines that ensure the safe and regulated use of the platform.

5.1.4 Strategies that optimise WhatsApp's integration for more effective internal communication at Thobela FM

Objective 4 focused on strategies that could optimise the integration of WhatsApp Messenger for more effective internal communication within Thobela FM Radio Station to address the identified challenges. The study results indicated a need for managers and supervisors to set clear guidelines for WhatsApp use, as established for work-related issues. This is crucial, as the guidelines could establish regulations governing the proper use of workplace WhatsApp groups to ensure the convenient, appropriate sharing of information while safeguarding the privacy and security of data shared on the platform (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Oliveira & Wijngaert, 2017). These guidelines may include outlining clear regulations on the acceptable time to send messages in the groups and establishing an administration team to ensure that messages sent in the WhatsApp groups are appropriate and in line with workplace regulations. These guidelines could also ensure that the boundary between employees' personal and work lives is respected, while also ensuring that the platform provides convenience and accessibility for work-related

issues. The regulated use of workplace WhatsApp groups will also make the employees feel valued and respected as human beings when they realise that their employers respect their personal lives.

The study findings outlined strategies to enhance the use of WhatsApp for communication at Thobela FM. Most participants suggested the need for clear guidelines on the use of WhatsApp in the workplace. This is crucial, as it could outline both how and when to use WhatsApp groups, while also safeguarding the privacy and data security of workplace information shared in them. This could also minimise information leakage while stipulating disciplinary measures for those found to be linked to the leaking of workplace information or the personal details of other employees from WhatsApp groups (Van Zyl, 2021; Lee & Lee, 2020). Furthermore, the findings revealed that employees also suggested establishing training on using WhatsApp groups to enable them to use groups designated for work-related communications effectively. This could enable employees to use the platform safely while also enhancing their overall use, safeguarding them from misuse that may jeopardise their jobs due to violations of privacy and data security. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains staff motivations by focusing on how individuals actively seek out media, in this case, WhatsApp, to fulfil specific needs such as information sharing, social interaction, and organisational engagement (Gallion, 2010). This means that employees at Thobela FM may be motivated to use WhatsApp for its immediacy and accessibility, allowing them to communicate efficiently and stay connected with colleagues.

The study results indicated a need to leverage WhatsApp features and integrations to enhance collaboration. At the same time, the user guidelines safeguard privacy and work-life boundaries within the organisation. This is crucial, as it exposes users to the available features that safeguard the privacy of information shared on the platform, while also ensuring that their personal time is respected and that no work issues cross that boundary. These guidelines also enhance employee collaboration and team cohesion by ensuring privacy and data security. When people feel safe, they can share information and interact with one another on the platform, since they have developed a sense of trust in the platform and in one another due to the guidelines in place. Furthermore, the guidelines

draw a line between employees' work issues and personal life issues, allowing employees to address work issues during work time and to have their personal lives respected when they are off work. The employees revealed a need for the station to set clear regulations regarding what constitutes an acceptable and appropriate time for employees to engage in the WhatsApp groups. The significance of these regulations and guidelines is to ensure clear boundaries between employees' work and personal lives, which are respected. This could improve employees' well-being by showing they are valued and respected, which could, in turn, enhance their productivity in the workplace.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are subjectivity and generalisability. This is the case because the study's qualitative design explores employees' subjective experiences, and they may interpret the same concept differently. For example, one employee asserted that formal communication is conveyed through emails and phone calls, while the other employees had differing understandings and interpretations. Secondly, the issue of generalisation is a limitation due to the study's reliance on small sample sizes to obtain in-depth, rich data from participants. The qualitative findings cannot be generalised to other similar settings due to the study's small sample size. In light of this, these findings cannot be generalised to other similar settings, as participants' experiences are subjective and the sample size is too small.

5.3 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations for Thobela FM Radio Station managerial teams and scholars:

5.3.1 For Thobela FM Managerial Teams

The study proposes establishing clear guidelines for WhatsApp use, detailing which types of messages can be shared on WhatsApp, email, websites, and other relevant platforms, and enhancing communication and promoting safe use across platforms. The study also recommends providing guidelines on the time, tone, and formatting to use when sending work-related WhatsApp messages to employees or to work WhatsApp groups. This helps

maintain convenience and safe use of the platforms. In contrast, respecting the employees' personal time. Furthermore, training and advising employees to mute work WhatsApp groups at certain times after work is crucial to ensuring their full participation in off-work activities and socialisation, without work messages spoiling the moments and causing them stress. This could bring a balance between accessibility and boundaries.

5.3.2 For the Employees

The study recommends using available WhatsApp features to mute groups at certain times after work to ensure their work issues do not affect their personal lives. This could also be used when attending important meetings and events, where they can hardly handle disruption.

5.3.3 For Future Research

The study recommends comparative studies that compare WhatsApp usage across different departments within the same organisation and across similar organisations, examining how it influences workplace productivity. Furthermore, a comparative study is recommended to assess the use of WhatsApp and other platforms, such as email, within the organisation. Such a study might aim to compare uses and effectiveness, depending on preference, and explore the reasons for that preference over other platforms. The study also recommends a longitudinal study to track changes within the organisation over time, with respect to organisational policies and technological advancements, to assess the relevance and convenience of the platforms used.

5.5.4 Theoretical recommendations

Beyond its practical contributions, this study also offers recommendations for theoretical advancement. The findings highlight that UGT needs refinements to account for gratifications associated with managing boundaries and negotiating organisational roles. Furthermore, CAT needs to be expanded to account for the dynamics of digital platforms, as both theories support a hybrid framework integrating motivation and accommodation strategies. Moreover, the findings highlight the need to develop new theoretical lenses to

capture how informal communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, are integrated into formal organisations.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The study explored factors that affect WhatsApp's use as a communication platform and the extent to which it satisfies the formal and informal communication requirements of Thobela FM's permanent staff, based on the assumptions of uses and gratifications theory. While various studies have highlighted the prevalence and significance of mass media use across different organisations, there is limited data on staff members' perspectives and experiences with WhatsApp Messenger as a means of communication in the workplace and at Thobela FM Radio station. This served as an indicator for the gap in the body of knowledge. According to this view, the study provides empirical evidence. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the use of mass media platforms for communication, particularly in the context of SABC radio stations. The findings of this study reveal that the integration of WhatsApp in the workplace at Thobela FM proves invaluable, as it provides the employees with a convenient platform for knowledge and information sharing, while also creating a conducive and supportive environment for peer guidance. This is the case regardless of the identified challenges of using WhatsApp, such as privacy and security concerns. It has also been revealed that the use of WhatsApp in the workplace strengthens team cohesion and collaborations among employees, and across different departments at Thobela FM Radio Station. It was also revealed that WhatsApp strengthens communication within the organisation by enabling instant communication and feedback among employees. The study made recommendations for the organisation to enhance the use of WhatsApp Messenger while safeguarding employees' safety and privacy. The study also made recommendations for future research.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Appendix 6: Participants Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title: Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province

Isaac Masilo Mashila (49196561)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Isaac Masilo Mashila (please print)

Researcher's signature Mashila .

Date : 21 July 2024

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH AT THE SABC

Appendix 4: Request for Permission Letter to Conduct Research

PERMISSION LETTER

Research title: Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province

Researcher: Isaac Masilo Mashila
(49196561)

Request for permission to conduct research at Thobela FM (SABC)

Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province.

17 July 2024

Mmankwe Florina Sebola
Thobela FM, Second Floor, Programming
015 290 0025 and Sebolamf@sabc.co.za

Dear Mrs Mmankwe Sebola

I, Isaac Masilo Mashila am doing research with Makananise, Fulufhelo Oscar an Associate Professor in the Department of communications towards a MA at the University of South Africa. We have no funding for this project. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province

The aim of the study is to assess the impact of WhatsApp integration on the daily communication practices of permanent staff members at the SABC by measuring changes in communication frequency and content.

Your company has been selected because is a key player in the South African broadcasting domain, the SABC emerged as emblematic of this transformation. In addition, examining the integration of WhatsApp at Thobela FM will provide insights into how technological dynamics affect internal communication strategies.

The data for this study will be collected from SABC Limpopo. The study setting is suitable for the research because it will be less costly to arrange with Thobela FM staff members due to the industry relationship. The study environment has several

qualities, including a friendly group atmosphere, regular communication, leadership with experience in research, and easily fillable questionnaires.

The benefits of this study are that the study will assist participants in understanding and distinguishing between formal and informal methods of speaking at work. They will understand that some confidential documents such as contracts cannot be shared via WhatsApp or social media, while others such as show scripts may.

Potential risks include Loss of data for the Johannesburg team; if loadshedding returns, downloads may be problematic owing to poor network. Meetings to discuss the material and questions will take place after hours at SABC to ensure building security; moreover, Johannesburg colleagues will be linked on Microsoft Teams. In the event of load shedding, the researcher will print documents and mail them to the impacted member in Gauteng/Head Office.

Feedback procedure will be communicated in journals and research reports once it is approved.

Yours sincerely

I M Mashila

Isaac Masilo Mashila

Researcher

APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE SABC TO CONDUCT THE STUDY



HR: Learning & Development
Radio Park Cnr Artillery and Henley Roads Auckland
Park 2092. Private Bag X1 Auckland Park 2006
Johannesburg Gauteng South Africa. Tel +27 11
330-9520 www.sabc.co.za

Date: 24 January 2025

Dear Mr. Isaac Mashila

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SABC-THOBELA FM

This letter serves as authorization for Isaac Mashila to conduct the research project under the topic "**Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province**". The data for this study will be collected from SABC Limpopo.

Upon reviewing the letter sent to us by your institution, we are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct the same study in our organization. All interviews, filed surveys, observations around the site and the distribution of questionnaires are approved and will be duly supervised by the SABC Learning and Development division.

We hope that this research opportunity will be fully beneficial to your studies. If you have any concerns or require additional information, feel free to contact the division.

Many thanks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elisa Molaba", is written over a horizontal line.

Ms Elisa Molaba
SABC Learning and Development manager
(011)7144887 | 0820530240 |
molabame@sabc.co.za

South African Broadcasting Corporation SOC Limited: Registration Number: 2003/023915/30
Non-Executive Directors: Mr K M Ramukumba (Chairperson); Ms N A Batyi (Deputy Chairperson); Dr R K C Horne; Ms P Kadi; Ms P P Magopeni;
Mr D M Maimela; Ms A C Makhwanya; Mr D K Mohuba; Ms M Moonsamy; Ms R M S Motaung; Adv T S Thipanyane; Mr M Tsedu
Executive Directors: Ms N L Chabeli (Group Chief Executive Officer); Mr L Binza (Chief Operations Officer); Mr T Matore (Acting Chief Financial
Officer); Company Secretary: Adv T Moshakga



APPENDIX D: RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Appendix 3: Researcher Acknowledgement Form

RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Research title: Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province

**Researcher: Isaac Masilo Mashila
(49196561)**

Hereby, I Isaac Masilo Mashila ID number 9109096162086 in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy

and that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements

Signature: *IMashila*

Date: 17 July 2024

APPENDIX E: CREC ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



College of Human Sciences_CREC

Date: 21/01/2025

Dear: Mr Isaac Mashila

NHREC Registration # : (Rec-240816-052)
Ref #: 5291
Name: Mr Isaac Mashila
Student #: 49196561

Decision: Ethics Approval from 21 January 2025 to 20 January 2026

Researcher: Mr Isaac Mashila

19 HOSPITAL STREET POLOKWANE

Polokwane

49196561@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0766708864

Supervisor: Professor Fulufhelo Oscar Makananise makanfo@unisa.ac.za

Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela FM Radio Station- Limpopo Province

Qualification: MPCHS92 for MA

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Human Sciences_CREC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The **low-risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Human Sciences_CREC on **21 January 2025** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Human Sciences_CREC Department of Communication Science .
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (**20 January 2026**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal, for Ethics Research Committee approval.

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from Unisa.
2. De-identified data must be safely stored on password protected PCs.
3. Care should be taken by the researcher when publishing the results to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the university.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication practices, principle 7 referring to Social awareness, must be ensured: "Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible." Unisa will not be liable for any failure to comply with this principle.

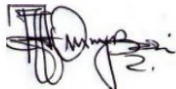
Note

The reference number 5291 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof Khatija Khan
Chair of College of Human Sciences_CREC
E-mail: khankb@unisa.ac.za



Professor Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Human Sciences_CREC
E-mail: onyanob@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX F: EDITING CERTIFICATE

PRO EDIT PTY LTD
PO BOX 23081, CLAREMONT CAPE TOWN 7735

EDITING CERTIFICATE

Date: 2026/02/09

This serves to confirm that the document entitled:

**Integration of WhatsApp Messenger into Internal Communication among Permanent Staff Members at the Thobela
FM Radio Station - Limpopo Province**

by

ISAAC MASILO MASHILA

49196561

has been language edited on behalf of its author.

Genevieve Wood
Pro Edit Pty Ltd