

Comprehending Commercial Speech:

How 13-15 year olds understand non-traditional advertising on New Zealand radio

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

**Student's
Signature**



Date: 25/11/2010

Thomas Watts

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Commercialising the airwaves

Depending on one's political or ideological standpoint, New Zealand's deregulated broadcasting environment can be held up either as a warning to other nations, or as an example of how broadcasting can be made a competitive and cost-effective industry. Commentators describe it as an experiment in allowing market forces to shape one of the most commercialised media environments in the world (W. Hope & Johnson, 2001; Kelsey, 1995).

This provided New Zealand with the highest number of stations per-head of population in the world (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005), leading to widespread use of non-traditional advertising in pursuit of advertising in a highly competitive marketplace (Watts, 2008). How young people in New Zealand understand non-traditional advertising is the focus of this research project.

While non-traditional advertising is defined as being commercial speech purporting to be (or presented as) programming it is not widely understood as a term (W. Hope & Johnson, 2001, 2004; Ofcom, 2009). When discussing this research topic most interactions start with a blank stare, until the practices associated with non-traditional advertising are listed: sponsorships, prizes or spoken advertisement on commercial radio. This leads to a new interest in the conversation inevitably ending up considering how these types of commercial content fit in with what is perceived to be 'advertising'.

Within New Zealand radio research there is a tendency to focus on the structures and politics of the radio spectrum. While important, this is often done at the expense of the experiences of the audience (Johnson, 2005). This current study is one of the first in New Zealand to consider how an audience understands commercial radio.

Using focus groups consisting of young people aged between 13 and 15, the research documents how young people understand the grey area surrounding what makes an advertisement an advertisement. More broadly, this study provides an insight into media literacy amongst young people in New Zealand. When youth audiences hear this particular type of commercial speech on the radio, do they hear advertising, entertainment or opinion? And if they are aware of all of the various forms of advertising content, do they care about the moral issues surrounding these more subtle (and arguably manipulative) forms?

In order to appreciate how audiences understand their media messages, this study takes a reception studies approach. Reception studies focuses on the negotiated meanings that the audience makes in the consumption of media texts – put simply, the meaning of a text is not inherent; the meaning is understood through the relationship between the listener and the broadcast content (Holub, 1984). This approach creates a rich qualitative data set where the participants in the research are able to provide their own voices on their own experiences in their own language.

This chapter is concerned with placing the New Zealand broadcasting experience in a historical context. This involves documenting the dramatic shift in ideology and

government policy that culminated with New Zealand radio moving from a heavily regulated environment to a free-market where radio stations thrived or perished depending on their ability to turn a profit. From there, this research considers the New Zealand radio market in its present form, with many radio stations but very few owners, as well as the consequences that this commercial environment has for the content being broadcasted.

1.1 The New Zealand radio context

New Zealand is one of the most commercially saturated media environments in the world and for this reason alone studying the specifics of New Zealand's experience is worthwhile (Kelsey, 1995; M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). Ideologically, New Zealand represents an experiment into how far neo-liberal reforms can push the regulatory system of a media environment, including radio advertising which largely funds the commercial broadcasters. As such, the specifics surrounding the growth of the New Zealand radio industry are also important to analyse, as many of the trends occurring within New Zealand are apparent in the media policies and practices of other countries.

Early broadcasting structures in New Zealand reflected the Reithian British public service broadcasting principles of 'entertaining', 'informing' and 'enlightening' the mass audience (Day, 1994). As such, New Zealand was one of the first countries to broadcast proceedings in parliament (Day, 1994). As well as providing public service broadcasts, the New Zealand government also offered commercial broadcasting options which generated a lucrative source of income. Until the late 1960's when pirate radio began to circumvent

government control, the state effectively controlled broadcasting. And while the pirate radio revolution can be seen as radically changing the face of broadcasting, Mollgaard (2009) maintains that over time, the pirate radio stations helped usher in a stale commercial duopoly under the guise of broadcasting freedom and the counter-cultural nature of their set-up was co-opted by and branded as a point-of-difference by the its owner.

Pirate radio effectively opened up broadcasting in New Zealand which led to the subsequent deregulation of the radio spectrum. Driven by the ideological principle that government had no place in the commercial broadcasting environment, the 1984 Labour government implemented market-driven legislation under the assumption that increased commercial activity could provide the revenue to meet audience needs (Mollgaard, 2005; M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). With the passing of the Radiocommunications Act of 1989, the New Zealand radio environment was effectively treated the same way as any other tradable commodity with many companies that had no background in media buying into the New Zealand radio market (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). This free-market approach had the effect of opening up competition across the airwaves. As a result, there was a great increase in the number of radio outlets across the country with a large number of new providers (Cocker, 1992; Shanahan, 2000).

This proliferation of radio stations is evident in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, which currently boasts the highest number of radio stations per head of population in the world. In 2005, there was a ratio of one radio station for every 5,250 people, compared to

one for every 250,000 in Sydney, Australia and one for every 350,000 in London, England (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005).

However; although the market regulated environment provided more radio broadcasting outlets, there was no significant increase in the number of businesses eager to spend money advertising on radio. This meant increased fragmentation of the available advertising dollar, which in turn encouraged an intense focus on procuring advertisers to maintain profitability of these radio stations (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005).

This intense level of competition meant that there were few small players left due to their inability to be cost-effective (Mollgaard, 2007). Economies of scale became prominent in this environment as larger companies were able to engage in cost minimization in order to stay economically viable (Hendy, 2000; Mollgaard, 2007). This process was assisted through the development of broadcast technology, where radio production has become increasingly centralised; the vast majority of content produced in Auckland and then networked around the rest of the country. In this situation, the only content that appears to be local is the advertising - all nationwide networks have synchronised local ad-breaks allowing local sales team to broadcast advertising for local clients (Mollgaard, 2007). This level of commercial efficiency makes it very difficult for any new privately owned stations to match the cost-effectiveness of established players in the market (Rinks & Evey, 2004). It has left commercial radio in New Zealand as a restrictive environment where financial goals are the underlying motivator and any content that could cause listeners to change the station is avoided (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005).

1.1.1 The New Zealand radio market today

While deregulation successfully produced new radio stations, over time the number of owners has decreased to the point where only five networks – National Radio and Concert FM (both government-funded) plus Life FM, Radio Rhema and Southern Star (all owned by Christian Broadcaster Association) – exist independently of the two dominant companies: The Radio Network (TRN) and Mediaworks (Mollgaard, 2005; M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). Between them, these two companies own 17 out of 22 available national networked radio stations broadcasting to New Zealand listeners (Research International, 2009). In turn, both of these companies are owned by different overseas interests. Mediaworks also owns two television channels (TV3 and C4) and is itself owned by Ironbridge, an Australian-based private equity firm with interests in “expansion capital and buyout opportunities” (Ironbridge, 2009, p. 1).

The Radio Network is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Australian Radio Network (ARN). One half of the ARN shares are owned by APN News Media, who also own New Zealand’s largest selling daily newspaper the ‘New Zealand Herald’ as well as a variety of other holdings including nationwide magazines ‘New Zealand Woman’s Weekly’ and ‘The Listener’ (APN Print, 2010). The other half of Radio Network is owned by US company Clear Channel, which also owns a large proportion of the American radio market, thus bringing American commercial influences to New Zealand broadcasting (M. W. Shanahan & Duignan, 2005).

The consumer-centred rationale for the competitive radio marketplace assumes that a growing number of networks will provide the audience with a more diverse range of programming content. However, there is a tendency for radio stations to duplicate commercially successful formats rather than create untested formats to attract new audiences (Glasser, 1984; Hendy, 2000). For instance, Mediaworks and TRN both have similar stations running similar programs to compete for the same audiences across a number of formats:

Top40/Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR):	The Edge (Mediaworks) ZM (TRN)
CHR Urban:	Mai FM (Mediaworks) Flava (TRN)
Adult Contemporary:	More FM (Mediaworks) Classic Hits (TRN)
Rock:	The Rock (Mediaworks) Radio Hauraki (TRN)
Easy Listening:	The Breeze (Mediaworks) Easymix (TRN)
'Golden Oldies:'	Solid Gold (Mediaworks) Coast (TRN)
Talkback:	Radio Live (Mediaworks) Newstalk ZB (TRN)
Sport:	Live Sport (Mediaworks)

McCourt and Rothenbuhler argue that this strict adherence to formats serves to “institutionalize standardization and predictability to assure nervous advertisers... that their money is being well spent because they are reaching their target audience” (1987, p. 106).

1.1.2 Youth radio in New Zealand

When looking specifically at the choice available to young people, Mediaworks and TRN provide the vast majority of options with 92.1% of the 10-17 year old demographic listening to commercial radio, a percentage which equates to approximately 382,300 listeners during weekdays (Research International, 2008a). Of these stations, there are four commercial stations aimed specifically at young people (see Appendix A).

In New Zealand other forms of youth broadcasting include campus based radio stations operating in the four main centres of New Zealand; ‘bFM’ operating out of Auckland University, ‘Radio Active’ operating out of Victoria University in Wellington, ‘rdu’ operating from Canterbury University and ‘Radio One’ operating from Otago University. Other Universities also have radio stations; however these are Low Power FM broadcasts that have a very limited area of coverage. None of these stations broadcast nationally and the listening audience is mostly from the 25-39 demographic (Research International, 2008b).

There is no national youth network in New Zealand, unlike the UK (BBC1), Australia (Triple J) and Sweden (Sveriges Radio P3). However, this country has come close to establishing a

commercial-free youth broadcasting vehicle under the 1999 Labour Government. This thesis stemmed from research conducted into the political debate surrounding the publicly funded Youth Radio Network (YRN) that was being setup to provide non-commercial broadcasting alternative for young people in New Zealand. This radio station has never eventuated, due in large part to the sustained and focused pressure of the commercial broadcasters lobby in New Zealand. The industry lobby group 'Radio Broadcasters Association (RBA) successfully argued that commercial radio is already 'providing' for the 'needs' of young people (New Zealand Treasury, 1997). However, the question of what was actually being 'provided' was never thoroughly investigated by any of the participants in the Youth Radio Network debate. New Zealand radio studies lecturer Andrew Dubber (now at the University of Birmingham) argues that "the choices between radio stations aimed at youth [are] exclusively provided by commercial stations, exclusively provided by multinational corporations, exclusively within a narrow band of popular music... it isn't a voice [for young people] in anyway shape or form, it's a way of aggregating youth and selling them products... it's like we've got all these different flavours of ice cream and presenting them like it's all the food groups" (personal communication, June 20, 2008).

This current study builds on this earlier research in New Zealand radio. In chapter 2, the existing literature on media effects, radio audiences and advertising is considered. In chapter 3, the chosen research method – the focus group – as well as the reception studies methodology is discussed. The research findings are in chapter 4 and these findings are discussed and conclusions drawn in chapter 5.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Understanding the relationship between media and audience

This thesis encompasses a number of different areas of academic study, but at its core this research is concerned with how audiences understand and use media. As such, this research will consider the developments of 'media effects' studies from their inception to where the approach is placed now. From there, the research will consider audience understanding and how media usage (in particular advertising) fits into the everyday lives of the audience. This also involves looking at audience interaction with advertising, especially how non-traditional forms (product placement and advertorials) have become more prominent. From here, this literature review will discuss the research surrounding young people and their media consumption with a focus on research based on the New Zealand experience. Finally this research considers the commercialisation of radio (predominantly in New Zealand) as well as developing themes that are applicable to other media economies.

2.1 Media effects and the audience

When looking at the audience as a structure, it is important to start by working out what an audience is and is not. An audience is not a uniform mass, with Moores (1993) suggesting that the plural 'audiences' is more preferable, as there is no amorphous

collection of people simply waiting to consume messages. Because of the ambiguous nature of “the audience,” research into mass communication tends to concern itself with the social, cultural and psychological *effects* that this media content might have on members of said audience (Perse, 2001). The concept of ‘media effects’ is a relatively easy concept to grasp. Since the industrial revolution, people have relied upon the mass media for information, escapism and meaning making (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1977). Since media is such fundamental part of everyday life in the western world, theorists suggest that it would be prudent to accept that there an effect over how individuals view society; what is left to establish is the *extent* of this effect. For the purpose of this research, the framework for understanding these effects is of paramount importance.

2.1.1 Hypodermic needle model

Some of the earliest media effects research was conducted from the Frankfurt School by Adorno & Horkheimer (1977). Their approach to media effects was based on the ‘stimulus-response’ model drawn from psychological thought, and then applied to a societal context. This ‘magic bullet’ or ‘hypodermic needle’ model effectively posited the media as being so powerful that the audience was unable to resist the influence of any given media message. This was based on a notion that the mass media created a mass audience who were affected uniformly. Adorno and Horkheimer (1977) had watched the way Nazi Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels utilised the Nazi Germany propaganda machine through the mass media and concluded that only a hypodermic needle theory could explain this powerful influence over the audience.

This “mass audience effects” style has been outmoded as it discounts the role of the audience in the media effects process, effectively positioning them as incapable of actively engaging with media messages (Gauntlett, 1995). Gauntlett (1995) argues that the cause and effect nature of media effects research is a gross oversimplification whereby most researchers find an issue (for example, violence in society) and then blindly assume that it is a direct result of media consumption. He ultimately argues that the cause and effect approach to media consumption is not based on any sound social theory, and that research utilising this explanation for media influence is methodologically dubious at best, often serving as a veil for socially conservative agendas (Gauntlett, 1998). For Gauntlett (1998), the important aspects of media research are about looking at audience influences and perceptions rather than effects and behaviour.

However, Perse (2001) argues that researchers should not ignore the entire ‘hypodermic needle model’ because it is often useful when discussing vulnerable audiences who are unwittingly exposed to media content (like young children). Similarly, this approach to media consumption is often used by the mainstream media itself (possibly unwittingly) to provide an explanation for random acts of violence¹. According to this approach media

¹ Two cases are relatively illuminating of this idea. Firstly, the case of James Bulger where two 10 year-old British boys murdered a 5 year old boy in a way that the mainstream news media reported as being closely linked to the horror movie ‘The Bride of Chucky’. While police discounted this as an influence, it did not stop the outpouring of public opinion over the powerful effects of media (Franklin & Petley, 1996; Pennell & Brown, 1999). A similar example occurred in the USA where the shootings at Columbine High School led to musician ‘Marilyn Manson’ being blamed for influencing the incident through his lyrics (Muzzatti, 2004).

messages get consumed unconsciously, which is relevant in the case of this research as it is possible that certain types of non-traditional advertising (such as advertorials) could be consumed unknowingly.

2.1.2 Limited effects

The uniform nature of media effects was first challenged by the audience response to the Orson Welles radio dramatization of H.G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds' in 1938. The story is centred on a series of fictional newscasts which report on the invasion of Earth by aliens. While a number of people panicked because they believed the Earth was being attacked, research suggested there was not a uniform effect; in fact, it was the social context surrounding the consumption of the broadcast that most influenced individual reactions – those who were in isolated communities or with particular religious affiliations were more likely to have panicked (Lowery & De Fleur, 1995).

As such, media effects research began focusing on differing theories of media influence during the 1950's. This 'limited effects' model emphasizes audience discernment and is based on the assumption that audiences can actively select how they understand media. Klapper (1960) argued that audiences select what they consume, how much attention they give it, how the message of that consumed media is understood and what they learn from that message. This view grew out of studies into persuasion and electoral research which discovered that the effects of media on political decision making was tempered by the social connections amongst people, the influence of people within the flow of information from the mass media, as well as a wide variety of personal experiences and

attributes (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). This research concluded that media was consumed socially and subsequently led to shared interpretations of media messages. This led to the understanding that mass media messages reinforce existing beliefs rather than propose an entirely new message. Emphasis is now placed on the social context in which the media is consumed, an important aspect of media consumption when dissecting the various forms of advertisements.

The 'limited effects' theories were also expanded upon by the Uses and Gratifications theory of media influence; an approach which placed the importance of media messages predominantly in the hands of the audience (Ruggerio, 2000). This approach concerned itself with understanding why people use the media and what they use it for (McQuail, 1983). The Uses and Gratifications methodology positions media consumption within an 'active audience' framework whereby the audience are in control of their media usage.

2.1.3 Reception studies

Research into the social context surrounding media consumption has had a critical impact on the media effects and audience effects research methodologies. Establishing an understanding of media in everyday life involves going in depth with a small number of people; this is effectively a shift from quantitative into qualitative research (Gauntlett, 1998). This research project employs this more qualitative, 'reception studies' framework which focuses on individuals with the aim of establishing a representative in-depth insight

into how audience consumption works, as well as the social contexts surrounding this media consumption.

Reception studies employs an active audience approach, and is based around the notion that the meaning of a text is not inherently embedded in the text itself; rather the meaning is filtered through the listeners own sociocultural environment (McQuail, 1997).

This is the approach employed by Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School which understood media content as being 'encoded' by the producer of the message and 'decoded' by the audience. This research effectively establishes the audience as active receivers of media messages, who can negotiate, and even potentially oppose, the meaning of a particular message (Hall, 1997).

This research approach involves encouraging participants to discuss texts themselves in order to create collective meanings. This tends to be interlinked with focus group interviews which offer an insight into how audiences generate their own questions concerning media consumption, framed and constructed in their own vocabulary (McQuail, 1997). This approach considers the '*how*' of the media consumption; how media usage fits in around everyday life, thus providing a good context for reception studies research (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). The findings of this form of research are not necessarily applicable at a societal level, but instead offers an insight into the lived experiences of media consumers (Moore, 1993).

2.1.4 Media effects and advertising

While social issues have been discussed in relation to media effects, this research is primarily concerned with the ways in which audiences consume and understand advertising. Media communication research has often been concerned with the influence of advertising. Paul Lazarfeld's limited effects theory surrounding personal influence was incorporated by market researchers and used by advertisers to best work out how to encourage audiences to purchase products (Katz, 2001). McGuire (1986) notes that one of the most common ways in which media effects is used is in relation to working out a cause and effect relationship between consumption of advertising and purchasing decisions (even if it is difficult to narrow down the direct influence).

Perse (2001) offers caution by noting that there is often a level of self interest involved when evaluating advertising effects. For example, commercial media organisations derive profit from advertisements and product placements that they produce in order to encourage consumer purchases. Since their advertising is only profitable if it successfully convinces audiences to buy products, it is in a media organisations best interest to play up the effectiveness of these advertising messages.

2.1.5 The construction and commoditisation of audience

It is important to look critically at the construction and commoditisation of the audience for this advertising as it provides an insight into the power relationship between the advertisers and the consumers. Commercial media organisations talk of 'delivering'

audiences to prospective advertisers by shaping content that is designed to appeal to a particular demographic.

But, if as Smythe (1981) argues audiences are indeed being 'delivered' to advertisers, what is being 'delivered' is very contentious subject. Audience measurement techniques convert media consumption into "manageable calculable units" and this data is then used to provide a picture of how audiences use media; rarely is the audiences' perspective considered in these measurement techniques (Moore, 1993, p. 3). However, while these audience measurements are an inexact science, the media industry still relies upon them to understand trends of consumption. This approach focuses on consumer behaviour and tries to work out how to keep audiences interested in the commercial messages being proliferated and, in turn, convert those audiences into purchasers. The 'audience' is a concept created within commercial media research for financial gain, and while there are noticeable flaws "its fictionality does not necessarily hinder its economic functionality" (p. 3).

2.2 Audiences and Advertising

2.2.1 Structures of power:

While the reception studies approach to understanding advertising consumption is important, it is important to critically examine the power structure and commercial influences over media content, as it provides an insight into the kinds of messages that are being broadcasted to audiences. The Frankfurt School adopted the notion of the mass audience and used it to argue that powerful mass media outlets encourages a

standardization of culture that leads to 'high' culture being overrun by 'low' popular culture (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1977). Within this environment of standardization Adorno & Horkheimer (1977) suggest that there is a process of 'pseudo-individualisation' whereby consumers are encouraged to differentiate themselves through the unconscious consumption of goods. These commercial imperatives underpin mass media organisations and results in the continual need to encourage consumption in order to maintain advertising revenue.

The commercial imperatives behind media production are emphasized by Herman and McChesney (1997) who maintain that the quality of media content suffers through the minimization of costs. To maintain financial viability, all media content is filtered through a commercial paradigm which actively aligns with the views of their advertisers. As such, commercial media content often contains an ideological bias whereby "consumerism, class inequality and individualism tend to be taken as natural and even benevolent, whereas political activity, civic values and anti market activities are often marginalized" (1997, p. 27).

Hope and Johnson (2001) position advertising as a part of everyday life suggesting that the values purported by the commercial media serve to form part of our understanding of the world. McChesney (1999, p. 266) argues that this level of commercial exposure leads to an invasion of social space with "ads in schools, airport lounges, doctors offices, movie theatres, hospitals, gas stations, elevators, convenience stores, on the Internet, on fruit, on ATMs, on garbage cans and countless other places. There are ads on beach sand and

restroom walls.” Hope and Johnson (2001) also document the shift in advertising from an original focus on the release of new products to the current situation where the commoditisation of products has focused on encouraging the value of their brand, rather than making a higher quality product. This focus on branding is also visible within media products themselves, with each radio station or news program keen to brand themselves as being more cutting edge or more fair and balanced, a commercial identity which serves to mask any deficiencies in the quality of their product (McChesney, 1999).

One of the fundamental focuses of this research relates to the increase of commercial speech and the way in which it has intensified over time to the point where leaving the house involves being inundated with commercial messages. The irony of course is that as commercialism has increased, success for any particular advertiser becomes particularly difficult, hence pushing advertisers to try even harder to gain the attention of more discerning audiences.

2.2.2 Audience perceptions of advertising

When looking at the perception of advertising amongst consumers, there are two general approaches amongst researchers. Research tends to look specifically at either public opinion towards the broad institute of advertising, or consider the effectiveness of individual advertising campaigns. For most audience members, advertising is utilised as a tool to provide information regarding where, when, how and why to consume a product or service (Coulter, 2001). Adult consumers use advertising in order to interact with the products by making value judgments about the quality of these products as well as their

own needs for any particular product (Gordon, 2006). Adults also view advertising as a reflection of a dynamic and growing economy (Ford-Hutchison and Rothwell, 2002). At the same time, advertising is also seen as an annoyance, as it disrupts the flow of the programming, or even as being unethical if the claims of the advertising are seen as being harmful or untrue (Dutta-Bergmann, 2006; Obermiller, Spangenburg, & MacLauchlan, 2005).

However, when asked about favourite advertisements, audiences are considerably more receptive. Audiences tend to appreciate advertising that is entertaining perhaps through interesting special effects and well developed plot-lines; which are all aspects that are associated with programming itself (Ford-Hutchison & Rothwell, 2002). Weilbacher (2003) suggests that audiences pay attention to content that relates directly to them through an internal screening process that discerns whether the message is of interest. He argues that in an age of media saturation, most consumers are intolerant of intrusive communication, have a short attention span once a message is perceived to be advertising and an essential disinterest and distrust of advertising in general. This suggests that advertising is a basic part of everyday life – a natural status quo. This understanding of audiences reflects an active audience approach, but also an inherent understanding that advertising is a ‘necessary evil’, even a ‘trade-off’ in order to receive media content for free (Ford-Hutchison & Rothwell, 2002).

2.2.3 Audiences and non-traditional advertising

However, the vast majority of this scholarly research into advertising has been associated with traditional advertising – in this case most of the examples examine advertising that appears during commercial breaks on broadcast mediums (specifically television). As audiences become more sceptical of advertising, however, there has been an influx in non-traditional forms of advertising, such as sponsorships and product placements, as well as the integration of consumer products into the story of the show itself (Watts, 2008). This is arguably a considerably more effective marketing tool as it is supposedly influencing consumers at a subconscious due to advertising being disguised as editorial content.

It is important to establish that these non-traditional forms of advertising such as advertorials, sponsorship and product placement are not new concepts. Radio programming during ‘the Golden Age of Radio’ during the 1920-50s in the United States was reliant upon commercial sponsors to such an extent that advertising agencies were writing entire radio dramas devoted to their products (Hilmes, 2005). Similarly, New Zealand had ‘Aunt Daisy’ during the 1930s-60s, who as well as being the ‘first lady’ of New Zealand radio, was also a vehicle for promoting a number of products on-air without identifying her promotions as advertisements (Hoar, 2009). For example, this spoken advertisement for ‘Goddards Silver Cloth’ which appears on-air as an unscripted editorial opinion:

“Oh I say. So many people are not cleaning their silver now, that’s terrible. Well they clean it about only once a month instead of once a week because they love the

Godard's silver cloth. So simple: just as you set the table you rub up the silver, each piece of silver as you set it down" (Brown, 2002, p. 1).

The effects of product placement within broadcast mediums have often had profound effects on the sales of particular products. The 1989 movie 'E.T' is one of the most successful examples of product placement; the alien is lured out by the young protagonist with 'Reese's Pieces Peanut Butter Cups,' a move which led to candy sales increasing by around 66% (Ong & Meni, 2004; Reed & Dutka, 1989). While not all product placements work as effectively as others, it is especially important to consider the influence of this more indirect approach on young people, who are arguably less adept at understanding the intent of non-traditional advertising.

2.3 Youth Audiences

2.3.1 Defining youth

When considering 'youth audiences', it is necessary to take a step back in order to assess the contested nature of the term 'youth'. The idea of adolescence as being a unique stage in human development was popularised in 1904 by American Psychologist G. Stanley Hall – he pertained that this 'youth' phase consisted of some form of conflict with a parental figure, mood disruptions and risky behaviour (Savage, 2007). The marketisation of youth, however, did not develop until the 1940s/50s. In Western countries teenage consumerism stemmed from the economic affluence afforded by the end of World War II, and was encouraged by the mass media as identifiable youth audiences made young people appealing to advertisers (Savage, 2007). Frank (1997) argues that even the youth anti-

establishment counter-cultural movements of the 1960s were firmly rooted in these consumer ideals. He suggests that these movements encouraged a culture of instant gratification which was then utilised by advertisers in order to encourage young baby-boomers to become better consumers than their thrifty parents who had grown up during the war.

The advertiser focus on youth audiences is becoming more prominent as time passes (Livingstone & Bovill, 2001). The appeal stems from the fact that while young people do not necessarily have high levels of income when compared to adults, the majority of that income is disposable and therefore available to spend on consumer products (Zanker, 2001). The youth targeted by advertising are getting younger, as identified in Lindstrom's (2004) research surrounding the creation of the Tween² market as a lucrative new audience with a massive amount of spending power.

Children and young people have a large influence over several aspects of the purchasing process, because besides being consumers in their own right children and young people also influence purchases within the family (McDermott & O'Sullivan, 2006). For example, Caruana and Vassallo (2003) found that mothers who shop with their children tend to spend 30% more than they had originally intended – if the father is shopping with their children, he will supposedly overspend by as much as 70%. While these are studies on

² 'Tween' is a neologism of 'between' and 'teen' and is an American marketing term used to describe the market of 8-12 year olds.

American young people, they serve to highlight the importance of the youth market to advertisers in developed capitalist societies.

This categorisation and demographing of youth 'markets' is framed negatively by a number of theorists arguing against the commercialization of young people. Langham Brown, Ralph and Lees argue that "the commercial media have promoted the emergence of a global community of young people free from the values and preferences of any particular social and geographical location and embedded in the ethic of consumerism, preoccupied it seems by celebrities, fashion and the demands of ad orientated life styles" (1999, p. 151).

What is important is that this homogenization of 'youth' within the 'youth market' is not rebutted by commercial media outlets; rather this level of consumerism is reinforced as the natural state of affairs. When discussing young people, one of New Zealand's radio industry sales agencies celebrates the fact that young people are heavily influenced by international popular culture and international celebrity lifestyles; as such, youth culture is "one big entertainment world" (Burgham, 2002, p. 5). The fundamental difference between a radio sales perspective and a more critical academic approach revolves around the role of the media within society and how its encouragement of consumer culture is perceived. From a critical media studies perspective this focus on trivial superficialities is damaging, whilst the literature from within the industry understandably encourages an entertainment world as being a positive state of affairs, as the industry derives profit from reinforcing these perceptions.

2.3.2 Young people and media literacy

Within media studies literature, it is increasingly common to focus on the media literacy of young people³. This research is grounded in the academic consensus that young people are capable of comprehending and responding to media messages in active ways where the meaning made stems from the socio-cultural experiences of the audience member (Hagen & Wasko, 2000). Media literacy depends upon the ability to understand advertising based on the cognitive development of the young person. Livingstone (2001) has found that from roughly the ages of two to six, children view advertising as entertainment that is interspersed with programming. Oates (2001) reports children as young as six as able to differentiate between advertisements and programs and are even capable of recalling advertisements and their products. Bonfield and Cole (2007) note that in a review of the 'vulnerable groups' literature, children can distinguish advertising from programming at about age five, but do not understand the persuasive elements until age twelve. Achenreiner and John (2003) suggest that by the age of 12, children are highly aware of, and make use of, brand names as a cue in consumer judgments.

One of the reasons why young people are more likely to be influenced by advertising relates to the social environment surrounding its consumption, particularly the way in which television is consumed. OfCom's (2005) research suggests that 44% of parents

³ Notable scholars in the area include Professors Sonia Livingstone (London School of Economics), David Gauntlett and Annette Hill (University of Westminster). In New Zealand Dr. Geoff Lealand (2004a, 2004b) and Dr. Ruth Zanker (2001) have carried out work using similar frameworks.

never talk to their children about the intent of advertising, which could potentially lead to a higher level of susceptibility to advertising messages.

2.3.3 How advertising is used by young people

The Irish Broadcasting Commission have offered some in-depth research on how young people (aged 10-17) view advertising. Their conclusions found that children value and use advertising; that children are aware of the intention of advertising; that they find advertising annoying, especially on the radio where products are repeatedly promoted; but at the same time, they also generally like social marketing messages and campaigns because these advertisements were understood as having a positive impact upon society. Lindstrom (2004) argues that due to the commercial nature of broadcasting, most young people do not expect to be informed by traditional media as a public service. This has led to young people being highly media literate, very sceptical about claims posed in advertising and very adept at noticing assertions associated with poor products (Laczniak, Mallalieu, & Palan, 2005). This distrust of advertising mirrors that of older demographics; public opinion polls have found that approximately two-thirds of adult consumers doubt the trustworthiness of advertisements (Calfee and Ringold, 1994).

While most researchers into children and advertising focus on health concerns associated with fast food, alcohol and tobacco products⁴, young people say that they are more

⁴This can be seen in a number of research such as (Ashton, 2004; Fielder, Donovan, & Ouschan, 2009; Hoek, Maubach, & C., 2004; Goldberg, Niedermeier, Bechtel, & Gorn, 2006; Hoek et al., 2004; Tangari, Burton, Andrews, & Netemeyer, 2007; Zhao & Pechmann, 1997)

concerned about issues of image and social status that stem from advertising. This ties in with research done by Oates (2001), which states that advertising does not *make* teenagers aged between 13-17 purchase alcohol as such (it actually has little influence on consumption) but it does offer a guidance for how one should behave whilst drinking. Likewise, Pechmann, Levine, Loughlin and Leslie (2005) found that branding is important to teenagers through studying the effect of advertising on teen tobacco consumption. These researchers found that brand specific advertising expenditures had three times more influence on brand share amongst teenagers than in adults. While this does not prove direct causality between advertising and product purchase, it does indicate that advertising has an influence on those consuming it.

2.3.4 Product placement and young people

A tighter correlation exists between the influence on consumer behaviour and *product placement*, as children have not developed sensitivity to this type of non-traditional advertising (Avery and Ferraro, 2000). Moore (2004) states that to evaluate advertising, children and young people need to be able to differentiate between advertising and non-advertising but this becomes problematic as “the lines between advertising and entertainment have become increasingly blurred” (p. 163). Product placement in film is an area of growth within media studies research that has been overlooked for sixty years (Auty & Lewis, 2004). As such, young people’s awareness of non-traditional forms of advertisement is a burgeoning area of research. One such example of the arguable cause and effect of on-screen product placement involved the research of Auty and Lewis

(2004) who tested 105 young people in two separate age groups (6-7 and 11-12) to see how product placement affected their consumer choices. The researchers showed the participants a scene from the movie 'Home Alone' which involved Pepsi being spilled on the floor, whilst another group was played the same scene without the branded product. Afterwards, the participants were then asked to choose between Coke and Pepsi and a significant proportion of participants choosing Pepsi. This research highlights that product placement works in reminding the viewer of previously established product preferences. In a similar study, Halford, Gillespie, Brown, Pontin, & Dovey (2004) found that showing 12-13 year olds fast food advertising meant that they would consume more food than they would have done without the product advertising cues. Although, it is important to note that when obvious product placement was noticed by audiences, it led to negative reactions because it was perceived as advertising that interrupted the flow of a story (Hudson, Hudson and Peloza, 2008). As such, product placement is not always effective as it can leave audiences with a dislike of the product in question.

Product placements appear to have an influence at a subconscious level, and this raises questions concerning the ethical nature of this form of advertising. For example, Hudson, Hudson and Peloza (2008) argue that product placement regulations should only be used on social ills such as fast food, alcohol and tobacco – effectively suggesting that the placement of positive ideas can potentially influence and be used for positive action. Similarly Gupta and Gould (1997) and Argan, Velioglu, & Argan (2007) both provide research that suggests that as long as the product placement is promoting something

ethical, then the act is perceived positively by the audience. However, there is still a lot of

room for analysis in this area with key academics in the field concluding that there is a need for more research (S. Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Krider, 2006; Law & Braun, 2000; Moore, 2004; Morton & Friedman, 2002; Sargent et al., 2005; Tiwsakul, Hackley, & Szmigin, 2005).

2.4 Young People in New Zealand:

Research in the field of non-traditional advertising suggests that cultural and social environments have a great deal of influence on how audiences consume and understand media content. As such, the research that has looked explicitly at young people in New Zealand's media experience is of great importance to this research project. Lealand (2003) had a group of New Zealand school students draw their dream bedrooms and through these drawings, found that New Zealand young people had a very advanced sense of brand awareness, as well as a real love of media in general (for example, most rooms had television screens that were at least 50"). This suggests that brands have come to 'signify the cultural capital of the person' with corporate branding being incredibly prevalent in the bedrooms of these young people (for example, some rooms had a McDonalds or KFC restaurant in the room, as well as an X-Box, a Playstation, Sega or Nintendo gaming consoles).

One of the most comprehensive insights into the study of New Zealand children's media usage was a study conducted by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (2008) . This research looked specifically at the experiences of 6-13 year olds, lending this research particular relevant for this project. They found, firstly, that there is a difference in access

to media devices and in children's responses to media content depending on the cultural background of the child. For example, Pacific children are more likely to listen to the radio, whilst Pakeha children are more likely to use computers and the internet. This reinforces the understanding that media consumption varies depending on class, ethnicity and gender. Secondly, while television was the most used medium, and certainly has the most impact, the participants also used a wide variety of other media with increasing numbers of young people utilizing the internet. Many young people also have cell-phones so are able to participate in competitions on television, or promotions on the radio. Thirdly, children have clear notions regarding the types of content that are appropriate for them to consume with many participants self-censoring in accordance with family rules surrounding consumption.

With regards to children and their radio use, 75% of 6-13 users listen to the radio on a regular basis (BSA, 2008). Radio usage appears to increase with age, and also entails an embrace of youth formats, which could be argued as a means for young people to create their own identity separate from their parents. For most participants, the radio is a communal listening activity, with the majority of young people listening with an adult around. While most participants had their own radio in their room, this study found that most radio listening occurred in the car, the living room, and the bedroom. Mornings tend to be the most popular time to listen, which reflects the trends of adult listening. The finding that children listen to what their parents consume suggests that they are often hearing content not necessarily targeted at them.

Radio as an influential social medium does not appear to concern adults a great deal, and is four times more likely to have no rules placed upon its consumption. This study found that parents are worried about bad language, but not concerned about advertising, with only 1.82% of parents citing commercial content on radio as a concern. What came through very strongly in this research was the confidence of the participants in their ability to self-select and otherwise control their media consumption, a finding that confirms the notion that children are not passive media 'sponges' and are engaged with what they are consuming.

2.5 Advertising on Radio

Finally, contemporary radio broadcasting is of great interest for this research project; in particular the way in which it functions as a vehicle for commercial messages. Radio is an easy medium for advertisers because it is quick and cost-effective (Hausman, Messere, & Benoit, 2007). Hendy (2000) suggests that 80% of all radio income comes directly from commercials on air. As established earlier, the audience of a radio show simply exists as a lure for advertisers to reach these consumers who may be interested in their products. Interestingly, research into advertising on radio suggests that commercials on commercial radio are the most universally disliked characteristic of the medium (Berry, 2006; Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007). As new technologies like iPods have enabled audiences to be in charge of their own listening experiences, listeners (especially in the United States) are now able to avoid these elements as seen through the steady decline of radio listening over the past 10 years (Berry, 2006). As such, radio stations are in a

continuous fight to attract listeners so that they might listen to messages from the advertisers who are keeping them in business.

2.5.1 Non-traditional radio advertising

As a result of this general dislike of traditional advertising, radio stations are utilizing other forms of on-air commercial activity in order to gain more revenue for the station. This in turn leads to a blurring of the lines between editorial content and advertising with “commercials [being] introduced into the editorial programming” of the radio broadcast (Brown, 2002, 24 Nov.). Similarly, prizes, sponsorship and on-air promotions serve to integrate the consumer products into the editorial content of the broadcast. Marsh (2000, 11 Feb) suggests that on-air promotions are often twice as expensive as buying the equivalent time covered in pure spot advertising. This is because these promotions represent a win/win/win situation for the advertiser, the audience and the station. In theory, a good promotion will be entertaining for listeners which can make them listen longer which benefits the station whilst “the advertiser gets to bask in the reflected glow of a trusted radio station or DJ” (Marsh, 2000, p. 34). This contrasts with traditional radio advertising which tends to be seen as an annoyance. Promotions do not necessarily mean that money changes hands, as stations often exchange large prizes for on-air mentions with clients (Vacarro & Kassaye, 1997).

There has been little academic consideration of these non-traditional forms of advertising on radio. Most writing regarding advertorials and product placement on radio comes from trade magazines (such as Advertising Age, Continuum and Marketing Week) who argue

that the regulation of the industry (especially in the United Kingdom where there are strong regulations surrounding commercial content) is hampering the growth of the advertising industry.

There has been little research into how audiences feel about these types of commercial content on the radio. The British regulatory body 'OfCom' (Office of Communication) have produced a study into listener tolerance of commercial references within radio programming. Their research will inform this thesis, as it is a key and significantly detailed audience study concerned with audience understanding of commercial content. The OfCom research studied 18-60 year olds, which means that school-aged young people's experiences were not considered. As such, this research, which looks at 13-15 year olds, will aid this area of academic research.

In approaching the regulation of commercial references within radio programming, OfCom is concerned with maintaining three principles: 'transparency', 'separation' and 'editorial independence' - which effectively means that advertising has to be obvious to listeners and should not encroach on programming space or influence editorial content (Ofcom, 2009).

Their key findings include listeners *expecting* to be sold to, whether by commercial breaks or within editorial programming – the majority of participants understood how commercial radio is funded and accepted this as a trade off for receiving radio as a free service. At the same time, advertising tends to be associated negatively by audiences as it is intrusive and interrupts the program content. This form of advertising also treats the

audience as a homogenous mass and is consequently seen as being irrelevant to most listeners' lived experience. Spot advertisements were also perceived as having an overt sales agenda with low production and 'tonal' values, factors that tended to annoy listeners. As such commercial references within programming were considered by the participants to be preferable to spot advertising, because they were perceived as being less intrusive and with a less overt sales agenda. As long as the commercial references did not appear to impair the listening experience – either by being irrelevant to the listening content or by intruding on the listening experience – listeners were favourable towards them.

The participants desired clarity and integrity from broadcasters, so that listeners could clearly identify commercial content in order to preserve the listeners' trust of the presenter or the radio station. They felt that editorial independence was of profound importance as listeners felt they had relationships with the on-air presenters; to feel as though the presenter was delivering 'scripted opinion' would leave listeners feeling irritated and let down. However, the general sense was that there was not a need for separation (labelling of commercial references within the broadcast) because the audience was savvy enough to work out the difference – however, there was a strong concern that a younger audience might not have the same commercial awareness.

What is interesting is the way in which New Zealand's regulatory system differs from the United Kingdom which has a stronger public broadcasting. At present, there are no limits on the amount of commercial content that can be broadcasted every hour, and unlike the

New Zealand print and television mediums there is no need to label any radio advertorial content as being an advertisement (ASA, n.d.). This means that while the OfCom research into commercial references is illuminating, it may not be representative of the New Zealand experience, which is arguably more saturated with advertising.

2.6 New Zealand radio

Within New Zealand academic radio literature, the earlier history of the New Zealand broadcasting experience has been well covered by historians Downes and Harcourt (1976) Day (1994; 2000) as New Zealand set up Reithian broadcasting policies in the early 1920s, through to the 1960s. There are also a couple of celebratory histories of specific iconic radio stations such as the first ‘pirate’ radio station Radio Hauraki’ and the first commercial radio station ‘Newstalk ZB’ (Blackburn, 1989; Francis, 2006).

The deregulation and privatization of radio has been the other main focus of New Zealand radio research, with emphasis on the analysis of program quality, news coverage and commercial factors. Cocker (1992) argued that while deregulation had led to growth in the number of stations, it also equated with a profound dilution in the quality of aspects of radio programming, such as in-depth and unbiased news coverage. Likewise, Norris and Comrie (2005) concluded that commercial imperatives led to the sidelining and consolidation of news reporting because news journalism is resource intensive and is arguably expendable if all that is required is to entertain the audience.

Shanahan and Duignan (2005) offer a comprehensive overview of how radio developed in New Zealand's market regulated economy since the Radiocommunications Act was passed in 1989. As well as covering the growth and then subsequent rationalisation of the commercial radio industry, they also identify three main tensions in the New Zealand radio industry. Firstly, there is the tension between providing a big-budget Auckland-based program which lacks local content versus a lower quality program that is geographically relevant for the listeners. At the present time, the New Zealand radio industry leans towards networking because it is more cost effective. Stemming from that issue is the second tension between providing standardized content or diverse content; as advertisers want to be assured the station is doing everything in its power to keep their listeners through commercial breaks, any content that may cause a listener to change the station is avoided. This leads to a third tension between balancing the needs of the listeners and the needs of the advertiser. Shanahan and Duignan (2005) conclude that in order to keep their advertisers happy, commercial radio stations have become very risk averse and are therefore prone to playing content that audiences are already familiar with. The result is a rather formulaic set of programming styles all designed to capture mass consumer audience demographics.

2.6.1 Youth radio in New Zealand

The 'Youth Audience' has been examined in the past from an industry perspective, whose findings concluded that youth listening increased due to deregulation (M. Shanahan, 2000). It was determined that deregulating the market led to more young people listening

to commercial youth radio stations, whilst noting that there was considerably more development in areas with a larger available listening audience. There is also research regarding how the proposed public service commercial-free Youth Radio Network (YRN) had been proposed by government and then systematically sidelined and shutdown by commercial lobbyists (Mollgaard, 2005; Dubber, 2007). This debate prompted more research into young people aged 12-25 years and resulted in the research paper '*Youth Television and Radio Needs*' which investigated what young people wanted from their radio stations, including aspects such as: 'the right blend of music', 'good presenters', 'good talkback' 'gig guides', 'comedy', 'jokes/prank calls', 'competitions' and 'music requests' (New Zealand on Air, 1997, p. 9). The research discussed the closeness that young people felt with other listeners through the creation of a listening subculture primarily based on a relationship with the on-air presenters. As such, having the ability to participate in the process of creating a particular product is an important part of listening experience, a finding which matches other overseas research on the motivations of young people listening to radio (Boehnke, Münch, & Hoffmann, 2002). The research also found that attitudes towards advertising were still generally negative, with 62% of participants agreeing that there were too many advertisements on the radio, which led to disloyalty amongst listeners who would change channels to avoid commercial breaks. The research into the 12-25 demographic has not been updated since 1997 and as such it would be intriguing to establish whether attitudes towards expectations of radio stations have changed in the last 13 years.

2.6.2 Radio sales in New Zealand

The New Zealand Radio sales arm 'The Radio Bureau' has also published insightful research into the New Zealand market which highlights the unabashed commercial approaches of New Zealand radio stations – for example, the advertising profile for Top 40 station 'The Edge's' states that their young audience has “high disposable incomes and spend everything they earn” (TRB, 2010a, p. 1). TRB argues that the segmentation of the market makes radio a more financially developed advertising medium than television due to maximising audience profitability by creating defined audience segments rather than larger audience targets of television. Statements from TRB (2010a) clearly outline the positioning of the commercial radio industry as being essentially linked with the sale of targeted advertising, with content that provides a means of drawing listeners in to consume the on-air commercial content.

According to TRB (2009), New Zealand radio currently receives 11.6% of the advertising spent across the New Zealand mediascape, which is one of the highest shares in the developed world. They also argue that New Zealand's deregulation process has made radio very useful for targeting audiences because the marked segmentation approach has significantly reduced media fragmentation. This effectively means that audiences are understood as niche markets and, as a result, more easily targeted. This is also argued as being positive for the industry, as it provides what the TRB identify as the 'total solution' for all the advertisers needs, ranging from “scheduled ads, on-air promotions, on-street promotions and onsite promotions, ad-libs, sponsorship, and other integrated

opportunities such as texting and online” (TRB, 2010b)⁵. TRB posits this as being beneficial for listeners, saying “luckily, operating in a market with so much competition, New Zealand radio is recognised internationally as some of the best in the world - we’ve had to hone our craft!” (TRB, 2010b, p. 10). While, TRB do have a vested interest in overstating the effect of radio advertising in New Zealand, their research does provide insight into how the audience is perceived.

2.6.3 Background to this Research

My own research has previously investigated these areas of non-traditional advertising (Watts, 2008). This involved performing a content analysis covering four prominent commercial youth stations seeking to identify the different kinds of commercial speech and to ascertain what proportion of station programming was commercially orientated. These stations were ‘The Edge’, ‘ZM’, ‘Flava’ and ‘Mai FM’ which are all variations on a CHR/Top 40 format.

On two days, Tuesday 12th and Thursday 14th of August 2008 - these four stations were recorded for one hour during each of the four main day parts – Breakfast (6-10am), Daytime (10am-2pm), Drive-time (2-7pm) and Nights (7pm-12).

⁵ For a comprehensive list of all the commercial services that ‘The Radio Bureau’ offers advertisers see Appendix B.

The chosen hours recorded were:

7-8am – Breakfast on Tuesday/Thursday

12-1pm – Daytime on Tuesday/Thursday

5-6pm – Drive on Tuesday/Thursday

8-9pm – Nights on Tuesday/Thursday

In total, 32 hours of recordings were analysed and categorised.⁶ Because there was no existing framework for classifying commercial content, a categorisation system was developed. Broadly, this meant classifying the broadcasts according to perceived intensity of the commercial imperatives present in the audio. This evaluation also considered how obvious the advertisers' message was in the recorded content.

The 'High' category only consisted of commercial breaks which contained pre-recorded advertisements. 'Medium-High' contained commercial speech incorporated into the editorial content of the broadcast. The 'Medium' category also involved a similar level of commercial-speech, however, the intensity of the commercial message was less pronounced. For example, giving away prizes meant that the audience had the potential to gain something from the radio stations, rather than simply absorbing product information. Content classified as 'Medium-Low' encouraged listeners to interact with the radio station through the promise of a prizes or by encouraging the consumption of extra

⁶ Music content was not analysed in this study as this research topic was focused on the commercialization of editorial content. Thus, the commercial or non-commercial nature of the music played was not addressed in this research.

material online. The 'Low' category consisted of low-level commercial activity that promoted awareness of the particular radio through branding and text messaging without offering a message with an identifiable product attached. Finally, 'None' consisted of the content that did not fit within one of these previous categories. This meant anything that was not encouraging product consumption or branding on the radio station.

Types of Advertising

High:

Commercial spots: 15, 30, 45 or 60 second pre-recorded commercials that exist to promote a product or service.

Medium High:

Spoken copy/advertorials: where the presenter positively promotes a product on air whilst making the endorsement appear to be an unbiased part of the program.

Sponsorship: a brand name that is attached to a segment of the program.

Station promotional advertisements: when the station advertises their own promotions in the midst of a commercial break.

Onsite promotions: where the promotions teams visit a client and encourage listeners on-air to visit them for free prizes and purchase products from the client's store.

Medium:

Voicebreak prize giveaways: where the presenter is promoting a prize and encouraging listeners to call up the station to win it.

Voicebreak promoting station events: where the presenter advertises an event run specifically by the radio station.

Interviews promoting an event: time spent with an interview which is directly associated with encouraging listeners to attend a specific event.

Medium Low:

Teasing upcoming giveaways: encouraging the audience to keep listening through the commercial breaks with the lure of a specific commercial product.

Website promotion: encouraging listeners to visit the stations website for more content (which serves as another advertising portal).

Apparently unintentional commercial speech: when a product is mentioned, but it is not obviously an advertorial.

Low:

Station identification: either pre-recorded by the station or live to air repetition of the station's name and their slogan.

Teasing upcoming segments: encouraging the audience to keep listening through the commercial breaks with the lure of non-commercial content.

Voicebreaks encouraging text messaging: where presenters encourage listeners to text message the station. This costs money meaning that it is potentially a useful revenue gathering technique (Bruno, 2007).

None:

Public service announcements (PSA): non-commercial advertisement for the betterment of society.

News, sport, weather and traffic: provide information for listeners with regards to these topics.

Callers with no prizes attached: presenter interacting with the audience without a commercial benefit for either party.

Non commercial voicebreaks: where the presenter is effectively talking about anything unrelated to products or station branding.

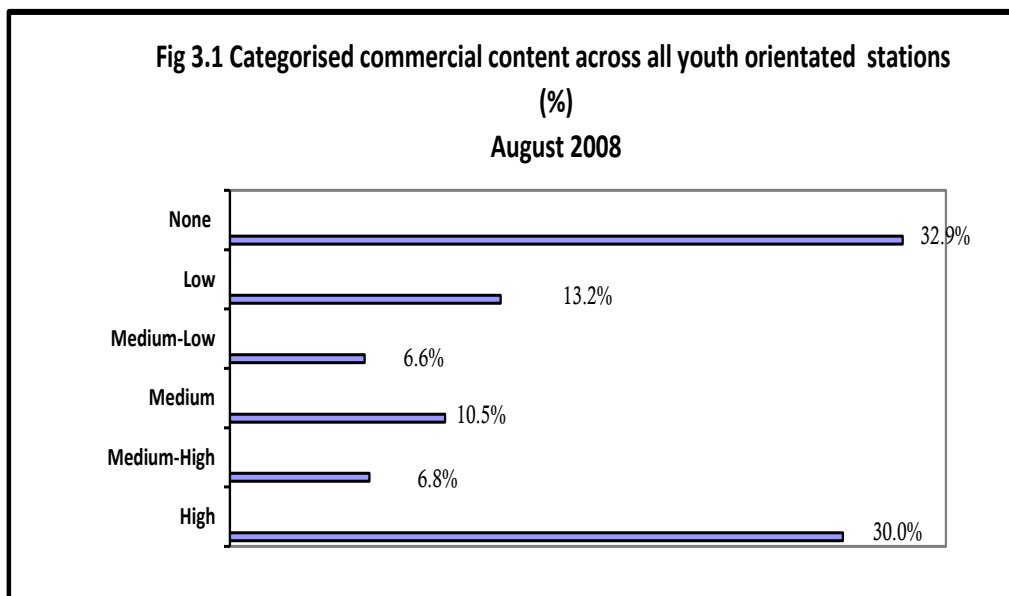
In relation to the measurement and evaluation of advertising content over time there were a number of different aspects that were considered. For example, if an entire hour of programming was sponsored, only the time where the sponsors' name was mentioned was placed in the 'Medium High' category.

On the other hand, if there was an interview that involved promotion of an upcoming event but the interview also included discussion about other topics, the entire interview was classified as 'Medium High' on the basis that the interview subject was appearing in the broadcast because of their upcoming event.

If a presenter were talking about a product as part of a 'personality piece', the entire clip was considered to be in the 'Medium High' category because the purpose of the section was to promote a product. Similarly, if a presenter was doing a personality piece whereby listeners were invited to ring for a prize, the entire clip would fit in that 'Medium' category.

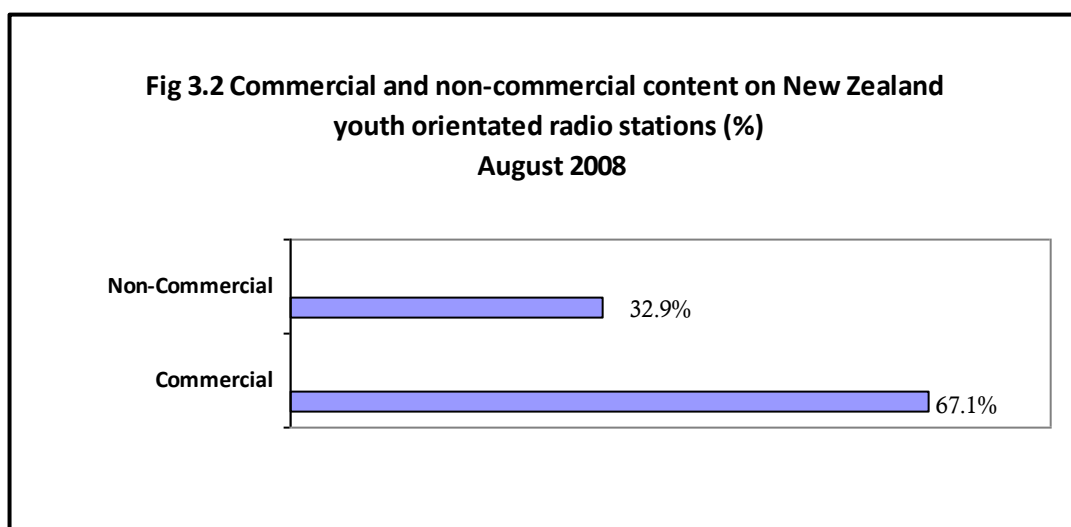
Because this research is primarily concerned with the prevalence of commercial speech on New Zealand youth radio, there was a need to separate music from the non-musical editorial content. Of 32 hours of content, approximately 20 were music orientated. Consequently, the results presented in this research are based on the analysis of the (approximately) 12 hours of non-music content.

Fig 3.1 highlights the breakdown of commercial content across the four commercial radio stations. This data effectively illustrates what commercial youth radio in New Zealand offers radio listeners.



A wide variety of different commercial techniques are utilised by the broadcasters. Spot advertising ('High') is by far the most common element of commercial content (30% in total, which is just under 3 ½ hours). The 'Medium High category' is 6.8% or 46 minutes. Content in the 'Medium' category is 10.5% or 71 minutes, while the 'Medium Low' is 6.6% of the total non-music broadcast equating to 45 minutes. The Low category is the second highest of the commercial content with 13.2% (which equates to about 90 minutes). The non-commercial 'None' accounts for 32.9% or 3 ¾ hours.

While the 'None' section appears to be the largest category, it is important to remember that the High, Medium-High, Medium, Medium-Low and Low categories *all* fit within the realms of commercial speech. Fig 1.2 highlights what the radio picture looks like if you combine all of the commercial speech aspects together and contrast them against the 'non-commercial' aspects of commercial youth orientated radio stations. Based on this it appears that commercial radio serves as commercial wallpaper with over 7 ½ of the 12 hours of non-music content being used for commercial purposes.



These findings point to the way in which commercial broadcasting fits within the structure of the days listening. The rule tends to be, the more listeners there are listening, the more commercial content will be played; breakfast radio timeslots in particular have the largest audiences and highest commercial content in all of the stations analysed. Sixty-seven percent of all non-music programming on youth radio fits into a commercial category (see Fig 3.2).

This research also argued that the intensification of commercial messages meant that there was little room for public service elements to find their way into the commercial radio broadcast of the New Zealand industry. For example, while 33% of the broadcast was classified as being 'non-commercial', the topics of discussion tended to be of a vacuous nature (see Appendix C for a list of topics that were discussed). It was also noted that the interactions that young people had with these stations appeared to be limited to commercial exchanges (ringing up to win prizes etc). The research also found that all the stations put a considerable amount of effort into being perceived as having less advertising. For example, one station promoted the fact that they had 40 minutes without a commercial break; while that was accurate, the station filled the remaining 20 minutes of that hour with two commercial breaks – effectively keeping the same amount of spot advertising, just repackaging the experience to the listener (Watts, 2008). This earlier research now informs this project, as it is a platform for considering how this content is consumed by its target audience.

2.7 Summary of Literature:

Audience effects research has moved to focus on the experience of media consumers and as such a reception studies approach is an effective way of gaining insight into the understandings of the audience. Young people are often seen as a vulnerable group; however, research finds that they are actively engaged with their media consumption and are able to distinguish the difference between advertisements and programming on television. However, they are not as adept at identifying more subtle forms of advertising such as product placement, which appears to be effective at influencing the behaviour of children. Young people in New Zealand have experienced this through growing up with a commercially saturated radio environment that has a variety of non-traditional advertising techniques to decipher. As such, this research hopes to answer two particular questions:

Can young people identify these new forms of advertising?

What do young people think of the form and content of this advertising?

Chapter 3 Methodology

Because this study focuses on how a complex topic is understood by young New Zealanders, qualitative methodology is appropriate. Focus groups enable participants to collectively consider an issue and, because understandings vary, to flesh out ideas; something which would be unusual through individual interviews or through a survey. With its emphasis on how non-traditional advertising is understood there can be no right or wrong answers amongst the responses from the participants. Quantitative data is generated alongside the qualitative findings, adding some points of comparison.

This chapter combines the literature on methodology along with the research structure. In section 3.1, issues arising from ethical sampling are briefly outlined, and in 3.2 the focus group is considered as a part of social science research. Section 3.3 outlines the structure of the focus groups including the use of pre-screeners (questionnaires) and audio clips which acted as stimuli for the consideration of the focus group. 3.4. Finally a summary of the methodology is offered in section 3.5.

3.1 Sampling and ethics

Because this study involved research data from human subjects, ethical approval had to be sought and received from AUT University Ethics Committee. The major ethical issues that had to be negotiated were surrounding informed consent and confidentiality. An

unexpected ethical issue arose in regards to accessing groups of young teenagers, as the

school which initially gave permission for this study withdrew because the students were seen as being too busy. The research ended up proceeding at a co-educational high school in Auckland with students from a range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Students were invited at assembly and through school notices to participate.

The age range chosen was 13-15 year olds because they are in the middle of the 10-17 demographic that is measured by the commercial radio industry in New Zealand. A total of 20 students participated in two focus groups; 10 students in year 9 (aged 13-14 years) and 10 students in year 10 (aged 14-15 years). The sample size was determined by the number of volunteers willing to meet in a classroom during lunch break. Those participated were given book vouchers. Confidentiality was given to all the young people – they chose pseudonyms for themselves and the schools details were also kept confidential.

While there is no reason to believe that these students are in anyway atypical, it is important to reassert that the findings of these focus groups are indicative rather than prescriptive. This means that the participants are not the voices of all 13-15 year olds in New Zealand; however they are authentic voices in a field of academic enquiry which rarely provides a platform for adolescents to share their understandings.

3.2 Focus groups

Utilising focus groups is compatible with the ‘reception studies’ approach, which attempts to examine the understandings of audience members and the meanings that they take from media messages (Holub, 1984). Focus groups generate data which reflect both how

individuals think and how group dynamics affect that thinking; the researcher has to strike 'a balance between looking at the picture provided by the group as a whole and recognizing the operation of individual "voices" in it' (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 8). As such, focus groups are effectively social environments. According to Morgan (1998) 6-10 participants is the ideal number of participants as it enables everyone to have their voices heard whilst also enabling in-depth group discussion. Focus groups serve to "represent the voice of the audience, or speak on its behalf" (McQuail, 1997, p. 15) and as such this research focused on facilitating a conversation between young people about how they engage with and understand advertising on commercial radio.

The two main advantages of the focus group approach are that they provide for a conversation (which can unpick the meanings that are made by various group members and the process through which this occurs) and they allow the researcher to focus on the variety of meanings and meaning-making processes within and between groups (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). The main disadvantages are the potential for one group member to dominate the discussion (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994) and the potential for focus groups to generate misinformation amongst the group (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). These particular issues were worked through with prior discussion and appropriate facilitation.

Although marketing focus group research usually constructs groups of strangers, there is no requirement to do so for sociological inquiries (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). This approach to New Zealand youth media research has been used by Lealand (2004) and

serves as an efficient means of generating an accurate portrait of the experience of the audience in a relatively short space of time.

Following the advice that the research should take place in a familiar setting rather than an unfamiliar one, the focus groups for this study took place at the participants' school (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

In running the two focus groups, a basic interview guide was employed which set directions, stimuli and prompts that helped enable the smooth running of the sessions (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998).

This research employed a basic strategy of moderator, assistant moderator and audio recording (this is modelled on the procedure set out by Hill (1997)). The discussions are reported using an approach based on the standard media studies model where "illustrative quotes are attributed to individual participants but the code of reference is confidential" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 17).

While it is impossible for the moderator not to leave an imprint on the group (Borden, 1975) the goal for the moderation of the focus groups was as neutral and encouraging as possible. As such both focus groups were run according to the same systematic protocol⁷. The researcher was the moderator, ably assisted by an assistant moderator – the thesis supervisor – who helped with practical and logistical details.

⁷ An outline of the Focus Group plan is in Appendix D.

Of the various 'roles' available for a moderator of a focus group, this research chose to combine the "seeker of wisdom" and the "expert consultant" roles (the other roles are "Enlightened Novice", "Challenger", "Referee", "Writer", "Team Member-Discussion Leader", "Therapist", and "Serial Interviewer") in order to be to give the participants an equal opportunity to share their "wisdom" and also competently and clearly answer any questions about advertising on radio (D. Morgan & Kreuger, 1997, pp. 45-47).

3.3 Structure of the focus groups

The research proceeded in three steps:

First, each participant was given a self-reporting one page 'pre-screener' to fill out (see Appendix E). This was a basic questionnaire about their radio listening habits and served as an ice-breaker task to get participants to think about their relationship with radio.

The 'pre-screener' was handed out at the start of each focus group and the participants had 5 minutes to fill it out. Data from this source provided background to their radio listening experience.

Secondly, the participants listened to a 6 minute CD containing a number of different types of both commercial and non-commercial radio clips. These clips have been included on CD (attached) and also transcribed (see Appendix F).

The clips that were played were all recorded in August 2008 as part of my honours research which focused on the four main commercial radio stations 'The Edge,' 'ZM,' 'Mai

FM' and 'Flava'⁸. The clips were chosen from this time period so that the students would be unable to recognise the exact origins of the pieces of audio. The clips were a variety of different types of commercial content, played in a random order. The clips were chosen based on the methodological approach outlined in the literature review, with a focus on clips that showcased more subtle forms of advertising.

The clips were played twice in the focus group. The first time the clips were played without discussion, only with the participants selecting the most appropriate answer to whether the clip was an advertisement. Having no discussion after the first listen enabled the participants to record their first response without being influenced by the opinions of the group. The sheets were then collected and the clips were played again but were discussed as a group in-depth.

Finally, there was a group discussion based on the interview guide considering broader issues of non-traditional advertising (Appendix G).

3.4 Analysis of research findings

The group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher with the help of a research assistant. This transcribed text was approached from an inductive thematic analysis approach looking for emergent themes. As Kellehear (1993, p. 38) explains:

⁸ See Appendix A for more detailed station profiling.

Inductive thematic analysis is subjective and interpretative, taking 'the data itself as the orienting stimulus of analysis that attempts to overcome etic (outsider's) problems of interpretation by staying close to the emic (insider's) view of the world. Also, thematic analysis does overcome the problem of viewing all events or items as having equal value or importance. (p. 38).

Although inductive thematic analysis is 'more demanding on the personal resources and intellectual art and craft of the individual researcher' (Kellehear, 1993, p. 38), for some researchers, the openness to theory generation is a necessary part of the research.

The quantitative information gained within the course of the research was put into graphs and discussed briefly to give an insight into the background of the listeners.

3.5 Summary

The role of the focus group in this research is a tool to encourage discussion. The moderator's responsibility is to deepen the understandings and probe deeper into initial responses in order to unpack the meaning behind the opinions held. It is also to clarify thoughts as they are complicated by the peers within the research, through asking provocative and thought-provoking questions of the participants.

Ultimately, this research methodology is designed to provide a platform from which to gain an insight into how young people understand advertising aimed at them. While not generalisable to the entire population, the reception studies approach is the most effective way to provide an insight into how young people understand commercial

content. It serves to provide insight in these new advertising phenomena and not only into the effectiveness of radio advertising targeted at young people, but also debates surrounding regulating commercial media content.

Chapter 4 Research Findings

This chapter is dedicated to interpreting and analysing the data from the focus groups.

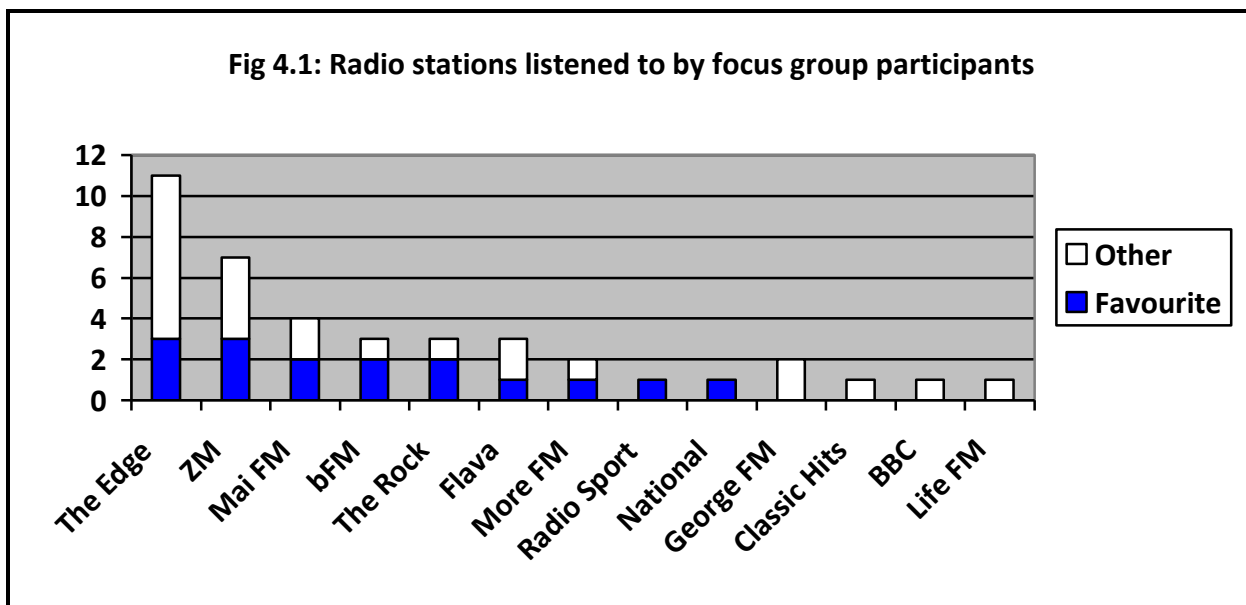
This starts by focusing on the quantitative data obtained in order to ascertain information about the way in which the participants consume radio. Following that, the focus group discussions are considered. This research findings chapter is ordered loosely around the structure of the focus group and discussed with the aid of illustrative quotes from the focus groups themselves. The transcription has deliberately been as unobtrusive and possible, leaving the participants conversing in their own language.

The discussion starts with basic conversations about the nature of advertising on radio, continues onto analysis of each of the individual audio clips, then considers the outcomes from some of the open discussions surrounding the nature of non-traditional advertising on the radio.

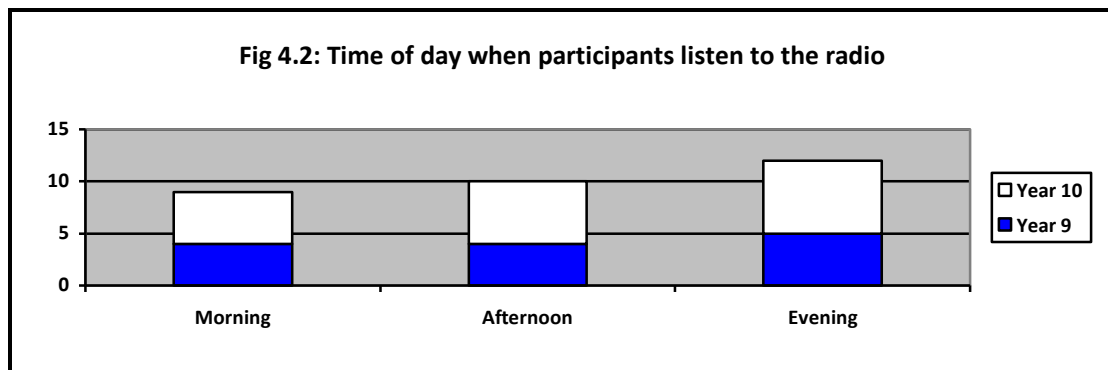
4.1 Pre-screening Data:

While this thesis is meant as a qualitative piece of research, the pre-screeners that the participants completed provided some background into these particular listening experiences, information which is important when implementing a reception studies methodology. When looking at which stations were listened to, the research found that while all the youth-targeted radio stations were represented, there was a wider spread of other radio stations as well, which means that young people are often listening to radio

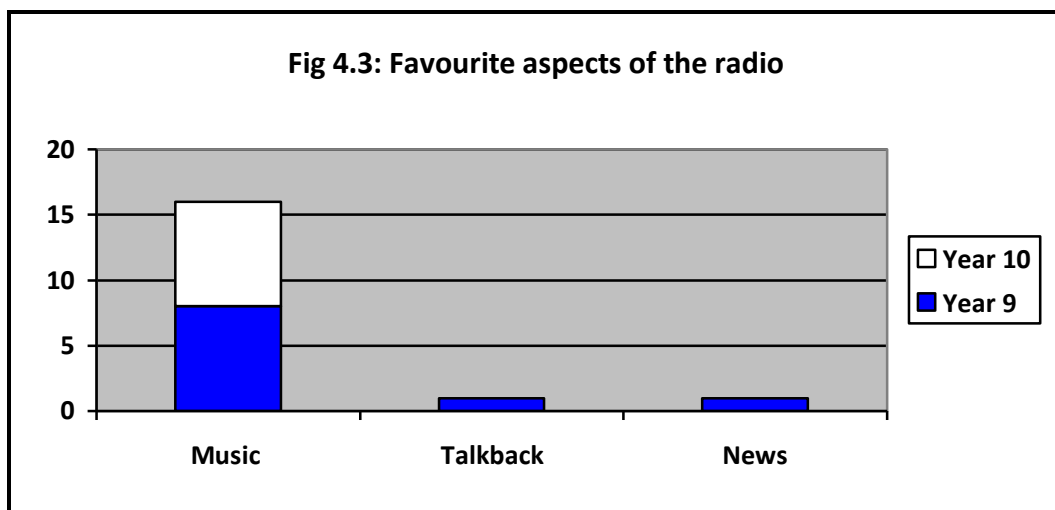
stations that are not necessarily targeted at them (see Fig 4.1). While ZM and The Edge were both well represented, stations targeted at older listeners were also mentioned such as Adult Contemporary formats 'More FM' and 'Classic Hits,' as well as the non-commercial option National Radio. However, The Edge is very heavily consumed as a secondary station, with more than half of the participants listening to it.



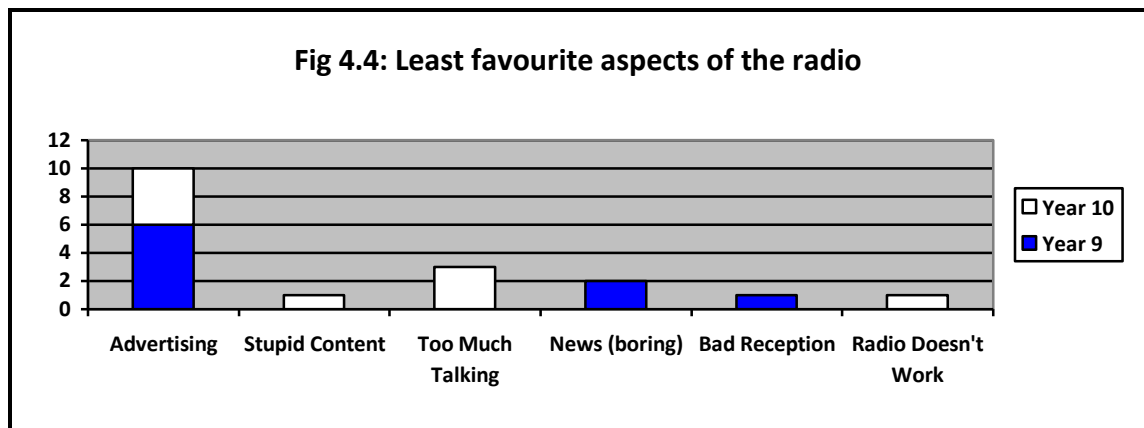
In terms of what time of day the participants listened to the radio, there is no real trend that established itself (see Fig 4.2); however, the fact that the participants listened slightly more in the afternoon/evening than in the morning is interesting as most adult listeners tend to listen in the morning to the Breakfast shows.



What came through very strongly within ‘what people liked most about the radio’ was that people listen to the radio because of the music being played with 16 of the 20 people choosing the music as their favourite thing about the radio (see Fig 4.3).

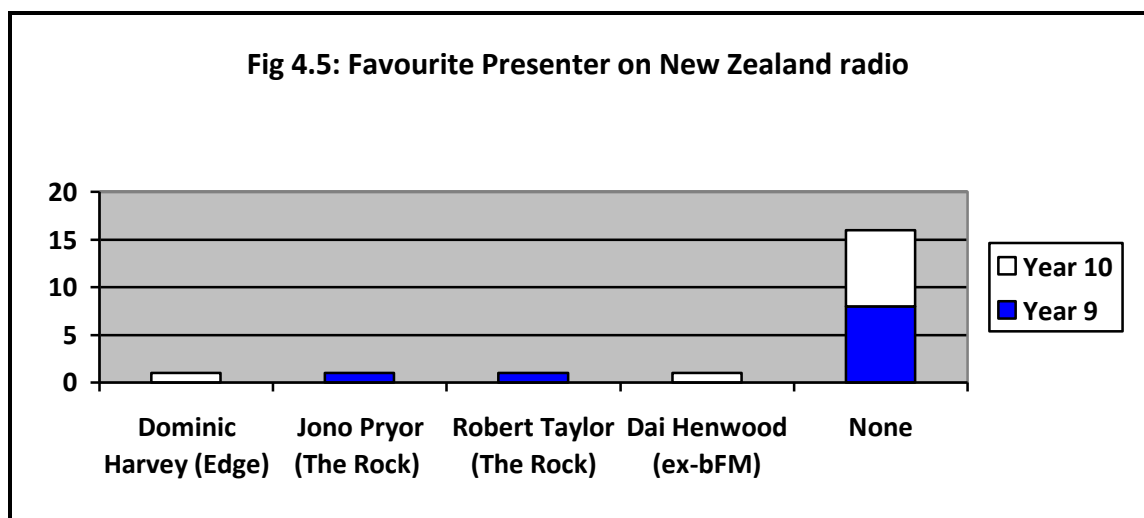


Most of the time there was not much of a justification for why they enjoyed listening to the music on the station, they simply ‘liked it,’ or liked it more than the ads on the station. One person said that their favourite thing was the fact that there were “not many ads” which was interesting. One person liked news whilst another liked Talkback radio – in particular “listening to stupid people”.



When it came to the most disliked feature of radio, advertising was featured most often, mostly because it was considered to be “annoying”. The common theme seemed that any content that was considered boring (for example, ‘the presenter talking too much’ or ‘news’ which was mentioned twice) was not looked upon favourably (see Fig 4.4).

In relation to a question on the participants favourite presenter on radio, the majority (75%) did not have one, which combined with the participants stated reasoning behind listening to the radio (to hear music), implies a certain level of disconnect from the identities of the presenters (see Fig 4.5).



The final question was: *'If you had \$500 to spend on anything you wanted, what you would get? You can keep the change.'* Most items that people mentioned were consumables; though admittedly some options were unattainable with the \$500 on offer (some examples included "Russia", "a Harley Davidson" and a "hot-air balloon ride around the world"). Other things chosen were things like 'food' (cherries and drink), shoes/clothes, a BMX, an Xbox, a gaming console, a BluRay player, an iPhone, an iPod touch and a new processor for a computer. This broadly reinforces the idea that there is a desire for young people to obtain new technology, as well as a few examples of unconscious usage of branding (iPhone, iPod touch, Xbox etc).

4.2 Focus Groups: What do you think about ads?

The first question to start the focus group discussion was *'what do you think about ads?'*

The response from the participants in both focus groups was automatically very passionate in their dislike of advertising and they began speaking very emotively about the topic:

AMBER: *Oh, I hate them, I hate them, I hate them*

BEN: *They're boring; I just love listening to music*

AMBER: *It takes over the music so much...*

BEN: *Flava's the best cause it's only got 60 seconds*

AMBER: *There should be no ads*

LEON: *I hate them!*

KATE: *They suck...*

NEILL: *They don't have any meaning*

The main reason for disliking advertising was because it interrupted the purpose behind listening in the first place:

CHARLOTTE: *It takes up all the time you could be listening to music*

DANIEL: *It's the same kind of principle as when you're watching TV; you're half way through something and it stops, and you've got wait until it starts again...it pisses you off.*

However, when the participants moved past the visceral response to advertising in general, they were more embracing of advertising. As such, advertising that appears to be engaging and interesting to the audience was received positively by participants.

OLLIE: *Sometimes they're funny*

MADELINE: *They're annoying jingles*

NEILL: *They're enjoyable. Some are, because they have some good jingles*

LEON: *They have some good ads. Can we hear the tile depot one?*
It's pretty good

MODERATOR: *How does that go?*

SEVERAL MALES START SINGING THE TILE DEPOT JINGLE

This discussion mirrors the general dislike of advertising on radio that has been covered previously in the academic literature, and also the fact that audiences like media that they find interesting and entertaining, which a lot of advertisements succeed at being.

4.3 Focus Groups: What are your favourite radio ads?

Both groups were asked to talk about their favourite radio advertisements:

ELLIE: Music ads, when they advertise, like, concerts coming up

ALL: Yeah!

BEN: The Big Day Out [music festival] and that

FINN: If they advertise something real exciting...

AMBER: Or useful, like an event that you could go to

GLYNIS: Or like, sales on at particular places

The first focus group answered the question in relation to types of advertisements that they enjoyed. Their answers suggest that the most liked advertisements tend to be ones that are relevant to the listener, particularly in relation to entertainment. The other focus group focused specifically on particular advertisements, demonstrating a strong recall of specific radio advertisements. On a number of occasions, one member of the group would identify his or her favourite advertisement, prompting a number of participants to sing the company's jingles:

MADELINE: I like Lollypops Playland!

FOCUS GROUP START SINGING THE 'LOLLYPOPS PLAYLAND JINGLE

PETE: Alert Taxis!

ALL: Yeah!

PETE: So cool

LEON: I like the pizza hut one

FOCUS GROUP START SINGING THE PIZZA HUT JINGLE

4.4 Focus Groups: What makes an advertisement an advertisement?

The first question that was designed to delve into the theoretical nature of advertising was *'what makes an advertisement an advertisement?'*

PETE: Trying to sell something

LEON: Advertising!

LAUGHTER

KATE: Well, you can't have advertising without talking about ads...

LEON: It gets you to buy their products. Showing and item or product or something, and trying to get you to buy them

NEILL: Trying to make something appealing

LEON: Trying to make something appealing to the buyers

NEILL: *Trying to sell a product or promote an event*

OLLIE: *To make you buy something you don't need*

LEON: *Maybe a really intense guy who speaks really fast?*

What came through these focus groups is that 'advertising' is mainly considered in relation to selling products. Though, within the discussion in both focus groups the participants became naturally aware that there was a grey area when it came to the advertising of ideas that were seen as being positive messages.

AMBER: *But you know how in the middle of the ads, there'll be this one that'll be like "trying to stop smoking" or something. But it's not to get business for the QuitLine. It's to help people. I don't consider them ads. Like, one's that are help you to donate to cancer. Like, it's sort of an ad, except I don't mind them.'*

HELEN: *Or like, advertising reasons why you should go to university or something...*

AMBER: *Or like environmental helping things. They're not like, advertising to come and buy something*

HELEN: *They're trying to help you do the right choice*

The grey area surrounding the definition of an 'advertisement' appears to be pretty apparent in these exchanges. If it specifically relates to promoting a product, then it is an

advertisement. This is arguably because there is an obvious push from the advertiser for a commercial exchange to take place between the listener and the product. However, when it comes to promoting ‘services’ or ‘causes’, then there appears to be a distinction that can be made. What seems to be important is the perception of the motivation behind the advertisers. For example, in the case of the Land Transport Safety Authority’s advertising (which encourages socially responsible driving) the participants felt that it was not an advertisement because there was not an obvious commercial imperative attached to the advertisement. As such, the basic perception of advertising seems to be related specifically to consumable products. The fact that universities were mentioned as being something of a public service was interesting because it implied that tertiary education is perceived as being disassociated with commercial exchange.

The broad discussion surrounding ‘what makes something an advertisement’ is a thread that is woven through the rest of the focus group discussions as well.

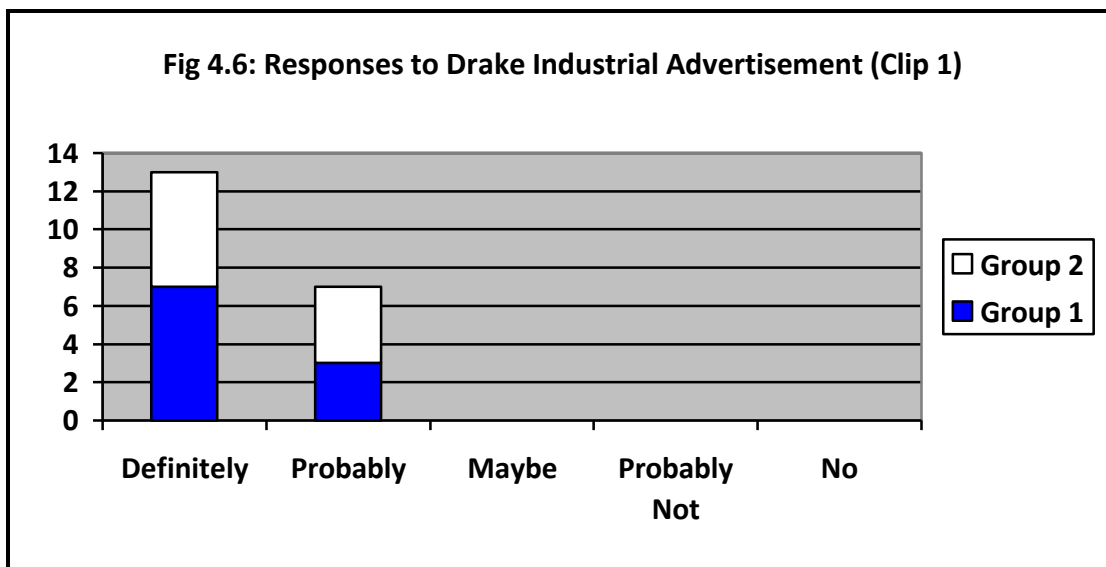
4.5 Focus groups: Responses to Audio Stimuli:

The second part of the focus group was dedicated to gaining responses from the participants to various clips of commercial content recorded from the radio⁹. First the participants rated how likely it was that the clip was considered by audiences as an ‘advertisement’.

4.5.1 Responses to ‘high intensity’ advertising

⁹ See Appendix F for the transcribed content.

Clip 1 and **Clip 6** were both examples of advertisements that would normally appear during a commercial break. **Clip 1** was an advertisement for an industrial recruiting agency called Drake Industrial, recorded from 'The Edge' network.



The response to the Drake Industrial advertisement was pretty unanimous about the nature of the clip, with nearly every participant definitely certain that it was an advertisement. As it was so easily identified as being an advert, the responses to it tended to be negative.

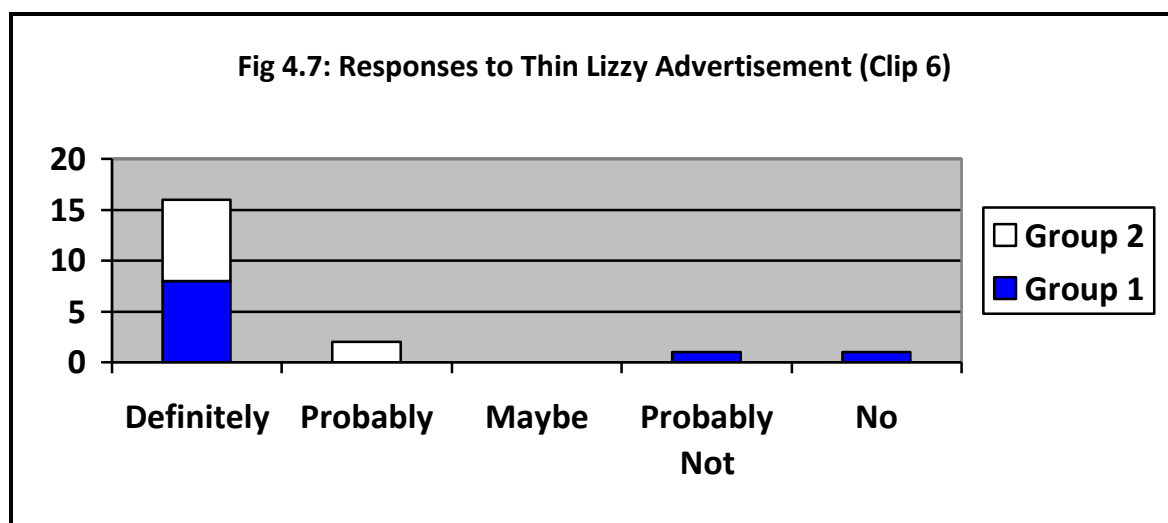
BEN: *Bad*

AMBER: *Yuck. It's so like, typical and boring*

When asked how they could tell that it was an advertisement, one student said "well they're advertising something". After a bit of prompting, one student commented on the fact that there is a certain type of sound that advertisements on the radio should have, with background music and sound effects as being part of the package. There was a

general sense of *knowing* what a radio advertisement typically sounds like, but needing prompting in order to articulate those factors.

Clip 6 was also an advertisement, this time for New Zealand owned beauty company 'Thin Lizzy'. The advertisement has an interesting twist because it is designed to appear as though it is a song, as it is longer than other advertisements (60 seconds as opposed to 30 or 15 which are more common), and has no obvious 'call-to-action' for the listener. It was played on the 'ZM' network.



Interestingly, both focus groups the majority of participants laughed when this clip was played which was a sign that most people there knew that it was an advertisement masquerading as a song. However, there were two people in the first group who initially thought that this was not an ad, which shows that for a first time listener, it would be easy to mistake Thin Lizzy for a song.

AMBER: *Yes, it did take me a while to figure out that that was Thin Lizzy. Like, when we first heard it...*

CHARLOTTE: *I've heard that song on TV so I just instantly knew that it was Thin Lizzy*

Part of understanding this content involves the participants using their previous understanding of cross-media companies and advertising.

While the advertisement was 'annoying', it was perceived as being a deliberate marketing ploy. The participants were aware of how important brand recognition is for advertisers.

GLYNIS: *I suppose what they're trying to do is to get that song in your head so you remember their product, and so like, every time you go "argh Thin Lizzy" and then one day you go "ohh, I need this product, I'll get Thin Lizzy"*

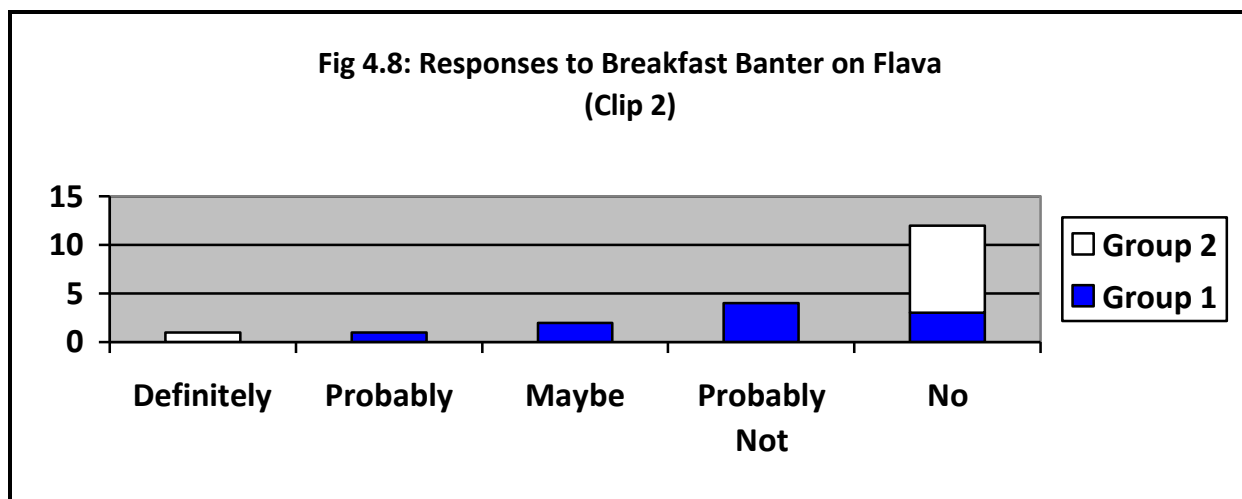
Both advertisements that were considered to be 'High' intensity ads were perceived by the vast majority of participants as definitely being traditional advertisements; suffice to say that the young people in this research tend to be very adept at identifying traditional advertising on commercial radio.

4.5.2 Responses to 'low intensity' advertising

Clip 2 and **Clip 4** are both 'Low' level intensity clips, in which there are very minor commercial messages involved but are not promoting specific consumable products.

Clip 2 was a piece that was recorded off the Breakfast show on Flava, which encouraged listeners to send in their text messages as a response to the question 'Would you rather have the rapping ability of Eminem or the skateboarding ability of Tony Hawk?' Most

participants' original reaction was that the clip was not intended as a commercial message.



The discussion surrounding the clip reflected the fact that the majority of people in both groups felt that it was not really a 'real' advertisement. The debates in both groups were whether or not promoting your own station could potentially be seen as being an 'advertisement' or if encouraging people to text message could be considered 'advertising'. What is interesting here is that automatically, what an 'advertisement' is has changed over the course of 5 minutes. Originally the definition created by the group was specifically related to products and services, whereas now the notion of an 'advertisement' has expanded to include the promotion of ideas.

NEILL: *I don't know, I'm confused*

OLLIE: *It wasn't an ad*

PETE: It could be?

MADELINE: Yeah, it could be because she was asking a question and there could've been a prize if you texted in that

OLLIE: But he's not trying to sell anything or promote anything

CHARLOTTE: It's not advertising anything. It's just on their show talking and sharing texts like...

BEN: Yeah, it's not an ad.

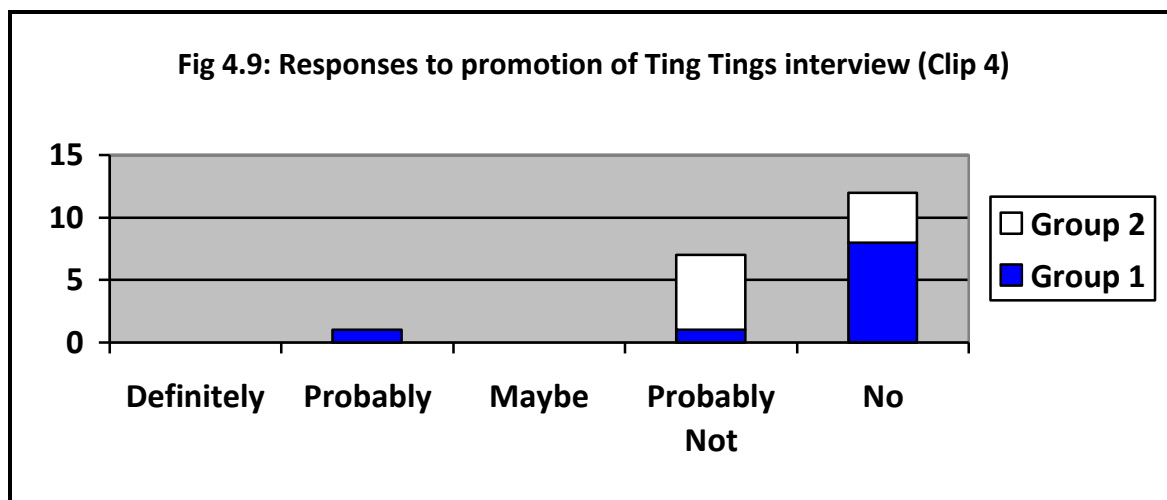
AMBER: But then again, they're getting you to text in.

CHARLOTTE: It's more just them on their talk show just...

HELEN: Yeah, if that's an ad then everything they say is an ad

The potential for 'everything to be an advertisement' was used in a disparaging way to suggest that particular participants were being too critical. This could potentially relate to the fact that many people consume commercial radio, and although they dislike the commercials on it, the possibility that the entire radio stations programming could be 'an advertisement' could be an uncomfortable concept due to advertising being viewed in a negative light by majority of the participants.

Clip 4 started with the conclusion of a song, followed by the DJ promoting an upcoming interview. All but one of the participants said that this was not a real advertisement.



ELLIE: I don't think that's ad

AMBER: No, I think that's an ad

GLYNIS: They're making you come back and listen to...

ELLIE: But then if you say that's an ad then you could say that just talking on the radio is an ad

HELEN: Oh yeah, I guess

AMBER: But all radio they're trying to get you to listen obviously and this is trying to convince you to listen

ELLIE: But an ad is at a break!

BEN: Like a 60 second break

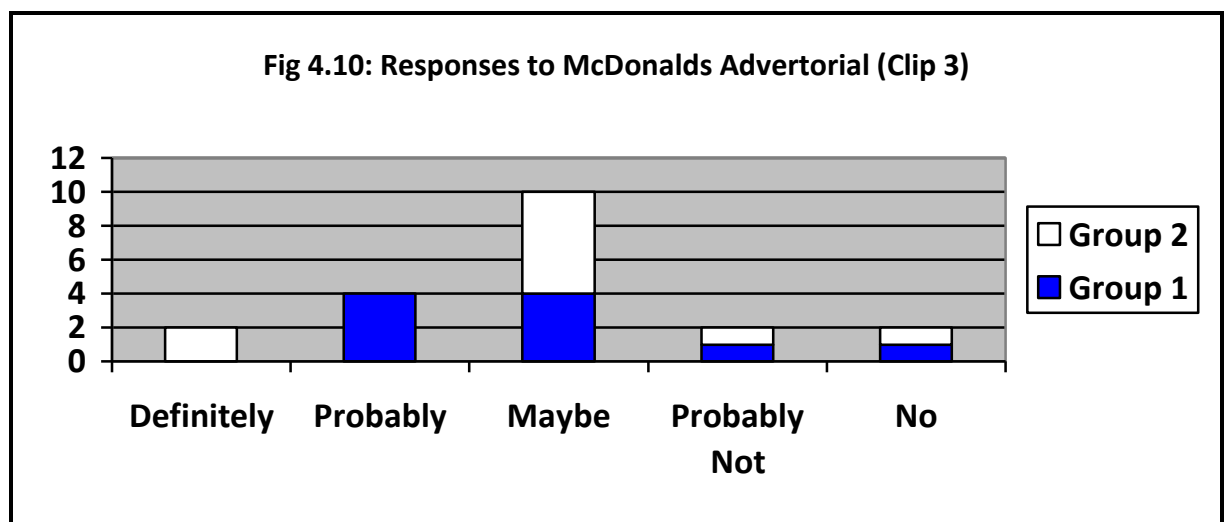
It is apparent from the discussion that radio tends to be thought of in a relatively polemic way, with programming and advertising being separate. The general consensus was that these examples of low level commercial activity in the form of station branding is

appropriate to do, in order to pass on information about the broadcast to the listeners. By and large both groups felt that these low intensity advertisements tended not to be advertisements.

4.5.3 Responses to advertorials

Clips 3, 5 and 7 were all examples of advertorial type content where the presenters are actively involved with the promotion of a commercial message that often integrates advertising messages into the editorial content of the show.

Clip 3 is a clip from Mai FM in which the presenter starts by back-selling the music that has just been on air, before moving onto encouraging listeners to go to McDonalds to buy any of their three limited edition burgers. The promotion would have been paid for by McDonalds; however, there are no obvious cues for the audience to pick up on. Most participants felt unsure about this particular clip, with most placing the piece in the 'maybe' category.



The debate over meaning for this particular clip was interesting because the discussions easily turned into tit-for-tat arguments between the people who thought it was definitely an advertisement versus the people who thought that it definitely not an advertisement.

DANIEL: It's not really an ad; it's more of a discussion

ELLIE: It's just basically saying "if you don't have anything to do, go down to the..."

AMBER: I reckon that's definitely an ad. They're telling you to go somewhere and they're telling you to do something.

PEOPLE DISAGREE

ELLIE: But they're not saying "20% off here"

BEN: Nah, it's not an ad...

AMBER: Well, it's telling you to go places and do things, and like, eat Kiwi Burgers

ELLIE: But it's not like one of those ads that's annoying, because it's telling you about an event that's happening

GLYNIS: *But she's not from McDonalds, she's not trying to get people to do something. She's just saying "if they're hungry, they should try this" because she obviously liked it*

AMBER: *But that's still an advertisement for McDonalds.*

HELEN: *I think it is an ad. They've been paid to...*

DANIEL: *But who says they were paid to do it though? Who says they were paid to mention McDonalds?'*

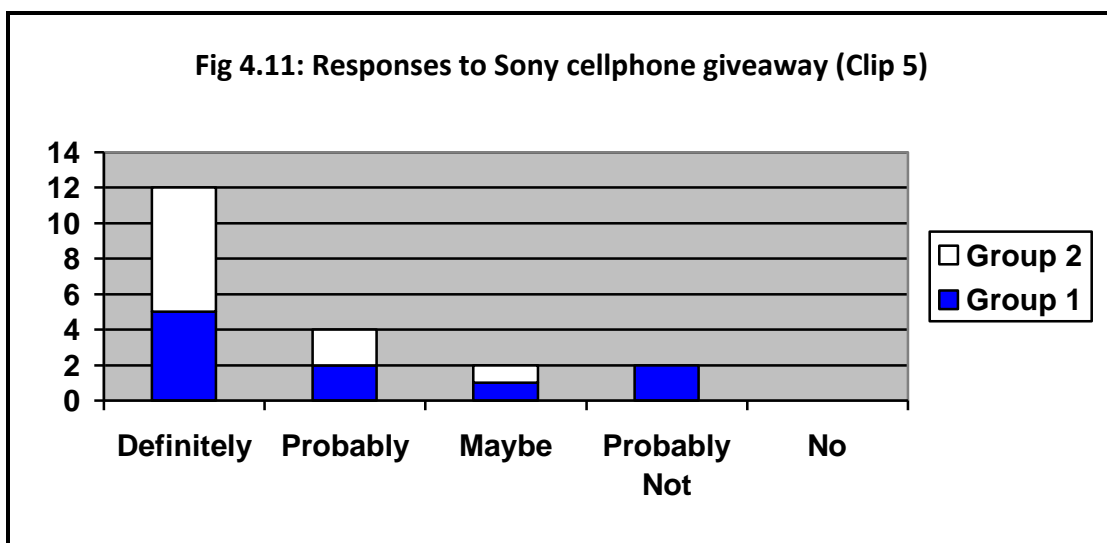
The fact that the presenter has to promote products on air as part of their job description is not necessarily understood by the focus group participants. Interestingly, the other focus group had a slightly more critical approach to the advertisement:

PETE: *I'd say she's definitely advertising McDonald's because there's two types of radio ad; the ones where they play, and the ones where they get DJs to actually say stuff'*

LEON: *So there's, like, pre-made ones, and one's where people improvise slightly*

For the one focus group, there was a participant who could strongly identify why he felt that it was an advertisement. This was influential in the group's discussion and contrasted with the participants initial thoughts when hearing the clip.

Clip 5 is another example of non-traditional advertising broadcasted on Mai FM. It is primarily an advertorial with the presenter telling the audience about the new 'Sony W350' cellphone, demonstrating all of the various features and why the phone is important for the listeners to have, and then encouraging listeners to enter the draw to win one of the phones. The clip is also interesting because it includes references to Vodafone (the telecommunications provider) and tells listeners that the phone can also be bought from the 'First Mobile' store. Again, there is nothing that explicitly states that this is an advertisement; however, the majority of participants in both the focus group identified it as such.



Both focus groups picked up on the way in which the spoken copy was selling a number of products within the same promotion:

OLLIE: *They're advertising the phone and they're advertising First Mobile*

PETE: *It's advertising the phone*

QUENTIN: *It's an ad that explains the phone*

DANIEL: *I think it was kind of like... it wasn't an ad to start, it was more of a review for a product that had just come out, and then they inserted into that an ad for the radio station by saying "get this phone and listen to us"*

AMBER: *But yeah, it was an ad both for the advertiser and themselves... oh, and to text in*

ELLIE: *I don't really know. It just doesn't really seem like an ad, like, the way they, it just seems like a casual conversation but they were putting advertisements into it. Ads are more set song... they're more set...*

AMBER: *We're just super sceptical*

CHARLOTTE: *They're probably been getting paid, for like, all the little things, they wouldn't mention if they weren't being paid to do all of that stuff. It's probably likely they were getting paid to do that because they get money from that. A lot of profits because they're advertising other products by just talking, and oh, it's probably more effective than other ways because people just listen to conversations like that and it kind of fits in their mind'*

AMBER:

And because people don't recognize that it's an ad, that's a more effective way of making money

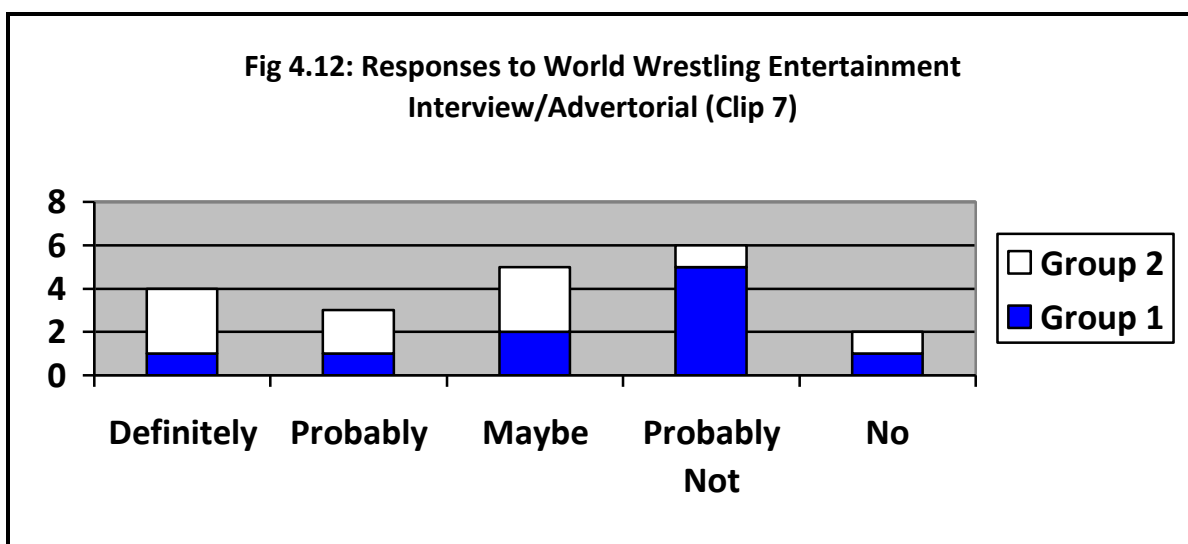
One participant was less convinced that it was an advertisement, because the phone was being given away for free, the clip was less likely to be an advertisement. This reinforces the notion that an advertisement may not be an 'advertisement' if the audience is directly benefiting from the commercial exchange. This particular giveaway clip was rated as being more intensely commercial than the McDonalds advertorial. The reasoning behind this was that the McDonalds advertorial offered nothing to the listener apart from encouraging them to have McDonalds for lunch whilst the Sony Cellphone clip was actively giving listeners a chance to win the phone.

However, another factor may have been the different ways in which the spoken were delivered by the presenters. In the case of the McDonalds advertisement, it was casually placed into conversation using colloquial language, in contrast to the Sony Cellphone clip which was more obvious in its promotion of the product. Advertorial related programming appears to need to fit into the show seamlessly in order to maintain the illusion that the advertisement is editorial. As a result, whilst the McDonalds advertisement was received more positively by the participants, it was also more underhanded judging by the fact that the participants were unsure if they were listening to an advertisement. It is also arguably underhanded *because* it was perceived positively.

Clip 7 was the final example of spoken copy on the radio that was directly integrated into the content of the show. In this case, it was an interview with the American Wrestler John

Cena as part of the Breakfast show on ZM. The interview was promoting the event itself, and was book-ended by the breakfast show presenters using the Wrestling slogan, as well as promoting the coverage of the event on Pay-Per-View television channel Sky.

The participants were split over the nature of the clip with a relatively even distribution across the range of responses.



Both groups recognized a mix of content, with the information for the event in and of itself an advertisement, but the intention of the presenters was not clear to the participants.

LEON: *It was just a bunch of radio hosts talking*

QUENTIN: *For entertainment*

LEON: *Is it possible for it to be - not an ad, but still advertising?*

LAUGHTER

PETE: *It wasn't in the ads but it was on a broadcast?*

LEON: *But they were advertising in their broadcast!*

KATE: *I think it might not have been an ad; it could be one of those things where you want people to go to it so you just mention it?*

PETE: *That's pretty much ads*

KATE: *Yeah, but maybe they didn't realize they were doing that; they didn't mean it to be an ad but it turned out as an ad*

What is interesting about the discussion surrounding this clip is that participants began automatically to look for justifications as to why it was an advertisement rather than being asked by the moderator to explain their thoughts on the nature of the clip. This tended to involve looking for keywords to prove a point.

DANIEL: *Um, I just heard the words "on Sky Box Office"*

JASON: *Because, it's like, telling you about wrestling and encouraging you to watch box office*

DANIEL: *They're telling you to book the program on Sky Box Office which costs you money so it's kind of advertising sky*

GLYNIS: *But they're also just talking and having a discussion about wrestling. Like, they are advertising but they're also just*

*talking about it and getting their views. It's not all saying
"watch this"*

AMBER: Subtly

JASON: That ad was probably the best ad

*LEON: If they're promoting a big huge company like WWE then I
think I might be an ad*

NEILL: It's a promotion

*PETE: Well, I think if they were talking about something and it
wasn't an ad, they'd be talking about it naturally, rather
than like "WWE SMACKDOWN ON BOXOFFICE." If was more
like - "I've been really into WWE recently, it's pretty cool,
apparently there's a new one on tonight" - that would be
really natural and it might not be advertising. But that was
scripted*

The word 'subtle' was used on three different occasions when describing this particular clip. What was interesting is that two boys in different focus groups mentioned that they liked that clip the best because of its subtle nature. Both groups got to a point where they decided that the clip could be an advertisement, however, neither was really confident about their decision.

4.6 How can you tell the difference between advertorial and ad?

After the audio stimulus, there were a series of questions opened up to the group designed to investigate how the group understood commercial references on radio. The first question was: *'How can you tell the difference between advertorial and advertisement?'*

LEON: *Probably scripting*

PETE: *A program's designed to entertain and inform...*

LEON: *Ads are designed to entertain and inform!*

LAUGHTER

PETE: *Sorry, a program is designed to entertain while an ad is...*

LEON: *Ads **are** entertaining though...*

PETE: *Yeah, but that's not their primary purpose*

OLLIE: *How do you know?*

LEON: *They could be entertaining to entice you to listen to them
more*

PETE: *You guys are being too philosophical...*

This exchange is intriguing as it looks at the nature of commercial radio. The fact that the words 'entertain' and 'inform' were used to describe both the programming on commercial radio as well as the advertisements was illuminating. Interestingly, according

to this perception of advertising, a commercial would only need to incorporate 'education' and it would be fulfilling basic Reithian broadcasting principles. Of course, 'entertaining' and 'informing' have slightly different meanings depending on whether the broadcast originates from non-commercial radio or commercial radio.

4.7 Traditional vs. non-traditional advertising

Because this research is concerned with what young people actually *think* about non-traditional advertising, the participants were asked whether they prefer a radio presenter to promote a product or a traditional advertisement. Both groups preferred a more non-traditional approach to advertising.

CHARLOTTE: *They don't just say "oh, go buy the Beatles album." They'll talk about, "oh, I really like this song they had" or "I remember when they were really popular back then." They're talking about them, not as well as selling*

AMBER: *And it's funny too!*

CHARLOTTE: *And its better when it doesn't seem like an ad. It's more interesting... the radio presenters, like, talk about it in different ways and obviously they can't play that over and over again'*

So in this case, the participants prefer the presenter because there is room to vary the message, rather than one recorded advertising message. Recorded advertising is not live,

so there is no way of reinterpreting them as being the genuine opinion of the person talking, whereas advertorial content still allows the audience to think that they may be just listening to the opinion of the presenter.

DANIEL: Well one of the things that annoys me about ads, proper ads, is that the marketers use specific motivation techniques. Essentially they try to make you their puppet by giving you a taste of what you want to make you want it even more. And, if it's like a presenter talking about it, then it's not really like that, it's like them discussing it and helping people who are interested to get information from it because, I mean, they don't get any money from it really.

This statement positions the presenter as having editorial control over the products they are promoting, when this not necessarily the case on the majority of youth radio stations in New Zealand.

According to these participants, one of the big appeals of this form of advertising rather than traditional spot advertising is that presenters have the advantage of being able to do impromptu ad-libs, rather than as a recording that stays the same every time it gets heard.

Interestingly in both groups there was one person who said that he or she would prefer to listen to a regular 30 second advertisement because they were perceived as being fast and to the point:

GLYNIS: *With the ad they're only focusing on selling you that certain thing.*
With the DJ they talk a lot...'

AMBER: *Yeah, that's a good point. If they had more music and quick ads,*
rather than less music, quick ads, plus a DJ babbling on for ages,
then that'd be better. Yeah, if it's quicker then...

ELLIE: *Yeah, ads do get to the point where it's "buy this 'cause it's cheap,"*
and that's...you know. It gets to the point where it's quick, and fast
and direct

Here it appears that the most important caveat for favouring non-traditional advertising over regular commercial breaks is an expectation that the advertorials would be over faster. This does not always eventuate. For example, in the case of the advertorial for the Vodafone Prize give away (Clip 5), the clip was actually 77 seconds long, so it was more than twice as much advertising time than a regular 30 second commercial.

4.8 The lure of prizes

The lure of prizes appears to be a strong incentive for radio listeners and as such they are seen as being used to keep audiences listening through commercial breaks:

MADELINE: *[it's] kind of advertising because it makes you stay*

OLLIE: *Because you don't want to miss out if you've actually won*

The group decided that they would only make a conscious effort to listen through the advertisements if the prize on the other side of the commercial break was worthwhile.

Participants suggested that a worthwhile prize might be money, iPods, cellphones, or concert/movie tickets. There appears to be a strong sentiment amongst these listeners that their attention will only be piqued if the radio is offering something desirable.

4.9 Summary

In considering the results of the focus groups, all the participants were involved and engaged with the topic; it appears that advertising is something that most young people are aware of and have strong opinions about. The focus group discussions evolved from the participants thinking of advertising as something negative and straightforward, to each group considering the nature of different types of advertising. For these participants, advertising is most commonly associated with the selling of products. As a result, advertising social messages was not necessarily considered to be an advertisement. Certainly early on, being seen as being an 'ad' was 'bad', however this definition was expanded to include some of the more neutral content exhibited in non-traditional advertisements.

On the evidence gathered here, young people are fairly adept at identifying traditional advertising. There is also a strong embrace of traditional forms of commercial activity with a number of participants deriving (possibly ironic) pleasure from singing along to advertisements. At the same time, there was a considerable amount of confusion surrounding the non-traditional forms, especially when the presenter is able to promote products in his or her own words. This level of commercialism was not framed by the

participants as something that could be influenced; rather it was understood as the status quo that is part of getting commercial radio for free.

broadcasters will have to work out alternative ways of getting revenue in for their radio station.

By and large, the participants wanted the radio to provide entertainment. While spoken copy can be considered to be part of entertainment (a DJ's message is perceived as being more relevant), spot advertising cannot unless it is a particular advertisement that is relevant to their interests. Youth radio stations broadly target 10-29 year olds, so these participants aged 13-15 are at the younger end of this spectrum. They are not able to drive yet, unable to go to bars and unlikely to be looking for jobs or higher education and as such a large amount of advertising is often considered irrelevant to this particular age-group leading to a general disaffection towards advertisements.

PETE: [the radio stations] all say – "we've got less ads than everyone else, you should love us..."

At the same time, the participants stated their distaste for advertising, yet were very actively involved with reciting the advertisements to make people laugh in the focus groups. One of the aspects that came through very strongly was the social capital and sense of community that came through being aware of radio advertising. Advertisements provide a common ground for the group discussion– a good example was the popularity of jingles within the group of Year 9's, in which a number of references to an advertisement elicited the recitation of the products advertisement and slogan. Both groups showed an almost ironic enjoyment of these advertisements because although the groups felt that

they were often examples of 'bad' advertisements, it is also what appeared to make them more attractive to the audience.

One of the important points made by the participants was that commercial spots on radio are not categorically bad; rather it is poorly produced advertising was the most pressing issue. One participant suggested that movie director Michael Bay should make all of the advertisements in New Zealand. While this was obviously not a serious suggestion, it highlights that there is a lack of tonal production values that does not appeal to this audience.

There was also a suggestion from the participants that radio advertising would be more effective if there was less of it:

AMBER: But I think it would be more effective if they just made a really awesome ad, and only played it a couple of times, so you were like "oh this is a cool ad" and you remember it because it's cool, like whatever, and it wouldn't be annoying. And then you'd...

CHARLOTTE: And you'd wonder like "oh is this ad going to be back on"

AMBER: And then you'd go research it because it'd be like "oh that was a cool ad"

While it is possible that commercial practitioners would argue about the feasibility of this approach to advertising, it does not negate the perception within this group of

participants that this idea would be a workable solution. At the same time, the

participants also believed that an effective advertisement that drives sales is not necessarily the same as appreciating an advertisement. Advertisements do not appear to have to be liked to be effective by this particular group of people.

5.2 What an advertisement is...

Among the participants there was an expectation that they 'understood' what a 'real' advertisement sounded like. The definitions created by the participants place 'real' advertising as promoting the commercial exchange and the sale of goods. Advertisements, according to the participants, tell people explicitly what to do or buy, which may explain why some of the non-traditional advertising was not always perceived as having a commercial agenda, and was even slipped under the radar on some occasions. A number of participants mentioned that particular clips were 'sometimes' an advertisement – especially in the cases of those clips that did not have an overt sales agenda.

There was also a sense amongst the focus groups that being influenced to purchase products was something that happened to *other* people, because being able to be manipulated into purchasing products was associated with a lack of impulse control. In this situation, there was an obvious sense of distance between the participant and the advertiser, scepticism that arguably comes from growing up in a heavily saturated commercial environment.

5.3 The ethics and purpose of radio

One of the findings of this research was that the participants preferred the more 'subtle' non-traditional forms of advertising. The interview with the American wrestler (Clip 7 which was book-ended by a piece of spoken copy from the DJ) was mentioned by participants in both focus groups as their favourite advertisement specifically *because* they did not know that it was an advertisement. As such, it seems the participants prefer this type of advertising because it feels like it is getting the advertising content out of the way. The reality is, however, that the non-traditional types of advertising are used to supplement traditional advertising, rather than replace it.

For the participants, the most appealing aspect of the clip was that the commercial content in the wrestling interview (Clip 7) was not seen as impinging on the broadcast experience. The focus groups imply that radio exists for young people as an entertainment based medium. As such, when the advertisements are entertaining, the audience appear to appreciate them more. However, it means that to talk to young people through commercial radio, it seems to need to be through an entertainment lens. In this kind of environment, politics, social issues, and identity issues would be very difficult to include within this light-hearted entertainment framework and would be arguably be avoided for the most part.

The important thing is that nobody in the focus groups thought that unlabelled commercial content might be unethical. As long as it what is broadcasted is perceived as being within the law by the participants, then the content is fine. When it came to

unethical advertising, the participants' main issues with advertisers related more towards false claims, as that was illegal. Referring back to the New Zealand radio content as "some of the best in the world" could arguably be reframed as stating that New Zealand is able to fit the most commercial content into a broadcast without the audience appearing to mind (TRB, 2010b, p. 10).

5.4 Branding: "I'm lovin' it!"

The participants knew that they were being targeted and marketed to by the radio stations and did not appear to mind.

CHARLOTTE: And they were trying to, like, advertise their product, in like, a song and it would get us listening. Everything is, like, trying to persuade us into listening.

BEN: Jingles often help companies to make people remember their products, because, I mean, think about McDonalds; everybody knows the "I'm lovin' it" ad.

MODERATOR: Do we?

BEN: I'm pretty sure we do...

MODERATOR: If I went 'Da-na-nah-nah-nah' (MODERATOR hums the McDonalds jingle)

ALL: Yeah!

AMBER:

Yeah! Just those little notes'

It may have been the fact that there was a clip from McDonalds played during the focus groups, but the restaurant was a focal discussion point for both groups. The participants and their relationship with McDonalds branding was illuminating as it provided an example of how young people interact with branding in commercially saturated environments. Both groups knew the McDonalds jingle off by heart, and in one group the discussion moved onto the new promotion (the 'Angus Beef Burger'). This serves to reinforce that conversation between the participants was often facilitated through the mention of international brands.

What is interesting is that the participants felt that McDonalds advertising needed to be censored in case it was potentially 'harmful' to 'kids:'

LEON:

I like it how on TV they can't show McDonalds ads or fatty food ads from like a period of time, the school time when the children come home and watch TV, watch Sticky TV or whatever. And they just advertise kids stuff, no McDonalds...

Within this group there was an expectation that there are viewers that need protection from advertising. However, there was no clear indication of when and for whom this protection was needed, just that the participants themselves are not going to be affected.

5.5 What is radio for?

This research can be read differently depending on one's political and ideological mindset considering how commercial reality affects society. This encompasses an age-old debate between the market-driven mindset of 'giving people what they *want*' and a public service aim to provide people 'what they *need*'. The young people involved in this research appear to be comfortable as the targets of advertisers because their listening focus is only on entertainment (mostly in the form of music). It is therefore easy for these young people to meld with the commercial imperatives of a commercial radio station. The 'success' of commercial radio is also reinforced by the fact that the goals that non-commercial radio encourages (identity creation, a sense of culture and a more informed society) are almost impossible to measure, whilst the advertising revenue is considerably more straightforward.

The participants appeared to have a good understanding of how commercial radio is funded through the use of advertising:

DANIEL: The companies fund them to have the ads

GLYNIS: And mention [a product] as well, if you mention like...

JASON: And if it profits they'll probably advertise it again

This implies a level of acceptance of the commercial reality of radio by the participants. Advertising appears to be perceived as part of the package that comes along with getting radio for free; a necessary evil that has to exist in order for the radio to function.

When considering whether it is okay for the advertisers to fund commercial radio, there was a general chorus of agreement amongst the focus groups because:

BEN: If there wasn't advertising in New Zealand, people wouldn't be buying stuff...

Audience murmur in agreement

MADELINE: That's how things work, isn't it?'

5.6 How radio product placement varies

The participants noted that product placement (or advertorials) on radio was obviously different than television. Namely, products are placed visually on television, while radio relies on aural placement of brand names rather than visual cues.

OLLIE: When they're advertising McDonalds on the radio you don't feel the urge to buy it. When you see it you want to buy it.

As such, advertising on radio differs from television as there is less sensory imagery, which suggests that the product is processed differently. Identifying examples of commercial references in radio involves searching for different cues than those found on television. Based on the discussion, it did not appear that most participants had thought about product placement on the radio, but were aware that it existed in film and television. This implies that audiences are not explicitly aware of this form of advertising on radio, and are unlikely to look for it unless prompted. As a result, the focus group discussion is a slightly

unrealistic picture of non-traditional advertising comprehension, since when listeners are consuming radio content they are seldom listening to the content very closely to see if it is indeed an advertisement. As soon as an authority figure in a room (in this case the moderator) asks 'is this an advertisement?', then it implies that there is likelihood of there being an advertisement present. As a result the participants were arguably more critical and also more engaged with the radio advertising than they would be otherwise. Also, audiences often filter out advertising if it does not relate to any particular audience member's experience. As such this research was not necessarily 'replicating' a natural listening experience.

If the moderation role had been expanded to assume that of a media studies teacher who was lecturing the young participants about the way in which commercial radio operates, it is evident from this research that the participants would have been able to identify and understand more commercial content. As such, it is not that young people are unable to comprehend commercial speech; they just need to know how to look for it.

5.7 Presenter/listener relationship

While not necessarily generalisable to a large populace, it was clear from the discussion that the participants did not have strong personal relationships with specific on-air presenters, an observation that differs from previous research which suggests that audiences listen to the radio for a sense of imagined community with the presenter as the main focal point. This disconnection could stem from the amount of commercial content that the presenters have to promote. One of the main issues that British audiences had

with non-traditional advertising was that they expected the presenters to be impartial and anything that damaged that sense of trust was looked upon unfavourably. However, with these participants, there did not appear to be any shock when they heard presenters indicating that they do not have their sense of trust lost when the presenter is attempting to influence their purchasing decisions. It appears that instead of forming a sense of community around the presenters' interaction with the audience, the findings in this research suggests that the communities formed around the traditional advertising.

5.8 Methodology revisited

The role of the reception studies methodology and the use of focus groups coloured the way in which the research was conducted. One of the aspects that came through the focus groups was how certain questions provided a strong sense of unity and cohesion amongst the participants, whilst others prompted arguments. The group was adamant about the nature of traditional advertising as well as obvious low-level advertising; arguments tended to surface when discussing the non-traditional clips because there was no clear-cut answer. In the case of the McDonalds advertorial (Clip 3) for example, there were arguments over whether the presenter was voicing an opinion or whether it was an advertisement paid for by McDonalds.

With the value of hindsight, it would have been beneficial for the participants to have rated the clips at the conclusion of the focus group to see how the discussion had changed their viewpoints (if at all). The way in which the discussion flowed and developed was affected by the focus group environment. Similarly, while there was a deliberate effort to

make the environment as comfortable as possible it is possible that the combination of a friendly atmosphere and pre-existing peer groups made the discussions slightly too relaxed. As such, there was no real desire amongst participants to find a deep level of truth surrounding the nature of advertising on radio. There were a number of times when a participant would derail the conversation either by making a joke, or by stating that the conversation had gotten 'too philosophical'.

In each group there were a couple of people who felt quite strongly that much of the content on display was commercial by nature. Because of the scope of the project, the research was unable to get particularly in depth with each person's listening background and where his or her listening habits stemmed from. Because often times the participants that were better-informed about advertising and the commercial nature of radio tended to have more cynical opinions, and as such having an understanding of the participants listening background would have provided a deeper level of insight into the nature of the discussion.

5.9 Reconsidering media 'effects'

When considering the findings of this research, it is important to remember David Gauntlett's criticism of the cause and effect relationship between media and audience, and his assertion that the researcher's emphasis should always be on the audience and the meanings that they create (1995/1998). While this methodological criticism is important and definitely holds weight (especially in the UK), it is possible that the lack of

regulatory bodies in New Zealand and the subsequent blurring between advertising and editorial content is on a scale that Gauntlett had not considered. While his approach of placing the audience unconditionally at the heart of the research process is worthwhile, it is entirely possible that the commercial messages on New Zealand commercial radio are considerably more intense for audiences not to be affected in an adverse way. Even as audiences are able to negotiate the meanings of the media texts, there is still little to suggest that commercial radio in New Zealand could serve any other human need apart from providing a sense of escapism. While escapism is important, it also actively discourages engagement with the civic activities important in encouraging a functioning society.

5.10 Directions for future research

In terms of extensions of this research, conducting this same research project with participants of different ages would provide an interesting insight into how a variety of audiences understand commercial content. Comparing the differences between this particular age group and an older demographic would make for an intriguing insight into the commercial reality of how radio in New Zealand is understood as it would highlight whether non-traditional commercial content becomes easier to identify as participants get older. This area surrounding the understanding of commercial content also can be used as a guide for informing rational debate over legislation surrounding the labelling of non-traditional forms of advertising.

Comparing the New Zealand experience to that of young people in the UK or Australia where there is non-commercial public service broadcasting targeted at young people would also provide some insights into possible different levels of understanding of commercial content in a less commercially saturated environment.

Another aspect that could be considered is how listeners appear to prefer advertorial type content instead of advertisements whilst still forming strong relationships with presenters who are responsible for utilising their credibility to sell products to the audience.

Investigating this relationship would be interesting with specific attention to how radio listeners perceive the amount of control that DJ's have over what they say on air and the music that they play on air. It is possible that there would be a sizeable discrepancy between the amounts of control that the audience believes presenters have compared to the freedom afforded by their radio stations.

5.11 Conclusion

Non-traditional advertising is one of the few growing areas of revenue for commercial media; however, the academic study of how audiences understand this type of content has just begun. Looking at 13-15 year olds in New Zealand and their understanding of commercial references on radio is a very tightly focused example, and while the findings are indicative rather than prescriptive, there are a number of worthwhile findings derived from this research project. Firstly, the young people in this research view traditional advertising as being unpleasant due to commercials interrupting the flow of a broadcast.

It shows that the participants are confident with the way in which they consume media

and feel a sense of agency when utilising their media platforms. This confidence is also demonstrated in their embrace of advertising as a means of social interaction and commonality between their peers. In many cases, these young people used advertising as a form of entertainment itself, singing along to jingles, reciting slogans in order to make their peers laugh. This reinforces the existing academic literature surrounding how young people use media and understand advertising.

When considering how young people comprehend more subtle forms of commercial speech, this research found that the participants were only able to partially understand and identify the non-traditional advertising presented. The participants preferred the more subtle forms of advertising to traditional advertising, because it meant (at least in theory) that the radio stations could have less commercial breaks. However, this still means that there is still ambiguity for the audience knowing when they are hearing a commercial message.

This thesis paints a picture of media literacy amongst young New Zealanders. It shows that understanding non-traditional advertising is complex and that many of the subtle forms of commercial exchanges between broadcaster and consumer go unnoticed. Fundamentally, this research shows that radio is used by young people as an entertainment medium. This means that provided advertisers can position their messages inside this framework, the evidence gathered here suggests that the youth audience may not be actively concerned about the frequency of commercial content on youth radio in New Zealand.

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Appendix A: The four commercial youth stations in New Zealand

The Edge is a CHR/Top 40 station owned by Mediaworks, which targets an audience of 10-29 year olds. The Edge rates strongest with listeners aged 10-17 (Research International, 2009) and according to Colmar Brunton (Colmar Brunton, 2008) they are the preferred radio station of 6-13 year olds. The Edge listeners expect to be entertained “by the most exciting promotions in New Zealand” (Mediaworks, 2010a, p. 1). The Edge is run from Auckland, but is networked throughout New Zealand and is the most popular radio station amongst young people nationwide, with 437,800 listeners in an average week (Mediaworks, 2010b).

ZM is another CHR/Top 40 station owned by The Radio Network that targets a slightly older audience than ‘The Edge’, rating top in the 18-24 demographic (Research International, 2009). The ZM broadcast is networked throughout the country from Auckland, however the Wellington and Christchurch markets have a local presenter from

10-2 on weekdays¹⁰. The breakfast show reaches an average weekly audience of 405,000 (The Radio Network, 2010b).

Mai FM is an urban/hip hop station targeted at young Maori and Pacific Island listeners, aged 10-17. It broadcasts on a frequency that was leased to the Maori tribe 'Ngati Whatua'. It was owned and developed as a business venture of the tribe, however in 2008; Mai FM was purchased by Mediaworks. While the station attempts to maintain a local community feel, it is first and foremost a commercial operation (Pryor, 1998). For a long time it was held up as being the beacon of market success, competing with The Radio Network and Radioworks for advertisers and in a number of cases getting better ratings (Research International, 2006). In buying Mai FM, Mediaworks highlighted that consolidation appears to be the long term trend in a market regulated mediascape.

Flava is an urban/hip-hop station owned by The Radio Network targeting young Maori and Pacific islanders in the 10-24 age bracket (The Radio Network, 2010a). It is also the newest youth-orientated station in the market and was launched in 2005 to compete with Mai FM's for the Maori and Polynesian audience. Upon its launch, The Radio Network opted to broadcast Flava without advertising for three months which led to the station effectively

¹⁰ It is worth noting that it is even though some frequencies are considerably closer to Christchurch than Auckland (such as South Canterbury), yet the stream that South Canterbury gets during the daytime is from Auckland instead of Christchurch.

halving Mai FM's audience share (C. Hope, 2004). As such Mai FM's profitability was damaged and is a likely reason behind the sale of Mai FM to Mediaworks.

Appendix B: Options for advertisement

List of options for advertisers on commercial radio in New Zealand from '*Radio Products Overview*' (TRB, 2010b).

Spots	Recorded commercial advertisements.
Sponsorships	Couples an advertiser's brand with a station, show, or feature.
Promotions	Bespoke promotional activity created by stations for advertisers.
Phone Outs	On-air phone call from station announcer to client, to discuss client's business or products.
Ad-libs	Announcer-read promotion for advertiser's products.
Advertorials	On-air question-and-answer style session between announcer and advertiser.
TST (Time Saver Traffic)	Traffic report intro and outros featuring advertising branding.
AZB / B2B	Special spot advertisements placed adjacent to the news at the hour.
Crosses	Announcer crosses to promotions personnel or advertiser at a live event.

(pre-recorded and live)	
Sampling	Station 'street teams' distribute advertiser product samples.
Onsite	Promotional activity at a specific location or event, for example, a store opening.
Outside broadcasts	Stations broadcast from outside the studio at, for example, sporting events.

Online options include:

Streaming	Allows listeners to access their favourite radio stations online. Pop up media players can carry an advertiser's message.
Banners, Skyscrapers, Buttons	Customisable webpage advertising space, links to advertiser's website or a micro site.
Media One	Media pop-up which delivers advertiser television commercials to visitors to station websites, links to advertiser's website or a micro site.
Database marketing	Available via SMS and e-mail, allows advertisers to use data captured through listener web or SMS opt-in.
Games	Bespoke online games, created for specific advertiser campaigns.
SMS	Spots which can be tagged with quick-SMS numbers to opt-in or access special offers via SMS vouchers.

Appendix C: Discussion Topics

These were *all* of the topics that the stations invited people to call up to discuss:

Who is the bigger 'man-whore' than Michael Phelps?

What is the worst pain you've experienced?

Do you have a height mismatch with your partner?

Are you working a 60 hour week?

Who is the biggest celebrity you've met?

What's the weirdest fetish you've come across?

Would you rather have the skateboarding skills of Tony Hawk or the rapping ability of Eminem?

Can you boil an egg?

What's your worst Customer Service experience?

What makes your neighbourhood look like downtown Mogadishu?

Have you ever slept with your teacher/boss?

Why can't Jennifer Anniston find a husband?

How much would you pay for shoes?

Appendix D: General Focus Group Plan

12.00	Arrive at school; meet with Assistant Principal, set up room.
12.30	Lunchtime starts; students begin arriving, grab a plate of food and sit down to choose a pseudonym.
12.40	Introduction to the afternoon, introducing researchers, emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers - but participants will need to concentrate.
12.45	5 minutes to fill in Pre-Screener about radio listening habits.
12.50	Listening to Audio - identifying ads - collect answers.
12.55	Play clips individually, discuss each clip.
1.00	Open discussion on radio .
1.20	Last thoughts, give out book tokens, and tidy up.

Appendix E: Pre Screener Questionnaire

Gender

How old are you?

What one radio station do you listen to most?

Are there any other radio stations that you listen to? If so, what are they?

What time of day do you tend to listen most (Breakfast, During the Day, Afternoon or Nights)?

Who is your favourite DJ on the radio?

What's your favourite thing about the radio?

Why is that?

What's your least favourite thing about the radio?

Why is that?

If you had \$500 to buy something right now what would it be? You are allowed to keep the change.

Appendix F: Audio Clips - transcribed

Clip 1: Drake Industrial advertisement (The Edge)

SFX: sounds of machinery

MALE VOICEOVER: “You like to know who you’re working for?

 You like to know where you stand?

 Then you’d better be with Drake Industrial – consistent

 work, familiar faces, Drake Industrial – 0800 HOT JOBS”

Clip 2: Breakfast Show Banter (Flava)

FEMALE PRESENTER: “Thursday versus day! Would you rather have the rapping

 ability of Eminem or the skating skills of Tony Hawk? Lots of

 texts come in.”

MALE PRESENTER: “Yeah, it seems like a simple one, but we’re quite split up on

 this.”

 “Jamie says – ‘Eminem, he’s the man’”.

 Someone else says ‘I’d rather spit lyrics like Eminem, he’s

 amazing – I can already skate good enough.’ Aw, lucky!”

Clip 3: Spoken McDonalds Advertorial (Mai FM)

FEMALE PRESENTER: “...just before that, it’s little Kanye West, some homecoming coming up, I love that song, I love Kanye, Maya as well as Baby Bash...

If it’s kai time around at your whare, or you’re at mahi and need a bit of a feed, cruise on over the golden arches, and get a little McD’s Olympic action.

To celebrate the Olympics of course, they’ve got three burgers, the kiwi burger; the kiwi burger (*delivered in a ‘stereotypical’ New Zealand accent*) is my personal favourite, loving the Kiwi burger.

Or you could do the McOzzie, the McOzzie, (*delivered in a ‘stereotypical’ Australian accent*) or you could try the McAsia burger, I can’t do an Asian accent, so you’ll just have to improvise. (laughs) Head over to Maccas and get yourself a feed, man!

You’re with Mai FM 88.6.”

Clip 4: DJ Promoting Interview (ZM)

SONG ENDS

MALE PRESENTER:

“Taking 18 tonight on the ZM top 20 with Mark, it is the Ting Tings and ‘Shut Up and Let Me Go’

I’m actually catching up with Katie White from The Ting Tings tomorrow morning – got a little bit of an interview with her – quite excited actually, if you do have a question you’d like me to ask her, text it through to me ‘9696’ – I’ll see what I can do for ya.”

Clip 5: Prize Giveaway (Mai FM)

MALE PRESENTER:

“26 minutes after 5 with the ‘Hare’ Drivetime – and checking into Mai Mobile as you know, this week we’re giving you a chance thanks to Sony Ericsson to pick up the W350 Walkman phone – it is hot property!

I’ll give you a chance to score that Friday, between now and Friday you’ve got to get registered.

We’re just going to check out one of the many features on this phone and I’ve figured this is an

important feature because anyone who's kicking their phone, has to be also kicking Mai FM and you can do that on this funky phone – the W350 has an FM tuner which basically means you can take Mai and go mobile – listen to us anywhere you're at.

Basically the headphones plug in and adapt as an aerial – so you get good reception, reception is tight, and plenty of presets, but let's be honest, you only need one station.

So here's how you get onto winning this afternoon – Sony Ericsson W350 – it's valued at around \$300 and available in-store at First Mobile – but it's yours free on Friday just by texting me right now – 3550 is the number – keyword is Sony – and I need the name of the station you will definitely preset on your W350.

All right, it's as easy as that. 3550 is the text-to-win number. Key word is Sony and I need the name of the station on your number one preset. It's the Sony Ericsson W350.

Mai Mobile at Mai 88.6"

Clip 6: Thin Lizzy Advertisement (ZM)

FEMALE SINGER:

“Come on Girls!

It’s time to make-up.

Girl, you can be a rock-star playing your guitar, look
hot and be famous in the media.

You can be a supermodel strutting down the catwalk
or fly off into space and be an astronaut.

Set your sights at the area on fire

Down the fear, let everybody know you’re here.

You’re first to move, yeah you’re first to shout –
show the world exactly what you’re all about.

It’s time to make up!

Make up. And get busy. Wake up.

It’s time to make up.

Get down. And get busy.

Make up with Thin Lizzy. Thin Lizzy.

Thin Lizzy.

It’s time to make up!”

Clip 7: Breakfast Show Interview with Wrestler John Cena (ZM)

GRANT KEREAMA: *"John Cena, with the 'Pollsta', coming up next!"*

RECORDED STATION ID: *"Polly and Grant – ZM's morning crew – 91ZM"*

GRANT KEREAMA: *"Sixteen to eight – today's hit music ZM..."*

It is WWE's summer slam, a live event, Monday – this Monday coming up at Midday – and you can book it at Sky Box Office.

Alright – give them a call 0800 759 Triple 7. Channel 200. For WWE's Summer Slam."

POLLY GILLESPIE: *I didn't know what to expect, because the 'New Hot Guy' told me that when you interview a professional wrestler, often they talk in character.*

It was freaking the bejeezus out of me – so when I got John Cena on the phone, I didn't know what to expect...

{Interview Starts}

JOHN CENA: *Hello!*

POLLY GILLESPIE: *Hi, how're you?*

JOHN CENA: *I'm fantastic, just getting ready for summer slam.*

Fade out

POLLY GILLESPIE: Wow, hey, John, we know you're a busy man, thank you so much for your time today and we really look forward to having you back in New Zealand.

JOHN CENA: Oh, I look forward to being there and everybody can catch us at 'Summerslam,' we've got the biggest event of the summer coming up and they can make sure to check their sky pay-per-view to see us before we get there.

POLLY GILLESPIE: Can't wait! Cannot wait - thank you so much, John.

JOHN CENA: Thank you.

POLLY GILLESPIE: Take care, bye.

GRANT KEREAMA: John Cena. He's fighting Batista. WWE's summer slam, a live event, on Monday, Channel 200, book at Sky Box Office, phone 0800 759 777.

POLLY GILLESPIE: And if you want to hear that interview in its entirety – it is longer, it will be up at zmonline.com.

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Questions

What do you think about ads on the radio?

Do you have favourite ads on the radio?

Of the pieces of audio that we just heard – which ones do you think were ads?

What do you think the difference is between the program and the ads? How can you tell the difference between them?

If a DJ tells you about a product are you more likely to listen to a presenter or an advertisement?

If a presenter tells you that they will be giving a prize away after a commercial break will that make you listen through the ads?

Do you think there should be rules about advertising on radio? What kinds of rules?

Any other thoughts that you want to share with the group?