CHAPTER 9

GENERATING OF MODELS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned mainly with the revision of certain aspects of the theories that have been discussed in this study, and is intended to present a new theoretical model for broadcasting in a multicultural and multiracial society.

9.2 Certain Aspects of Social Identity Theory that Need Modification or Revision

The findings of this study that have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter cast some serious doubts on the survival of SAfm, unless drastic measures to change the face of the station that have been proposed are taken. Considering the theoretical models discussed in chapter 4, the study has demonstrated clearly that there is a gap (or lack of harmony) between what SAfm stands for and what potential listeners want or expect from the station. As indicated, the station seems to be severely lacking in terms of programming (i.e. presenters, programme content, the presenters' general outlook or their approach to life) that could enable the potential listeners to relate to it. Besides the factor of the shared language that is crucial to the success of the station, some of the key elements that could lead to successful communication between the presenters and potential listeners – such as common experiences, attitudes, and beliefs – are grossly lacking. In order for SAfm to succeed, it is vital for there to be harmony or congruence between the station and what listeners expect from it. All that has just been said lends support to the claims made by the theories of dissonance, consonance and balance that were discussed in chapter 4. In the context of radio, these theories state that listeners (i.e. the target audience) will not listen to a station that is not in tune with their needs, tastes, lifestyle, attitudes, etc. In a nutshell, this means that if the changes suggested in this study are not implemented by SABC radio management, the desire to make SAfm appeal to a multicultural and multiracial audience will not be fulfilled.

Contrary to the proposition of social identity theory which postulates that low status groups would be motivated to be part of a group they perceived as having a positive social

identity, this research has shown it to be not necessarily true. For example, Africans who may be viewed subjectively by some as low status groups were shown in this study to have a strong negative identity with an English radio station or a White English culture. In other words, Africans do not necessarily attach particular significance to a White English culture, or to being English, to the extent that they would aspire to be part of it. This also indicates the strength of cultural ties in the African community, which are accompanied by the natural inclination to listen to their own cultural radio stations. However, the desire and willingness to listen to a multicultural English radio station remains a possibility.

Considering the sociopolitical and historical factors in terms of race relations in South Africa, including the part that apartheid has played in this regard, one may begin to understand why this is the case. Furthermore, in a country such as South Africa where race group or group culture has always been an issue, and given the low level of tolerance between the race groups, it is inconceivable that this state of affairs could change in the short term. Not even the installation of a democratically elected majority government has improved the worrying racial issue.

Unfortunately, living in South Africa – as in any other society – you are reminded of who you are and where you belong. In a country where people are constantly being challenged, either in terms of their skin colour or the cultural group to which they belong, it becomes easy for an 'us and them' situation to prevail that tends to accentuate differences between people or groups. This includes the negative attitudes and perceptions, etc, that develop as a result of it. This is a challenge, especially to those who hold the common view that Africans are gradually losing their culture (or the sense of who they are) because of the view that young people – especially those attending multiracial schools, and those at institutions of higher learning – are being assimilated into a White or English culture.

It is this researcher's contention that if this is the case, it is the stage in the lives of these learners that predisposes them to behave this way. Most learners and students who go to multiracial schools or institutions are reminded more often who they are and where they belong, irrespective of the image they may try to project when they go back to their own communities. Nevertheless, it is important that the impact of globalisation in terms of

foreign cultures encroaching on African cultures should not be overlooked either.

The apparent lack of support for the claim that has been made by this aspect of social identity theory is indeed an open challenge to it and may necessitate its revision. It is important therefore for this aspect of the theory to be modified or revised in order to take into consideration the part that cultural or sociopolitical and historical factors play in creating a positive social identity regarding one's own cultural group.

However, Coloureds have given this aspect of social identity theory strong support for the reasons given in the previous chapter. The apparent lack of need among Indians to identify with English culture, and the preference they have shown for listening to an English radio station – especially a multicultural English one – shows that they have a greater desire or need to be part of South African society (i.e. national identity), for the reasons given in chapter 8. Though it is difficult to speculate on the reasons for the absence of positive identification among Indians with White English-speakers or English culture, it is safe to say that one of the main reasons for this is cultural. The lack of affinity among the various population groups in South Africa with each other indicates that South Africa is still, by and large, a deeply divided society. According to the prediction of social identity theory, this state of affairs should be a source of great concern to the South African government because of its potentially disastrous consequences for the country in terms of race relations.

The only conclusion one can draw from this study is that the stronger a particular group culture or cultural identity, the lesser the need for that group to identify with any other group (culture). However, the weaker a particular group culture, the greater the need for that group to identify with other cultural groups that are valued. Put another way, the stronger the collective self-esteem of a particular cultural group, regardless of its social status, the more difficult it would be for that group to aspire to be part of other groups. However, where the collective self-esteem of a particular 'low status' group is weak, the tendency for that group to aspire to be part of 'high status' groups would be greater. In conclusion, it would appear that there is one major principle at work when it comes to radio listening behaviour across cultures. This is that where a given cultural group has a

strong sense of group identity, it may be difficult or impossible for the members to listen to a radio station that broadcasts in another culture, unless they want to listen to a specific presenter or programme. In other words, such a group is more likely to show a strong preference for its own (cultural) radio station.

9.3 Theoretical Assumptions that Form the Basis for the new Theoretical Model

The new theoretical model that will be discussed in this chapter was influenced largely by Oakes et al's (1994) self-categorisation theory, Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory, some aspects of communication theories that were discussed in chapter 4, and by what has been learnt in this study.

One important aspect of social categorisation theory is the importance of the comparative context that has been discussed in chapter 5, which plays a vital part in the categorisation process, or – in minimising or accentuating differences between objects or people – to create a perception of similarities or differences. Based on the theoretical proposition of this theory, it is possible to create a radio station that can cut across cultural or race groups, and have a wider or common appeal among its listeners. In order for this type of radio station to succeed, it is essential for the station to approach whatever it does in manner that would reduce or eliminate anything that could accentuate differences among listeners from the different cultural groups. This would entail everything that is divisive, or could create an impression among certain segments of its listenership that the station does not belong to them.

The theory is useful in the sense that it suggests the psychological process by which anything different or divisive can be transformed to create a perception of similarity, inclusiveness or commonness among people or between groups of people. This can be illustrated best by one of the arguments of Adam and Moodley (1985) in their book for rejecting the view that South Africa's social structure is plural in character like that of Northern Ireland, Lebanon, India, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Nigeria or Sudan. They 'argue that since most South Africans are adherents of various Christian denominations, conflict is played out under a "shared Christian ideology" which keeps it within certain humanitarian bounds' (cited by Welsh, 1989, p. 65). The mention of the word Christianity, it would

seem, transforms any differences between Christian denominations into one thing: a family of believers in Christ. The knowledge that other churches are Christian churches, despite the fact that they may differ in their practices, will be enough to create the impression of sameness about them.

At the heart of this model is the Oakes et al (1994) principle of metacontrast that has been discussed in chapter 5, which states that a given set of items is more likely to be categorised as a single entity to the degree that differences within that set are less than the differences between that set and others within the comparative context. According to Oakes et al (1994), the theory puts greater emphasis on categorisation as a dynamic, context dependent process, determined by comparative relations within a given context.

Perhaps one should draw an analogy with the Olympic Games to clarify and simplify the meaning of this theory. When participants from different countries (context 1) come to these games, they may have in mind that they will be competing with athletes from different countries who may be similar to, or different from, them (context 2) in terms of race, culture and socio-economic status, for example. Though this kind of thinking may prevail, these games also become an occasion where the athletes, and the citizens of the world who may be watching the opening ceremony on TV, see themselves as one with the whole world (context 3) because of what they all share: sportsmanship. These games also become an avenue by which positive identity is experienced. Hence, we hear expressions such as 'the great citizens of the world', which may be intended to express the value of being part of the human race.

The Olympic Games are in essence a good example of how different categories (i.e. athletes from different countries), whatever their differences might be, are suddenly transformed into one category in the context of the greatest sports event in the world. They may be different, but they are also unified by what is common to all of them.

Social identity theory becomes particularly important when one of the social categories that includes oneself is made salient. For example, the Olympic Games would become far more interesting to watch if people knew that their own athletes were involved. The

feeling that one's country is involved may bring a sense of pride and concern that stems from the knowledge that one is participating equally with others in a major international event. This theory is also important because it offers insight into the psychological processes that motivate people to adopt certain types of behaviour, such as the need to associate themselves with other cultures or things that are considered to have some value. It is also vital because it offers insight into the psychological processes that may lead groups or individuals to identify, or not to identify, with others, or with a particular radio station. Insight into this aspect of social identity theory has been discussed at length in chapter 5.

9.4 An Assimilative Model for a Multicultural Radio Station

The two models that will be presented and discussed in this section are the work of this researcher. The name given to these models is intended to signify change into a form that is conducive to absorbing groups from different cultures into a mainstream radio station that could make them seem alike, or one that they can identify with.

### 9.4.1 Model 1: An Assimilative Model for a Multicultural Radio Station

This model takes a structural approach in presenting the key components or elements that are needed to create a multicultural radio service. It assumes that a radio management team with the propensity and commitment to transform or make the station into a truly multicultural radio service would have been appointed and 'up and running' by the time the strategies for the station were put into action. It is also expected that those who form part of the management team would have extensive knowledge and experience of radio in general, including programming and scheduling. The model also assumes that a common field of experience already exists among the listeners, and between listeners and presenters.

Though both the immediate and long-term goals of this model are to provide a blueprint for the development of a multicultural radio station that potential listeners could identify with, or be loyal to, it is also believed that this type of station would contribute to nation building and national development. At the heart of this model are those elements or

factors that would play a pivotal part in influencing people of various cultures and races to listen to a multicultural radio station. The area marked A is where perceptions are created as a result of the listeners' experience of the station. That is regarding programmes and presenters, as well as everything it did that would convince the listeners that it was a truly South African, premier radio service that they could identify with and be proud of.

Figure 9.1 An Assimilative Model for a Multicultural Radio Station
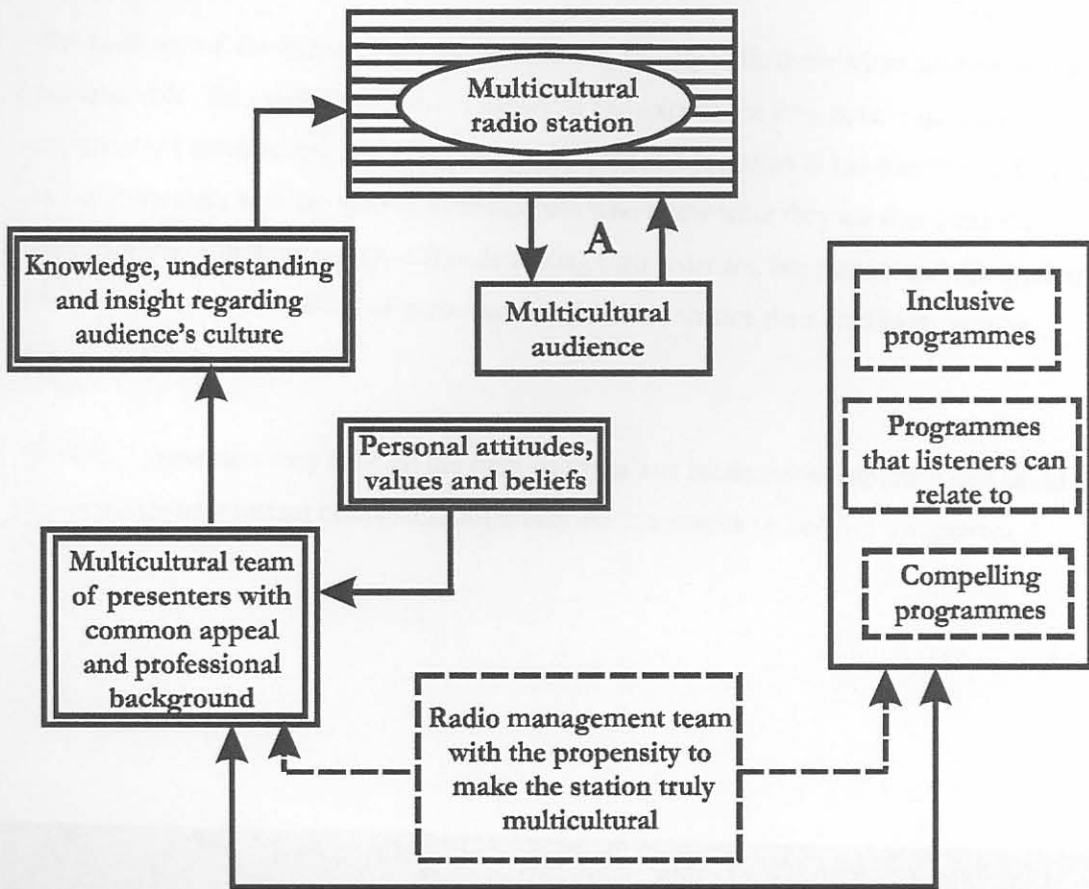
In essence, this would require every aspect of the station to promote and reflect what the station stands for. For example, at management level, it is vital for its leadership to comprise people who are committed or best suited to building and developing such a radio station. The presenters on this type of station should be representative of its target audience. It is vital for the programmes not only to relate or be relevant to what the

listeners want, but to be about the heart and soul of South Africanism; to allow the nation to speak to and reflect itself by broadcasting innovative and compelling programmes. This model takes the view that the qualities of a multicultural team of presenters, the programme content and the way programmes are presented, including the ability of presenters to deal with listeners from different cultural or racial backgrounds, will determine the success or failure of this type of radio station.

The most crucial facet of presenters as communicators is that they must appeal to listeners (or recipients) from the various cultural groups that the station wants to attract or serve. To appeal to a multicultural and multiracial audience, presenters must have certain qualities that will make them bond with their listeners. A number of these qualities, such as those having to do with the creation of the broadcasting atmosphere that would give listeners a positive listening experience, and to do with the manner in which presenters deal with listeners, were identified in chapter 8.

The right qualities of a presenter refer to those attributes that make them good presenters, both at a personal level and in the programmes they present. Those are the qualities that enable them to form a 'natural' bond with their listeners, and that make them loved and respected by almost everyone who listens to their programmes. Their extraordinary communication skills and exceptional ability to present good programmes in an interesting and compelling way make them popular with their listeners.

The professional background of presenters relates closely to their ability to do their jobs as professionals. This would involve the expertise and experience they have acquired as presenters or announcers, knowing what is required and expected of them in their job, and so on. Presenters who are seen as professionals who know what they are doing are the most likely to win more than just friends among their listeners, but respect and admiration as well. The professionalism of presenters would also enhance their credibility among their audience.

However, presenters may have all the right qualities and professional expertise that could easily make them instant celebrities, but if they are insensitive or harbour a negative

attitude to people from different cultures, they could be a complete failure if not a disaster on a station that is designed to attract a multicultural audience. Presenters' values and beliefs cannot be separated from their attitudes to others. In fact, anyone's attitude to people or things could be a reflection of their own values or beliefs. This means that presenters who were inflexible in their approach to life, or held negative stereotypes of people from other cultures or races, would alienate many potential listeners to a multicultural radio station. Such presenters could succeed in attracting only a few listeners, if any, from their own cultural group who identified with them.

Regarding the broadcasting language on this type of radio station, it is imperative for presenters to be fluent in the language they use to communicate with their target audience. It is also important that what are perceived as foreign accents in presenters' speech should be reduced as far as possible to a generally acceptable level. As pointed out previously, the target audience may hear but not assimilate what is being said, because of their dislike of the presenter's accent, or their inability to understand it.

This model takes a strong view that presenters play a crucial part in most programmes, which should in fact manifest itself in the programmes they present. In addition to being seen as presenters, they are also expected to broadcast their programmes in a manner that transcends cultural differences. It is actually the presenters who should create a strong feeling among the different segments of South African radio listenership that the station is the one they can truly identify with, through the kind of programmes it offers.

The programmes broadcast on the station should target everyone, irrespective of cultural differences. The topics dealt with on the station should address issues of common concern or common interest. In the case of programmes designed to entertain the audience, such as music and sport, the station and presenters should broadcast programmes that reflect common tastes among listeners. Inclusiveness should be the motto that drives the station's overall programming. Nobody should feel left out. Inclusiveness is about involving listeners in every way possible, such as in competitions the station offers, talk shows and phone-in programmes. In a nutshell, the station must involve all the listeners in whatever it does, in a way that creates a sense of ownership among them.

In addition, the model recognises the need for other types of programmes such as those that will make it possible for the listeners to learn about each other's cultures. It is therefore imperative for this kind of radio station always to strive to provide the listeners with unique and interesting programmes that would appeal to them.

This model can be used in an established radio station, or a new one.

9.4.2 Model 2: Second or Extended or Comprehensive Assimilative Model for a Multicultural Radio Station

Since the theoretical model discussed below is a version of the previous one, there was no need to adopt a new name for it. This model may be considered a knowledge-based approach that uses psychological insights to change or influence human behaviour (i.e. listeners) in a particular direction. Unlike the previous model that takes a structural and direct point of view on developing a multicultural radio station – which would help bring about common values, personal attitudes and beliefs, etc – the present model is aimed at accomplishing the same thing through indirect and less obvious but more dynamic ways.

At the centre of this model is the receptivity of potential listeners to this type of radio station, and ultimately the aim of persuading them to listen to it. This model also recognises that the desire to listen to this kind of radio station would depend on whether the potential listeners identify with it.

The model is built on the premise that there are certain key elements that a radio management team can influence in order to develop the type of station that could attract the kind of listeners it wants. It shows three key components within radio management's control that could persuade listeners to listen to a multicultural radio station. These are:

1. A multicultural team of presenters with credibility, broad support base, and common appeal

Figure 9.2   Second or Extended or Comprehensive Assimilative Model for a
             Multicultural Radio Station

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┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Multicultural team of   │              │ Variation of programme  │
│ radio presenters having │◄───────────► │ contents over an        │
│ credibility, broad base │              │ extended period         │
│ of supporters and       │              │                         │
│ common appeal           │              │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
      ┌──────────────┐
      │ Revamped     │◄────
      │ corporate    │
      │ identity     │
      └──────────────┘
                          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                          │ Receptivity of audience │
                          │ to multicultural        │
                          │ radio station           │
                          └─────────────────────────┘
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Available options:
Option A (Radical revamping) True multicultural programmes - cognitive dissonance
Option B: (Phased sensitation) Three-phase approach
          Channel hopping   ⎤ cognitive
          Incidental exposure ⎬ sonance
          Multicultural contents ⎦ approach
Option C: (Considerate approach) Play-safe approach:
          Option A with Option B as back up

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┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
│ Identification   │     │          │     │ Knowledge,   │     │                  │
│ with radio       │     │ Spin-offs│     │ understanding│     │ Personal         │
│ station          │ ──► │          │ ──► │ and insight  │ ──► │ attitudes,       │
│ Brand-locked     │     │          │     │ regarding    │     │ values and       │
│ audience         │     │          │     │ audiences'   │     │ beliefs          │
│ Development      │     │          │     │ cultures     │     │                  │
│ of common values │     │          │     │              │     │                  │
└──────────────────┘     └──────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────────┘
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2.   Variety of programme contents over an extended period

3.   A revamped corporate identity

Though a lot has been said about the type of presenters that would be ideally suited to a multicultural radio station, certain key aspects of this model are worth mentioning. A multicultural team of presenters is undoubtedly one of the foundations on which a multicultural station should be built. In other words, the presenters on this type of station should be representative of its target audience. This would not only help the potential listeners to identify with the station or the presenters, but enhance the station's identity as a multicultural radio station. Furthermore, this would help the station to gain credibility in the country and among the listeners.

If there were already an indication of a gap in the market for this type of radio station, and that the potential listeners were favourably disposed to it, another obstacle in the path of defining the success of the station would have been overcome.

Presenters who have general appeal are without doubt another important factor in this model. Given that this aspect of the model has been dealt with in this and other chapters, to repeat it here would be unnecessary.

The second key aspect of this model, namely the station's programmes, is as vital as presenters on any radio station. In fact the two are inseparable, because any programme can be good or bad, depending on the presenter. Though it is to be expected that a radio station should broadcast various types of programmes, it is imperative that these programmes suit the needs and tastes of the listeners. It is also vital that the programmes broadcast on the station are those that the listeners can relate to. Assuming that the programmes are what the listeners want and are featured on appropriate time slots, they should be left to run for an extended period, unless there are indications that they are not popular with most of the listeners. Again, since much has already been written about (multicultural) programmes in this study, the reader is asked to refer to some of the earlier

chapters in this dissertation for details.

The third key aspect, which has to do with revamping of the station's corporate identity, would be more appropriate to an existing radio station that wants to change or shed its old image. It is a very interesting and creative exercise aimed at portraying a certain (predetermined) image of the station and/or organisation concerned to the target audience and to the general public. Such an exercise includes the design of a new logo and formulation of a repositioning statement or pay-off line for the station. Furthermore, it is imperative that the style and 'feel' of the station, as well as the events or activities it wants to associate itself with, are consistent and contribute to the image it wants to establish. In fact, everything it does as a broadcasting set-up in terms of its culture, the presenters and the programmes, must contribute to the overall image of the station. Rebuilding of the station's image also entails listeners or potential listeners being made aware of the station - its existence, what it stands for, and the value or benefit of listening to it – through aggressive marketing that involves promotions and advertisements. In addition to the presenters' normal visits to broadcast in areas or at events where their listeners are likely to be, it is imperative for the station to be seen as a good 'corporate citizen' by involving itself in worthy and meaningful social causes in the communities it serves. This would go a long way towards enhancing the station's credibility, let alone projecting the positive or desired image it would be trying to build up among its listeners. Much of what has been said above would also apply to a newly established station.

However, setting up a multicultural radio station would require a particular approach to introduce it to the potential listeners and to the community in which the station will operate. In the case of South Africa, there are three approaches that have been identified for this purpose:

Option A (radical revamping): True multicultural programmes – cognitive dissonance

Option B (phased sensitisation): Three-phase approach – channel hopping, incidental exposure and multicultural programmes

Option C (considerate approach): Play-safe approach – option A and option B as a backup

Option A – the radical revamping approach – assumes that an established radio station requires radical transformation in order to become truly multicultural. This approach may lead to cognitive dissonance, especially if the listeners do not like the new changes on the station. That is, assuming that the current listeners find it difficult to adjust to the changes (e.g., new presenters/programmes or new station format), and given the availability of alternative radio stations, they could easily decide to listen to another station with which they are comfortable. This is even more likely to happen if they are forced to adapt to the new changes, even only until they find a replacement (see theories of dissonance, consonance and balance in chapter 4). However, this approach is in no way different from starting a completely new radio station.

The three-phase approach is based on the view that South Africa is still a long way from unification and the development of common values and shared philosophy of life. It is considered suitable in laying the groundwork for a proper multicultural radio station, especially where a radio station that has been earmarked for this purpose already exists, such as SAfm.

The approach has been conceptualised around three stages that are believed to be key to the development of such a radio station: (i) sequential presentation of radio programmes specifically aimed in turn at either a black or a white audience; (ii) interspersed with a series of programmes of common interest; (iii) from this approach and by chance, resultant channel-hoping and dual exposure, common values and a shared philosophy of life would develop in the long run, and the groundwork for a proper multicultural English radio station would have been laid.

Although this approach could also be regarded as a cognitive sonance approach in the sense that it seeks to appeal to either black or white listeners and to a multicultural audience, it may not succeed in an environment where there is a proliferation of radio stations, including those that serve specific cultural groups, because potential listeners

could easily tune into a station of their choice that satisfies their needs. This approach involves a gradual, or phased, or evolutionary development of a shared value environment.

The third and last approach to be considered is the play-safe approach. This should be seen as modification of the three-phase approach that has just been discussed. The main difference here is that it is aimed at minimising or removing certain elements of the three-phase approach that could lead to alienation of certain segments of the station's listenership. Instead of presenting programmes that are aimed specifically at a black or white audience, this approach advocates replacement of such programmes with those that would appeal to both black and white listeners. A good example would be those programmes that are aimed at increasing understanding and tolerance between people of all races in South Africa, especially those that examine cross-cultural issues that could raise interest in most listeners (see the section on recommendations in chapter 8). Another important aspect of this approach is that it discourages channel hopping by providing potential listeners with good and compelling programmes that satisfy most of their needs.

All three approaches assume that the three key aspects of the model presented above would be in place or ready by the time the station began operating, or when the management team implemented the new strategy. Adoption of any of the three approaches is expected to result in listeners' identifying with the station, and eventually in a brand-locked audience with common values. As a spin–off, this type of radio station would lead to increased knowledge, understanding, and insight regarding audiences' cultures. It is also believed that this would have a profound effect on their attitudes, values and beliefs, which may lead to the development of a unique South African culture and identity.