

**ПРАВЕН ФАКУЛТЕТ, УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ – ШТИП**

**FACULTY OF LAW, GOCE DELCEV UNIVERSITY, STIP**



**ЕДИНАЕСЕТТА МЕЃУНАРОДНА НАУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА  
ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**

**ОПШТЕСТВЕНИТЕ ПРОМЕНИ ВО ГЛОБАЛНИОТ СВЕТ  
SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE GLOBAL WORLD**

**ЗБОРНИК НА ТРУДОВИ  
PROCEEDINGS**

**ШТИП 2024  
STIP 2024**

**ПРАВЕН ФАКУЛТЕТ, УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ – ШТИП,  
РЕПУБЛИКА С. МАКЕДОНИЈА**



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**ШТИП 2024**



**FACULTY OF LAW, GOCE DELCEV UNIVERSITY, STIP,  
NORTH MACEDONIA**



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**SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE GLOBAL WORLD**

**PROCEEDINGS**



**STIP 2024**



Eleventh International Scientific Conference SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

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Adress: Faculty of Law, Goce Delcev University, Stip, North Macedonia,

Ul. Krste Misirkov bb, PO box 201,2000, Stip, R.N. Macedonia

[www.ugd.edu.mk](http://www.ugd.edu.mk)

Печати / Print: 2-ри Август-Штип / 2-ri Avgust-Shtip

Уредници: Елена Максимова, Јорданка Галева, Наташа Мирославева, Ана Панева, Кристијан Панев

Технички уредник: Елена Максимова, Ана Панева

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација

Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

316.42:34(100)(062)

316.42:32(100)(062)

МЕЃУНАРОДНА научна конференција Општествените промени во глобалниот свет  
(11 ; 2024 ; Штип)

Општествените промени во глобалниот свет [Електронски извор] :  
зборник на трудови / Единаесетта меѓународна научна конференција = Social changes in the  
global world : proceedings / Eleventh international scientific conference. - Штип : Универзитет  
"Гоце Делчев", Правен факултет ; Shtip : Goce Delcev University, Faculty of law, 2024

Начин на пристапување (URL): <https://js.ugd.edu.mk/>. - Текст во PDF формат, содржи 505  
стр., илустр. - Наслов преземен од екранот. - Опис на изворот на ден 18.09.2024. - Трудови  
на мак. и англ. јазик. - Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија кон трудовите

ISBN 978-608-277-076-5

а) Општествени промени -- Право -- Свет -- Собири б) Општествени промени  
-- Политика -- Свет -- Собири

COBISS.MK-ID 64436997

- All manuscripts were subject of double-blind peer review process.
- No responsibility can be accepted by the publisher or compilers for the accuracy of the information presented. The expressed opinions are of the authors and does not necessarily coincide with views of the Program Committee and the Organizational Committee of the conference
- The UDK numbers for each of the manuscripts are contained in the electronic version of the proceedings, available on: <http://js.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/scgw>

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## THE FUTURE OF MACEDONIAN NEWS RADIO STATIONS IN THE TIME OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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### Abstract

The development of technology, as much as it brings novelties and advantages, also represents a challenge for overcoming certain obstacles to development in certain spheres and segments of social life. The broadcasting industry and radio stations as part of this sphere, with the advent of the Internet, smartphones and artificial intelligence, face the biggest challenge every day, that is, how to survive and remain competitive in the media market. The subject of this paper is an analysis of the situation of news radio stations and the challenges they face in order to give recommendations for improving the situation in which they are. The paper contains data from several research, and as a case study the transformation of Macedonian radio Channel 77 is elaborated.

**Keywords:** *radio, Channel 77, social media, digitization, artificial intelligence*

### Introduction

The paper is structured into two main sections. The first section begins with a brief overview of radio stations in general, followed by a more detailed examination of Macedonian local radio stations. This part encompasses research findings on various aspects: the financial landscape of radio stations, including their sources of funding and investments; the state of human resources, specifically the media workers; and the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and the proliferation of fake news. The results presented in this section predominantly derive from secondary sources, supplemented by original research conducted as part of the NEWAVES project

<sup>1</sup>. As part of this project, we created a short questionnaire to understand Macedonian local radio stations' perceptions of what could or should be done to become more visible in the media market. The questions in the survey and the interviews conducted within the framework of this research pertain to general data about the radio stations (seven in total), including the year of establishment, territory covered by the

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<sup>1</sup> Project 101112458 – Newaves (Collaborative Alliance for Radio Recovery and Boost of Community News Media in Low-density Territories) delegated by European Commission and conducted by four universities and four radio stations from four European countries: Portugal, Slovakia, Croatia and N. Macedonia (Goce Delcev University, Stip and Kanal 77 Stip). The project is focused on developing a digital platform that can be used for identifying and combating fake news and providing opportunities for rearranging existing programs by offering free informational materials that the institution can benefit from.

program, number of listeners (weekly and monthly), number of employed journalists and technicians, gender, age, years of experience, education, and type of radio station. Additionally, the survey inquired whether the radio station creates news or publishes content and the types of news and programs produced. It was also asked which social networks the radio stations are represented on. The questions were designed to gather detailed information about the financial structure (income from subsidies, marketing, program production, equipment/facility rentals, grants/donations/projects), investment history (allocation of revenue to profit, wages, operating expenses, and financing needs, investments in studio equipment and company vehicles), and platform usage of the radio stations (type of platform, nature of the platform, and the need for a specific kind of news sharing platform).

The second section of the paper identifies several factors contributing to the decline of traditional media formats, such as the advent of the Internet, digitalization and the rise of social networks. Taking into consideration that there is a decline in the number of radio stations, it is logical to have a dramatic increase in income among existing radio stations, but according to research made by Agency for audio and audiovisual media services, this is not the case either. From 50 local radio stations in 2018, in 2023 only 39 lefts. The number of radio stations has decreased by 22%, and revenues have increased by only 2% (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2024).

Referring to this situation, in the third part of the paper we explore how and why one of the most popular news radio stations in Macedonia, Kanal 77, decided to change its media strategy and how this transformation influenced its survival in the competitive media market. For the purposes of this paper, research was conducted through an interview with the owner of the radio station. In the in-depth interview, we focused on several key areas, namely: introduction or general information about Radio Kanal 77; the challenges that forced them to make changes; the strategies they used before and after the transformation; the results and impact of the transformation; and conclusions and recommendations.

In each of these segments several key questions were asked: What were the challenges; when and how did they notice that the radio was facing problems and challenges; where did they see the opportunities for growth; what was the change in the income of the radio before and after the transformation? This set of questions dealt with the "challenges" part of the radio station. In the "strategy" section, we analyzed the previous and current strategic documents of the company. In the "results and impact" section, we analyzed the impact of the change and analyzed current and past research that the company itself has carried out.

In the concluding section, the authors synthesize the findings and propose recommendations based on the comprehensive analysis presented throughout the paper.

## **1. The state of news radio stations**

The Macedonian legal framework includes several laws governing the establishment and operation of media entities. Various strategies have been developed to foster the growth of the broadcasting industry and additionally, annual surveys are conducted to evaluate the state of the media and identify the challenges they encounter. In the Republic of North Macedonia (Macedonia), radio stations operate through three organizational forms - public, commercial, and non-profit, and on three territorial levels - national, regional, and local. According to Macedonian constitutional Article 16, which guarantees the right to establish institutions for public information, there are currently 64 licensed radio stations, of which 43 are local (we have to take into the consideration that 4 of these 43 are non for profit radio stations, and these radio stations have little influence from the change in the market, due to the fact that their operation is not completely dependent on the market conditions). The results of several studies show that every year there is a closure or reduction in the number of radio stations due to new technological challenges and various obstacles they face daily. Below, several of these challenges are listed and explained, including financial resources, human resources, freedom of expression and artificial intelligence.

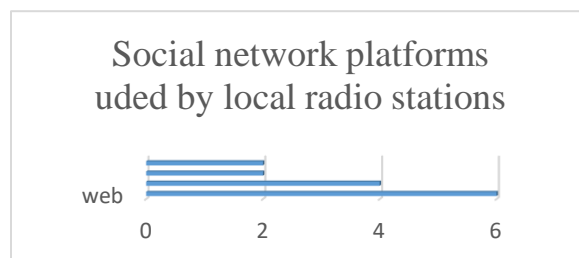


## 1.1. Financial resources from advertising and income generation

One of the problems and barriers to the development of the radio broadcasting industry in the commercial sector is the limited potential of the advertising industry, especially in local commercial radio broadcasting, which is in a particularly difficult state since most of the advertising income goes to national broadcasters (Совет за радиодифузија на Република Македонија, 2007). The crisis in journalism funding has been triggered by digital disruption, in which large number media are competing for a shrinking advertising market (Media Development Center, 2022). Particularly, radio stations are facing challenges from new media market regulations and advertising industry dynamics, as well as from increased internet competition. Advertising plays a crucial role in generating revenue for radio stations, as evidenced by the research of the latest market analysis of audio and audiovisual media services conducted in 2022 (Трајчевски, 2023). According to the results, the sale of advertising space was the primary source of income for almost all local radio stations (in only three radio stations, the share of advertising revenue in total income was less than 50%). "Other income" accounted for 18%, while the share of revenue from sponsorships, revenue provided by third parties and other activities was insignificant. The results indicate that in the previous year, 2021, local radio stations recorded a 14% decrease in revenue compared to the previous year. This decline can be primarily attributed to the income generated by radio stations in 2021 from paid political advertising (amounting to 3.21 million Macedonian denari) and financial assistance to cover licensing fees (amounting to 0.96 million Macedonian denari). Only one of the three non-profit local radio stations reported income. Among the commercial local radio stations, one of the stations generated no revenue, the lowest income of a local radio station was 0.03 million denars, and the highest recorded income was 5.07 million denars, of which 2.10 million denars were from advertising. The current condition of radio stations can be attributed to their relatively small slice of the advertising (*cake*) market, characterized by intense competition among a multitude of media players. In recent years, social media advertising has emerged as one of the most popular and efficient methods for businesses to connect with their desired audience. With millions of individuals regularly using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, social media advertising has evolved into a vital tool for companies striving to remain competitive and engage with fresh clientele (Gok, 2023). Among the traditional radio stations a few radio stations monopolize most of the advertising market, leaving very little part for the rest. This situation is cited in the Regulatory strategy for the period from 2019 to 2023, as one of the reasons for the unsuccessful operation of the media (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2019).

According to the results obtained by the research conducted as part of Newaves project, the local radio stations are in general present on additional electronic and internet platforms that is 43% of the local radio stations use only Web, 29% Web and Facebook, 14% use Web, Facebook and Instagram and 14% Facebook and Instagram (Graph 1). Most of the media which are part of the conducted survey are financing from marketing, or 5 of total 7 local radio stations choose this option with. One media is providing finances from grants, projects or donors, and one media has income due to its program production. Not a single media from this survey research does not provide its income by subsidies or renting equipment.

Graph 1



Additionally, the research reveals that the majority of the income generated by local radio stations is allocated to employee salaries. Specifically, three local radio stations allocate 80% of their revenue to salaries, while three other radio stations allocate 60%, 50%, and 40% of their revenue to salaries, respectively. A smaller portion of the income is spent on operational needs: 20% in four radio stations and 30% in one radio station. This allocation pattern is a primary factor limiting the potential for future development of local media.

Furthermore, the results indicate that in 2023, only four media outlets invested in technological advancements (hardware, software, microphones, cameras, etc.), whereas in 2021 and 2020, only one media outlet each year allocated funds from their income for such investments. Regarding investments in technological advancements related to vehicles, the research shows that in 2023, 2016, and 2010, only one media outlet incurred such expenses, while only one local radio station made such an expenditure, last doing so in 2005. The situation is similar for investments in technological improvements (buildings - expansions, acquisitions, etc.), where only one media outlet made such investments in 2023, with similar investments occurring in 2014, 2012, and 1996.

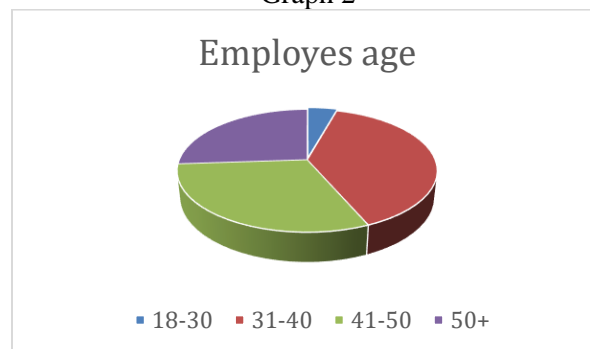
All these factors lead to the conclusion that local radio stations face serious existential issues of sustainability and lack of appropriate technical, special and working conditions.

## 1.2. Lack of human resources

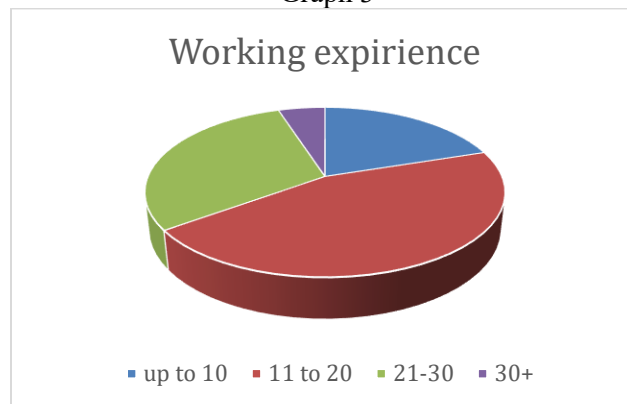
Regarding the issue of staffing in the local sector, the number of employees is significantly low in comparison to the nature and scope of the program service. There are also radio broadcasters who do not have a single employee registered (Совет за радиодифузија на Република Македонија, 2007). From the conducted survey (as part of Newaves project) on seven local radio stations in Macedonia we can notice that in total, there are 14 employed journalists and 10 technicians, five media have by 2 employees, one media has 1, and one media has 3 employees' journalists. An additional problem is the lack of younger staff: in all 7 media only one employee (4%) is (are) younger than 30 years of age (Graph 2), or only 4 of 20 employees (20 %) have less than 10 years' working experience in the local media where they work (Graph 3).

The last two indicators clearly show a lack of vision for the future development of the local radio stations, and a potential grim future. We have to notice that there is fairly balanced gender structure i.e., 14 of the local media staff are male and 10 are female. An additional problem is the lower level of professionals who work in the local media with specialized educational background in journalism and public relations studies. From the survey results it's noticeable that only 8 of 24 employees have their formal education in journalism and public relations studies.

Graph 2



Graph 3



### 1.3. Freedom of Expression for Media Workers

Media information system in Macedonia, like in the other spheres of social organization and action, is synthetically connected with the public political discourse and determines the presentation of public information's in terms of intensive political mobilization. The subjective approach in the editorial policies of electronic mass-media in the state many times is expression of certain business, ideological, ethno-national or political structure. On this basis the media information system builds interdependence relations with certain political subjects, reflecting their attitudes and perceptions. All of this influences on objective presentation on information's toward the citizen and modification on their attitudes.

Regarding independence (of the editor, journalist, content creators, or program collaborators and other individuals) which is considered a component of media freedom (ЖП Службен Весник на Република Македонија, 2013), the results from the latest research (2023) show that the general perception of journalists and media workers regarding freedom of expression, on a scale of one to five, is rated at 3. As reasons and factors affecting freedom of expression, factors influencing censorship are listed, originating from: the business community, political parties, supervisors (editors, owners), state institutions, and self-censorship (Koroveshovska, 2023)

### 1.4. Artificial intelligence as a tool for fake news

Fake news has already fanned the flames of distrust towards media, politics and established institutions around the world, while new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) might make things even worse (Cassauwers, 2019). Voice cloning known as audio deepfake is a type of artificial intelligence used to create convincing spoken sentences that sound like certain people are saying things they didn't say. This tool is mostly used for videos, but since it is a voice clone it can also be used for audio format. The two basic ways audio fakes are made: either text-to-speech - where the scammer puts in real audio and then writes what they want the voice to "say" - or speech-to-speech, where the scammer records a statement in their own voice, and then the tool converts it (Philp, 2024). Regarding this issue, deepfake detection systems work very differently from how human beings listen. They analyze audio samples for artifacts such as missing frequencies that are often left behind when audio is programmatically generated. Often, they focus on certain aspects of speech, such as how the speaker breathes or how much the pitch of his voice goes up and down (Collier, 2024).

Another detection method is the identification of fake stereo audio through false quality detection, using SVM and CNN (Liu, 2021). The practical use of this work is mainly for music websites, applications and their users. When listening to fake stereo audio, we can often feel a significant drop in perceived quality.

Hence, it is necessary to design an algorithm to detect fake stereo audio. The detection strategy the researcher adopts is to extract the acoustic features of each channel of stereo audio and combine them and feed them into the recognition classifier.

Modern radio stations must adapt to the changes brought about by artificial intelligence. Continuous adaptation of their strategic documents with the latest technological developments should be imperative for local radio stations as well. Using AI tools to produce quality radio content is also not something that is unknown in the world of modern radio stations. Also, having knowledge about the use of AI in the world can give them greater resistance to changes and the possibility of survival in the market.

## **2.Factors for the decline of traditional media formats**

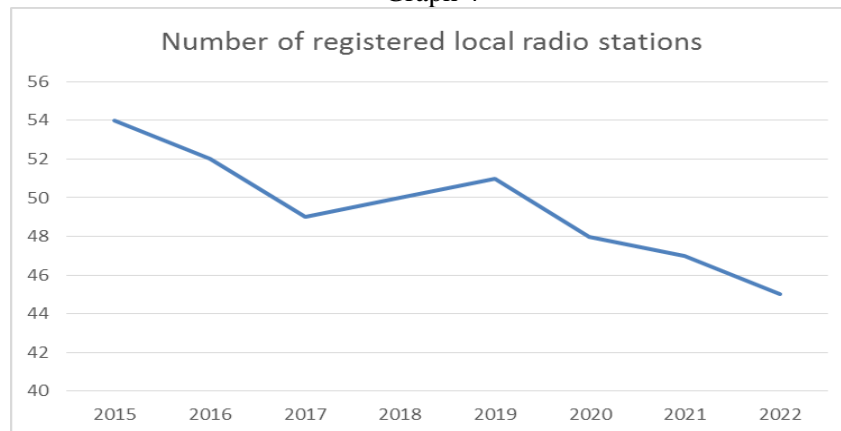
Considering the above situations and challenges and following the general trend of mainstream media, a decline in traditional media formats has been observed. According to the relevant data given in Table 1 (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2015-2022) and Graph 4 (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2022), we can notice that in Macedonia there is a continuous decline in the number of registered local radio stations from 2015 to 2022. The research shows that listenership is on the decline, primarily due to the use of new digital media, which are primarily utilized by the younger population. In specific tasks we have been focused on theoretical and statistical analyses on the local radio stations in the country, using general data produced by the official national Agency of Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services (AAVMS).

In the case of AAVMS the focus is on the annual reports of the reach of radio stations in the local areas they are covering (listenership). The indexes are compared since the period of 2015 and also dynamics of the work and the active status of this type of media. In this segment we created a new index which will incorporate the middle value of average daily reach of the local radio stations and comparing it by year where we can determine the dynamics of prospects for existence of this media in the future. This tendency will be shown as graphical value. We are using the extreme value cases of max and minimum reach of individual radio stations with location of towns and state regions in general. The relevance of this data is related to determining present media positioning, but also projecting in short terms, relative prospects of the same.

Table 1

Year	Number of registered local radio stations	Index (middle value of average daily reach of the local radio station)	Index Radio Kavadarci (middle value of average daily reach of the local radio station)
2015	54	2,03	7,4
2016	52	4,28	24,48
2017	49	5,26	24,69
2018	50	4,95	25
2019	51	6,11	24,3
2020	48	4,14	15,4
2021	47	4,81	16,5
2022	45	5,97	17,5

Graph 4



The lack of digitalization makes them less competitive on the market and influences their sustainability on commercial level. The Index (middle value of average daily reach of the local radio station) is growing by the year 2019, and then we have significant decrease or stagnation, with small correction of growth in the year 2022. Even if it not follows the pattern of continues decrease of the number of radio stations, this data has correction if we take in account that the average value in the early years is due of more inactive stations with value 0. It's also noticeable from the data that there is a great margin of the average value and maximum value of certain radio stations, i.e. the higher average is the product of a few radio stations which have extremely high daily reach. For example, in 2022, 27 local radio stations, or 60 % are below the average value. We calculated one of the extreme examples of the continuing high daily reach of the local radio station, Radio Kavadarci, where is also clear the decrease and stagnation of the reach to the potential audience.

In terms of the survival of traditional media or their potential decline, data from research conducted in 2019 indicate that television remains prominent in viewership compared to radio and reading printed media (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2022)<sup>2</sup>. Among traditional media, 83% of respondents watch television daily or several times a week, 25% regularly listen to the radio, 9% read books, and only 6% read newspapers or magazines. The percentage of internet usage is significantly higher: 72% of the total number of respondents access internet content through their mobile phones, while 38% do so through a computer or laptop. The survey concludes that 76% of people use television and the internet as sources of information, 20% get informed through the radio, and 17% through printed media.

Media sustainability related the stabile income and financing is the main factor for their prosperity on the market. Lack of adequate media space and lower coverage of potential listeners is a great obstacle for future development and present sustainability. The results obtained by the survey conducted in September 2023 (as part of Newaves project) show that four of seven media (local radio stations) are covering less than 10.000 potential audiences weekly, two between 20.000 and 50.000, and only one more than 50.000 per week. Situation is similar in monthly coverage of potential audience: five media have below 40.000, one from 80.000 to 200.000 and only one media more than 200.000.

## 2.1. Social media as competition

According to the Public Policy Document, radio is under pressure from increased competition from the internet and the new offering of music streaming services, as well as the vast selection of spoken content

<sup>2</sup> Through telephone surveys, respondents were asked about the types of media they used for information on the previous day.

in the form of podcasts (Media Development Center, 2022). What's significant for local information is that the online sphere actively allows the involvement of the public and local communities in informing, without intermediaries, as well as the participation of local self-governments and municipal administrations. Simultaneously, this means avoiding relatively high (for traditional media) costs for broadcasting, permits, printing, and distribution, which is seen as an advantage for journalistic reporting. The programs of almost all radio stations can be streamed live via the internet, and for more straightforward user interaction, most media outlets (both radio and television) have profiles on social networks like Facebook and X (former Twitter).

The report about vulnerability of local media related to research conducted in western part of Macedonia in 2023 points out that the advent of the internet (social networks and online media) on the one hand provides an advantage for local media to have their online platforms and expand their audience (Незири, 2023). On the other hand, there is a problem with unfair competition from unregistered portals that claim a significant share of the advertising market. Another issue arising from the presence of social media is that they receive the same funding as traditional media but often operate with a single employee, without registration, without a formal business structure, office, or an imprint. In general, it is estimated that the internet is increasing unfair competition among local media.

## 2.2. Challenges of Digitalization

Unlike traditional media, digital media are transmitted as digital data to devices that convert them into various forms such as videos, text, advertisements, music, podcasts, audio books, virtual reality, or digital art. This means a completely new set of transmission methods and devices for media delivery. Traditional media need to adapt to the challenges brought by the digital era by applying new transmission methods and technologies. Particularly for radio, this entails digital signal transmission on one side and distributing programs (music, news, shows) on websites and platforms, on the other.

Concerning new technologies and digitalization, there is significant skepticism among radio stations, although all of them have their internet extensions (Media Development Center, 2022). The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services establishes the conditions for providing radio program services that can be delivered through radio frequencies, digital terrestrial multiplex transmission capacity, public electronic communication networks that do not use limited resources, or via satellite (ЈП Службен Весник на Република Македонија, 2013)<sup>3</sup>. According to the obligations arising from the law, in 2022, the Public Enterprise Macedonian Radio Broadcasting (PE MRB) successfully introduced a digital radio standard for broadcasting digital audio radio services - Digital Audio Broadcasting Plus (DAB+)<sup>4</sup>, a system capable of meeting the current and future needs of PE MRB and enabling the introduction of new services that will result from the process of digitalization in radio broadcasting (ЈП Национална Радиодифузија, 2022)<sup>5</sup>. The situation for other radio stations on this issue remains unchanged. Radio stations still use analog frequencies for their program service, meaning they do not broadcast their program service through digital terrestrial multiplex. For their digitalization, a new DAB+ network would need to be built (the minimum investment for setting up the necessary infrastructure is estimated at 2.5 million euros over 3 years), or an upgrade of the infrastructure of the existing DAB+ operator (this investment is estimated at 2.1 million euros). As a third option, alternative technologies are offered, namely DAB+ technology via internet, which

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<sup>3</sup> Article 62, Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>4</sup> DAB+ enables more services within a single multiplex, providing a broader selection of thematic radio programs (by music genres, sports, news, etc.) and improved sound quality for the same number of services.

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with Article 107 and 110, the national media house MRT is obliged to ensure conditions for the use and development of modern technical and technological standards in program production and prepare a plan for transitioning to digital technology. The initial phase of the development plan for (Macedonian Radio) planned to launch experimental broadcasts in DAB+ in 2019. (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2019).

provides more information and data than the standard DAB+ (Таргет комуникации, Доел Скопје, 2021). The main obstacle to the popularization of digital radio is the high cost of digital receivers and the lack of information about the total number of such receivers, which presents a problem for cost-benefit analysis for the possibility of introducing digital radio for commercial purposes<sup>6</sup>. Research conducted in 2021 shows that the supply of DAB+ digital radio receivers range from 20 to 100 euros, which may pose an obstacle to the rapid implementation of the DAB+ service. It seems that these digitalization "requirements" and challenges, also have a direct impact on several factors influencing the survival of traditional media in the market, as well as on the radio listenership and the revenue generated from advertising.

### 3. Case study: Transformation of Radio Channal 77

Kanal 77 is a private national radio station established in 1991 in Stip, N. Macedonia . It is the only national private informative radio station in Macedonia, employing over 20 professionals. For a radio station to be classified as informative, 50% of its total vocal broadcast must have an informative character. Kanal 77 follows a talk-music format with a predominantly informative character. Nine years ago, Kanal 77 was heavily focused on informative programming, broadcasting long news segments of 15 minutes with main editions at 12 PM and 4 PM. It also rebroadcasted programs from international agencies such as Radio Free Europe (RFE), Voice of America (VOA), and Deutsche Welle (DW). The main pillar was the news, with other segments serving as fillers for the program schedule. They played older music targeting an older audience, and half of the music broadcasted had to be Macedonian, with 50% of that during prime time (7 AM to 7 PM). This approach led to listener fatigue due to the repetitive content. They have experienced a drop in the marketing revenue and drop in the listeners. This drop could be seen on the national level at that time.

Additionally, global decisions by these news agencies (RFE, VOA and DW) to withdraw from Macedonia forced Kanal 77 to reassess its strategy. Analyzing trends in Balkan countries and more developed countries like Germany and Britain, they realized that radio's dominance in news dissemination was waning, overtaken by faster, more flexible digital media. Radio required significant production time and lacked the immediacy and flexibility of digital platforms. Taking in consideration this situation, Kanal 77 decided to make a change in 2015. After analyzing successful radio stations globally, they recognized that the key difference was the absence of lengthy news segments and a focus on audience communication. They started to utilize various communication channels such as phone, Viber, WhatsApp, and email, fostering a two-way interaction with their audience, a feature no other medium could replicate as effectively. With the new strategy Kanal 77 shifted its target demographic to the 30-40 age group, and broadly target group of 25-45 age. They maintained their image as an informative radio station, with dedicated journalists creating news content. But also they adopted a format that emphasized constant communication with the audience, integrating interactive elements such as quizzes and audience engagement in advertisements, in collaboration with the business sector. This was also part of their future business model.

Additionally, they use foreign consulting company with aim of posting itself in the market through strategic moves. In the absence of relevant market and audience research (the last one was conducted by the Macedonian regulatory agency in 2017), Kanal 77 invests in its own alternative research on audience behaviors.

From this research we can conclude that the transformation was both necessary and beneficial. Sponsors reacted positively, as evidenced by an increase in advertisements and audience numbers. Market research indicated that around 65% of people in Macedonia listen to the radio, an increase from 40% a few years ago. Kanal 77 currently reaches approximately 39.2% of the radio-listening population, making it the most listened-to station in Macedonia. Also, according to relevant research from the Agency for Audio- and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

Audio-Visual Media Services of Macedonia, Radio Kanal 77 has the largest increase in absolute revenues of all radio stations in the country (Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, 2024).

## Conclusions

From the research results, the following conclusions can be drawn: the sustainability of local radio stations is severely challenged by financial constraints, human resources and new technological advances, which pose significant obstacles to their progress and survival of the broadcasting market. The research indicates that advertising remains the primary source of income for most local radio stations. However, the financial situation is problematic due to the limited potential of an advertising market dominated by national broadcasters. A few stations capture the majority of advertising revenue, while others struggle to generate sufficient funds. The findings reveal that the staffing levels in local radio stations are alarmingly low, with some stations operating without any registered employees. This lack of personnel severely limits the scope and quality of program services, with a notable deficit in younger staff members, indicating a potential crisis in succession and future vision for these media outlets. Freedom of expression for media workers is another critical issue. The media information system in Macedonia is heavily influenced by political and business interests, leading to biased editorial policies and compromised journalistic independence. Only one-third of the employees possess formal education in relevant fields, which further hampers the ability of local radio stations to produce high-quality content and adapt to the evolving media landscape. Artificial intelligence is another challenge for all radio stations, not only for local ones. While technological advancements in Artificial Intelligence, like audio deepfakes, offer innovative capabilities, they also introduce significant risks to media authenticity. In this context, continuous development and refinement of detection algorithms will be essential to counteract the potential misuse of AI in creating deceptive audio content.

The results indicate that radio stations are facing a significant decline, driven by several key factors, including the inability to adapt to digitization and the opportunities provided by social media. The rapid news dissemination and inherent attractiveness of social media platforms, combined with the rise of social media advertising, divert potential revenue away from traditional media outlets, posing their biggest competition.

The challenges presented by these digital advancements underscore the necessity for radio stations to innovate and embrace new technologies to remain relevant. Without strategic adaptation and investment in digital transformation, radio stations will continue to struggle in an increasingly competitive and rapidly evolving media landscape.

The case of Kanal 77 serves as an example of the vital role innovation and responsiveness play in the media industry. Our core focus are the local radio stations, but the case of Kanal 77 can be replicated in a local radio station. The transformation that Kanal 77 have done should be an example that change must be done and in local and regional level radio stations. By recognizing the shifting dynamics of media consumption and the rising influence of digital platforms, Kanal 77 proactively modified its strategy to stay relevant. The station's focus on interactive and engaging content, rather than relying solely on traditional news broadcasts, allowed it to build a more trusted and long-lasting connection with its audience. This approach not only retained existing listeners but also attracted a younger demographic, crucial for long-term sustainability. Furthermore, Kanal 77's ability to make the change from a rigid, one-way communication model to a dynamic, two-way engagement format exemplifies the adaptability required in modern media. This strategic move not only enhanced audience loyalty but also opened new revenue streams through innovative advertising formats that encouraged audience participation. This might be even crucial for their revenue growth. The transformation also illustrates a broader trend in the media landscape, where content creators must balance traditional media strengths with the agility of digital platforms.

Kanal 77's experience suggests that media organizations can thrive by offering unique, interactive content that resonates with their audience, thus maintaining trust and relevance in an increasingly digital world. In conclusion Kanal 77's successful transformation highlights the importance of adapting to changing



media landscapes and audience preferences. Also, it shows how strategies can be so important in developing a radio station in Macedonia. Taking into account that we as a society do not have a strategy for the media market, that might be one of the reasons for falling media sector.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services currently has a strategy for 2024-2028, but this document predominantly refers to the operation and strategic determinations of the agency, not to the media space. The last strategy for the development of the media space was adopted in 2019 and is valid until 2023. Therefore, one of the recommendations is that N. Macedonia needs a comprehensive strategy for media development. This strategy should address the evolving media consumption habits and integrate both traditional and digital media to create a synergistic media ecosystem.

The second recommendation is address to regional media reassessment: the regional division of media needs updating to reflect current demographics. Ensuring that media resources are allocated effectively will help in maintaining vibrant local media landscapes.

The third recommendation refers to content customization: local radio stations should tailor content to their specific regions to enhance relevance and profitability. Content that resonates with local culture and interests can build a loyal audience base and drive commercial success.

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