

Business model innovation processes in the South African podcasting industry

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (International Business).

24 November 2025

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Corporate Strategy at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Name & Surname

Signature

Abstract

In 2004, British broadcaster Ben Hammersley, for his article *Audible revolution* in The Guardian, was looking for a word to describe the rapid growth of online radio (Bottomley, 2015). As a result, Hammersley landed on the term 'podcasting.' It was only a decade later, in 2013 and 2014, that the podcast industry started to take off. Apple had reached 1 billion podcast subscribers and *Serial*, a true crime podcast, gained immense popularity (Rime et. al, 2022). Since then, the term 'podcasting' has become popular in most parts of the world.

The study sought to understand the application of business model innovation (BMI) frameworks and processes in the South African podcasting industry. Specifically, the study examined the key factors that have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream South African podcast creators) reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry.

Moreover, the study examined the mechanics of business model innovation and identified the internal and external factors that have influenced innovation, and how these factors interact with one another.

Finally, the study sought to understand what the barriers for innovation have been for these platforms, and how creators have responded to them.

Keywords

Business model innovation, digital transformation, emerging economies, South African podcasting industry

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BM – Business Model

BMI – Business Model Innovation

GIBS – Gordon Institute of Business Science

IE - Industry Experts

MC – Main Case

NAB - National Association of Broadcasters

P - Podcasters

PC - Podcast Consumers

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Chapter 1 introduces the study's main question, and subsequently presents its significance and the academic gap that is being addressed. The chapter begins with a brief descriptive overview of the origins and genealogy of podcasting. Next, the chapter discusses the background to the research problem, the identification of the research problem, and the business and theoretical relevance. Following, study outlines the research questions and expatiates the research aims, contributions and scope. These elements fall within the scope of business model innovation within the South African podcasting industry.

1.1 Introduction

In 2004, British broadcaster Ben Hammersley, for his article *Audible revolution* in The Guardian, was looking for a word to describe the rapid growth of online radio (Bottomley, 2015). As a result, Hammersley landed on the term 'podcasting.' It was only a decade later, in 2013 and 2014, that the podcast industry started to take off. Apple had reached 1 billion podcast subscribers and *Serial*, a true crime podcast, gained immense popularity (Rime et. al, 2022). Since then, the term 'podcasting' has become popular in most parts of the world.

1.2 Background to the research problem

The global media landscape has shifted significantly due to the rise of digital media platforms. Defined as the move from mainstream media to digital online forms, and rooted in digital transformation, these platforms have altered both audience perception and behaviour (O'Lynn, 2023, p. 4). Audiences are no longer limited to traditional media alone; they now have easy access to content across various channels and platforms (Verhoef et. al, 2021). Moreover, digital transformation has also manifested in the rapid growth of podcasting platforms (Minooka, 2024). Over the years, the platforms have become more than infotainment outlets, but viable business ventures with brands and advertisers investing in them (Minooka, 2024). Global podcast advertising revenue, which grew to US\$4 billion in 2024, is projected to reach US\$5.5 billion by 2027 (Swaine, 2025).

According to Feliciano-Cestero et al. (2023), digital transformation is influenced by factors such as knowledge, leadership, digital servitization as well as technological factors. In line with Feliciano-Cestero et al. (2023), Merlano (2024) and Omrani et al. (2024) also highlight technology as a factor that influences digital transformation. Collectively, these factors, which the study will expand on in the literature review, are reshaping the media landscape, particularly the podcasting industry.

In South Africa, the podcasting industry is still in its early stages compared to other regions. While the birth of podcasting in South Africa dates back to 2015 and 2016 (Van der Merwe, 2021, as cited in Nkoala, 2024), it was only with the launch of Africa's biggest podcast, *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* in 2018, that the industry began to gain audience, commercial and cultural traction. Following this, the South African podcasting industry has seen notable growth, both in listenership and revenue. While industry advertising value rose to R137.6 million in 2023, with a forecast of R183.5 million in 2028, the number of South African podcast listeners is projected to rise from 13 million in 2023 to 16 million by 2028 (National Association of Broadcasters, 2024). Although Motsaathebe (2023) attributes the growth and success of the South African podcasting industry, particularly *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, to the content and subject matter of the show, host's personality and access to digital media platforms for content sharing, this study interprets these successes as a reflection of Business Model Innovation (BMI) application.

1.3 Research problem

While literature on business model innovation (BMI) has been extensively studied, the primary focus and application of existing literature has been on how business models can be developed (Ramdani et al. 2019) as well as how organisations can gain competitive advantage (Bhatti et al., 2021; Geissdoerfer et al. 2018). Despite the expanded literature on BMI, there is little to no academic research on how business model innovation (BMI) frameworks are applicable in an emerging industry like the South African podcasting industry. Thus, *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, which serves as the study's primary case, alongside other South African podcasters, presents a valuable research opportunity to investigate BMI beyond content production and distribution, and cultural impact. In doing so, the study addressed an unexplored area of the South African podcasting industry: understanding the application of business model innovation (BMI) frameworks, the processes and drivers that shape these applications, as well as the

internal and external factors that would have played, and continue to play a role, and how these factors interact in the podcasting industry.

1.4 Business relevance of the study

As noted earlier, podcasting platforms have grown rapidly due to digital transformation, and have become commercially viable (Minooka, 2024). According to Nielsen (n.d.), audience engagement is significantly rising on podcasting platforms, with advertising revenue increasing as well. Similarly, Minooka posits that audience engagement has grown due to how unconventional podcasting platforms are in their packaging and delivery (2024). This engagement has created opportunities for podcast creators, brands and media owners to interact and in turn, gain a better understanding of the podcasting industry (Minooka, 2024; Nielsen, n.d.). In gaining deeper insight of the industry, podcast creators, brands and media owners are able to improve monetisation models, refine business models and further grow audience engagement (Minooka, 2024; Nielsen, n.d.).

As highlighted previously, the South African podcasting industry is on a growth trajectory, with a forecast of 16 million listeners and R183.5 million in 2028 (National Association of Broadcasters, 2024). This indicates the potential of the industry in the coming years. Thus, examining the processes and drivers that shape the application of business model innovation (BMI), as well as how the internal and external factors interact, provides useful insights.

1.5 Theoretical relevance of the study

Business model innovation (BMI) has been extensively studied by scholars throughout the years. Much of its literature, however, has been in the disciplines of strategy, management, and entrepreneurship (Amit and Zott, 2021). For many scholars, BMI has centred around how organisations should conduct business (Amit and Zott, 2021) and gain competitive advantage (Bhatti et al., 2021). Moreover, research done by scholars such as Andreini et al. (2021), Boucken and Friedrich (2024), Jin et al. (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and Rummel et al. (2021), just to name a few, have broadened BMI understanding through process-based literature.

In recent years, scholars like Ramdani et al. (2019) and Verhoef et al. (2021) have attributed the influence of digital transformation as a key feature in further defining and

understanding business model innovation (BMI). Ramdani et al. (2019) highlight the importance of BMI in exploiting middle markets, particularly in emerging economies. This resonates with the South African podcasting industry. Similarly, Verhoef et al. (2021) identify digital transformation as a defying force that challenges traditional business conduct, often resulting in the development of new business models. Thus, digital transformation can be seen as an external accelerator of business model innovation.

This study therefore contributed to the theoretical expansion of business model innovation (BMI) within the context of an emerging economy such as the South African podcasting industry, an industry that is shaped by creativity, content, audience engagement and cultural traction. By using *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* as the primary case, as well as comparable insights from other South African podcasters, this study added to existing theory by demonstrating how BMI frameworks are applicable in an informal, creative, and culturally driven context like the South African podcasting industry. In addition, the studied highlighted digital transformation as a key factor through which business model innovation (BMI) manifests.

1.6 Research questions

The study's main research question emanates from academic literature by Andreini et al. (2021), Bouncken and Fredrich (2025), Loon and Quan (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and Verhoef et al. (2021) among others. These scholars highlight the complex factors that influence business model innovation and how they interplay with one another. Additionally, the recommendation by Ramdani et al. (2019) to investigate digital business models and the nature of their disruption, as well as the contextual influences of digital transformation (Verhoef et al. (2021) presents an interesting research opportunity for insights on how podcasting platforms in South Africa, *particularly Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, has innovated its business model beyond content creation and audience engagement, thus reimagining a new way of creating and capturing value.

While the rise of podcasting platforms have created an opportunity for podcast creators, brands and media owners to interact within the industry (Minooka, 2024; Nielsen, n.d.), there is limited scholarly insights on the ways in which this interaction can manifest. As a result, the following research question was formulated:

What key factors have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (including other mainstream podcast platforms) reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry?

In addition, three sub-questions were formulated to further expand the study's main research question:

Research question 1: What processes of BMI *has Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) followed to innovate its business model?

Research question 2: How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?

Research question 3: What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) responded to these barriers?

1.7 Research aims

The study sought to understand the application of business model innovation (BMI) frameworks and processes in the South African podcasting industry. Specifically, the study examined the key factors that have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream South African podcast creators) reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry.

Moreover, the study examined the mechanics of business model innovation and identified the internal and external factors that have influenced innovation, and how these factors interact with one another.

Finally, the study sought to understand what the barriers for innovation have been for these platforms, and how creators have responded to them.

1.8 Research contributions

The study contributed to the existing theoretical conversation on business model innovation (BMI) as follows: Firstly, it serves to contribute to the limited literature on how

business model innovation (BMI) frameworks are applicable in emerging economies (Ramdani et al., 2019), particularly the South African podcasting industry. Secondly, the study serves to advance knowledge and understanding of BMI through the lens of digital transformation (Ramdani et al., 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021). Verhoef et al. (2021) posit that digital transformation is a key factor in the development of new business models. As such, by examining how South African podcasters make use of digital technologies in order to innovate, the contribute insights on the interconnection between business model innovation (BMI) and digital transformation.

In regions such as the United States and United Kingdom, podcasting platforms have achieved great commercial success. While the South African podcasting industry is on a growth trajectory, its growth and success cannot compare with other regions. The industry is faced with unique challenges that are less pronounced in other regions. These challenges include internet access, data costs, and small advertising spend for creators, to name a few. These constrains affect the degree in which innovation can take place in the South African podcasting industry.

Thus, this study contributed to existing business model innovation (BMI) literature by examining the key factors that have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry. Next, the study provided insights on the processes of BMI followed by *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* in innovating its business model, and highlighted the internal and external factors that interact within the South African podcasting industry. Furthermore, the study uncovered the barriers to business model innovation (BMI) in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* has responded to these barriers. Lastly, the study drew comparable insights from other South African podcast creators, further enhancing knowledge of business model innovation. In the South African podcasting industry.

1.9 Research scope

The scope of the study was inductive and explorative in nature, and focused on business model innovation (BMI) processes in the South African podcasting industry. Using *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* as the primary case, as well as comparative insights from other South African podcast creators, the study examined how these creators are reimagining and innovating their platforms beyond content creation and audience engagement to build sustainable business models. Informed by literature from Andreini

et al. (2021), Boucken and Friedrich (2024), Jin et al. (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and Rummel et al. (2021), the study explored the processes, internal and external factors, and barriers that shape business model innovation within the South African podcasting context.

The study was limited to South Africa podcast creators, with a focus on Johannesburg. Johannesburg is the creative hub of South Africa and serves as the ecosystem to many of South Africa's media houses and productions, including podcasting platforms.

While content creation, audience engagement and insights, as well as financial earnings form part of the scope of podcasting, the focus of the study remained on understanding the application of BMI frameworks in the South African podcasting industry. These elements are only analysed insofar as they inform innovation models.

In doing so, the study contributed to existing theory by examining BMI frameworks in the South African podcasting industry, and by providing insights on how creators, brands and media owners are able to interact within the industry.

1.10 Research structure

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the literature review and discusses the key constructs of the study. Chapter 3 expounds the study's main research question and sub-questions. Chapter 4 discusses and justifies the adopted research methodology. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature in chapter 6. Chapter 7 concludes the study and highlights limitations and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

To address the study's research questions, chapter 2 reviews literature on business model innovation (BMI), and situates the literature within the context of digital transformation and the South African podcasting industry. To this end, the review provides an overview of BMI literature followed by a discussion of the key constructs and their theoretical foundation.

The chapter begins by highlighting the key goal of business model innovation as defined by scholars. According to Timmers (1998, as cited in Jin et al., 2021), the logic of business model innovation is the redesign of a firm's business elements to create value, a view that is also supported by Christofi et al. (2023). Although the general consensus among scholars is that business model reconfiguration is key for value creation, most of the existing literature overlooks creative or emerging markets, such as the South African podcasting industry. Thus, this gap highlights the importance of examining podcasting platforms in the South African landscape.

Table 1: Structure of the literature

Headings	<i>Podcasting industry</i>	<i>Business Model Innovation</i>	<i>BMI processes</i>	<i>Factors influencing BMI</i>	<i>Digital transformation</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Discussion	Overview of podcasting landscape	Literature on BMI	Understanding the stages of BMI	Internal and external factors, and challenges	Digital transformation as a driver for BMI	Summary

Source: Author's own

2.2 The Podcasting Industry

2.2.1 The Global Context

Podcasts date back to 2004. In his effort to describe the rapid growth of online radio, British broadcaster Ben Hammersley landed on the term *podcasting* (Bottomley, 2015). While many still view podcasts as internet radio (Tzllil, 2023), the Merriam-Webster

(2025) defines it as “a program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the internet,” enabling audiences to listen asynchronously (Strickland, et al., 2021). Although this definition has been widely referenced by scholars, Rime et al. (2022) argue that it is not sufficient enough to develop future frameworks. Nevertheless, the podcasting industry continues to grow significantly. Rime et al. (2022), posit that a Google search for the term *podcast* in 2004 returned 6000 results. In 2021, the term returned over 1.9 billion results (Rime et al., 2022).

Table 2: The Podcast Consumer

The Podcast Consumer	Podcasts have achieved mainstream dominance	Podcasts reach every valuable audience segment	Video is redefining the podcast landscape	Podcast advertising delivers RIO and trust	Forward looking trends suggest continued growth	Podcasts offer a competitive advantage
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Source: Author’s own adapted from Edison Research’s Podcast Consumer 2025

While podcasts are consumed globally, the United States dominates the industry insofar as audience segment, engagement and advertising revenue. The podcast landscape has achieved new heights in the U.S. According to Edison Research (2025), 55% of individuals in America are now consuming podcasts on a monthly basis, marking a 6% increase from 2021 (Nielsen, 2021). Moreover, podcast reach in the U.S. is generational: 66% of individuals aged 12-34 consume podcasts monthly, while 61% of individuals aged 35-54 and 38% of those over 54 listen to monthly (Edison Research, 2025). Furthermore, 51% of U.S. individuals aged 12+ have consumed a video podcast (Edison Research, 2025).

Notably, there has been a significant increase in advertising spend by brands and media companies as a result of the high number of podcast listeners (Moe, 2023; Minooka, 2024). Similarly, Nielsen notes that the growth of podcasting platforms have afforded advertisers the opportunity to reach and engage niche audiences (2021). In fact, Nielsen (2021) contends that podcasts are critical for brand KPIs, demonstrating how effective they are. In addition, Statista (2025) projects global advertising revenue to reach \$3.56 billion in 2025 and \$.4.75 billion by 2030, with 75% of that revenue generated in the United States. As noted previously, the U.S. leads the industry, however, the industry is

steadily growing in emerging markets. Next, the study examines podcasting in the South African context.

2.2.2 The South African Context

In South Africa, podcasting dates back to 2015 and 2016, and it was only with the launch of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* in 2018 that the industry began to gain traction (Van der Merwe 2021, as cited in Nkoala, 2024). Launched in 2018, the platform quickly became a fan favourite due to its subject matter and interview format. In 2021 and again in 2025, *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* became the first podcast to establish cross-platform presence, airing episodes on DStv channels Channel O and Mzansi Wethu (DStv, 2021; DStv, 2025). On 11 July 2023, *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* became the first podcast in South Africa to reach 1 million subscribers on YouTube (Mphande, 2023).

While the South African industry does not compare to other regions, particularly the Americas and some parts of Europe, the industry has shown tremendous growth, both in listenership and revenue. According to Swaine (2025), a vast majority of individuals who have access to the internet listen to podcasts. The National Association of Broadcasters (2024) note that the number of South African podcast listeners is projected to rise from 13 million in 2023 to 16 million by 2028, while industry advertising value is forecast to rise to R183.5 million in 2028 from R137.6 million in 2023.

As such, this growth, demonstrated by *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, draws attention to sustainability and the ways in which creators are reimagining their business models beyond content creation and audience engagement in the South African podcasting industry. Nevertheless, the industry remains largely underexplored academically.

2.3 Business Models and Business Model Innovation

It is important to first understand what a business model is before examining business model innovation. The term *business model* started gaining popularity in the 1990s (Altafin et al., 2025). Although there is no definitive definition for the term, a business model can be understood as a structure that helps a firm function effectively and efficiently (Altafin et al., 2025). In other words, a business model is a system that a firm employs to create and capture value for all stakeholders (Kraus et al., 2020). Similarly, Chinese digital ventures contend that a business model provides insight on the stakeholders of a firm - who the customers are, what that they want to benefit from the

firm, and how the firm can cater for the customers and their needs, ultimately creating value (2023).

According to Jin et al. (2021), business models across the board have become the same. This homogeneity can result in many firms losing their competitive advantage (Jin et al., 2021). Therefore, in order to maintain their competitive advantage, firms have to innovate their business models.

Amit and Zott (2021) define business model innovation (BMI) as the process in which firms reconfigure and redefine their offering in order to create and capture value for all stakeholders involved. While a business model paints a picture of how a firm currently operates, business model innovation paints one of intent and transformation. This involves rethinking the firm's value proposition and transforming that value among stakeholders. Building on this, Wirtz et al. (2016, as cited in Andreini et al., 2022) highlight an additional perspective of BMI, one that also focuses on processes and not just value proposition and creation. This view is supported by Zott et al. (2024), Rummel et al. (2021) and Ramdani et al. (2019), and will be further discussed in section 2.4.

Having outlined the definition of BMI from both a value creation and process point of view, it is necessary to ask: how do firms innovate their business models? To answer this, the study examines the BMI framework, the approaches to business model innovation and the processes.

Table 3: BMI Theoretical Lens

Business model framework	What is being innovated?
Approaches to BMI	The type of innovation
BMI processes	How the change is implemented

Source: Author's own

2.3.1 BMI frameworks

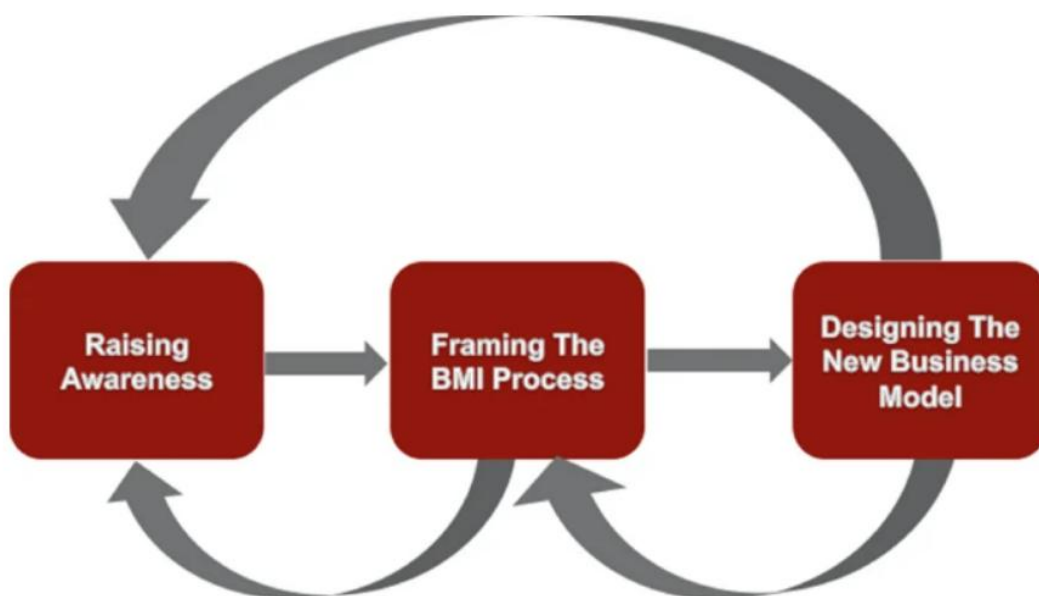
Firms explore business model innovation as a result of customer demands and changes in customer behaviour (Zott et al., 2024; Li 2020; Ramdani et al., 2019). While the framing is different, these scholars present similarities in their BMI framework. Zot et al. (2024) present a three-phase framework, with the third phase being the implementation of the

redesigned business model. Therefore, only phase one and two will be discussed in detail. Li (2020), on the other hand, highlights three segments of the BMI framework. This includes value proposition, value architecture, and functional architecture. Ramdani et al. (2019) identify four elements, including value proposition (the why), operational value (the what), human capital (the who) and financial value (the how).

As noted above, Zott et al. (2024) present a three-phase framework. Phase one of their framework, also called the *awareness stage*, requires a shift in focus from firm managers (Zott et al., 2024). Simply put, managers should step back from only thinking about the firm's offering and start thinking more about the business model as a system (Zott et al., 2024). This shift enables managers to identify the firm's strengths, weaknesses as well as areas of improvement. It is important to note that this framework serves a dual purpose. First, it helps us conceptualise business model innovation. Second, it outlines the actions firms take to implement the redesigned model. This will be discussed further in section 2.4.

Phase two, also called the *framing stage*, requires firm managers to define the problem they are trying to solve and ensure that the innovation goal matches the firm's technological, financial and human capital resources. This view is also supported by Ramdani et al. (2019).

Figure 1: Framework for developing business model innovation capability

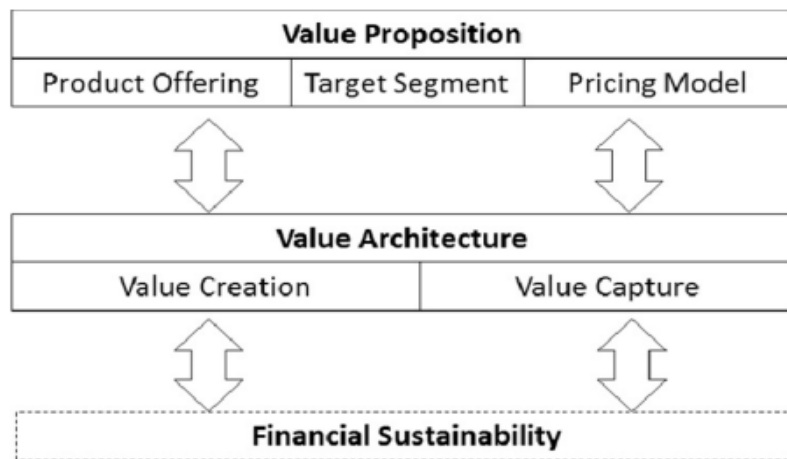


(Note The various arrows indicate a highly iterative [as opposed to linear] process)

Source: Zott et al. (2024)

Li (2020) distinguishes between two frameworks: the initial business model and the holistic business model framework. The initial business model framework was used as a guide for earlier work on business models. At first, the framework focused only on *value proposition* and *value architecture*. It was only at a later stage that *financial sustainability* featured as part of the framework. While Li (2020) acknowledges the initial business model framework, more emphasis is placed on the holistic business model framework. Li (2020) notes that feedback from firm managers on the initial business model framework prompted additional insights and ultimately the extension of the framework. As a result, the initial holistic business model was developed.

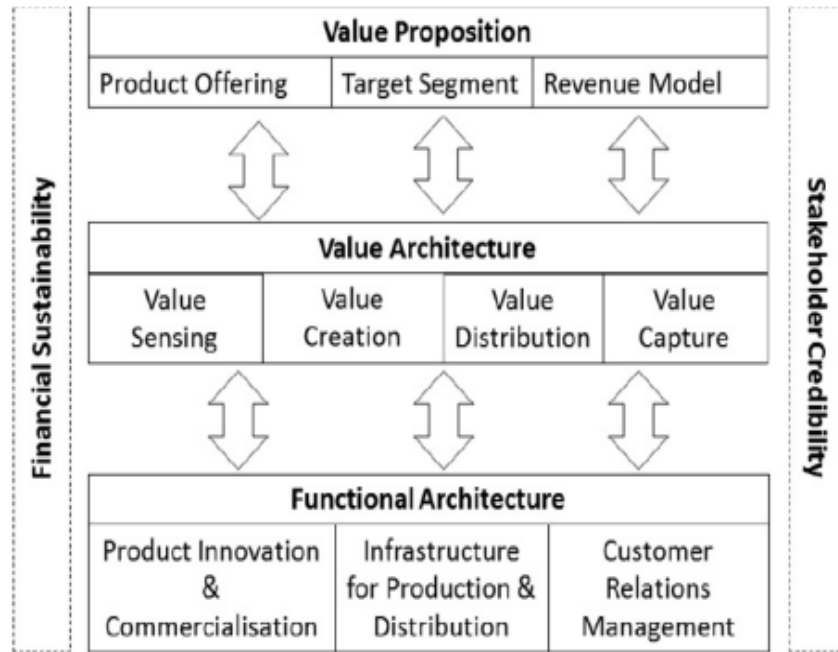
Figure 2: Initial business model framework



Source: Li (2020)

Similarly, the holistic business model framework comprises value proposition, value architecture as well as financial sustainability. The only difference is that the extended framework features two additional elements, namely functional architecture and stakeholder credibility.

Figure 3: Holistic business model framework



Source: Li (2020)

When firms examine what they need to innovate, they first have to look at their *value proposition*. This includes the firm's product offering, target market as well as revenue model (Li, 2020). This enables firms to assess their vision and strategy. Following this, firms must then look at their *value architecture* which includes value sensing, value creation as well as value distribution and value capture. Next, firms must look at *functional architecture* which comprises product innovation and commercialisation, infrastructure for production and distribution and customer relations management (Li, 2020). Li (2020) notes that a good business model balances both *financial sustainability* and *stakeholder credibility*. Moreover, Li (2020) states that credibility with stakeholders is crucial for the success and survival of firms, particularly creative ones.

Ramdani et al. (2019) present a four-phase business model innovation framework, which examines areas of innovation where other forms of business models can be identified. Their framework is more comprehensive in comparison to Zott et al. (2024) and Li (2020), with 4 innovation areas comprising 16 elements. These innovation areas include *value proposition*, *operational value*, *financial value* as well as *human capital* (Ramdani et al., 2019).

Figure 4: Business model innovation framework



Source: Ramdani et al. (2019)

Value Proposition

The first innovation area is value proposition. Here, firms are required to answer the *why* questions (Ramdani, et., 2019). Similar to Li (2020), value proposition requires firms assessing their offering, target audience and the needs of that audience, ensuring customer satisfaction. According to Eyring et al. (2011, as cited in Ramdani et al., 2019), in order for business model innovation to take place, firms need to define their new value proposition. As a result, firms are able to innovate their business models and meet the unsatisfied needs of consumers (Eyring et al., 2011, as cited in Ramdani et al., 2019).

According to Eyring et al. (2011, as cited in Ramdani et al., 2019), firms are able to satisfy these unmet needs by examining the following: How do customers utilise their offering? What alternatives are available? Where do customers experience frustration? What is the customer's end goal with the current offering? These questions enable firms to evolve their business models, and meet the needs of unsatisfied customers.

Figure 5: Business model innovation areas and elements

Areas of innovation	Elements	Relevant questions	Variables	Studies
Value proposition (Why?)	Core offering	Why our products/ services?	Value proposition	Al-Debei and Avison (2010)
			Value proposition	Dahan <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Value proposition	Demil and Lecocq (2010)
			Value proposition	Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Value proposition	Yunus <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Type of offering	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)
			Offering	Rajala <i>et al.</i> (2012)
			Offering	Sinfield <i>et al.</i> (2012)
			Product/Service offering	Kiron <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Customer value proposition	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)
	Customer needs	Why customers purchase our products/ services?	Change in offering	Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014)
			Product selection	Brea-Solis <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Value propositions	Kohler (2015)
			Value proposition	Taran <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Offering	Landau, <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Value proposition	Christensen <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Value proposition/Offering	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Value proposition	Hartmann <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Value proposition	Mehrzi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
			Market offering	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016)
Target customers	Why target the current segment(s)?	Customer needs	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)	
		Perceived needs	Amit and Zott (2012)	
		Customer need	Sinfield <i>et al.</i> (2012)	
		Customer engagement	Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013)	
		Target customers	Dahan <i>et al.</i> (2010)	
		Target customers	Sinfield <i>et al.</i> (2012)	
		Customer identification	Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013)	
		Target segments	Kiron <i>et al.</i> (2013)	
		Target market Segment(s)	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)	
		Target customers	Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014)	
Operational value (What?)	Customer perceived value Key assets	Why customers choose us? What assets do we need?	Customer segments	Kohler (2015)
			Target customers	Taran <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Target customers	Landau, <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Value delivery	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Market/Customer segment	Hartmann <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Customer segment	Mehrzi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
			Customers	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Meeting local needs	Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Affordability	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)
			Satisfy perceived needs	Amit and Zott (2012)
Key resources	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)			
Resources	Rajala <i>et al.</i> (2012)			
Key assets	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)			
Key resources	Kohler (2015)			
Resources	Christensen <i>et al.</i> (2016)			
Value creation	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016)			
Key resources	Hartmann <i>et al.</i> (2016)			
Key resources	Mehrzi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)			

Source: Ramdani et al. (2019)

Operational Value

The second innovation area is operational value, and it requires firms to respond to the *what* questions. Here, firms evaluate their key assets and processes, partners network as well as distribution channels (Ramdani et al., 2019). By examining these elements, firms are able to better understand how the interaction between their resources, customer channels and partners and suppliers contribute to value creation and value capture.

Human Capital

Following operational value is the third innovation area: human capital. This area involves firms addressing the *who* questions. While most frameworks focus less on human capital, Ramdani et al. (2019) highlight it in their framework. As such, the human capital innovation area involves organisational learning, skills and competencies, incentives and training (Ramdani et al., 2019). By focusing on these elements, firms are able to experiment and conduct business in new ways, as well as utilise the skills and

competencies needed for the innovated business model through investing in the training and development of individuals so that they can carry out the innovation activities (Ramdani et al., 2019).

Financial Value

The final innovation area is financial value. This area is concerned with answering the *how* questions. Here, firms evaluate their revenue streams, cost structure, cash flow and margins (Ramdani et al., 2019). This allows firms to explore how they can create value and capture it financially, optimise costs and maintain efficiencies to ensure financial value. By doing so, firms pave a way to profitability and sustainability.

Figure 6: Business model innovation areas and elements (cont'd)

Areas of innovation	Elements	Relevant questions	Variables	Studies
	Key process	What processes do we require?	Resources Key processes Technologies Investment in technology Processes	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016) Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011) Mason and Spring (2011) Brea-Solis <i>et al.</i> (2015) Christensen <i>et al.</i> (2016)
	Partners network	What relationships should we consider?	Value creation Value network Value network Value network Network architecture Relationships Value chain linkages Partners' network Partner network Partner network Key partners Partner network Value networking Supply chain	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016) Al-Debei and Avison (2010) Demil and Lecocq (2010) Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010) Mason and Spring (2011) Rajala <i>et al.</i> (2012) Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013) Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014) Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014) Taran <i>et al.</i> (2015) Kohler (2015) Peters <i>et al.</i> (2015) Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016) Mehrizi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
	Distribution channels	What channels can deliver our products/ services?	Network Distribution channel Channel Customer access Distribution channel Channels Sales channels	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016) Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010) Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011) Sinfield <i>et al.</i> (2012) Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014) Kohler (2015) Mehrizi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
	Human capital (Who?)	Organisational learning	Who should be engaged in knowledge transfer activities?	Value delivery Double loop learning Experimentation process Human resource practices
	Skills and competencies	Who should execute specific activities?	Resources and competencies Core competency Resources and competencies Core internal competencies Core competency Core competencies Domain-specific know-how	Al-Debei and Avison (2010) Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010) Demil and Lecocq (2010) Morris <i>et al.</i> (2013) Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014) Taran <i>et al.</i> (2015) Peters <i>et al.</i> (2015)
	Incentives	Who should be rewarded?	Incentives Human resource practices Crowd rewards	Sorescu <i>et al.</i> (2011) Brea-Solis <i>et al.</i> (2015) Kohler (2015)
	Training	Who requires development to carry out specific activities?	Human resource practices	Brea-Solis <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Financial value (How?)	Revenue streams	How do we generate revenue?	Value finance Volume and structure of revenues	Al-Debei and Avison (2010) Demil and Lecocq (2010)

Source: Ramdani et al. (2019)

Figure 7: Business model innovation areas and elements (cont'd)

Areas of innovation	Elements	Relevant questions	Variables	Studies
			Revenue model	Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Sales revenues	Yunus <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Revenue model	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)
			Revenue model	Rajala <i>et al.</i> (2012)
			Monetisation	Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013)
			Revenue model	Kiron <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Revenue	Huang <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Revenue drivers	Morris <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Revenue model	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)
			Revenue streams	Kohler (2015)
			Type of revenue	Peters <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Value appropriation	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Revenue stream	Hartmann <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Revenue model	Mehrzi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
			Revenue	Landau, <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Revenues	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016)
	Cost structure	How do we cost our products/ services?	Value finance	Al-Debei and Avison (2010)
			Volume and structure of costs	Demil and Lecocq (2010)
			Cost structure	Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Cost structure	Yunus <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Cost structure	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)
			Cost	Huang <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Cost model	Kiron <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Pricing approach	Morris <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Cost structure	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)
			Cost structure	Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> (2014)
			Cost consciousness	Brea-Solis <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Company cost structure	Kohler (2015)
			Cost drivers	Peters <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Value appropriation	Cortimiglia <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Cost structure	Hartmann <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Costs	Landau, <i>et al.</i> (2016)
			Cost structure	Mehrzi and Lashkarbolouki (2016)
			Finances	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2016)
	Cash flow	How should we manage cash flow?	Capital employed	Yunus <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Monetisation	Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013)
	Margins	How much surplus can we make?	Margin	Demil and Lecocq (2010)
			Profit formula	Wu <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Economic profit equation	Yunus <i>et al.</i> (2010)
			Profit formula	Eyring <i>et al.</i> (2011)
			Profit model	Sinfield <i>et al.</i> (2012)
			Profit	Huang <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Margins	Morris <i>et al.</i> (2013)
			Estimation of profit potential	Dmitriev <i>et al.</i> (2014)
			Profit formula	Taran <i>et al.</i> (2015)
			Profit formula	Christensen <i>et al.</i> (2016)

Source: Ramdani et al. (2019)

Analysis

While all three authors approach business model innovation differently, there are clear similarities in their frameworks. All three authors note that innovation is a result of shifts in the behaviour of customers as well as market needs. Where the authors differ, however, is in the structure of the innovation process.

In their framework, Zott et al. (2024) approach business model innovation from a process point of view. They note that managers, and their perception of BMI, are key agents in the innovation activities of firms. Furthermore, their framework underscores BMI as a process that takes place over time. This process involves managers understanding the current business model (awareness stage), clearly defining the problem (framing stage)

and then carrying out the redesign business model (design stage). Zott et al. (2024) reflect and strategies first before implementation.

Li (2020), on the other hand, focuses on the components of the business model. To achieve business model strength and sustainability, firms need to ensure that all five components of the framework are aligned. Whereas Zott et al. (2024) focus on the steps firms should take when innovating, Li (2020) emphasises the key components that should feature in the business model to ensure balance and credibility.

Ramdani et al. (2019) present the most comprehensive model. In their framework, the key areas include value proposition, operational value, financial value as well as human capital. These areas align BMI with organisational activities, thus making their framework practical and actionable.

These frameworks complement each other. Collectively, they offer insights on the sequence of innovation (Zott et al., 2024), key components required for innovation (Li, 2020) as well as where innovation needs to take place (Ramdani et al., 2019). Therefore, the framework by Ramdani et al. (2019) is the most appropriate for this study, given its practicality and actionability.

2.3.1 Types of BMI

While BMI frameworks identify the areas and elements of a business model where innovation can take place, the types highlight the extent and newness of the changes. Foss and Saebi (2017, as cited in Andreini et al., 2022), note four types of business model innovation, namely: modular, architectural, radical and incremental. Similarly, Ranta et al. (2021) also highlight radical and incremental BMI in their analysis. With modular BMI, firms target and apply change to a specific area or component of the business model. Architectural BMI, on the other hand, reconfigures the components of the business and how they interact with one another. Incremental BMI involves firms gradually improving the components of their existing business model, while radical BMI introduces novel changes that can transform both the firm model and industry (Foss and Saebi 2017, as cited in Andreini et al., 2022; Ranta et al., 2021).

Next, the study discusses the approaches of BMI and examines the pathways firms use to make changes to their business models.

2.3.2 BMI approaches

Ramdani et al. (2019) identify three approaches to business model innovation: experimentation, open innovation and disruption. According to Thomke (2020), experimentation involves firms pursuing knowledge to understand cause and effect. This enables firms to gain insights on what works and what doesn't work before committing additional resources (Thomke, 2020; Ramdani et al., 2019). Secondly, firms can approach BMI through open innovation (Ramdani et al., 2019). According to Yun et al. (2020), open innovation can be understood as a systematic approach that enables firms to achieve innovation opportunities through exploring both internal and external knowledge sources. Finally, firms can use disruption as an approach. In this context, firms rethink their existing business models and create and capture value in new ways.

These approaches link theory with practice as they inform how firms innovate their business models.

2.4 BMI Processes

To investigate the processes firms follow to implement their redesigned business model, the study draws on literature from Zott et al. (2024), Andreini et al. (2022), Rummel et al. (2022), Amit and Zott (2021) and Pieroni et al. (2021).

Zott et al. (2024) present a three-phase framework, while Andreini et al. (2022) identify five integrated processes. Rummel et al. (2022), on the other hand, focus on the implementation process, Amit and Zott (2021) on a three-iterative phase process, and Pieroni et al. (2021) outline a four-stage approach. The processes will be analysed as outline above.

As noted previously, Zott et al. (2024) present a three-phase framework. Phase one, or the *awareness stage*, requires managers to shift their attention beyond the firm's offering and instead think about the business model as a system (Zott et al., 2024). This enables managers to identify the firm's strengths, weaknesses as well as areas that need to be improved.

Phase two, also referred to as the *framing stage*, requires firm managers to define the problem they are trying to solve and ensure that the innovation goal matches the firm's technological, financial and human capital resources. This view is also supported by Ramdani et al. (2019).

In phase three, the *design stage*, firm managers translate insights from phase one and two and carry out the reimagined business model. According to Zott et al. (2024), the interaction between phase one and two guide phase three and ensures that the business model is not only implemented, but operational too.

Andreini et al. (2022) highlight five BMI processes, namely: cognitive, knowledge-shaping, strategizing, value creation and evolution learning processes.

2.4.1 Cognitive processes

Cognitive processes highlight the relationship between firm managers - both top and middle managers - and how they look at problems and make decisions within the firm (Andreini et al., 2022). Cognitive processes focus on the mindset of managers in relation to the key ideas and environment of the business. As a result, this aids in the generation of novel ideas for innovation (Andreini et al., 2022). This view is supported by Zott et al. (2024).

2.4.2 Strategizing processes

Strategizing processes look at how firms transform and innovate their ideas. Here, firms strategically position themselves to gain a competing advantage over the market (Andreini et al., 2022). A firm goes through a process of configuration with its business model. It looks at what is feasible to innovate and what is not, and it aligns it with the identity of the firm (Andreini et al., 2022).

2.4.3 Knowledge-shaping processes

The next process is the knowledge-shaping process. Andreini et al. (2022) posit that it is not enough to achieve BMI with only cognitive and strategizing processes. The knowledge-shaping process looks at how stakeholders within a firm gather knowledge and new insight, and how that knowledge and insight is disseminated within the organisation to generate new innovations (Andreini et al., 2022). There are two types of knowledge-shaping processes: systematic experimentation and trial and error. With systematic experimentation, firms test hypotheses (Andreini et al., 2022). This enables firms to observe what works and what does not. Trial and error, which is similar to the experimentation approach by Ramdani et al. (2019), allows firms to refine their strategies through knowledge-shaping activities (Andreini et al., 2022).

2.4.4 Value creation processes

This process looks at the set of activities, including BMI reconfiguration, that firms take to create, deliver and capture value for all stakeholders involved (Andreini et al., 2022).

2.4.5 Evolutionary learning processes

Evolutionary learning processes integrate all stages of business model innovation. In this context, firms continuously learn, adapt and revisit the other processes in order to sustain the competitive advantage they have (Andreini et al., 2022).

Rummel et al. (2022) look at a five-phase BMI process, namely: initiation, ideation, integration, implementation and evaluation.

2.4.6 Initiation

The initiation phase looks at the business ecosystem and the problems that exist within the ecosystem. In other words, this phase is about sensing the problem (Rummel et al., 2022).

2.4.7 Ideation

This phase is about generating novel ideas for a new business model. Similar to the knowledge-sharing process by Andreini et al. (2022), ideation involves stakeholders disseminating knowledge and insights amongst themselves to aid with creative thinking (Rummel et al., 2022).

2.4.8 Integration

The integration phase involves firms aligning the ideas generated with their goals and strategic positioning (Rummel et al., 2022). Here, firms align themselves and the new innovated business model with feasibility.

2.4.9 Implementation

Here, firms enter the implementation phase and execute the new business model.

2.4.10 Evaluation

In this phase, firms evaluate the new implemented business models. They do so by measuring the innovation and its performance. Based on the results, firms can then align and refine the innovation (Rummel et al., 2022).

2.4.11 BMIdeate, BMIterate and BMImplement

Amit and Zott (2015, as cited in Amit and Zott, 2021) note that a BMI strategy should encompass the following elements: design, testing and implementation. As such, their process follows three phases: BMIdeate, BMIterate and BMImplement.

Similar to the awareness stage identified by Zott et al. (2024), BMIdeate examines the firm's business model in its current state and how it aligns with the needs of the stakeholders. This enables firms to gain an understanding of the existing business model, and translate the insights gathered into themes that relate to the redesign of the business model. Amit and Zott (2021) note that this step requires creativity from the firm as the insights gathered inform the redesign of the business model.

Following this is BMIterate. This phase focuses on refining ideas generated in the BMIdeate stage. Similar to the knowledge-shaping activities (Ramdani et al., 2019), BMIterate involves experimentation and trial and error. Testing ideas enables firms to gain insight into the most viable model (Amit and Zott, 2021).

The final phase is BMImplement. Here, firms commit resources to the redesigned model and ensure that it is fully operational. Amit and Zott (2021) define implementation as the decisions taken to align the redesigned model with the objectives of the firm.

2.4.12 Prepare, sense, seize, transform

Pieroni et al. (2021) follow a four-stage approach, which includes prepare, sense, seize and transform. They note that the preparation stage is the starting point for the application of the business model. The activities and tools of this stage is twofold: clearly defining the scope and objectives of the BMI activities and aligning stakeholders in mindset.

Next, firms identify potential opportunities and ensure that they are feasible and practical. Additionally, firms need to ensure that these opportunities align with the firm's objectives

and capabilities, and that they speak to the aims, inputs, tasks and outputs (Pieroni et al., (2021).

The sense stage is followed by seizing. Similar to BMIterate (Amit and Zott, 2021), this stage refines and shapes the model to ensure that it is optimised to fit the firm's strategic direction.

The final stage is the transform stage. In this stage, firms plan the roll out of redesigned model all dedicate resources to ensure that the model is operational and that it delivers its intended value.

2.4.13 Comparative analysis

The literature above highlight that BMI is a continuous process, and not a once-off event. This process involves firms examining the different areas and elements of their existing business model, refining them and adjusting them as they go. While scholars approach BMI processes differently - some emphasise manger mentality and others firm experimentation - the journey is the same.

All scholars agree that the process of business model involves awareness, experimentation, implementation and refining. In other words, BMI is iterative and learning-driven, not linear.

Zott et al. (2024), for example, highlight that innovation begins with how firm managers see the firm in its entirety. This is supported by Andreini et al. (2022)'s cognitive and strategizing processes. Both scholars agree that innovation starts in the mind before it can be actioned.

Andreini et al. (2022) go further and highlight knowledge-shaping processes, which involve experimentation and trial and error. This aligns with the BMIterate phase by Amit and Zott (2021). They posit that experimentation, which enables firms to test and refine ideas before committing resources, is key for business model innovation.

Similarly, Rummel et al. (2022) also highlight experimentation as part of the ideation and integration phases. Additionally, they emphasise the importance of strategic alignment to ensure that ideas that have been generated align with the business model. This is

supported by Pieroni et al. (2021)'s seize stage, where firms refine their models to ensure that they are optimised to fit the firm's strategic direction.

It is important to note that the process of innovation continues even after implementations (Rummel et al., 2022; Pieroni et al., 2021). This process involves firms evaluating and adjusting the redesigned model. This view aligns with the evolutionary processes by Andreini et al. (2022) which states that once the redesigned model is implemented, firms must observe it and adjust accordingly.

2.5 Factors Influencing BMI

To shine a light on the factors that influence business model innovation, the study draws parallels from van Tonder et. al. (2023), Verhoef et al. (2021) and Kraus et al. (2020) and other scholarly work. These factors give insights into the mechanics that have shaped business model innovation for *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream South African podcasters).

2.5.1 Internal factors

2.5.1.1 Brand innovation

Masood et al. (2025) notes brand innovation as an important internal capability for firms. Brand innovation encompasses value proposition and firm identity, and fosters the development of new value through experimentation and collaboration.

2.5.1.2 Digital advertising

According to Masood et al. (2025), digital advertising informs a firm's strategy and decision-making. This internal factor enables firms to test ideas and integrate the insights gathered into value creation. Similar to brand innovation, digital advertising allows firms to experiment and generate valuable data about their customers, which help shape the business model.

2.5.1.3 Culture and customer-centric culture

According to van Tonder et.al (2023), culture or organisational culture, which is a direct representation of a firm's identity, characterises the norms, values and behaviour of a

business and its employees. Albrecht (2015, as cited in van Tonder et. al, 2023) argues that culture contributes to the failure of digital transformation. To combat this failure, firms can encourage cultural renewal amongst employees. By adapting to cultural renewal, firms set themselves apart and can easily adopt digital transformation to the business model, resulting in competitive advantage.

Masood et al. (2025) posit that a customer-centric culture is important for creating value for customers. Firms that are customer-centric possess a collaborative and flexible mindset that enable them to easily identify opportunities, reconfigure offerings and implement with the goal of creating value for customers (Masood et al., 2025; Abdelkafi et al., 2023).

2.5.1.4 Marketing agility

Marketing agility demonstrates how quickly firms can respond to ideas and customer feedback (Masood et al., 2025). As an internal capability, it enables firms to test ideas, adjust the firm's offering accordingly and implement the changes.

2.5.1.5 Organisational structure

Digital transformation brings change to the workplace. As a result, this change can affect the processes and structures of a firm. Firms can ensure that they employ digital transformation efficiently and effectively through paying close attention to the organisational structures and aligning them accordingly (van Tonder et al., 2023). By doing so, the firm strengthens its organisational structure relationship with business model innovation.

2.5.1.6 Strategic renewal

Strategic renewal highlights the relationship between firm resources and capabilities as well as digital transformation. According to van Tonder et al. (2023), for a firm to successfully integrate digital transformation into its business model, it needs to continuously adapt and align its organisational strategy. A firm can also adopt a digital strategy. In doing so, the firm affords itself the opportunity to capture additional value (van Tonder et al., 2023).

2.5.2 External factors

2.5.2.1 Digital Technology

Kraus et al. (2020) state that new technologies present firms with ample opportunities to innovate their business model. Verhoef et al. (2021) argues that the constant evolution of technology is enough reason for firms to consider digital transformation. Furthermore, with the introduction of new technologies, firms have the potential to save costs, particularly those in supply chain (Verhoef et al., 2021).

2.5.2.2 Digital Competition

As a result of new technologies, competition is high among industries. Because of digital transformation, for most firms, competition has now become global. In other words, the introduction and evolution of new technologies has redefined competition amongst companies (Verhoef et al., 2021)

2.4.2.3 Digital Consumer behaviour

As previously mentioned, there has been a significant shift in audience behaviour with the introduction of digital transformation. The shift in preferences from consumers has significantly affected the way in which businesses operate (Verhoef et al., 2021). Moreover, this forces businesses to adapt to these changes and adopt digital transformation into their offering.

According to Ramdani et al. (2019), there are two ways in which firms can respond to the above factors. Firms can either employ adaptation, which addresses the external factors, or employ resilience which address both internal and external factors.

2.4.2.4 Competitive environment

Abdelkafi et al. (2023) discussed competitive environment as well as firm's stakeholders and value adding network as external forces that shape innovation.

According to Abdelkafi et al. (2023), the competitive environment determines business survival. Competitors can collapse well-designed business model. Thus, in competitive environments, firms must strategically innovate in order to achieve long-term impact.

2.4.2.5 Firm stakeholders value adding network

Stakeholders and value adding network play an important role for firms seeking to create value creation. According to Abdelkafi et al. (2023), stakeholder and value adding network support strengthens a firm's business model and fosters innovation. Equally, a lack of support can cause the model to fail.

2.6 Barriers of business model innovation

Bashir et al. (2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024) identify 6 areas that hinder business model innovation. These comprise cognitive, organisational, institutional, market, behavioural and technological.

2.6.1 Cognitive barriers

Cognitive barriers refer to a firm level of awareness of the need for business model innovation. These barriers highlight a firm's internal limitations, which shape the innovation and the pace of innovation all together. This is described in Zott et al. (2024)'s awareness stage, which notes that managers are required to shift their attention beyond the firm's offering and instead think about the business model as a system. This enables managers to identify the firm's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement (Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024).

2.6.2 Organisational barriers

Organisational barriers highlight bureaucracy and resistance within firms (Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024). Additionally, they highlight the lack of skills and expertise within that can drive innovation and create value.

2.6.3 Institutional barriers

(Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024) note that institutional barriers are caused by rigid and inflexible business strategies, limited finances, a lack of talent and high costs associated with innovation.

2.6.4 Market barriers

Market barriers are shaped by the external environment. These factors include a lack of market information, the presence of monopolies, a lack of customer insights and new offering resistance from customers (Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024).

2.6.5 Behavioural barriers

These barriers reflect the mindset and mentality needed for business model innovation. When firms lack these behaviours, managers and decision-makers perceive themselves as not being able to influence outcomes, which reduces the likelihood of experimenting and testing ideas (Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024).

2.6.6 Technological barriers

According to Bashir et al. (2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024), technological barriers are caused by a lack of technical knowledge as well as the lack of finances associated with developing technological capabilities.

2.6.7 Financial barriers

Geissdoerfer et al. 2023 posit that innovation is always met with financial considerations. To develop a business model and implement it, firms require finances.

2.7 Strategic Agility

Business model innovation is associated with a number of barriers and challenges. To overcome these challenges, firms require specific capabilities. According to Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025), strategic ability is a key capability that helps firms successfully navigate the hardships associated with business model innovation. As a result, Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025) identify three capabilities.

2.7.1 Strategic sensitivity

Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025) posit that strategic sensitivity is ideal for firms that are proactive. This capability enables firms to anticipate market shifts, act ahead and gain competitive advantage over the competition (Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter,

2025). Strategic sensitivity also emphasises internal collaboration and external align as key factors that create value.

2.7.2 Leadership unity

According to Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025) firms that practice leadership unity are decisive but thoughtful. This enables firm manager to build trust with employees. Leadership unity fosters collaboration and unison, which fosters innovation (Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter, 2025).

2.7.3 Resource fluidity

Resource flexibility speaks to how quickly firms can shift, adapt and reconfigure their resources in order to respond to market dynamics (Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter, 2025).

2.8 Digital Transformation

Digital transformation can be considered a driver of business model innovation. Digital transformation and its disruptive nature has altered how firms conduct business as well as consumer behaviour (Verhoef et al., 2021).

Verhoef et al. (2021) define it as the manner in which firms employ digital technologies to create and capture value through novel business models, while Fitzgerald (2014, as cited in van Tonder et. al, 2023) defines it as employing digital technologies to improve the ecosystem of a business for all stakeholders, including customers.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature that helps address the study's research questions. The chapter explored the literature relating to business model innovation. The chapter also discussed BMI frameworks, the types of BMI, business model innovation approaches and the factors that influence BMI, Additionally, the chapter discussed the barriers of innovation and, specifically, strategic agility, as an approach.

The next chapter discusses the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Chapter 3 discusses the research questions as identified in the literature review. The research questions are grounded in academic literature by Andreini et al. (2021), Bouncken and Fredrich (2025), Loon and Quan (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and Verhoef et al. (2021), who highlight the complex factors that influence business model innovation and how they interplay with one another.

Additionally, the study by Ramdani et al. (2019) that encouraged further investigation of digital business models and the extent to which they cause disruption, as well as the contextual influences of digital transformation (Verhoef et al. (2021) present an intriguing research opportunity for insights on how podcasting platforms in South Africa, *particularly Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, has innovated its business model beyond content creation and audience engagement, thus reimagining a new way of creating and capturing value.

While the rise of podcasting platforms have created an opportunity for podcast creators, brands and media owners to interact within the industry (Minooka, 2024; Nielsen, n.d.), there is limited scholarly insights on the ways in which this interaction can manifest. As a result, the following research question was formulated:

What key factors have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcasts) reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry?

To simplify and further expand the study's main research question, the researcher formulated three additional sub-questions.

In addition, three sub-questions were formulated to further expand the study's main research question:

1. Research question 1: What processes of BMI *has Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) followed to innovate its business model? (Andreini et al., 2022; Rummel et al., 2022; Ramdani et al., 2019)

This research sub-question examined the BMI processes followed by South African podcast creators. Simply put, research question 1 investigated the steps and activities podcast platforms haven taken in order to reimagine their business model.

2. Research question 2: How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry? (van Tonder et al., 2023; Verhoef et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2020)

Research question 2 sought to understand the interaction between internal and external factors in the South African podcasting landscape, and how this interaction shapes innovation.

3. Research question 3: What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) responded to these barriers? (van Tonder et al., 2023; Verhoef et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2020)

Research question 3 examined the barriers that limit innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. Additionally, it sought to understand how podcast creators have responded to these barriers.

By examining the processes, the internal and external factor interactions, as well as the barriers and responses, these research questions collectively sought to comprehensively understand how business model innovation in the South African podcasting landscape looks like.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology.

4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 outlines and justifies the study's choice of the methodology and design. Moreover, the chapter discusses the study's research strategy.

Saunders et al. (2023) define an exploratory study as one that “explores or clarifies understanding of an issue, problem or phenomenon” (p. 179). They further posit that in an exploratory research study, the main question usually starts with ‘what’ or ‘how’ (Saunders et al., 2023). Therefore, to carry out the research and answer the main research question, this study made use of the exploratory research method.

4.2 Choice of methodology and design

4.2.1 Research Philosophy

The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy which highlights that because people are complex, their realities shape them (Saunders et al., 2023). It is therefore reasonable to posit that because people interpret the world differently, they cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena. The purpose of the study went beyond gathering numerical data of the key factors that have influenced the development of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G's* business model. In answering the “what” question, the study sought to make sense of the research problem through the subjective perspectives from both the traditional and digitalised world. Thus, an interpretivist research philosophy was ideal for this study.

4.2.2 Research assumptions

The study followed both the epistemological and ontological assumptions. Berryman (2019) defines these assumptions as the nature of knowledge and the nature of reality respectively. According to Saunders et al. (2023), epistemology highlights that knowledge is subjective because humans interpret it through their lived experiences and interactions. Ontology, on the other hand, highlights that reality is socially constructed and is not the same for all humans (Saunders et al., 2023). Thus, the interpretivist philosophy followed by the study considered epistemology as an approach to gain more knowledge about the study's main research question through engaging with different stakeholders in the South African podcasting industry. Furthermore, the study considered

an ontological approach as it holds open the idea that not all mainstream podcasts have innovated their business model.

4.2.3 Research strategy

The study followed a narrative research strategy, which involved participants giving a personal account of the main research question (Saunders et al., 2023). The study employed this strategy to draw narratives from the study's target population. By doing so, the study was able to draw valuable data from participants as they shared their own experiences and insights.

4.2.4 Research method

This study followed a qualitative research method. Saunders et al. (2023) defines this method as one that makes use of non-numerical data. This research method uses interviews, informal observation, narrative analysis and/or grounded theory to generate and interpret data (Saunders et al., 2023). This research method is ideal because it allows the study to gain understanding of the key factors that have influenced the development of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G's* business model. This research method gives the study context of the different perspectives.

4.2.5 Time horizon

This study's time horizon was cross-sectional, which emphasises research that is conducted in a particular timeframe (Saunders et al., 2023). The study captured a snapshot of the business model innovation processes and mechanics in the South African podcasting industry, particularly *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*.

4.2.6 Population

Thacker (2020) defines population as a group of individuals with specific characteristics that relate to a research study, or a set of elements derived from a sample (Saunders et al., 2023). For this study, the population included all stakeholders involved in the South African podcasting industry.

4.2.7 Target population

Target population, which forms part of the population, is what the study focused on. Population is the broad area of the study, while target population is the specific area of the study (Saunders et al., 2023). The target population for this study comprised stakeholders that form part of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, particularly the managers and decision makers. Additionally, the study considered other mainstream podcast creators as part of the target population to help the study in its comparative analysis. Media sale houses and advertising agencies also formed part of the target population as they often render sales and marketing services for podcasting platforms

4.2.8 Unit of analysis

Damsa and Jornet (2021) write that the unit of analysis is integral to any study's methodology. The unit of analysis is the object being examined. It's what the study is inquiring about (Damsa and Jornet, 2021). Therefore, the study identified business model innovation processes in the South African podcasting industry as the unit of analysis. While *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* operated as the study's primary case, together with insights from other mainstream podcasting platforms, industry experts and audience members, the study focused entirely on the processes that have helped South African podcast creators reimagine how they create and capture value.

4.2.9 Sampling techniques and sample size

A sampling technique that is purposive was used for this study. With purposive sampling, the researcher uses their own judgement in choosing cases that are relevant to the study and that will help the researcher meet the study's objectives (Saunders et al., 2023). The study's selection had a particular criterion: managers and decision-makers at *Podcast and Chill*, mainstream podcasters, industry experts, audience members, media sale houses and advertising agencies. The cases were informative and had the experience needed to respond to the processes of BMI, the factors that interact as well as the barriers for the innovation and the responses by podcast creators. As a result, the purposive sampling technique was ideal because it chose cases that added value to the study.

The researcher intended to conduct a total of 16 interviews for the study. This comprised of the management and decision-makers of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, other

mainstream podcast hosts, industry experts and audience members. However, a total sample size of 12 was achieved. According to Namey et al. (2016, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2019), a sample of 8 to 16 is adequate for a qualitative research study. The goal was to gather rich insights from participants in relation to the study's main research question.

4.2.10 Research/measurement instrument

As a qualitative research paper, the study followed a semi-structured interview guide. According to Saunders et al. (2023), this interview structure draws on more than one theme. On the one hand, semi-structured interviews follow a prepared set of questions while on the other hand, there is flexibility and the possibility of new sets of questions due to the responses of participants (Saunders et al., 2023). The research participants comprised stakeholders that are directly involved in the production and management of *Podcast and Chill with Mac G*, other mainstream podcast creators, industry experts and audience members.

The study prepared the research instrument beforehand, and the instrument was based on the study's main research question. The research instrument was guided by the following factors:

- The processes of BMI *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) followed to innovate its business model?
- The internal and external factors that interact in the South African podcasting industry?
- The barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) responded to these barriers.

The prepared research instrument allowed participants to share their personal experiences and insights of the research question.

Table 4: Interview guide

Research questions	Literature	Interview guide
<p>Main research question:</p> <p>What key factors have influenced the innovation and development of <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G's</i> business model?</p>	<p>Bouncken (2024), Loon and Quan (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you give your understanding of innovation in the context of podcasting, particularly in South Africa? 2. Overtime, what changes have you seen in terms of how podcasts create and capture value? 3. In your experience, who or what do you think influences the direction and development of podcasts? Audiences, platforms, culture, industry? 4. What has been role of the audience in shaping the tone, content and growth of podcast platforms?
<p>Research question 1:</p> <p>What processes of BMI has <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> followed to innovate its business model?</p>	<p>Andreini et al. (2022) Rummel et al. (2022) Ramdani et al. (2019)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. When change is needed, what have you noticed in terms of how teams and creators practically respond and adapt? 6. Can you walk me through what you think are the processes that guide how podcast platforms organise their workflow, roles and decision-making? 7. How does the team generate, evaluate and refine ideas, and create value out of those ideas? 8. Talk me through the idea development cycle. Is it fast paced or deliberate? What factors influence ideation and the execution?

<p>Research question 2:</p> <p>How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?</p>	<p>van Tonder et. al. (2023) Verhoef et al. (2021) Kraus et al. (2020)</p>	<p>9. In your view, what factors support the growth of podcasts in South Africa? What are the challenges that limit growth and expansion, and sustainability?</p> <p>10. How would describe, if there is any, the relationship between podcast platforms and mainstream media?</p> <p>11. What shapes innovation in the South African podcasting industry?</p> <p>12. Can you think of moments where a podcast had to pivot or reconfigure itself? What do you think are the factors forced that?</p>
<p>Research question 3:</p> <p>What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> responded to these barriers?</p> <p>judgements on the management of companies into their overall assessment of a company?</p>	<p>van Tonder et. al. (2023) Verhoef et al. (2021) Kraus et al. (2020)</p>	<p>13. In an emerging market like South Africa, do you think innovation is easier or limited?</p> <p>14. Does the need for funding and advertising opportunities limit the way podcast platforms are managed?</p> <p>15. What has been the morale in your team?</p> <p>16. What has been the impact of <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> in shaping the industry?</p>

Source: Author's own

4.2.11 Data collection

The study was qualitative in nature and therefore required deep and informative insights from its target population. As a result, the study followed a narrative research strategy through semi-structured interviews to gather data. This research approach allowed the researcher to gather rich and valuable insights from participants as they shared their own personal experiences. Before the data collection process, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the school's ethics committee, which was approved on the 8th of

September 2025. The study conducted in-person and virtual interviews which were between 15 minutes and 60 minutes. Both the in-person and virtual interviews were conducted with participants based in Johannesburg. Virtual interviews were conducted via Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. For in-person interviews, the researcher used their Rode Wireless PRO recording device and the researcher's mobile device as backup. For virtual interviews, the recording function of Google Meet and Microsoft Teams were used. The interview recordings were loaded onto an online cloud storage and a USB to ensure safety of the data.

4.2.12 Data analysis

The study employed a narrative research strategy to gather insights from participants. As a result, the study, interpreted verbal data. This type of data involve extended speech in the form of audio or audio-visual material (Saunders et., 2023). To analyse the data, the study followed a thematic analysis approach. This approach allows the researcher to find similar themes and patterns in a data set (Saunders et al., 2023). Saunders et al. (2023) write that there are six steps to follow with thematic analysis:

- Data familiarisation
- Data coding
- Initial theme generation
- Theme development and review
- Theme refining, defining and naming
- Writing up

Thematic analysis was ideal for this study because it allowed the researcher to analyse the data with flexibility and no confinements.

The researcher used a CAQDAS tool for the study. Specifically, ATLAS.ti was used to analyse the data collected through participant interviews. Firstly, the researcher uploaded the transcripts into ATLAS.ti. Secondly, the researcher generated codes from the data. Thirdly, the researcher organised the codes by grouping them into first and second order codes. Finally, the researcher further organised the second order codes into the relevant themes required to respond to the study's main research question.

4.2.13 Data quality

According to Saunders et al. (2023), semi-structured interviews in qualitative research pose concerns about reliability and dependability because of a lack of standardisation in the questions. These concerns are because of potential bias between the interviewer and the interviewee (Saunders et al., 2023). Validity and Credibility: This reflects the trustworthiness of a study. Validity ensures that a study achieves its intended purpose, while credibility ensures that a study has insights that are trustworthy (Saunders et al. 2023).

As such, the study employed the following rigorous approach to ensure quality data: First, the study selected participants who were able to provide insights that were informative and valuable for the study. This ensured the study achieved credibility. Second, the semi-structured interviews ensured that the study achieved consistency. Additionally, the participants were asked the same set of questions from the interview guide. Third, the use of a CAQDAS tool, specifically ATLAS.ti, ensured that the researcher could both organise and code the data. The tool also enabled the researcher to align the codes with the study's research questions. This ensured the study achieved reliability.

4.2.14 Ethical considerations

This study declared compliance with the MPhil Research Ethics Committee of GIBS. As noted previously, the data collection process only commenced after the researcher's ethical clearance was approved by the school's ethics committee.

The researcher sent out interview questions to participants in advance to ensure transparency and protect participants from sharing confidential information. The researcher guaranteed confidentiality with participants, that no information will be shared with competitors. The researcher guaranteed participants that the information shared will be used for academic purposes only. The researcher also stated that participants should only share information they are comfortable with. The researcher notified participants in advance that the interviews will be recorded. The researcher ensured that all participants are over the age of 18 and ensured that no harm was posed to the participants. The researcher did not abuse their power and authority.

4.2.15 Study limitations

As previously noted, there is little to no academic literature on the processes of business model innovation, particularly in an emerging economy like the South African podcasting industry. While this gap made the study worthwhile, it also posed limitations on the researcher. The absence of academic work related to the study's main question required the researcher to rely heavily on the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

Furthermore, the study placed significant focus on *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* and its direct stakeholders. This introduced the possibility of participant bias, especially where there was affiliation.

Moreover, the researcher was only able to interview a limited number of mainstream podcast hosts, industry experts, media sale houses, advertising agencies and audience members. As a result, these interviews did not meet the entire scope of the study and limited perspectives.

The study recognised that not all South African podcasting platforms have innovated their business models. This increased the potential of the data not fully representing the study's population.

The study also acknowledged that some of the stakeholders may have not been forthcoming due to a fear of disclosing sensitive information.

Finally, the study's sample size, which was limited to 12 participants, was fairly small.

The next chapter discusses the research findings.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

The findings presented in this chapter were collected and analysed from a set of 10 semi-interviews that aimed to respond to the study's research questions. These research questions emanated from academic literature outline in both chapter 1 and 2, which highlighted the complex factors that influence business model innovation and how they interplay with one another.

The study's main research question examined the key factors that have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* as well as other podcast platforms reimagine value creation and capture in the South African podcasting industry. During the interviews, the participants provided insights into the processes of innovation, the internal and external factors that interact, as well as the barriers for business model innovation, and how creators have responded to these barriers. This approach facilitated the perspectives and lived experiences of participants, while identifying the patterns that underpin business model innovation (BMI), particularly in an emerging context like South Africa.

The study identified four participant groups namely: main case (MC), podcasters (P), industry experts (IE) and podcast consumers (PC). The data collected from the interviews were coded using ATLAS.ti, which helped organise and categorise insights into codes and themes for analysis. As a result, 12 themes were developed.

Table 5: Participant group overview

Participant Group	Total number of participants
Main Case	1
Podcasters	5
Media Industry Experts	3
Podcast Consumer	3
TOTAL	12

Source: Owner's own

The findings were guided by three sub-questions that emanated from the study’s main research question. Each sub-question was discussed in a separate section, where both themes and sub-themes were highlighted and supported by participants’ quotations and interpretation within the context of the study.

To gain a deeper understanding of the findings, the study conducted a narrative analysis, which enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences across the data collected from participants in relation to business model innovation processes in the South African podcasting industry. Furthermore, the cross-case analysis provided insights into the mechanics and factors that continue to shape value creation in the South African podcasting industry.

5.2 Research Question 1: What processes of BMI has Podcast and Chill with Mac G followed to innovate its business model?

5.2.1 Introduction

Research question 1, which is explorative in nature, sought to examine and understand the BMI processes followed by creators in the South African podcasting landscape. The identified processes were gathered from the perspectives and lived experiences of participants. Accordingly, 4 themes were identified from the data gathered, and are discussed below. These themes relate to how *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* as well as other podcast platforms in South Africa innovate. Thus, RQ1 investigated the steps and activities podcast platforms haven taken in order to reimagine their business models.

Table 6: Themes relating to research question 1

Themes		Sub-themes	Theme frequency
1	Experimentation and adaptive learning	Adaptation, experimentation, content experimentation, brainstorming, reflection, research, sentiment analysis	Many
2	Audience Engagement	Audience feedback, feedback loops,	Many

		stakeholder engagement	
3	Content innovation and diversification	Content creation, content development, content adaptation, content diversification	Many
4	Strategic partnerships	Brand partnerships, collaboration, business model shift, BMI	Some

Source: Author's own

5.2.2 Research question 1: Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning

The first theme highlights experimentation as a core area in business model innovation. This theme was found to be consistent across the participant groups. The perspectives and lived experiences of the participants noted the role of experimentation and idea testing in podcast platforms developing their business model.

5.2.2.1 Evidence of experimentation and adaptive learning

As noted previously, experimentation and adoptive learning was consistent across the podcasters and industry expert participant groups. This was guided by iterative approaches that helped creators refine their ideas.

Table 7: Evidence of experimentation and adaptive learning

Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning	
Participant	Quotation
P2	<i>"That's how we move. The beauty of podcasting and platforms like YouTube is that there are no barriers. You have an idea, a camera, and a microphone—you try it, post it, and see what happens."</i>
P2	<i>"From my perspective, I approach it like many reformist businesses: we don't always know what consumers want until we offer it to them."</i>

IE2	<i>"I've had firsthand experience. When we first started my company 6.5 years ago, it was a music studio, and podcasts weren't a thing. It naturally progressed to about 80% podcasting, maybe 20% everything else. We've focused on building the creative community. Early in my career, the first podcaster I worked with, besides myself, was Mac G. I helped him from early days to over a million subscribers, got him his first commercial deals. We lost some deals, we learned together—it was all firsthand experience."</i>
P1	<i>"Innovation comes from having space and time to breathe and think creatively. Taking breaks, reviewing feedback, and giving the team autonomy sparks new ideas. Financial resources also enable more experimentation, but even with limited funds, innovation comes from structured collaboration and reflection."</i>
IE3	<i>"I followed that up with global media in London, visiting stations like Capital, Heart, Smooth, and Classic, as well as some talk stations. They were active in the podcast space too, using a similar concept: one station producing content that could be used across multiple stations, converting interviews into podcasts of different lengths. London's advantage was proximity—all stations were in one building, making production easier. Topics like politics, interviews with superstars, movie launches, and album releases helped maximize audience reach." IE3M</i>
P3	<i>"We basically got a camera, put it up, recorded a few ideas and thoughts, posted it online, and Bob's your uncle. At that time, when we started the podcast, we didn't know the reach we had or the impact it would have. We also didn't realise the necessity it had."</i>
MC	<i>"We analyze sentiment, export the data into AI, and identify what works and what doesn't."</i>

Source: Author's own

5.2.2.2 Analysis of evidence

The insights from the participants demonstrated that business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry follows no set template. In fact, the data collected found BMI to be informal, flexible, experimental and adoptive. In most cases, creators tested ideas and then refined them through trial and error. Moreover, the data linked audience sentiments and feedback, which the study will discuss further in theme 2, as an integral component in the process of experimentation and adaptive learning.

A different perspective from IE3 highlighted observational learning. The participant visited radio stations in the London region to observe their operations as they were already involved in podcasting.

“They were active in the podcast space too, using a similar concept: one station producing content that could be used across multiple stations, converting interviews into podcasts of different lengths.” IE3

Insights from observational learning facilitate adaptive learning and enable individuals to test ideas before committing resources to them. This process is a core area in business model innovation.

5.2.2.3 Conclusion on Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning

The participant groups demonstrated similarities in their experience of how South African podcast creators have innovated their business model. These similarities emphasised experimentation, iteration and evaluation as mechanics that have influenced how South African podcast creators have reimagined value creation. The insights from IE3M also highlighted an area of opportunity for South African podcast creators.

5.2.3 Research question 1: Theme 2: Audience engagement

The second theme to be discussed in relation to research question 1 is audience engagement. This theme was recurring in participants' insights, and highlights the role of audiences in shaping the tone, content and the growth of podcasting platforms in South Africa.

5.2.3.1 Evidence of audience engagement

Table 8 below presents evidence of audience engagement and the role it plays in shaping business model innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. The researcher identifies patterns of similarity and difference from the participant groups.

Table 8: Evidence of audience engagement

Theme 2: Audience engagement	
Participant	Quotation
MC	<i>“For instance, we monitor Average View Duration (AVD) per episode to see when viewers drop off. This helps us tweak content to improve engagement, which also helps algorithms favor our videos. So audience input—qualitative and quantitative—is paramount to our approach.”</i>
P5	<i>“Once audiences understand identity and niche, they start feeling at home with the podcast. They become contributors in a positive way, shaping content indirectly. For example, Podcast and Chill has “chillers” who engage with the podcast, giving feedback about what they like or dislike.”</i>
P5	<i>“Audiences form parasocial relationships with podcasters—they feel like they know them personally, even though they’ve never met. They relate to them virtually, on social media or via podcast platforms. This engagement helps shape tone, content, and the overall growth of the platform.”</i>
P2	<i>“So, I don’t let the audience dictate what I do. Instead, I focus on doing what I find meaningful, and then I try to get them to like it.”</i>
IE2	<i>“Mac G is a great example. He’s completely loyal to his audience, sometimes at the expense of commercial value. Brands panic during social media crises, but he prioritises his audience. That loyalty drives engagement and value.”</i>
IE2	<i>“Podcasting is merging with TV—audiences are moving to YouTube over Netflix and DSTV. Podcasts now need to bring TV-level production quality, but the commissioning editor is now the audience. The audience is brutal, but if you build it authentically, you own it. Mac’s book “Uncancellable” is a great example—his relationship with his audience can’t be broken. Growth must be organic; you can’t fake engagement.”</i>

P1	<p><i>“We closely monitor comments, likes, and engagement. Audience feedback pushed us to go deeper into topics, rather than surface-level commentary. While some people resisted the change, we also gained new followers who were more engaged. Understanding who your audience is—and who you want to reach—is crucial when iterating content.”</i></p>
IE4	<p><i>The audiences have better access now to sort of commenting and talking about and sharing the content.”</i></p>

Source: Author’s own

5.2.3.2 Analysis of evidence

The insights from the participants highlighted the role of audiences in shaping the innovation and growth of podcasting platforms in South Africa. In fact, some participants suggested that, in some cases, audiences have assumed the role of co-producers.

A perspective from IE2 indicated that some podcasting platforms prioritise audiences over commercial value. This prioritisation drives engagement from audiences, ultimately translating into value.

“Mac G is a great example. He’s completely loyal to his audience, sometimes at the expense of commercial value.” IE2

Another perspective from P5 highlighted the parasocial relationship audiences have formed with podcast creators, and how this relationship has helped drive engagement and the growth of podcasting platforms in South Africa.

“This engagement helps shape tone, content, and the overall growth of the platform.” P5

Conversely, P2 offered a different perspective that indicates that, in some cases, value is created internally. Some podcasting platform are creator-driven and are shaped by the content and subject matter, instead of audiences.

“I focus on doing what I find meaningful, and then I try to get them to like it.” P2

This perspective presents a different form of business model innovation, one that is not commercially driven.

5.2.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Audience engagement

Insights from participants presented similarities in relation to the role that audiences play in shaping innovation and the development of podcasting platforms in South Africa. While a perspective that described a content-first approach was highlighted, the insights gathered from participants suggested that audiences are crucial for strategic direction and business model innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. Additionally, participants’ insights highlighted that podcasting platforms with strong communities are more likely to create value.

5.2.4 Research question 1: Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

The third theme spotlights content innovation and diversification as a process of business model innovation. The insights from participants illustrated the various ways podcast creators in South Africa have innovated, diversified and built ecosystems.

5.2.4.1 Evidence of content innovation and diversification

The evidence presented in table 9 highlight diversification as a strategic mechanism through which innovation has taken place.

Table 9: Evidence of content innovation and diversification

Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification	
Participant	Quotation
MC	<i>“For example, we were the first in the world to do a live podcast. There’s innovation in our events side—we were among the first to have a major live show, like the one with 8,500 attendees at Sunday Arena. There’s also innovation in building an ecosystem for our viewers—the Chillers—through lifestyle products that align with their profiles. We constantly innovate with products like Punch and Grandeur, and there are a couple of new products we hope to release next year.”</i>

MC	<i>"We also make campaign revenue, such as subliminal power spots for Netflix, product placements, and event revenue through tours, ticket sales, and sponsorships. We distribute content on TV, licensing episodes through our company. And finally, revenue comes from lifestyle products like Grandeur, Chillas Punch, and merchandise."</i>
P1	<i>"Subject matter. Choosing topics that resonate deeply with the audience is critical. For example, in the wellness space, there's high appetite for content, but it's niche. We focus on research, educating our audience, and presenting content in a way that drives engagement. AI tools also help us analyze our audience—like understanding that 80% of our viewers are female—so we can tailor titles and content accordingly."</i>
P2	<i>"We're afraid of people's opinions. We play it safe. Look at most South African podcasts—they're all sit-down formats. Meanwhile, global creators are out there doing things: filming on the move, experimenting, creating immersive content."</i>
P2	<i>We're competing on the same platforms as creators in the U.S. and Europe, but we're producing less dynamic content. We've found a comfortable formula—sit down, chat, post—and we think that's enough because it gets a few thousand views. But there's so much more potential if we were more daring."</i>
IE2	<i>"Podcasting is merging with TV—audiences are moving to YouTube over Netflix and DSTV. Podcasts now need to bring TV-level production quality, but the commissioning editor is now the audience."</i>
IE2	<i>"Yes, but execution can be tricky. Building a network under a single YouTube channel can limit growth. Strategically done, it's smart. Vertical networks—like business or wellness channels—make sense. It's a growing trend but requires careful execution."</i>
IE2	<i>"OB/live events: Podcasts recorded live at events or locations."</i>
PC3	<i>"We have almost like, adapted from, It only being audio to being audio visual, you know, which was something. and it's almost like that's how you would also get the value. People don't just</i>

	<i>want to listen only, but they want to see what's happening, know, because it lands more when you then get to see people visually.”</i>
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Source: Author’s own

5.2.4.2 Analysis of evidence

A perspective by MC indicated that live events and show tours are another strategic way to extend value. This perspective was also supported by IE2.

“For example, we were the first in the world to do a live podcast. There’s innovation in our events side—we were among the first to have a major live show, like the one with 8,500 attendees at Sunday Arena.” MC

Furthermore, MC noted lifestyle products, including alcohol beverages and branded merchandise, as factors that have contributed to diversification.

“And finally, revenue comes from lifestyle products like Grandeur, Chillas Punch, and merchandise.” MC

Another perspective by P1 emphasised the use of AI as a tool in aiding with innovation. This process involves platforms extracting audience insights and creating content that drives engagement and creates value.

“We focus on research, educating our audience, and presenting content in a way that drives engagement. AI tools also help us analyze our audience—like understanding that 80% of our viewers are female—so we can tailor titles and content accordingly.” P1

The insights also drew attention to the interaction between mainstream media, particularly TV, and podcasting platforms. This interaction has allowed podcast creators to license their content on tv platforms and further diversify themselves.

“We distribute content on TV, licensing episodes through our company.” MC

“Podcasting is merging with TV.” IE2

A perspective by P2 stressed that while South African podcast creators have demonstrated innovation, self-limitations have been equally prevalent.

We're competing on the same platforms as creators in the U.S. and Europe, but we're producing less dynamic content. We've found a comfortable formula—sit down, chat, post—and we think that's enough because it gets a few thousand views. But there's so much more potential if we were more daring.” P2

5.2.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

The insights revealed several areas of similarity regarding content innovation and diversification. These similarities were recognised as a strategic mechanism that has supported innovation in the South African podcasting industry. Conversely, the limitations that were highlighted present an innovation opportunity for South African podcast creators.

5.2.5 Research question 1: Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

This theme describes the role of strategic partnerships in driving innovation and growth in South African podcasting platforms.

5.2.5.1 Evidence of strategic partnerships

Participants emphasised collaboration, partnerships and sponsorships as gateways to growth and value creation. In some cases, participants also noted the role of convergence.

Table 10: Evidence of strategic partnerships

Theme 4: Strategic partnerships	
Participant	Quotation
MC	<i>“Netflix and DSTV are starting to recognize this shift, seeing the potential in acquiring content or collaborating with platforms like ours.”</i>
MC	<i>“Mainstream media sees podcasts as growing and wants to collaborate, but it's tricky because they can't control content. For</i>

	<i>instance, we posted episodes on MultiChoice. The goal was to reach audiences without Wi-Fi who have access to TV. Podcasts and mainstream media can complement each other, but control remains a challenge.”</i>
IE2	<i>“It naturally progressed to about 80% podcasting, maybe 20% everything else. We’ve focused on building the creative community. Early in my career, the first podcaster I worked with, besides myself, was Mac G. I helped him from early days to over a million subscribers, got him his first commercial deals. We lost some deals, we learned together—it was all firsthand experience.”</i>
P1	<i>“Initially, I worked with agencies to get budgets for branded content, but I realized having a sales team—whether in-house or external—was critical. I partnered with Africa Podcasts, who secured at least one branded campaign per month for the past two months.”</i>
P5	<i>“For advertising, brands like Striped Horse associate with podcasts like Podcast and Chill because of clear niche identity and audience engagement. That’s monetisation and product alignment.”</i>

5.2.5.2 Analysis of evidence

A perspective by P1 described the importance of podcast platforms having sales teams.

“Initially, I worked with agencies to get budgets for branded content, but I realized having a sales team—whether in-house or external—was critical. I partnered with Africa Podcasts, who secured at least one branded campaign per month for the past two months.” P1

Mainstream media was positioned as a value adding partner by participants.

“Netflix and DSTV are starting to recognize this shift, seeing the potential in acquiring content or collaborating with platforms like ours.” MC

Conversely, a perspective by MC highlighted that while mainstream media has facilitated both audience and financial growth for podcast platforms, control has been a factor.

“Podcasts and mainstream media can complement each other, but control remains a challenge.” MC

5.2.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

The data from the participant groups revealed parallels regarding the role of strategic partnerships in facilitating growth in podcasting platforms. While a perspective from MC noted limitations as a result of control from mainstream media, the data gathered from participants emphasised that strategic partnerships are key for the growth of podcast creators in South Africa.

5.2.6 Findings Summary

The evidence presented in research question 1 emphasised the key role that experimentation and adaptive learning play business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry. Specifically, the evidence indicated that South African podcast creators refined their value proposition by testing ideas, engaging with audiences and through iteration. The insights also noted observational learning as an important innovation lens that enables South African podcast creators to experiment with ideas before allocating resources to them. Moreover, the evidence described innovation processes in the South African podcasting industry as informal and flexible.

The evidence described audience engagement as a fundamental driver of business model innovation. The evidence positioned audiences as co-producers of podcasting platforms, highlighting their role in shaping the tone, content and growth of South African podcasting platforms.

Content innovation and diversification was positioned as a supporting mechanism for innovation in the South African podcasting industry. The evidence explained that South African podcast creators further extended their value through licensing their content on mainstream media, live events and show tours, lifestyle products, merchandise and by expanding into networks.

Moreover, the evidence noted the importance of strategic partnerships and how they facilitated innovation and growth. The evidence revealed that collaboration between

podcast creators and fellow creators, brands, advertisers and mainstream media increased operational value.

5.3. Research question 2: How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?

5.3.1 Introduction

Research question 2 sought to understand the interaction between internal and external factors in the South African podcasting landscape, and how this interaction shapes innovation. Moreover, this interaction is captured by the themes highlighted in Table 11.

Table 11: Themes relating to research question 2

	Themes	Sub-themes	Theme frequency
1	Internal factors	Internal capabilities, strategic decisions, content direction	Some
2	Audience dynamics	Audience expectations and preferences, audience influence	Some
3	Technological and infrastructural factors	Data costs, internet access, rural limitations, infrastructure and technology	Some
4	Market and commercial factors	Advertiser expectations, brand value and identity, sponsorship opportunities, market saturation, mainstream media	Some

Source: Author's Own

5.3.2 Research question 2: Theme 1: Internal factors

This theme draws attention to the role of internal capabilities in responding to both audience dynamics and market shifts.

5.3.2.1 Evidence of internal factors

The data presented in table 12 highlights the internal behaviours and strategies demonstrated by podcast platforms to ensure that innovation taken place.

Table 12: Evidence of internal factors

Theme 1: Internal factors	
Participant	Quotation
P1	<i>“Innovation comes from having space and time to breathe and think creatively. Taking breaks, reviewing feedback, and giving the team autonomy sparks new ideas. Financial resources also enable more experimentation, but even with limited funds, innovation comes from structured collaboration and reflection.”</i>
P1	<i>“Communication and collaboration are vital. For example, when we lost a show on our network, everyone was consulted before the decision was made. Editors, producers, and talent all provide feedback, which shapes improvements and innovation. Getting the team the right tools so that that are efficient in their work is important.”</i>
P2	<i>“For instance, my mission is to speak to interesting South Africans—people whose stories might vanish if not recorded. That’s not necessarily trendy or current affairs-driven, but it’s purposeful. If people like it, that’s great; if not, I still have those stories archived.”</i>
MC	<i>“We’ve created cultural icons, memorable content, and opportunities for over 50 people working under the platform. We’ve paved the way for others to enter the space while showing that black-owned media ventures can succeed</i>

	<i>commercially—a space traditionally dominated by white ownership.”</i>
IE3	<i>“Podcast and Chill’s success comes from starting independently and identifying a market gap. Despite controversial topics and limited advertiser interest initially, they persevered. Word of mouth helped them become a household name. Mac G didn’t start with celebrity status but built credibility through persistence.”</i>
P4	<i>“I’m consistently shooting. I think in a week I should, 2 times a week. Um, and when I remember that to get to a shoot, uh, with each conversation, the conversation is an hour, but it’s about 3 hours of prep. In that 3 hours of prep, that’s my prep as the host. Then there is another 2 to 3 hours that is spent by the content producer. This is from when they ideate who they want to get in touch with. Then they storyline that conversation, then they put that conversation into show prep themselves that they deliver to me. Then they set up getting the people to studio, transport, and, and, and. So one conversation, we’ve actually put down that it takes 8 hours for one conversation to be successfully executed. If you include editing.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.3.2.2 Analysis of evidence

A perspective by P1 noted the importance of autonomy in sparking creativity and ideation.

“Innovation comes from having space and time to breathe and think creatively. Taking breaks, reviewing feedback, and giving the team autonomy sparks new ideas.” P1

Moreover, participant P1 emphasised two key points: Firstly, consultation was found to be an important tool that facilitated feedback from all stakeholders. Secondly, ensuring that the team has the correct tools to improved performance and efficiency.

“For example, when we lost a show on our network, everyone was consulted before the decision was made. Editors, producers, and talent all provide feedback, which shapes improvements and innovation. Getting the team the right tools so that that are efficient in their work is important.” P1

5.3.2.3 Conclusion on Theme 1: Internal factors

The participant groups demonstrated that innovation is predicated by the internal strengths, skills and decisions of podcast platforms. These internal capabilities allows platforms to innovate and respond to market dynamics.

5.3.3 Research question 2: Theme 2: Audience dynamics

Theme 2 describes how audience preferences and expectations force podcast platforms to adapt and innovate.

5.3.3.1 Evidence of audience dynamics

Participants highlighted platform shifts and curated content as key areas that podcast creators need to pay attention to.

Table 13: Evidence of audience dynamics

Theme 2: Audience dynamics	
Participant	Quotation
P2	<i>“At first, it was purely audio. Over time, it evolved, and in South Africa, it’s taken on a stronger video identity than audio. South Africans enjoy watching conversations more than just listening to them. So locally, the word “podcast” now refers to both audio and video formats.”</i>
IE3	<i>“Younger generations prefer curated content they can choose, especially during commutes in taxis or cars. Podcasting provides an opportunity to reach them in ways traditional radio can’t.”</i>
P3	<i>“Social media has decreased attention spans; people can focus anywhere from 15 seconds to a minute. So the innovation question is also: is your content interesting enough? Can you keep people engaged long enough?”</i>
PC1	<i>“Consumers play a pivotal role because we are living in an era where we are slowly starting to define what we as a consumer</i>

	<p><i>want or like or don't like. I mean, take cancel culture. I mean, you could cancel one person now and beg for them to be um present again at another point.'</i></p>
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Source: Author's own

5.3.3.2 Analysis of evidence

A perspective by P2 highlighted video format as an important part of how South African audiences consume content.

"South Africans enjoy watching conversations more than just listening to them." P2

Participant IE3 pointed out the need for curated content and how it aligns with younger generation preferences and contexts.

"Younger generations prefer curated content they can choose, especially during commutes in taxis or cars. Podcasting provides an opportunity to reach them in ways traditional radio can't." IE3

Participant P3, on the other hand, emphasised audience attention spans and the need for podcast creators to curate content that is either short or interesting.

"Social media has decreased attention spans; people can focus anywhere from 15 seconds to a minute. So the innovation question is also: is your content interesting enough? Can you keep people engaged long enough?" P3

5.3.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Audience dynamics

While participants shared different perspectives on audience dynamics, the underlying theme in their experiences emphasised podcast creators adapting and aligning their internal capabilities and offerings with the shifting preferences and expectations of audiences.

5.3.4 Research question 2: Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

This theme analyses the role technology and infrastructure play in shaping innovation.

5.3.4.1 Evidence of technological and infrastructural factors

The evidence from the participants demonstrated the interaction between internal capabilities and external forces.

Table 14: Evidence of technological and infrastructural factors

Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors	
Participant	Quotation
P3	<i>“The main factor is internet access. People may want your content but can’t afford data. Rural areas have limited access and rely on TV or satellite. Even those with internet might only watch short clips due to data limitations.”</i>
MC	<i>“The biggest external factor was COVID-19. Content production froze worldwide, and people searched for new content, which led to a surge in podcast consumption. The increase in fibre connectivity also played a huge role—people needed stable internet for remote work and video consumption, which benefited YouTube content significantly.”</i>
P5	<i>“First, internet access. In places like the US or Monaco, internet is ubiquitous and often free in hotspots. If we had that in South Africa, the podcasting industry would grow exponentially. Currently, data is expensive, limiting access to millions of South Africans who would otherwise engage.”</i>
P2	<i>“Other challenges include the cost of data, limited internet access, and poor infrastructure. For many South Africans who don’t have consistent access to water or electricity, podcasting is far removed from their reality. So yes, the opportunity is there, but growth will be slow until access, affordability, and education improve.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.3.4.2 Analysis of evidence

While most of the participants noted data prices, internet access and infrastructure as factors that hindered innovation in the South African podcasting landscape, participant

MC highlighted COVID-19 as a major contributor to fibre connectivity and increase in podcast content consumption.

“The biggest external factor was COVID-19. Content production froze worldwide, and people searched for new content, which led to a surge in podcast consumption. The increase in fibre connectivity also played a huge role—people needed stable internet for remote work and video consumption, which benefited YouTube content significantly.” MC

5.3.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

While participant MC stressed the role of COVID-19 and the opportunity it brought digital platforms and telecommunications companies, the data highlighted similarities across most participants and emphasised high data prices, limited internet access as well as infrastructure challenges.

5.3.5 Research question 2: Theme 4: Market and commercial factors

While the previous theme analysed the role technology and infrastructure play in shaping innovation, this theme examines the interaction between podcast creators, advertisers, brands and other external factors that shape monetisation in the podcasting industry.

5.3.5.1 Evidence of market and commercial factors

The insights from participants captured the gap that exist between podcast platforms, advertising companies and brands.

Table 15: Evidence of market and commercial factors

Theme 4: Market and commercial factors	
Participant	Quotation
IE3	<i>“Brands are careful. Investments usually align with brand value, relevance, and competition. Mainstream advertisers will invest in podcasts only if it fits their brand and marketing strategy. Some campaigns, like Coca-Cola collaborating with the Springbok rugby team, are very controlled and deliberate.”</i>

P2	<i>“We’ve had a few advertisers, like Netflix and a betting company. Betting and alcohol brands are currently the biggest supporters of podcasts in South Africa. But honestly, maybe 3% of my 320 episodes have been sponsored. The rest are self-funded.”</i>
MC	<i>“There’s a balance between being too safe—which limits growth—and being too edgy—which can limit revenue. It’s a constant dance.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.3.5.2 Analysis of evidence

Participant IE3M highlighted brand carefulness as a result of gradual expectations.

“Brands are careful. Investments usually align with brand value, relevance, and competition. Mainstream advertisers will invest in podcasts only if it fits their brand and marketing strategy.” IE3

Similarly, Participant MC emphasised the balance of safety and controversy, and the consequences associated with this balance.

“There’s a balance between being too safe—which limits growth—and being too edgy—which can limit revenue. It’s a constant dance.” MC

On the contrary, participant P2M noted that while a majority of advertisers and brands have shown conservatism, some have shown support to podcast platforms.

“Betting and alcohol brands are currently the biggest supporters of podcasts in South Africa. But honestly, maybe 3% of my 320 episodes have been sponsored. The rest are self-funded.” P2

5.3.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Market and commercial factors

The data revealed several areas of similarity regarding advertiser and brand attitudes towards podcasting platforms. These similarities were recognised as factors that affect the pace in which podcasting platforms innovate, monetise and become sustainable. Although some companies, as noted by participant P2, support podcast creators, they only constitute a small percentage.

5.3.5.4 Findings Summary

The evidence positioned internal factors as important enablers for business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry. These factors comprise internal capabilities, skills, strategic decisions and content direction, all of which enable podcast creators to respond to the shifting market dynamics.

Audience dynamics emerged as a key factor that drives innovation in the South African podcasting industry. As noted previously, the evidence described the audience as co-producers of podcasting platforms. This places audiences at the centre of business model innovation.

The evidence described data costs and internet access, which form part of technological and infrastructural factors, as both drivers and obstacles. While the evidence recognised the role of COVID-19 in accelerating fibre connection and podcast consumption, the evidence also emphasised that high data costs and internet access continued to limit the pace of innovation.

The evidence also discussed the role of market and commercial. The evidence emphasised that brand expectations and advertiser conservatism limits innovation.

5.4 Research question 3: What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* responded to these barriers?

5.4.1 Introduction

Research question 3 examined the barriers for innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. Additionally, it sought to understand how podcast creators have responded to these barriers.

Table 16: Themes relating to research question 3

Themes		Sub-themes	Theme Frequency
1	Financial constraints	Funding challenges and limitations, lack of	Some

		support and investment	
2	Technology and Access	Data costs, internet access, infrastructure challenges, innovation constraints	Some
3	Controversy	Brand image pressure, fear of criticism, red tape, traditional media, media competition, audience engagement	Low
4	Response strategies	Agility, alternative platforms, brand partnerships, diversification, network development, measurable insights, entrepreneurial perseverance and self-funding, social media	Some

Source: Author's Own

5.4.2 Research question 3: Theme 1: Financial constraints

This theme observes how finances have constrained innovation in the South African podcasting industry creators.

5.4.2.1 Evidence of financial constraints

While the evidence from the participants indicate that innovation is easier in South Africa, the evidence also notes that financial constraints limit projects, particularly ambitious ones.

Table 17: Evidence of financial constraints

Theme 1: Financial constraints	
Participant	Quotation
P1	<i>“Financial constraints also limit creativity, hiring, and the ability to sustain production during months without campaigns. These challenges affect not just us but many creatives in South Africa.”</i>
MC	<i>“Innovation is easier in South Africa. If you introduce the right product or content, it can go viral faster than in the US, where there’s more competition. Podcasts are inexpensive to start—basic equipment and a concept are enough. But access to capital is a limitation for larger ventures, which can restrict ambitious projects.”</i>
P5	<i>“For the first, South Africans are very innovative, but red tape and lack of investment hinder creativity.”</i>
MC	<i>“No government is going to invest money in what we’re doing. They don’t get it. IDC processes take too long, even when they see merit in what we’re doing. Banks didn’t want to loan us money.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.4.2.2 Analysis of evidence

Participant MC noted that innovation is easier in South Africa. However, a lack of finances and funding, especially for bigger podcast platforms, limits innovation.

“Innovation is easier in South Africa. But access to capital is a limitation for larger ventures, which can restrict ambitious projects.” MC

Similarly, participant P5 highlighted that innovation efforts in South Africa are hindered by financial support.

“For the first, South Africans are very innovative, but red tape and lack of investment hinder creativity.” P5M

Participant MC also stressed the lack of support from government and financial institutions, even with the evidence of merit.

“No government is going to invest money in what we’re doing. They don’t get it. IDC processes take too long, even when they see merit in what we’re doing. Banks didn’t want to loan us money.” MC

5.4.2.3 Conclusion on Theme 1: Financial constraints

The data presented similarities across participants regarding financial constraints. These similarities were identified as barriers that constrain and limit creativity and the growth of podcast platforms.

5.4.3 Research question 1: Theme 2: Technology and access

This theme discusses technology and access, and how they shape podcast consumption and the growth of podcast platforms in South Africa.

5.4.3.1 Evidence of technology and access

Participants’ perspectives described the digital gap, and the limitations facilitated by this gap.

Table 18: Evidence of technology and access

Theme 2: Technology and access	
Participant	Quotation
IE3	<i>“Contrary to first-world countries, South Africa was lagging due to telecoms, connectivity, and disposable income constraints. But things are changing.”</i>
P3	<i>“People may want your content but can’t afford data. Rural areas have limited access and rely on TV or satellite. Even those with internet might only watch short clips due to data limitations.”</i>
P5	<i>“Currently, data is expensive, limiting access to millions of South Africans who would otherwise engage.”</i>
PC2	<i>“So there are some areas in the country where people don't have access to the internet, access to electricity, et cetera. So unfortunately, we still live in a country that's highly unequal.”</i>

	<i>Yeah, unequal, you know? Um, So, from a podcast creator point of view, I think opportunities are vast, but I think then the rich might be limited because of those constraints.”</i>
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Source: Author’s own

5.4.3.2 Analysis of evidence

Although participant IE3 indicated that the technology and access gap has started to close, participants P3 and P5 emphasised that high data costs and internet connectivity continue to be barriers that limit accessibility.

“People may want your content but can’t afford data. Rural areas have limited access and rely on TV or satellite. Even those with internet might only watch short clips due to data limitations.” P3

5.4.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Technology and access

The data revealed similarities across participants and highlighted high data costs, and internet connectivity as barriers that limit both podcast consumption and growth in South Africa.

5.4.4 Research question 1: Theme 3: Controversy

Theme 3 draws attention to controversy and how it limits monetisation and growth, particularly for podcast platforms that push boundaries.

5.4.4.1 Evidence of controversy

Participants highlighted advertiser and brand conservatism as a barrier, particularly for podcast platforms with a controversial tone.

Table 19: Evidence of controversy

Theme 3: Controversy

Participant	Quotation
IE3	<i>“Controversial content works, but the long-term sustainability with freedom of expression is yet to be seen.”</i>
P1	<i>“Some topics are sensitive or uncomfortable to share publicly.”</i>
IE2	<i>Mac’s book “Uncancellable” is a great example—his relationship with his audience can’t be broken. Brands panic during social media crises, but he prioritises his audience. That loyalty drives engagement and value.”</i>
MC	<i>“You have to be a safe space for brands to want their logo on your platform. There’s a balance between being too safe—which limits growth—and being too edgy—which can limit revenue. It’s a constant dance.”</i>
P3	<i>“Shock-value podcasts have more freedom but can be risky—used poorly, they can backfire.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.4.4.2 Analysis of controversy

Participant IE3 noted that while controversy attracts audiences, its long-term sustainability is yet to be seen.

“Controversial content works, but the long-term sustainability with freedom of expression is yet to be seen.” IE3

Participant MC stressed brand hesitancy, and the importance of podcast platforms finding a balance between being safe and edgy.

“You have to be a safe space for brands to want their logo on your platform. There’s a balance between being too safe—which limits growth—and being too edgy—which can limit revenue. It’s a constant dance.” MC

Participant IE2 indicated that, for some podcast platforms, value has been driven by those platforms prioritising the audience and sticking to the controversial tone.

Mac’s book “Uncancellable” is a great example—his relationship with his audience can’t be broken. Brands panic during social media crises, but he prioritises his audience. That loyalty drives engagement and value.” IE2

5.4.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Controversy

While IE2 introduced a perspective where podcast creators prioritise their audience, the rest of the evidence from participants pointed to advertiser and brand hesitance as barriers that constrain monetisation and growth.

5.4.5 Research question 1: Theme 4: Strategic responses

Theme 4 spotlights how South African podcast creators have responded to the barriers that have limited and slowed down the pace of innovation.

5.4.5.1 Evidence of strategic responses

The evidence reflected entrepreneurial perseverance, sponsorships, collaborations, convergence as well as diversification.

Table 20: Evidence of strategic responses

Theme 4: Strategic responses	
Participant	Quotation
P2	<i>“If it works, great. If it doesn’t, move on. It’s not like traditional TV, where it takes months of meetings and approvals. For example, SABC 2 will be airing my podcast in 2026, but those conversations started a year ago. Compare that to when I launched my first episode with Grand Chan—I had the idea on a Friday, called him, and by Tuesday we were recording.”</i>
IE2	<i>“Now, they’re converging. Mainstream media struggles with the youth market—they don’t engage with traditional media. That’s why Spotify and Netflix recently partnered, why DSTV is signing podcasts, why Fox buys podcast IPs.”</i>
IE2	<i>“When we started, we were a network; now, we’re a network for networks, building the plumbing for everyone. We don’t see other networks as competitors.”</i>
P2	<i>“So, I fund my podcast myself through my business.”</i>

MC	<i>“But we came in there and we were going to lose. I think the number was like 600 grand each. Each person was going to lose and we were okay with it because we believed in it, and here we are now. We’ve got the channel we’re looking for, and we’ve got the extension on much better terms.”</i>
MC	<i>“But now, we also have sponsorships with brands like Betway, Hollywood Bets, Capitec, and others—these are recurring revenue. We also make campaign revenue, such as subliminal power spots for Netflix, product placements, and event revenue through tours, ticket sales, and sponsorships. And finally, revenue comes from lifestyle products like Grandeur, Chillas Punch, and merchandise.”</i>
IE2	<i>“Yes, but execution can be tricky. Building a network under a single YouTube channel can limit growth. Strategically done, it’s smart. Vertical networks—like business or wellness channels—make sense. It’s a growing trend but requires careful execution.”</i>

Source: Author’s own

5.3.5.2 Analysis of evidence

Participant P2 highlighted that while their processes are tedious, mainstream is converging and absorbing podcasting platforms. This perspective was also shared by participant IE2.

“It’s not like traditional TV, where it takes months of meetings and approvals. For example, SABC 2 will be airing my podcast in 2026, but those conversations started a year ago. Compare that to when I launched my first episode with Grand Chan—I had the idea on a Friday, called him, and by Tuesday we were recording.” P2

Participant MC, similar to participant P2, emphasised self-funding as a response strategy.

“But we came in there and we were going to lose. I think the number was like 600 grand each. Each person was going to lose and we were okay with it because we believed in it, and here we are now.” MC

Participant MC further noted the role of diversification in growing and becoming sustainable.

“We also make campaign revenue, such as subliminal power spots for Netflix, product placements, and event revenue through tours, ticket sales, and sponsorships. And finally, revenue comes from lifestyle products like Grandeur, Chillas Punch, and merchandise.”

Participant IE2 recognised the new strategy employed by podcasting platforms to expand into networks and house multiple podcasts.

“Building a network under a single YouTube channel can limit growth. Strategically done, it’s smart.”

5.3.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Strategic responses

The data collected from participants highlighted similarities regarding responding to the barriers of innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. While participants described different approaches, these approaches encompass diversification, entrepreneurial perseverance and collaborations.

5.3.5.4 Findings Summary

The evidence recognised financial constraints a barrier for innovation. The evidence noted that financial constraints limited creative projects, particularly on larger podcasting platforms. The evidence also highlighted the lack of institutional support in South Africa as a barrier.

While technology, infrastructure and access emerged again as a theme, the discussion is different. In research question 2, the evidence described data costs and internet access as factors that interact with both the internal and external environments that shape business model innovation. In research 3, these factors are described as barriers that limit innovation.

The evidence described controversy as a barrier, and highlighted its close association with advertiser and brand conservatism as a limitation to both monetisation and innovation. In contrast, the evidence noted that, in some instances, controversy operated as key driver of audience engagement and value creation.

The evidence highlighted the response strategies employed by podcast creators to overcome barriers. These approaches, which comprise agility, alternative platforms,

brand partnerships, diversification, network development, measurable insights, entrepreneurial perseverance and self-funding and social media, enabled podcast creators to innovate despite limitations and constraints.

The next chapter presents the research discussions.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that were presented in chapter 5. The findings are analysed in relation to the literature presented in chapter 2. Moreover, this chapter follows a structure similar to chapter 5, and is organised according to the three research questions. Each theme is subsequently compared to the literature in chapter 2. This approach allows the researcher to draw parallels between the literature and the data gathered for the study, and validate any similarities with the existing literature or establish new contributions.

The following three-step approach for a comparative analysis was undertaken by the researcher:

1. Through the Ctrl+F function, the researcher performed a targeted word search in relation to the literature that was discussed in chapter 2. This enabled the researcher to match the findings with the existing literature.
2. If no results were found, the researcher extended the search on the literature cited in the study to identify any of the themes discussed in chapter 5.
3. If the search yielded no results, the researcher further extended the search by using the study key words related to the theme or the study's constructs within

Google scholar. The researcher focused on literature that was published in the past 5 years. If no results were found, the researcher considered the finding as a potentially new contribution to the literature.

If new literature was found from the extended search, the researcher included it in the reference list and not the literature review.

This chapter examines the parallels between the existing literature and the study's findings. Moreover, it highlights areas of difference and identifies new potential contributions.

6.2 Research Question 1: What processes of BMI has Podcast and Chill with Mac G followed to innovate its business model?

Research question 1 sought to examine and understand the processes of business model innovation followed by creators in the South African podcasting landscape. In other words, RQ1 investigated the steps and activities podcast platforms haven taken in order to reimagine their business models.

6.2.1 Research question 1: Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning

The first theme highlighted experimentation as a core area in business model innovation.

6.2.2.1 Overview of findings: Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning

Experimentation and adoptive learning was found to be central and consistent across participants. This findings noted that iterative approaches helped creators refine their ideas. More often than not, podcast creators tested ideas and then refined them through trial and error. Moreover, experimentation and adaptive learned was linked to audience sentiments and feedback. The insights identified this engagement channel as an integral component in the process of experimentation and adaptive learning. Furthermore, the insights described observational learning as a facilitator as it enabled individuals to test ideas before committing resources to them.

6.2.2.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 1: Experimentation and adaptive learning

Ramdani et al. (2019) identified three approaches to business model innovation: experimentation, open innovation and disruption. Conversely, Andreini et al. (2022) highlighted knowledge-shaping processes as part of their BMI processes framework, which comprises systematic experimentation and trial and error. Amit and Zott (2021) emphasised a three-stage process consisting of BMIdeate, BMIterate, BMImplement. Rummel et al. (2022) proposed a five-phase process consisting of initiation, ideation, integration, implementation and evaluation, while Pieroni et al. (2021) outlined a four-stage approach focused of prepare, sense, seize and transform.

As per the findings, South African podcast creators have followed no set template when innovating their platforms. In fact, the findings noted that innovation happened at the level of testing ideas and reviewing audience feedback, marking the process informal and flexible. Thus, experimentation and adoptive learning was seen to be a primary mechanism of innovation by South African podcast creators.

This is consistent with the literature discussed above, where scholars identified experimentation as an important factor for firms innovating their business models. What differs, however, is that South African podcast creators, unlike in more established sectors, do not follow a systematic approach.

6.2.2.3 Conclusion: Experimentation and adaptive learning

Similarities concerning experimentation and adaptive learning in the context of business model innovation were identified between the findings and the extant literature, as they both emphasise the process of testing, trial and error, evaluation and refining. Thus, these findings confirmed the literature on experimentation and iteration.

6.2.3 Research question 1: Theme 2: Audience engagement

This theme emphasised the role of audiences in shaping the tone, content and the growth of podcasting platforms in South Africa.

6.2.3.1 Overview of findings: Theme 2: Audience engagement

The findings identified audience engagement as a key component that shaped innovation in the South African podcasting industry. Furthermore, the findings characterised audiences as co-producers on podcasting platforms, highlighting the role

they play in driving experimentation and adaptive learning through feedback and engagement metrics.

6.2.3.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 2: Audience engagement

Ramdani et al. (2019) identified three approaches to business model innovation, namely experimentation, open innovation and disruption. For the purpose of this discussion, the researcher focuses on open innovation. According to Ramdani et al. (2019), firms can approach BMI through open innovation. Yun et al. (2020) defined open innovation as a systematic approach that enables firms to achieve innovation opportunities through exploring both internal and external knowledge sources. Similarly, Andreini et al. (2022) argue that evolutionary learning processes integrate all stages of business model innovation, enabling firms to continuously learn, adapt and revisit the other processes in order to sustain the competitive advantage they have.

In the context of South African podcasting, audience engagement forms a key part of this systematic and evolutionary learning approach. This process allows podcast creators to receive feedback and engagement metrics that provide them with insights that enable them to shape and refine their offerings, and create value.

6.2.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Audience engagement

These findings illustrate similarities with the extant literature, particularly in highlighting the role of audiences in shaping the tone, content and the growth of podcasting platforms in South Africa.

6.2.4 Research question 1: Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

This theme spotlighted content innovation and diversification as a key process of business model innovation. This theme described how podcast creators sustained themselves beyond their core offering.

6.2.4.1 Overview of findings: Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

The findings described diversification as a strategic mechanism through which innovation takes place. The findings emphasised that podcast creators were expanding their offerings beyond content creation. While this expansion was centred around existing capabilities, podcast creators strategically extended their value through licensing their content on mainstream media, live events, show tours and lifestyle products. In some cases, research and AI played an integral role in aiding these innovations.

6.2.4.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

The literature review found no evidence relating to content innovation and diversification. Thus, the researcher followed the three-step approach that was outlined in this chapter's introduction.

Through the Ctrl+F function, the researcher performed a word search on "content innovation and diversification" and "diversification" in the literature review. However, no results were found relating to content innovation and diversification.

To identify the theme, the researcher extended the search by using "content innovation and diversification" and "diversification" as key phrases on the literature cited in chapter 2: Andreini et al. (2022), Rummel et al. (2022), Amit and Zott (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019). The search yielded no results.

The researcher further extended the search by using the key words related to the theme within Google scholar. The researcher searched "diversification in business model innovation." From the results, the researcher focused on literature that was published in the past 5 years. A theme match was identified in Sohl et al. (2022), highlighting business model diversification as an alternative approach to firms creating and capturing value, and innovating.

As previously noted, the findings described that South African podcast creators were strategically extending their value through content licensing, live events and show tours, lifestyle products as well as merchandise. Additionally, some podcast platforms have turned into podcast networks. This captures the very essence of diversification as per Sohl et al. (2022).

This new literature was only added to the reference list, and not the literature review in chapter 2.

6.2.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Content innovation and diversification

Parallels were drawn between the findings and the extant literature. Both emphasise content innovation and diversification, particularly diversification, as a strategic mechanism that has supported innovation in the South African podcasting industry.

6.2.5 Research question 1: Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

Theme 4 acknowledged the role of strategic partnerships in driving innovation and growth in South African podcasting platforms.

6.2.5.1 Overview of findings: Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

The findings highlighted collaboration, partnerships and sponsorships as gateways to growth and value creation.

6.2.5.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

The findings identified parallels regarding the role of strategic partnerships in facilitating the growth of podcasting platforms. These partnerships involved South African podcast creators collaborating with brands and advertisers, mainstream platforms, and in some cases, with other creators. As described by Ramdani et al. (2019), these findings mirror operational value, which emphasises the relationship between partners network and value creation. Ramdani et al. (2019) further noted that when firms examine their operational value, they are able to understand how the interaction between their resources, customer channels, partners network and as well as suppliers contribute to value creation. Thus, strategic partnerships are key innovation drivers for South African podcast creators.

6.2.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Strategic partnerships

The findings corroborated existing literature on collaboration and strategic partnerships. As per Ramdani et al. (2019)'s operational value, partnerships are key for understanding how stakeholders can create value. In the South African podcasting landscape, partnerships and collaboration were found to increase and strengthen operational value.

6.3 Research question 2: How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?

Research question 2 examined the interaction between internal and external factors in the South African podcasting landscape, and how this interaction shapes innovation.

6.3.2 Research question 2: Theme 1: Internal factors

This theme focused on the role of internal factors in responding to both audience dynamics and market shifts. This factors included internal capabilities, strategic decisions and content direction.

6.3.2.1 Overview of findings: Theme 1: Internal factors

The findings described the internal behaviours and strategies demonstrated by podcast platforms to ensure that innovation takes place.

6.3.2.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 1: Internal factors

Masood et al. (2025) noted digital innovation, which emphasised the set of activities followed by firms to improve their capabilities and differentiate themselves, as a key factor that shapes value creation. Literature by Ramdani et al. (2019) highlighted human capital as an important innovation area. This comprises organisational learning, skills and competencies, incentives and training (Ramdani et al., 2019). Emphasis on these area enables firms to invest in the training and development of their employees, and in turn experiment and utilise the skills and competencies developed to shape the innovation activities (Ramdani et al., 2019).

The findings align with the extant literature. Collectively, they demonstrate that innovation is shaped by the internal strengths, skills and decision-making of firms. In the context of the South African podcasting industry, internal capabilities were found to be key enablers that aided podcast platforms to innovate and respond to market dynamics.

6.3.2.3 Conclusion on Theme 1: Internal factors

The findings align with the view highlighted in literature that internal factors support and optimise internal capabilities which shapes business model innovation.

6.3.3 Research question 2: Theme 2: Audience dynamics

Theme 2 examined the relationship between podcast creators and audiences. Specifically, it described how audience preferences and expectations drive podcast platforms to adapt and innovate.

6.3.3.1 Overview of findings: Theme 2: Audience dynamics

The findings highlighted shifting audience preferences and expectations as key factors where business model innovation is concerned. This was attributed to format, psychological factors and age.

6.3.3.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 2: Audience dynamics

Firms explore business model innovation as a result of customer demands and changes in customer behaviour (Zott et al., 2024; Li 2020; Ramdani et al., 2019). Across literature, customers are seen as the central drivers of business model innovation. Furthermore, the literature noted that when firms consider business model innovation, they first have to examine their value proposition, which comprises product offering, target market and revenue model (Li, 2020). In the context of the South African podcasting industry, audiences play a pivotal role in shaping the tone, content and growth of podcast platforms. The findings mirror the extant literature and positions audiences, similar to customers, at the centre of value creation and value capture.

6.3.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Audience dynamics

Both the findings and the literature agree that internal capabilities and offerings need to be aligned with and responsive to shifting preferences and expectations, especially in an emerging economy like the South African podcasting industry.

6.3.4 Research question 2: Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

This theme analysed the role technology and infrastructure play in shaping innovation. The sub-themes comprised data costs, internet access, rural limitations, infrastructure and technology.

6.3.4.1 Overview of findings: Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

The findings noted data prices, internet access and infrastructure as factors that hindered innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. Conversely, COVID-19 was highlighted as a major contributor to fibre connectivity and the increase of podcast content consumption.

6.3.4.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

The literature highlighted the role of infrastructural and technological factors in shaping business model. Specifically, the literature described how digital transformation, including infrastructure and new technologies, create opportunities for innovation to take place (Verhoef et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2020). As per the findings, these opportunities, particularly in the South African podcasting industry, are limited by data costs, internet access, rural limitations and technology. Moreover, while the findings noted COVID-19 as an accelerator of fibre connectivity in South Africa, the findings equally emphasised that high data costs and internet connectivity affect the pace of innovation.

6.3.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Technological and infrastructural factors

Both the findings and literature indicated that infrastructure and technology are key components in innovation. However, these components impose limitations in an emerging market like the South African podcasting industry.

6.3.5 Research question 2: Theme 4: Market and commercial factors

This theme examined the interaction between podcast creators, advertisers, brands and external factors that shape monetisation within the South African podcasting industry.

6.3.5.1 Overview of findings: Theme 4: Market and commercial factors

The findings described the factors that affect the pace in which podcasting platforms innovate, monetise and become sustainable. The factors comprised advertiser expectations, brand value and identity, sponsorship opportunities, market saturation and mainstream media.

6.3.5.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Market and commercial factors

The literature review found no evidence relating to market and commercial factors. As a result, the researcher followed the three-step approach that was outlined in this chapter's introduction.

Through the Ctrl+F function, the researcher performed a word search on "advertiser and brand value" and "sponsorships" in the literature review. The results found literature from Masood et al. (2025), highlighting brand innovation and digital advertising as factors that drive business model innovation. These factors, however, are positioned as internal drivers of BMI in literature. In contrast, the findings highlighted these factors as external influences that shape value creation in the South African podcasting industry. The results also found literature from Abdelkafi et al. (2023) that discussed competitive environment as well as firm's stakeholders and value adding network as external forces that shape innovation. Specifically, stakeholders and value adding network, were described as all

the parties involved in creating value for firms. In the South African podcasting industry, these factors, particularly stakeholders and value adding network, have influenced the pace of innovation.

Due to the findings, the researcher did not proceed to the next step.

6.3.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Market and commercial factors

Both the findings and the literature highlighted the role of competitive environment and valuing adding networks as key factors in business model innovation. While these factors have driven innovation in mature industries, they have constrained innovation in South Africa. Podcast creators in South Africa have had to navigate advertiser conservatism and brand expectations, which contributed to the slow pace of innovation.

6.4 Research question 3: What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* responded to these barriers?

Research question 3 examined the barriers for innovation in the South African podcasting landscape, and how podcast creators have responded to these barriers.

6.4.2 Research question 3: Theme 1: Financial constraints

This theme observed how finances have constrained innovation in the South African podcasting industry creators.

6.4.2.1 Overview of findings: Theme 1: Financial constraints

Although the findings indicated that innovation is easier in South Africa, the evidence equally highlighted that financial constraints limit projects, particularly larger ones.

6.4.2.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 1: Financial constraints

Geissdoerfer et al. 2023 indicated that innovation is always met with high financial considerations. To develop a business model and implement it, firms require finances. This mirrors the study's findings that a lack of finances and funding, especially bigger for podcast platforms, limits innovation. Moreover, the lack of support from government and financial institutions, even with the evidence of merit, was noted as barrier.

6.4.2.3 Conclusion on Theme 1: Financial constraints

The findings and the literature presented similarities regarding financial constraints. These similarities were identified as barriers that limit creativity and experimentation, and the growth of South African podcast creators.

6.4.3 Research question 3: Theme 2: Technology and access

This theme analysed the role technology and access play in shaping innovation. The sub-themes comprised data costs, internet access, infrastructure challenges, innovation constraints.

6.4.3.1 Overview of findings: Theme 2: Technology and access

The findings indicated that high data prices and internet access hindered innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. These barriers constrained content consumption and limited the interaction between podcast platforms and audiences. limited

6.4.3.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 2: Technology and access

The literature highlighted the role of technology and access in driving business model. Furthermore, the literature described that while technology and infrastructure created opportunities for innovation to take place, these opportunities, particularly in the South African podcasting industry, are limited by data costs and internet access (Verhoef et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2020).

6.4.3.3 Conclusion on Theme 2: Technology and access

Both the findings and literature indicate that both technology and infrastructure support innovation. However, they impose limitations in an emerging market like the South African podcasting industry.

6.4.4 Research question 3: Theme 3: Controversy

Theme 3 discussed the relationship between controversy, monetisation and growth, particularly for podcast platforms that push boundaries.

6.4.4.1 Overview of findings: Theme 3: Controversy

The findings highlighted advertiser and brand conservatism as a barrier, particularly for podcast platforms with a controversial tone. In contrast, the findings also noted controversy as a driver of audience engagement and value creation.

6.4.4.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 3: Controversy

The literature found no evidence relating to controversy. Therefore, the researcher followed the three-step approach that was outlined in the introduction.

Through the Ctrl+F function, the researcher performed a word search on “controversy” in the literature review. However, no results were found relating to content innovation and diversification. The researcher moved to the next step.

To identify the theme, the researcher extended the search by using “controversy” and “brand conservatism” as key phrases on the literature cited in chapter 2: (Bashir et al., 2020, as cited in Eichler et. al, 2024); Geissdoerfer et al. 2023. The search found no results.

The researcher further extended the search by using the key words related to the theme within Google scholar. The researcher searched “controversy in business model innovation” and “risk in business model innovation.” From the results, the researcher focused on literature that was published in the past 5 years. Still, the search found no

results related to the theme. The researcher considered the finding as a potentially new contribution to the literature

6.4.4.3 Conclusion on Theme 3: Controversy

As per the findings, controversy in the South African podcasting industry is seen as an external barrier that affects the extent to which South African podcast creators can innovate. While some of the insights highlighted controversy as a contributing factor to audience engagement and value, the dominant view was controversy limited innovation.

6.4.5 Research question 3: Theme 4: Strategic responses

Theme 4 spotlighted the ways South African podcast creators have responded to the barriers that have constrained innovation.

6.4.5.1 Overview of findings: Theme 4: Strategic responses

The findings of this theme emphasised entrepreneurial perseverance, sponsorships, collaborations, convergence as well as diversification.

6.3.5.2 Overview of literature and discussion of findings: Theme 4: Strategic responses

Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025) noted business model innovation is associated with a number of barriers and challenges. Furthermore, they highlighted that firms require specific capabilities to address challenges. Mueller-Saegebrecht and Walter (2025) further noted strategic ability as a capability that helps firms successfully navigate the hardships associated with business model innovation. Their framework emphasised strategic sensitivity, leadership unity and resource fluidity. While these factors are not responses, they function as capabilities that enable strategic responses, particularly in dynamic markets. This view mirrors the findings and highlights the need for firms to strategically position themselves, particularly in re in dynamic markets.

6.3.5.3 Conclusion on Theme 4: Strategic responses

Both findings and the literature highlighted the need for strategic responses, especially in combating innovation barriers.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher employs Ramdani et al. (2019)'s four-phase business model innovation framework, which examines areas of innovation where other forms of business models can be identified.

6.4.1 Framework overview

The first innovation area is value proposition (Ramdani, et., 2019). Similar to Li (2020), value proposition requires firms to assess their offering, target audience and the needs of the audience to ensure customer satisfaction. The second innovation area is operational value and it involves firms evaluating their key assets and processes, partners network as well as distribution channels (Ramdani et al., 2019). Following operational value is human capital. This area involves organisational learning, skills and competencies, incentives and training (Ramdani et al., 2019). By focusing on these elements, firms are able to experiment and conduct business in new ways, as well as utilise the skills and competencies needed for the innovated business model through investing in the training and development of individuals so that they can carry out the innovation activities (Ramdani et al., 2019). The final innovation area is financial value, and it is concerned with firms evaluating their revenue streams, cost structure, cash flow and margins (Ramdani et al., 2019). This allows firms to explore how they can create value and capture it financially, optimise costs and maintain efficiencies to ensure financial value.

Therefore, the research findings mirror the following areas in Ramdani's framework:

- Value proposition: South African podcast creators are innovating with niche and audience-centred content as well as live events and show yours. This highlights that podcast creators are focusing on delivering value and not just entertainment.

- Operational value: South African podcasters are distributing their content on multiple platforms. This enables creators to cater to various audience segments, which in turn creates value.
- Human capital: This area reflects the internal capabilities and emphasise Ramdani et al. (2019)'s view that emphasises the skills and strengths shape innovation.
- Financial value: This area highlights how firm revenue sustains operations and ensure growth. In the context of the South African podcasting, creators are exploring multiple revenue strategies to ensure that they remain sustainable.

This chapter sought to comprehensively understand how business model innovation in the South African podcasting landscape looks like. By drawing parallels between the findings and the extant literature as well as points of nuance, the study recognise experimentation, audience dynamics, diversification and strategic partnerships as key processes of business model innovation. The study also notes that factors like informal strategies, technological and infrastructural challenges, financial constraints and social factors controversy drive innovation in the South African podcasting industry

Chapter 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The study sought to understand the application of business model innovation frameworks and processes in the South African podcasting industry. With *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* as its main case, the study examined the key factors that have helped South African podcasting platforms reimagine value creation. As such, this chapter concludes the study by presenting the findings of each research question. Moreover, this chapter discusses the conceptual framework as per the comparative analysis of the findings and the literature in chapter 6. This enables the researcher to outline the factors that shape business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry.

This chapter also discusses the research contributions, the limitations and provides recommendations and suggestions for future research.

7.2 Principal theoretical conclusion

This section considers the study's theoretical conclusions in relation to the research questions. The conclusions were drawn by comparing the research findings with the extant literature. This comparison also outlined points of similarity and difference from both the findings and literature.

7.2.1 Research question 1

What processes of BMI has *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (and other mainstream podcast platforms) followed to innovate its business model?

Research question 1 examined the BMI processes followed by South African podcast creators. In other words, it investigated the steps and activities podcast platforms haven taken in order to reimagine their business model.

Firstly, the findings positioned experimentation and adaptive learning as key factors for business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry. According to the findings, experimentation and adaptive comprise the testing of ideas, audience engagement and evaluation as well as iterative efforts by podcast creators to refine their value proposition. Moreover, the findings noted observational learning as an important innovation lens that enables South African podcast creators to experiment with ideas before allocating resources to them. These findings mirror the extant literature, which also centralise experimentation and iteration for firms innovating their models (Andreini et al., 2022; Amit and Zott 2021; Ramdani et al., 2019).

The parallels between the findings and the literature emerge from iterative activities and processes that both firms and South African podcast creators engage in. In contrast, the difference is in the structure. While most established industries follow a structured approach when engaging in BMI processes, South African podcast creators follow a more informal and flexible method. This indicates the pace in which innovation takes place.

Secondly, audience engagement emerged as a fundamental driver of business model innovation. The findings positioned audiences as co-producers of podcasting platforms. The findings emphasised the role played by the audience in shaping the tone, content and growth of South African podcasting platforms. These findings are corroborated by the extant literature, which indicate that firms can approach innovation opportunities through exploring external knowledge sources (Yun et al., 2020; Andreini et al., 2022). What is different, however, is that audience participation in the South African podcasting landscape goes beyond consumption. These audiences drive ideas and play an active role on the platforms.

Thirdly, content innovation and diversification was described as a supporting mechanism for innovation in the South African podcasting industry. The findings explained that South African podcast creators further extended their value through licensing their content on mainstream media, live events and show tours, lifestyle products, merchandise and by

expanding into networks. As per Sohl et al. (2022), diversification is key for value creation, indicating similarities between the findings and the extant literature.

Lastly, the findings emphasised that strategic partnerships facilitated innovation and growth. The findings revealed that collaboration between podcast creators and fellow creators, brands, advertisers and mainstream media increased operational value as per the view by Ramdani et al. (2019)

7.2.2 Research question 2

How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?

Research question 2 sought to understand the interaction between internal and external factors in the South African podcasting landscape, and how this interaction shapes innovation.

The findings positioned internal factors as important enablers for business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry. These factors comprise internal capabilities, skills, strategic decisions and content direction, all of which enable podcast creators to respond to the shifting market dynamics. Both Masood et al. (2025) and Ramdani et al. (2019) emphasise the role of human capital - organisable skills, capabilities and competencies - as important for firms engaging in business model innovation activities. Thus, both the findings and the literature agree that internal capabilities shape innovation. The difference, however, is that the South African podcasting industry follows an informal structure.

Audience dynamics emerged as a key factor that drives innovation in the South African podcasting industry. As noted previously, the findings described the audience as co-producers of podcasting platforms. The extant literature posit that firms explore business model innovation due to customer demands and customer behaviour (Zott et al., 2024; Li 2020; Ramdani et al., 2019). Across literature, customers are positioned as the central drivers of business model innovation. Moreover, the literature indicates that when firms consider business model innovation, they first have to examine their value proposition, which comprises product offering, target market and revenue model (Li, 2020). In the

South African podcasting industry, audiences play a pivotal role in shaping the tone, content and growth of podcast platforms. The findings align the extant literature and positions audiences, like customers, at the centre of business model innovation.

The findings described data costs and internet access, which form part of technological and infrastructural factors, as both drivers and obstacles. While the findings recognised the role of COVID-19 in accelerating fibre connection and podcast consumption, high data costs and internet access continued to limit the pace of innovation.

Verhoef et al. (2021) and Kraus et al. (2020) posit that technology functions as both a facilitator and obstacle of innovation.

In both the findings and the literature, technology emerges as a key factor for innovation. Equally, it highlights the challenges of emerging markets, like the South African podcasting landscape.

Market and commercial factors also shape innovation. These factors include advertiser expectations, brand value sponsorship opportunities and market saturation. While the extant literature describes the role of stakeholders and value adding network in driving innovation (Abdelkafi et al., 2023), brand expectations and advertiser conservatism, particularly in South Africa, limits innovation.

7.2.3 Research question 3

What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has Podcast and Chill with Mac G (and other mainstream podcast platforms) responded to these barriers?

Research question 3 examined the barriers that limit innovation in the South African podcasting landscape. Additionally, it sought to understand how podcast creators have responded to these barriers.

The findings recognised financial constraints a barrier for innovation. The findings noted that finances constraints limited creative projects, particularly on larger podcasting platforms. This reflects the view by Geissdoerfer et al. (2023) that indicates that

innovation is always met with high financial considerations. To develop a business model and implement it, firms require finances.

The findings and extant literature both recognise financial constraints as a barrier in innovation. The findings also highlight the lack of institutional support in South Africa as a barrier.

While technology, infrastructure and access emerged again as a theme, the discussion is different. In research question 2, the findings described data costs and internet access as factors that interact with both the internal and external environments that shape business model innovation. Conversely, in research 3, these factors are described as barriers that limit innovation.

The findings indicated that controversy serves a dual function. First, controversy is considered a barrier due to its close association with advertiser and brand conservatism, which restricts both monetisation and innovation. Second, for some podcast creators, controversy has operated as key driver of audience engagement and value creation.

Research on controversy in relation to business model innovation is limited, indicated a potential new contribution.

The findings highlighted the response strategies employed by podcast creators to overcome barriers. These approaches, which comprise agility, alternative platforms, brand partnerships, diversification, network development, measurable insights, entrepreneurial perseverance and self-funding and social media, enabled podcast creators to innovate despite limitations and constraints.

By examining the processes, the internal and external factor interactions, as well as the barriers and responses, these research questions collectively sought to comprehensively understand how business model innovation in the South African podcasting landscape looks like. Thus, the South African podcasting industry illustrate processes of innovation that align with the extant literature. Both the findings and the literature recognise experimentation, audience dynamics, diversification and strategic partnerships as key processes of business model innovation.

What is different is that innovation, particularly in the South African podcasting industry, is shaped by informal strategies, technological and infrastructural challenges, financial

constraints and social factors like controversy. Diversification and controversy can be seen as potential new contributions as they both function as response strategies.

7.2.4. Principal theoretical conclusions

The subject of the study was business model innovation processes. The research was conducted in the context of the South African podcasting industry.

The study highlights that while there is extensive literature on business model innovation, there is little to no academic research on how (BMI) frameworks are applicable in an emerging industry like the South African podcasting industry.

The study's main research question examines the key factors have helped *Podcast and Chill with Mac G* (including other mainstream podcast platforms) reimagine how value is created and captured in the South African podcasting industry.

The study followed a qualitative research method. This research method enabled the researcher to gain understanding of the key factors that shape business model in the South African podcasting industry.

The study found that experimentation, audience dynamics, diversification and strategic partnerships are key factors that shape business model innovation in the South African podcasting industry. Moreover, the study found that innovation in the South African podcasting industry is shaped by informal strategies, technological and infrastructural challenges, financial constraints and social factors like controversy.

7.3 Research contributions

The study sought to understand how business model innovation frameworks are applicable in the South African podcasting industry. As such, the researcher examined BMI processes, interacting factors, barriers and the responses.

By identifying points of similarity between the findings and the extant literature, the study contributes to the existing scholarly work. Moreover, the points of difference present potential new contributions.

7.3.1 Similarities with literature

A majority of the themes the researcher discussed aligned with the extant literature. The researcher noted the following as similarities:

- Experimentation and iteration is important for firms innovating their models
- Innovation opportunities can be explored through external knowledge sources
- Technology is a key factor for innovation
- Diversification is key for value creation
- Collaboration and strategic partnerships increase operational value
- Internal capabilities shape innovation
- Audiences, like customers, are at the centre of business model innovation.
- Financial constraints limit innovation

7.3.2 Differences with literature

The study points of difference, which may be potential new contributions. These nuances are as follows:

- South African podcast creators follow a more informal and flexible method when pursuing innovations.
- Audience participation in the South African podcasting landscape goes beyond consumption. These audiences drive ideas and play an active role on the platforms.
- Diversification and controversy function as response strategies.

7.4 Limitations

The research was conducted within the context of an emerging market. Both South Africa and the podcasting industry are considered as developing. The study examined business model processes in the context of podcasting. There is little to no scholarly work that examine business model innovation in the context of podcasting. Therefore, the literature was limited. Furthermore, the focus of the study was limited and not fully represented. The researcher recognises the possibility of participant bias because of the nature of the study. The study also acknowledged that some of the stakeholders may have not be as transparent because of a fear of disclosing sensitive information. Lastly, the study's sample size was limited to 12 participants.

7.5 Recommendations for management and other stakeholders

This section provides insights on how managers and stakeholders can strategically position themselves. The study's conceptual framework can be used as a reference for podcast creators who want to innovate their platforms. Therefore, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

- Podcast creators must understand their audience. To achieve this, they can employ audience analytics to gain understanding of preferences, habits and trends.
- Podcast creators should innovate their content and experiment with different formats and topics, particularly those with an audience demand.
- Strategic partnerships, particularly with mainstream media, can help podcast creators gain new audience segments. As such, podcast creators should explore collaborations and partnerships.
- Diversification is key for innovation. Podcast creators should explore various monetisation models. This ensure sustainable growth.
- Podcast creators should introduce initiatives that help develop talent. This helps improve content quality, encourages innovation through experimentation, and grows the industry.
- Podcast creators should embrace technology and stay informed regarding new developments and advancements. This enables to increase their efficiencies and gain competitive advantage.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

This research study was limited to South Africa. As such, the researcher suggests that future research should be conducted in the context of the African continent. The researcher also notes that future studies should examine the impact of mainstream media on the development of the podcasting industry. Moreover, the researcher suggests that future studies should explore the contribution of the podcasting industry to employment and economic growth.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Research questions	Literature	Interview guide
<p>Main research question:</p> <p>What key factors have influenced the innovation and development of <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G's</i> business model?</p>	<p>Bouncken (2024), Loon and Quan (2021), Ramdani et al. (2019) and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you give your understanding of innovation in the context of podcasting, particularly in South Africa? 2. Overtime, what changes have you seen in terms of how podcasts create and capture value? 3. In your experience, who or what do you think influences the direction and development of podcasts? Audiences, platforms, culture, industry? 4. What has been role of the audience in shaping the tone, content and growth of podcast platforms?
<p>Research question 1:</p> <p>What processes of <i>BMI has Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> followed to innovate its business model?</p>	<p>Andreini et al. (2022) Rummel et al. (2022) Ramdani et al. (2019)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. When change is needed, what have you noticed in terms of how teams and creators practically respond and adapt? 6. Can you walk me through what you think are the processes that guide how podcast platforms organise their workflow, roles and decision-making? 7. How does the team generate, evaluate and refine ideas, and create value out of those ideas? 8. Talk me through the idea development cycle. Is it fast paced or deliberate? What factors influence ideation and the execution?

<p>Research question 2:</p> <p>How do the internal and external factors interact in the South African podcasting industry?</p>	<p>van Tonder et. al. (2023) Verhoef et al. (2021) Kraus et al. (2020)</p>	<p>9. In your view, what factors support the growth of podcasts in South Africa? What are the challenges that limit growth and expansion, and sustainability?</p> <p>10. How would describe, if there is any, the relationship between podcast platforms and mainstream media?</p> <p>11. What shapes innovation in the South African podcasting industry?</p> <p>12. Can you think of moments where a podcast had to pivot or reconfigure itself? What do you think are the factors forced that?</p>
<p>Research question 3:</p> <p>What are the barriers for business model innovation in an emerging marketing such as the South African podcasting industry, and how has <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> responded to these barriers?</p> <p>judgements on the management of companies into their overall assessment of a company?</p>	<p>van Tonder et. al. (2023) Verhoef et al. (2021) Kraus et al. (2020)</p>	<p>13. In an emerging market like South Africa, do you think innovation is easier or limited?</p> <p>14. Does the need for funding and advertising opportunities limit the way podcast platforms are managed?</p> <p>15. What has been the morale in your team?</p> <p>16. What has been the impact of <i>Podcast and Chill with Mac G</i> in shaping the industry?</p>

Source: Author's own

Appendix 2: List of codes

#	First order codes	Second order codes
1	Experimentation	Experimentation and adaptive learning
2	Adaptive Learning	Experimentation and adaptive learning
3	Audience Interaction	Audience engagement
4	Feedback	Audience engagement
5	Engagement Strategies	Audience engagement
6	Content Innovation	Content innovation and diversification
7	Content Diversification	Content innovation and diversification
8	Content Creation	Content innovation and diversification
9	Brand Partnerships	Strategic partnerships
10	Collaborations	Strategic partnerships
11	Network Development	Strategic partnerships
12	Internal Capabilities	Internal factors
13	Internal Innovation	Internal factors
14	Audience Preferences	Audience dynamics
15	Audience Expectations	Audience dynamics
16	Audience Influence	Audience dynamics
17	Technology Access	Technological & Infrastructural factors
18	Internet Access	Technological & Infrastructural factors

19	Infrastructure Challenges	Technological and infrastructural factors
20	Market Conditions	Market and commercial factors
21	Commercial Opportunities	Market and commercial factors
22	Sponsorship Opportunities	Market and commercial factors
23	Funding Limitations	Financial constraints
24	Financial Resources	Financial constraints
25	Cost Barriers	Financial constraints
26	Technological Advancements	Technology and access
27	Data Costs	Technology and access
28	Connectivity	Technology and access
29	Controversial Content	Controversy
30	Brand Image Pressure	Controversy
31	Audience Backlash	Controversy
32	Agile Approach	Strategic responses
33	Alternative Platforms	Strategic responses
34	Content Differentiation	Strategic responses
35	Perseverance	Strategic responses
36	Self-Funding	Strategic responses
37	Social Media	Strategic responses

Source: Author's own