

The Voice of Tween Engagement

A local transmedia narrative informed by the screen media tastes and preferences of New Zealand tweens.

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Abstract

Post-millennial tweens (9-13 year olds) are considered one of the most exciting and influential youth generations in history. They spend hours online, sourcing, creating and sharing content across multiple platforms. They have increasingly discarded scheduled television viewing, replacing it with YouTube (Rideout, Ulla, & Roberts, 2010) and other social media sources. For New Zealand tweens this means more foreign content is being consumed than ever before and local stories are increasingly more difficult to discover. At a time when New Zealand tweens are developing their own identities, and a sense of self and place in the world they need local stories (Götz, 2016; Zanker, 2013). However, there aren't enough local stories being developed for this age group. When tweens are already proficient in developing and sharing user-made content, a solution to the paucity of local stories could be as simple as including them in the creative process. My practice-based research explores how tweens can be part of the creative process using transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling reveals multiple narrative perspectives, across several platforms, often encouraging audience interaction and participation. Qualitative data I collected from a sample tween audience informed a transmedia story that was then shaped and refined by the sample audience's feedback and ideas. My research explored the benefits of this process, identifying how helpful having a tween insight is, not only to the story development but also to the selection of distribution platforms and audience interactivity mechanisms. Through my work I demonstrate that transmedia storytelling, informed by a tween audience, offers a process for local content creation that can reach tweens with stories they like, on platforms they use and in ways they prefer. Local stories created this way will be more likely to be discovered by tweens, be relevant and engaging and more likely to be shared by tweens.

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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, 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."

Signed Andrea Kahukiwa

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Confidential Material

Story ideas, loglines, taglines, character descriptions, associated distribution platforms and the story world are confidential for one year to protect the creative copyright of this work and allow the time needed to apply for funding to have the *Mangu Town* transmedia story produced.

Introduction

This research is motivated by the need to find innovative solutions to redress the imbalance between the level of foreign (predominantly American) content New Zealand children consume and the amount of engaging local content they can choose from. My professional background in marketing and communications provides me with a level of insight and an appreciation of the business of media content creation. My post-graduate studies in communications have focused on the importance of the 'local story' and just how hard it is for these stories to endure in a commercially competitive media landscape. With four children of my own, ranging from one year to 13 years old, I have witnessed first hand the increasingly powerful role screen content has on a child's view of the world. My school age children have enjoyed learning in Māori immersion and Māori bilingual environments but still come home and role-play with American accents. Their imaginations of the future include some very American values and pop culture aspirations. In this research I am drawing on my skills and experience in all areas to produce a research study that will hopefully make a positive impact on our local children's media landscape.

Local stories are considered to be important in communicating the values, identity and sense of belonging to communities, whether they be national or more discrete groupings (Wulff, 2013). In New Zealand the availability of diverse local stories for children is considered to be very low by international standards (Hassall, 2016) meaning that New Zealand children, especially tweens are not easily able to discover local stories that will contribute positively to their developing sense of self and belonging. NZ on Air, the funding body responsible, for ensuring local stories are reaching local audiences have identified this issue and are investigating a range of possible solutions (NZ-on-Air, 2015a). I believe transmedia storytelling offers part of the solution; it offers the scope of telling local stories in a way that can engage tweens (nine-13-year-olds) with more success than single-platform linear stories. Key to this is the potential benefits of making this age group part of the creative process, something that transmedia producer Jeff Gomez believes is essential for reaching today's media savvy interpersonally connected tween audiences (Gomez, 2016). *The Voice of Tween Engagement* explores ways of making tweens an authentic part of the on-going story, increasing the likelihood of engagement, shareability and discoverability with the tween audience. This research addresses what local children's media experts and children's interests groups believe are unacceptably low levels of children's content and the challenge to find new ways to ensure they have a diversity of age-appropriate stories (KidsOnScreen, 2015; Zanker, 2013).

Transmedia storytelling is still an emerging narrative genre on the cusp of possibilities (Phillips, 2012), the definitions of which vary between media academics and practitioners. For this research, the definition offered by media academic Henry Jenkins offers a way to understand the genre:

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story (Jenkins, 2011).

Transmedia producer, Nuno Bernardo's definition guides the writing approach I have taken for a transmedia story that will engage children within the tween age range. Bernardo's describes transmedia storytelling as being developed over multiple media forms to enable different entry points into the story. He explains that the writer must appreciate that audiences are no longer confined to one medium, but are accessing content on multiple devices across multiple platforms and stories must be written to engage the audience in this way (Bernardo, 2011). This approach means that the transmedia stories I write can offer the audience a more deeply immersive experience by including the opportunity for them to interact and participate in the story process. In this way I can create local narratives that are more compelling and engaging for a tween audience. Advantageously, transmedia storytelling already mirrors the way tweens consume media meaning the narrative experience is more likely to be discoverable (because of multiple entry points), and shareable (due to the range of platforms for story distribution).

More than a decade ago, Henry Jenkins predicted that the children who grew up with a Pokémon character, who effortlessly traversed multiple platforms, could expect more than a simple serialised one-hour drama to engage them as adults (Jenkins, 2003). Similarly, New Zealand tweens who have grown up with the Internet and a range of digital devices are not a generation likely to be satisfied or fully engaged by stand-alone, scheduled programming. Knowing the audience and knowing where and how to reach them is essential to writing a story that will engage and immerse tweens (Phillips, 2012). Transmedia storytelling has the scope to connect with the audience and engage them in the creative process. This then provides the basis for a new approach to local story telling that can offer writers and producers an alternative way to successfully reach the 9-13 age group with stories that are relevant and important to them.

Methodological Approach

Practice-based research enables me to write a transmedia story for tweens that is underpinned by an understanding of their tastes and preferences. It includes making them a key part of the story writing process and analysing the benefits of this approach. I conducted qualitative research on a sample audience of New Zealand tweens to better understand their preferences for devices, screen media, characters and popular culture. The findings from this initial research inform the draft narratives of *Mangu Town*. The draft storylines and characters are then presented to the tween research participants for feedback. Their feedback enhances the reflection process, guiding all aspects of the writing of the *Mangu Town* story and production bible. The *Mangu Town* production bible then serves as a way to explain how the story will work for the audience so that funders, producers and creative teams can understand how the multiple narratives can be executed. This approach provides the

opportunity to see whether a narrative process that includes tweens in story development can make local stories more engaging, more discoverable, more shareable and therefore a more attractive proposition for funders and producers. It hopes to provide evidence for an alternative process for creating transmedia stories for tweens that reduces some of the risk associated with reaching niche audiences in New Zealand.

Research Question:

My research addresses the following research question:

1. What are the benefits of involving tweens in the process of local transmedia story creation?

Children between the age of nine and 13-years-old are commonly known as tweens. Branding and marketing experts like Martin Lindstrom define the age range as between eight and 14 years, describing them as the most “powerful, smart, complex consumers and influencers” of our era (Lindström, 2003). Transmedia expert Jeff Gomez calls them the most desirable target market and media savvy generation to date (Gomez, 2016). Other marketers and consumer researchers most commonly have the tween age band between eight and 14 years (Wingert, 1999). Tweens are essentially pre-adolescents, children on the verge of ‘coming of age’, just beginning to define themselves and their identities separately from their parents. For this study, I chose a narrower range of nine to 13-year-olds to fit within the typical age of children who would be at primary and intermediate school. NZ On Air also uses age ranges based on the children’s year level at school (NZ On Air, 2015).

NZ On Air has identified that local programming for school-aged children (which includes tweens) requires new strategies. Funding limits have made it difficult to cover all ages and genre diversity for children (NZ On Air, 2015). They commissioned a media use study in 2014 to understand the changing media habits of children (ColmarBrunton, 2015). Following this the organisation initiated a number of strategies that recognise the potential for digital and interactive media to better meet the local content needs of young audiences (NZ On Air, 2016; NZ on Air, 2016). Transmedia storytelling is a good fit with these new strategies and is an approach that is consistent with the way both local (ColmarBrunton, 2015) and international research (Rideout et al., 2010) indicate children are already consuming media. Transmedia storytelling is also consistent with the preferences and screen viewing habits of my tween research participants.

The content creation process this research explores seeks to address the concerning imbalance between the significant amount of foreign (predominantly American) screen content that New Zealand children are watching and the low level of local screen content that is available to them (Zanker, 2013). It is also consistent with the general approach by NZ On Air, who in a range reports suggest future strategies could see them prioritising children’s funding applications that are designed for multiple platforms and interactivity (NZ On Air, 2015). The level of local screen content for children in

New Zealand is among the lowest in the OECD (Ministry of Social Development, 2010) and identifying viable ways to make content that is relevant and engaging to them is one step toward improving this imbalance.

Local Screen Content – the background and need

The work of international and local children's media scholars explain why this age group is more vulnerable to the lack of local screen content (Götz, 2016; Steemers, 2016; Zanker, 2011) than other age ranges. Most recently, international children's media expert Dr Maya Götz outlined how children can be influenced by screen content and its potential to be both a negative and positive force in the development of their identities. Götz's research showed that when given a choice, children preferred local content and the impacts of not giving children this choice were likely to be negative. She believed the lack of local children's screen stories in New Zealand could be particularly damaging to tweens because this is an age when they are developing their sense of self, sense of belonging and a set of social values and mores that will guide them into adulthood (Ryan, 2013).

In the updated version of *The Children's Media Handbook*, Singer and Singer lament the fact that producers and writers of children's screen media content are often oblivious to the differences in children's age groups. They assert that content that currently exists does not appear to recognise the developmental differences or different emotional responses to media between those under seven and those between seven and 13-years-old (Singer & Singer, 2011). Jeanette Steemers notes that more academic perspective is needed to ensure sustainable practices for the production of children's media content (Steemers, 2016) are developed. NZ On Air has recognised that funding limitations have made it difficult to produce engaging age appropriate content for children in New Zealand (NZ On Air, 2016). The *Mangu Town* transmedia story addresses this by developing a story specifically for tweens, using a process that seeks to understand their screen media habits and tastes and make them part of the creative process.

There are two recent research studies that provide an accurate overview of the screen media habits and trends of children (including tweens). The *Children's Media Use Study* (Colmar Brunton, 2015) commissioned by NZ On Air and the longitudinal study *Generation M2 Media Use in the Lives 8-18 year olds* (Rideout et al., 2010). The research I conducted on a sample group of tweens built on the results of these studies, revealing just how little local content features within the current media landscape of local tweens. Significantly, half of the tween research participants were unable to identify any actual local screen content they watched.

Recent efforts by NZ On Air, show that they recognise the need to address the lack of engaging content for the tween age group and the changing media habits of children overall. Currently, NZ On Air is actively seeking and testing viable ways to increase the amount of discoverable local content available to children. The draft *NZ On Air Funding Strategy* released in September 2016 for public feedback, proposes an innovative change to the way funding for contestable content will be managed.

The proposed new strategy provides opportunities for new genres of content to be considered and does not presuppose the distribution platform for funded content (NZ On Air, 2016).

Challenges to producing content for tweens include the risk of no financial return, a reason cited by NZ on Air as why 'the market' cannot be left to cater for children's screen needs (NZ on Air, 2015). Another challenge is engaging what is considered to be a 'hard to reach' audience (Zanker, 2011). American content not only dominates traditional television screens and movie theatres, it also dominates most, if not all online platforms, making it difficult for tweens to discover local content on preferred platforms like YouTube. Recent media use studies in New Zealand (ColmarBrunton, 2015), Ireland (O'Neill, Brian & Dinh, 2014), the UK (Jackson, 2016) and America (Rideout et al., 2010) all offer evidence of the significant popularity of YouTube amongst tweens and other age groups of children. However, it is unlikely that New Zealand tweens are discovering much in the way of local content on YouTube because of the way platform search algorithms are designed.

YouTube algorithms include thumbnail, title impressions, user viewing history as well as behavior and session metrics. While YouTube does not make its algorithms public, research and analysis by online content creators, Frederator provides evidence that *viewer velocity* is a key to influencing whether YouTube recommends videos or not. Their theory is that YouTube's algorithms work by promoting channels not videos, specifically those channels that attract the most viewers to the YouTube platform and then keep them on the platform for longer session times (Gilen & Rosen, 2016). This means specifically stand-alone New Zealand content is unlikely to rank well. NZ On Air has recognised the challenge New Zealand children have finding local content and have initiated the development of an online platform especially for primary and intermediate aged children (NZ On Air, 2016). Such a channel could provide an effective touch-point for entry into local transmedia stories for tweens.

Summary

This practice-based research aims to create a transmedia story that is informed by tweens and a production bible refined by their feedback to story ideas. The intention is to explore the benefits of including tweens in the creative process and produce a transmedia story that will be relevant and discoverable, engaging and shareable. The outcome can then provide evidence for the viability of this process so that funders and content creators can consider using this process when addressing the challenges of creating engaging and meaningful local content for tweens.

In Chapter two of this exegesis I review the literature on children's media use and the importance of local content for the development of children in pre-adolescence. I summarise the current levels of local screen media and the unique relationship tweens have with media. I then review the definitions of transmedia storytelling, before considering relevant transmedia stories and local children's dramas that inform the practice of writing the *Mangu Town* transmedia story. My review of screenwriting and narrative theory by Andrew Horton, Aristotle and Aaron Sorkin provided me with a theoretical framework to underpin the writing of my characters and the sample scripts for different story elements.

In Chapter three, I outline the overarching research methodology and qualitative tools I used to gain a deeper understanding of the tween research participants that inform the draft narratives. Chapter four is a discussion and reflection of my process. It details the benefits of using a practice-based approach when exploring a new process for developing screen narratives and how qualitative data collection methods can complement this approach. My reflection on the transmedia production bible for *Mangu Town* (the transmedia story I created for New Zealand tweens) provided a process for story creation that included the benefits of working with an audience to inform and shape engaging and shareable transmedia story experiences.

Literature Review - Contextualisation

Writing a transmedia story for New Zealand tweens requires knowledge beyond understanding who they are as an audience of pre-adolescents. It also requires understanding why (if at all), local stories are important to their development and what existing research reveals about their screen content and popular culture preferences. As a mother of tweens, I am conscious of the role media devices and unlimited Internet access has in their everyday lives. In our home scheduled television has been replaced by streaming services, YouTube, social and performance media¹. This means my ability to manage, moderate and influence their screen content is eroded. When it comes to local content my children are regularly encouraged to look for New Zealand options but despite my efforts it is rare for my children to find local content on the platforms they use. American accents, You Tubers, and their friends dominate their screen media worlds.

Research supports my parenting observations. Globally, tweens in particular, have shown a dramatic shift in their media consumption habits by moving away from scheduled television and towards online platforms that are influenced by YouTube, Google and social media. When there is little local content available beyond funded scheduled television shows and few examples of multi-platform or online content for tweens, it is unlikely that much local content is reaching them. Researchers have identified that this shift has affected children and how it now impacts on their lives (Ching & Foley, 2012). When reviewing a range of literature in the fields of children's media, psychology and marketing it is difficult to find research to suggest ideal processes or approaches for developing engaging screen content for tweens in local markets. There are a good number of studies that focus on the range of effects media or screen content have on children. They cover issues like gender (Göetz & Lemish, 2012; Lemish, 2010;), violence (Valkenburg, 2004) and the need for local children's content in a changing digital landscape (Lustyik & Zanker, 2013). However, there is a general lack of academic perspective on the production aspect of children's screen content and little in the way of research on the specific production issues for producing engaging children's screen content outside of America (Steemers, 2016). This literature review identifies a range of studies that seek to understand children and tweens as global screen audiences as well as studies that identify both the particular tastes or habits of New Zealand tween consumers (ColmarBrunton, 2015) and effective approaches to producing digital stories that engage young or local audiences (Hardy, Hight, & Michelle, 2011).

¹ Performance media are a collection of social apps that allow users to record and edit short videos with a variety of filters and effects. Users then share content for other users to endorse like and comment. One popular example is the social media app called musical.ly dance.

Tweens and Screens

Tweens are, for the purposes of this thesis, pre-adolescents between the ages 9 and 13-years-old. Definitions for the tween age band vary from study to study. Some researchers believe the lower end of the age band starts at eight years old (Lindström, 2003) while others believe it starts at ten-years-old. The upper end of the tween age band also varies, for example, branding and neuro-marketing expert Martin Lindstrom, author of *Brandchild* includes children as old as 14 in this age band (Lindström, 2003). Consumer and marketing-focused researchers most commonly have the tween age band between eight and 14-years-old (Wingert, 1999). However, the label tween is more a description of a life stage than a specific age band. Tweens are literally children 'in-between', they are simultaneously 'acting like kids' and at the same time, taking on the actions and values of teenagers (Prince & Martin, 2012). Globally, tweens have been considered one of the hardest groups to reach, described by marketing and media experts as "fickle and difficult" (Andersen, Tufte, Rasmussen, & Kara, 2007). In her research paper *Producers Speak: Creating Civic Spaces for New Zealand Children*, Ruth Zanker's research appears to support this. Local content creators Zanker interviewed suggest this was the most challenging age group to reach. The content creators and commissioners she interviewed were confident they were reaching the under six and the over 14 age group but they believed they were yet to "nail it" for those 'in between' (Zanker, 2011).

When tweens are considered hard to reach and engage, there is an increased risk to the funders and broadcasters, possibly making them a less attractive audience to fund. However, without public funding and channel support, content creators are unlikely to be able to finance screen productions for them (NZ On Air, 2015). While content creators might consider tweens an unattractive audience, marketers consider them a very lucrative one to understand and reach. They consider the tween generation to be a global phenomenon and describe them as more powerful than any previous generation (Prince & Martin, 2012). As pre-adolescents, forging emerging identities, marketers and marketing academics recognise both their potential as audience and their vulnerability to media messages. They also see them as a triple opportunity worthy of understanding and reaching. Marketers want to understand the tween generation because they are a primary market, an influencing market and a future market (Prince & Martin, 2012).

Local content creators have not yet invested the time or resources to understand local tween audiences in the same way that marketing and consumer researchers have in other countries. Without a current understanding of the audience, content creators are less likely to be able to reach them. If for instance, content creators are not aware of local tweens favourite and emerging social media platforms, how can they include these platforms as part of the process of the creating stories intended to reach tweens? Local media use studies (ColmarBrunton, 2015) and international reports on children and the media (Rideout et al., 2010; vom Oder & Turner, 2016) offer some insight on how to produce engaging local screen content for tweens, but there is little research that specifically seeks to understand the screen content tastes and nuances of New Zealand tweens and how to use this knowledge to produce relevant engaging content for them.

Local and international children's media use studies focus predominantly on media use as a time related activity. Other research by children's media academics have commonly sought to address the role media has in children's lives, especially in areas of identity, education, development and behaviour (Götz, 2016). Local research commissioned by NZ On Air (ColmarBrunton, 2015), international research like the longitudinal study by the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout et al., 2010), and the Irish study *Net Children Go Mobile* (O'Neill, Brian & Dinh, 2014) are focused on media use as an activity. The findings of each of these studies provide evidence that tweens are increasingly using multiple screen devices to source a range of different platforms. All studies show a decline in scheduled television viewing and a significant increase in online viewing. The NZ On Air study showed that locally there is growing popularity for YouTube as a platform choice but it wasn't able to address what children were watching on YouTube within the scope of the study. The focus was on identifying the scheduled television shows children were watching.

The increasing popularity and impact of YouTube is detailed in a number of recent media use studies (ColmarBrunton, 2015; Rideout et al., 2010; vom Oder & Turner, 2016). Other research focuses on the role of YouTube as part of an evolving media landscape (García Jiménez, García, & Cruz López de Ayala, 2016) and the changing relationship younger audiences have with media platforms and online actors (Ramos-Serrano & Herrero Diz, 2016). The PBS documentary *Generation Like* reveals that tweens and teen's are not content to passively consume content they desire to be part of content creation process on social platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (Raney, 2015).

Generation Like identifies a cultural shift that has occurred within the current generation of tweens and teens; it is a generation of young people who subconsciously (and consciously) construct their own personal brand (via content they create) to share it across online platforms to gain social approval in the form of likes and shares (Raney, 2015). The evidence of children's changing consumption patterns in recent studies suggest there is a need for different ways of creating children's content that are in harmony with the way they use devices and media platforms. Single platform, scheduled television viewing is no longer an adequate way to reach or engage tweens, yet it is one of the only places local stories can be accessed.

Role of Local Content

Having access to local screen content is essential to being able to participate in the modern digital landscape, the alternative, as pointed out by Nyamnjoh (Carlsson et al., 2014), is to suggest that local culture is meaningless. My research has taken the approach that a local story is one that is unique to the New Zealand experience. It is a story that is drawn from the rich diversity of cultures and communities that survive or thrive within New Zealand and similarly reflects these. It acknowledges the significance of tangata te whenua and recognises that any story must embed tikanga Māori and te reo Māori within the narrative and characters. New Zealand on Air, defines local content as "as stories that reflect the diversity of New Zealand faces, stories and storytellers (NZ On Air, n.d.). In the late 1980's, well before the Internet and new media had changed the way content was distributed; Geoff Lealand undertook a study to understand why and how American popular culture had become so dominant. He wanted to know how New Zealand content could be as successful or popular with New

Zealand audiences as American content was. Part of his research included defining what it was that made New Zealand content (which was informed by the definition of New Zealand culture) distinct from the “foreign import” (Lealand, 1988). The challenge, as Lealand saw it in the 1980s, was the lack of any consensus on a concept of New Zealand culture. Lealand suggested the popular alternative to literary conventions that New Zealand had ‘no culture’ or was a ‘second tier version of British culture’: was that of a self-confident multicultural Pacific nation, moving away from European dominated ways by taking on Māori and Pacific values (Lealand, 1988). Almost 30 years after his research study, *Foreign Egg in our Nest: American Popular Culture in New Zealand*, Lealand undertook research to identify the level of New Zealand screen content being used in New Zealand schools. His 2016 study found that teachers believed students responded best to New Zealand screen content because it spoke to them directly often using local “Kiwi” humour. Teachers in the study thought that local screen content was needed to reflect the bicultural/multicultural New Zealand that students lived in, rather than older, mono cultural versions of a New Zealand.

Representations of New Zealand’s bi-cultural identity are key to producing authentically local stories. A genuine recognition of Māori as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa should be embedded in local stories in such a way that te reo and tikanga Māori are normalised within the narrative. NZ On Air considers that it is particularly important young people be exposed to the reflections of language, cultural identity and values through local content, as they are still working out their own identity and sense of place (NZ On Air, 2015). However, research shows that when New Zealand tweens are sourcing more American content from more platforms than ever before and spending more time online than watching scheduled television (ColmarBrunton, 2015; Jackson, 2016) they are unlikely to be discovering content that includes tikanga and te reo Māori in a meaningful or relevant way. Content that reflects New Zealand’s diversity and embeds te reo Māori is increasingly unlikely to reach our children.

Ngā Matakīireā’s 2010 report; *Mainstream Māori Programming* (Ngā-Matakīireā, 2010) identified that content proposals that were considered to contain “too much Māori content” also struggled to secure broadcaster support, lessening the likelihood of Māori children hearing their language within mainstream screen environments. Commercial interests dominate the current media landscape, and as a result children and Māori continue to be marginalised through local screen content, despite their significance as a demographic. In 2015, children’s content across all age groups of children accounted for less than 7% of all first run local content (NZ On Air, 2015), even though children as a group make up approximately 25% of the population. Lower still, is the level of content for Māori, which accounts for approximately 3.5% of all first-run content, making Māori children the most marginalized group of all. When the amount of local content available is so low and the amount of foreign content so high there is an imbalance in what tweens can discover and access. NZ On Air acknowledges both the size of the child demographic and the importance of reaching them with more local content despite commercial challenges (NZ On Air, 2015). Practice-based research that explores different ways to create local content for tweens could provide more options for NZ On Air to consider and perhaps the beginning of solution to address the current paucity of local children’s content.

Transmedia for New Zealand Tweens

Transmedia storytelling is still an evolving genre. Henry Jenkins who writes extensively on new media, spreadable media and transmedia storytelling has provided updated definitions, which indicate the flexibility, and scope of this storytelling approach to reach socially active media savvy audiences. His most recent definition explains that transmedia storytelling can morph and adapt to suit specific audiences, story contexts and resources (Jenkins, 2011). It is Jenkins' belief that there is no one formula for transmedia storytelling but rather a set of choices that best suit a particular story and audience.

Research on how effective transmedia approaches are in engaging children can be found in education environments where transmedia is being used as part of a model for improving learning outcomes in conjunction with public broadcasting services. Educationalists in the US, through the funded Ready to Learn (RTL) programme, have identified the strengths of using transmedia in conjunction with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) to deliver educational content to under-served children in certain areas. The Children's Public Broadcasting Service (CPB) and PBS wanted to create multiple entry points to narrative based learning journeys across multiple platforms. They use well-loved characters to engage children in the stories not only extending the story but to creating enriched learning experiences (Johnson, Steven, Lovitts, Lowenstein, & Rodriguez, 2016). The RTL-CPN-PBS transmedia-learning model worked with content creators to develop stories for pre-schoolers and five to eight-year-olds. Narratives were embedded within mathematical concepts, which then unfolded across multiple media for enriched learning and entertainment experiences. The transmedia elements included, television, online video, online games and physical resources that allowed related maths skills to be repeated and mastered. The transmedia story for 5-8 year olds included a participatory element where children were able to go online to help solve a mystery. Researchers reviewing the model considered the use of transmedia as a key part of the models success, and noted the ability of transmedia frameworks to engage children and scaffold them into different learning opportunities (Johnson et al., 2016). While this example focused on younger age groups, it provides evidence of how successful transmedia can be at engaging children and offering multiple entry points to cast a wide net.

More research in the fields around children's media production showing how transmedia can engage and enrich narrative experiences for tween age children is needed. Knowing how to produce transmedia for a tween audience will could help smaller nations like New Zealand address the imbalance between local and foreign content. More specifically research is needed to understand how transmedia storytelling can make local content more discoverable and shareable and engaging for tweens. Looking across a range of marketing literature offers some insight into the differences needed when aiming digital narratives at tweens as opposed to teens and adults. Research into the behaviour differences between teenagers, adults and tweens as consumers shows that tweens are more brand conscious than teenagers, more susceptible to online banner advertising than teens, and more likely to 'click through' than adults. As a consumer demographic they are highly motivated by rewards and

small giveaways (Prince & Martin, 2012). Knowing this provides some guidance when producing a transmedia narrative that will be discoverable for tweens as a general demographic. What it does not do however is indicate how transmedia storytelling could make local stories more engaging. *The Voice of Tween Engagement* aims to explore this by looking at the benefits of transmedia storytelling as a means to include tweens in the creative process of writing transmedia narratives and therefore creating local stories that will engage and be shared by them.

Screen content influences on the Mangu Town story

The process of reviewing examples of transmedia storytelling reveals how little content creators have explored this genre as a means of reaching children with meaningful stories. Nonetheless, some strong examples do exist. PBS in America has created successful edutainment transmedia narratives for younger children with *Odd Squad* (Bishop, 2014) and *Peg + Cat* (Demas, 2013). NZ On Air has funded the Emmy award winning *Reservoir Hill* (Robins, 2009) for slightly older youth audiences as well as the recently released *Jiwi's Machines* (Gracewood, 2016) for younger audiences. *Reservoir Hill* offers evidence for how an audience can become immersed in the story through a mystery genre when they develop a strong connection with the lead character and are able to interact with the narrative on a variety of platforms. Any single medium has the ability to connect with the audience, but transmedia can make an audience feel directly involved (Phillips, 2012) as was the case for many of the fans of *Reservoir Hill*.

Over two series, *Reservoir Hill* generated significant engagement levels with a loyal group of fans delivering an immersive story to a youth audience across multiple platforms (Hardy et al., 2011). This online series, despite having a slightly older target demographic than tweens, provided a useful example of how effective a local transmedia story can be when engaging an audience through a relationship with a lead character who appeals for their help across multiple platforms. Research that was undertaken concurrently with *Reservoir Hill*'s second series explored how the audience engaged with a story across multiple channels and allowed them to be part of the story development. *Reservoir Hill* was able to include the audience in the story process without giving away authorial control of the story (Hardy et al., 2011). This aspect of the story is instructive in informing how to balance feedback from participants with the normal story writing process and to what extent a tween audience can participate or co-author a transmedia narrative like *Mangu Town*.

The most recent New Zealand transmedia story for children is, Joseph Herscher's innovative science series *Jiwi's Machines* (Gracewood, 2016) which scaffolds its audience from quirky slapstick comedy to the practical science behind kinetic machines. The ability of each short narrative to take the audience from fiction to fact shows the scope of transmedia to not only create a story world but to take the audience beyond the story world to explore non-fiction dimensions relevant to the story. This is not dissimilar to the PBS narrative *Odd Squad* that was aimed at taking children through an immersive entertainment and mathematical learning journey. Similarly, with *Mangu Town* I seek to motivate interest in New Zealand's social history by drawing from the historical event that inspired it.

Another useful example is the web series *Nia's Extra Ordinary Life*, (Warkia, 2014) which enjoys continued success with a younger tween audience. Through the eyes of 10-year-old Nia, the audience experiences a range of milestones and everyday challenges that would be familiar to many New Zealand tweens and their friends. It has been cited by a number of the younger research participants as a local series they have enjoyed or watched. Now, into its second series the character of Nia continues to develop and grow with her audience, and the story is set to expand into different media forms, namely a book. Each episode includes a small lesson, animated special effects and seamlessly includes words and phrases in te reo Māori. The ability of each four or five minute episode to include a Māori perspective or world view makes this series identifiably New Zealand and provides a benchmark for other local children's productions including *Mangu Town*.

There have been a number of innovative and successful transmedia stories produced throughout the world for tweens, teens and adults. *#LoveMilla* is an example of a well-executed transmedia series that engaged tweens and teens in Finland across multiple platforms. This online transmedia series delivered storylines that did not 'talk down' to their young audience and avoided sanitisation of teen issues by using relatable characters and humour as the key conduit (Poso, Takila, 2013). *#LoveMilla* was a favourite choice when the New Zealand Prix Jeunesse children's Jury took part in the awards program in 2014. Where Nia's journey was aimed at a younger tween audience, *#LoveMilla* would have sat more comfortably with an older tween or teen audience with the main character, 17-year-old Milla negotiating some of the more gritty issues a teen might face.

Using both Instagram and Facebook this series worked across platforms to engage and enrich the audience by allowing them the opportunity to become a part of Milla's life. Despite the Instagram feed being predominantly in Finnish it is possible to gain insight into Milla's character as well as an understand the story world of *#LoveMilla*. Using Instagram, a character can be developed through carefully curated photo posts and comments as well as develop an interactive relationship with the audience. Instagram is a popular social platform for both girls and boys and has the ability to carry narratives with visual impact. Significant numbers of my tween research participants, prefer and source screen content recommendations from Instagram, making it an obvious platform choice for elements of the *Mangu Town* story

Another interesting and award-winning transmedia story is *Final Punishment* (Scarambone, 2014), produced by Nuno Bernardo's Portuguese based film and television production company beActive. beActive is also the company that produced the successful transmedia story *Sofia's Diary* (Bonnett, 2008). *Final Punishment* was, by New Zealand standards a big budget production. Broadcast on Brazilian television, it blurred fiction with reality creating a story world based on an imaginary high-tech women's prison facility whose surveillance and security systems were hacked to reveal a disturbing murder mystery scenario. Beginning with fake newspaper articles informing the public of the opening of the ultimate prison facility and followed by breaking television news coverage of the prison breach, the audience was drawn into the lives of eight women and their terrifying situation. Aimed at the commercially lucrative, 18-35-year-old demographic, this transmedia narrative constructed the story

around an alternate reality game, complete with clue hunts, dance parties and the ability for the audience to try and save the women. The series went to great lengths to engage the audience, creating a believable alternate reality to fashion a gripping event that cleverly mixed fiction with reality. This story illustrates the potential for well-financed transmedia storytelling to immerse an audience in the story experience especially where budgets allow. In comparison, the budget *Reservoir Hill* had a much more modest budget to operate within, limiting the degree to which the audience could participate in the series (Hardy et al., 2011). In a 2014 interview for Cineuropa, Nuno Bernardo revealed that one of the biggest challenges in producing and raising funds for *Final Punishment* was that transmedia storytelling was still considered too new to gain mainstream funding and therefore more innovative production models and collaborations need to be explored in order to enable this kind of story happen (Pinto, 2014). Bernardo argues that well-executed scripts, high production values, and rich story worlds have the scope to engage a wide range of individuals but that these stories should be local and reaching local audiences (Pinto, 2014).

The limited funding available is a constant challenge to providing local stories to local audiences. Local producers are still creating compelling and relevant stories, just not in any significant quantity when it comes to children.² Local children's television dramas like *Boy versus Girl*, *The Cul de Sac* (Campbell, 2016) and *Terry Teo* (Sharpe, 2016) show that with funding, local producers are able to deliver high quality uniquely local stories to young audiences, which are positively reviewed by critics (Grieve, 2016; Wichtel, 2016). However, the extent to which young audiences can discover and become immersed in these local productions is harder to determine. While *Terry Teo* has enjoyed encouraging numbers of online views and secured a prime-time television slot (Grieve, 2016), its story line, and 'comic strip' heritage offered the potential for it to be imagined across a range of different platforms for the tween age group. Similarly, *The Cul de Sac*, a children's sci-fi drama with a cast of characters that span the tween and teen-age spectrums, offered the scope to immerse young audiences further in a compelling story premise with highly relatable characters. Each of these local productions offered strong characters that were able to drive the narrative and could have offered a different perspective on the story using different points of view and platforms. Of course, the premise of *The Cul de Sac* is that there is no Internet, no parents and no electricity, which may have precluded the use of some new media platforms. However, the potential to expand to a young radio audience could have been explored using radio casts in combination with live action games.

The success achieved by these single platform on-demand shows suggests there is much to be gained in terms of audience engagement, and shareability if, at the outset stories can be imagined across more than one platform. Decisions about which platforms to use to tell the different stories could be guided by research on and collaboration with young audiences. Platform choices for *Mangu Town* will be informed by the preferences of research participants making each of the stories more likely to connect with diverse tween audiences. As a platform YouTube is an obvious choice. The popularity of YouTubers and YouTube as a platform for young audiences has been successfully tested

² There is roughly one children's drama produced every 1-2 years (NZ-On-Air, 2016).

by the creators of the *Lizzie Bennett Diaries* (Su & Dunlap, 2013) and the spinoff series that features her YouTubing sister; Lydia Bennett. The award-winning adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* created contemporary versions of Austen's timeless characters that were able to intimately connect with their audience via vlogs, (video blogs).

YouTubers

YouTubers hold a most beloved status with tweens and teens in New Zealand and throughout the world. Seeking an understanding as to why they are so popular ensures that the creation of a transmedia story that uses YouTube to communicate a character's story is done in a way that is consistent with the behaviours and preferences of the audience. The popularity of YouTubers has been strongly on the rise with the younger age group for the past decade or more (Ault, 2014). A survey of 13 to 18-year-olds commissioned by Variety Magazine found that YouTubers consistently outranked traditional celebrities. The top five most influential figures chosen in the survey were all YouTubers rather than mainstream celebrities. Today's New Zealand tweens, like others around the world, are drawn into the relatable nature of these YouTube personalities who cover a diverse range of topics and areas of interest, ranging from shopping hauls, and life hacks, to sports tips and game commentary. In their recent paper *Adolescents and YouTube: Creation, participation and consumption*, Antonio Garcia Jimenez, Beatriz Garcia and Maria Cruz Lopez de Ayala cite a range of interesting research studies that offer reasons for the popularity of YouTubers with tweens and teens. Spanish language-based studies suggest children and adolescents are attracted to the 'never concluding nature' of YouTube narratives. The fact that characters do not stop developing and the story never ends can potentially lead to an addictive attraction for the audience. Other Spanish-based studies they reviewed concluded that young people use YouTube as a means of searching for relevant local content that they can identify with.

Garcia et al. also reviewed a range of English based studies and found the reason young people particularly favoured YouTubers, was because they were just real people even after becoming famous (García Jiménez et al., 2016). It is perhaps the ability of YouTubers to show empathy for their peers that provides the basis for their success in drawing audiences. YouTubers are predominantly young, (under 30) and trade off typical teenage 'social transgressions' in ways that make their online personas believable and relatable (García Jiménez et al., 2016). It is their character perhaps more so than their subject that Garcia Jimenez et al. conclude is key to their appeal (García Jiménez et al., 2016). This research is consistent with the theory that socially fallible characters are more relatable and authentic and that richer more rewarding characters still have the capacity to develop even when the story is over (Horton, 1999).

Writing Transmedia for Tweens

Andrew Horton's book *Writing the Character Centred Screenplay* suggests a good story starts with a strongly polyphonic character who is ever evolving and drives the story forward (Horton, 1999). Transmedia stories developed for tweens can combine the best practices of screen and transmedia

writing theory with research that identifies what it is about characters that tweens really respond to. In, *The Producers' Guide to Transmedia*, Nuno Bernardo emphasises the importance of character in developing stories for transmedia audiences and the subtleties that need to be considered depending on the device that a story is to be viewed on. Bernardo explains there is a closeness and intimacy when watching something on a mobile phone that is distinctly different from television. For example, hard-hitting or violent content can be too confronting on a mobile phone, which is an intimate and personal device (Bernardo, 2011). Therefore knowing what devices tweens will be likely to view stories on is important in the early development of those stories.

Transmedia producer Andrea Phillips also notes the importance of character but explains that in transmedia storytelling, the world needs to be even bigger than the character, as transmedia is an exercise in open-ended storytelling, boundless, whereas traditional single-medium storytelling is finite (Phillips, 2012). Similarly Andrew Horton's theory of the character-centred screenplay argues that characters should always be somewhat open-ended. Horton advocates a character-centred approach to scriptwriting in which character development should follow a carnivalesque³ process. Developed this way characters are more engaging and will drive the premise of the story forward with greater authenticity. Drama that is driven by the evolving nature of characters creates stories that are richer and offer a more memorable experience for the audience (Horton, 1994).

The transmedia story seeks to offer audiences a richer experience, with many narratives or perspectives across multiple platforms. Rather than using any and every newly available media platform or device, the focus for any audience segment is on deepening the audience experience by creating a range of relevant entry points to and journeys through the story. For this reason drawing on both transmedia and screen writing theory together with research on the screen media behaviours and preferences of tweens, writers and producers can ensure decisions to use and integrate elements like YouTubers are authentic and add to the story experience. Transmedia stories are multi-dimensional, revealing the story to the across different media channels and through the eyes of different characters. It offers authentic opportunities for the audience to participate and interact with the story-world and the characters. For tweens this means being able to explore the story world and build relationships with characters that are continually evolving, on devices and platforms they already use. Creating characters that share the characteristics of YouTubers or exist on popular tween platforms like Instagram is consistent with Horton's carnivalesque process for character creation.

Script writing expert Aaron Sorkin offers a range of theories and strategies useful in guiding the development of the *Mangu Town* story. Sorkin believes there are many nonsensical rules regarding script writing and storytelling but that some must be followed for any screen or stage genre. It is the rules, Sorkin argues that "make the art of writing beautiful" (Sorkin, 2016). Like Horton, he references Aristotle's *Poetics*, as essential to a foundation understanding to the rules of drama and being able to create a story that works well for its intended audience (Aristotle, 350AD). Sorkin, Aristotle and Horton

³ Horton's carnivalesque approach builds on the works of Roland Barthes, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Horton describes character as 'never complete, set, finished but always glimpsed in motion from a certain perspective', like a carnival (Horton, 1999).

all advocate audience-centric approaches to writing dramatic narratives and accordingly *Mangu Town* is very audience-centric, using an approach to narrative structure and character development that is tailored to the tween audience. *Mangu Town* is chunked into meaningful pieces, so the story is effectively told across multiple platforms for a variety of audiences. Within each smaller narrative, a strong premise with well-developed and interesting characters creates a compelling story and world for unforgiving tween audiences.

Methodology

Overview

Central to my practice-based research objective has been exploring a creative process that will give tweens a voice in their local media landscape. In order to achieve this I sought to understand them better as a screen media audience. I gathered qualitative data on the tastes and preferences of a sample tween audience that informed the writing of Mangu Town. Feedback from the sample audience of tweens then shaped and refined the first draft of the Mangu Town stories and influenced how I would deliver these stories to the tween audience. I wanted to learn what benefits there could be when including the intended audience in the creative process. In particular, could it provide insights that would make the final transmedia story a more engaging and shareable local story experience? My data collection method included constructing an online environment where the tween participants could answer without the influence of others. A practice-based methodological approach underpinned the writing of my transmedia story and the creation of the transmedia bible. Qualitative data collection methods that specifically addressed research with children complemented this. Continued reflection on the research design improved subsequent questionnaires and provided insight on how the process could be streamlined for future studies.

The transmedia production bible, as the final outcome of this research, is a presentation and planning document structured to make it clear to a producer, production team or funder how the story can be executed. The plan includes direction on the timing and duration of different story elements. It details which platforms will be used and how they will provide a range of entry points to different segments within the tween audience. It also includes how specific interactive mechanisms should be timed and managed to engage a local tween audience and prompt them to share their story experience. The structure and contents of transmedia production bibles vary from project to project. Transmedia producer Gary Hayes provides a template for producers and views the production bible as a useful guide to the thinking, planning, documenting and supporting materials required when developing a property across multiple media platforms (Hayes, 2011).

Methodological framework

Linda Candy defines practice-based research as an approach that aims to seek new knowledge through practice (Candy, 2006). My aim is to explore whether my creative practice of writing a transmedia story using a range of script writing theory and primary and secondary research on tweens results in a story and process that makes local content more discoverable, shareable and engaging for tweens. In doing this I hope to provide content creators and funders with an alternative process for creating transmedia stories for this age group. Creative practice and practice-based theories recognize that documentation and self description of creative work are as much a part of the creative work or practice as the creative work itself (H Smith & Dean, 2009). My reflection on each stage of my

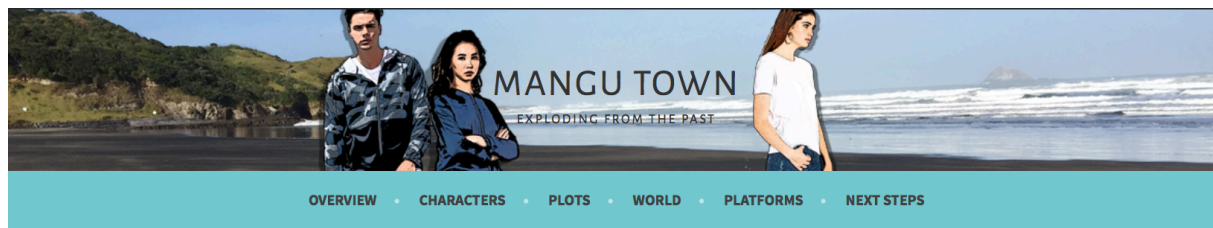
research with the sample tween audience and the development of the transmedia story provided me with ongoing refinements to my research practice. Reflective practice is described by Schön as “the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning...” (Schön, 1983). This methodology allowed me to review the findings of my initial qualitative data sets to continuously refine the *Mangu Town* story. My documentation of the process includes insights on refining the process so that it offers a viable option for content creators.

The process that was undertaken to produce the *Mangu Town* transmedia story and production bible represents an original investigation. The usefulness of the data gathered from the tween research participants went beyond my expectations. More than just informing the writing of the story and guiding the development of character profiles it helped me reflect more on how different segments of the wider tween audience would receive the story. Ideas to extend the story to other media and distribution platforms came from reviewing why there were differences between my findings and those of the recent NZ on Air *Children's Media Use* study (ColmarBrunton, 2015). My process and the final transmedia bible for *Mangu Town* is refined by the reflection between my own research and the one commissioned by NZ on Air. The description of my process contributes to new knowledge in the area of children's local content creation as it provided evidence of tweens shaping a transmedia story in a meaningful way. There have only been a few transmedia stories developed in New Zealand for children, for example *Jiwi's Machine* and *Nia's Extraordinary Life*. Detailing the process and approach I used for *Mangu Town* provides a reference for others considering a similar undertaking. The knowledge gained as a result of this research includes a deeper understanding of New Zealand tweens as an audience and the benefits of including them in the creative development of local stories.

Methodological approach for research design with children

There is a great deal of diversity when it comes to research design involving children. Experts in the area of research with children are often in complete contrast and conflict in their methodological positions (Tisdall, 2009). There are also a number considerations and questions to consider in research with children in online environments (Ólafsson, Livingstone, 2013). In light of the diverse range of expert opinions on how to conduct research with children I focused on those that suggested data collection tools that were most likely to provide valid data on the actual thoughts and beliefs of the research participants. I needed to avoid methods of data collection that would make it difficult for children to give candid responses. Harvard Business Professor, Gerald Zaltman, suggests the reason that researchers don't get candid responses in focus group situations is because the information gathered in a focus group rarely represents what the participants actually feel or think and that the answers participants give are not likely to match how they will actually behave (Zaltman, 2003). Zaltman explains that focus groups do not allow the time or environment for participants to make choices based on their unconscious thoughts and are therefore less accurate. This is not to say that participants lie, but that their responses are not an accurate reflection of what they think or feel. For this reason de-identifying the data so that the participants could feel that their answers would not be directly attributed to them was important. Creating a user-friendly online environment that would be

free of adult influence was key to ensuring that I could get authentic and genuine answers from my



PROJECT OVERVIEW

WHAT IS MANGU TOWN?

Mangu Town is a transmedia narrative that tells a uniquely New Zealand story for an audience of local tweens who are between the age of 9 and 13 years old. Informed by research into the current screen media tastes and habits of New Zealand tweens, this story is anchored by a significant event in New Zealand's history; the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior. This story will engage a wide range of tweens through responsively developed characters and distribution channels.

TAGLINE

When uncovering the past not only reveals the truth but can change the future.

PREMISE

A young teen searching for clues to explain her lonely life exposes her mother's involvement in a tragic event, but it gives her a chance to save the future for her new friends.

WHAT IS THE STORY ABOUT?

Mangu Town is a mystery about a young girl, whose life has been defined by secrets locked in the past. In her search to uncover the truth she finds that the past is more complicated than she imagined. Her new friends and their community are all somehow connected to same event that has overshadowed her life.

WHY WILL THIS STORY ENGAGE NEW ZEALAND TWEENS?

The Mangu Town story is told from the perspective of four different lead characters over a variety of social media and online platforms popular with the tween audience. Each combination of character and distribution channel is designed to appeal to a particular segment within the tween audience and was informed by the results from research with a sample group of tweens. The different platforms provide alternative entry points to the story, giving different segments within the New Zealand tween demographic the opportunity to discover the story and become engaged.

Figure 1: The Mangu Town transmedia bible. Presented in a simple website format to allow the viewer to easily navigate through different aspects of the bible. Links throughout the text allow for more detailed relevant information to be accessed while reading.

child participants.

As I wanted to know about tween preferences, tastes and favourites, I didn't not want them to feel as though like they should restrict in their answers because of the presence of an adult or because the presence of dominant personalities within the group made them feel uncomfortable sharing (Morrow & Richards, 2007). I chose to use online questionnaires (see Appendix A, B & C) that enabled long form answers in conjunction with easier check boxes and multiple choice questions so that the process didn't over-burden my young participants. By using graphic customisation I was able to make the graphics and layout of the questionnaires visually appealing to my young audience. I was able to embed videos and other images and links to other platforms to make the online question answering as easy as possible. I know from my own children that if you ask them to choose just one favourite they often struggle and a default answer of '*I don't know*', however, if you give children the opportunity to supply two or three of their favourites in an answer you will often get a more genuine response. Piloting and testing are key ways to avoid unwieldy, unreliable data sets and flawed results with children (Tisdall, 2009) so by pilot testing with my own children, I was able to produce questionnaires that would deliver rich and robust results.

While the difference is subtle, I felt that knowing what children preferred doing and liked most, as opposed to what they actually did would provide a more useful picture of how a transmedia story might reach them best. For instance I know my own son prefers to watch YouTubers playing his favourite games; Minecraft or Roblox on my iPad but this is not something he is able to do every day. Similarly, I know my younger daughter prefers to make musical.ly videos with an old iPhone and share them with her friends but again it is not the screen activity that she engages with most. Asking my research participants to list the activities they most preferred as well as the ones most often engaged with revealed patterns of screen consumption and tastes for content that were key to deciding which platform to use to present a character's story.

Research Design – The Process

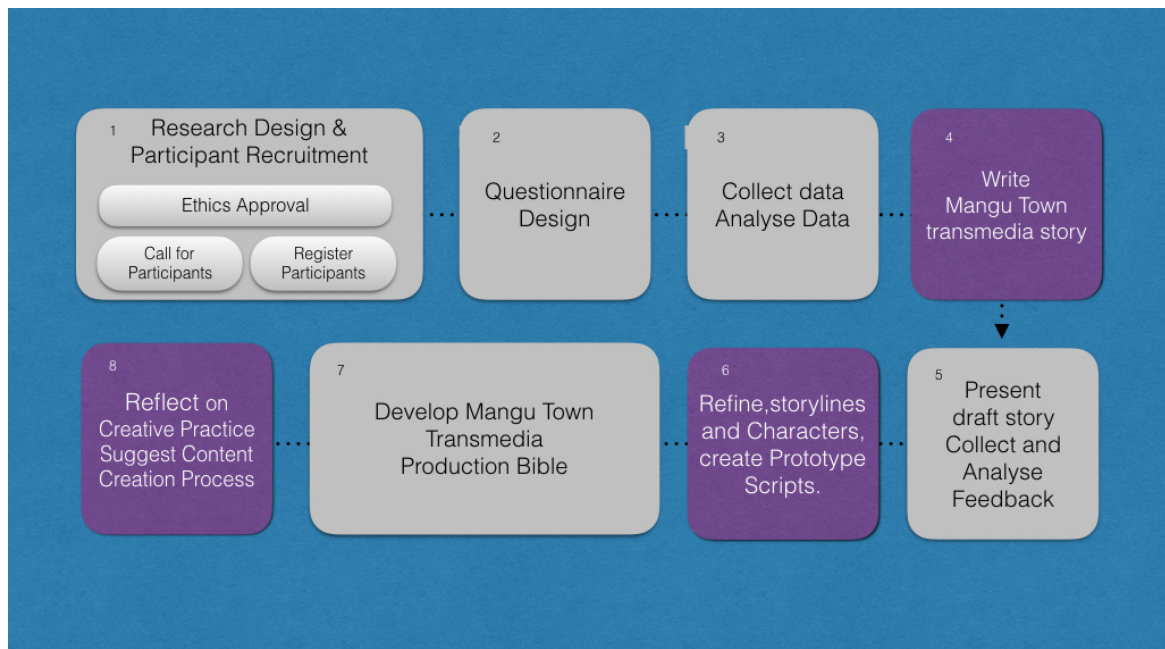


Figure 2: Research Process: Developing a transmedia story process. This process starts with the input of a tween sample audience. Then a story is written which will expand across different media platforms. Participant feedback informs the development of a transmedia production bible that shows how the story could be produced and reflection on all aspects of the process to produce a refined version of the process.

The process of writing a transmedia story with a sample tween audience participating in the creative process included the following eight steps (see figure 1).

Steps 1 to 3:

Gaining ethics approval included (see Appendix E for AUTEC approval), recruiting participants through schools and social media, registering the participants, designing the questionnaires, collecting and analysing data.

Step 4:

Developing the story using the analysed data, secondary research and examples of other transmedia stories and local children's dramas. Screenwriting and dramatic narrative theory as well as the guidelines from transmedia producers underpin this process.

Step 5:

Presenting elements of the draft story to the participants so they can provide useful feedback, but not be burdened with too much to read. This process is a combination of quick-fire prototyping producing animated storyboards of the characters with suitable voice-over. Producing multiple iterations of each animated storyboard and voice-over sequence. The voice actors' interpretations of character scripts enrich the process by not only adding inflection and emphasis to words but by changing words and sentences in ways that were more in keeping with the age of the characters. Collecting feedback from the voice actor for analysis.

Step 6:

The story and the characters are refined in response to feedback from research participants. A number of iterations are developed together with sample scripts and practice Instagram accounts. Reflecting on each new draft version against the entire body of data ensures that the story and structure accurately reflect the tastes and habits of the research participants.

Step 7:

Developing a production bible to translate the audience-centric story for tweens into a structured plan for producers and creative teams. As *Mangu Town* is a story told from multiple perspectives and across several platforms popular with tweens, the timing and integration of key plot points need to be well planned so that the audiences can be built up steadily over time. This ensures opportunities for organic sharing and can maximise audience growth.

Step 8:

The final step; reflecting on the entire practice as a process for tween content creation.

Table 1 indicates how the data collected on preferences influenced the creation of the Mangu Town transmedia story.

Data collected	Analysis	Result
82% of participants prefer YouTube and 2% prefer free-to-air television.	The YouTube platform needs to be both used to deliver the story and form part of the creative story.	Two of the characters in the story are YouTubers, one established and one trying to jump on the YouTuber bandwagon.
There are five different social media platforms that participants prefer. Instagram is the most popular especially with older females.	Instagram needs to be used as one of the narrative platforms and also forms part of the story.	@Lonely_Lolly the Instagram account of one of the lead characters will tell her story and share clues about the mystery that surrounds her mother affecting everyone.
The laptop is the preferred screen device overall but device preference shifted significantly between age and gender demographics. Older females prefer laptops and phones. Younger participants preferred tablets.	Different characters will appeal more to some audience segments than others. The choice of platform and likely device needs to be factored into decisions for the character+platform+device equation.	Lola's story will be aimed at older female tweens using Instagram and mobile phones. The Greener Grass Freddie story will be told via YouTube videos, most likely viewed on a tablet.

Research Design - Ethical Considerations

This research requires working with a group of tweens and gaining their trust to provide honest answers and candid feedback to a range of creative story and character samples. It also requires that children participate using screen devices and the Internet to access online survey tools, YouTube and websites created for the research.

While children were not able to give consent, they could give assent and it was important that they did not feel pressured into being a part of the research by adults. It was equally important that parents and caregivers were well informed to give consent and support to the children answering the questions in an online environment. Schools also have rules about recruiting their students for research and the schools contacted as part of this research admitted to researcher fatigue. Schools preferred to

prioritise research from within their own school community; e.g. teachers, past students or parents linked to the school. Feedback from schools also indicated that while they are happy to allow researchers to present to students for recruitment purposes, some parents did not want this to occur. Westmere School required an extra step be added to the recruitment process so that parents could be given adequate notice. The school gave parents notice that a researcher was scheduled to present to classes to recruit participants for research. Parents then had a period within which they could review the research and contact the school to ask that their child not attend the presentation.

In addition to the child and parent information sheets, this process required putting together information for distribution in school newsletters and direct emails to the parent database. For the convenience of the school and parents, a simple website was set up to explain the research objectives and participation protocols (<https://transmediastorytellingnz.wordpress.com>).



Figure 3: Transmedia storytelling website screenshot: Informing parents and participants. A website was created to inform parents about the research objectives and process. It also offered potential participants who had seen advertising on Instagram to find out more about the study and make contact. Visit: <https://transmediastorytellingnz.wordpress.com>

Increasing the level of uniquely local stories for tweens who are at the stage of their life when they are developing a sense of self, belonging and identity was a key concern of this research. It was important to echo these concerns in the research design. Te reo and tikanga Māori are essential aspects of truly local stories for New Zealand tweens, especially those with whakapapa Māori. *Mangu Town* included Māori characters that were likely to be fluent speakers and draft scripts included a broader range of te reo Māori than might usually be found in local children's drama. Draft scripts were written with the scope to increase the amount of te reo Māori and were written in a way that sought to normalise the use of te reo within a mainstream setting. Normalising the use of te reo Māori is considered one way to ensure the on-going revitalisation of the language (Te Māngai Paho, 2016).

As part of the ethics approval process, special attention had to be given to the use of te reo Māori within the research design. It was important that the use of te reo Māori be normalised within the research design, as much as was possible for someone who is not a fluent speaker. Initial surveys were offered in both English and Māori and participants could choose which language to complete the survey in. The ethics approval process ensured that questions were translated to the highest standard and this also meant seeking assistance to ensure ngā patai Māori would be of a structure that is familiar to students who are engaged in Māori-medium education. It also meant ensuring that these considerations were at the forefront of the research process and not thought of in hindsight.

This research process sought to answer the following research question.

1. What are the benefits of involving tweens in the process of local transmedia story creation?

Results and Analysis

Overview

Overall the results provide insight into the tastes of a sample tween audience, as well as demonstrating a range of material benefits in including their input in the creation of a local transmedia story. Fundamentally their input provided inspiration for developing characters and insights into ways of approaching story writing for this age group. At a practical level, their input shaped the way the story was developed to optimise the discoverability and social sharing of the story, which are key to engaging the post-millennial generation.

The research results deepened my understanding of my sample tween audience revealing the diversity of tastes that can exist within a small homogenous group. The diversity of tastes within the group were considered typical of child research groups, who are diverse and often have little in common (Tisdall, 2009). Research also included my informal creative and research journals where I was able to analyse my reactions and experiences, challenges and discoveries. This enriched my story writing practice as well as the process for including tweens in local content. The outcome of this reflection informs this exegesis discussion. Within the discussion chapter I suggest a streamlined process for including tweens in the creation of local transmedia stories so that they may be more viable for local content creators.

Summary of questionnaire results and feedback from participants

Viewed in conjunction with other recent children's media use studies, the results of this study provide useful insight into the tween demographic. Previous studies that sought to investigate children's media use habits provided a lens through which to view my sample audience's results. The NZ On Air *Children's Media Use Study*, (ColmarBrunton, 2015), the Kaiser foundation's, *Generation M2 Media in the lives of 8 to 18 year olds* (Rideout et al., 2010) and an Irish study, *Net Children Go Mobile*, each provided a view of device and media use that showed trends that were mirrored in the results of my own sample of tweens. These studies mostly focused on the actual media or device use of the research subjects, quantifying how much time they spent using devices, which devices they used most and which platforms they used most regularly. Common themes from the existing studies included YouTube as the single most popular screen media activity, Instagram as one of the most popular social platforms and the fact that boys and girls used devices differently. These trends were reflected in the results of my research. For instance, over 80% of participants in this study chose a YouTuber as their favourite screen character and 94% of the participants not only wanted their own YouTube channel but could also envision and outline what it would be like to run their own channel. I hadn't seriously considered these factors before developing the story ideas for *Mangu Town*.

The popularity of YouTubers with the vast majority of tweens in this study (see Appendix D for specific results) was a significant factor influencing character development and the platforms their stories would be distributed on. To better understand why YouTubers are so popular with tweens I considered how they compared to fictional characters and the actors that tweens favoured. I found that it was less about the subject and more about the *character* and *personality* on the screen. One way to view the wide range of YouTubers popular with tweens is to apply Andrew Horton's character-centred screenplay theory. YouTubers represent characters that are in a perpetual state of evolution, constantly evolving and developing throughout their series of videos and vlogs in response to their audience (Horton, 1999). Their development as characters or actors in their own stories creates a narrative that is compelling to their audience beyond the content of their videos. Actors in any good dramatic narrative whether it be fiction or non-fiction are able to compel and engage their audience taking them on a journey through the narrative. The nature of the YouTube character, or actor, is similar to what Horton describes as the carnivalesque approach to character development (Horton, 1999), i.e. an approach that creates richer more engaging characters.

The popularity of YouTubers with research participants resulted in three of the key characters using a YouTube platform to help to their story unfold.

Characters' YouTube Channels

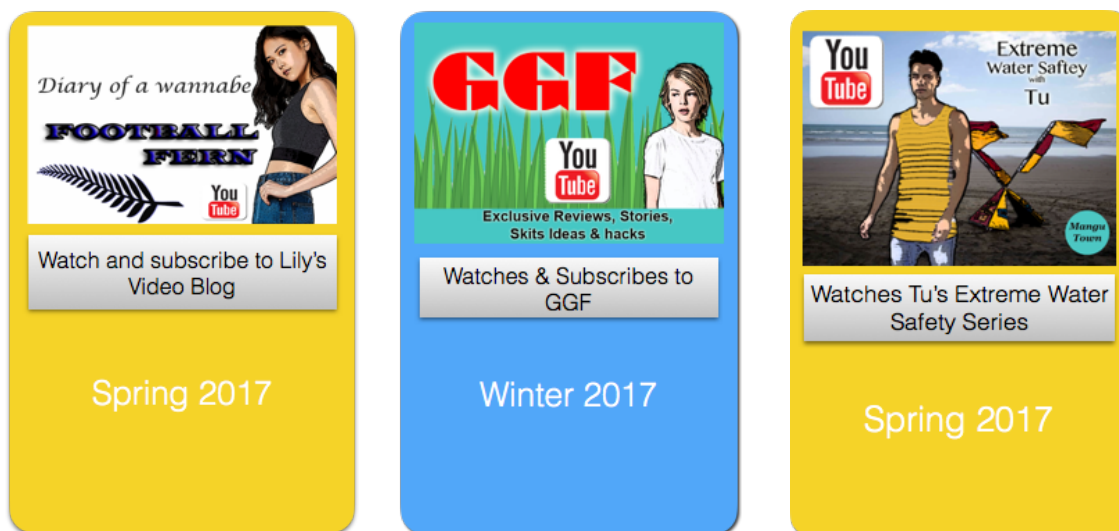


Figure 4: Characters' stories told through their YouTube personas

The initial questionnaires not only provided an understanding of the tastes, preferences and favourite screen past-times of tweens, it also provided evidence of how capable this age group are at finding a vast array of content from a range of online sources. Predominantly, the content these tweens sourced was not marketed to them in a traditional way. As the results showed (*see Appendix D*) most of the respondents learned about new content from YouTube or Google suggestions. The next most common ways they learnt about new content was through their friends on social media or in face-to-face situations. Traditional advertising on television did not feature highly in the results, especially with girls, who were more likely to source new content from social media or radio than television advertising.

Learning how participants found out about new content was instructive when choosing how they would initially discover and become engaged in the story. For example current YouTube algorithms for recommended content do not work in favour of locally specific content. Local content is not generally designed to reach large global audiences and therefore is less likely to generate high enough views to appear in recommendations (Gilen & Rosen, 2016). Recent moves by YouTube to facilitate a local app for kids (The-Wireless, 2015) may overcome this for younger children but a quick search on YouTube for action comedies with young male heroes did not return any New Zealand examples. This meant that careful attention needed to be paid to how the tween audience would discover their way into the story. Selecting appropriate YouTube advertising or sponsored posts within Instagram feeds are important for assisting with the initial discoverability of the story.

Feedback on the draft *Mangu Town* story

The third questionnaire specifically sought feedback from participants on the characters created for *Mangu Town*. Their responses included very useful information and some frank criticism of the characters, indicating the degree which the characters engaged the tween audience. Respondents were either able to identify with aspects of the characters they preferred or it provided useful suggestions about how a character or plot might develop. In cases where a respondent didn't like a character (or any character in particular) they provided well thought-out suggestions that added to the evolution of the character.

Participants responses to a range of general questions about character and requests for feedback on characters in the *Mangu Town* story provided further evidence that the tween

participants in this study follow trends of preferring YouTubers to traditional music or screen stars (Ault, 2014). New Zealand tweens are moving away from traditional television and film celebrities and heroes to the more unassuming YouTube stars, whose fame is almost always independent of transnational media companies and Hollywood movie studios. Where once Disney and other media companies were the primary content creators targeting children and teens, now children and teens are increasingly authoring and sharing their own content (Yarosh et al., 2016). The collaborative way contemporary children create screen content and view social media platforms as their own personal stage for sharing content is generational phenomena the 2014 PBS documentary by author Douglas Rushkoff calls *Generation Like*. Rushkoff's documentary illustrated a generational shift where children, tweens and teens seek a voice and a platform to be heard as a way of empowering themselves and asserting their sense of identity (Raney, 2015). A significant number of the tweens in this study were active on social media or performance apps and were sharing their user-generated content to create their own online identity (among their friends).

When developing the *Mangu Town* story I tried to create characters that reflected the journey that many tweens are already on as members of the so-called 'Generation Like'. Greener Grass Freddie, Lola, Lily and Tu all have online personas and this added a complexity and currency to the characters that reflect the day-to-day screen habits of New Zealand tweens. Interestingly, in the first draft, Tu was the only character that didn't have an online persona and feedback showed him to be the least interesting character to the sample audience. In keeping with his character, I added Tu in as a 'reluctant YouTuber'. I decided that while he wouldn't be a character that relished the prospect of creating an online presence, he would do so out of a sense of duty to his surf club and community. Hence, his character is the spokesperson for his surf club's YouTube channel.

The majority of participants suggested that the yet to be developed 'antagonist' for the story would be someone from outside the community, indicating that they did not expect to build a relationship with the antagonist. Reviewing their responses against Horton's character-centred screenplay theory revealed that the participants viewed the antagonist as a stereotyped villain. If I followed the audience direction on this, the antagonist would end up being a very one-dimensional character. To overcome this I decided to create two antagonists. One would be the more stereotyped corporate villain with a sinister bodyguard and the other would be one of the lead characters on a personal journey, Lily. I chose to add further complexity to Lily's character by ensuring she was still likeable, while making personal choices that would put her in conflict with the main protagonists. Her character will take a

personal journey from protagonist to antagonist and back to protagonist once she overcomes her personal obstacles.

Conclusion

With a rich snapshot of the habits and tastes of a diverse group of tweens I was able to develop a prototype for a transmedia story experience that reflected their tastes and would be discovered by them across the platforms and channels they preferred. The range of data I collected from the tween participants provided results that enabled me to make more accurate choices for enhancing each character's story and selecting the device and platform combinations that would make *Mangu Town* a more immersive story experience.

Compared with other studies on similar age groups my tween research participants watched less scheduled television and more YouTube. They indicated lower levels of local content consumption than the more nationally representative NZ On Air study, which was possibly a reflection of the medium to high socio-economic status of the participants in this study combined with their high level of Internet access. To overcome this bias and to ensure that the *Mangu Town* story can still reach those without Internet access I have explored the possibility of extending the story to radio and comic strip platforms. Radio versions of the story could play through the Iwi radio network and comic strips could feature in children's sections of free community newspapers or even the New Zealand Herald children's section.

When audience segments were broken down by age and gender they showed different preferences for content, platform and devices. For instance, older tween girls all used Instagram as well as one other social media platform and preferred smart phones or iPhones, whereas young tween boys rarely used Instagram and preferred laptops or tablets. Segmenting the results in this way enabled me to design distinct entry points to fit the profiles of the segments. Feedback to the draft story elements indicated the validity of the first two questionnaires with the 80% of participants engaging with the mystery elements of the story and believing that, *Mangu Town* was accurately targeted to their age group.

The tween research participants taking part in this study did so knowing their thoughts and ideas would be used to shape both a story and a set of characters for an audience like themselves. When providing feedback to the draft story ideas, they were aware that they were shaping the story and helping to investigate whether it was viable for them to be part of a transmedia storytelling process. Their answers and the thoughtful quality of their feedback showed their interest in participating in this process. This is consistent with the nature of

'Generation Like,' who desires to be a part of online narratives with opportunities for them to participate and share stories with their friends. Knowing more about this audience not only makes it possible to create engaging and shareable content for them but it also offers insight into how as the future, lucrative 18-35 year-old demographic, they are likely to consume media. The process used for the *Mangu Town* transmedia story offers the opportunity for media producers and funders to have a conversation with a pivotal audience and expand the ways they reach this audience. Opportunities to extend the content beyond fiction open up possibilities for other non-fiction genres to more broadly serve an audience needing a variety of local content.

Discussion

Discussion of how the results informed the creative process for *Mangu Town*

Overview

My objective was to write a transmedia story that has a uniquely New Zealand narrative using a process that would ensure the resulting transmedia story would be meaningful and relevant to New Zealand tweens. My motivation for doing this was to contribute to the body of knowledge around children's local content creation, tween media use and the creation of transmedia stories for New Zealand tweens. The outcome was not only a transmedia story and production bible but also a deeper understanding of the process of writing local transmedia content for New Zealand tweens. This work aims to provide evidence for including tweens in the creation of local screen content as a means of addressing the imbalance that currently exists between local screen and foreign screen content. In this way it outlines the benefits of including tweens in the creation of a local transmedia story and suggests the foundations for an alternative process of local content creation for this age group.

Results were a combination of reviews of literature around children's media use and responses as an audience and data from surveys with a sample tweens audience. Analysis of these results provided an understanding beyond media use trends to include the tastes and preferences of local tweens by both gender and age. This included recognizing that tween's relationships with the screen media is vastly different from that of previous generations and appreciating that local tweens are already using social media as a way to create their own online identities and personal narratives. My story creation process recognizes this and was based on tweens participating in the process to make the story experience more meaningful for them. This is important because tweens have come of age in a time of pervasive communications. As a result they are far more media savvy, interpersonally connected, and able to express themselves than any previous generation (Gomez, 2016).

My practice-based goal was to write an engaging, local transmedia story that was audience centric. This meant including tweens in the writing process and identifying ways they could be an on-going part of the story. While my own children gave me insight, they could not offer me the level of understanding that qualitative research with a sample audience could offer. Questionnaires within a qualitative methodological framework enabled me to gather detailed information about the sample audience's screen media preferences habits and general popular culture tastes. This same method was used to gain their feedback to draft story ideas. While research with the tweens used qualitative research methods the process was still part of an overarching practice-based research approach. At

times, there were tensions between the two methodologies, one requiring a more subjective analysis, while the other required a more reflective analysis. It was challenging switching between the two modes but ultimately my practice-based research benefited from the rigour the qualitative research brought to the process, and the qualitative questionnaires benefited from a more reflective analysis of each action. Hazel Smith and Roger Dean explain that while different in approach from practice-based research, there is much to be gained by including qualitative (and other methodological approaches) within practiced-based research and that the combinations can sometimes produce exhilarating findings and artworks (Hazel Smith & Dean, 2009).

An understanding and reflection of the audience

One advantage of transmedia stories is that they are able to reach an audience on the platforms and in the ways they like to use media (Bernardo, 2011). To do this of course you need to know not only the platforms and devices your audience uses but also their tastes for media content. By designing a robust and valid process for collecting data from the tween sample group, I was able to understand them as a diverse audience with common intersection points. For instance *Hunt For the WilderPeople* (Waititi, 2016), YouTubers, and Instagram are popular screen choices with more than half of the research participants. Conversely only one segment of the participant group regularly used radio as a source for discovering new content. This kind of information was invaluable in constructing a transmedia story that would appeal to a wide range of people within the tween demographic. It signalled which platforms to focus on and what style of characters would be widely appealing. A deeper understanding of the audience informed key creative decisions for the *Mangu Town* story. For example the idea of having a tween co-author the main character's Instagram account was the result of knowing just how popular Instagram was as a platform as well as understanding the need and desire for the tween demographic to share content as a way to accumulate social currency. Another example is the way in which the characters identities were extended by interweaving YouTube channels, SnapChat or Instagram profiles as part of their personalities. Decisions to have character's run their own YouTube channels or tell their personal story via Instagram could not have been made without an insight into the tastes of the research participants against a backdrop of knowledge about what makes tweens unique as a generation. Developing an online presence and producing content for a group of followers are essential for the modern tween experience and therefore it was important that the characters did this as an integrated part of the *Mangu Town* story. In the recent study *YouthTube: Youth Video Authorship on YouTube and Vine* (Yarosh et al., 2016) the authors explained how youth identities are shaped by their performative interactions with the media and the staging and sharing of oneself online (Yarosh et al., 2016). This was reflected in the results of the research with the sample tween audience where almost all of the participants desired to have their own YouTube channel. The *Mangu Town* story allows the tween audience to shape their own identities through interactions with characters whose own identities are being extended across a range of social media platforms. Being able to perceive subtle trends and tastes of the tween demographic that as a parent or adult I might not have noticed or comprehended was an important aspect of this research process. I was able

to simultaneously consider both the story and the way the story would be distributed as part of the creative process. Marketers and consumer researchers recognise the value of understanding the tween demographic and have invested in understanding its complexities (Prince & Martin, 2012) but local content creators and funders have not yet been able to do this comprehensively, limiting their understanding of this hard-to-reach audience. My research process could easily be streamlined so that the collection of information about the tween audience could be simpler, with quicker turn around times. The process could then be more financially viable for production companies, funders or broadcasters.

The value New Zealand tweens place on local content or whether they want more local content to choose from was not explored as part of this research. This research did show that currently, less than half of tween participants could provide examples of any local content they watched. Accordingly finding ways to make local content more discoverable and shareable needs to be identified. Similarly, stories that are written for tweens need to go beyond making the story worlds merely visually recognisable (although this is also important). Local stories also have to include values that are identifiably and meaningfully “New Zealand”. I look to Geoff Lealand’s suggestion that New Zealand identity is that of a self-confident multicultural Pacific nation, moving away from European dominated ways by identifying more closely with Māori and Pacific values (Lealand, 1988). This definition provided inspiration for the *Mangu Town* utopian way of life where tikanga Māori is the basis for the area, and the use of te reo Māori is normalised within the story.

At the outset, this research identified the lack of mainstream Māori programming and a paucity of normalised te reo Māori within local mainstream children’s content. While none of the Māori speaking participants in the study chose to answer their questions in Māori, offering them the choice was still important. Refined versions of the *Mangu Town* story would seek in-depth guidance from experts in te reo and tikanga Māori to ensure that these can be authentically normalised within all aspects of the story world and scripts. Ideally, a tween or teen co-creator would also be involved so that the use of te reo Māori has a youth authenticity to it as well. Reports undertaken by key funding bodies and literature on local content levels reveal the possible reluctance of broadcasters to fund programming with ‘too much’ Māori content. Within the framework of *Mangu Town*, there is the scope to extend the story to include one character and storyline using 100 per cent te reo Māori and supported English sub-titles for those who are still developing their fluency levels.

On-going involvement and participation by the audience

This research went further than just understanding what the participants liked; it also looked at what would make the story experience richer and more rewarding for them. To achieve this within a transmedia framework there needed to be authentic ways for the audience to interact with characters and their participation needed to add to the overall story. The results of the first questionnaires with the sample audience underscored the popularity of Instagram with local tweens. To use this platform successfully an audience or follower base needed to be built. From this came the idea to invite the

tween audience to audition to be @Lonely_Lolly as a way to extend participant and bring an authenticity to the tween interactions with the character of Lola. This kind of audience participation would build local interest and a follower base for the character as well as enhancing the tween authenticity of Lola. Similarly online auditions for the character of GGF would heighten interest in the presence of a local YouTuber and again generate a foundation fan base for the character. These two character's identities would have their foundations in YouTube and Instagram so their relevance and popularity to the tween audience could then be measured in a currency of likes and shares.

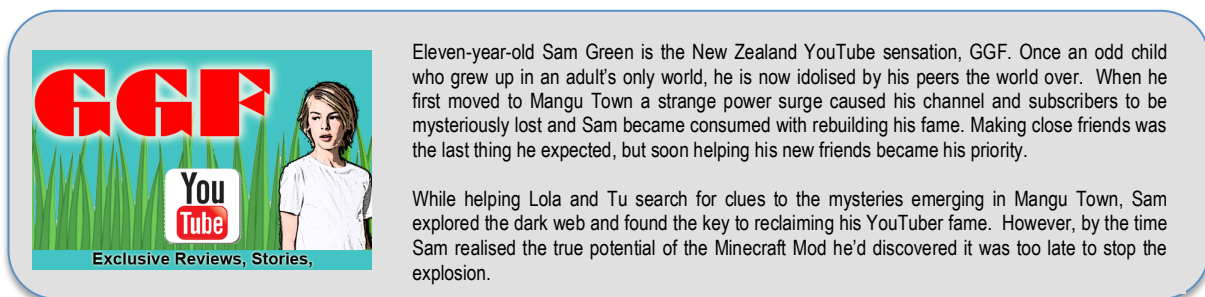


Figure 5: Sam's Character Description: Sam's character reveals both key plot clues as well as his personal story via the GGF YouTube channel. The GGF YouTube channel will have the appearance of a legitimate channel; reviewing games, pranking, short skits and life hacks by an 11 year old.

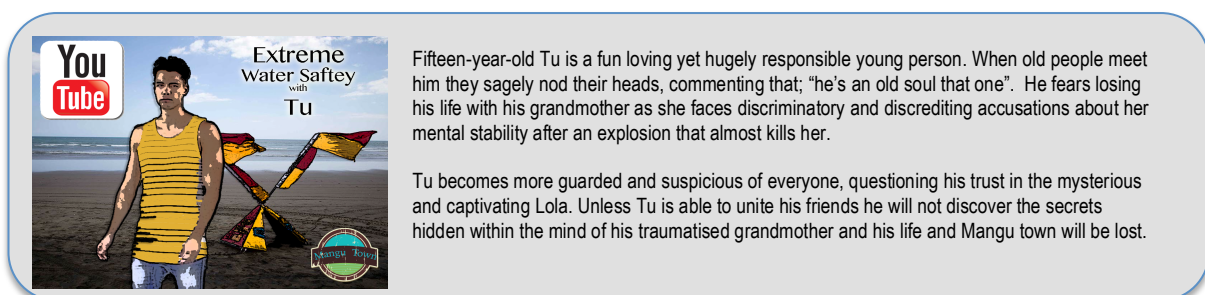


Figure 6: Tu's Character Description: Tu's character developed the most in response to the feedback from the research participants. Feedback indicated his age needed to be younger and his character should be funny yet vulnerable. By adding him as a reluctant YouTuber, running the surf club's new water safety channel, Tu could be connected to the social media lives of his friends and the audience. His SnapChat account serves to promote his YouTube channel and build interest in the fictional utopian world of Mangu Town.



Thirteen-year-old Lily has a strained relationship with Mangu Town. For someone so young she has been in self-preservation mode for a long time. She mistakenly blames Mangu Town for her family's misfortune and this causes her to fluctuate from protagonist to antagonist and back to protagonist again as she works out what is really important. Lily finally feels like she has a way out when Internet sensation Sam Green moves to Mangu Town.

With dollar signs in her eyes she curates her best scrimping, saving and soccer tips on video and has Sam help her launch her own YouTube channel. With a sponsor clearly in her sights she hides the fact that her sponsor is linked to coastal mining in the area.

Figure 7: Lily's Character Description: Lily's character was liked because of her sporting endeavours and her handy budget tips. She appealed to both genders but when looking at how effective her character would be at moving the plot forward her character lacked dimension. By setting her personal goal in conflict with those of the other characters I was able to create tension in the story and split key information across the characters so that the audience knew more than some of the characters did.



Fourteen-year-old Lola is a young teen whose only friends are her Instagram followers and her mother. Her mother's secret past has kept her moving from place to place never allowing her to make any close friends.

When Lola and her mother arrive in Mangu Town everything changes. She starts making friends and believes she can have a normal life, but then her world comes crashing down as she discovers that her mother's secrets are connected to a near fatal accident in Mangu Town. Uncovering her mother's past is the only way to protect her friends, and save the community but in doing so she may condemn her mother.

Figure 8: Lola's Character Description: Lola emerged as the most well liked and most interesting character overall with the research participants. While originally, I had considered Tu in the role of the lead protagonist, Lola's character had a broader appeal across both male and female participants. Female participants could relate to her and the male participants found her character one of the more interesting characters.

The Transmedia Production Bible

The development of the transmedia production bible presented how the tween audience would experience the Mangu Town story and explained in detail to a potential producer, funder or broadcaster how the story should be executed. Within the production bible document a project overview explains the premise for the story and this is supported by detailed profiles of the characters, the story world, the tone and the platforms used to distribute the story to the audience. User journeys that explain how the audience might enter the story and navigate through the different narrative elements are broken down into key audience segments making it clear how different segments will connect with the story. A timeline for the Mangu Town transmedia story is also complimented by a series of tables that detail how and when different elements of the story come online and when

different promotions would be launched. The *Mangu Town* transmedia bible also included sample scripts and storyboards.

Example: Audience Journey, Story Elements, Platforms and Timing

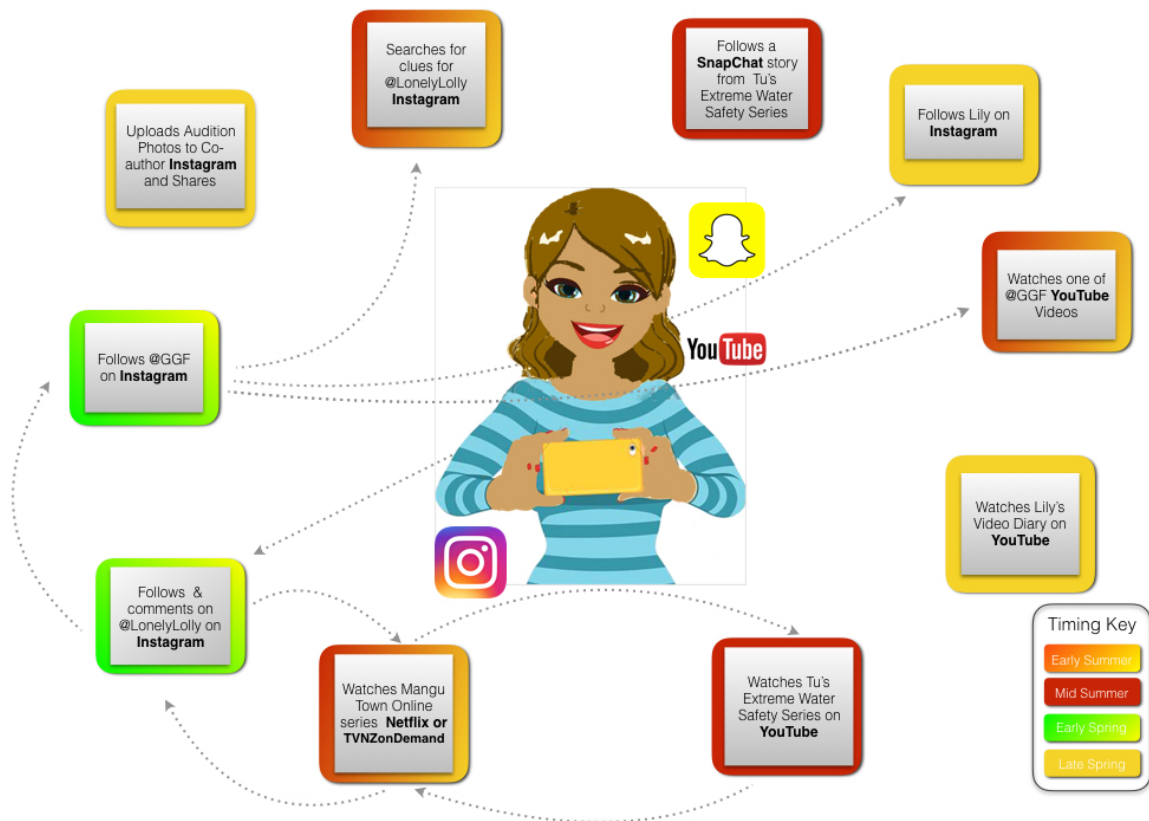


Figure 9: How a tween girl between the age of nine and eleven years might navigate the *Mangu Town* transmedia story.

Conclusion

To keep pace with the evolving tastes of tweens, local content needs to be created differently. Today's tweens need to be a part of their screen media landscape to ensure that content is relevant to as many of them as possible. As a generation, tweens are pivotal; they are the first generation never to know a life without the Internet. This is reflected in their screen media tastes as evidenced in this research. Marketing academics recognize their vulnerability to media messages but still see their value as an audience (Prince & Martin, 2012). While global marketers and marketing academics have invested time and resources into understanding the decision-making influences on tweens, similar studies by creators of local screen content do not exist. My practice-based research attempted to fill that gap by not only developing a deeper understanding of a sample group of tweens but also exploring the viability of a transmedia story writing process informed by this knowledge.

Given that tweens are both a significant and challenging demographic group in New Zealand, it is important to find practical ways to increase the levels of local content available that will engage and be shared by them. Tweens do not offer local media producers and corporate sponsors an obvious commercial return, nor do they offer funders a low-risk option to reach a local audience with limited public funds. What they do offer is insight into future marketing and audience demographics. This transmedia research project shows that by including tweens in the creation of a transmedia story some of this risk can be reduced as the process provides indications of likely engagement levels early on in the project. Additionally, the structure of the story is based on the way that tweens are currently sourcing content from their favourite platforms. Tween tastes will never be static and regularly collaborating with them to create screen content will help producers and funders stay current with their tastes, habits and trends for different platforms ensuring stories produced are relevant to them.

The transmedia production bible for *Mangu Town* uses the popular mystery genre to tell a story using the media and platforms preferred by tweens. The story, the characters and the world it presents are informed and shaped by tween feedback. Evidence from the research suggests that even in draft form the story was able to engage a significant proportion of the sample tween audience. The transmedia production bible for *Mangu Town* details the execution of a story designed with a distinct New Zealand tween voice. It is unlike any story that has been produced for local children and has the scope to engage a generation using platforms and technologies that are ubiquitous in their life. By anchoring the story in a defining event in New Zealand it is an identifiably New Zealand. Once the mystery is revealed and resolved it will have specific relevance to young New Zealand tweens.

Based on the outcomes of my research with a small sample audience of tweens, New Zealand content creators may like to consider working with their own sample audiences at the beginning of projects to gain insight into how tweens may respond to ideas, storylines or platform choices and then be guided by these insights. They may wish to take on tween co-authors as a way to ensure the subtleties

needed to engage a tween audience are understood. The tweens who participated in this research were motivated and very interested in being part of a creative process that was designed to deliver them a modern story experience. Their ideas and energy are at the very least a rich source of inspiration and offer the potential to bring a youth dimension to co-created stories. Groups like the New Zealand Children's Screen Trust, who is committed to increasing the diversity of New Zealand children's screen content may also be able to offer content creators support in this direction. For the *Mangu Town* transmedia story, my intention is to find a suitable production team that includes tween co-authors, to make final refinements to the story and the story world in preparation for Mangu Town to go into production.

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Appendices

Appendix A: He aha tō tino mea - what's your favourite?

Appendix B: More of Your Favourites

Appendix C: Mangu Town the Developing Story

Appendix D: Research Process and Research Results

Appendix E: AUTECH Approval

Appendix A



The Voice of Tween Engagement - a master's research study to help shape your local media landscape.

* 1. Which language would you like to answer this survey in?

- ☐ Te reo Māori
- ☐ English

Questions in English

* 2. What school do you go to?

* 3. Which ethnic group/groups do you belong to?

- ☐ European
- ☐ Māori
- ☐ Pacific Peoples
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Middle Eastern/Latin American/African
- ☐ Other

* 4. What year are you at school?

* 5. Which of the three below do you like the most?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube | <input type="checkbox"/> TVNZ on Demand | <input type="checkbox"/> Lightbox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram | <input type="checkbox"/> TV 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Netflix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> TV 3 On Demand | <input type="checkbox"/> QuickFlix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Māori TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Google |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV One | <input type="checkbox"/> Māori TV on Demand | <input type="checkbox"/> A 'free' streaming site like couch tuner or projectfreetv |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Sky | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |

* 6. What three screens do you most enjoy watching/playing/ content on? *(content includes: movies, television or online shows, sports, documentaries, music, games, tutorials, youtube, vimeo, photos and more)*

☐ Mobile Phone or iPod

☐ Computer/Laptop/netbook/chrome or similar

☐ Tablet or iPad

☐ Movie Theatre

☐ Family Television

☐ Playstation or Xbox

☐ Television in your own room or space

☐ Other (please specify)

* 7. What are two screen activities you do every week? e.g. play Minecraft, watch Youtube videos, watch regular TV etc ..

1

2

* 8. What was the last video game you played?

* 9. What was the last music video you watched?

* 10. What is your favourite NZ show on TV or online?

* 11. What is your favourite combination of screen content and device *(for example MineCraft on my computer or GoodLuck Charlie via Netflix on the family TV).*

* 12. Who are your three favourite screen characters or people *(for example Ally from the Austin and Ally Show and Minecraft YouTuber Dan TDM) ?*

1

2

3

* 13. Have you answered your questions in English?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Ngā Patai - Te Reo Māori

Translations

Kupu Māori

waea pūkoro
taru paoho
iPapa
Pouaka X
Paeāhua
Pae Tīhau
Pukamata
paetukutuku utu kore
puoro ataata
tākaro ataata
pae pāpāho
i runga ipurangi
tino kiripuaki /tāngata i runga pae pāpāho
pakiipūmeka

Translations

English Words

mobile phone
iPod
iPad
X Box
Instagram
Twitter
Facebook
free streaming site
music video
video game
screen content
online
Favourite screen characters or people
documentary

* 14. Ko wai te ingoa o tō kura?

* 15. He aha tō reanga tau kura?

* 16. Ko wai tō iwi/hapu?

* 17. He aha ngā mata pāpāho e rua e pārekareka ai ki a koe hei mātakitaki, hei tākaro i(ngā kiriata, ngā hōtaka pouaka whakaata , ngā hōtaka i runga ipurangi, te hākinakina, te pakipūmeka, te puoro , ngā tākaro ataata, te youtube, te vimeo, ngā whakaahua , he aha atu)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waea Pukoro? Taru Paoho rānei? | <input type="checkbox"/> Rorohiko |
| <input type="checkbox"/> iPapa | <input type="checkbox"/> Whare Kiriata |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pouaka whakaata a - whānau | <input type="checkbox"/> Pouaka X (Teihana takaro rānei) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pouaka whakaata a - rūma moe? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tētahi atu mata pāpāho.... whakaingoatia | |

* 18. He aha ngā pae pāpāho e toru kua rarangitia ki raro nei e whakamahia ai e koe i te nuinga o te wā?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube | <input type="checkbox"/> TVNZ Mātakihia | <input type="checkbox"/> Lightbox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paeāhua | <input type="checkbox"/> TV 3 me te TV4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Netflix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pae Tīhau | <input type="checkbox"/> TV 3 Mātakihia | <input type="checkbox"/> QuickFlix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pukamata | <input type="checkbox"/> Māori TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Google |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Māori TV Mātakihia | <input type="checkbox"/> He paetukutuku utu kore hei hono atu eg couchtuner , projectfreetv rānei |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sky | |

Tētahi atu ,whakaingoatia

* 19. He aha ngā mahi pāpāho e rua e tākaro ai e mātakitaki ai koe rānei ia wiki; (hei tauira, runga ipurangi, ngā hōtaka pouaka whakaata, ngā tākaro ataata, ngā ataata a- you tube, ngā puoro ataata).

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | <input type="text"/> |
| 2 | <input type="text"/> |

* 20. He aha te puoro ataata whakamutunga i mātakitaki ai koe ?

* 21. He aha tō tino hōtaka nō Aotearoa (i runga pouaka whakaata , i runga ipurangi rānei)?

* 22. He aha te pae pāpāho ka kaha tipakohia e koe hei matakitaki, hei tākaro tō tino hōtaka/kemu rānei *(Hei tauira MineCraft mā te rorohiko; GoodLuck Charlie mā Netflix i te pouaka whakaata a- whānau)?*

* 23. Ko wai oū tino kiripuaki /tāngata i runga pae pāpāho? *(Hei tauira, Ally nō te Austin and Ally Show me Dan TDM nō Minecraft You-tuber)*

1

2

3

* 24. Kia Mutunga?

☐ Aē

☐ Kau

Appendix B



How do you find out about the best screen content?

* 1. Which three ways do you find out about new screen content like games, music, you tubers, online shows, movies, sports games, documentaries and tv shows?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube suggestions | <input type="checkbox"/> Television Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends on Snapchat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends on instagram | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends on Twitter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking face to face with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents and family | <input type="checkbox"/> Google Ads |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Billboard or Bus advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends on Facebook | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |

* 2. Who are your two favourite singers or bands?

1

2

3. What is your favourite song by a New Zealand artist?

* 4. What was the last movie you saw at a movie theatre?

5. What is your favourite New Zealand Movie?

* 6. Which international entertainer (singer, actor, comedian, personality) would you like to meet?

* 7. Which New Zealand entertainer (singer, actor, comedian, personality) would you like to meet?

* 8. What is your favourite online, console *(e.g. PlayStation, Xbox)* or app based game?

* 9. Name three of your favourite New Zealand television or online shows.

1

2

3

Appendix C



The developing stories of Mangu Town

The Voice of Tween Engagement - a master's research study to help shape your local media landscape.

After carefully looking at your responses to the first two questionnaires, I have created four draft story lines that connect with each other to tell a bigger story. The questions below have descriptions, pictures or short videos to show you what the story and characters could be like. Your answers to all the questions will be used to decide exactly what the story and the characters will end up being like. I want to know which characters you think are interesting and which parts of the story you think 9-13 year old New Zealanders will want to know more about. PS please remember these are all just draft ideas!

* 1. How old are you?

- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12
- ☐ 13

* 2. Are you male or female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Story Choices (if viewing this on a mobile phone you will need to enlarge the image to be able to read the text).

A contact of Greener Grass Freddie has developed a revolutionary mod for Minecraft. The mod uses geo-locating technology, smart algorithms and a network of clever programmers across the world. It is a time travel mod that builds world's within a time frame you chose, based on your physical location.

Freddie has been testing it but has discovered something spooky about the worlds it builds. He has a few places for his followers to test it out with him but he's





Lola has always been quietly happy, enjoying the huge range of interesting places throughout the country she and her mother have lived in.

Lola started an Instagram account when she was 10 and lonely. Even though her identity is kept secret she has made some great online friends. Her account is filled with her ideas on fashion, style, music, movies, design and books. It is also how she has slowly been finding clues about her mother's past. A past that has kept them moving from town to town all their lives.



Greener Grass Freddie is the official YouTube channel of New Zealand's international sensation Sam Green.

Greener Grass Freddie has special guests to help him review the latest games or create funny skits and hacks for getting through life as a young teen. He travels a lot and makes hilarious videos describing the places he's forced to visit. Like many people between the age of 6 and 60 Freddie loves Minecraft and is always looking for the next big thing in the online crafting world.



Lily Lim is strong willed and focused on the sports she loves. She wants to become a Football Fern but the costs of extra training, gear and travel are too much for her family right now.

Lily's new friend Sam (Greener Grass Freddie) suggested she start a video diary where she can share what she's learnt about training on a budget and other things that young sports people could find helpful. It might even help her find some sponsors.

Lily's video diary on YouTube is called Diary of a Wannabe Football Fern and it features tips on training, skills demonstrations, expert advice from Football Ferns and ex All Whites as well as a mix of Lily's own sporty fashion and budget tips for buying sports gear.



NETFLIX **TVNZ ONDEMAND** **SKY**
Mangu Town, the series unfolds across 10 gripping episodes. The chance friendship of Lola and Tu in a quiet coastal town uncovers dangerous secrets that have been hidden for decades.

Lola is quickly caught up in the middle of a huge local Mangu Town drama that seems to have something to do with her mother's secret. She tries to find out what her mother has been hiding all these years and ends up being seen when Tu's Nan is nearly killed in an explosion. Soon everyone is scared and they're all blaming her even Lily and Tu! Only young Sam keeps helping her.

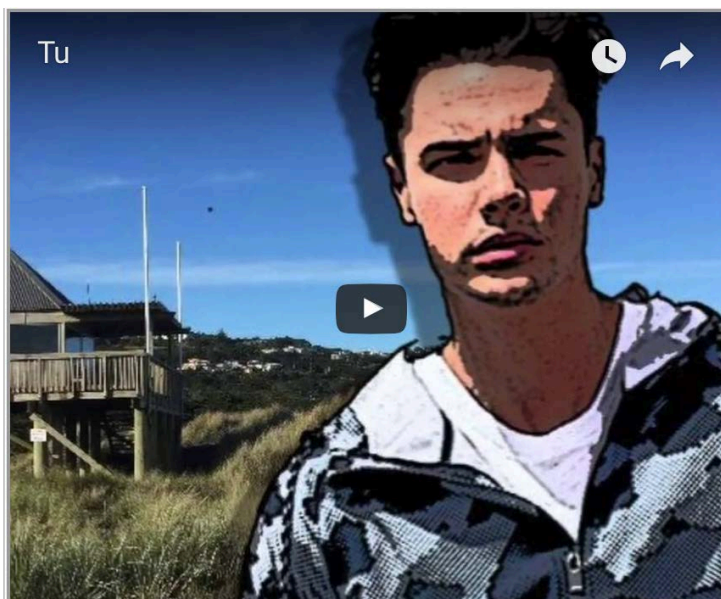
* 3. After looking at the 'Story Choices' above which of the below are you most likely to choose?

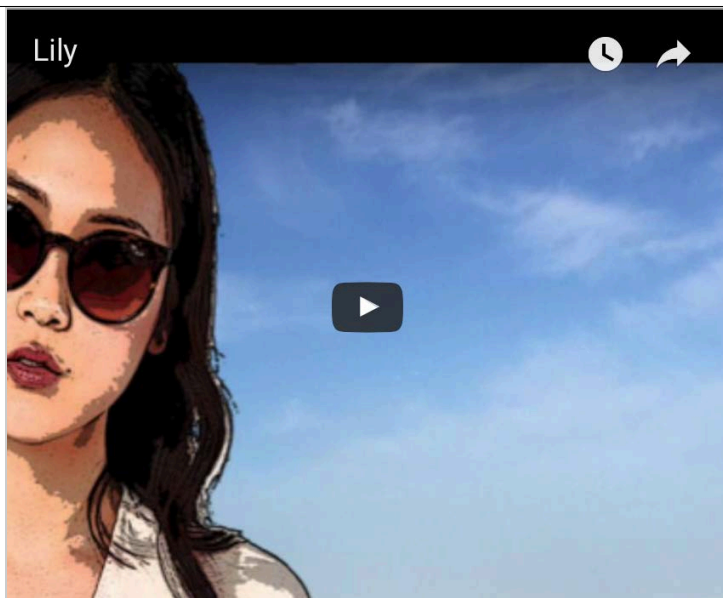
- ☐ Read Lonely Lolly's Instagram Feed and discover the clues to her mother's secret and check out her style, music & dance and movie tips.
- ☐ Watch Greener Grass Freddie's YouTube Channel, for an NZ funny game reviews, parodies, skits and travel ideas.
- ☐ Watch Mangu Town the series on Netflix TVNZonDemand, Sky etc
- ☐ Watch Video Diary of Wannabe Football Fern by Lily
- ☐ Test the Minecraft GeoLocator Time Travel Mod

4. After reading the summary of the Mangu Town series (see summary in "Story Choices" above) which part interested you most?

- ☐ That there is a mystery to be solved
- ☐ The characters
- ☐ That the story is set in New Zealand
- ☐ That I can relate to some of the characters
- ☐ No part of the story interests me. Please tell me why no part interests you.

* 5. After watching the four character videos below, rank the characters from the 1 - 4.
1 being the most interesting and 4 being the least interesting.





		Lola
		Tu
		Lily
		Greener Grass Freddie (Sam)

* 6. Overall, did this story seem the right age for you?

☐ Yes

☐ No, Please say why

7. So far, the Mangu Town series, doesn't have a character yet who is the bad guy. The bad guy or girl is the character in a story that makes things hard for the main characters (we call this person the antagonist).

If you were creating this kind of bad or evil character for Mangu Town what would they be like? Choose one of the below or describe your own.

- ☐ A man or woman who is not from Mangu Town but is pretending to be bringing something really good to the community when in fact he/she is actually trying to get the beach ready for an international company to do deep sea mining and trick the community into agreeing.
- ☐ A man or woman who has lived in Mangu Town for 20 years but who has never felt like he/she fitted in. He decides he would rather make money for a big international company by helping them get access to the land and beach needed for deep sea mining.
- ☐ A mysterious man or woman in a dark suit and dark sunglasses. No one seems to know who they are or what they are doing. People in the community who have had meetings with them never admit to it or tell anybody anything about the meetings even when they are asked about them.
- ☐ Describe your own bad guy for Mangu Town.

* 8. So far which of the characters is most like you?

- ☐ Lola
- ☐ Tu
- ☐ Greener Grass Freddie
- ☐ Lily

* 9. Please explain how you think the character that is *most like you* would talk, behave or even what might happen to them in the story. (You could suggest a particular saying they might use, a way they might laugh or something they might like doing).

* 10. If you had your own YouTube channel what would it be like?

Appendix D

Research Process

Introduction

The first two data sets collected in this study provided a deeper understanding of the screen media preferences and habits of New Zealand tweens.

Ethics approval was sought and granted by Auckland University Of Technology Ethics Board. Ethics approval number 15/428 (see appendix E),

The online survey tool Survey Monkey was used to privately and anonymously gather data from the tween (9-13 year-old) participants. Questionnaires were designed to be completed easily within a 10-minute time frame. The Survey Monkey tool allowed the questionnaire to be visually optimised to appeal to the age of the participants. Images were embedded within the Survey Monkey questionnaire to make the questions less text heavy and embedded links included private YouTube files within the survey environment.

Setting

This study was conducted in Auckland New Zealand where 100% of participants lived in urban or suburban environments. The participants in this study came from communities of medium to high socio economic means. While participants came predominantly from decile 10 schools (*see figure 1*) a sizeable proportion of the students were drawn from the immersion Māori unit of Decile 10 Westmere School. These students predominantly came from outside the Westmere School 'home zone' and are therefore not necessarily representative of the school's decile 10 rating.

Participants

The sample for this study was a purposeful convenience sample, recruiting willing participants from schools that would provide a representative sample of 9-13 year-olds. Calls for participants were conducted via the social media sites, Instagram and Facebook. 24 participants from 6 different schools including participants from Ngā Uri o Ngā Iwi, the Māori immersion unit at Westmere School registered to be part of the study and on average 20 participants responded to each survey. Participants were able to choose which ethnic groups they belonged to. The majority (72.2%) identified as European and 50% identified as Māori, 5.56% identified as Pacific peoples and 11% as other.

The gender split of the participants was 50% male and 50% female. The age of participants was skewed to the younger age of the tween spectrum with 9 and 10 year olds making up 66% of participants.

The participants ranged from Year 5 (primary school) to the first year of high school (Year 9). 38.9 % of participants were in Year 5 making up the largest proportion of participants with only 5.56% in year 9 (*see figure 3*); this is consistent with the younger skew of participants.

Data Collection and Measurement

This project required an approach to gathering data that reflected the age of the participants as well as the kind of information that was being sought from them. It was important that participants were able to give their own opinions delving, into their 'unconscious thought' in a way that reflects what they really thought or felt. The data collected for this research study was divided into two phases.

First data set

The first data set gathered data that would establish a deeper understanding of the participant's preferences for screen activity including, devices, content genre, platforms, characters, specific music, movies, and local content favourites. This data was collected via two separate questionnaires (*See Appendix A and B*) with a range of multi choice, check box and short answer questions. Surveys were sent via the online survey tool, Survey Monkey.

Second data set

The second data set gathered participant's feedback on draft story ideas, platform choices and character descriptions. The creation of which, were informed by the analysis of results from the first two surveys. There were 11 questions in total, including; multi-choice, ranked answers and longer form text style answers. Due to the young age of participants the creative content was presented in a variety of different ways. Images with captions were used to present the different storylines and very simple animated storyboards with voice-over were used to present each of the key characters. Each of the character description videos was between 2.00 and 3.20 minutes long. These videos attempted to present the essence of each character and give clues about how they connect to one another and the over-arching story, without giving away too many plot points. The videos were also designed to reveal the platform and sub-genre linked to each character, whether directly in the case of Greener Grass Freddie and Lily as YouTubers or indirectly in the case of Lola. The use of voice over in the animated storyboards further reduced the amount of reading that was required by the participants.

Survey Monkey enabled the data to be collected efficiently and then de-identified for analysis. Participants were assured at the start of the process that their answers would not be identified as coming from them, so they did not need to worry about anyone judging their answers, their thoughts or ideas. They were able to answer the questions without feeling pressure about sharing what they really felt and were able to complete the questionnaires at a pace they determined, using mobile devices and online platforms they already enjoyed. By enabling participants to use devices they were already familiar with, an environment for answering the questions that was conducive to sharing what they really felt and thought was created.

The data was tabulated and then graphed so that trends or common preferences could be viewed by gender and age ranges. The longer form answers from the second data set were

coded to identify common themes or ideas, which were similarly used to refine the characters and storylines.

Validity and Reliability

Analysis of the data sought to make distinctions between what the tween participants did most often and what they preferred to do. The majority of participants viewed the draft storylines and character profiles as interesting to them and/or relatable, suggesting that the initial data was reliable and valid for informing a story for them.

One question in the second phase of the research was less reliable than the others as it was often misinterpreted by participants (see question 10 Appendix A). Participants appeared to believe this question was asking why they thought a character was most like them, rather than how the character that they had chosen as being most like them would behave or act.

However despite this, the answers participants gave were useful in providing insights about how engaging they found the draft transmedia story overall. It also offered further evidence that the participants identified with the draft characters.

Procedure

The first questionnaire was offered in both English and te Reo Māori. The original research design included asking participants to choose the most interesting story idea from a range of different loglines. The most popular story logline or loglines would then have been developed for further feedback. Due to time constraints this step had to be eliminated.

Collection of data set 1

Phase 1 of the research was carried out over 8 weeks and included two online questionnaires that gathered data sought to gain a deeper and more current understanding of the screen activity, preferences and tastes of the participant group. Consultation with my own 9 and 12 year olds ensured that the questions could be easily understood in both English and te reo Māori and confirmed that the questionnaires could be comfortably answered in less than five minutes.

Requests for participants to complete the first questionnaire were sent out via email, with a first reminder to complete the questionnaire sent out after 2 weeks and a second reminder sent out after 4 weeks. At the end of the fourth week the survey was closed and the results were analysed.

Collection of data set 2

The second phase of the research was concerned with the creation of the draft transmedia story and finding a way to include the tween participants in the process. This phase of the research can be broken down into three separate parts. The first part was the creation of the first draft of a uniquely local transmedia story that was informed by the analysis of *data set one*. The second part involved developing a process that enabled the tween participants to view elements of the draft story and provide feedback. The third and final stage was the analysis of the questionnaire results that would then inform another creative cycle.

Part 1: Producing the first draft of the Mangu Town Transmedia Story

Selecting a story idea from a short-list of loglines began once the responses collected from the first two questionnaires were analysed. To keep the story grounded within a uniquely New Zealand context I chose a real event in New Zealand history that the tween participants were not likely to know very much about. The bombing of Rainbow Warrior was chosen because of the mystery surrounding the event. The analysis of the *data set one* provided evidence as to the current tastes and the preferences of the participant group. To assist the creative process I profiled audience segments within the cohort, based on a range of factors, like gender, age, favourite screen content, favourite screen character etc. In this way I was able to ensure I was creating a story with characters that would be interesting to the different segments and which they could identify with or have an aspirational connection to. I structured the framework of the storyline around 4 key characters creating different entry points to the story for the different audience segments.

Other elements created as part of the draft transmedia story project included a scripted scene that connected the character Tu to the character of Greener Grass Freddie. This scripted scene introduced the platform that would be used to tell Greener Grass Freddie's perspective on the story. I also created detailed backstories for each of the key characters that would be used to inform the plot points and the creation of a series of support characters. All of these draft elements for the *Mangu Town* transmedia story project were informed by the results of the questionnaires and the information participants provided.

I used a process of quick fire prototyping to develop the key characters. These key characters had to drive the overarching story and be presented across the different platforms identified as being the most preferred by the audience segments. Because there were crossover interests between each of the audience segments, this meant that if a character did not engage a participant fully, the platform used to tell that character's part of the story might.

Part 2 – Presenting Mangu Town to participants and getting their feedback

For the second part of part two, I had to select which story elements would be presented to the participants and how to execute these to maximum effect. I then had to develop a list of questions that would draw out the true thoughts and feelings of the participants.

Overview of results

Questionnaire 1: Hei aha tō tino mea? What's Your Favourite

Questionnaire 2: More Of Your Favourites

The majority of participants (82%) selected YouTube as their most preferred activity with 71% of participants watching content on YouTube every week. Male participants and those who identified as Māori, were more likely among the participant group to favour watching content on YouTube than other screen activities and were more likely to watch YouTube every week than female participants.

YouTubers were also the most popular screen characters with YouTuber videos, the most watched screen content overall. YouTuber video content included game reviewers, lifestyle commentary, life

hacks, sports, pranksters and skits. The majority of YouTubers were from outside of New Zealand, with only one participant choosing a local YouTuber as their favourite screen character.

The timing of the questionnaire showed the engagement and widespread popularity of *Hunt for the Wilder People* and it's star Julian Dennison, followed by it's director Taika Waititi who were both chosen as the New Zealand entertainers that participants would most like to meet. Other local entertainers that participants most wanted to meet were actors, singers or comedians, whereas 50% of the international entertainers participants would most like to meet were YouTubers.

The majority of the YouTubers were from the UK reducing the saturation of Americanisms and American flavoured content. Almost all of the other favourite entertainers were more traditional celebrities like actors and singers and the majority of these were American. Questions about local media content revealed that only 14% of participants had a favourite local song that was released in 2016 with the majority of favourite songs being older releases from over 2 years ago. When it came to naming their three favourite local shows either on scheduled television or online, participants only chose shows from scheduled television, many couldn't name 3 favourite shows and some named shows that weren't local while others named content like the news or an All Black's game.

The family television did not feature prominently in the preferred choice of screen device for the tween participants. Laptops and computers were by far the most popular, followed by tablets and mobile phones.

The most common way tweens found out about new content was via suggestions on YouTube and Google followed by suggestions from their friends. Boys were more likely to take content suggestions from YouTube and Google, whereas girls were more likely to take suggestions from friends, face to face or via social media.

Questionnaire 3: The Developing Story of Mangu Town

The third questionnaire gathered feedback from the tween participants on the draft elements of the Mangu Town transmedia story. The respondents who completed this questionnaire represented a slightly older skew with some of the younger research participants not completing the questionnaire. There were slightly more male than female respondents 53% versus 47%.

Four narrative summaries that would contribute to the over-arching Mangu Town story were presented to participants using a combination of themed visuals and text. Participants were asked to select which of these narratives they would be most likely to choose to watch further. This represented the touch-point through which a tween would enter a local transmedia story. The YouTube channel featuring the character Greener Grass Freddie was the most popular among participants. The second most popular was the fictional Mangu Town Minecraft Mod, which was also linked to the Greener Grass Freddie character. Both the Mangu Town online series and lead protagonist Lonely Lola's Instagram feed were the most likely choice of 18% of the participants and the Video Dairies of Lily, the Wannabe Football Fern were the choice of just 12% of participants. The mystery element was considered to be the *most interesting* part of the Mangu Town Series by 88% of respondents. Lola and Tu were considered the *most interesting* characters followed by Greener Grass Freddie then Lily. All characters were considered to be the *most interesting* by at least some of the respondents.

82% of the participants considered the story to be the right age for them with the remaining participants believing it was either too young or too old for them. When asked to develop or choose an antagonist for the story from a list of descriptions 50% of respondents chose the following profile description for the antagonist:

A mysterious man or woman in a dark suit and dark sunglasses. No one seems to know who they are or what they are doing. People in the community who have had meetings with them never admit to it or tell anyone about the meetings, even when asked about them.

13% of participants described their own antagonist with the options including, a gang member and bully, and someone with one blue eye and one green eye.

Analysis of results examples

Table 1: Examples of the data collected, analysis of the data and the how this affected how the Mangu Town transmedia story was developed.

Data collected	Analysis	Result
82% of participants prefer YouTube and only 2% prefer free-to-air television.	The YouTube platform needs to be both used to deliver the story and form part of the creative	Two of the characters in the story are YouTubers, one established and one trying to jump on the YouTube bandwagon
There are 5 different social media platforms that participants prefer. Instagram is the most popular especially with older females.	Instagram needs to be used as one of the narrative platforms and also form part of the story.	@LonelyLolly the Instagram account of one of the lead characters, will tell her story and share clues about the mystery that surrounds her mother and seems to be effecting everyone.
Laptops were the preferred screen device overall but device preference shifted significantly between age and gender demographics. Older females preferred laptops and phones, Younger participants preferred tablets.	Different characters will appeal more to some audience segments than others, the choice of platform and likely device need to be factored into decisions for the character+platform+device.	Lola's story will be aimed more at the older female teens using Instagram and mobile phones. The Greener Grass Freddie character's story will be told via YouTube videos, most likely viewed on a tablet.

Table 2: Examples of the data collected, analysis of the data and how this affected the Mangu Town transmedia story was developed

Data collected	Analysis	Result
Participants find out about new content via YouTube and Google more than any other means.	Tweens are highly influenced by YouTube suggestions, Google search results and probably Google ads and banners – this is corroborated by marketing academics that have found that tweens are twice as likely as adults to respond to banner advertising and show much higher click through rates to promotions.	Develop YouTube and Google ad promotions to be integrated into the YouTube channel for GGF. A simple ad to be placed with click through capability on key YouTubers that tweens have mentioned in research so far.
Face-to-Face recommendations with friends come next. For male participants Google and YouTube play an even more significant role, males are twice as likely to find out about new content via YouTube or Google than any other means.		
72% of participant's local song choices were over 5 years old.	Local music isn't reaching tweens with any immediacy, local song	Content for @LonelyLolly will include short reviews of latest

	choices are reflective of songs that have been across many mediums, i.e. Lorde made the news, was played on radio, and was included in the Hunger Games. Similarly Stan Walker was promoted more than other local artists	locals music releases and all local music videos. #NZMusic #artistsname This will not be genre specific @LonelyLolly will perhaps seek feedback of her followers and will @ the musicians. NB: may need to send media release to musicians or similar explaining the fictional nature and the objective to promote local to tweens.
53% of participants chose a YouTuber as the international entertainer that would most like to meet.	Consistent with overseas trends YouTubers are replacing the position once held by actors and musicians. The format and style of even the most professional and successful YouTubers is casual, conversational and each have a particular persona.	Two of the characters in the story are YouTubers. Greener Grass Freddie, will be modelled off some of the most commonly popular YouTubers, e.g. DanTDM.

Table 3: Examples of the feedback on the draft *Mangu Town* story, analysis of this feedback and how this helped to refine and shape the *Mangu Town* story and the *Mangu Town* transmedia production bible.

Data collected	Analysis	Result
Most participants (88%) found the mystery element to the story to be the most interesting aspect of the story.	Characters need more development and more complexity. The Mystery element is surprisingly galvanising amongst the diverse group.	Findings support using the mystery element as a hook for each audience segment via the character+platform+device combination that best suits them. @LonelyLolly will provide clues by way of tiny bits of evidence that link her mother to the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior. Greener Grass Freddie will explore the 'dark web' to help his friends and access a Minecraft mod that will give him clues – he will review the mod etc... Lily will have diary heart-to-hearts with her followers revealing to them that she knows more than she is telling her friends.
A good proportion (29%) of participants would enter the story via Greener Grass Freddie's YouTube channel.	YouTube videos carry a lot of currency and the duality of a story within a review and skit channel is appealing.	A relationship via Instagram needs to exist between Greener Grass Freddie (renamed GGF in response to feedback) and @LonelyLolly..
Another good proportion (25%) of participants would enter the story through Lola's Instagram account.	While perhaps the weaker story GGF's YouTube channel (which has lowest amount of mystery inferred on it) has wide appeal.	@LonelyLolly followers can be directed to GGF's YouTube channel and his Instagram account (which will just serve to promote his

Over one fifth of participants (23%) would like to test the fictional Time travel – geolocator Minecraft mod.	Lola has a higher resonance with older female tweens.	channel). GGF can talk about @LonelyLolly's clues, directing his followers to @LonelyLolly if they think they can help.
Older girls were more likely to follow Lola and boys were more likely to watch the YouTube channel.		
Tu was the least interesting character overall and one participant called him completely bland.	Tu's character was intended to be the older solid hero type, who could deal with issues. The presentation of this character, on reflection was not young enough. Not having an online identity perhaps made him harder to relate to.	The age of Tu's character to be reduced. Suggestions that he would be a humorous wise-cracker able to take tension out of situation was included in his character development. An online identity was added – as a reluctant host of a local surf lifesaving channel. Also add a SnapChat account – based on the research these accounts could be very appealing to male tweens and could round off the character better.

Figures

Data set 1: Hei aha tō tino me? What’s your favourite?

Figure 1: Participant’s School Decile Rating

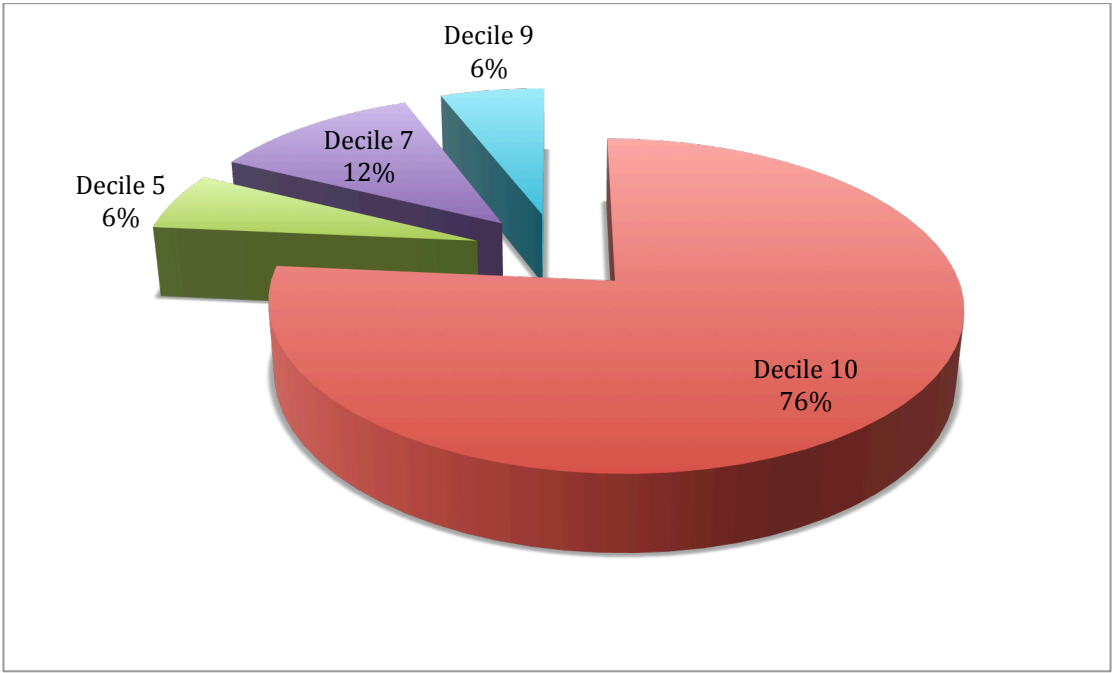


Figure 2: Ethnic Groups of Participants

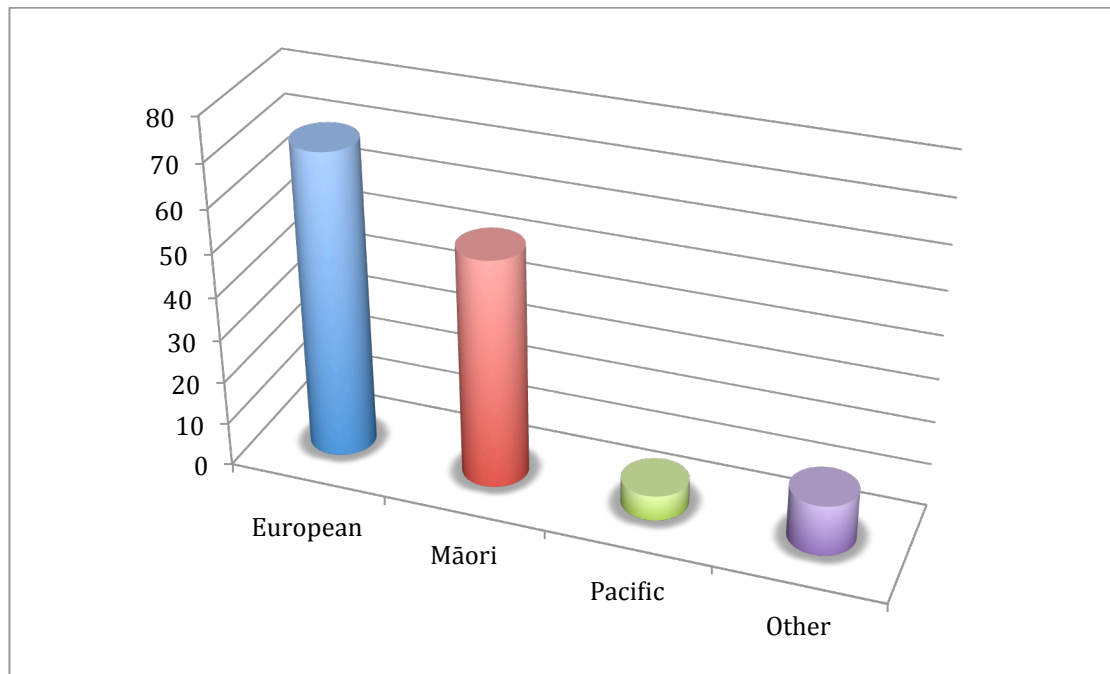


Figure 3: Participant’s Year at School

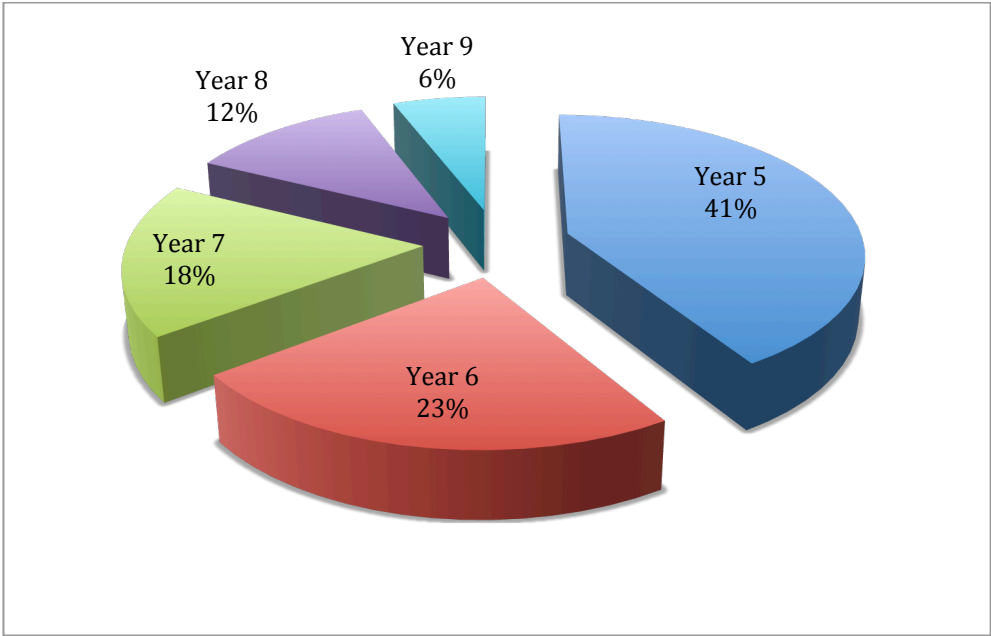


Figure 4: Percentage of Participants Whose Preferred Screen Activity is Watching Content on YouTube

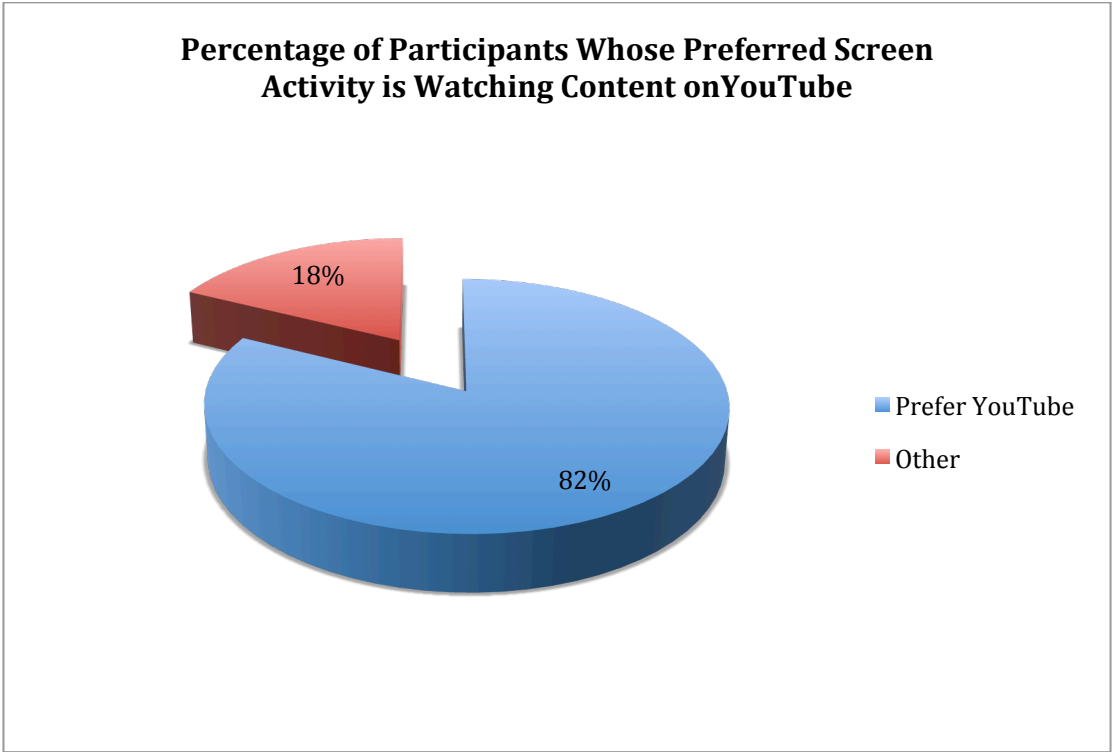


Figure 6: Percentage of boys whose preferred screen activity is watching content on YouTube

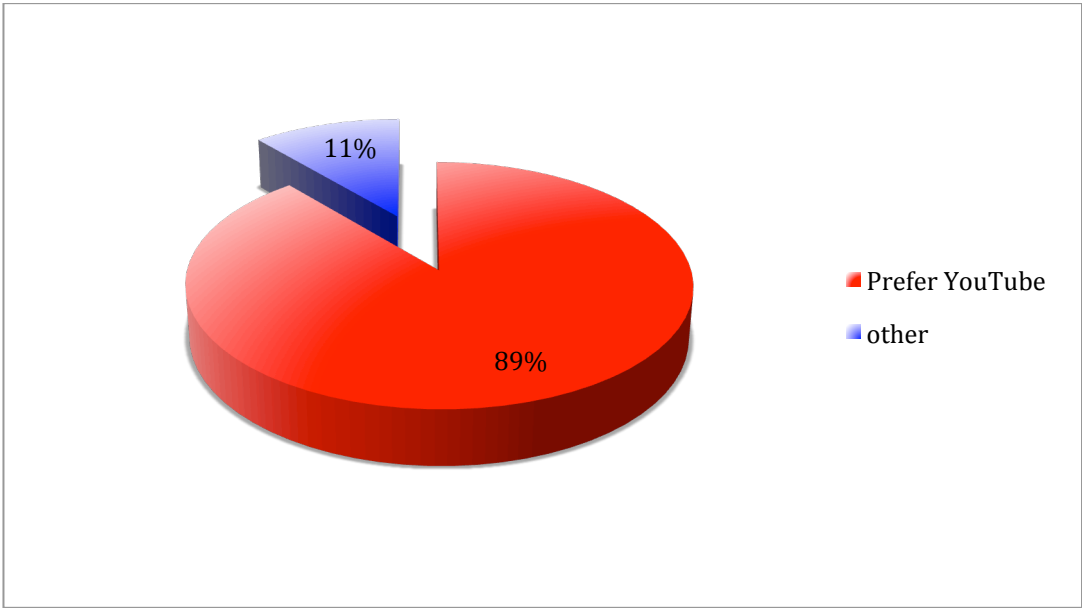


Figure 7: Percentage of Māori Participants Whose Preferred Screen Activity is Watching Content on YouTube

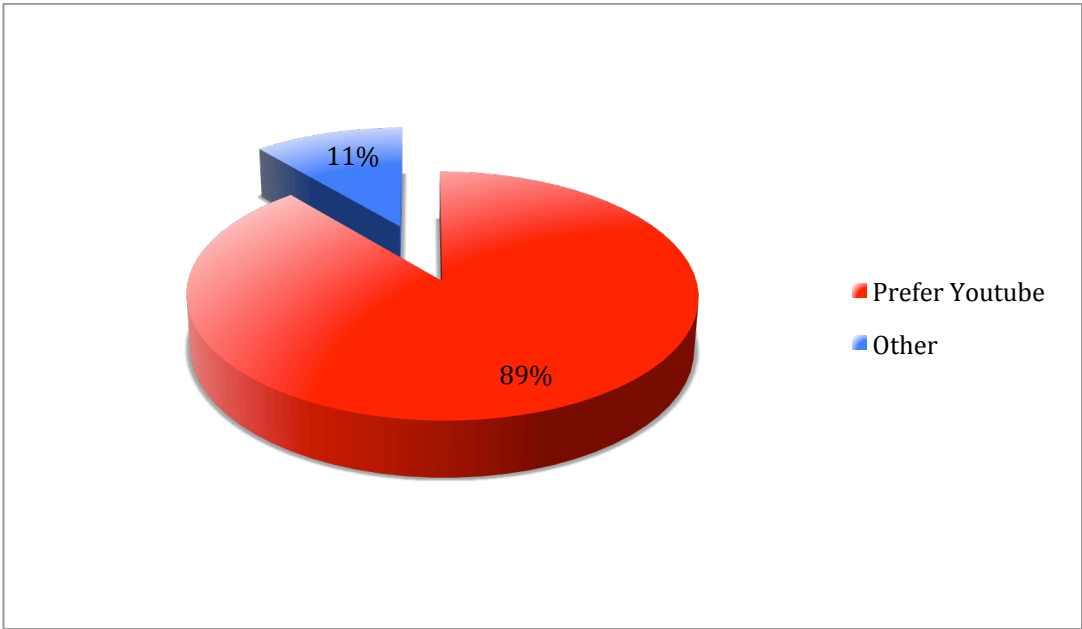


Figure 8: Percentage of female participants whose preferred screen activity is watching content on YouTube

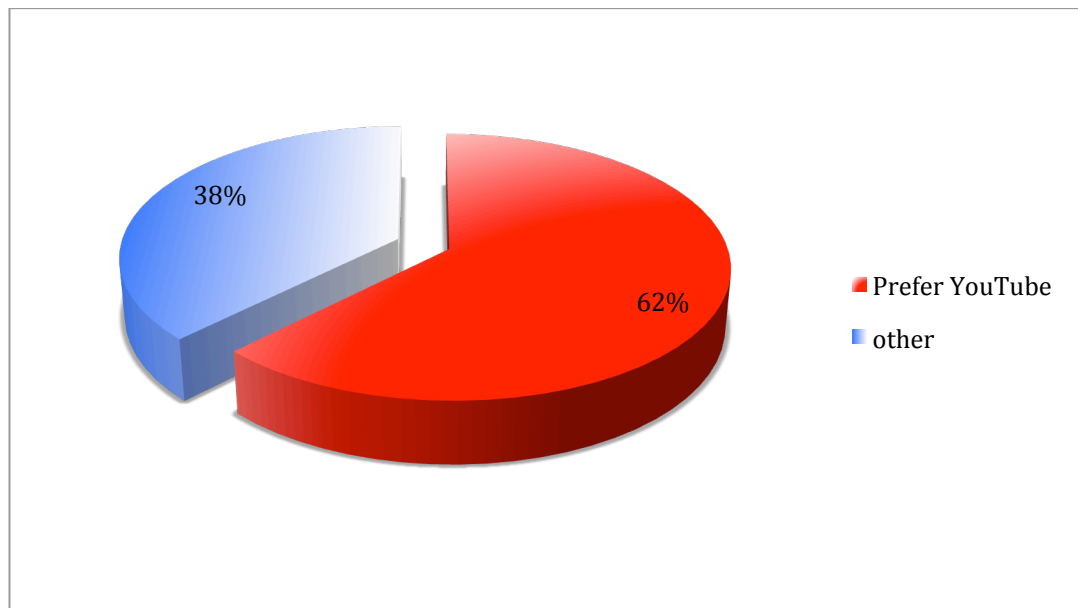


Figure 9: Percentage of Participants Who Watch YouTube Every Week

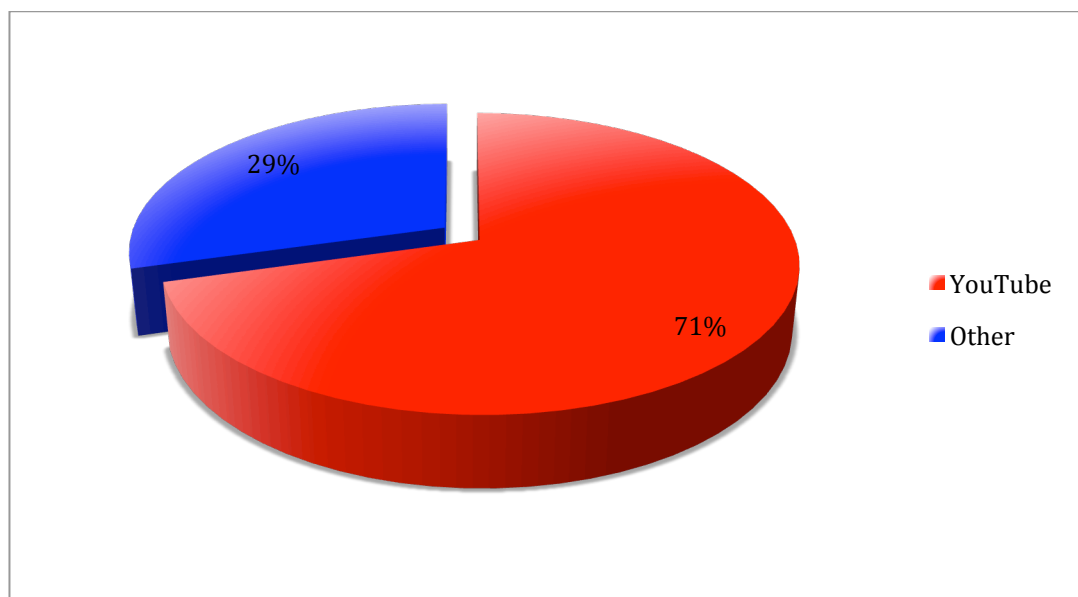


Figure 10: Favourite Screen Platform of Participants

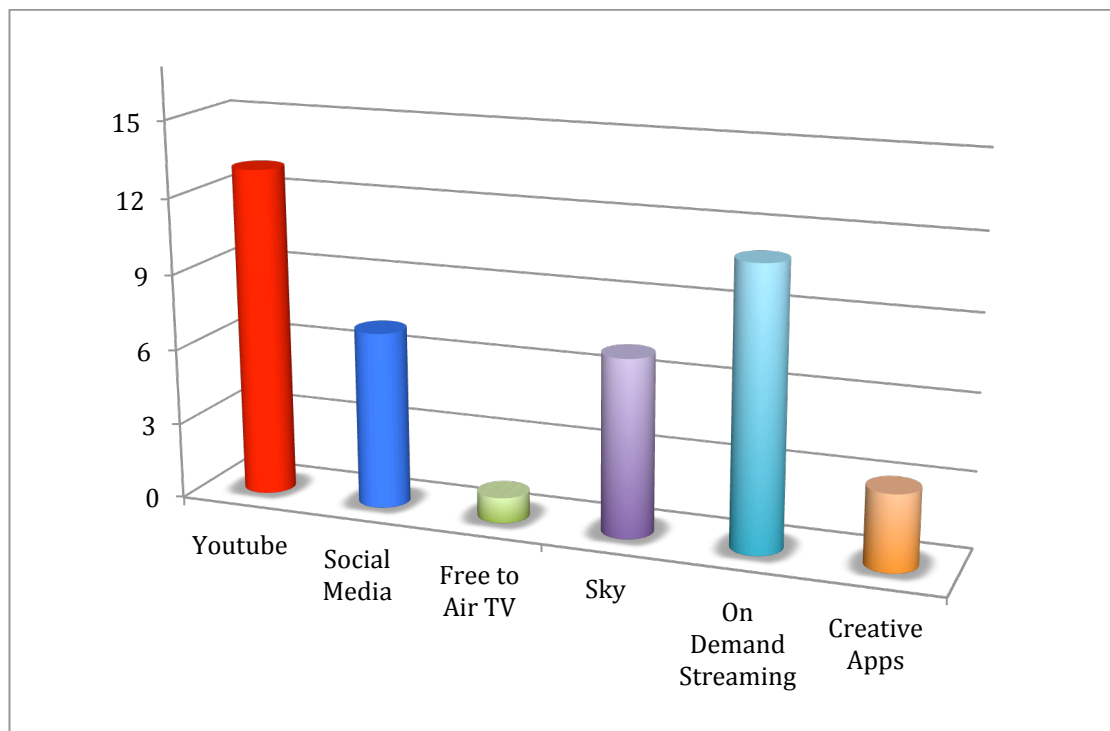


Figure 11: All Respondents Most Liked Platforms

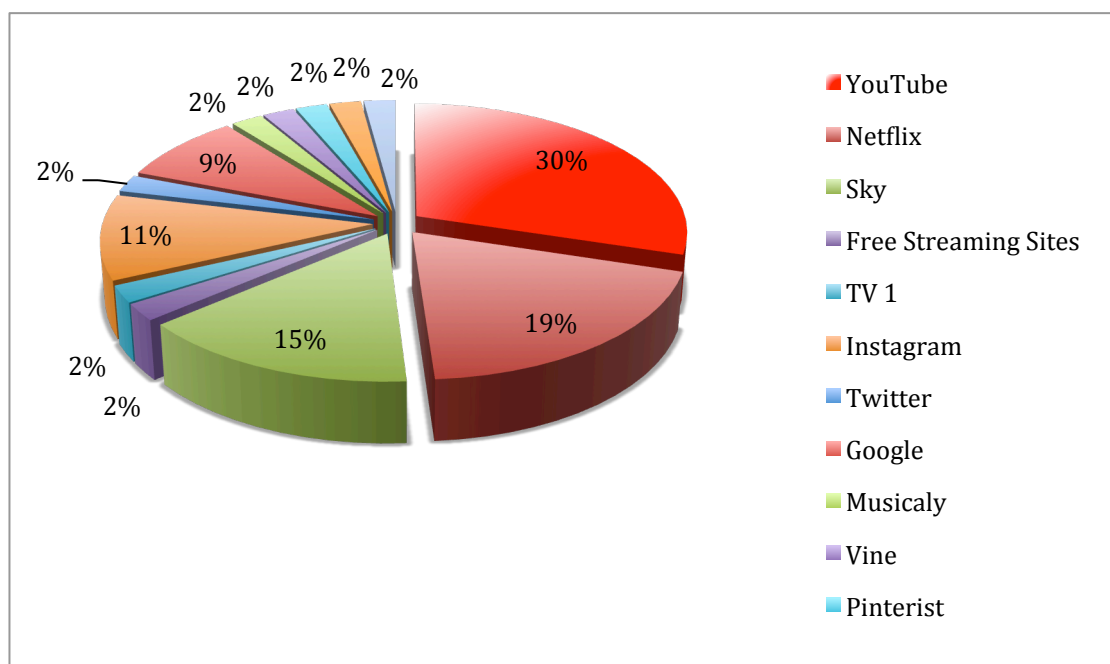


Figure 11: Male Respondents most like platforms

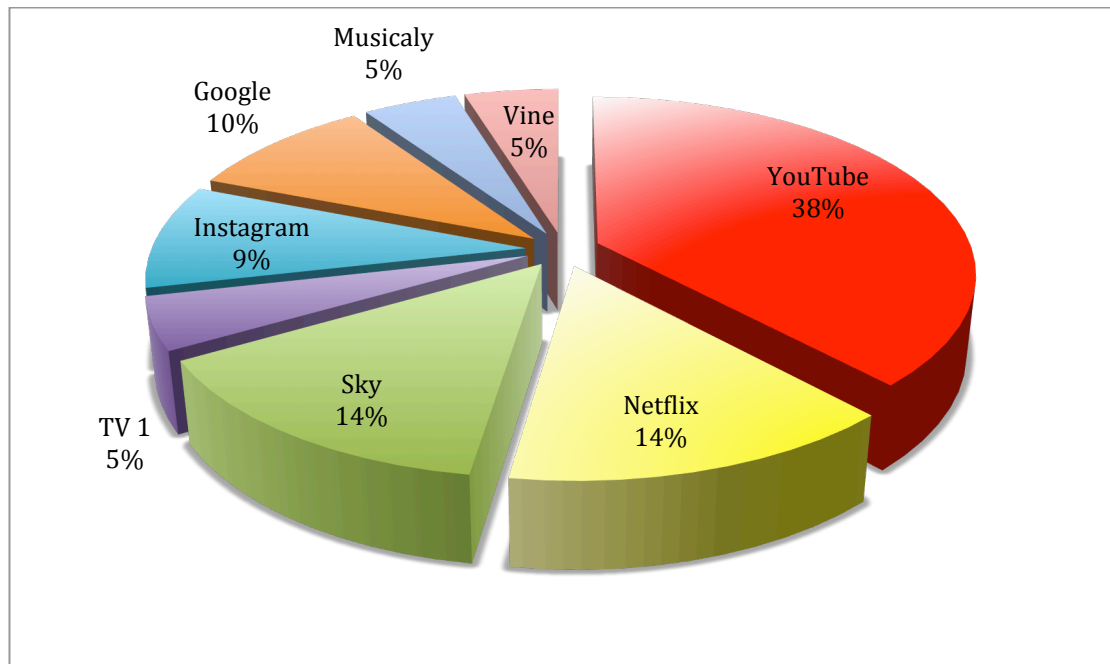


Figure 12: Female respondents most liked platforms

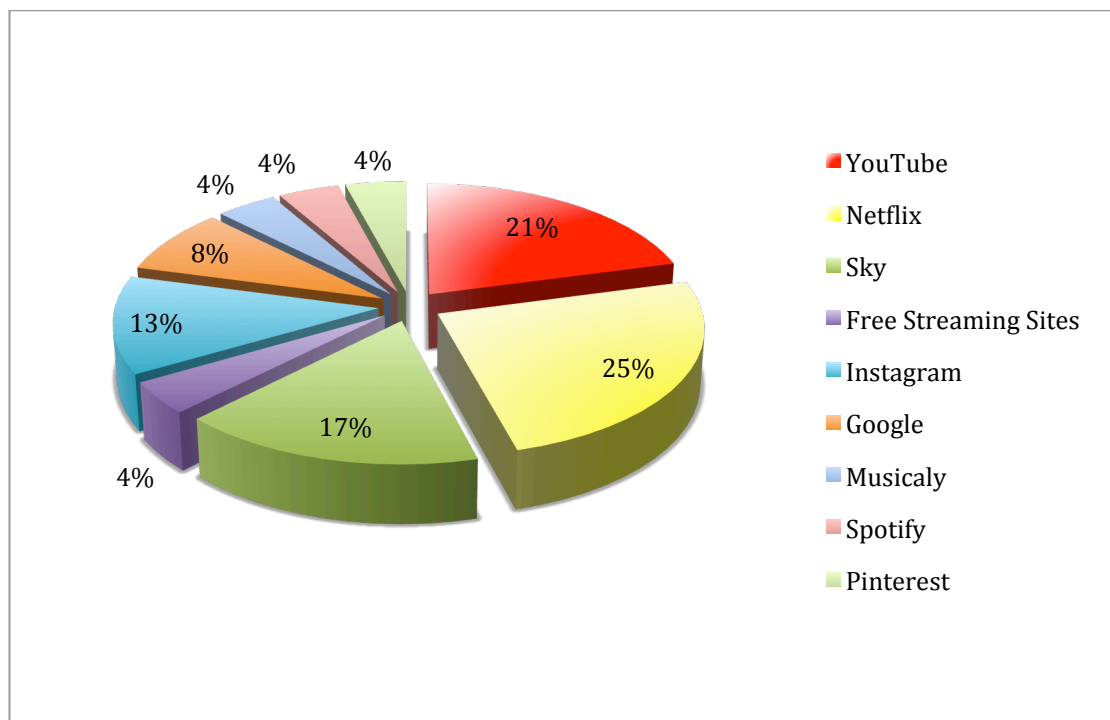


Figure 13: Screen Preferences All Participants

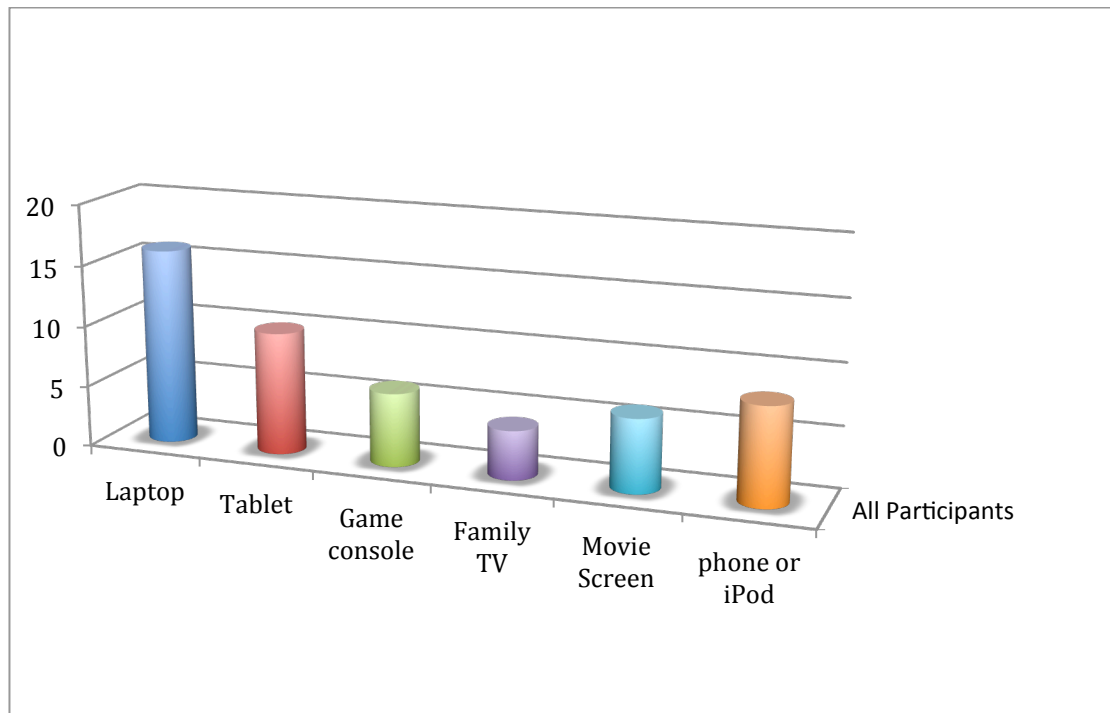


Figure 14: Screen Preferences of Years 7-9 Participants

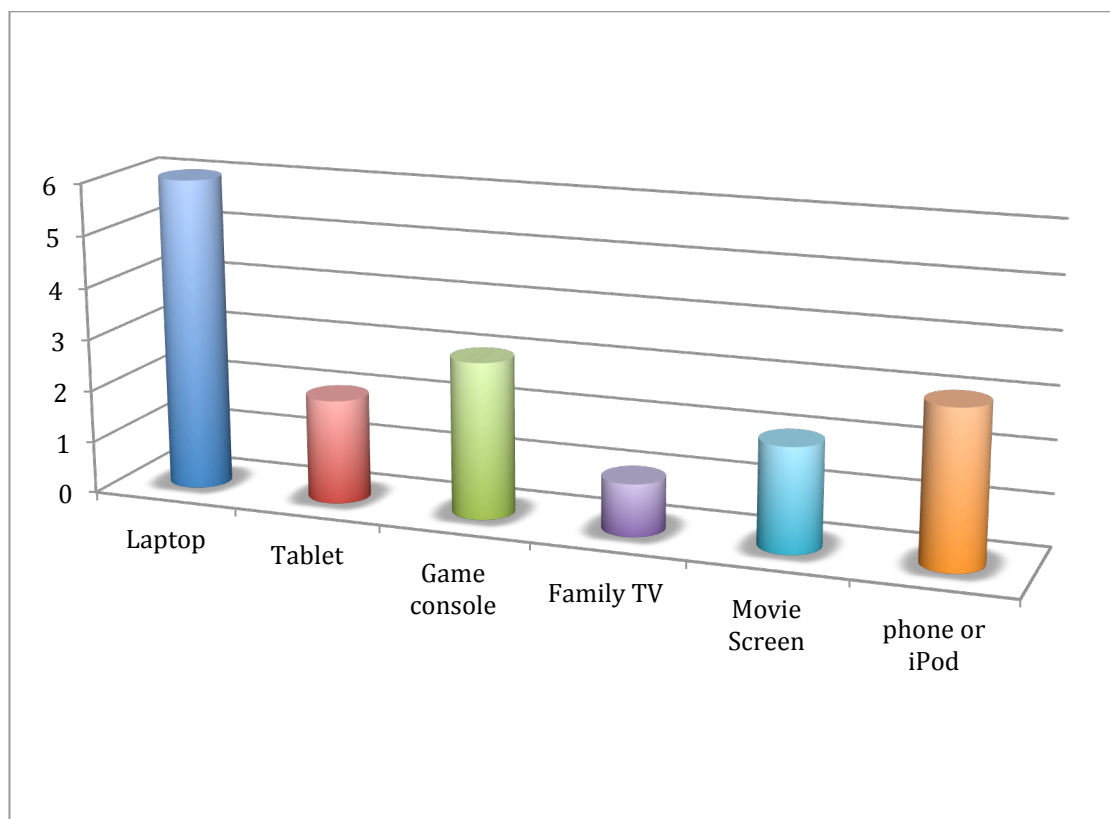
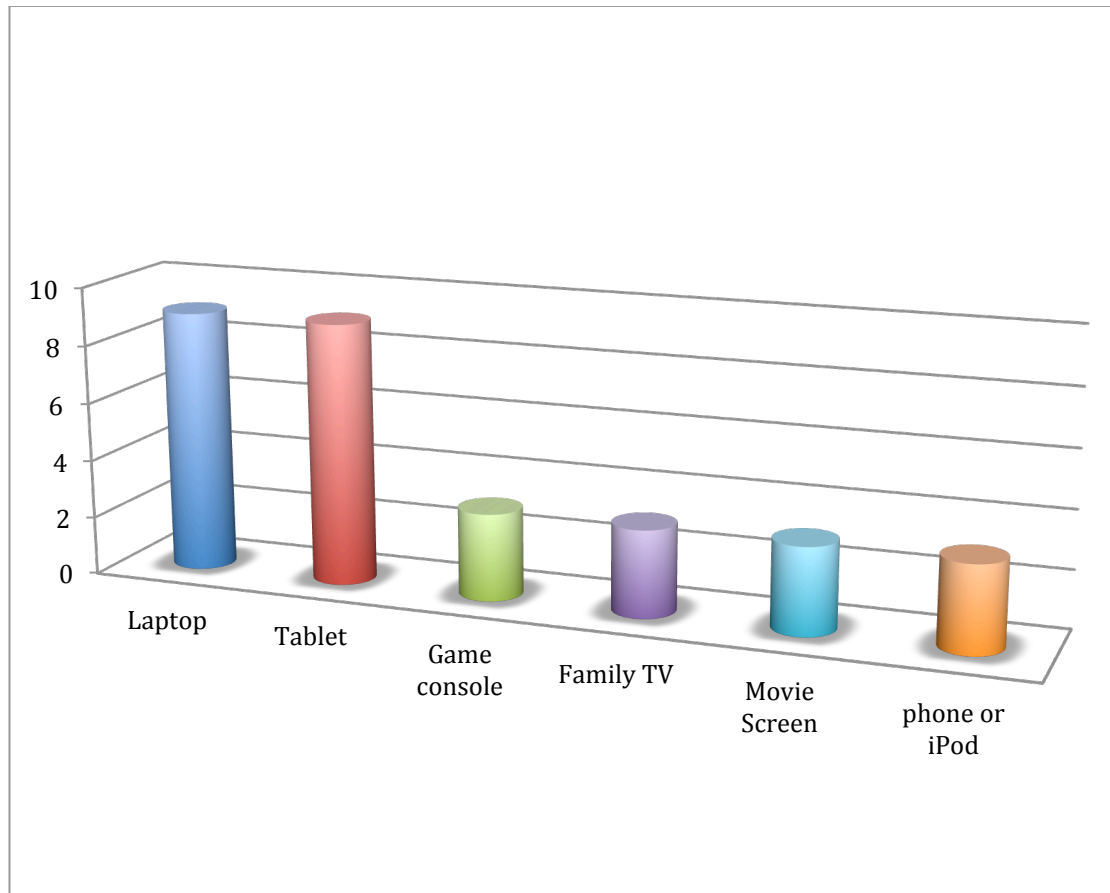


Figure 15: Screen Preferences of Years 5-6 Participants



Survey 2 More of Your Favourites

Figure 16: Top Three Ways All Participants Find Out About New Screen Content

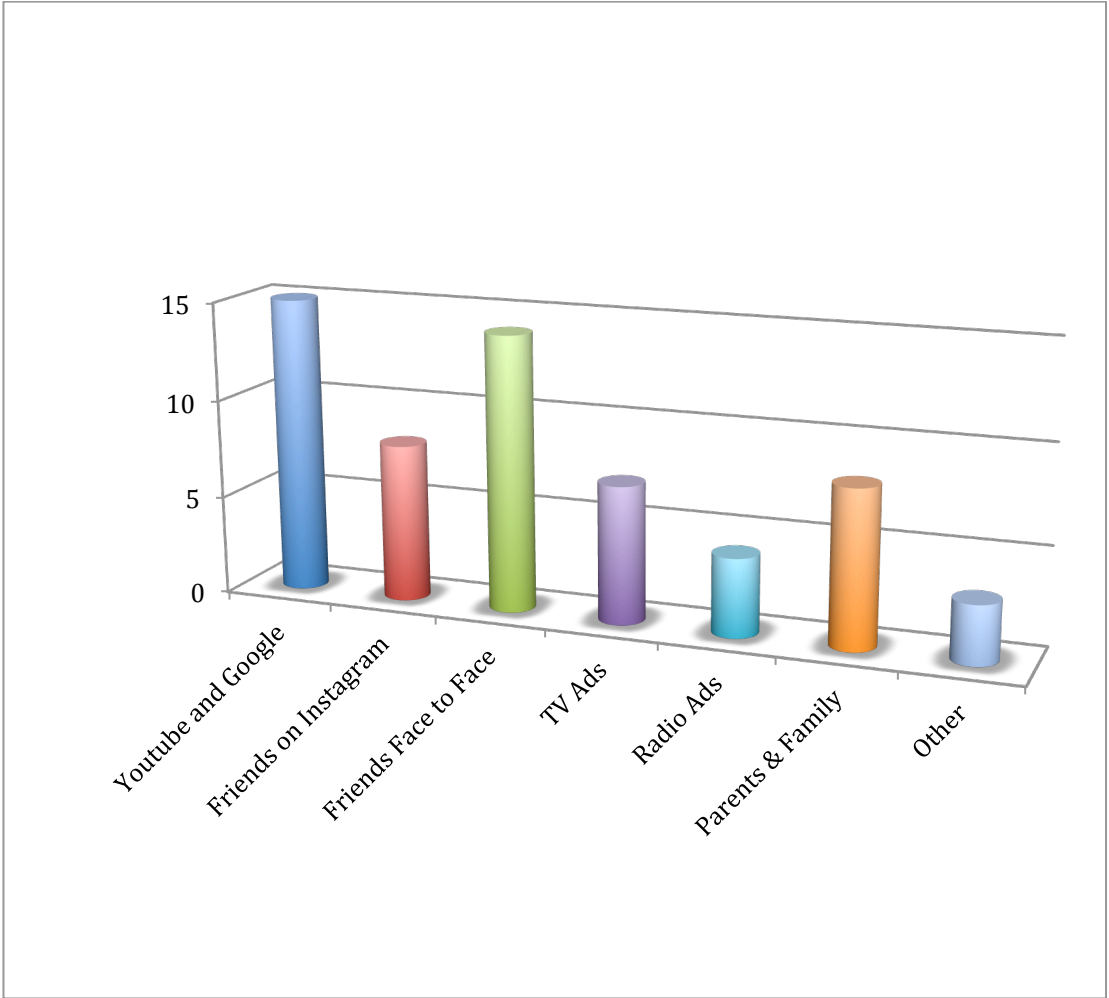


Figure 17: Top Three Ways Male Participants Find Out About New Content

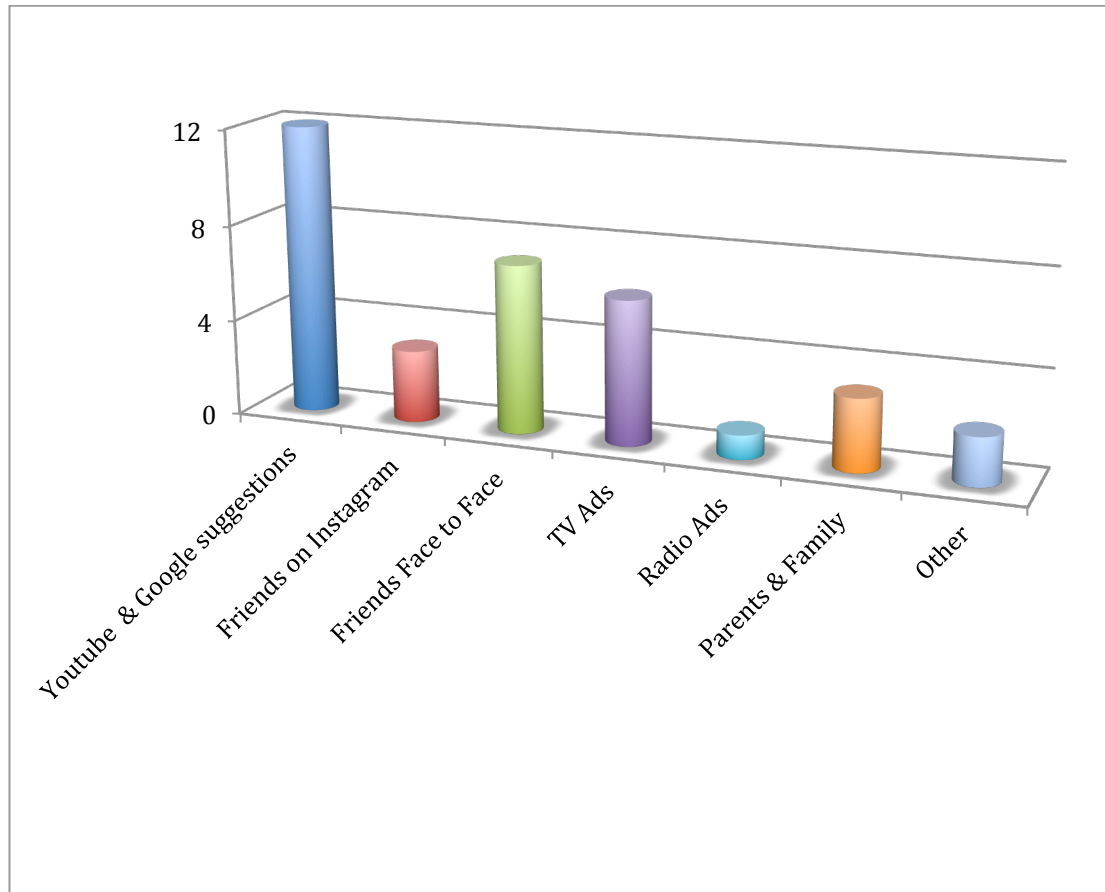


Figure 18: Top 3 Ways Female Participants Find Out About New Screen Content

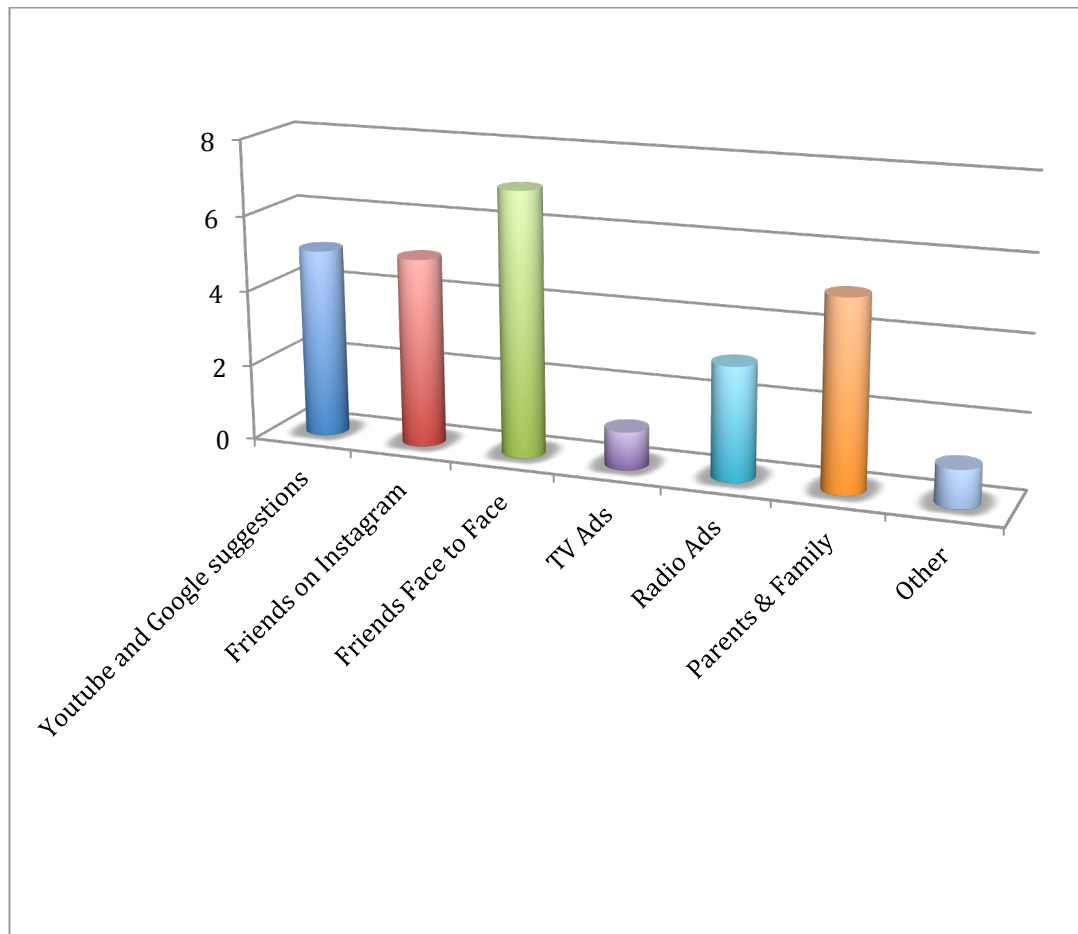


Figure 19: Participant’s Favourite Local Shows - not always local

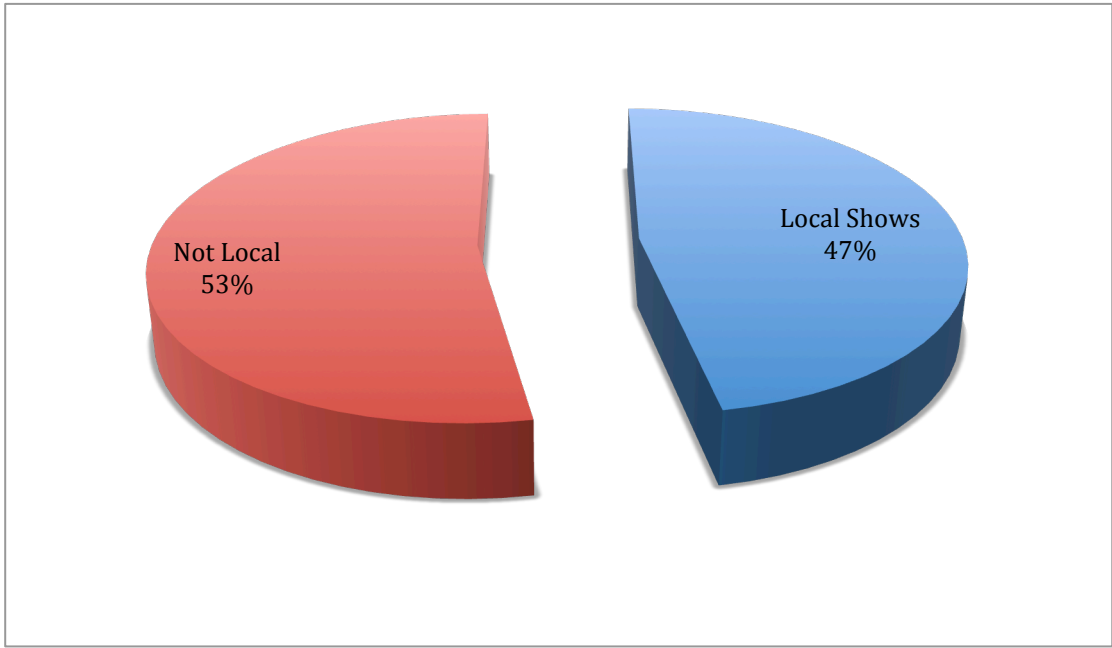


Figure 20: Target Age of Participant’s Favourite Local Stories

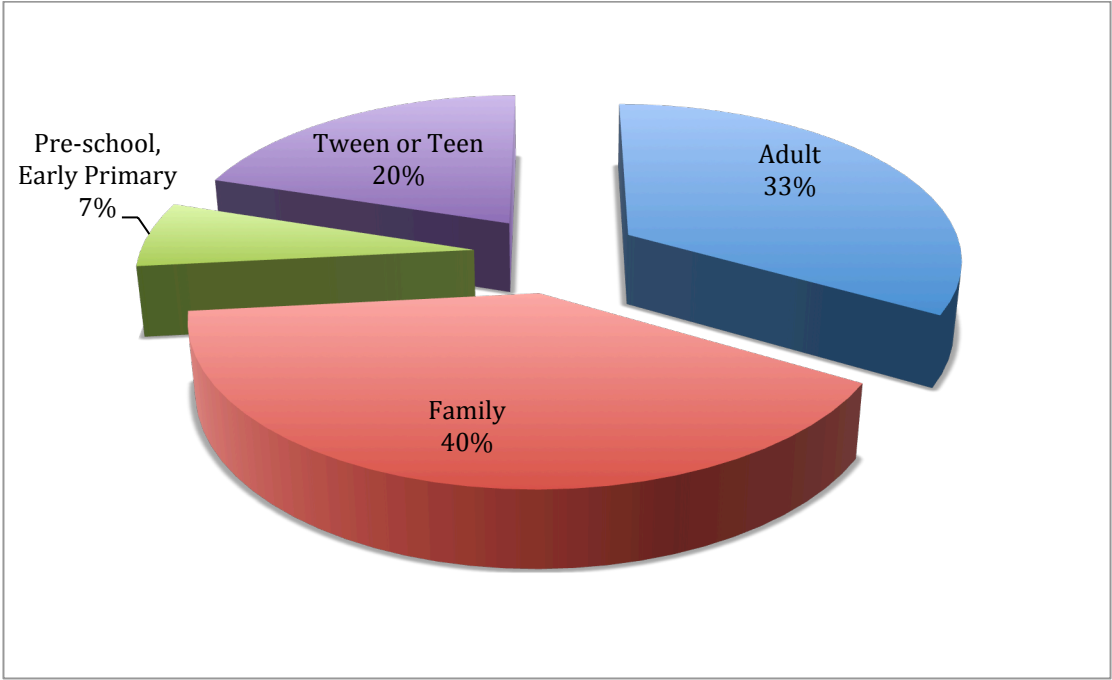
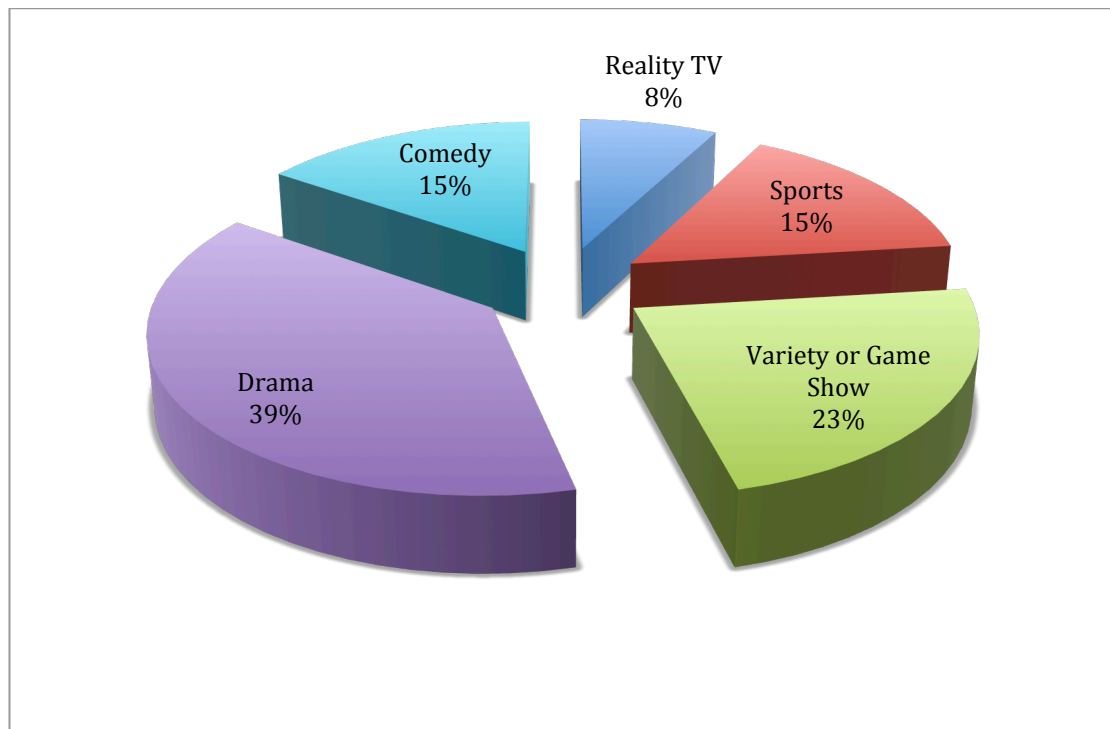
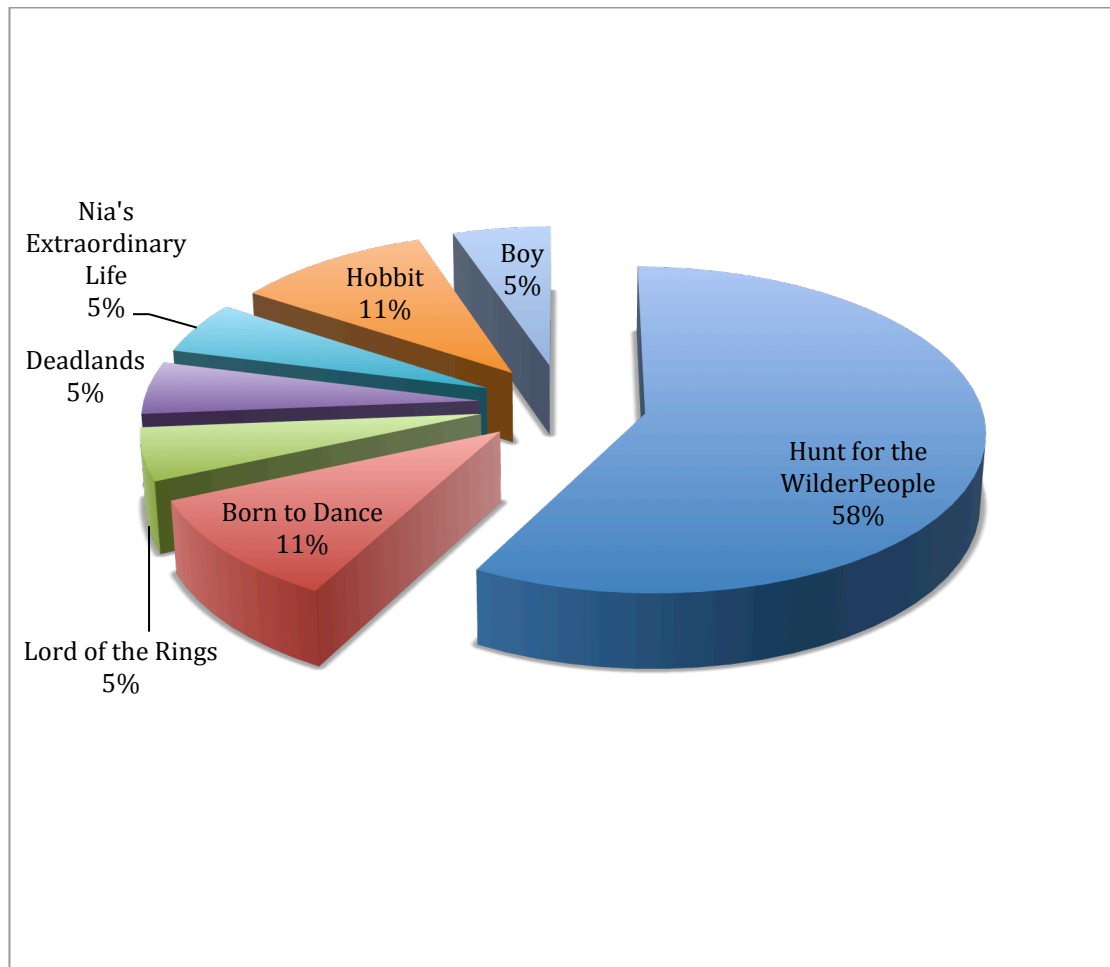


Figure 21: Genre of Favourite Local Shows



NOTE: This graph shows the genre of the shows named by participants as their favourite local show, either on television or online, however not all the shows selected by participants were local shows.

Figure 22: Participants Favourite Local Movie



Note: Nia's Extraordinary Life is not a movie and The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings are not local movies, even though directed by New Zealander Peter Jackson and shot in part in New Zealand.

Figure 23: Favourite Local Movie Choices Not Always Local

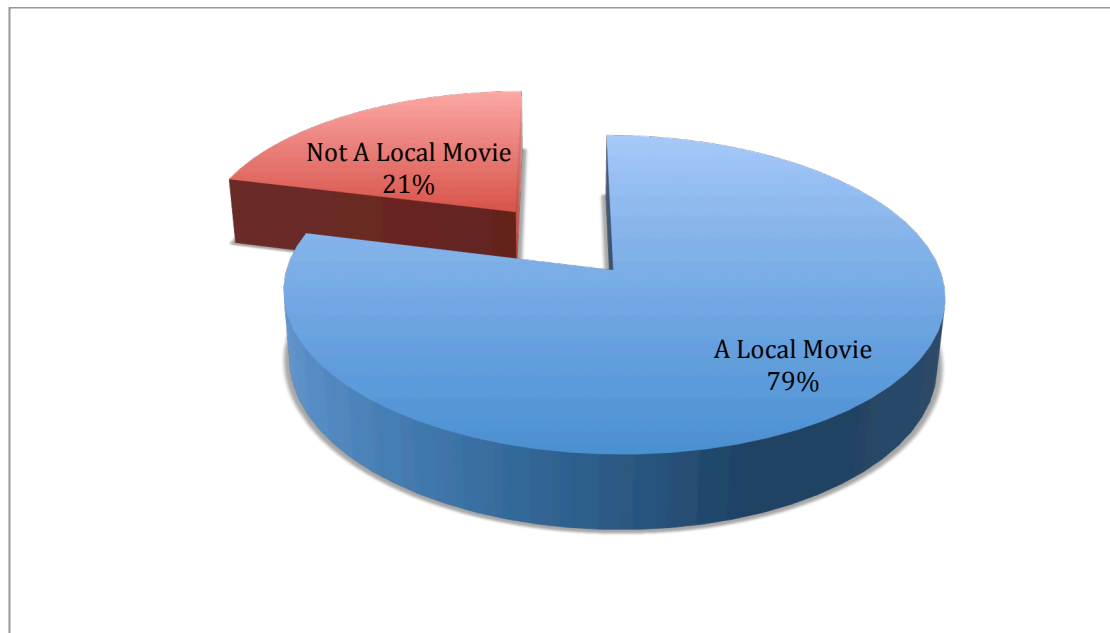


Figure 24: Type of Local Entertainer Participants Would Most Like To Meet

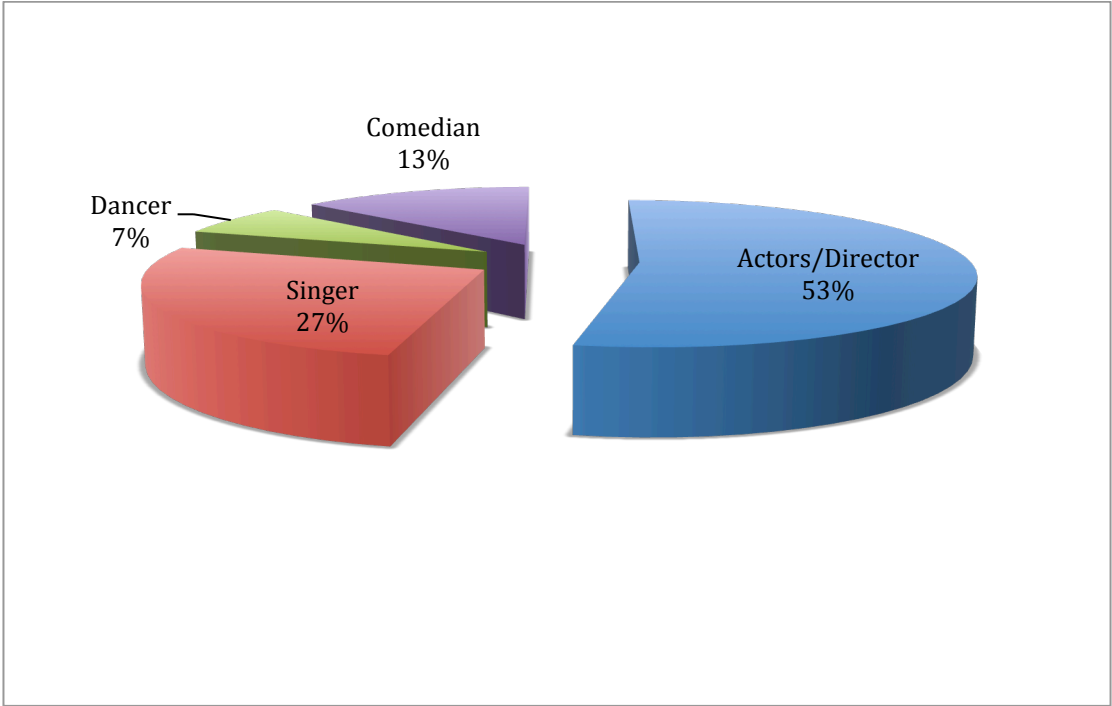


Figure 25: Type of International Entertainer that Participants Would Most Like To Meet

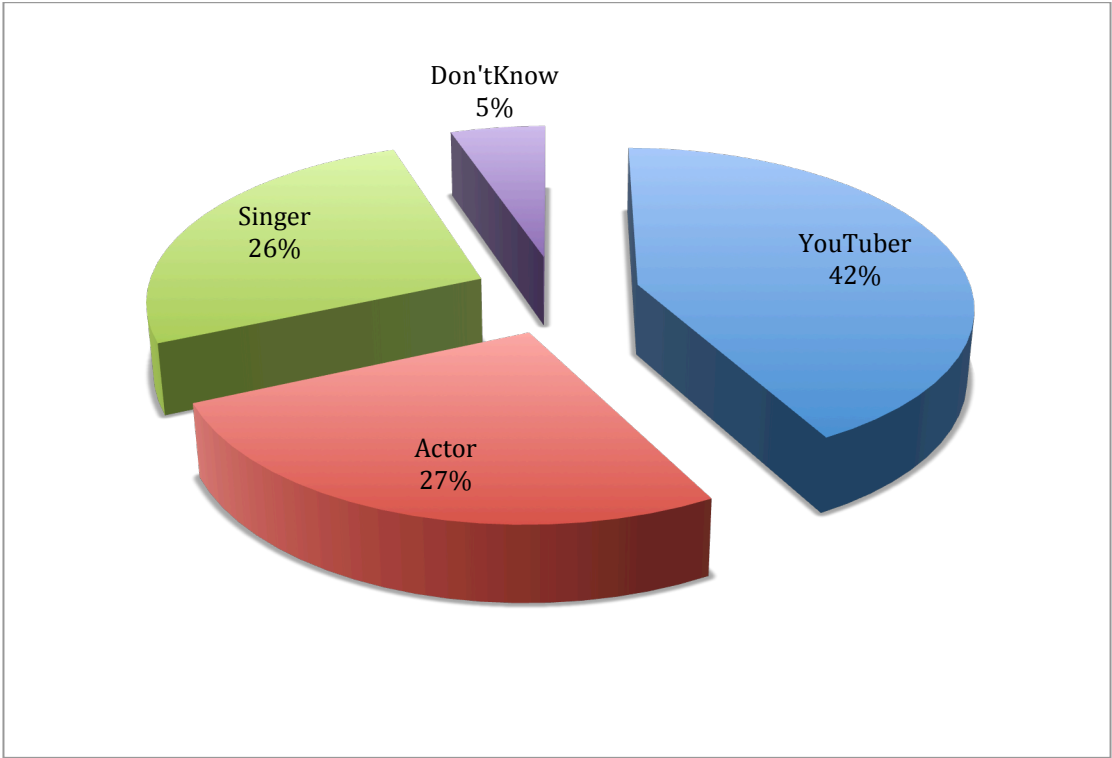


Figure 26: Where Entertainers That Participants Would Most Like to Meet Are From

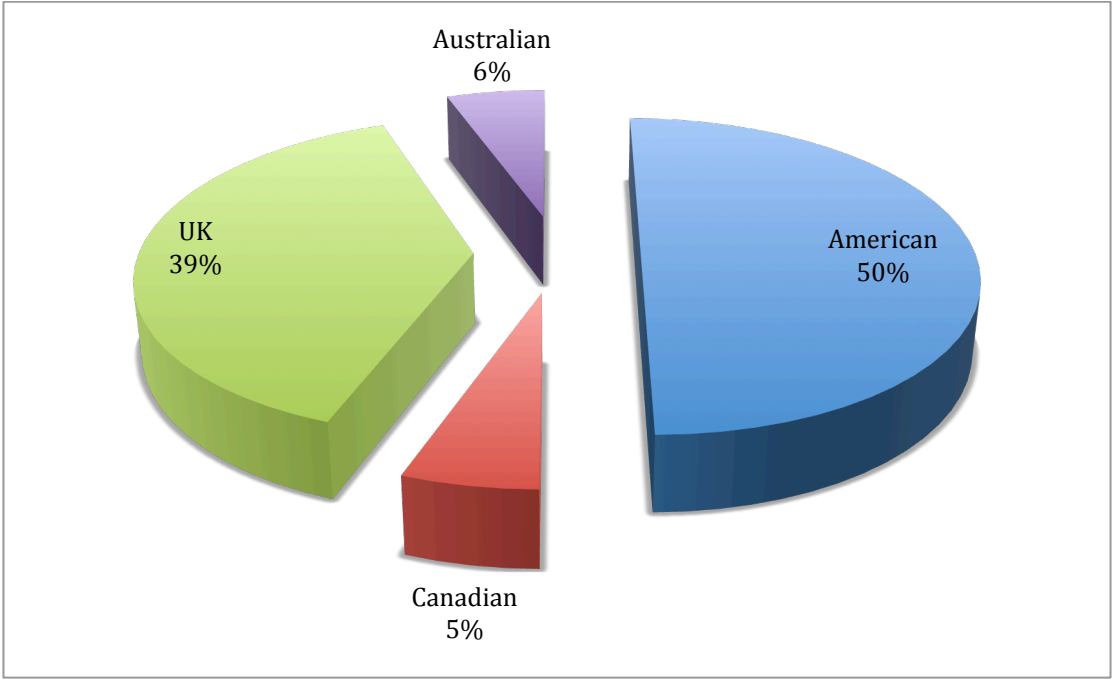


Figure 27: When Participants Were Asked to Name Their Three Favourite Local Shows

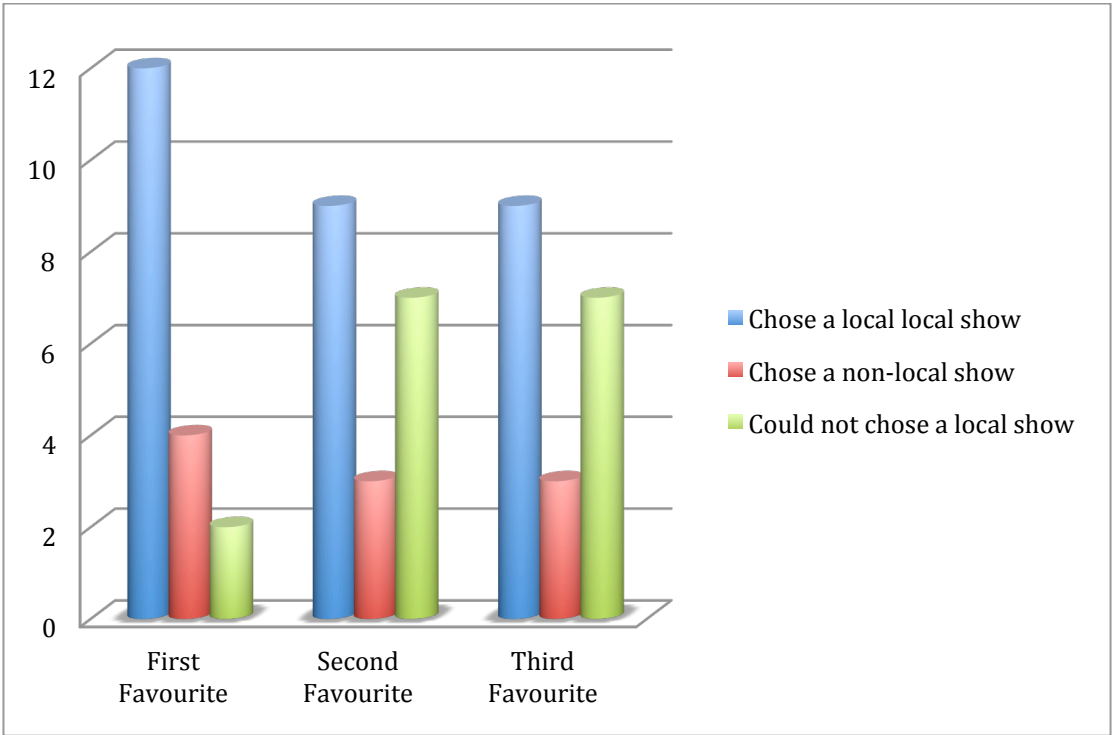
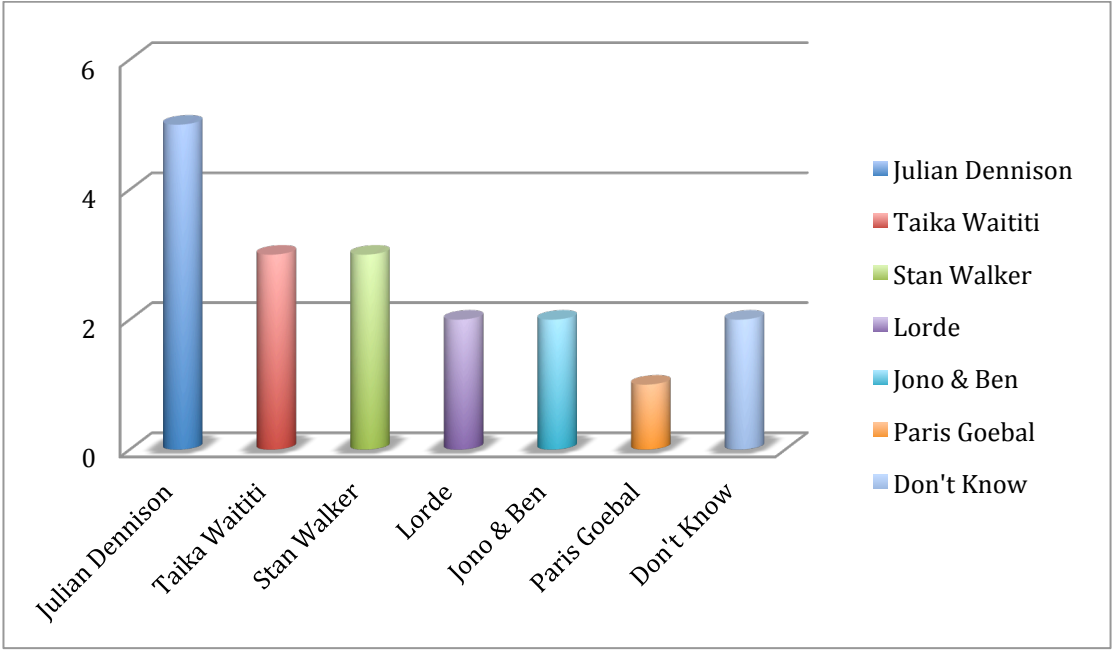


Figure 28: New Zealand Entertainers that Participants Would Most Like to Meet



Data set two: Mangu Town the developing story

Figure 29: Age of Participants responding to story feedback questionnaire

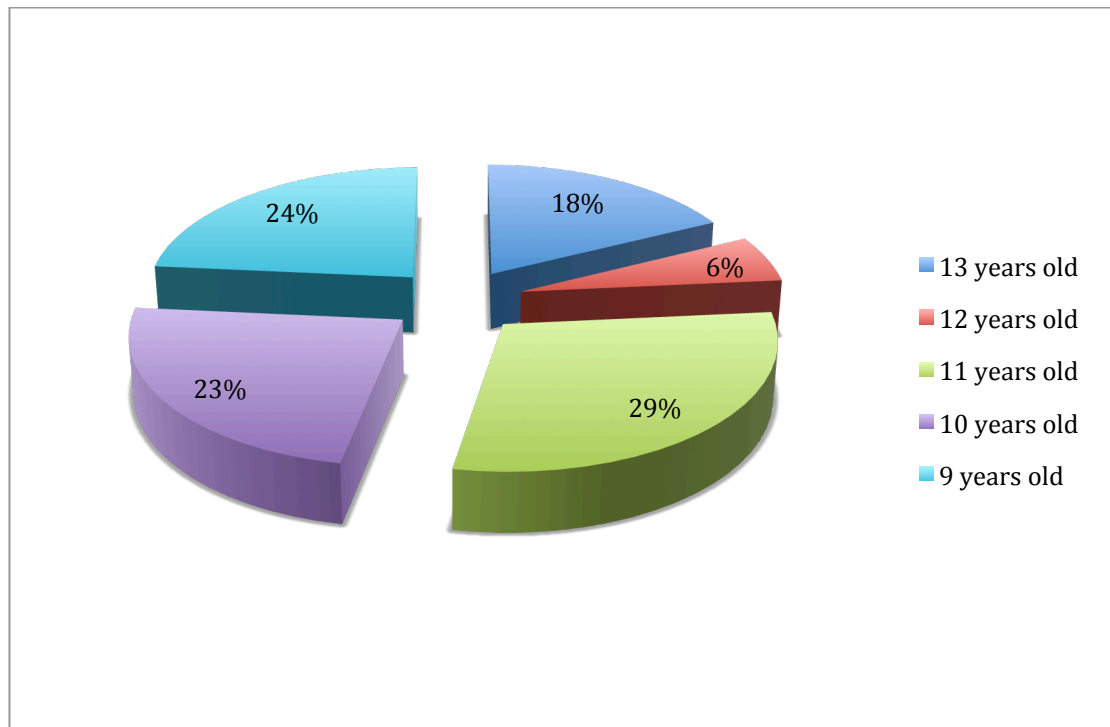


Figure 30: What Part of the Mangu Town Story Interests You the Most?

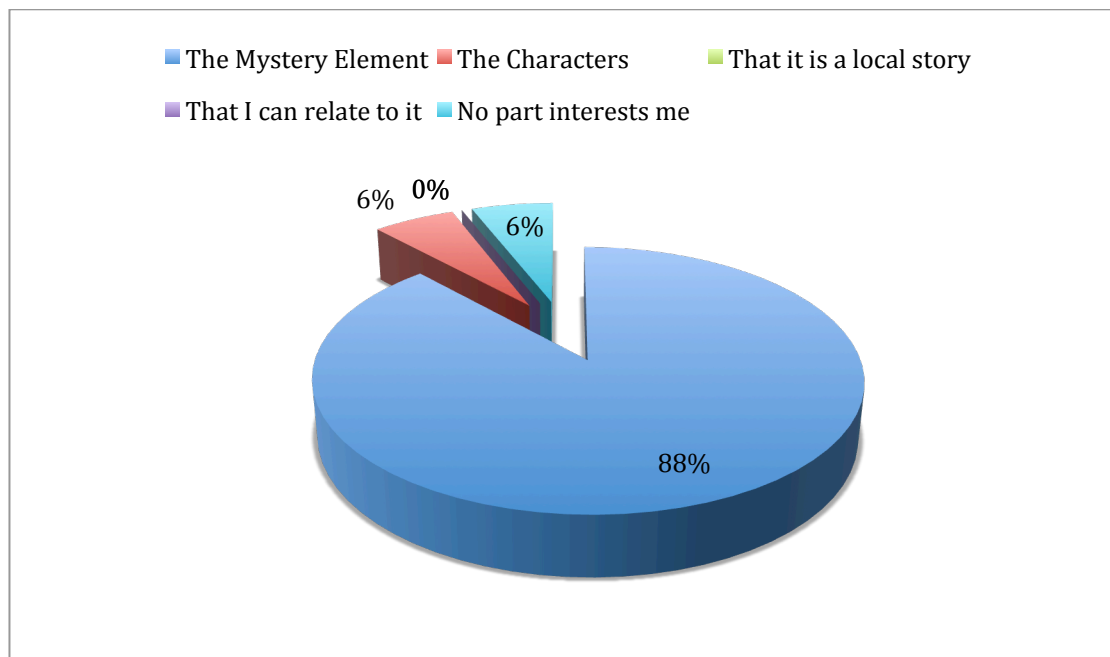


Figure 31: What Part of the Mangu Town Story Interests You the Most?

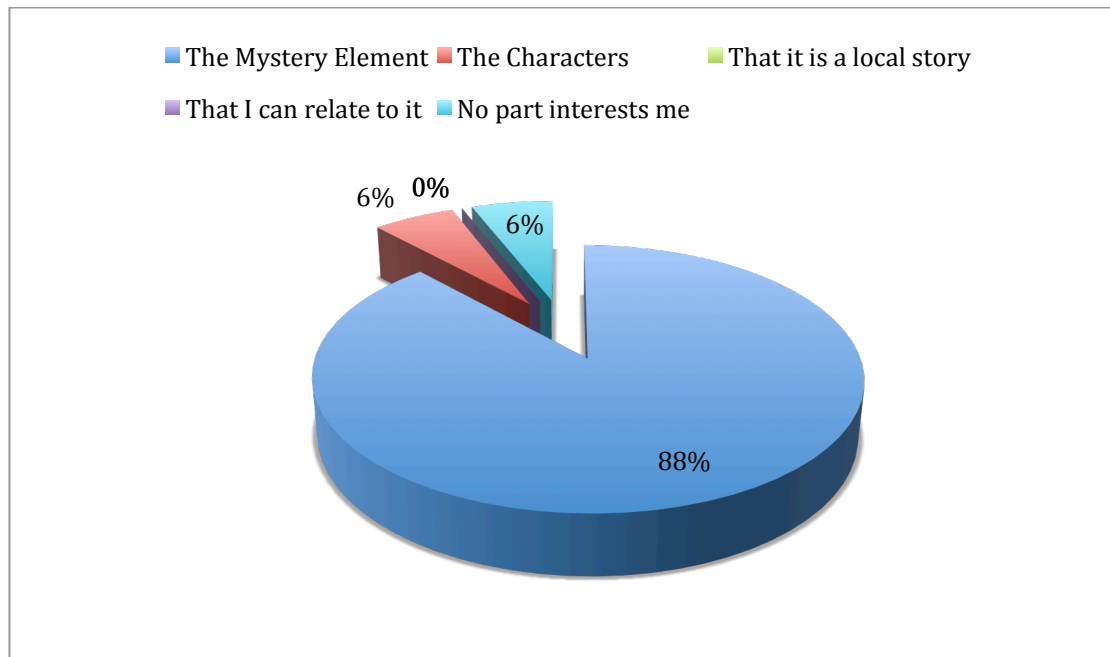


Figure 32: Where participants are most likely to begin their Mangu Town narrative journey

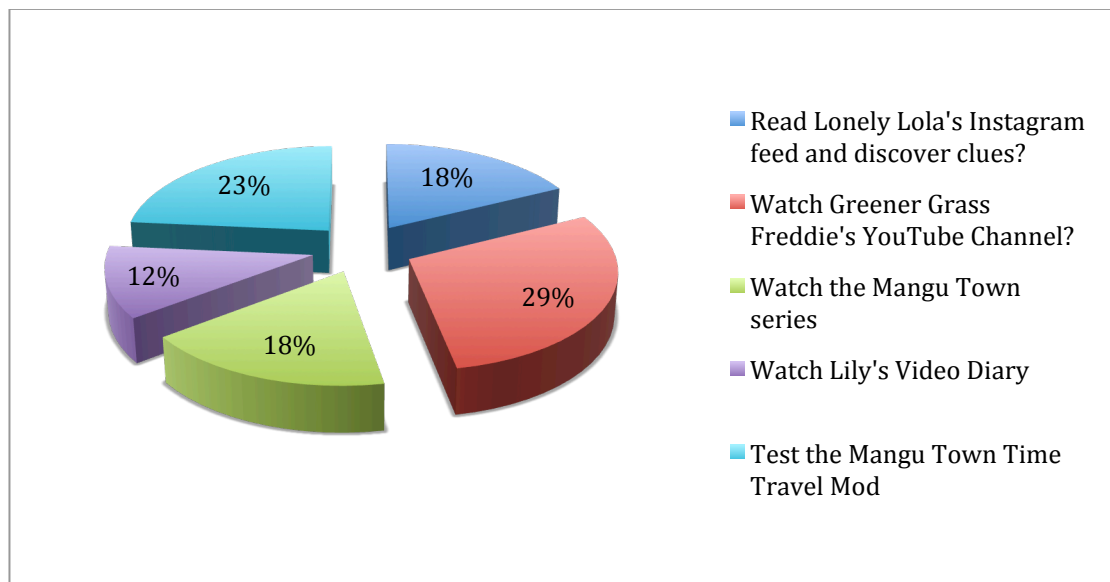


Figure 33: Participants who have ideas for their own YouTube channel

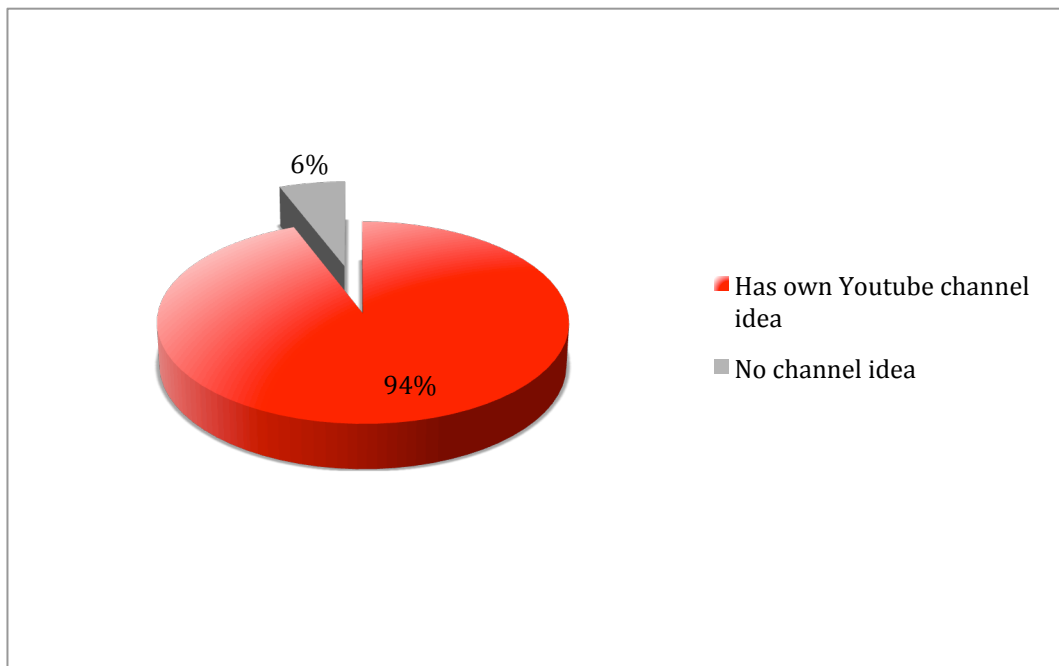


Figure 34: Where 9-11 year old girls would enter the Mangu Town Story

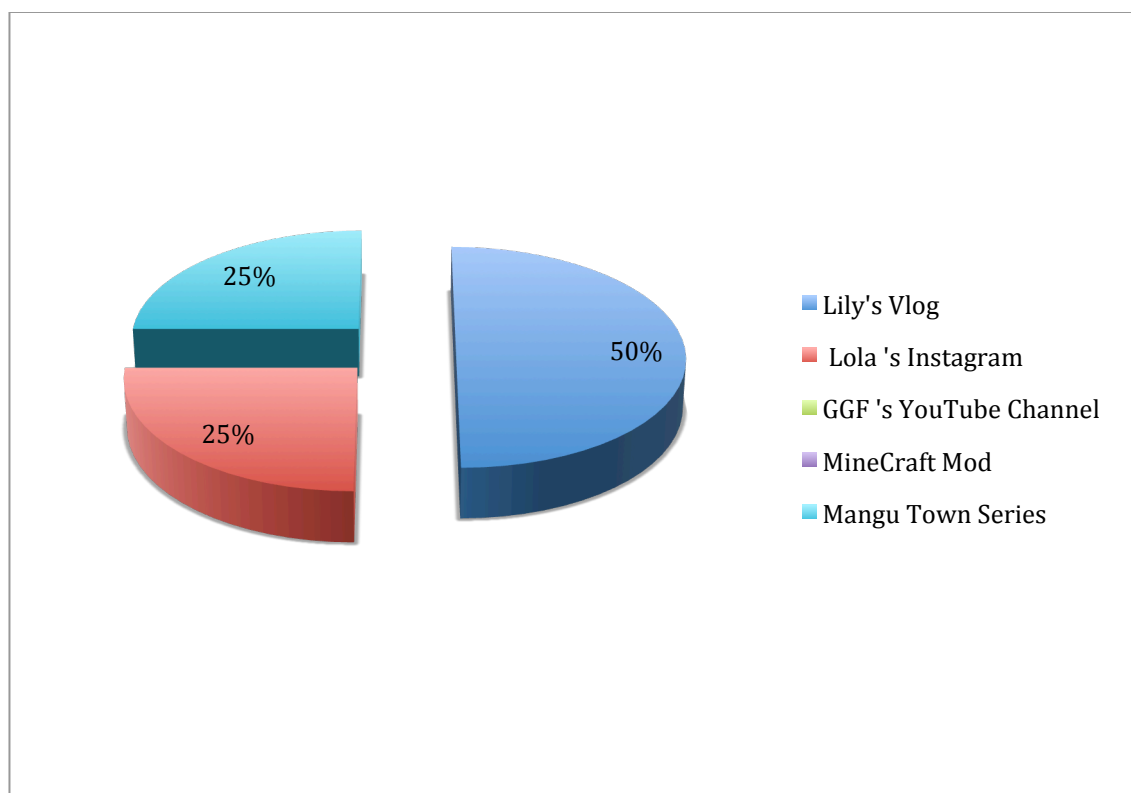


Figure 35: Where 12-13 year old girls would chose to enter the Mangu Town story

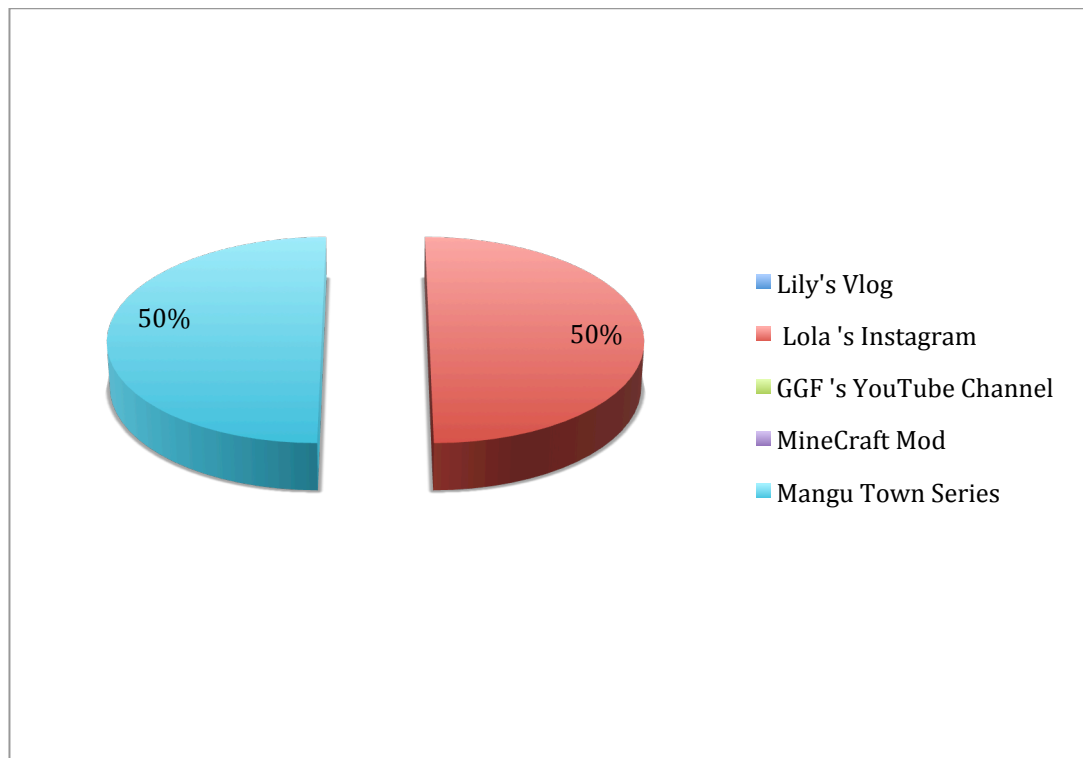


Figure 36: Where 9-11 Year old boys would chose to enter the Mangu Town story

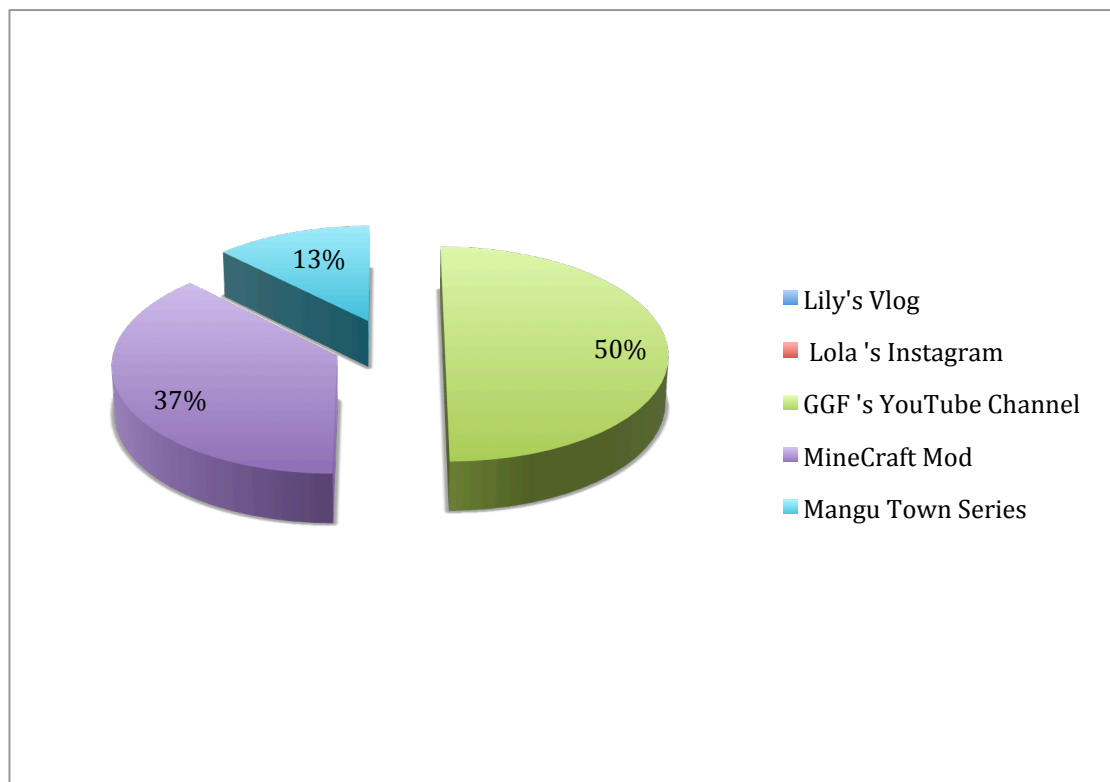


Figure 37: Where 12-13 year old boys would chose to enter the Mangu Town story

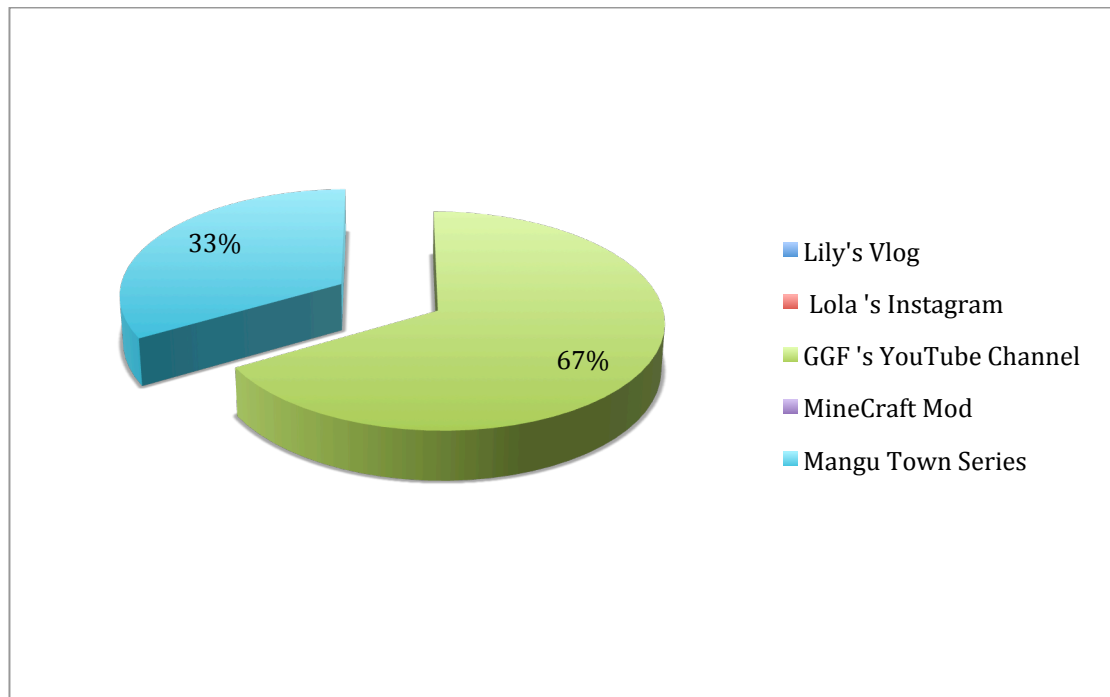
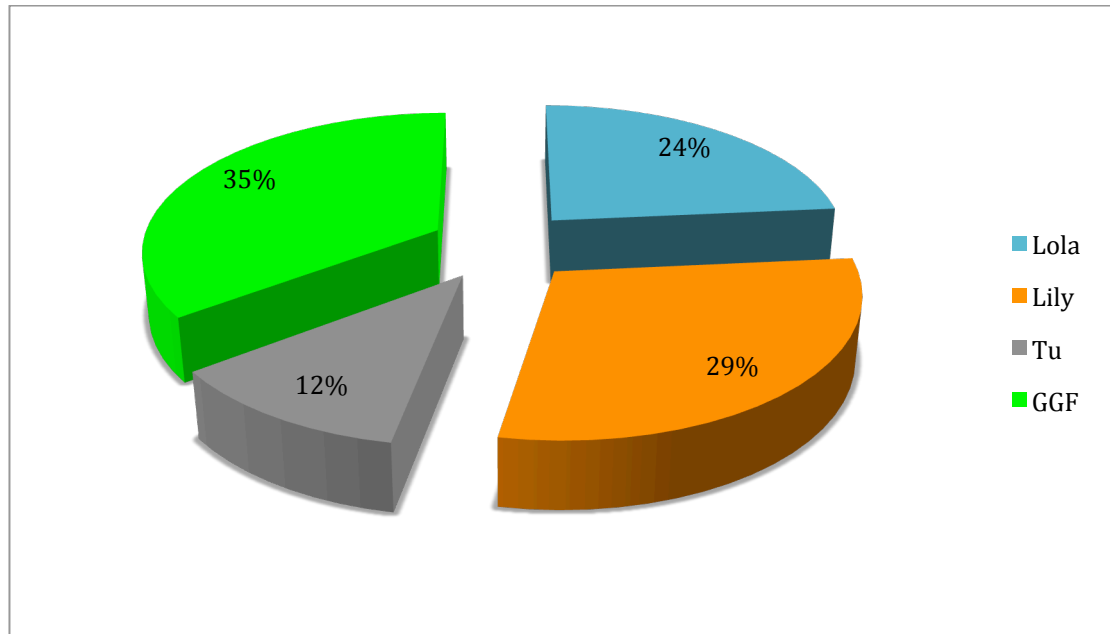


Figure 38: Characters participants found most interesting

Age Range	First character considered most interesting	Second character considered most interesting
9-11 year old girls	Lola	GGF
12-13 year old girls	Lola	Tu & GGF
9-11 year old boys	Tu	Lola
12-13 year old boys	GGF	Lola

Figure 39: Which character is most like you



AUTEC Secretariat

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24 February 2016

Anna Jackson
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Anna

Re Ethics Application: **15/428 The voice of tween engagement: The process of producing a transmedia artefact with the participation of a tween audience.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved in stages for three years until 22 February 2019.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 22 February 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 22 February 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Andrea Kahukiwa andreakahukiwa@me.com