

Critical reflections on erotic content in Star FM's Couples quality time and Ya FM's Moto mubhurugwa (fire in underwear)

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Abstract

In Shona tradition, sex education customarily occurs in gendered, compartmentalised and private contexts. Accordingly, sexually explicit representations in the public sphere are morally obnoxious. However, there has been an unpredicted upsurge of sexually explicit content in Zimbabwe's Shona language broadcasts. This study is an evaluative and explanatory enquiry of erotic content in Star FM's Couples quality time and Ya FM's Moto mubhurugwa, and an account of radio producers/presenters' intensified interest in the subject of sex, against the Shona people's ethics on sexual deliberations. Using interviews, data were collected from purposively selected sample comprising radio presenters and listeners, and content analysis of conveniently picked episodes of radio broadcasts in question. Deploying the indigenous knowledge systems viewpoint, this study shows that, the framing and presentation of Couples quality time and Moto Mubhurugwa generally flouts Shona moral standards on sex. However, we argue that, while preserving culture is important, in the absence of sound cultural institutions and spaces, African language radio is an expedient medium for sexual knowledge dissemination. Using the culture industry thesis, the study also demonstrates the commodification and marketisation of sex as one of the new generation radio stations' strategies to penetrate the broadcasting market and compete with well-established players. The study provides insights into the conundrums of integrating sexual issues in African language broadcasting, and broadcasters' dilemma in mediating cultural and commercial functions.