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**The Performative Nature of Talk on Commercial Music Radio in South Africa:  
The cases of 5FM, Metro FM and 94.5KFM**

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Thesis submitted for the award of the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in MEDIA STUDIES

through the Centre for Film and Media Studies

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Performative Nature of Talk on Commercial Music Radio in South Africa:  
The cases of 5FM, Metro FM and 94.5KFM

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DATE: February 2010

Commercial Music Radio is one of the largest radio formats in the country, attracting millions of listeners per week, yet little academic attention has been afforded to its components such as music, talk and accompanying sounds that garner listeners. This thesis pays particular emphasis on initiating South African literature on the nature of talk on commercial music radio. There resides a general perception that music on music radio stations is the primary reason why listeners listen to radio, yet within music radio there are recognisable on-air personalities who speak, announce or link songs. In as much as these presenter voices are deemed 'salutary' reminders (Starkey & Crissell, 2009) of the live nature of radio, there is further evidence, within my thesis, that interrogates the significance of talk on commercial music radio through qualitative methods that seek to understand, describe and explain the social phenomena of on-air talk on music radio. Three South African radio stations – MetroFM, 5FM and 94.5KFM – are used to foreground my research on the production, stylisation and performance of commercial music radio's talk.

CONTENTS:

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Radio is known as a secondary medium in the broadcasting industry accompanied by a general perception that no one cares if you listen to radio as long as you do not switch it off (Berland, 1990). It is a medium that emits music, talk and various other sounds that evoke actions, laughter, sadness and elation to name a few. Reasons behind listening or paying attention to radio vary depending on individual preferences and preconceptions of what radio can provide as a communicative medium – be it news, sport, weather updates or music. Yet many scholars have been reductive in their analysis of radio by casting it as a medium that merely provides companionship or background noise for the listener. Such interpellations have been based on observations of how people listen to radio in the sense that there is no active participation required to engage with this medium. One could be driving, working or participating in any other activities whilst their radio plays song after song with the presenter speaking in between. This observation then begs the question of whether or not listeners are actually listening or at least paying attention. Is radio a presence that becomes faint and familiar like the buzz of fluorescent lights, with listeners listening inattentively and occasionally concentrating on it when something odd or expected, a competition perhaps or even the news, come up - in which case the volume might be notched up to hear the latest breaking news on the hour or to make more audible their favourite song?

In this thesis I pay particular attention to the talk aspect of music radio. The scope of this thesis will be limited to commercial music radio stations – two from the SABC and one from Primedia.

In focusing on commercial music radio I exclude three other identifiable radio formats in South Africa, namely: talk radio, public service radio and community radio. Reference will occasionally be made to these other genres to expand on or compare and contrast certain them with instances of my analysis. This thesis is therefore an exploration of the talk components of commercial music radio in South Africa. Through an exploration of three case studies - MetroFM, 5FM and 94.5 KFM - I argue that the talk featured in and around the music on prime time shows bears significance on each radio station's success and appeal to audiences.

Together these radio stations command an audience of close to 8 million from a population of 48 million (RAMS, 2009), and have been chosen for their large reach within their respective formats. Ultimately these are the three largest commercial music radio stations in South Africa. With a near 20% grip of the country's population one can start to question what distinguishes these stations from the rest and what exactly attracts listeners to them. In so doing one has to take into account – the vital element of talk on music radio – which will be analysed in detail herein.

The main reasons for talk on commercial music radio vary from providing an element of

companionship, educating, entertaining and enlightening listeners. Listeners are usually alone when they are listening to radio or receiving radio signals. When presenters talk on music radio it is usually to back announce a song and address each person individually. The actual content of talk is not very important, however the manner in which the talk is delivered makes talk important on commercial music radio stations (Bredenkamp, 2008).

Talk on commercial music is afforded no intensive research and as such there exists a dearth of literature in this regard. My research herein is driven by a need to create and expand upon existing literature on radio in South Africa, with a specific focus on the radio component of talk. A further motivating factor in the conceptualisation of this thesis was the observation that talk on music radio is not just talk that links songs, but discursive talk which has the ability to convey more entertainment information. The kind of talk I am referring to herein is the actual presenter talk and not the talk of fixed fixtures such as news, sport, weather and traffic reports. Presenter talk has the potential to transcend into popular culture, economic and political topics in a conversational and opinionated manner that at times borders on cultural production or the affirmation of various target market cultural practises. Yet this talk and its effects remain largely ignored in radio literature. Emphasis is instead placed on the manner in which talk on radio is presented as opposed to the actual content of talk on music radio.

I therefore explore the ways in which talk is styled, performed and delivered to audiences.

## Statement of Purpose

Shingler (1998) attributes the importance of radio to five points: its flexibility or portability, ubiquity, cheapness, invisibility and its potential as a powerful cultural influence through music and the actual talk from radio presenters.

Looking at these five features or characteristics it becomes easier to disregard the constant voices that herald the perceived death of radio due to the advent of emerging new media. Shingler's five points underpin the reasons why radio is still relevant today. However it is equally important to take into account the traits of the medium that enable it to sustain these five features. One such trait is the element of talk in commercial music radio. This thesis specifically asserts that in as much as a commercial music radio station's primary focus is music – and it is believed listeners select them for this reason – the talk may in fact be more significant than either the producers or the listeners realise. Listeners often select a radio station based on the personalities or presenters behind the microphones. The reasons for their preferences/ selection could range from the presenter being entertaining, informative, comedic or simply that they enjoy listening to their chosen on-air personality. The assertion that music radio is just that – music radio, will to a great extent be proved wrong through analysing talk on the three chosen case studies MetroFM, 5FM and 94.5KFM.

Talk on radio has also been described as performance, in the theatrical sense of the term, premised on the notion that presenters are performing for listeners (Bauman, 1977). The

thesis will also discuss the performative nature of talk in commercial music radio – MetroFM, 5FM and 94.5 KFM - to assess how their talk or dialect can be justified as performance. Much of this dialect analysis will include transcribed audio texts from recorded radio shows - one purposively chosen breakfast and afternoon drive time show from each radio station. Music is not featured in these recordings and as such the focus is shifted directly to only when the presenters go live or talk on-air between songs. The transcribed text will serve as evidence of how each radio station's talk is structured to relate to listeners, culturally and personally, whilst keeping listeners tuned in and not choosing other radio stations.

In examining the cultural authenticity (Lindholm, 2008) that is relayed through the talk or dialect I also draw on the Jensen's (1984) interpretive approach to guide my theoretical analysis of speech. Jensen asserts that cultural material is constructed in and through interpretations. And as such, to gain insight to this cultural material one has to engage with the cultural producers or radio stations. This is achieved by encompassing both the producers and the audience for whom material is broadcast.

### **Research Questions**

What is the role of talk on commercial music radio in South Africa?

How is talk styled and presented to appeal to listeners of commercial music radio?

What is the performative or functionalist nature of talk on commercial music radio?

How do audiences decode talk on commercial music radio?

## **Overview of Thesis.**

Chapter 2 provides a summary of the pertinent research on radio, abroad and in South Africa. Most of the literature reviewed is from international radio scholars due to a dearth of local literature on my chosen aspect of music radio. Crissell (1986 and 2004) provides the most relevant literature that deals with relationships between talk and music across varying radio formats. Crissell views music and talk as the most illuminating aspects of radio programming as the majority of radio stations rely solely on music and talk. Talk on radio represents two roles through its words that are symbols of what they represent, and the voices conveying the words index the personalities. To contextualise my study I also focus on local literature from Tomaselli et al (1989), Olorunnisola (2006), Fourie (2003 and 2001), Fardon and Furniss (2000), Kruger (2006) and Wigston (2001). International literature from McLeish (2005), Barnard (2000), Tolson (2006) and Potter (2006) to name a few, grounds the theoretical framework on radio in general. I have attempted to select the most relevant literature and as such do not go in-depth on other radio formats such as talk radio and community radio. The scope of the review is such that it provides an overview of commercial radio – which embodies the primary unit of my analysis – talk on commercial music radio.

Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative methods employed in this study. I draw on aspects of Discourse Analysis, Conversation analysis and borrowing from ethnomethodology to gain insight on my chosen radio stations. In-depth interviews are conducted with programming managers from all three radio stations – 5FM, MetroFM and 94.5KFM.

I further engage in brief audience research via email and social networking interviews of purposive audience samples.

Chapter 4 is the first of the three case studies and focuses on MetroFM. The chapter commences with general observations, stylistic creations of the station as well as the performative aspects of their on-air talk. The chapter also analyses transcribed excerpts of talk on the afternoon drive and morning breakfast shows. This chapter demonstrates how talk on MetroFM is styled and presented to attract and retain listeners in their target market range. I also explore how radio presenters on MetroFM are viewed as sub-brands of the MetroFM brand and are selected on the basis of their credentials or establishment as celebrities.

Chapter 5 discusses 5FM. Following a similar pattern of analysis as employed in chapter 4, I reflect upon the aspects of talk on this contemporary hit music radio station and draw parallels with the other two radio stations. As much as 5FM identifies itself as a music radio station, the findings in this chapter contradict this view and reflect on the informative and relevant content their presenters engage listeners with in between songs. During the audience research phase 5FM's Gareth Cliff breakfast show was highly rated by interviewees as being great because of Gareth Cliff's on-air personality. I further explore this perceived popularity of presenters and attractiveness via an established on-air presence when analysing the element of talk on 5FM's breakfast and drive time shows

Chapter 6 deals with 94.5KFM. 94.5 KFM is the only regional radio station in this study and was chosen on the basis that it is a highly successful commercial music radio station that grosses in excess of R800million per annum on advertising revenue (Bredenkamp, personal interview, April 2008) and also commands 1.2 million listeners (RAMS, 2009) in the Western Cape province alone. I also chose it as convenience sample that would diversify the two SABC radio stations in this study. 94.5KFM is owned by the private broadcaster, Primedia. The same format of analysis and observation is applied in this chapter as in the previous two. 94.5 KFM is also an example of bilingual broadcasting, with individual news, sport and weather reports often featuring items in both English and Afrikaans. However, these bilingual moments are not the central focus of this study, which is more concerned with instances of actual talk by the main presenters on the prime time shows. The morning breakfast show carries the most talk on this radio station, whilst other daytime programmes afford talk the least amount of time, which affirms their status as a music radio station.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis. While each chapter makes reference to the data gathered during the audience research component of this study, in this final chapter I provide a summary and brief discussion of the major findings of the data yielded. This chapter also summarises the findings of this thesis

**Conclusion:**

The omnipresence of radio in day-to-day activities has largely grown into a natural occurrence, one that often eludes being subject to deeper investigation as consumers and scholars have grown too familiar with the medium which reinforces the adage of ‘familiarity breeds contempt.’

Radio is seldom viewed as a media text capable of being analysed, particularly within a South African context, where radio predominantly becomes a text for analysis if it is in the form of Talk Radio or Community Radio. Research on commercial music radio in South Africa is minimal and is most conducted by the actual institutions that own each radio station. For example the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC), which owns 5FM and MetroFM, has its own Market Intelligence department where investigative studies are conducted on radio trends, radio effects and radio consumerism in general. Such research is then housed and archived within the SABC only to be made public by request only. Such reservation of material or territorialism could be said to stem largely from a fear of advantaging rival radio stations or broadcasters. Primedia, which owns 94.5 KFM, also has its own dedicated research department.

My research therefore explores the potential importance of talk on commercial music radio. In establishing the importance I also seek to establish the performative or functionalist nature of this particular kind of music radio talk. The following chapter provides a review of the relevant literature, which serves to contextualise the present study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It must be noted that what I am trying to cover in this thesis has not been afforded significant attention in past literary studies of radio. Much of the literature on radio in South Africa comprises of historical overviews, instruction manuals or textbooks. Kruger (2006) for example writes a manual for community radio broadcasters, which is more a teaching resource for radio students. Fourie (2003 and 2001) provides a comprehensive account of radio production and historical account of radio in South Africa.

Another observation that could account for the dearth of specific functionalist roles of radio's attributes such as talk on commercial music radio, in South Africa, could be held against the history of apartheid in the country – which stifled holistic media progress and led to key media scholars such as Tomaselli et al (1989) paying particular homage to the separatist rise of individual radio stations across the country.

#### **Radio in South Africa**

Internationally, a key work is that by Shingler and Wieringa (1998) in which they date radio back to 1894 when Italy's Guglielmo Marconi experimented with Hertzian waves near Bologna and transmitted Morse dots and dashes from one side of a valley to the other. Shingler and Wieringa (1989) work through a timeline of radio experiments until 1912 where radio broadcasting gained momentum and transmitting licenses were implemented to limit radio transmission internationally. Locally, radio developed eleven years after broadcasting began internationally; the South African Railways and British

Empire Exhibition collaborated to produce the first experimental broadcast in Johannesburg on 18 of December 1923. On 29 December 1923 the first public broadcast was made from Johannesburg (Tomaselli et al, 1989).

The introduction of radio in South Africa came during immense political unrest in the country. The media and all broadcast components were subject to state control in the country. Therefore much research by Tomaselli et al (1989), covered significant ground on emphasising the restrictive nature of research on the local broadcasting industry. Particular emphasis was placed on the analysis of the state broadcaster – the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC) – its governance, policies and financial troubles of past years. Tomaselli et al also purveyed the political and racial ideologies that led to the didactic nature of television and radio programming in South Africa.

Programme ideology was in terms more familiar to the less educated white (and coloured) petty bourgeoisie. The bilingualism of the disc jockey signified the extent to which Afrikaner culture was thought to be on par with English culture. (Tomaselli et al. 1989: 69).

What Tomaselli et al outline is a primary basis of how radio stations produce culture. Across all three radio stations examined for this study programming ideology was reinforced through the selection of presenters. For example MetroFM presenters are comprised of a majority of black radio presenters. 5FM presenters are majorly white although their staff demographics are shifting as a result of them targeting new audiences that include black people. 94.5KFM features white and so-called coloured presenters on its line-up, which is representative of the actual audience they target. Language, race and

culture to this day signify the divides of the past in South Africa as individual radio stations have to cater to racially classified audiences, as there is yet to be a singular shared, unified sense of ideology in South Africa.

Listening to radio therefore presents itself as a means of reinforcing ideologies.

Reinforcing ideologies and propaganda was the nature of the apartheid government's media policy (Tomaselli et al, 1989), which yielded separately developed listeners via perceived black music or Bantu radio stations and white radio stations that featured more worldly and rock music.

Moving away from the ideological perceptions of radio, Rosenthal (1974) writes an early history of broadcasting in South Africa for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first public broadcast. Rosenthal is one of the few local scholars who moved away from the apartheid inspired documentation of broadcasting in South Africa, to focus rather specifically on the actual aspects of the radio. He begins by discussing his early memories of radio in South Africa, with the first radio station, JB, broadcasting from the old Stuttafords building at the corner of Pritchard and Rissik Street in Johannesburg. Rosenthal (1974) then proceeded to note his experience of radio and how he perceived radio presenters as 'performers' on-air, which was largely due to the fact that broadcasting entailed assemblages of musicians who were required to perform live on air. Talk was usually referred to as 'short lectures', short stories or presentations. There was also a requirement to communicate individual personalities through the microphone.

In its early days of inception in South Africa, radio was intended for the purposes of conveying messages over distances to multiple recipients at the same time (Tomaselli et al, 1989). In 1924 there were three independent radio stations in the country. One in Johannesburg, one in Cape Town and the third in Durban. In 1936 these three radio stations were absorbed by what is now known as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). At the time the programming mimicked the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) programming and leaned towards providing educational and cultural information. The functions of radio were limited to enlightening and uplifting the listeners and the music genres were confined to classical and religious music (Tomaselli et al, 1989).

The SABC today has 18 radio stations. 15 of these stations are dedicated to public service broadcasting and broadcast across all eleven official languages in South Africa. In terms of commercial music radio station ownership, the SABC has three – 5FM, MetroFM and Goodhope FM. 94.5KFM, which formerly belonged to the SABC was sold to Primedia in 1996. Primedia is a private broadcaster that owns four commercial radio stations – namely 94.5KFM and 567MW Cape Talk in Cape Town; Highveld and Talk Radio 702 in Johannesburg.

### **Commercial Music Radio**

In answering this one has to look at the nature and purpose of radio, through, Barnard (2000). Barnard believes music has, since radio's inception, formed the core of radio programming largely because of tradition and costs. He further goes to say that music

enables the medium's utilitarian aspects such as framing talk and information content and provides an environment in which advertisements can be heard to the most positive effect (Barnard, 2000:124). In define radio's music as setting a mood conducive to advertising it is evident that Barnard is aware of radio's commercial needs as well as the negative implications of advertising on radio, hence a mood has to be set to deceive or mellow down listeners. The need to sell to listeners becomes more evident when looking at the specific format of commercial music radio.

In attempting to unpack the commercial music radio format one finds a myriad of definitions which are all held together by the ability to generate money through advertisers selling products on-air to listeners. By its nature and name commercial music radio is financed by national and local spot advertising or sponsorships, and run as a public company with shareholders whose purpose is to generate revenue (McLeish, 2005:14) To reinforce this perception of an ever growing commercial imperative of music radio, Ahlkvist (2001) states that commercial radio has become increasingly rationalised and economically concentrated. This he claims leads to more homogeneous programming across radio stations, which seeks to please funders, advertisers and sponsors first; thereby rendering individual radio stations' programming standardized and similar.

However Ahlkvist (2001), takes a more critical approach to the commercial influence inherent upon radio as he predominantly concerns himself with programming philosophies which he believes underpin the sound of commercial music radio stations. Again an opportunity to discuss the talk component on commercial music radio is missed

due to the fact that reference to rationalisation of commercial radio is grounded in the production of culture. Culture on radio is something deemed as a product of music programming or by means of alluding to this, Alkvist cites Jensen's frequently cited article:

Cultural material is not 'processed' like soap by organisational, technical and economic 'factors', it is constructed in and through interpretations. To study its genesis, one must study what holds true in the world of its production, a world centred on expressive material, and encompassing both the producers and the audience for whom they create. (Jensen 1984:110)

Interpretative studies on the culture production aspect of radio however circumnavigate around popular music production and programming. Commercial music radio, as the name suggests is primarily about airing music. This musical basis is underpinned by a relationship between individual radio stations and the music industry in which record companies use radio to promote their music and radio stations use this music to target listeners that are attractive to advertisers (Barnes, 1988). The more the listeners, the more the advertisers, the more commercially viable the radio station.

In attracting listeners, music selection is believed to be the main attraction to radio and in turn the genres (rock, rap, etcetera ) contribute towards reinforcing cultural production ideologies. There is a failure to acknowledge Tomaselli's (1989) view that radio or broadcasting changed from being merely a disseminator of existing cultural forms outside broadcasting to a generator of culture itself. The basis of this paper is thus to further the debate on how radio generates revenue not through music only, but through the presenters' talk. Rahfaldt (2007) identifies commercial music radio as 'music-based

radio' and although focusing more on a youth context, he acknowledges radio's culture production potential by stating that:

Music-based radio, in its postmodern assemblage of stylized content, broadcast personas, advertising, branding, and music, does not simply accompany youth throughout their daily lives: it actively helps them to construct what constitutes life itself. (Rahfaltd, 2007: 3)

Another well documented perspective on commercial music radio is the role of advertising – the excessiveness thereof, the decline thereof and struggles to attract more advertisers to radio platforms. Chester et al (1978) provided a history of advertising and cited 28 August 1922 as the first time in which an advertisement was aired on WEAJ (now WNBC) station in New York. Advertisers saw radio campaigns as effective means of marketing their products and a radio station that could pull greater crowds was attractive and worthy of pursuit in the eyes of advertisers.

Gallagher (2006) states that music radio, particularly contemporary hits radio, is the most valuable form of radio for advertisers seeking to advertise on various radio formats.

Commercial music radio is seen by advertisers as the most flexible and immediate means for innovative ways of connecting to their target audiences. Gallagher (2006) whilst primarily concerned with the role of advertising on radio also takes time to align himself to the view that music, and not talk, is key for the success of commercial music radio.

Unlike talk radio, where listeners specifically tune in to hear talk or presenters talk, he argues that people constantly tune in and out of music radio which therefore necessitates a high music rotation. Contradicting Gallagher (2006) is Potter (2006) who believes that music radio stations often have many competitors for advertisers and audiences, and as

such radio stations with a “more music, less talk” stance are most likely to lose advertisers as well as audiences. This means that if a radio station is best known for music only, any form of talk will be received with negative emotions and listeners will tune out. On the other hand there is also Newton (2006) who believes presenter talk is central to commercial music radio’s success in the sense that a listener can easily listen to their favourite CD as opposed to listening to a radio station that rotates songs and occasionally plays a favourite hit now and again. Newtown (2006) understands that there needs to be a relationship between the presenter and the listener before loyalty to a radio station can be established. This takes into account the fact that radio is, according to McLuhan (1964), a private experience that affects most people intimately and offers a world of unspoken messages between speaker and the listener.

What radio stations and advocates of advertising on commercial music radio fail to realise is that the element of talk on commercial music radio is the main conduit of intimacy with the medium and talk can be used to upsell more advertising airtime on radio stations.

To add weight to the radio presenter’s significance as a conduit through his talk or on-air talent, McLeish (2005) points out that music content on varying commercial music radio stations or two competing programmes may vary little. For instance a contemporary hits rock radio station will sound similar to another competing hit rock radio station, therefore in order to create a preference for a listener, the attraction must lie in the way the similar music is presented. “To be successful therefore the DJs personality and programme style

must not only make contact with the individual listener, but in themselves be the essential reason for the listener's attention. The style may be elegant or earthy, raucous or restrained, but for any one presenter it should be consistent and the operational technique first class." (McLeish, 2005:168)

By placing emphasis on the role of presenters on-air one has to take a closer look at the content of talk, presentation of talk, stylisation of talk and performance of talk by radio personalities. It is also important to contextualise radio presenters within a studio setting where they are limited to the straight-jacket of the microphone (Gamlin, 1947).

As on the stage, so on the radio, the more natural the performance the greater the art behind it ... so the broadcaster [presenter] gives the impression of being natural, just another simple soul like you and me" (Gamlin, 1947:14)

Similarly Tolson (2006) explores how presenters perform on-air via their presenting styles, commentary, dialogue, interviews and debates in the media. He views talk in the media as engaging audiences with "quasi-interactive relationships." Tolson employs Scannell's (1991) concept of 'double articulation' where presenters talk to one another whilst simultaneously talking to the listeners. Presenting in the media is almost seen as performance. Three major points used to break down media talk are: interactivity, performativity and liveliness. Tolson (2006) deals with the analysis of spoken discourse and the process of conversation analysis to assist in making clear his analysis and reflection on broadcast talk.

This focus on performance is further explored by Campbell (1996), who broadly discusses attributes of performance and how the spoken word can translate into being performance. He borrows from (Connor, 1989) in an attempt to define the performative nature of words through the kinds of actions performed by individuals as they utter words with specific intention. Austin (1962) examines the way in which some talk performs a deed through the act and in the singular moment of utterance. Austin goes further to define the act of speech as a performance with effects, that bring something into existence. Apart from this performative effect of talk on air there is also the role of talk as an index to the presenter on air. Listeners draw their own conclusions on the personal look and style of a presenter based on the voice, tone and words the presenter emits. This might not always be the case as radio stations usually have websites which provide the 'faces behind the voices'. Wells (2004) sums up the phenomena of vocal characteristics as a quality which is the "distinctive timbre of a voice produced by resonance." Certain vocal qualities can attract or repel listeners and certain voices can be tolerated because of the authority or attractiveness of the personality behind the voice. Voice connotes individuality and as such it is hard to find presenters with similar vocal characteristics. O'Donnell, Hausman and Benoit (1987) summarise a presenter's being on radio as being merely vocal – in the sense that your voice is what you are to the listener, since the presenter is characterised via voice only.

Listeners form their own ideas of what presenters look like and what their roles on air entail, yet Brewster and Broughton (1999) describe a radio presenter as a person who merely presents a series of songs for an audience. This does not take into account the

factor of personality and how much of a role the presenter can have over the mood in which the music is received. For example a presenter might prelude songs with talk that is derogatory and offends the listener, who in turn can tune out of that radio station, thereby missing whichever song was played next. If not derogatory, radio presenters can also introduce and back announce songs whilst interspersing it with chat, comedy or some kind of performance that will lead to a better reception of the next song that is aired next. Brewster and Broughton (1999) also place particular emphasis on the dynamics of presenters as club disc jockeys as well – where presenters, or disc jockeys in this instance, perform live mixes for audiences. There is little emphasis on the role of the disc jockey as a performer in studio but where mention is made it is to highlight the power and capacity of radio's reach – and how the disc jockey gained adoration and fame by merely being a part of this 'uniquely seductive' medium. Therefore any attempt to define such disc jockeys as presenters or as performers are made vivid by their physical appearance before an audience in a club environment. I am thus not concerned with this kind of performer, but rather interested in disc jockeys as performers.

Barba (1995) takes a direct attempt at labelling radio presenters as performers, and acknowledges that radio draws on the talent and insights of performers or scholars of performance. Unlike theatre, radio however relies on invisible performances via the theatrics of the voice as mediated by the radio. Again this plays on the binary role of talk on radio which relays talk and indexes the performers. Friedman (2002) described the act of talking or speech as a performance that yields effects and brings something into existence. Radio's preconception as a 'theatre of the mind' works in accordance to its

performative effects that appeal to the imagination. Crissell (1986) explains this by stating that owing to radio's "sound-only nature, instead of sound and vision, the listener is compelled to 'supply' the visual data for himself" (7).

Hyde (2001) also furthers this notion of 'radio as performance' by outlining several kinds of performance skills required to be a good radio performer: Ad-libbing, impromptu speaking, script reading from cold copy and generally a consciousness that one is addressing individuals not crowds. This could also be understood as the performativity of talk.

The term performativity was first theorised in Austin's (1976) speech act theory which amongst many other roles states that speech is also a way of action as well as evoking action. One could adduce this to a performative nature of speech and as such apply it to radio by suggesting that radio presenters' or performers' - in this context - seek to elicit listening or some kind of action through the use of their voices. Wells (2004) deems the human voice to serve as a means of communication our ideas to others via its distinctiveness in the sounds it produces.

Starkey and Crissell (2009) add that through the use of spoken words, radio broadcasts are able to direct listeners' interpretations through their word choices, a practise which is called anchorage in the media industry - where print media captions pictures and film might have voice-overs to anchor or direct the meaning of their broadcast. This ensures that the functionalist role of talk on-air is not ambiguous. O'Donnell, Hausman and Benoit (1987) conclude that the performative aspect of presenting on radio encompasses

introducing songs, entertaining with humour and reading commercials, weather, news and general announcements. In a sense what they say could be summarised under the functions of talk on radio.

### **The Functionalist Nature of Music Radio's Talk**

McLeish (2005) views talk on music radio as serving the purpose of framing “a sequence of programmes, giving them continuity, acting as the voice of the station, is very similar to being the host of a magazine programme responsible for linking different items” (McLeish 2005: 123). The purpose is this to provide a continuous thread of interest to listeners. Potter (2006) in Eastman et al (2006) discusses information radio programming in which he concludes that all radio serves the purpose of informing and educating – whether it is through the presenter, advertisements or an interview – information is being imparted upon the listener. This conclusion is reached through a summation that most radio stations schedule some talk, traffic, weather, news and sports reports.

Tomaselli et al (1989) attempt to approach radio from a functionalist point of view and conclude that broadcasting and other media fulfil a functional role in maintaining the stability of general consensus. But this conclusion is overshadowed by the growing trend of their time, in which radio's functional aspects were reduced to entertainment value. Radio served to entertain. To try move away from this entertainment-only role of radio, Rahfaldt (2007) takes an ethnographical exploration of South African radio content and its capacity to educate and enrich identities of youth audiences. Here again emerges an opportunity to discuss the performative nature of talk on ‘music-based radio’, but

Rahfaldt (2007) appears to be more concerned with the overall sound of broadcasts – which entails on-air sounds or ambience, silence, songs, and text or presenter talk that blend together to create a radio broadcast that encourages reflection and stimulates dialogue.

Even the most highly targeted ‘all music’ stations provide generous amounts of information to their audiences in the form of pop psychology, humorous stories and discussions of ‘what’s hot’, all presented in the latest lingo of the target audience (Potter 2006:378).

With the presence of computers and the internet in radio studios, presenters are able to collect relevant news about musicians, current affairs and events or ‘gig guides’ for listeners. These information segments are usually short and informative. This observation is noted in all three radio stations in this study, whereupon, presenters prepare their talk around the music they play.

There is a constant reminder in the aforementioned Potter (2006) quotation, that a radio station’s ratings are directly proportional to the amount of talk or useful information imparted or broadcast, regardless of whether or not it is an ‘all music’ radio station. What presenters say in between songs, whether it is humorous or informative can add value to the listening experience. Another example cited to offset the argument that all radio serves to inform is the fact that more than one-fifth of programming on commercial radio stations is reserved for advertising and various promotions on-air, including information about the station itself.

In addition to the informative nature of all radio, Potter (2006) reiterates the importance of on-air talk being delivered by recognisable personalities. This importance is grounded on research that found that “most loyal listeners seek feelings of imagined pseudofriendship or imagined personal relationships with media personalities” (Potter 2006: 380).

Chester et al (1978) take the theme of radio’s ‘pseudofriendshipness’ further by adding that radio has the unique ability to entertain and inform individuals regardless of what they are physically engaged in. This ability is attributed to the ‘companionship’ radio affords listeners as it follows them from home, to car and even in public spaces (5). This however is within a U.S context, but could be seen true for a South African audience.

Any kind of friendship or companionship relies on some level of communication or talk between the two or more parties involved. It can be said that radio talks to the listener and the listener can choose to talk back, via phoning the radio station, or by merely reacting to what is being said. To understand talk on commercial music radio one has to draw on Hausman et al (2004) whereby in which they present a historical overview of talk or presenting in the media. In this historical account it is important to note that radio was first talk; music was only added at later stages when Lee de Forest’s Audition tube allowed radio to go beyond wireless telegraph. Hausman et al (2004) and selected international literature view talk as being the most important component of radio. The Historical overview also elaborates on the early advertising trends where groups and shows were named after their sponsors or advertisers. Radio presenters were part

salespeople, on-air masters of ceremonies (MCs) and sophisticated worldly interpreters – they did everything from news to reading commercials to researching musicians and various performers. A deep male voice (the ‘golden voice’) was considered essential for radio.

Hausman et al (2004) continuously refer to radio presenters as announcers and in the process list announcer responsibilities as introducing songs, being informative and entertaining. Utterback (2000) takes Hausman et al’s reflection on radio’s deep male voice of authority further by stating that the rich, baritone radio voice has today been replaced by conversational styles which have resulted in broadcasters representing the diversity of audiences. However in being conversational, Utterback (2000) provides what she calls the mnemonic of ‘PREP’ – Person, Room, Emotion and Place – which can be used by radio presenters to create a sense of interpersonal communication with listeners. PREP is essentially founded on the idea of the presenter imagining they are talking to one person in order to sound conversational. As such the presenter’s command of the listener’s attention on a one-on-one level gives room for an exchange of values, desires and tensions (Chester et al, 1978). This exchange works best in radio shows that allow listener participation via phone-ins, email, Facebook messages and other means of contacting on-air personalities.

In a case study undertaken by Starkey and Crissell (2009) about the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme and Channel 4 Radio’s *The Morning Report*, there was a conclusion that talk on radio was “premeditated and orderly yet because (on radio) the listeners cannot see the

speakers or their words, or what their words refer to, it is more colloquial and less syntactically elaborate than most conventional writing and may include redundancy in the form of repetition.”

Within studies of talk in radio there seems to be a lack in analysing underlying factors that make talk a topic worthy of analysis. Often the focus is on radio personalities and their ability to command the listeners’ attention. How do they garner the listeners attention because the voice, which is merely a tool for emitting sound or communicating meaning, cannot do that alone? It makes no sense to have a warm comforting voice on-air if no attention is paid to what language they articulate themselves or what they talk about

Wells (2004) defines language as a series of sounds which evoke meaning when produced in a particular order. To date there are between 2500 and 6000 languages in the world, with English largely viewed as a global language. South Africa still has sections of its population which are not fluent, nor literate with English. To cater for such sectors there exist vernacular radio stations, in South Africa, such as *Umhlobo Wenene*, *Ukhozi FM*, *Ligwalagwala FM*, *Motsweding* and so forth. Often and most important aspect to note is that some of these vernacular radio stations command the biggest listenerships; with South Africa’s *Ukhozi FM* being the second largest listened to radio station in the world with over 6.566 million listeners per week (SAARF, Aug 2009). Surely this should point to the fact that culture, and not just personalities and music, plays a large role in determining the effectiveness of a radio station.

It must be noted that the content of radio – the genres of music, vernacular languages, racial selection of radio presenters reflect a real-life racial divide, “constructing a world that limits development of interracial comity using a number of structural and symbolic conventions” (Entman and Rojecki, 2000, pg 149). Structural, symbolic and even cultural conventions can at best be reflected through the element of talk, and not merely the type of music a radio station airs. Anderson’s (1991) work on imagined communities helps media analysts better understand radio when considering the idea that all communities or audiences in this instance are imagined and targeted via creating common information and collective group consciousness to transcend geographic space and create national identity. Yet one area that remains uncertain is the guarantee of these imagined communities and to what extent radio affects them:

The effectiveness of television and radio depends ultimately on the willingness of the public to listen to or to view what is broadcast. No broadcasting system, however well intentioned, can survive without public acceptance of the programs it offers. (Chester et al, 1978:103)

Tacchi (2002) argues that radio is not an essential part of everyday life but is rather a component which many people use on a regular basis without taking much note of it. The nonchalance about radio largely emanates from constant and repeated exposure to the medium which make it appear ordinary or common - much like the act of breathing. We seldom stop and count our breath or analyse why we breathe and as such a study on radio often conjures a look of ‘but isn’t it obvious to you?’ Anderson (2001) terms radio listening as a mundane, effortless act that leads to obliviousness to its complexities. This complacency has often led advertisers and many radio analysts into believing that radio is

a medium that is heard and not listened to and as such many might dismiss the idea of talk on commercial music radio.

On the other hand there are radio stations that have proven through audience measurement systems that they can attract higher listeners. Wigston (2001) notes that successful radio stations offer more than just specific types of music, talk and information. They should, he argues, also offer a certain sense of community through their programming options. In this way, radio stations develop a unique identity and loyal listeners.

In creating a unique identity and forming relationships with “imagined communities” (Anderson’s 1991) of listeners it is important to note that radio, as a medium, is wholly dependent on auditory codes in order to communicate with its listeners. Wigston (2001) identifies four distinct auditory codes, that are used in radio programming, as: sound effects, human voice, music and silence. The one auditory code that is perceived to surpass all three other codes in this thesis is the human voice – which relays talk.

### **Talk on Radio**

Although most of the literature encountered thusfar draws parallels to sections of this thesis, the scholars that follow next address the nature of talk on radio more directly with others looking at it from a Talk Radio format perspective and others expanding on what talk should be and its relevance on-air.

Crissell (1986) pays close attention to two auditory codes of radio - music and talk or human voice as Wigston (2001) would refer to it. Crissell views talk and music on radio as the most important aspects owing to the fact that a great majority of radio stations rely solely on these two forms. He then attempts to explain why talk and music occupy the most on-air time, and how their contents and conventions have helped to shape modern popular culture.

Due to the auditory nature of radio, messages in radio consist primarily of speech, and speech consists not just of words, as writing does, but always of words expressed in voices. Crissell (1986) goes on to state the obvious, in the sense that words on radio are always and unavoidably spoken. This appears to be common knowledge, owing to the fact that radio is an auditory medium. Radio's talk is always conveyed through words or sounds only and as such particular attention should be afforded to the nature of this sounds or talk. Barnard (2000) also deems spoken words on radio as being the most important aspect of radio, without which, non-stop music and natural sounds would lack in context. A further significance of words on-air lies in the fact that they index a binary code in which words themselves are symbols of what they represent, while the voice in which they are heard is an index of the person speaking.

In fact voice can be so powerful an expression of personality that merely by virtue of some well-delivered links a presenter or disc-jockey can impose a unifying and congenial presence on the most miscellaneous of magazine or recorded programmes. Moreover the voice of a continuity announcer is an index not only of herself, whom she may identify by name from time to time, but of the whole station or network. As a matter of deliberate policy she will give a kind of composite unity to its various programmes, set the tone of style of the whole network. (Crissell, 1986: 43)

Crissell further dismissing music on the radio as merely an object of aesthetic pleasure but also acknowledging music as the mainstay of radio's output states that:

It is clear too that in its ancillary function music also requires the clarification of words, for music alone will not be able to tell us whether we are about to hear a brains trust or a history programme or a children's fantasy; and even when music is broadcast as a background enhancer it is not clear without the words in the foreground precisely what is being enhanced (Crissell 1986:55).

Crissell concludes that music alone is insufficiently meaningful, that the listener needs to have it identified for him or her through a presenter's words or back announcing.

If it is accepted that words are the primary code this implies that radio, unlike muzak systems or even cassette and CD players, is a 'live', predominantly personal medium, and unrelieved music with no visible human origination is dauntingly impersonal. (Crissell 1986: 65)

In local literature, Tomaselli et al (1989), briefly discuss presenter talk on radio, which in their view is deemed as 'disc-jockey chatter'. Such chatter is described as one half of a conversation in which speech is spontaneous, non-formal and generally comprising talk on the 'trivialities of day-to-day life'. Shingler (1998) takes this further by stating that talk on radio can be informal, intimate, natural, gossipy or authoritative, public, preachy and even artificial. By stating all these traits of talk Shingler seeks to assert the fact that there is no single form of talk on radio, and therefore dismisses any attempts to define talk on radio as misguided efforts. Brecht (1932) acknowledges the multiplicity of radio's talk but states that regardless of its form it seeks to address a listener on a one-to-one basis.

This confusion around defining radio's talk, could account for the dearth of literature on the aspect of talk. Bosch (forthcoming, 2010) addresses this literary deficiency, within a South African context, by employing qualitative content analysis on 567MW Cape Talk's radio programming. Bosch first defines talk radio according to Rubin & Step's (2000) definition that views it as a format characterised by conversation that is initiated by a programme host and usually involving listeners who telephone to participate in the discussion about topics such as politics, sports, or current events.

Gregory and Carrol (1978) take this definition a step further by stating that talk on talk radio is premeditated and more explicit than spontaneous speech in that it creates its own context or situation to a much greater extent.

Kress (1986) adds that talk on talk radio "is more fluent, precise and orderly, less diffuse and tautological, than ordinary speech, and the adoption of these literary characteristics can, in a subtle way, make it seem more authoritative" (Kress 1986:407).

In as much as this thesis does not attempt to analyse talk on talk radio, but rather talk on commercial music radio; it is important to observe structural patterns of analysis where the component of talk is under scrutiny.

Before analysing a radio station's talk one has to engage, first, with the structure of the actual institution that broadcasts talk. A study on talk grounded on special attention to the broadcaster's history, policies, aims and objectives leads to a better informed critique of

their talk. However it must be noted that talk on commercial music radio and talk on commercial talk radio differ significantly. In the sense that there resides a journalistic nature or reportage style and commentary on news items in talk radio. Whereas talk on commercial music radio can be defined as mere 'chatter' (Tomaselli et al, 1989). Bosch (forthcoming, 2010) notes 567MW Cape Talk's talk as branching out towards being a form of civic journalism in instances where the station takes on the role of a concerned citizen by discussing and addressing matters affecting their listeners.

Crisell (2004) at best assimilates the theme of my dissertation. Crisell explores the 'extra-musical' functions of radio and how spoken word radio's talk transcends over music and manages to attract listeners. The general idea of music being the primary reason why listeners listen to radio is further challenged and corroborated with examples of the functions of talk on radio. Adorno (1945), in a social critique of radio's music adds that music is more an ethereal and sublime experience in which listeners suspend all intellectual activity when dealing with radio's music; listeners, he argues, become "content with consuming and evaluating its gustatory qualities – just as if the music which tasted best was also the best music possible" (211) and as such music is seen to satisfy a particular psychological hunger or a need to be pleased through music. The significance of radio's music is further challenged by Starkey and Crissell (2009) who argue that since the mainstay of radio stations is recorded music and recorded adverts - the presenters' voices provide a 'salutary' reminder that radio is fundamentally a live medium which differs from CDs and similar media in its potential for spontaneity, novelty and unpredictability (Starkey & Crissell, 2009:19).

Starkey and Crissell (2009) further identify a need for radio to be made as entertaining or lively or be paced according to the music it plays. This means that music radio stations should employ personalities that match the genres of music they play, an example being a popular urban youth music radio station should have youthful presenters who can relate to the type of targeted listener. The role of presenters in such shows would, according to Chester et al (1978), provide programme identification and develop listener loyalty – as music alone cannot anchor itself nor distinguish the radio station from other music radio stations. Starkey and Crissell (2009) also suggest a move away from ‘broadcasterly’ modes of talk to more audience-focused discussions. There is also a need to offer informative commentary as opposed to ‘demotic’ arguments and gossip about current issues.

Radio is by far the most resilient medium which has been labelled with numerous appellations ranging from a ‘blind medium’, ‘companionship’ medium, ‘invisible’ medium and even ‘Cinderella’ medium. From its early inception in the 1920s radio has had to contend with the advent of the Walkman, the advent of the Discman and of late the advent of the iPod. Yet, even after all these new radio contenders radio continues to occupy approximately ninety percent of South Africa’s population (SAARF, 2009). The technologies I have listed all play music – some more portable than others – but radio has not vanished. And herein is an area of interrogation that seeks to find what sets radio apart from these other music players. To gain a better understanding on the dominance of radio one has to agree with Crissell’s argument that verbal, not musical, content is central to the distinctiveness of radio.

## **Conclusion:**

Radio continues to be outlined on the peripherals of television and broadcast media in general. Much of the literature that exists on radio, within a South African context, follows the format of historical overviews, instruction manuals or textbooks, such as Olorunnisola (2006), Fourie (2003, 2001), Fardon and Furniss (2000), Kruger (2006) and Wigston (2001) to name a few. As can be seen from the literature referred to herein little attention, with the exception of Crissell (1986 and 2004), McLeish (2005), Barnard (2000), Tolson (2006) and Potter (2006), is afforded to the component of talk on commercial music radio. No literature on talk on commercial music radio in South Africa exists.

What this chapter sought to bring to the fore was literature that would frame or contextualise the need for specialised research in my chosen subject area. A focus on individuals behind broadcasters sheds lessons on how presenters successfully relay information or engage their listeners through their own microphone style which entails imagining that one is addressing one person, not a large group, as in the case of a public meeting (Tomaselli et al, 1989). There is little to no literature that focuses on the functionalist role of talk on commercial music radio. This leads to an enquiry on how the media's role in society can be gauged without paying much attention to aspects such as music radio's talk?

The element of talk underpins radio features such as sports reports, advertisements and programmed talk shows. Yet the actual talk as a subject of study continues to go by unnoticed with much emphasis on the element of music on commercial music radio. Much of the literature referred to herein is from United States and UK based scholars who are particularly concerned with the broader dynamics of media and society, broadcast cultures and other realms of communications studies; with a few pages or one chapter in each dedicated to radio. There is no literature in South Africa that fully examines the performative nature of talk on commercial music radio with a South African context. Before this is explored further, the following chapter provides a description of the chosen methodology of the thesis.

University Of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The primary methodology of the present study was qualitative. Qualitative research was chosen as a means in which my chosen subject radio stations could be approached to seek an understanding, description and explanation of their social phenomena of talk. Flick (2007) describes this form of research, qualitative research, as intended to approach the world 'out there' to explain it 'from inside' via analysing experiences of individuals, analysing interactions and communications. Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) take this further by stating that qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practises that make the world visible: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (3).

The primary aim of this thesis is to observe, describe and make sense of the phenomenon of talk on commercial music radio. There is also an attempt at understanding the process of talk on commercial music radio. Thus qualitative research provides key approaches into understanding motives, programming ideologies and presenter behaviours on-air. I enquire through mixed methods comprising of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and Angrosino's (2007) 'naturalistic observation' whilst borrowing from ethnomethodology and dramaturgical analysis measures.

Observation or naturalistic observation is the most prominent tool of qualitative research (Angrosino, 2007) as researchers favour observing people in highly controlled settings in

which the researchers control all variables involved, with the aim of experimentally testing specific hypotheses” (2). My research, however, did not allow for control of all variables involved and was more non-reactive or unobtrusive observation (Adler and Adler, 1994), in the sense that I did not participate in the actual talk on commercial music radio and neither did I attempt to intervene or influence the nature of talk on-air. To ensure that subjects of my observation were in their most natural state the radio shows observed were not aware as to which specific radio shows I would record, transcribe and analyse. They were however aware that research was being conducted on them over the period of March 2009 to January 2010. This observation period comprised of note taking and recording for the purposes of analysing conversations or talk on-air as well as the general discourse of talk on-air.

### **Discourse analysis**

The reason behind a discourse analysis approach in this study was to examine radio’s talk through local semantics such as words. Such semantics identify “social presuppositions and underlying ideologies” that in effect establish content, occurrence, frequency and tones (Van Dijk 1988a:170). Furthermore in examining ideologies, programming rationale, transcribed radio shows, words and general attributes of each radio station there was a need to go beyond the quantitative approach of tables, statistics and reflect on the more qualitative findings that would assist in making sense of my chosen radio stations’ performative nature of talk.

In my analysis of talk I interrogate the overall characteristics of commercial music radio’s discourse. Such discourse is dependent on its contextual variables such as who

owns the radio station? Who listens to the radio stations? What programming philosophies do managers apply on their radio stations? And what cultural constructs do they seek to perpetuate or what cultural context do they produce content for?

My research attempts to address these questions via discourse analysis, which Silverman (1993) deemed to provide “important insights into instructional talk based on pressing sociological and practical concerns”(124), for example presenter to listener communication and the functions or achievements of such communication, if any.

Furthermore, discourse analysis encompasses a wide range of social science research based on the analysis of talk. This form of analysis resembles conversation analysis in the sense that Austin (1962) related the two by stating that talk or speech does not simply describe a state of affairs but performs an action (Silverman, 1993).

### **Conversation analysis**

Conversation analysis compliments discourse analysis in the sense that it explores, according to Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), the varieties of sequential organization that provide the structure for conversation or talk on the radio between presenters of between presenters and their audience, which is particularly relevant when considering radio’s talk which comprises turn-taking systems to manage conversation construction. I do not however go into the conventional terminologies of conversation analysis nor analyse conversations with the intention of asserting the presence of code-switching, turn-taking construction units and so forth. As such I do not deem conversation analysis

as a primary method of research herein, even though I do borrow from its conventions. I am more occupied and interested in the actual content of the conversations that take place on air. How these conversations are constructed is evident in the manner in which they are transcribed, but the subject of analysis is the actual talk or what is being said. The purpose behind this is to avoid obfuscating radio's talk with other modes of day-to-day talk. Talk on radio is contextualized with a radio station and as such cannot be seen as normal conversation, but rather staged conversations, within radio studios. It is therefore important for me to find out the performative aspects of this talk as I am aware of how talk, in conversation analysis, is constructed and analysed; but choose not to engage the data in this manner. Conversation analysis, did however, allow me to examine the functionalist nature of talk at length by being able to analyse what presenter talk yielded from its audience – be it social actions, direction giving or any action accomplished through the presenter's instruction or talk on-air in general (Schegloff, 1987).

Schegloff (1987a) further suggests that:

Talk is at the heart of everyday existence. It is pervasive and central to human history, in every setting of human affairs, at all levels of society, in virtually every social context. Yet the evanescence of speech has led social scientists to treat it almost always as epiphenomenal to the affairs, actions, and even accidents of human actors, and, across time, to social structure (3).

In asserting that I am looking for a performative aspect of talk my research borders on a dramaturgical analysis based on the fact that I am looking for performances in which there are actors, audiences and motives (Felman, 1995:5) and in so doing I focus on their roles. Granted radio presenters are not actors but the scenarios for performance allow an

analogy to ensue and that views them as performers, performing for an audience and as such garnering an impact or response on their audience. Manning (1992) goes to say that a dramaturgical analysis tends to have a functional role and that “the observation that dramas serve certain purposes should not, however, be taken to imply either that these purposes are necessary or that the particular means of fulfilling the purpose are the only way” (Manning 1992: 41). In so saying Manning confirms what I earlier outlined regarding the indefiniteness or lack of a fixed outcome emanating from a study on a dynamic medium such as radio – particularly where emphasis is laid upon individual such as presenters who exhibit their own individual characteristics and behavioural traits which cannot be applied as the standard radio benchmark.

I focus on the on-air conversations because they offer an accessible and appropriate resource for ethnomethodological enquiry.

In every moment of talk people are experiencing and producing their cultures, their roles, their personalities... You and I live lives of talk, experience the social world as motivated talkers and listeners, as tongued creatures of the social order; each with our own bursts of pleasure and pain, each with our proud differences of personal style (Moerman (1988:xi)

I also draw on ethnomethodological enquiry to assess how audience members make sense of radio's everyday presence. By so doing I attempt to find methods of making the common sense world more visible (Eggins & Slade, 1997) or pay attention to the perceived normality or radio's talk as one would pay attention to the extra-ordinary events in life. In borrowing from aspects of Garfinkelian ethnomethodology I interrogate the notion that people within a particular grouping or institution such as the SABC Radio

or Primedia have procedures for making sense of their day-to-day actions and decisions (Feldman, 1995).

## **Interviews**

In acknowledging this I conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with the three programming managers from each respective radio station. The programming managers at the time of this study were:

From MetroFM: Mr Segale Mogotsi.

From 5FM: Mr Vukile Zondi.

From 94.5KFM: Mr Ian Bredenkamp.

Additional contextual interviews were conducted with the SABC's market intelligence head, Angie Hammond as well as an interview with radio scholar and lecturer, Franz Kruger. This choice of interviewees was intentional and based on the direct relevance and credentials of each respondent to my research. Programming managers oversee the sound and on-air product of radio stations and play a direct role in managing various aspects of on-air presenters – such as behaviour, presenting styles and overall in-studio procedures. The head of the marketing department was selected on the basis that this department collates and handles the research components of each SABC radio station. It was therefore necessary to establish what forms of market research are covered, through which methodologies and to what extent such gathered knowledge is relayed to the actual radio stations. Franz Kruger has written extensively on radio and lectures in journalism,

specialising in radio and ethics. During the time of this research, Kruger was in the process of establishing a University of the Witwatersrand Radio Academy. Through an in-depth interview with Kruger, I sought to contextualise the state of radio in South Africa, establish the objectives of his radio academy as well as commentary on the nature of talk on commercial music radio stations in South Africa.

The nature of these interviews was face-to-face and in-depth - each averaging a minimum of 30 minutes per interviewee, responding to a set list of questions that sought to reflect on their understanding of the role of talk on the subject radio stations. With the programming managers there was an underlying enquiry that sought to make sense of their decisions, programming methods and their overall ideologies on the performative nature of talk on their respective radio stations. Further questions drew on the individual interviewees' research findings on the effects of talk and how presenters play a role in audience determinism.

These interviews required that I travel to Johannesburg and personally conduct these interviews as I believed telephonic or email interviews would not yield substantial responses. Whereas face-to-face interviews relayed a sense of seriousness of the study through my personal approach (Gray, 2007).

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The 'naturalistic observation' of radio stations occurred between March 2009 and January 2010. The actual analysis of talk on each chosen radio station was an ongoing process whereby in which I switched between these three radio stations daily. Particular attention was paid to the prime time shows – namely the morning breakfast shows from 06h00 to 09h00 and afternoon drive time shows from 15h00 to 18h00 or to 19h00 in the case of 5FM and 94.5KFM. 06h00 – 10h00 is commonly referred to as the morning breakfast time slot on radio, and is defined as: the period in listeners are getting up, preparing for work or school and are in transit. The need for information such as news, weather and time checks is high (Wigston, 2001). Listenership tends to peak in this morning segment as many people listen in their cars en route to work and radio stations such as 94.5KFM fill this segment of the day with more talk as they are aware, through Radio Audience Measurement Systems (RAMS) provided by SAARF, that there are higher listenership numbers from 06h00 to 09h00.

The afternoon slot between 16h00 and 19h00 is known as the afternoon drive time, and listeners are comprised of children who come home from school and workers who are driving home from work. This day time tends to mirror the morning drive time, but with less talk and more music, as listeners have generally gone through an entire day of learning or working and need to relax with music and less talk (Wigston, 2001: 412).

MetroFM's morning breakfast show is from 06h00 to 09h00 on weekdays and the afternoon drive time show is from 15h00 to 18h00. The presenters for the breakfast show, known as The Morning Jam, are:

Kenny Maistry

Refilwe

Thato

BBK

The presenters for the afternoon Drive time show, known as The Avenue, are:

Glen Lewis

Unathi Nkayi

Melanie Bala

I do not include other irregular show participants and only include those who co-present as they form part of the consistent conversations that are held on-air.

5FM's morning breakfast show is from 06h00 to 09h00 on weekdays. The afternoon drive time show is from 15h00 to 19h00 on weekdays as well.

Presenters for the breakfast show are:

Gareth Cliff

Mabale Moloji

Leigh-Ann Mol

Sias Du Plessis

Damon Kalvari

Thabo Modisane

And for the Afternoon drive time show:

DJ Fresh

Catherine

Poppy Ntshongwana

Owen Hannie

In the case of 94.5KFM the morning breakfast show is from 06h00 to 09h00 and the afternoon drive time show, like 5FM's, is from 15h00 to 19h00 on weekdays.

The Breakfast Show is presented by:

Ryan O' Connor

The Afternoon drive time show is presented by:

Richard Hardiman

Unlike other Social Sciences research undertakings it would be difficult to guarantee the same research outcomes as the medium under study is a dynamic one that seldom sticks to one formula or manner of speech. However an attempt was made to ensure a purposive sample of audio from popular and established radio shows were selected in the hope that they would be the most reflective of each chosen radio station's programming. In total I recorded 72 hours of live radio – 24 hours from each radio station. However the analysis was not limited to what was recorded only, but notes would be taken when listening to these radio stations at home, in the car or at work – therefore the research was ongoing. The recorded hours were afforded more attention as talk from each was transcribed and analysed in detail.

This transcribed talk was viewed as the main text or the chosen unit of analysis. This unit of analysis excludes news, weather, sports and pre-recorded advertisements and focused on the actual utterances of the presenters in between fixed fixtures. News, sports and advertisements are not unique to any of these chosen radio shows and occur across different radio stations, often at the same times - hourly. In other words there is nothing special about these show features as they do not contribute towards the chosen unit of analysis. The main focus is on the presenters as they have sufficient room to talk and explore various elements of talk, whereas news, sports and advertisements are static in their format and cannot delve into other areas to stimulate the listener. The listener knows what to anticipate from these excluded features, but the listener does not know what to expect when Kenny Maistry, Gareth Cliff, Glen Lewis and Unathi Nkayi, Fresh Sikwane or Richard Hardiman speak.

During the process of listening-in or 'naturalistic observation' (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2005) of recorded radio shows a few changes occurred, due to the dynamic nature of the medium. One of the programming managers interviewed for the purposes of this study, Segale Mogotsi, resigned from MetroFM as of January 2010. Regardless of this resignation I have chosen to quote and substantiate from Mogotsi's responses to my research questions, as he was primarily responsible for the programming of the content I recorded over the period of this study – from 15 March 2009 to 18 January 2010. A number of presenters from all three radio stations took annual leave for periods of up to two weeks, during the course of this study. Another change that occurred on 1 April 2009 was the replacement of Thomas Msengeni or Bad Boy T with Kenny Maistry in the

MetroFM breakfast show.

It must be noted that this replacement of staff, taking leave and presence of stand-in presenters did not affect the actual discourse analysis of this paper as the show formats remained the same – the only difference was the voice behind the microphone and presenter style and dialect. The breakfast show included regular features such as news, sport, competitions, surf reports, traffic reports and presenter talk intervals all remained the same. The sameness was attributed to the fact that *MetroFM*, *5FM* and *94.5 KFM* shows are pre-scheduled and music allocated to certain times by the programming teams. In analysing radio's talk – I draw upon the recorded radio shows and transcribe them without factoring in the renowned linguistic characteristics often applied by sociolinguists. There will be no phonological symbols and all talk will be transcribed in the manner in which the English language is written. Any detraction or paralinguistic and non-verbal information that might have been observed during the selected recorded radio performances will be embedded within square brackets [...]. Intervals and pauses are denoted via ellipses or three dots (...).

Transcribed radio show segments are featured at length and annotated accordingly for clarity and exemplary purposes.

In analyzing the nature of talk on a commercial music radio station, one has to first identify the types of talk present on each of the chosen broadcasts. Bernard (2000) lists five principle forms of possible and observed types of talk on radio: Reading, Narration,

Commentary, Conversation and Ad-libbing or Spontaneous Speech. My interpretation of these principles is as follows:

1. Reading – the actual reading of news scripts, live reads or public service announcements.
2. Narration – the retelling of a story or reading a prepared script on-air with dramatic effects included.
3. Commentary – the analysis and comments presenters impart of topical issues or their day-to-day observations.
4. Conversation – the talk in and amongst co-presenters on-air
5. Ad-libbing or Spontaneous speech – can range from back announcing songs, to unscripted chatter in between songs.

I will adhere to each of these principles when defining transcribed data, before providing an analysis and interpretation.

During the course of this thesis I use the word presenter interchangeably with disc jockey or radio show anchor and I further use talk to refer to talk on commercial music radio. The term audience is used to refer to radio listeners and radio should be taken to mean commercial music radio in the context of this dissertation.

## **Audience Research**

Radio presenters were not interviewed for the purpose of this study. They were observed, recorded, transcribed and analysed. The reason behind not interviewing them was to avoid any form of subjective contribution on their part and to view them from three points of view only: My point of view, the programming managers' points of views and the audience's perspective. In attempting to gauge the audience perspective I had to also engage with some audience research which lent itself to quantitative methods, with an emphasis on being qualitative for the purposes of this study, in an attempt to understand media-audience relationships.

O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2008) cite a uses-and-gratifications (Blunder & Katz, 1974) understanding to reinforce that listeners are not merely passive consumers but are more actively engaged with their chosen media, however in unpredictable ways that often go against the media producer's intended consumption of their programme (use terms decoding/encoding). This multiplicity of unpredictable consumption creates a dilemma in the sense that the different contexts in which the act of listening to radio occurs makes it difficult to gauge the audience effects of radio. It therefore translates to a reliance on qualitative research findings to assess and give feedback on what the listeners want to hear and what the radio producers think their listeners want to hear.

The current study was also interested in exploring the listeners' perceptions of the talk on each of the selected radio stations, as well as what kind of talk they expected to hear. In particular, I was interested to find out whether there was any similarity between the

programming managers' intentions, and how this was decoded by the audience. This paper therefore conducted a small scale qualitative survey (see Appendix 1) to explore listener perceptions of the selected radio stations. The survey was administered (in person, via email and social networking websites) to a convenience sample of 157 participants in Cape Town (103 respondents) and Johannesburg (54 respondents).

The participants self-selected themselves as radio listeners through an initial question that sought to establish whether or not they listen to radio. If yes, they proceeded to respond to questions posed on the survey.

Although I briefly engage with audience findings in this thesis to support the findings of my thesis, surveys are advantageous in the sense that they are able to summarise a large population through sampling strategies (Babbie, 2007). A generalised questionnaire facilitated my ability to generalise about a larger radio listening audience. The disadvantage of conducting surveys for my research resided in the fact that surveys “cannot measure social action; they can only collect self-reports of recalled past action or of prospective or hypothetical action” (Babbie, 2007: 277)

The survey research was conducted over multiple forms of media – via email, social networking websites and hand-delivered questionnaires. Social networking websites such as Facebook, proved useful in the consolidation of audience responses. However in utilizing Facebook I targeted individuals that were outside my established online circle of friends therein as I approached a network of individuals who share a common interest in

a group titled “The Radio Reloaded.” With no access to the individual profiles I then took advantage of the ability to send Facebook users a message, without necessarily being online friends with them. This exercise garnered 21 responses from mostly Johannesburg-based respondents. A contributing factor in breaking or getting through to these online audiences was advice given by the former SABC Head of Commercial Radio Stations – Bob Mabena – who at first when I presented a summary of my thesis via Facebook said the following:

“Can you summarise my man. I opened up your message and I didn’t get any further.”

From then onwards I realised that I was going to have to apply an abridged approach to all my online interviewees. In dealing with internet savvy audiences I had to take into account Bauerlein’s (2008) findings that the more internet dependent market is a generation that seeks instant gratification, reads less and is proud of anti-intellectualism. Taking this into consideration I then rephrased my Facebook questions colloquially and shortened the number of questions to ten, with the last two asking for lengthy replies on their views on talk on their selected radio station (choice of MetroFM, 5FM or 94.5 KFM).

Taking the online research route consciously excluded broader audiences and narrowed the audience sample to generally middle to upper class radio listeners – the ones with access to the internet as well as digitally savvy enough to navigate social networking websites such as Facebook. Even though access to the internet has increased via mobile phones, I did not specifically anticipate responses from mobile web users owing to the

possible lengthiness of typing out responses to a survey on a phone.

To conclude the Facebook research I then embarked on joining three social groups therein: The 5FM group (which was at 41 827 members), the METRO FM group (which was at 17 727 members) and 94.5KFM Breakfast fan page (which was at 13 724 members). Each radio station has embraced Facebook as an extension of their individual brands to communicate and engage with listeners on the platforms they frequently spend time on. Each of these groups had discussion forums in which members could discuss, expertly, on matters or concerns regarding their chosen radio station. Presenters also contributed to discussions and even invited group members to comment on on-air topics or request songs to be played on-air. Some notable comments in these discussion groups were copied, with the permission of the respondents (via Facebook messages requesting their permission to use what they had said in that group).

To further my research I then engaged in a survey approach I refer to as “Cold E-mailing” – which is the equivalent of the concept of cold calling, where call centres collate databases of telephone numbers from other contacts and call these strangers with various sales pitches. A similar approach was taken herein, however phone numbers were substituted with email addresses. In order to attain email addresses I went through numerous ‘chain emails’ which I had been privy to<sup>1</sup>. I then copied and pasted recipients of such emails and tallied a total of 113 email addresses. I then sent a general email with this paper’s research questionnaire. The body of the email read as follow:

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<sup>1</sup> A chain email is one usually forwarded to more than one recipient and its subject nature could be in the form of a joke, public service announcement or even debatory.

Morning,

I'm sure you're busy [or not] and wondering who I am (I know a friend of a friend who knows a friend of another friend or I actually know you...).

So if you take no offence in receiving this uninvited email, please could you take a further 5-10 minutes when you're free today - to whizz through the attached research questions on your radio listening ways.

They're quite short and to the point and your responses will contribute towards a study on the *Performative Nature of Talk in Music Radio in SA*.

You can then simply email back your filled-in word document by next week Tuesday (24 March 2009) or sooner,

Thank you,  
Unathi

*(Email sent out: 19 March 2009 at 9h32 AM)*

The style and nature of this email was conversational and assumed that the recipient was computer literate, easy-going and more or less within a South African defined youth age range of 16 – 34 years old.

48 of the initial 113 possible email interviewees replied. Twenty of whom were people I knew and had met and the other twenty-eight comprised of strangers. The total number of positive responses does not take into account respondents who objected to my email and those who were sensitive to receiving an email from a stranger or cold emailing:

Good day,

I would like to know who you are and where you got my contact details. The "I know a friend..." part of your e-mail is a bit too vague for me.

Regards,  
Naomi

*(Responses received on 19 March 2009 at 12h45 PM)*

Audience research findings are interspersed throughout the next three chapters (4, 5 and 6) which discuss the chosen radio stations. The data collected from Facebook respondents was printed and collated in a file. Whilst data collected via email responses was archived in a sub-folder in my email inbox and later printed. I then analysed this data taking into account responses that spoke to my qualitative research needs. In structuring the data for analysis I took all the Question 1 responses on one word document – each with the author's name, I then took Question 2 responses onto one word document and so forth with all the questions. Thereafter I was able to synthesize the data according to individual responses.

### **Conclusion:**

A variety of methods have been encompassed in this study to fully explore the dynamic nature of this qualitative study. The heterogeneousness of some of my methods, such as Discourse analysis lent themselves to forms of ethnomethodology whilst the conversation analysis, although not the primary method herein, was closely linked to a dramaturgical approach that sought to validate talk as performance on radio. Hahn (2008) noted that qualitative research's ability to employ various diverse methods and assumptions, there lies a commonly shared challenge, in this case to establish the performative nature of talk on commercial music radio.

I conclude by affirming the significance of this study by quoting Hendy (2000), who outlines the structure of the body of this thesis with the following:

No one aspect of radio can be fully understood without some reference to three interrelated aspects of the medium: first, the ways in which it is produced, secondly the form and content of its programming... and thirdly the interpretations and reaction of its consumers, the listeners (Hendy 2000:7).

The following three chapters are case studies of the separate radio stations – beginning with MetroFM in Chapter 4, 5FM in chapter 5 and 94.5KFM in Chapter 6.

University Of Cape Town

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CASE STUDY: METROFM**

When I first undertook research on MetroFM at the beginning of 2009 it referred to itself as an Adult Contemporary radio station which targets an 18 to 49 year old listeners (<http://www.metrofm.co.za/advertise>). On the very same website towards the end of 2009 (November) the station referred to itself as a radio station that caters for a predominantly male audience, aged between 16 and 34 years, living mainly in the Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal provinces. Listeners are of Nguni and Sotho descent and are mostly in Living Standards Measure (LSM) 5-6 with a strong showing of LSM 7-10. Living Standards Measures (LSM) divide the country's population into 10 groups – with 10 being the highest level of living standard and 1 being the lowest (SAARF, 2010). From this one can gather that MetroFM targets an aspiring growing middle to upper class audience.

#### **Prime Time Presenters: MetroFM**

MetroFM's on-air presenters are all well-established, experienced entertainers who have been in the industry for more than 10 years – with the exception of Refilwe and BBK on the breakfast show. Glen Lewis has been with MetroFM for over a decade and Unathi Nkayi has been on radio and television programmes since the late 1990's. Melanie Bala is an established television personality in South Africa. Whilst Kenny Maistry, who presents the breakfast show has been in the radio industry since the early 90s and even presented a number of television programmes during the course of his career.

Goffman (1981) points out that “stations recruit presenters primarily on the basis of how well they suit the station’s audience profile and fit the station’s image” (Goffman 1981:212). MetroFM strives to employ ready-made on-air presenters and thereafter continue to grow them as individual brands. Brands in the context of this thesis are reputations built over time – names, personalities, institutions that conjure immediate recognition and particular associations (Priestman, 2002). MetroFM’s programming manager adds that:

In terms of the station you must realise that our personalities are in their own rights – sub-brands to our brand which is METROFM, what it means is that firstly they are global citizens – they travel all over the world, they are recognisable anywhere in the country.” (Segale Mogotsi, Personal interview, September 2009)

In making this acknowledgement Mogotsi is then tasked with a different kind of radio programming strategy, in which he fuses personality-driven programming and content driven programming. “If you were to take T-Bo Touch, you’d recognise him, if I took Criselda you’d recognise her, if I said Glen Lewis you’d recognise that; Kenny Maistry, you have an idea of who that is, you know them. And listeners tend to like personalities they know” adds Mogotsi.

One of the reasons behind selecting pre-established presenters is what Mogotsi terms as “harbouring on familiarity” – in which there is a tendency to rather produce and place well-known or familiar people on-air, as opposed to introducing new people and expecting listeners to adapt. This expands on Wright’s (1948) idea that the attraction to personality outstrips the attraction to on-air talent as the presenter’s reputation is the

magnet (Wright 1948).

Therefore to assume that MetroFM presenters are employed on the basis of who they are would be a safe assumption at this point. The radio station thereafter works on recreating and establishing these personalities through its programming. But a contradiction, which underlies the purpose of this study, is that these developed or high profile presenters are employed in a music radio station – a radio station that places emphasis on the type of music they provide. A station whose music is assumed to be the main audience attraction, yet serious attention is given to those who present this music. This, in my view, defeats the purpose of labelling such a radio station as a music radio station when it combines music content with personality content. I say personality content largely because radio's lack of visual elements enforces the idea that, these presenters are not employed on how they look, but rather on what they can say – therefore they are personalities that have content to present. Even though music radio stations distinguish themselves as predominantly music orientated there is also an intentional or unintentional emphasis on the content or quality of their spoken content through the choice of presenters. In selecting high-profile, established presenters who commands listenerships there is and unintentional privileging of spoken content over the musical content, even though the station is premised on the latter. In other words when listeners say "I'm going to listen to Glen Lewis!" they literally mean they are selecting that particular radio station to hear Glen Lewis. The music genre might be a pull-factor towards the radio station, but there are many more radio stations that play the same genre of music – therefore the presence of a personality such as Glen Lewis, who will have something to say, contradicts, to a

certain extent, the idea that music radio is premised by its music content.

In asserting the role of presenters as being attractive to listeners, there is also a need to content they deliver. Presenters are first seen as entertainers, music sales representatives who also sell themselves and their station whenever they record radio voiceovers and television commercials (Goffman, 1981: 324). Similarly, Bernard (2000: 182), reckons that “music radio presenters are there to provide pure entertainment and companionship, and the scope for spontaneous speech that does not centre on the trivial or inconsequential is limited.” Which therefore begs the question on what exactly the role of a music radio presenter is? In attempting to provide a response I use these presenters’ components of talk on their respective shows, throughout this chapter, as my point of departure.

### **The Nature of Talk on MetroFM**

If it [talk] wasn’t important people would just listen to their iPods and forget about it. I think it’s important because from listening to comments or the links that are made. We’d like to think that it adds value and that’s what we call infotainment – it adds value to the actual music because it’s informative, it’s sometimes inspiring – a DJ might say the things you want to hear – whereas with an iPod you wouldn’t have that experience. They say things that you can relate to but it’s also done strategically – I mean DJs don’t talk just after every song. If you listen carefully you’ll realise that there is something that we call Clocks, which we apply. There are moments we call them Stop Sets – where you can stop and talk but we try and play a lot of music continuously whilst identifying the station. Talk is quite important. Otherwise there wouldn’t be a need for DJs.

- (Segale Mogotsi, Personal Interview, Sept 2009)

If every radio station that labels itself a music radio station were to continuously play music with no intervals, except for jingles, station identifying drops and advertisements only – there would be no need for presenters. Their roles would be redundant or reduced to adjusting buttons behind the studio desk to control or cue songs and advertisements. From this hypothesis I can deduce that as much as this has not been acknowledged much in literature on radio – the presenter’s presence is of a significant role on music radio stations. Or else, as Mogotsi pointed out, people would turn to their iPods and music players to listen to their favourite songs as opposed to hearing their favourite songs after four or more shuffled songs on a radio station. It is uncommon to hear more than three songs in a row on a prime-time show without the presenter’s intervention. There are instances where an uninterrupted music mix is aired, but here a listener is forewarned and is aware of the non-talk musical feature. They can choose to switch to another radio station for the duration of that mix or listen to that musical mix to observe what will be included in the mix and how songs are mixed.

The presenter forms the link. And a simplistic interpretation of the role of the presenter on a music radio station would be; to talk. Presenters get paid to talk and yet little studies have been concerned with this primary role or performative nature of this talk.

Commercial music radio’s presenter talk has been limited to back announcing songs, time announcements, talking to listeners on-air and ad libbing. There has been no attempt at fleshing out these individual roles. Yet in presenting talk one has to ideally possess, according to Gamlin (1947) “a combination of an observant eye, a ready tongue, nimble wits, imagination, tact and a sense of proportion” (Gamlin 1947: 81). Wright (1948)

mentions an ability to create an illusion of spontaneity as being important for radio presenting so as to avoid disconnecting from your listener and creating an unseen barrier of didactic reading talk. The talk must be conversational and natural so as to accommodate the listener. In as much as a ready tongue, wittiness, humour are required there is also a need to acknowledge the listener's unseen presence. McLeish (2005) adds that to be successful on-air the presenter's personality and programme style must not only make contact with the individual listener, but it can take on varying forms that can be "elegant or earthy, raucous or restrained, but for any one presenter it should be consistent and the operational technique first class" (McLeish, 2005: 168) Barnard (2000) states that a sense of the audience should underlie all traits of radio's talk; taking into account "how listeners prefer to be addressed, their limits of tolerance and understanding, the environment in which they listen and whether or not they really want to listen" (Barnard, 2000: 175)

Although MetroFM caters for a Nguni and Sotho audience, the station is predominantly an English-speaking broadcaster, that caters for a largely black audience. Listenership figures stand at 5.3million listeners per week (RAMS, November 2009). As much as it is an English broadcaster it must be noted that the majority of its presenters, with the exception of Kenny Maistry, are not from English home language speaking families.

## Language on MetroFM

MetroFM acknowledges that their primary audience is of Nguni and Sotho descent (website), therefore the station mirrors its audience in the sense that most of their presenters are of Nguni, Sotho and Venda descent however they all converge to speak or present in the common language of English. It becomes evident that English spoken in particularly vernacular-laden accents forms part of their on-air distinction. By this I mean that the on-air presenters at MetroFM during the course of this study did not attempt to mimic English accents but spoke English with their home language accents – this is evident in the tone, rhythm and pronunciation of some English words. However this should not detract from the fact that they get their point across or are understood and heard by listeners. Regardless of which accent one presents in enunciation has been quoted as pivotal in all aspects of radio’s talk regardless of one’s natural dialect and so forth – if they can “open their mouth widely, raise the soft palate and keep the lower jaw forward” they will have little difficulty being heard (Gamlin, 1947: 28).

An example or model presenter for this argument is Glen Lewis, who co-presents *The Avenue* with Unathi Nkayi, between 15h00 and 18h00 on weekdays on MetroFM. There is an unforced, unpretentious consciousness in the manner in which he presents on-air that reiterates Gamlin’s advice “Be yourself, as you are. And not as you would like the listener to think you are” (Gamlin, 1947: 46). Glen Lewis’s Venda accent comes through strongly as he speaks and he is not apologetic about it. In a show recorded on 12 May 2009 he casually notes language complications and how people would be quick to judge him if he errs in English.

Time: 15h41

Glen: Like they say 'there's no champion when it comes to pro-nun-ziation'

Do you know what I mean? Because I know if I make a booboo in my Tshivenda language you will not complain, but if I do in English – its gonna be a big big story headline news tomorrow. Right!

Not only does this statement by Glen Lewis reinforce MetroFM's previous theme of black consciousness and black identity – where their slogan was once "Black Like Me" but it also serves to play out the unapologetic nature of black presenters, as well as a sense of pride in who they are, within a context that seeks to suppress black identities during the days of apartheid. This is a common theme that is noted in emerging black middle to upper classes who seek equality in language, status and stature with South African upper class segments. There is also a subtle message of not being ashamed of one's roots. A 28 year-old, black, female, interviewee for this study, posted the following as her status update on Facebook:

"When a black man can't speak English, he's uneducated. When a white man can't speak English, he's cute. How odd!" (posted on 10 January 2010)

Thereafter her Facebook friends proceeded to comment on matters of being undermined in South Africa, perceptions of blackness and others adding common jokes such as "When a white man is seen running, he's joggin. When a black man is seen running, he's being chased." I highlight this thread of status updates as one example of the type of discourse MetroFM listeners might engage in. The quoted interviewee cited MetroFM as

her favourite radio station, when responding to my radio questionnaire on 25 March 2009.

One has to wonder how, presenters, handle and negotiate such identity-related forms of expression and feeling in the part of their listeners. The 12 May 2009 quoted segment of Glen Lewis is taken from the context of the radio show's Big Word Challenge where two listeners have to spell words chosen by the presenters on-air. The one who spells the most words correctly wins. In this exact game one can assume an educative aspect as those listening and those competing get to learn how to spell certain words. In this instance words such as 'Daiquiri', 'Diorama', 'Presumptuous' and 'Inoculate' were chosen. The point I am reiterating is that this game in itself reflects a particular inclination at testing one another's vocabulary skills. Whilst posing these words to the two listeners one could sense the difficulty in actually pronouncing some of these words on the part of the presenters. In a sense there is an educative aspect that seeks to inform, correct and test one another – also playing to the theme of emerging black people who are aspiring to use, spell and know words that emerge in the Big Word Challenge.

Glen Lewis, as observed during the listening period, has a strategy in which he exaggerates or highly enunciates words that would otherwise tie his tongue. Such games are also conceptualised by the actual presenters of *The Avenue* – Glen Lewis, Unathi Nkayi and Melanie Bala. One could ask on which necessity this game was borne out of and what it seeks to achieve as there is no tangible prize – cash or otherwise – winners get thanked for participating. It appears to be a game of outclassing one another and

being patted on the back for it or perhaps it is merely an innocent educative game that teaches others listening on how certain words are spelt. Do game shows of this nature – that seek to prove intelligence reflect the audience’s intellectual, social or cultural capital (Bosch, forthcoming 2010)? And to a certain extent do they form part of the rise of black people?

Before I continue further it must be noted that the majority of MetroFM listeners are black South Africans who are largely considered to have been disadvantaged pre-1994 elections or in the apartheid era. Therefore in such instances such as the Big Word Challenge there could also be a social affirmation agenda that acknowledges that the audience being entertained or presented to harbours, to a certain extent, aspirations to speak better English or are already at that point of literacy and are merely publicly revealing their knowledge and capabilities to other listeners and the presenters.

Recorded on: 12 May 2009

Time: 15h43

Glen: It’s spelling time. We coming up with sophisticated words – where we found these words I don’t know.

Mel: The same place we always find the words [laughs].

Glen: Yeah. So some jaw breaking words and before you pronounce these words you need to do a proper stretch. You know like aahh, aahh.

Mel: Some tongue exercises. Loosen it up.

Glen: You know cause if you don’t you gonna have a muscle pull in your mouth.

Mel: A spasm in your mouth [laughs].

The presenters thereafter elaborate on the game plan – with visual and visually stimulating words. The English is clear, simple and vivid to such an extent that it bears resemblance to instructional talk which forewarns listeners that the words chosen will be difficult, but instead of saying ‘difficult words’ the presenters choose a rather dramatic narrative which entails words such as ‘jaw-breaking words’, ‘proper mouth stretches’ with ‘aahh and aahh’ sounds – all of which elicit a clearer image of the requirements to the listener on what they can expect and what degree of difficulty the Big Word Challenge poses. Another exception to all this dialogue could be perhaps to make fun of all the preparation one needs to make before engaging others with English words.

Another example shows a degree of comfort in speech as well as quick thought on the part of Glen Lewis, where he further goes to switch languages for the sake of placing emphasis on a larger cultural phoneme:

Recorded on 11 January 2010

Time: 17h18

Glen: That’s Whitney Houston in the background. In 2000 it was reported that she was under investigation after allegedly trying to smuggle 15.2 grams of marijuana [pronounces it as Mari-whaa-na] out of Hawaii [howls it] - a security officer found the drug in the singer. Houston then walked away when he tried to, tried to – cause you know there is nothing as a man, you can do, when a woman walks away, you can’t do anything about it! She shouts ‘Ndiyeke! [Xhosa for ‘Leave Me Alone]’

Glen Lewis does not finish this story but rather subverts or he relates the story to how hard it is to stop a woman when walking away. In this text we also find a hint of code-switching – as he switches between English and Xhosa to include the Xhosa word

“ndiyeke”, even though his mother tongue is Venda. Although this paper does not concern itself with conventions of code-switching it must be noted that, MetroFM does engage with this form of linguistic variety and as such it could be to reflect the presenters’ multilingualism. I am not concerned with the type of language but rather the content of their language. To further dissuade a linguistic analysis is the fact that code-switching in a multilingual country like South Africa is a common occurrence which is at times used for convenience, vocabulary deficiency and at times to negotiate, challenge or change different conversational situations (Kieswetter, 1995). In this particular instance, Glen Lewis possibly engages in code-switching to reflect on his experience of Xhosa ladies’ reactions.

Apart from showing a diversity and knowledge of other languages, this choice of word insinuates on who would most likely walk away and say “ndiyeke” – Xhosa woman. This not only alludes to Xhosa women but alludes to a stereotypical view held against Xhosa women by Sotho speakers in Johannesburg – that Xhosa women are stubborn. Therefore Glen Lewis merely re-affirms a commonly held view amongst the audience which at times offends his co-host Unathi Nkayi – who is of Xhosa descent and constantly has to defend Xhosa women as being assertive and knowing what they want.

Going back to the transcribed data of Glen Lewis’s talk, it is evident that the first part was a read narrative as one can hear the pauses and manner in which he drags out certain words such as ‘Hawaii’, ‘Marijuana’ together with a slower pace of speaking. But upon delving off the script his talk flow progresses quicker – to show a conscious stream of

thought at work and colloquialism. The purpose of this upbeat colloquialism on-air would be, as Crissell (1986) suggests to discourage a flat, expressionless tone and to keep listeners stimulated by not engaging in a reading tone only.

The act of reading implies absence – the separation of addressor and addressee. The addresser has been replaced by text, so that if a radio listener is aware that a broadcaster is reading he will assume that she is either relaying the words of somebody else or erecting a barrier between herself and the audience. Hence to avoid creating the impression of absence and impersonality much radio talk which is actually scripted – programme presentation, weather forecasts, continuity, cues, trailers and so forth – is delivered as if it were unscripted and impromptu (Crissell, 1986: 56)

In 15 seconds Glen Lewis relays a historical piece of information about Whitney Houston, then he proceeds to make social remarks about ways of handling women and also manages to add in some cultural nuances on women's behaviour whilst reading a script. Therefore the listener is informed – knows what Whitney Houston did – and is also afforded the opportunity to either relate to Glen Lewis's commentary or simply laugh it off.

The talk in this recorded segment is scripted and forms part of the history slot they present at approximately 17h20 on weekdays. The purposes thereof are to inform listeners on the events that happened in the past. Commentary around these scripts would seek to affirm or explain or vivify the imagery of these past encounters they impart. This talk comprises of certain nuances signatory to how Glen Lewis speaks on air and pronounces words – which brings me to stylistic creations of the spoken word on MetroFM – how presenters present and style their talk on air.

## **Presentation styles on Metro FM**

Having spent hours daily, listening to MetroFM it became clear that the station continues to emulate its own past presenter styles. In 1992, MetroFM station manager, Koos Hadebe was adamant that their presenters do not emulate other station presenters. On presenter selection criteria, Hadebe listed radio talent and music knowledge as essential to their staff compliment. Today not much has changed as current Programming Manager Segale Mogotsi outlines that, they try to “give people [listeners] what they know as opposed to try and teach them things they don’t know.” How this relates to stylistic creations and uniqueness is reflected in the prevalence of male baritone voices that are calm, knowledgeable and possesses warm voices (Hausman et al, 2004) with the exception of Glen Lewis and female presenters. MetroFM still abides by the Golden Voice Era (of the 1930s), whereby in which emphasis was placed on deep baritone voices, which sounded stylized and emphatic on-air – From Kenny Maistry to Eddie Zondi and many other presenters who present Jazz, Rhythm and Blues shows.

In the early 1990s when Treasure Tshabalala, Wilson B Nkosi, Bob Mabena and many more were presenters on-air, the very same deep, slow paced voices they possessed distinguished MetroFM from other radio stations. Perhaps, and I assume this, that it was a style that was developed to sync with the pace of their music – soul, rhythm and blues. This style has however changed on prime time shows, such as the ones selected herein, as MetroFM’s market segment has shifted from the 18 to 49 year olds to embrace the 16 to 34 year old. There are now female presenters such as Unathi Nkayi and Melanie Bala on

the afternoon show together with a high pitched, loud, yet warm sounding Glen Lewis. One now hears calm, deep voiced presenters such as Kenny Maistry – who has a deep, usually calm voice in previous radio shows – being more pacey and racey in his speech stylization.

In a recording of the morning breakfast show, Kenny Maistry averaged 120 words per 30 seconds – which was fast, unpunctuated and hard to decipher as his deep voice inhibited expressions of change in tone, pitch, thereby rendering all words similar in sound. An example being:

Recorded 11 May 2009

Time: 06h10

Kenny: It's Rafael Sadiq 'Love that Girl' and ahead of that the [mumbles inaudible words] Sweet Mints 'Love Me Another Day. It's coming up to six eleven. Er looking at your birthdays 089 110 33 77 born on this day Louis Farachon better known as well when he was born he was given the name Louis Eugene Walcott born on this day in 1933 he is the supreme minister and national representative of the nation of Islam and Ilija Mohammad an advocate of black interests and critic of American society born on this day in 1933. If you celebrating your birthday got a family member doing so – 089 110 33 77 – taking your birthday dedications up next.

When presenters change their voices or put on a voice they can be seen as performing as opposed to presenting behaviour in a particular manner. Talk in many broadcast environments is performed and as such one can note that presenters such as Kenny Maistry might be required to project preferred personas or styles of presenting (faster) rather than their day-to-day out of radio voice.

One of the first things noticeable in Kenny Maistry's presentation – in the 06h10 (11 May 2009) transcript - is a lack of punctuation – which suggests that he is reading a script. This reading tone relegates him to an older generation of presenters who would script their entire radio shows and know exactly what to say at which point in time of show, with little or no ad libbing. One gets the impression of an overall organisation of the show. In speaking faster and omitting structural speech breaks, the only manner in which he controls sentences from sounding as one monotonous thread, is through his breathing techniques and slight tone changes with certain words and letters. My main concern is on whether or not listeners are able to comprehend his fast-paced dialect. And here again, the problem is resolved through enunciation – each word although said fast is loudly articulated. And as such listeners do call in, to forward their birthday dedications:

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 06h20

Kenny: Don't forget your birthday dedications 0891103377 good morning Sibongile in Mamelodi! How are you doing?

Sibongile: I'm fine and you Kenny?

Kenny: How was your weekend?

Sibongile: First I'd like to say thanks for the great show! It's my birthday today!

Kenny: Thank you!

Sibongile: I'd like to wish myself a happy birthday!

Kenny: Okay! How old are you turning today?

Sibongile: I'm turning 23 today!

Kenny: Ooh! Young and fabulous! What are you doing? Are you studying or

working?

Sibongile: No, I'm currently working as an administration at the Rockston stationery here in Pretoria.

Kenny: Okay! Hope you enjoy your day. Hope you had a fab weekend as well! Building up to your birthday. Did you celebrate or are you gonna celebrate tonight?

Sibongile: Um, I'm gonna celebrate tonight!

Kenny: Okay, while you do that think of us as well. Okay? Don't party too much! I've got a great song for you, Sibongile I've got a great song for you from Rick Ashley, enjoy it okay?

Sibongile: Okay, thank youuu!

This conversation takes 1 minute 5 seconds. And Kenny adjusts his pace to match Sibongile's. He is conversational, yet flirty and his tone warms up to affection as he congratulates the caller. But once the caller is off the line he returns to his almost didactic read-from-script presenter styled pace:

Kenny: Six twenty-six – it's your morning household jam yep just the kind of song that gets the whole family going. Heading off to news headlines and sports details with Sizwe Mabena in for BBK.

Apart from the dialect stylization there are several stylised nuances that are specific to MetroFM in the choice of words used by presenters. For example time is referred to a mere numbers with no linkage to clock structure, in other words, unlike other radio stations presenters on MetroFM tend to announce time in a numerical sequential structure such as "it's six twenty-six!" or "It's coming to around six eleven" and so. They do not say "It is 20 minutes past the hour of six" or "it's eleven minutes past six." Even Glen

and Unathi on *The Avenue* state time in this same manner, with Unathi occasionally making an effort at announcing it to resemble time by saying its “24 after three” or “16 to four”. In the context of a radio station and to its familiar listeners this would make sense, however to the uninitiated ear it does tend to take a while to settle as the actual announcement of time.

Another element of stylisation is the pace, which is noted as fast throughout the recorded shows. There is also a lack of long-winded dialect or introductions or saying “The song you just heard comes from...” instead you are more likely to hear “It’s Rafaeli Sediq, ‘Love That Girl.’” Information and talk is dispensed in short burst albeit, short informative bursts. Head of Market Intelligence at the South African Broadcast Corporation, Angie Hammond, explains the reasoning around this type of talk presentation by stating that pace is an important thing for, what she dubs global citizens or listeners on the move, who have access to information on their mobile phones, computers and so forth. “When viewers switch to a commercial music format the talk on that format has to be relevant, it has to connect, it mustn’t be waffle and feelings” says Hammond.

If I am a global citizen [listener type] don’t give it to me in a slow pace, like I’m in Sub A, or a Grade 1 child. I know how to deal with information. I know how to deal with 86 kilobytes of information per minute! ‘Give it to me!’ and if you are speaking to a kind of now generation audience where perhaps where some of MetroFM’s audience is sitting it’s going to be ‘Don’t give me all of that kilobyte nonsense!’ I just want to know what it does.

- (Angie Hammond, Personal Interview, May 2009)

It is evident in the number of words per minute (an average of 240 words per minute) that MetroFM presenters factor into account these reflections Hammond touches on. To a certain extent this suggests that listeners adjust themselves to commercial music radio listening mode and they are able to catch on to these fast bursts of talk as they are able to respond through phone calls, emails and inner-discussions amongst their peers. I will discuss listener perceptions at length towards the end of this chapter.

At this point I would like to focus on a common mode of address prevalent to all three chosen radio stations. Addressing the listener as an individual. The style on MetroFM is conversational and not oratorical. Wright (1948), states that radio listeners do not want to be “harangued”, or “addressed”, or “lectured” – they each want to be spoken to as an individual. Taking this into account one then has to look at how MetroFM encompasses this view and it is evident in the primary words of address when presenters address listeners as individuals through the use of the word “You” Two examples being:

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 06h57 (11 May 2009)

Kenny: Mafutha Jammin on METROFM with Kabelo – Dubula... Interesting news for **you** history-wise in South Africa – the longest serving white political prisoner released on this day – that was David Kitton...

Recorded on 11 January 2010

Time: 06h22 (11 January 2010)

Kenny: Birthday shout outs – yeah it’s a new one on the show again, brought it back – because we like to chat to **you** and if **you’ve** got a birthday shout out 089 110 33 77, that’s 089 110 33 77...

These are two examples from a pool of many transcribed bits that place emphasis on the use of the word “you” and not “listeners at home.” Even though Kenny Maistry is aware of the large number of listeners paying attention (based on November 2009, RAMS) each listener is addressed as an individual. Which reinforces MetroFM’s slogan “It’s Where **You’re** At!” The talk is intentionally styled to talk to each person as an individual and not as a group of listeners. McLeish (2005) supports this form of personalised talk by stating that radio is not a PA system, where people are addressed a crowd. There is a need to speak directly to the person you want to talk to, to maintain a certain level of intimacy and reassure the element of a presenter’s companionship role.

There are, however, instances whereupon guests or co-presenters show signs of not being aware of these nuances of personalised radio – for instance Rob Byrne who presents traffic reports consistently during the course of this study starts by saying “Good afternoon MetroFM listeners!” or “Good Afternoon MetroFM listeners.” This lack of personal intimacy with MetroFM listeners could be a result of two factors. Rob Byrne might not be aware of radio’s conventions of addressing radio listeners as individuals or he is aware but because of the multiplicity of his role as a traffic reporter on other SABC radio stations he intentionally greets MetroFM listeners as a whole to reflect his guest status as well assert that he is now on MetroFM to present traffic. Other instances of similar occurrences, such as Rob Byrne’s, include prominent interviewees who are featured or interviewed on the radio shows to shed advice on important topics. They tend

to exclude the listener and pay particular attention to the interviewer – in this case Kenny Maistry or Glen and Unathi in the afternoons. An example being:

Recorded on 11 January 2010

Time: 06h40

Kenny: It's a welcome return to Ezra! Happy New Year good morning!

Ezra: Good morning and Happy New Year to **you Kenny and the staff**.

Kenny: And did you have a good holiday?

Ezra: I did indeed thank you.

In the above there is an omission of acknowledging the listener. Perhaps because the conversation is occurring between Kenny and Ezra with the anticipation that the listener will switch to eavesdropper mode – yet the information about to be imparted by Ezra is economy related and meant to benefit the listener as Ezra goes on to suggest that petrol prices could drop and that consumer spending is picking up and inflation now sits in the expected target range. Exception to the rule of speaking to the listener as an individual should be given to outsiders or show visitors as they are not usually fully briefed on the mechanisms of addressing the listener accommodatingly. Or presenters could brief their interviewees or guests on which mode of address works best for the medium.

### **Commercial nature of talk: on MetroFM**

For traditional radio programme makers, there is no confusion. The relationship between the DJ, the listener and the sale of the music product remains the same as it ever was: The possibility of promoting spontaneous e-purchases may influence the way a station plans its playlists, or indeed how a programme is paid for.

(Priestman, 2002:35)

Priestman's statement could to a certain extent be used to define the role of talk on commercial music radio. Beyond linking songs on-air presenters also have the responsibility to give details of the songs they play on-air and at times offer commentary. This ties in with what I perceived to be the primary role of music on-air - to expose it to the listeners and vice versa. Although this study has not gone into revenues generated through music album sales of music aired on MetroFM, it must be noted that "commercial music complexes are those characterised by the activities of an agent who serves as intermediary between the performers and audiences" (Gans, 1974:41), in other words the presenter could assume the role of the intermediary between musicians or record labels and the audience. In this intermediary role they back announce songs and ad lib additional information that would make the listener aware of who performs the song and how it fares on music charts. "Great song by..." or "This song has been number one on the charts..." are random examples of how presenters sell the music they are playing. Whether this translate into sales – it is yet to be established in this study.

Commercial music radio can also be viewed as a vehicle to sell music, as it gives listeners a glimpse of musicians or the songs, which in turn can be translated into a long term advertising component of such radio stations.

It rare to say music aired on radio stations is music being sold or advertised to listeners. A common form of radio advertising, that is referred to as advertising comes in the segments called commercial breaks – where clients produces 15 second, 30 second or

longer spots to promote their products for a fixed price depending on which time of day or show they place their advertisement in. There are also cheaper means of selling products on-air such as live reads and mere strategic product placement within the presenter's talk.

On a recording of Kenny Maistry's Morning Jam breakfast show the cereal name "Kelloggs" was mentioned seven times throughout the first hour at almost every talk interval from 06h00 to 07h00 between songs. An example being:

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 06h18

Kenny: ... don't forget we've got a great Kelloggs competition coming up as well – R3000 for the winner if you can win that competition, R500 for the runner-up – details on the way.

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 06h23

Kenny: Coming up in the next half hour – Kelloggs giving you another chance of Winning R3000 in cash and R500 for the runner up – looking for the person with the best uh, um, er, well, er, delivery shall we say of the Kellogg's catch phrase: "Kelloggs a hundred years of good morning!" so all you've got to do is say that when I open up the phone lines in the next half hour. And the person saying it the best? Well? Wins R3000 in cash!

These are two recordings that give an idea of what was repeated on seven occasions in the first hour of the show. Competitions that promise monetary returns usually garner listener attention, as the radio station's phone lines become busy and on several instances

of trying to call in to this Kellogg's competition the lines were busy throughout, from 06h30 to 07h00 – which signified that listeners were also calling in. This form of advertising usually elicits brand awareness – being aware of the Kellogg's brand and its existence for over a hundred years.

There are other forms of advertisements – which feature prominently on the shows [Morning Jam and The Avenue] line. These are pre-recorded and flighted between songs and presenter talk. On the 11 May 2009 breakfast show I counted twenty advertisements in the first hour of the show and this excludes live read advertisements such as the Kellogg's one – only pre-recorded advertisements.

Radio stations are mandated by the Communications Act available on the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) website (<http://www.icasa.org.za/>) – which regulates and ensures that radio stations and the broadcast media, in general, operates in the public's interest. Commercial radio stations need to make profits in order to pay salaries and other operating expenses and as such radio advertising plays a significant role in each radio station.

Although I have noticed a great number of advertisements, per hour, on the radio stations observed as well as most of MetroFM's prime time shows; there were growing concerns around the steady decline of interest towards radio advertising and advertisers turning to cheaper forms of advertising on-air such as live reads and sponsoring certain show segments and competitions, whilst others opting to produce shorter pre-recorded

advertisements as they are billed according to duration on-air (15 seconds, 30 seconds or longer). MetroFM's programming manager, Segale Mogotsi explains MetroFM's current advertisement placement model, by saying that "we've got what we call Stop Sets. If you listen carefully they [advertisements] are at 10 past, 20-past, 20-to and 10-to [times]. And every block is about 2 and half minutes. That's for revenue. And over and above that we have our own station promos, show promos – that way it's about 3 minutes of advertising. But within an entire show you will have about 9 -12 minutes [an entire show being 180 minutes]" (Personal Interview, September 2009).

During the observation of data, I was drawn to a conclusion that there was a heavy presence of advertising on MetroFM. This perception can be attributed to the fact that presenter-talk and advertisements garner criticism largely because they are talking where they are perceived as not meant to be talking. A kind of 'shut up and play the music' or reverting this to how much tolerance people have when encountering something out of the ordinary or a disturbance that warrants their attention. Mogotsi adds that "it [advertising] is not as much as you think. In fact we make a lot of room for music but while faced with advertising. And we have to advertise. That's our lifeline. That's how we make our money."

Moving away from the prevalence of radio advertising on MetroFM, I would like to note that radio advertising – be it through live reads or pre-recordings – is unlike presenter talk; advertising talk does not merely tell listeners about things but rather tells people how things or their products are connected to their lives (Jhally 2002). Advertising

addresses the listener as an individual and promises fulfilment or happiness or some kind of contention or even reward for indulging in whichever product they are selling. An example of such advertising talk can be exemplified in a 12 May 2009 advertisement, aired on *The Avenue* – pre-recorded and voiced by the Glen Lewis:

[With Background music] Ah, Art Galleries, a world for the sophisticated and privileged but now that's about to change, because the new members are putting a completely new spin on art exhibitions, now showing graffiti artists, glass artists and food artists and if you are an aspiring club DJ they want you to come along. To play at the new member Standard Bank Art Exhibition – send me your five to ten minute mix on CD to MetroFM, P.O Box 91136, Auckland Park, 2006. by the 29<sup>th</sup> of May and from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of June four of the selected DJs will be invited to play on The Avenue and one will be voted as the winner to play at the Standard Bank New Members Art Exhibition and also walk away with R15 000 cash. If you want to party with the winning DJ and experience an evening of pure indulgence visit [standardbank.co.za](http://standardbank.co.za) forward slash achiever for more information. Inspired. Motivated. Involved. DISCLAIMER: Standard Bank is an authorized financial services and registered credit provider.

This is an example of new ways in which advertisers are engaging radio listeners – by using the familiar-to-audience radio station's presenters and offering some kind of incentive for visiting their website and promise an opportunity to win money. This is a move away from the didactic formula of stating your product, what it can do for you and where to get it and at what cost. Unlike radio presenters, advertising does not merely relate to the manner in which people live, act or do things but it goes further to mimick how listeners are dreaming. In this case the Standard Bank New Members Art Exhibitions talks to their aspirations of sophistication and dreaming. Such advertisements

emanate from intensive studies and as Jhally (2002) explains it, advertising is a research intensive industry that wraps up our emotions and sells them back to us (Jhally, 2002).

Part of commercial music radio's talk is heavily laden with commercial undertones, teasers of what is to be expected in the next half hour, or which guests to expect or which competition to expect. It is as if to say radio's talk is 'advertorially', to coin a word, inclined as it seeks to speak to the listener hoping to inform, retain and elicit a reaction from them – be it through calling or emailing.

### **The Performance Nature of Talk: On MetroFM**

Moving away from the actual content of talk, I would like to establish MetroFM as a centre for performance and contextualise it as a stage on which presenters perform.

Firstly, MetroFM is located within the SABC Radio Park, in Auckland Park, as you walk towards the building's main reception desk one encounters MetroFM studios. There are two studios – similarly furnished and equipped with 24inch iMac computers. Through the thick sound proof glass that separates the studio from the reception area one can witness Kenny Maistry present the breakfast show with his co-presenters ambling in and out of the studio. There were newspapers, what appeared to be scripts all orderly arranged in front of Kenny who was scrolling through a local news website – News24 – at the time of my visit. In what almost feels like watching a live performance, without the sound from outside, Kenny and co-presenters gather behind their respective microphone everytime they are about to speak. They glance at one another from time to time as they speak and

signal with hand gestures as to what the next party must do or when they must speak. In the afternoon, the very same space that was occupied by Kenny Maistry was then occupied by Glen Lewis, Unathi Nkayi and Melanie Bala presenting the afternoon drive show. Melanie and Unathi were seated whilst Glenn Lewis stood for most of the show's duration, casually flipping through a newspaper during songs and chatting to his co-presenters. Even when on-air he would continue standing, gesticulating with vigour whenever he had a point to say. Being able to witness, through a glass window, personalities that are received as voices only by listeners personified these presenters which made watching them an even greater spectacle as it afforded me the opportunity to see the faces behind the voices. Before speaking on-air the live spectator can see them taking up their positions on their respective chairs before proceeding with their presenting. And like any other performance the act begins the minute the microphones are switched on.

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 15h12

Glen: It's that time of the afternoon where everything changes – even the kind of food you eat, the menu changes cause you eat what we eat – number 1, it is water, number 2 is ice tea, number 3 popcorns, number 4 biltong. Okay? \*Applause\* The Avenue has landed on your dial on Tuesday afternoon, good afternoon to you and yours! We call the shots until 6 o'clock.

Mel: Howzit?

Glenn: Hey man alright, man.

Mel: Unathi?

Unathi: Good! Busy but good!

Glenn: Had hectic day – I just had my first meal now!

Unathi: Oh, that couldn't have been nice!

From a dramaturgical analytical point of view the first thing I noticed was how Glen Lewis leapt from boringly leaning against the studio desk, reading a newspaper to bursting into vitality shouting “It’s that time of the afternoon where everything changes...” when the microphone was switched-on. To further this performance the presenters proceed to greet one another on-air even though they had been together for approximately 15 minutes before talking. This could be viewed as greeting on behalf of the audience as they proceed to enquire about one another’s day and general wellbeing.

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 15h13

Glen: [continued from above] Yeah, I’ve been up since like seven, and you can imagine the hassle of driving in the morning. Those people who are driving in the morning are upset – they are angry, they were barking at me! They were barking at me! And I just ignored them. I went to Randburg, from Randburg of course I went to rock the Matsantsantsa party koJet Square in Pretoria.

Unathi: How was it?

Glenn: It was great but I was inconvenienced, because there was an accident this morning. One person was killed. I think a truck overturned...

The audience goes from being entertained by Glen Lewis’s traffic antics to being enlightened on a truck accident that took the life of the driver. This kind of talk evokes emotions, empathy and even social actions. The kind of talk that yields actions is performative according to Mills (1959). It is this talk that I seek to investigate further in this study. Being a show that is presented by three people there are certain traits that will occur, namely taking turns to talk, being able to identify cues in which to add to one

another's talk all the while making it seem conversational and inclusive of the listener. Their talk is not poised for an eavesdropper but rather talking with the listener as well, at times on behalf of the listener. It might seem otherwise as the three presenters cue one another by name whenever looking for a response from that particular respondent but in actual fact there is a constant inclusive consciousness that in the midst of their in-studio conversations yields a "What do you think about this topic? I don't agree with you Unathi. Call us on 089 110 33 77." This is a performance in the sense that it occurs amongst individuals who anticipate that their presentation, be it the retelling of the day's events to on-air discussions will be evaluated by an audience. Performances do not always have to entail a visual component and to this Bauman (1977) adds that "language in the performance context is considered creative behaviour; outside the performance it is simply casual" (Bauman, 1977: 17) – which therefore means that within the context of the studio Glen, Unathi, Mel are performers. Therefore in as much as I am analysing their conversations and discourse it must be noted that performance analysis forms part of this study – to provide descriptive and evaluative feedback on the element of talk.

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 15h14

Unathi: Well today being a Tuesday we've got lots of things happening – we're going to be playing with words, after that playing with words and then playing with numbers after that. And then we are going to be just entertaining you – we've got a mix coming up especially for you. And we'll take you home with beautiful advice from Rob Byrne [traffic reporter]. So the moral of the story is *asseblief* please do not change your dial!

Unathi sets the scene on what is to follow and uses this as encouragement not to change radio stations. This can be interpreted as a direct plea or call to action to listeners.

Whether they obey or not, is an individual decision. This type of talk is performative or functionalist in the sense that it yields or requires some form of adherence to what the presenter or performer in this case is requesting.

In an interview for the *MetroSpective: Celebrating 21 Years of MetroFM* (2007), Glen Lewis, was quoted as saying that, “radio is almost like theatre. You cannot afford to make a mistake once you are out there. Everything has to be timed precisely and people will judge you by the way you say things and how you come across” (192). There is always a consciousness that there is someone listening, anticipating something interesting, informative or merely entertaining and it is the role of these presenters in the midst of all the music to provide that performance for the listeners.

### **Listeners and conclusion: MetroFM**

This chapter on MetroFM has made numerous references to listeners and as much as my research was not specifically audience related, I will incorporate some findings and reflections from respondents to offer some insight on MetroFM listeners and their perceptions of the station.

At MetroFM there is a conscious acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining listeners – from the current station manager, Matona Sakupwanya, to past managers such as Lesley Ntloko (station manager from 2000 to 2005) and Romeo Khumalo (station

manager from 1996 to 2000). Sakupwanya maintains that the biggest draw card of radio, compared to other media, is its level of being personal with their listeners, “Nobody can take away your relationship with a DJ [presenter] or talk-show host. Yes, other media will be chipping away at radio listenership but radio is not about to die; it is for us to work hard and keep our listeners” (MetroSpective 2007:189). Meanwhile former manager, Lesley Ntloko, was quoted as saying “MetroFM is a brand its listeners feel they own, and they’re very possessive about it, so they can sometimes be cruel in terms of who they want to see in the driver’s seat ... right down to the station’s line up of DJs” (MetroSpective, 2007: 160).

An example of what Ntloko says about its listeners was corroborated by a 1 April 2009 on-air presenter change – in which Thomas Msengeni (known as Bad Boy T) was replaced with a former MetroFM presenter, Kenny Maistry. The hostility was tangible as listeners formed groups deploring the redeployment of Kenny Maistry, others insisting the station brings back Thomas Msengeni.

Below are some anonymously listed listener views, noted on the MetroFM Facebook group discussion page, which exemplify how personally involved listeners got when changes were effected on MetroFM:

“we cant go on like this...Thomas must be brought back...”

“I miss Thomas..the breakfast show and the family is not the same again”

“tomas used to rock the mornings with his team. metro r starting to screw up big tym nowadays... tomas was a big asset”

“Where is Thomas? Kenny since he left the station years back, he is no longer the same, i used to wake up to Thomas, now i prefer listening to Music Videos on Channel O. No offence, but it was a bad move replacing Thomas.”

There are many more comments to this effect on the discussion titled, “Where is Bad Boy T?” And I use this as but one of many examples in which listeners can become personally acquainted with their chosen radio station. What is it that forms such relationships, as Sakupwanya noted, between listeners and radio presenters? The answer lies within this element of talk and on-air performance. If Thomas Msengeni’s role on-air was set to simply pressing the “Play” button and merely back announcing songs, reading announcements and advertisements, I doubt listeners would connect with him on the level they appeared to. Nor would they connect with any other radio presenter if all their roles rigidly suppressed any form of them showing their own personality traits through ad libbing, conversations and chatter between songs. It is that allowance to talk that connects listeners with the presenters. The music might be seen as the main attraction to the radio station, yet over time presenters also become attractions to radio stations.

The question then lies in how presenters or their talk attracts listeners? The answer would lie in the perceptions of talk and roles of presenters as defined by listeners. Here are a few responses on the question of “Why do you think presenters talk on ‘music’ radio stations? What could the role of their talk on-air be? Or what function does it serve?”

Nangamso Sapula (female, Johannesburg):

If they played just music it would be boring, I actually enjoy it when they discuss

izinto ezidla imizi (uyakutolika) [things that are topical or burning issues], like this one time they were talking abt isimilo sika Malema [Julius Malema's behaviour] and people called in and expressed their views. We need to keep up with current affairs.

Bhoza Mphela (male, Johannesburg):

Radio will not be stimulating if it was just music and no talk. I listen to radio to keep up with what is happening and at times to hear other people's views whatever these may be. The role of the radio station is edutainment and of course the big role of introducing new artists to the public.

Itumeleng Muhulatsi (male, Johannesburg):

Presenters talk because that is what the listener is tuned in for. As much as listeners also tune in for their favourite music as well as the latest, talk is what brings them back to that station rather than listening to their CDs, DMX, etc.

Moa Lindh (female, Cape Town):

They talk because it's in their job description. The role of talk is to give radio a "human face", and for DJ's to promote themselves as "brands".

Lubabalo Leve (male, Cape Town):

I think they're there to entertain people, get people thinking about certain topics (political, gossip, entertainment etc) they might bring up on the show for discussion.

Philipa Ndisi Hermann (female, Cape Town):

role models, provokers of ideas for population - they should make us think and allow platform, not too opinionated, Glen [Lewis] is the model presenter

Eric Snyders (male, Johannesburg):

we need these people to help us laugh at ourselves, remind us of certain things in the world yet not preach to us or bore us for too long. Tell us what we want to hear and let us make up our own minds, do not influence us, keep it short and to the point.

The respondents herein consented to giving their names and locations. Other respondents who identified MetroFM as their favourite station of choice also pointed out that talk on-air must serve to keep in touch with listeners, advertise, entertain, be funny and as long as they have content and not be merely 'waffling'. These responses were not only a reflection of MetroFM and the content they produce but also a reflection of the relationship that exists between listeners and their chosen radio stations. Through talk people are able to experience and reproducing their cultures, their roles as well as project their personalities. Each individual, unless born mute or disabled, is able to work with other people via talk be it on an instructive level or purely receiving orders. Social actions and practices are generally accomplished through talk and interacting with other talk capable individuals; in other words we are all, according to Moerman (1998) "tongued creatures of the social order."

The next chapter, studies the case of 5FM and its nature of talk.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CASE STUDY: 5FM**

In the previous chapter I descriptively analysed the nature of talk of MetroFM, in the following chapter I will proceed to use the same conventions of analysis employed in this study to examine the performative nature of talk on 5FM.

5FM refers to itself, on its website as a diverse Contemporary Hits Radio stations that is fast-paced and harbours a “youthful mindset” that targets a core audience aged between 20 and 25 years, within higher Living Standards Measures (LSM) of 7 to 9 (5FM website). Their primary audience is aged between 16 and 34 years old; LSM 6-10.

In 2005, 5FM’s core market was within the age range of between 20 to 30 years. In the early 2000s, under the programming management of Nick Grubb, the radio station started repositioning itself for a younger listenership and older, recognisable presenters such as Kevin Savage and Tony Blewitt were removed from the line-ups and younger presenters were brought in. 5FM was perceived as a white music radio station, whereas MetroFM could have fallen into the category of a black music station. These racial definitions were largely based on the genres of music prevalent on each radio station, and what audience was more likely to listen to it. 5FM started moving away from its trademark alternative rock music to more chart-topping songs, and hence today they are known as a Contemporary Hits Radio (CHR) format. An interview that explains these changes, and

repositioning was conducted with the current programming manager, Vukile Zondi, who also explains some of the programming rationale on 5FM. As of November 2009, 5FM's listenership was recorded at around 2.048 million listeners (SAARF, 2009). A significant growth from the 1.67 million listeners they held during the same period in 2008. In past previous years 5FM's listenership had hovered around the 1 million mark with little or no growth beyond 1.3 million.

In attempting to understand 5FM's market growth, I spoke to the SABC's head of Market Intelligence, Angie Hammond, who acknowledged some key areas of growth. "One of the key reasons for the stagnation in audiences in 5FM is that they had reached their ceiling – all their white listeners left school and went overseas and there were no more new listeners... It [the station – 5FM] deliberately went and tried to broaden its scope, by targeting the youth – black and white youth. In fact recent RAMS show a significant growth in Soweto. We're all very excited about that" (Personal Interview, May 2009). However to relate this background information on 5FM it is important to note that, a radio station cannot necessarily attract new listeners or grow its market by merely changing its music. Presenters play a significant role in growing audiences and the following segment on Prime Time presenters will explain this.

### **Prime Time Presenters: 5FM**

One of the first things to note when discussing 5FM presenters is that their shows are titled with the main presenter's name – for instance the Gareth Cliff morning breakfast

show is known as *Gareth Cliff on 5FM Mornings* and even other shows outside the parameters of prime time shows such as the *Rob Vember Show*, *The Sasha Martinengo Show* and so forth. Prominence of the presenters name is prevalent so as to assert the on-air personality. Programming manager, Vukile Zondi, confirmed this by saying “5FM follows a personality radio style format - which means that it’s a lot less structured and guided. Our guys have more space to kind of let their creativity run” (Personal interview, May 2009).

This should not detract from the fact that 5FM is first a contemporary hits music radio station and secondly a personality radio station, but should rather serve as affirmation that 5FM acknowledges the role of their presenters in on-air product they broadcast. “With the young market – you need people who are personalities [on-air]. You need people who have an opinion and you need people who have a unique personality that keeps the listener drawn to them.” (Zondi, Personal Interview, May 2009)

Without taking away from the ‘music radio’ station title, I again, move to placing emphasis on what was noted in the MetroFM chapter by stating that music alone cannot guarantee listeners. Even the presenter’s musical taste has no bearing on the actual music on-air. By this I mean that 5FM’s DJ Fresh could be renowned for being a club DJ that specialises in dance music. On-air he does not and cannot play an entire four hours of dance music as he is restricted by a pre-selected music play list. Such play lists are researched by each radio station’s music department and preset to rotate and play pre-selected songs, at specific times. There will be songs a listener enjoys and songs a listener

does not enjoy. Zondi adds that, “with the advent of iPods and all kinds of choices out there – the listener will need more than just the music to lure them. You’ll need the personality of the DJ [presenter] to actually keep you company. Otherwise you could just have an iPod playing your perfect selection of songs.”

During the course of my brief audience research I found that Gareth Cliff, who presents the breakfast show, appeals across racial lines. Black and white respondents showed an admiration for his condescending, witty and relevant on-air mannerism. DJ Fresh, who presents the afternoon drive show, was also rated highly due to his charm, warmth, humour and relevance to the listeners. This will be expanded upon towards the end of this chapter. In understanding what it is that attracts listeners to these presenters one has to assess the actual nature of their talk on-air.

### **The nature of talk on 5FM**

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 06h23

Gareth: [whistles] The Flash Republic with Stars on 5. Twenty three after six. So er Madiba’s grandson - Mandla Mandela – was sworn in as an MP yesterday. And President Jacob Zuma said he reckons Mandla will lead the country one day. How’s that? Talk about a nice endorsement. He just turned 30 now. So he still has a long way to go. But that’s cool – at 30 years old to me a member of parliament. Huh? To be tipped to take over one day! But then I suppose if you’re Madiba’s grandson that kind of thing tends to happen every now and again. What else is happening? You might have woken up this morning wondering what’s going on in this world. Well the Pope is in Isreal and Star Trek is Number 1 at the Box Office. Those are not related.

Although the above talk seems random, it appears to be highly informed talk that talks about current affairs as well as inviting the listener to think about current happenings around the world. When analysing talk on 5FM, I noted that there were certain signature utterances prevalent in all shows. Presenters will at all times identify their radio station – in which case Gareth Cliff refers to it as “5” throughout. Time is announced. And whichever song was played will be back announced. Then there is the running commentary which features highly on the morning show. It is mostly commentary that is factual, relevant and at times news. In other words there was substance or content in what Gareth Cliff delivers on-air. Unlike MetroFM presenters there is no heavy reliance on game shows or competitions, plus the presenter seems to naturally present material he might have scripted as mere spontaneous talk. There is also an active level of emotions that can be sensed as Gareth Cliff spoke – which led me into categorising him into what Crissell (1986) terms an “emotive presenter”, whereas on other radio stations such as MetroFM and 94.5KFM you are likely to encounter referential presenters who tend to shield their emotions or pretend to exude particular emotions depending on the script they are reading. With Gareth Cliff there is a sense of genuine emotion – be it contempt, anger, happiness it is easily discernable in his talk. He could actively select content that triggers his emotions and thus find creative ways of relaying this information.

Content-wise, the main requirement is staying relevant and producing content that is in line with our market, which is an inherently young at heart market. If you look at youth culture at this moment and the speed at which it changes that implies quite an involved requirement. The basic rule is to keep within the parameters of the BCCSA [Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa] and then I manage them by doing weekly meetings with them and just re-looking and scrutinizing what it is that they are doing and whether it is in line with the listenership and is relevant. (Vukile Zondi, Personal interview, May 2009.

Zondi further explains some of these “main requirements” he refers to as possessing a sense of humour, being light-hearted, fun and knowledgeable on youth trends – whether it be current affairs, sports, gadgets. “It doesn’t mean you must go there and read that stuff out and regurgitate it to the listener, but it means that you must be able to engage with the listener due to the fact that you are immersed in youth culture, which is also kind of a prerequisite [to become a presenter]” he adds.

In lieu of these talk requirements I am also aware of scholarly literature ahead of my study that suggests any attempt to define or analyse radio’s talk as being misguided and futile an exercise due to the nature of contemporary talk on radio. Talk on-air might seem unscripted and is often said to an attempt at being spontaneous , whilst filled with a large amount of ‘rambling’ – yet Crisell (1992) suggests that talk is meant to be fluent, precise orderly and less defuse and tautological, than everyday conversational speech.

Listening to Gareth Cliff’s show one gets the sense that there are no scripts in-studio –the presenter and co-hosts speak spontaneously and in the most natural unstaged manner.

They are very conversational, whilst aware of a listenership.

Recorded 12 January 2010-01-15

Time:

Gareth: Five minutes after six. Tuesday morning. Stretch and yawn baby. It’s the only way you’re going to wake up. [pauses] uhm. This whole thing about how the world cup is now suddenly dangerous because some idiot – I think it was a British newspaper wrote “We’re not so sure we should go to the world cup anymore!” you know? “It could be dangerous, there was a shooting in Angola!”

That's like saying everytime a druglord in Mexico shoots someone – we shouldn't go to America because they neighbours! You know? And were not even neighbours with Angola – they're two countries away for God sake. Calm down. Not everything in Africa is linked you idiots. Look at a map. I mean really. Look at a map! I'm not going anywhere near France because in Hungary, about three years ago someone shot someone on a train.

Mabale: [laughs]

Gareth: What stupid nonsense is this! Frightened white people. Don't worry. They happen every now and then. It's six after six good morning.

In as much as this might seem conversational, it appears that, Gareth Cliff selects newsworthy topics on websites, newspapers before commenting on-air. Together with his co-hosts they discuss it and thereafter present it in the simplest conversational tone – as if said in passing, in between songs. What is being discussed is topical and recent news and his sentiments resonate with some South Africans who have read or have seen the story in Angola and how it has been related to South Africa's World Cup. But without being didactic or reading this news feature off a script he personalises it, then proceeds to provide analogies to vivify the absurdity of the report from his perspective. His tone does however sound condescending and to a certain degree annoyed - which means he is being himself and afterall, human, which is what the listener can relate to. Another thing to note in Gareth Cliff's speech pattern is how his talk sounds like an unscripted conscious stream of thought – which he achieves by pausing, breathing and being unpretentious (by not putting on a voice or sounding like he is acting). His voice does not seem like a

traditional radio type voice and one can even get the impression he is slouching over the microphone when bored or sitting straight up when excited. There is something in his talk that is natural, visual and full of emotions.

Zondi describes Gareth Cliff's talk as follows, "Gareth pisses off a lot of people and that may be. And people will stay and listen to the show because the guy is opinionated and more often than not, he may get emotional and push personal vendettas into it which he is entitled to as a free speaking society and we have the BCCSA [Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa] to keep us in check with that. But people do respect people who are opinionated, not just any opinion but an informed opinion. So he is highly opinionated but he balances that opinion with 1) being very informed and 2) having a very dynamic team that is able to criticize him if not on-air but off-air to kind of balance things out and maintain the cross-over appeal that he has."

In mentioning a team that supports and criticizes Gareth Cliff, I became acutely aware of a secondary role of co-hosts in all shows encountered, across all three stations, observed – that they actually speak on behalf of the listener in instances where listeners cannot instantaneously call in and respond to the main presenter's talk, in this case Gareth Cliff. An example being:

Recorded on 12 January 2009

Time: 06h39

Gareth: Can't get a break. I joked about him [Tiger Woods] just a second ago. This Rachel Uchutaw [Russian accent] who is one of the 512 girls that he's been with,

besides his wife in the last while. She's like the first option. First right of refusal. She doesn't stop talking. She has not stopped talking to anyone who will listen!

Mabale: what did she want with Tiger's life?

Gareth: Well she's saying "Ah we've got such a great relationship and Tiger gave her money and sex for Christmas!"

Leigh-Ann: Goodness me. [All in disgust, say "Eeuw!"]

Leigh-Ann: some people would really like just that for Christmas.

Gareth: She also says that she wants to have his children once he's divorced!

[All in studio: Oh wow!]

Mabale: Isn't that lovely and sweet?

Gareth: This chick just keeps opening her fat mouth – to talk out of turn.

Daemon: You know what? Tiger needs to drop this, this, this gossiping whore as soon as possible. I mean, I sound terrible. But, but how else can you say it?

Leigh-Ann: please Daemon!

The listener's curiosity on "what has Rachel now said about Tiger Woods?" is conveyed through Mabale's enquiry. Expressions of disgust which might be shared by the listener are conveyed through Leigh-Ann's sentiment of "Goodness Me!" During the course of their talk one gets the sense that they are controlling one another, critiquing one another

and even censoring one another – a case in point being Daemon’s obscene “whore” references, which might not resonate well with the listener and are cut off by Leigh-Ann’s “Please Daemon!” This type of talk may appear to be in-studio banter, but one must take into account that the co-hosts and presenter are fully aware of an audience and as such seek to entertain, evoke emotions, stimulate the minds of this audience with their opinions and commentary. In its performative outcome, such talk could yield complaints to the radio station or compliments or calls, from listeners, that seek to contribute to the discussion. And here one has to note that a listener might call in, without having been invited by the presenter to contribute. It is then the decision of the co-hosts, producer and main presenter to allow the door-stepping caller to contribute on air.

Uninvited call-ins could be as a result of a particular trait, in the nature of Gareth Cliff’s on-air talk, in which he does not make any overt distinction when talking to the listener or his co-hosts. In other words he could easily say “What do you think?” without necessarily saying to which “you” – co-presenters or listeners? But co-presenters would know as they have the visual advantage. Listeners might attend to this “What do you think?” invitation or ignore it and let the co-hosts contribute.

Recorded on: 12 January 2010

Time: 06h13

Gareth: Thirteen after six. It’s Hey Soul Sister with Train on 5. And before that Le Roux with I’m not your Toy. Well who is? I mean – huh? How are **you** doing this morning? How busy was **your** first day at work? If it wasn’t then maybe you started last week – but – I had such a full day yesterday I’m, I’m exhausted already.

Mabale: Ja! It did feel like a long Monday.

Gareth then continues to talk about his activities of the previous day and the co-hosts continue to add and reply to his “How busy was your first day at work?” question.

Although unclear as to who is being addressed – audience or co-hosts? Listeners do call in and share or relate their first day at work after their holidays. This uncertainty is a result of Gareth Cliff nonchalant, carefree manner of on-air presence which does not directly invite listeners to call in, yet the purpose in his address is to invite them. This could be done to avoid a sense of desperation for listeners to call in, by merely saying it in passing. Whereas other radio stations make it blatantly clear that “it is now time to call us”, Gareth Cliff rarely mentions the radio station phone number, which could be an indication that he knows he is addressing people who are familiar with the radio station and likely to already know the number. To further make listeners feel included on the show is the fact that listeners call in, and are screened by the producer and thereafter in the middle of a conversation Gareth Cliff will just include a listener randomly, without saying “We have got so and so on the line” an example being whilst Gareth is speaking about people who irritate him on the first day at work from holiday, he turns to ask someone else opinion with a simple “What do you think?” Listeners are not aware of who this person is until he replies as follows:

Recorded on: 12 January 2010

Time: 06h22

Caller: Howzit guys?

Gareth: Yeah, what’s up?

Caller: You know what irritates me is all the people that come back all happy, relaxed

from the holiday and all the people that have worked through have to sit there, see them smiling telling everyone how great their holiday was!

Gareth: “Oh Bali was terrific!” and you’re sitting there thinking “So what!? So was the office every day!”

Caller: Ja! Exactly.

Gareth: you know what you do? You quietly sit there and then you plot their demise

Caller: ha ha ha ja, I’m trying, I’m working on it!

Gareth: Alright dude good luck.

Caller: Thanks hey!

Gareth: Cheers buddy. Good luck with work this week. And good luck with school tomorrow if you starting! It’s twenty four after six.

This caller has yielded the indirect invitation to contribute to the topic and hand.

Therefore proving that Gareth’s talk was effective and did resonate with some listeners – as they proceeded to relate the caller’s experience and offer him advice ‘to plot their [co-workers] demise’.

At this stage, I would like to point out that during the course of transcribing Gareth Cliff’s talk I got the impression that Gareth Cliff talks a lot, that there was far too much chatter on-air. But upon looking at the actual amount of time spent talking and the number of songs, it was still more music than talk – at an approximate 20% talk and 80% music ratio. In understanding the perception of too much talk, Angie Hammond’s research team at the SABC found that “its never that there is too much talk – you can go and count, we have done that, we have gone and taken tapes and said ‘but listen he played so many tracks in his show, he plays more music that he talks’ and he’d actually following the programmes format. So the DJ is not talking too much. Something else is

the matter and that's the key thing about talk on a commercial station; it has got to connect to your listeners" (Angie Hammond, Personal interview, May 2009).

As noted in the transcripts herein, Gareth Cliff appears to be knowledgeable and well-experienced with the medium of radio, yet Cliff is an example of a bad taste presenter thriving on-air. By this I mean that as an emotional presenter he is prone to getting emotional with listeners, with no form of restraint and being able to go as far as calling listener, "stupid" or being condescending towards them whenever they are not making sense of conversations he has brought up on his show. Gamlin (1947) viewed condescension towards listeners as "the fatal chink in the broadcaster's armour" (45) that arouses hostility should listeners sense they are being talked down upon. "Don't patronise the listener. If he takes the trouble to listen to you, the least you can do is to return the courtesy by treating him as you would treat a friend – naturally and respectfully" (Gamlin, 1947: 45).

Gareth Cliff's radio personality and on-air track record has been built on amateurish, often outrageously funny, sometimes mockingly bad taste which have ensured he attracts or repels listeners.

Some examples of Gareth Cliff's on-air bad taste tactics have made news headlines across the country. On 16 December 2009 a former minister of health, Manto Tshabalala Msimang passed away from liver complication and Gareth Cliff's comments were as follows on a social networking site – Twitter: "Manto is dead. Good. A selfish and

wicked bungler of the lowest order. Rotten attitude and rancid livers - all three of them."

(source: <http://twitter.com/GarethCliff> )

In 2004 5FM received numerous complaints over comments Gareth Cliff had made about mentally ill people, where he had said on-air "mentally ill people should be chained in a cell and fed porridge!"

In 2004, as well, he was suspended for making derogatory comments about Jesus and religion in general. He has been suspended on numerous occasions and complaints from listeners are laid against him on a regular basis, yet he continues to be on-air.

On several occasions I noted the words "Bitch", "Whore", "Asshole", "Bloody stupid idiot" and many more obscenities that would be deemed unsuitable for family radio, yet Gareth Cliff is able to utter such words, perhaps because radio listeners at the time of his show (between 06h00 and 9h00) are generally busy, preparing for work or school, driving to work and doing other things in the mornings whilst not fully paying attention. Words such as "Bitch" could perhaps act to catch attention, as the listener might not have been attentively listening and as such a word such as "Whore" might shock, disgust and even attract their attention further to here why the presenter said this. In defending himself and his crude choice of words at times, Gareth Cliff was quoted as saying: "I believe language is a mighty tool and that crude language - although it should rather be avoided - is a reality to most young people. Our generation is very straightforward."

(Swearing No Shock says Cliff, News24, September 2006)

In whatever words chosen by the presenter - be they rude, informative, humourous – there appears to be a conscious acknowledgement that someone is listening and someone is going to react or must react. Listeners must feel or do in a particular manner owing to what has been said on-air. Commercial music radio's talk, in this case 5FM, is effective owing to the presenters subject choices, vitality and on-air presentation style which is unpretentious, opinionated, yet relevant to the listener.

### **Stylistic On-air Creations on 5FM**

5FM, as mentioned earlier, is a radio station that has been transforming itself to accommodate new audiences. The music has changed from its 1990's heavy alternative rock influence to a much more contemporary hits radio format. In changing the music to much more trendy and contemporary hits, there has also been a move towards changing presenters to reflect the contemporariness of the music. This meant introducing younger or relevant presenters who could match the pace of the station's new feel. Around 2003, 5FM's on-air line-up changed to include the likes Alex Jay, Mark Gillman, Derek Richardson, Ian Fraser and Sasha Martinego to name a few. These presenters were directly aimed at a target audience aged between 16 and 24 years. What set them apart from previous 5FM presenters is that they did not present in the formulaic broadcaster's voice and above all they were personalities that were loud, opinionated and generally conversational.

From from 1 April 2005 further changes were made with the likes of Zuraida Jardine

moved to a prime time show and the introduction of the young Elana Afrika also happened in the same period. Sasha Martinengo and Ian F teamed up for a new show. Older presenters such as Barney Simon and Derek "The Bandit" were dropped of the schedule (Bizcommunity, March 2005)

Unlike MetroFM it became hard to define the exact stylistic creations of talk that 5FM presenters were accustomed to, because they are not specifically defined as possessing a unique style of presenting. Each presenter on 5FM came with their own personality. There was no formula or adaptation or prescribed way of talking on-air. For example Mark Gilman had a screechy, high pitch voice and other presenters were fast and energetic speakers. They all differed, whereas on MetroFM there are signature radio shows that carry deep, mellow, voices to match the music. The programming manager at the time of 5FM's schedule changes in 2005, was Nick Grubb. Grubb viewed presenters as entertainers and knew that radio had changed:

If you go on air at this or any other station, and your link consists of "that was Song So-and-so, and up next its artist Whatever, and the time is X" – I would like to inform you that you have been replaced.

(Grubb, University of Pretoria Speech, 2007)

Grubb, in a presentation made at the University of Pretoria in 2007, was outlining how radio presenter styles had changed and what types of presenters radio stations such as 5FM were now seeking to introduce. "I want people with opinions, people who take the time to understand what's going on around them, and can relate their perspectives to others. Its one thing to be a good communicator, but *what have you got* to communicate?"

I want interesting people – how interesting are you? Remember the first question? “Do I care?” – well if you don’t find yourself or the world around you interesting, maybe you should consider banking” said Grubb.

Recorded on: 13 May 2009

Time: 15h10

DJ Fresh: Very, very, very nice! Soul Searcher on 5FM, Can’t Get Enough – the Hendrik B remix. Ten minutes after three. Welcome to the Fresh Drive on 5FM, hopefully you are able to stick around seven. If not we’ll accept whatever time you can dedicate to us – we’re not really fussy I mean. 90 minutes? Whatever! We just glad you take out even a minute to be with us.

This short introduction is taken from afternoon drive time show or *The Fresh Drive*, as an example of what traits of talk, 5FM presenters engage in at times. Listeners are welcomed, song back announced, station identified and then the presenters attitude is demonstrated immediately as being a bit care-free in the sense that they do not really care whether you listen all the way or not but are able to whenever you can. The reason I have chosen this particular section of the show is to show the formulaic nature of DJ Fresh’s talk which contrast Nick Grubb’s expectations of presenters. DJ Fresh is one of 5FM’s new generation presenters who joined the station in July 2006 and previously held a position as a presenter on a Gauteng youth radio station, YFM, for over eight years. He had also released numerous music compilation albums and was well-known across the country’s club and dance music scene. Therefore it would be a safe assumption to say that DJ Fresh was included in 5FM’s line-up largely based on who he is. His signature deep yet friendly voice and quick wit, with an attitude enabled him to fit into the 5FM targeted evolving listenership.

Yet, on air, I noted that DJ Fresh, consistently back announces, gives the time, and proceeds to state what will follow on the show.

Time: 15h30

DJ Fresh: Fifteen thirty one, the Oreal Haste Project on 5FM, Take it slow. Here's Poppy with your headlines. Owen Hanning next with your sport.

Time: 15h39

DJ Fresh: fifteen thirty nine, Shirley on 5FM and Took the Knife ...[continues to talk about a Sexpo]

I noticed this rigid formula in DJ Fresh's presentation, which perhaps occurs out of habit and is covered up by his interesting, relevant topics of discussion and commentary on news events as well as his observations. It is therefore through his talk – the manner or authoritative tone in which he styles his talk and positions his talk – that attracts people to listen to him. Although one of the down-sides of presenting an afternoon show is that it is less talk and more music, I noticed that compared to the breakfast show, DJ Fresh had very limited time intervals in between songs in which he would attempt to squeeze in as much talk as possible. Talk of the afternoon show averaged 10% and music made up for more than 90%. The nature of this talk was not fast, it was not pacy, but well enunciated and conversational throughout. This reaffirmed the fact that 5FM looks for diverse personalities who do not conform to restrictions but are themselves on-air. Gamlin (1947) suggested that by being yourself on-air and not as you would like the listener to think you are, a presenter can thrive on radio.

### **Commercial nature of talk on 5FM**

One of the many critiques levelled against the broadcast media is the advent of advertising, more specifically the perceived abundance thereof. Many listeners have often stated that there is too much advertising on radio whereas upon close inspection one will find that the average number of advertisements per hour on the three chosen radio stations is between nine to twelve inserts of no more than 30 seconds each. There are also station identity jingles and semi-advertisements which are interspersed through the shows. Therefore how is it that something so minimal in presence within each radio show can take centre stage as a pitfall of radio?

In answering this question it is best to analyse the nature of radio advertisements – its talk, style and language used to speak to the listener. It is largely because these inserts due to their catchy production require the listener to pay attention and paying attention to something you least pay attention to might seem like an eternity as these advertisements are directly speaking to the listener and the listener is paying attention to what they perceive or are told is a music radio station.

Example of advertisement on *The Fresh Drive*:

Voice-over artist: It's time you take the next step in life, and at UNISA its as easy as one two three. One all new students registering for their second semester must apply first before 29 May 2009 by internet, fax or post. Two current students and approved applicants can register for the second semester from 26 June to 16 July, study material will be couriered. And three reach the top. So SMS UNISA to three two six nine two or visit [cao.ac.za](http://cao.ac.za) SMS charged at one rand.

This advertisement is 30 seconds long in length and attempts to be as informative as possible. And therein lies the problem. By trying to say a lot it sounds as if it is long. And this is how talk on commercial music radio can be judged. In as much as the presenters on air talk – they usually present one idea or piece of commentary at a time and not attempt to summarise all their ideas in one interval. Listeners of commercial music radio, noted, during the audience research of this thesis, that there was too much advertising, yet upon closer inspection the advertising was limited to no more than 15 minutes of advertising per hour of each show analysed. Programming manager, Vukile Zondi, explains why their advertising is limited by saying that “beyond that [15 minutes per hour] we’ll have a situation where you have no programming. You have no content. Especially if we are trying to put out more music than content. So advertising is what pays the bills and it’s what allows us to pay high profile presenters and not only high profile but highly professional presenters as well. We have a commercial imperative, or our imperative is commercial” (Personal interview, May 2009)

Another observation made on the commercial nature of talk on 5FM is that there is close to little or none of it within the presenter’s actual talk on-air. And by this I mean that I did not encounter live reads of advertisements on-air by presenters such as Gareth Cliff and DJ Fresh in the recorded shows. Nor did I hear any product endorsements in their talk. Instead all forms of commercials or advertisements were pre-recorded and played as separate entities from the presenters’ talk. “We do not want to bombard the listener with advertising because at the end of the day that is going to chase the listener away. So there

is a distinct line drawn between advertising and programming. And that is a very very important thing – especially in a commercial radio station – to draw that line where advertising and revenue generation can't encroach unduly on programming" (Vukile Zondi, Personal Interview, May 2009).

Zondi continues to state that unlike other radio stations that feature power spots, embedded advertisements and sponsored show sections, 5FM is hesitant to embrace this form of advertising, and whenever they do decide to incorporate it, they take into account how it will affect the listener or how it fits with their programming style. For instance, a youth associated brand, could sponsor a music mix or on-air competition without sounding as a blatant form of advertising.

This section is therefore shorter than the rest, as unlike other radio stations, the commercial nature of talk was less prevalent during the observation and recording period of this station. It must be noted that, that this does not mean it does not occur and that live reads or embedded forms of advertising do not occur on 5FM. However, during the course of this study, the recorded shows did not feature such forms of advertising. And wherever done during non-recorded shows it was conducted quickly and in subtle ways, which affirmed that 5FM was aware of their audience's possible response to commercial overloading or blatant ways of trying to sell them products on-air. I therefore move to the next section, that looks at the performative nature of talk on 5FM.

## **The Performance Nature of Talk on 5FM**

On a denotative level 5FM is located in the SABC Radio Park building a few metres away from MetroFM – they are separated by a staff canteen where various presenters and SABC staff gather for meals. 5FM is also encased within sound proof glass windows which revealed presenters sitting behind 24-inch iMac computers – one screen faces the reception area and as such reveals what the presenter is viewing online. The set up is identical to MetroFM’s set up and there is also a second studio in which the next presenter prepares for their show. DJ Fresh and his team were getting ready in the second studio, whilst Grant [who presents the 12h00 to 15h00 show before DJ Fresh) packed his laptop away and together with Anele said their goodbyes to listeners in the first studio. The next set of presenters pull close to their microphones and ready themselves for their four hour performance on-air.

The same observations were made for the Gareth Cliff show during my visit there. Gareth Cliff sat behind the main desk, with his arms folded on top of it, a few pieces of paper were scattered in front of him and the microphone was positioned on the side of his mouth not in front – to give him a clearer view of the co-presenters in front of him. Or perhaps for him to forget the presence of a microphone. All 5FM presenters observed during my visit presented in a seated position. I note this because Gamlin (1947) once observed that “it is obviously not easy to speak in a sitting position as it is when one is standing” (pg 23). It is also not easy to perform and sound lively whilst seated in a chair behind a microphone and desk, yet the radio presenters observed, across all three radio stations – with the exception of MetroFM’s Glen Lewis who stands throughout his show

– were able to fully perform on-air without giving the impression that they were seated.

I have come to conclude that performing on-air is not a natural situation however good a presenter might be or might make it seem. They are at the end of the day performing in front of a microphone, possibly with a script if not a show clock – and as such radio presenting should continuously be seen for what it is, an oral performance, without the aid of visual components. All their acting lies within their voices and the sounds they can improvise on-air (clap hands, crumple paper and so forth). Yet they are able to perform and entertain listeners for periods of up to four hours in one tiny cubicle or studio.

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 06h10

Gareth: Ten after six with Hooper Stank on 5, So Close So Far. And before that Kevin Roudoulf with Welcome to the World [singing it]. So here we are! We've got Leigh-ass Asmal

[All Clap]

Leigh-Ann: Hello!

Gareth: She does the news! In case you've never heard us before – there's Si-ass du Plessis – he does the Sport!

[All Clap]

Gareth: And there's Nqabale Moloi who does the traffic!

[All Claps]

Mabale: Or Mabale – that works!

Gareth: I haven't said anyone's name properly! I call her Leigh-ass, I call him Si-ass and for you Nqabale!

Mabale: And what do you call yourself?

Gareth: I don't know! And then there's Damien Kalvare who's the assistant to the executive producer Thabo Modisane [sings it]

[All clap]

Gareth: Awu! Awu! Ja, I said Thabo's name properly!

Mabale: You have to!

Leigh-Ann: It's in your contract.

The above transcription is an introduction to the 12 May breakfast show. It is clearly staged and planned. And shows a level of preparation in which Gareth briefed his co-hosts on how he was going to start the show and what their responses should be to each announcement of character – clapping and cheering. They are therefore aware of the fact that they are being observed and the fact that they are performing. Theatrics such as adding “ass” to Leigh-Ann and Sias's names form part of the humour and wit Gareth Cliff performs on air. Having a look at the afternoon drive show and comparing the introduction, I observed the following:

Recorded on 13 May 2009

Time: 15h11

DJ Fresh: Pops [Poppy] how you doing?

Poppy: So good! So fab. How you guys?

DJ Fresh: Very fabulous scarf you've got there!

Poppy: [laughs]

DJ Fresh: Is it an accessory or is it, are you feeling cold?

Poppy: No, I'm freezing today.

DJ Fresh: You can never tell with women sometimes.

Poppy: usually it is an accessory. But today its cold. My neck is freezing.

DJ Fresh: Anele came to work in her socks!

Poppy: Oh, those shoes!? Ja! She says Beyonce and Rihanna have things like that!

DJ Fresh: Oh, so Beyonce and Rihanna wear those!?

Poppy: Ja.

DJ: The knitted boots?

Catherine: What's wrong with that?

DJ Fresh: They look like socks!

In this above section, the main presenter, DJ Fresh, greets his co-host Poppy and

ascertains her well-being. This is also staged as the presenters had met earlier and spent time together whilst preparing for their show, yet once on-air an act that leads the listener to believe that the presenters are also making initial contact when they first speak on air, like they are making initial contact with listeners when they first speak on-air. It appears to be an inclusive kind of performance that ensures that the listener is on the same page with the presenters.

And much like actors entering a stage, one would notice items of clothing worn by the actors and in this instance DJ Fresh draws a picture of Poppy – through her scarf, as well as Anele – through the type of boots she was wearing. What sets this talk apart from any other form of talk is not the fact that it is descriptive, but rather the fact that it attempts to create a picture of what is said. Boots are described as socks or knitted boots and that immediately conjures an image of thin, wool, sock-like shoes. And all of this lies in words or talk of the presenter. Zondi adds that, “when you talk you accompany, you are the company that comes with that music, which means that when you talk you can’t be telling me about your mother or your experience with the traffic. If you’re going to be telling me about your experience with the traffic, paint the picture in my mind so that it makes sense. Give it some kind of relevance otherwise I could just say ‘The Traffic is bad! So what?’ Radio is about painting a picture to the person who is listening to you and for you to be able to paint a picture you’ve got to be relevant, so tell me about something that I actually care about and you’ve got to be able to speak creatively so that I can paint that picture in my mind. And that’s really where the difference is between a good DJ and a bad DJ. Gareth will describe something to you and you’ll be able to see it and relate to

it and so will Fresh and other guys. And that's where the craft lies." (Personal Interview, May 2009).

Below I have chosen an excerpt from the Gareth Cliff show which exemplifies how talk paints pictures. In theory radio is meant to be a medium that allows the listener to imagine what is being said, but the following example or on-air performance clearly guides the listener into seeing, feeling and relating to the on-air conversation.

Recorded on 12 May 2009

Time: 06h12

Gareth: Well, I just tried to swallow a Vitamin C pill and you know when you have that kind of gag reef!

Mabale: Eeuw! Is it the kind of pills that smell like toes?

Leigh-Ann: Like these ones here? [shaking pills in their container]

Gareth: Yes.

Mabale: You know you get those chips that smell like toes and they're orange.

Gareth: Aw! Hang on. It says its an immune system supplement. Now I don't know about you but you can feel winter right? I mean this morning especially – I got out of bed and I was like 'woof ooh whoo!'

Leigh-Ann: In your bones!

Gareth: Ja, there's no more toasty feeling when you get out of bed. Kind of instant cold

and I decided that I'd try some of these. So I'm taking one of these every day! I just hope they work. But they really – they taste disgusting and smell disgusting!

Mabale: They smell so bad they make you gag!

Gareth: Well, they call veggie tabs – I've just seen for the first time. So they contain...

Mabale: Probably got carrots in them.

Leigh-Ann: It's good for your eye sight!

One of the disadvantages of transcribing an on-air performance like this is that the presenters tend to draw on one another's talking styles, which makes it hard to distinguish speakers. Particularly the female co-hosts on the Gareth Cliff show. There are times when their voices were identical. Gareth Cliff has the advantage of having a male voice which distinguishes his lines or words on-air. There are no verbal cues that state who is speaking, which indicates that it not so much about who is speaking but what they are speaking about in this case. There are many other instances where Gareth Cliff, as well as DJ Fresh, from the afternoon drive show, speak in a manner that paints pictures in the listeners minds.

With the advent of technology radio stations such as 5FM now have in-studio cameras which transmit visual footage of what is occurring within the studio. Such footage can be viewed on the radio station's website [www.5fm.co.za](http://www.5fm.co.za) and assists listeners in the visualisation of what happens in-studio. Like television, radio's performances could reach a stage whereby in which they can be viewed on television channels as well. A starting

point is the live streaming of the radio shows. Such innovations bring new dynamics to the nature of radio, its form and function and whether or not it will continue to be called radio when the visual component becomes easily accessible?

### **Listeners and conclusion: 5FM**

This chapter on 5FM has made numerous references to listeners without necessarily quoting or showing any signs of audience research having been conducted. From here onwards I will reference respondents, that speak about 5FM, from my audience research findings.

At the beginning of this chapter I described the 5FM listener as the young, trendy 16 to 34 year old whom, SABC Market Intelligence Head, Angie Hammond, described as “global citizens” who are very busy and can get information anywhere. My research on audiences sought to approach this type of global, digitally savvy, online listener that 5FM targets.

Earlier I mentioned that 5FM sought to diversify its listener profile to include other racial groups through moving away from the alternative rock genre which was perceived as white music, to including pop, kwaito and more contemporary chart hits. This has to a certain extent repelled listeners and also attracted new listeners. Some of the audience questionnaires circulated yielded the following perceptions of 5FM as a whole:

Jonathan Dicks (male, Johannesburg):

I used to enjoy the music [on 5FM] but no longer – I really do not enjoy the music. I feel that 5FM is really lost in which type of audience they are trying to attract. I used to be a fan of 5FM and I would like to hear more rock and alternative music.

Steven Pieterse (male, Cape Town):

I typically listen to the Gareth Cliff Show and the Fresh Drive, for the music.

Naledi Mbatha (female, Cape Town):

They are versatile in that they play all kinds of music. I listen to pop, rock, hip hop and house music and I feel that only 5fm covers all these genres which is why I tune in to the shows so much.

Wishaal Jappie (female, Cape Town):

5FM is the best choice amongst what is currently on offer, they do not talk as much as other radio stations and they play the most recent music or at least try to keep up to date

These are a few examples taken from the responses of listeners who participated in my research. There is a general pull or attraction to a radio station through the type of music they play. Equally though there is also a push or repulsion from a radio station through the type of music they play. Talk on commercial music radio was seldom raised as reason for listening to 5FM unless I specifically asked respondents about their thoughts on the nature of talk. More than often this question yielded confusion, pauses and some thought. This reflected the fact that as much as people hear these presenters and call these presenters their favourite presenters, they seldom think about the importance or role of

these presenters' talk. Perhaps owing to the naturalness, ease, common sense nature of what these presenters do – listeners pay less attention to it and take it as normal. Where talk is discussed with listeners there is a tendency to describe it as humorous – which indicated a need to be entertained during the process of selecting which radio station to listen to.

Having looked at the transcribed data one can sense that there is content in the nature of talk presented on 5FM; ranging from political affairs to general entertainment information. Serious topics of discussion are raised through presenter talk – as Gareth Cliff comments on current political and world events. Yet, having a look at my data, I noticed that many respondents did not mention any of the heavy or serious discourse that is created on shows such as Gareth Cliff's. Instead there were responses that sought to praise him as a “good”, “clever”, “funny” and an entertaining presenter. Perhaps this is a reflection of how the younger radio audiences perceive serious matters discussed on-air – that they are current events that will pass and cannot be laboured upon endlessly? The youth could define themselves as politically apathetic, but this does not necessarily translate into ignorance. Being the “global citizens” they are able to sample information quicker online and know what is happening and being from higher LSM ranges, there is a probability that they are educated and can formulate their own opinions on matters raised on radio as well as social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The lack of actual content commentary from respondents could also point to the fact that these subjects could be boring for them, but the manner in which it is presented (mockingly, humourously and so forth) plays a role in how they choose to engage with it – be it

through laughing or calling in to the radio station and contributing. These are a few complexities that accompany studies on youth culture.

The youth are a dynamic market to cater for as well as to conduct research on. From as early as the 1950's BBC radio had noticed the need to accommodate a youth market, much like 5FM has moved away from the perceived identity of being a white music radio station due to their past alternative rock or heavy rock music content played. 5FM moved towards embracing a wider market by diversifying their staff compliment and moving towards a more contemporary hit music platform. For their efforts, their listenership has surpassed the 2 million listeners mark and in the past three years, 5FM has been awarded the Sunday Times [South African Sunday newspaper] Generation Next Award for being the 'coolest Station.'

In the following chapter, I move away from SABC radio station to take a look at a successful regional radio station owned by Primedia – 94.5KFM.

## CHAPTER 6

### CASE STUDY: 94.5KFM

In the previous two chapters I examined the performative nature of talk on 5FM and MetroFM, which are both SABC-owned national radio stations. 94.5KFM is a regional radio station that broadcasts in the Western Cape region. Prior to 1996, KFM was owned by the SABC, but due to financial difficulties at the time – the public broadcaster sold-off six of its regional radio stations to private ownership. These radio stations included, 94.7 Highveld Stereo (in Johannesburg) and 94.5 KFM (In Cape Town). Both of these stations were sold to an independent broadcaster – Primedia. Each of these Primedia radio stations has its unique identity, but a number of behind the scenes activity such as marketing, sales, administration and news are done collectively. It is therefore worth performing a study of this station against the backdrop of two SABC owned radio stations, to also see what differences lie in the programming and sound output of these stations. Although this is not a comparative study of the radio stations, observations to that effect can be adduced.

94.5KFM regards itself as being a “Number One Hit Music Station”, through on-air station identity jingles and drops. The station can be described as an easy listening, semi-Contemporary Hits radio station. I call it semi-contemporary owing to the fact that their music play lists tend to include hits from previous years as well as older songs. The station targets listeners in the 25 to 49 year age group, “living in the Western Cape and in

the upper income brackets”(www.kfm.co.za). 94.5KFM does not pride itself on being a personality driven radio station but rather a music driven radio station. Gallagher (2006) would describe this kind of radio station as a ‘Listen at Work’ station due to the fact that there is a prevalence of songs, rotated less frequently, minimal talk (with the exception of the Breakfast and Drive time shows) in between songs and service tends to be rendered for an older audience.

### **Prime Time Presenters: 94.5KFM**

One of the first observations upon listening to 94.5KFM is the lack of personality-driven programming. It is a music radio station and as such its prime time presenters are not national celebrities but perhaps regional celebrities in the sense that they are from Cape Town and have an established following in their broadcast region.

Both, the Breakfast Show is presented by Ryan O’Connor and the Afternoon drive time show is presented by Richard Hardiman, feature co-hosts. However, unlike the other two examined radio stations, co-hosts only speak when invited to speak by the main presenter. Or their talk is reserved for the fixtures (news, weather, sport and traffic). The central character is easily identifiable owing to the lack other spontaneous voices, of producers and co-hosts on-air. There is no attempt to support, argue or criticize the main presenter unless there has been a clear form of indication that a conversation or debate is in progress.

The breakfast show features the most amount of talk which I estimated at around 35% of the show's content (including news, sport, weather, traffic, special reports and advertisements) and the music made up for 65% of the show's content. The afternoon drive time show carried 90% music and 10% talk. The programming manager, Ian Bredekamp, explained the breakfast shows prevalence of talk as owing to the fact that "people are listening for shorter spurts at a time. The breakfast show is completely different! It's very interactive. If there is anything hectic that's gone on then they'll talk about it. Provided it is good radio. In our heads they're responding to the needs of the community. That's not really the rest of the day. You get the breakfast show and the rest of the day. And that's kind of how we programme the station as well" (Personal Interview, April 2008)

And on the afternoon drive show, Bredekamp, says "it's pacier – there's lots of news and traffic and sport. There is lots of information but there is not as much content as you'd have on breakfast. So you'd still have a lot of information burst but people don't want all that hectic shit when they're going home. They're tired they just had a long day. They just want to get home and know what's the latest in Zim, what's the headlines and have the Stormers won or not. So the afternoon drive is pacy as breakfast but there is less content in it" (Bredenkamp, Personal Interview, April 2008).

In as much as the programming manager would not succumb to calling 94.5KFM a personality radio station, their presenters are chosen on the basis of their public personas and their public establishment throughout the Western Cape region. The presenters' show

identities usually contain jingles saying “You’re listening to Richard Hardiman” or simply state their name in between songs, such as “Ryan O’ Connor” or merely “Richard Hardiman” Therefore there is emphasis on the personalities behind the music.

It must be noted that, even though 94.5KFM is a music radio station – it cannot thrive on music alone, nor attract listeners based on music alone. The element of personality reveals itself and listeners form relationships with individual presenters and thus can say “I’m going to listen to Ryan O’ Connor” or “I’m going to listen to Ryan Seacrest”. Radio is more an exercise of listening to people we like and identify with as opposed to listening to it for the music we like. There are many radio stations that might play an individual’s favourite genre but due to perceptions, language barriers or downright poor presenting – these stations might not attract the same listenership as MetroFM even though they play similar genres. A case in point is 94.5 KFM which together with Heart 104.9 and Goodhope FM, in Cape Town, play similar music and target the same audience, yet 94.5KFM captures the majority of this audience (1.2 million according to November 2009 RAMS). This can be attributed to either the personalities on-air or perhaps on-air competitions since 94.5KFM prides itself for being heavily commercial and business orientated. I will discuss this commercial component in the Commercial Nature of Talk on 94.5KFM section in this chapter. Before I proceed I would like to analyse the actual content and style of talk on 94.5KFM and thereafter proceed with the commercial imperative that surfaces in the station nature of talk.

## **The Nature of Talk on 94.5KFM**

Maynard (1991) suggest that when analysing the element of talk special focus should be attuned to how speakers interact, the types of questions, types of sentences and so forth.

By its nature and name, commercial music radio specialises in music – playing contemporary and past hits to please and attract listeners. When focusing on the element of talk within music radio one will encounter various kinds of talk such as: heritage talk, politics or issue talk, success or business talk, urban talk, faith or religious talk and health talk. However most of the talk on music radio is classified as “pop-psychology”, humorous stories and discussions on “what’s hot” all presented in the latest lingo. (Ferguson, 2006)

The overall analysis of 94.5 KFM’s daytime hour comprises of 12 to 14 songs per hour; the presenter spoke four times an hour on average. The presenter’s talk was limited to between 60 seconds and 150 seconds. The advertisements added up to between 9 and 12 minutes per hour.

When looking specifically at talk, 94.5 KFM’s Ian Bredenkamp added that, “Talk is not the most important thing for us; music is the first and foremost thing. We don’t want them to do a lot of talking. As a matter of fact on KFM in the average hour the jock [presenter] usually speaks three or four times.” To challenge this notion of the unimportance of talk on music radio, the recording of the Breakfast show on Monday (25

May 2009) revealed that in the first hour of the show, the presenter spoke for a total of 22 minutes. This 22 minutes includes live reads of promotional material, popular people's birthdays, a financial update, back announcing of songs and general chatter with the listeners. The recorded 22 minutes of talk does not include advertisements, news, sport and traffic reports. The total number of songs aired in this first amounted to eight full tracks.

By spending 22 minutes talking, this left 38 minutes for music, news, sport, traffic and advertisements. 22 minutes per hour is a considerably large amount of talk for a station that is predominantly music based. Ian Bredekamp does acknowledge that the Breakfast show is an exception to the rule of less talk on music radio. He described the breakfast show as a "separate animal" by saying: "The breakfast show is very interactive and if there is something going on they will talk about it, provided it's good radio. They respond to needs of the listener by discussing compelling issues and what makes their talk compelling is that they talk about things that can happen to anyone" (Personal interview, April 2008).

On the other hand to reinforce this notion of the unimportance of talk on music radio, the recording of Richard Hardiman's Drive show revealed that within the first two hours of the show (15:00 to 17:00) Hardiman spoke for a total of 11 minutes. That translates to an average of 6 minutes per hour. The 11 minutes excludes news, sports, traffic reports and advertisements. Here is an example of what Richard Hardiman's talk comprises

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 15h17

Richard: 94.5 KFM, September, Can't Get Over You. Seventeen minutes past three o'clock, Hardiman with you all the way through. It's a new week. Coming up a little later something kind cool for you and the letters game, might have heard it on breakfast this morning with Fruit and Veg City your chance to win cash today, simply by, simply by knowing your fruits and vegetables [makes mistake and mumbles lines] your bananas – its part of that game. I'll let you know when to call in a little later.

The above paragraph was presented within 21 seconds which is indicative of the fast pace of the afternoon drive show. Richard Hardiman back announces the song he played, September, Can't Get Over You, then proceeds to whet the listeners appetite on the *Fruit and Veg City* competition coming up later whilst advertising that it is also available on the breakfast show. Thereafter promises to tell the listener when to call in as he fades in a new song. Compared to talk radio this might seem insignificant and short but in essence the presenter has managed to please the listener with the prospects of winning money as well as update them on the details of the song played. There is not much personality filtering through this talk, nor was there much content that was reflective of the presenter's wit, humour, opinions and general personality. It was a straightforward script narration.

The breakfast show on the other hand, has room to allow some personality traits to pierce through the talk.

Recorded 25 May 2009

Time: 06h04

Ryan: Morning everybody?

Wesley: Hello, hello, how goes it?

Ryan: Ja, very well thanks. Monday morning start of a brand new week and a week closer to winter being over. I know it's just begun but that's the kind of optimism I wanna spread this Monday morning if you freezing cold [giggles aside] and hang in there we're a couple of months away with a little bit of sun, a little bit of summer as well.

Like Richard Hardiman, Ryan's talk is pacey, but also carries a narration feel to it. Almost as if it is being read, even when it is spontaneous. This could be due to the manner in which Ryan paces himself, with audible breathing pauses and reading tone that sounds non-conversational. Although the presenters on both shows carry the same presentation styles there were a number of differences in the shows they present - the breakfast show carried more features such as the GK [General Knowledge] Elite competition where two listeners compete in a general knowledge competition and the winner takes R1500 sponsored by Grandwest Casino. There was also "Whackhead" who randomly prank calls people live on radio usually eliciting anger or laughter from his respondents. Another feature, at the time of observation for this study, was the "Random Act of Kindness" where Mel Jones did road handouts of various products, food and 94.5KFM branded goods around Cape Town. The GK Elite general knowledge competition went as follows:

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 07h45

Ryan: And on the line this morning we've got Mick from Edgemean who takes on Lisa from Milnerton. Top of the morning to you Mick!

Mick: Um, likewise to yourself.

Ryan: [Laughs]. Nice accent you've got there. Are you from Ireland?

Mick: I just happen to be – nobody is perfect!

Ryan: It's where me roots are.

Mick: Ah, well like I say nobody is perfect.

Ryan: [all laugh]. We thought we could play some nice Irish music in the background for you Mick – can you hear it?

Mick: Yes, I'm listening closely. My hearing is totally bad, but I'm listening.

Ryan: laughs. Mick you're first through on GK Elite you get to choose if you want to go first or second?

Mick: Ah, Ryan I'll go first.

Ryan: Okay. Mick you know how we do this, 60 seconds comes your way – as many as you can in 60s. if you don't know pass, lets move on to something you do know. As many correct in 60 seconds as you can answer. Mick are you ready to play GK Elite?

Mick: I am ready.

Ryan: 60 seconds on the clock your time starts now. [clock beeps and ticks] Which World War was followed by the Port Stone [not clear] conference?

Mick: Pass.

Ryan: World War 2. What flavour is Amareta Liqueur?

Mick: Pass.

Ryan: Almond. Complete the...

Ryan continued with the questions and thereafter proceeded to give the correct answers when the respondents had given incorrect answers. The second caller was also given a chance to answer questions. And the one who answered the most correctly took the R1500 prize. Not only is this a competition but also a reflection on the educative nature of talk on 94.5KFM's breakfast show. As those listening to the show also learnt the correct general knowledge responses. This type of talk that educates is not only prevalent in this show's feature, but also permeates in other sections where Ryan talks, he provided background information on his chosen subjects and attempts to show his knowledge-ability of subject matters. Yet, even with this example, Ian Bredenkamp saw the content or what is spoken on-air as secondary to music on music radio - the manner in which the presenters delivered their talk was more important than the content of their talk on music radio. For instance a presenter could read and didactically tell the listener facts about Mandarin being the most widely spoken language. Instead of telling the facts as they are Ryan O'Connor and his team, through one of their information sessions on-air discussed and presented the material in an interactive manner that included the listener – this

section of the show entails listeners posing questions to Ryan and his team and in return they search for a response and give it to the listener.

Therefore in as much as the breakfast show is featured on a music radio station, it largely remains an informative and entertaining content-driven show. The afternoon drive time show, as mentioned earlier is not content-based but more about companionship and knowing that the music is not randomly shuffled on a computer and that there is someone on-air who links, provides information about the songs as well as time updates together with the odd live read or announcement. The role of the presenter on the 94.5KFM is a rather questionable one – in the sense that, it does not necessarily have to be a high profile, well-known Capetonian, yet it is – even though they do not say much there is comfort in knowing that a popular figure is behind the songs being aired.

During the course of this study, schedule changes were announced in January 2010. Richard Hardiman would move out of the afternoon drive time show to the midday show. And in his place would be another popular radio personality Lee Downs as of 1 March 2010. In a show that carries six minutes of talk per hour, it begs the question on why such links presenters need to be celebrities and why they would be paid bigger salaries than other presenters on day time shows – yet their roles are the same, excluding the breakfast show which features more talk? Nonetheless it is a case in point which confirms my speculation that music alone cannot attract listeners, but the nature of talk or talk presented by whomever – however short – plays a significant role in the way in which a radio station is received by its listeners.

### **Stylistic On-air Creations: on 94.5KFM**

94.5KFM's signature radio style for presenters is rather minimal and as such it is difficult to pinpoint the stylistic creations of their on-air presenters. But I nonetheless attempt by saying that they perhaps subscribe to the Golden Voice Era of the 1930s where talk is staged, scripted and anchored by familiar warm friendly voices. Their presenters' voices are not high pitched nor natural and are what I would call radio voices – voices that are not natural nor conversational but staged for purposes of being on-air (Gamlin, 1947). In the case of 94.5FKM there is a level of unnaturalness as at times it became evident that the presenter was reading a script or attempting to sound like they were reading a script. Not much emotion could be picked up in their presentation style and most of the content was straightforward announcing of what was happening, and what will happen next. This description excluded the breakfast show which included more content in its talk intervals between songs. Examples of the talk on the afternoon drive show are as follows:

Example 1:

Recorded on 15 January 2010

Time: 17h50

Richard: 94.5KFM, today's choice of karaoke Outkast the way you move. It's ten away from six. [breaks to weather]

Example 2:

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 07h12

Richard: Oh, I bought this CD based on this, this single alone. And the rest of the album is great. The new one from the Parlotones. [mumbles title] I bought it for that one – its number one. And it's just on repeat right now. I've listened to the whole album once, but this one is on repeat. Argh man, this is just one of the best tunes out right now. Er listen, coming up at 6 o' clock is six on the mix on the way, but first we've got Eyewitness News and of course sport, but before we get there, let's check out what Kim [not clear] has got for you in the traffic.

And this pattern of back announcing with little or not commentary continues on the afternoon drive show, whilst being read in Richard's paced, staged, warm grovel voice.

This staged or attempt at putting on an act alerts the listener to the reality or existence of some form of mediation and that there is a distinction between the listener and Richard Hardiman. Richard Hardiman does not speak in the manner in which he would speak naturally, there is not attempt at being conversational or intimate with his listeners.

Another element that separates Richard Hardiman is the 'sounding too good to be true' nature of his presentation that he delivers on-air, which was also noted in Ryan O'Conner's on-air delivery. It is almost announcer-like and an assumed characterisation put on for radio purposes – whereas in contrast – you have the presenters such as Gareth Cliff on 5FM who speak fluently and naturally without any artificial constructions in their voices and one senses that Gareth Cliff would speak as he does regardless of context or setting. There is a certain kind of sincerity that is conveyed to the listener in such instances, but where the talk is staged it feels cold and insincere.

To further reinforce the staged nature of talk on 94.5KFM is the matter of time regulation. On 94.5 KFM one need only look at the pace of delivery at which Ryan O'Connor delivers his talk. In a period of 160 seconds Ryan O'Conner and Wesley (producer) were able to deliver the following:

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 08h02

Ryan: Eternal, Just a Step from Heaven. 94.5 KFM with O'Connor and the Gang through to 9 AM. Its good to have you along. If it sounds like my voice is not quite there, its because its not quite there. It's been a rough six weeks with the IPL it's officially all over – its go Chargers, Go, Go. For those of you watching it. What a closing yesterday, what a final, what a challenge Royal Challengers versus the Deacan Chargers – the Deacon Chargers winning it. What a closing ceremony as well and ja it was just good to know that, that's done and I'm finished with IPL.

Wesley: Yeah, fireworks in the pitch, fireworks in the sky as well, what a awesome show that was as well. About 2 minutes of fireworks.

Ryan: It was two minutes of Fireworks. I had a look, I was right on the field – so at the end after the closing ceremony when they were handing out all the awards – I was literally a metre away from that stage. And I was watching, chatting to Dale Steyn and Jacque Kallis as they came off the stage. Having a look it didn't quite see what they were getting as runners up – you saw them getting some kind of a medal around the neck but you didn't see what it was. I can tell you what it was – it was a tiny little cricket bat and I think it was in platinum embedded with diamonds. [whistling and joh, joh,] It was a tiny little platinum cricket bat and in the handle of the cricket bat was embedded a whole lot of little diamonds. Some of them just took it off and they though 'Oh!' Jessie Ryder had a look and said 'Oh, I'm going to put my fiancee's name on it and give it to her as gift from Africa!' [laughing].

Wesley: I like the top that you're wearing Ryan.

Ryan: Nice Hey? It's Herchelle Gibbs Deacan Chargers top – tracksuit top.

Wesley: It's very cool.

Ryan: It's very very cool. I managed to er er twist Herchelle's arm to part with it. I know there were so many people looking for gear from the Deacan Chargers and I thought 'Come on!' and Herchelle said to me before it even started already before I even thought we'd get this far – he said "Don't worry mate, as soon as its done, I'll give you the number 8 Gibbs!" – A nice tracksuit top. This is one of the playing tracksuits they got. Very comfortable I might add. It feels good to wear a winner's jersey!

Wesley: Thank goodness he knows about it. It would be awkward if he didn't [in bold, staged accent].

There is a sense that the talk is being forced in a particular direction and one finds that the talk slows down whenever it is not scripted as there are pauses that suggest thought in between utterances. Ryan O' Connor in this above transcript makes an effort to vivify the scenario in which he was in, by including his proximity to stage as well as relaying which cricket players he interacted with. And here he identifies with the listeners as he too sounds star struck or in awe of the cricket players and even sounds to have been privileged to talk face to face with the players. It is important to acknowledge that it is the human factor that makes radio stations function. Bittner (1981) takes this further by stating that good announcers on-air are the ones who identify with their audience and reflect their humanness and ability to connect with listners.

In trying to assimilate audience expectations one has to take into account the assumed roles of presenters in early radio days – radio presenters were part salespeople and masters of ceremonies on air. Presenters were also expected to read news, be conversant as well as being witty. Their job was perceived more as performance rather than just talking on-air. (O'Donnell, 1987)

### **Commercial nature of talk: on 94.5KFM**

Having established itself as the sole support of radio, advertising progressively took command of the entire broadcast operation. Programs began to stress the more popular appeal in order to reach the type of audiences desired by various advertisers. The standards for writing and presenting commercial messages on the air were guided almost entirely by considerations of effective selling (Chester et al, 1978: 25).

According to Bredenkamp *94.5 KFM's* advertising is completely sold out, “You wouldn't be able to buy airtime on the station during daytime like for the next six months”

(Personal Interview, April 2008). During the listening and analysis of talk on *94.5 KFM* an average of 16 advertisements were aired per hour. Most of the features such as the GK Elite competition carried a heavy amount of advertising for their sponsor - Grandwest Casino.

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 07h44

Ryan: Let's play GK Elite now – it's brought to you by Grandwest, Live The Grand Life

During the sampled shows 75% of the entire presenter's talk entailed advertising through live reads and mentioning advertising client names. The prevalence and presence of advertising in most of the on-air talk on music radio revealed that talk is a powerful element of music radio which is recognised as an effective conduit by advertisers. If it was not, then advertisers would not be pursuing this avenue of on-air presence (via presenter talk).

Here is an example of the most prevalent form of commercial talk on 94.5KFM – the live read:

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 07h54

Ryan: Keep warm this winter with the energy saver, Econo Heat wall panel heater. Not only are they cost effective but they're also designed to stay on for a long time. Saving you up to 50 percent or more on heating costs. The only SABS approved heater. Econo Heater carry a two year warranty. Save money, save electricity and keep warm during winter with Econo Heat, South Africa's low cost energy saver heater. Available from leading hardware stores country wide.

Looking at Richard Hardiman's talk that features less talk, compared to the breakfast show, there is little room for live reads but more room for sponsored features – where advertisers buy certain on-air game shows, which thus entail the presenter hinting or subtly mentioning brand names or advertisers during the course of a particular game or competition on air.

Recorded on 11 May 2009

Time: 15h58

Richard: Two minutes away from four o' clock, coming up pretty soon, we're going to be playing the letters game. Do you wanna practise quickly? The letters game brought to you by Fruit and Veg City – what happens is, for every fruit that you get right you get R500.

The following is repeated three times between 15h58 and 16h20 on this day. Besides being evidence of high brand pushing or advertising, these transcribed recorded clips, also highlight the repetitive nature of talk on music radio. Repetition ensures that listeners are constantly aware of the brand. There is also a high level of repetition where advertising talk is concerned but not much repetition in terms of general on-air talk, which entails back announcing songs or speaking about the presenter's personal incidents at home or about Cape Town.

One can argue that advertising through the presenters' talk contributes to the educative nature of talk as it sheds more knowledge on the various brands that are being advertised. Another listener's advantage of having a large advertising presence on 94.5 KFM is the element of reward. As much as listeners choose 94.5 KFM because of its music content and Cape Town radio personalities, it can also be said that the promise of winning prizes such as R1500 cash, or a trip to Mauritius or LG cellular phones also adds to luring more listeners. This is particularly true because the phone lines are constantly engaged during competition times. People actively tune in and listen during competitions. If they did not tune in during those exact times then the lines would not be busy and there would hardly

be any competitors for the various competitions on 94.5 KFM. The advertising talk element serves a purpose to attract, convey advertiser information and also provide content for the presenters' talk intervals (between the songs). The high amount of advertising and give-aways can also be seen as giving 94.5 KFM a competitive edge against local music radio stations such as Heart 104.9 FM and Good Hope FM in Cape Town.

However it is important to note that the heavy presence of commercials or advertising talk on-air on 94.5KFM is largely as a result of their commercial imperative – to make money. Ian Bredekamp mentioned that “people look at radio in two different ways. You get some who go ‘Ja, lets just have a jol and play the right songs!’ and that’s all good and well, but, the first and foremost thing is that we’re a business that generates R800 million a year! And you’ve got to make sure your numbers are right because we’re a business about making money at the end of the day, we’re not a business about playing songs.” (Personal Interview, April 2008).

### **The Performance Nature of Talk: On 94.5KFM**

94.5 KFM is located in Cape Town's Somerset road in Greenpoint, on the top floor of the Somerset Square building. As with the SABC the live performance of on-air presenters is a privilege reserved for staff within the building or visitors. There is a single sound proof window that shows the presenter seated behind the microphone. There are also mini-television monitors outside that reveal close-ups of the presenter on-air. Unlike MetroFM and 5FM's tidy studio desk there are numerous scripts, newspapers and 94.5 KFM coffee

mugs in the studio. The presenter sits fastidiously in show prep mode trying to read as much as possible before going on air. Another distinguishing factor is that at the time of my visit the presenter sat alone in the studio, whilst going through his paperwork. Co-hosts would only walk in to the studio when it was their time to present a fixture and thereafter walk out, other staying a little longer to chat briefly on air with the presenter. There was a sense of boredom and loneliness as songs played or in between talk intervals. The presenter could walk in and out of the studio owing to the fact that songs were at times played on a back-to-back basis, are already programmed and linked with set jingles in between each that identify the presenters name and the radio stations name.

On the matter of in-studio talk or talk as performance it is important to note that radio's talk entails an ability to first be able to work out when it is appropriate to transfer the role of speaker. Something which happens seamlessly on 5FM but might be dependent on visual cues at 94.5 KFM as the co-Hosts in Ryan O'Connor and the Gang seldom 'butt-in'. Secondly there has to be a way of determining who will speak next and an ability to recognize cues to speak because radio presenters speak in "Turn Construction Units (TCUs)" (Sacks, 1974).

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time: 07h11

Ryan: We're talking about your favourite show of all time, it doesn't have to be something that's from old school or you know from the 80s or 70s – whenever – when did TV start? 76? 75?

Wesley: Yep, for us yeah.

Ryan: It doesn't have to be from all the way back then, it can something that you watched now and you were so addicted you can't miss out an episode of it. Can be something like Ugly Betty, could be something like Desperate Housewives, could be something like Lost – we wanna know from you, your favourite show or maybe something that's that's recently ended. So many people are saying Friends – remember Friends?

Wesley: Yeah. I love Friends. How many seasons? I think it went on for about eight seasons of so?

Ryan: Ja.

Janine: Thereabout ja.

Ryan: You know what? I wanna change my mind. I said that I *Shark*, that I love *Shark* – I wish they would bring back *Shark* and then I said *Mentalist*. But I do love *Two and a Half Men*. I just wanna throw a couple of my favourites in the mix and then I'll choose one. The best is *Mentalist*. I think it's brilliant. *Mentalist* is phenomenal. But er um there's shows that have been around like forever – *The Simpsons* for example. I cant get enough of. Um, *Two and a Half Men*. Absolutely love them. *Gary and Mary* – good show as well, I enjoy them. Those are the kinds of shows I enjoy. And there's another one that's come back. It was about a cop who was falsely convicted.

All: Life.

Ryan: That is an awesome show! Let us know 32945. Vanessa is on the line this morning. Vanessa how are you?

The dialogue amongst the presenter and his team on 94.5 KFM engages audiences via

“double articulation” where presenters talk to one another whilst simultaneously talking to the listeners (Tolson, 2006). The listener can at times be viewed as eavesdropping on these on-air conversations as Ryan O’Connor and his team unravel new or known human interest information about television programmes. O’Connor and his team are aware that they have a listenership, of around 1.2 million listeners (SAARF, 2009) ‘watching’ them. The breakfast team can be said to be professionals who convey knowledge, intimacy and also convey a real image of a person rather than a disembodied voice talking about various subjects on-air (Hausman, 2004). This goes back to the notion of radio as a ‘theatre of the mind’ where the listener does not just visualise Ryan O’Connor as a voice but also as a person experiencing the same things he or she is experiencing and speaking directly to him or her. One of the traits that ensure the listener feels appreciated includes presenters directly speaking to their audience for example when, in an archived 5 May 2008 show, Richard Hardiman says:

If **you** hear us playing the same tune twice between nine and five – R5000 is **yours** simply by SMSing us 32945 with all info of the song that we played and **your** info and **your** banking details, no we don’t need **your** banking details we’ll call **you** back.

Not only are Richard Hardiman’s words an invitation to a competition but they also make the listener feel unique by using words such as “you”, “yours” and “we’ll call you back.” By using these words the presenter strengthens the quasi-interactive relationships he already holds with the listener (Tolson, 2006)

Bredenkamp explains this as: “We don’t want our jocks to say ‘hey I hope you guys are having a great time today’ we say ‘I hope YOU’RE having a great time today. And it is this theatre of the mind impression of speaking or addressing each individual only, that we seek to maintain” Through the manner in which presenters perform on-air there is also a station mandate to ensure that listeners think the presenter is speaking to them alone. Bedenkamp says: “We’re very upbeat about the guys [presenters] keeping positive, we don’t moan about the state of the nation, or talk about crime, we don’t moan about the sport results – we keep it positive... So we don’t say the ‘Stormers got kicked this weekend’ but we say “Hey, sorry about the Stormers – they’re a nice bunch of Cape Town guys we love them and wish them good luck for next weekend” (Personal Interview, April 2008)

Recorded on 25 May 2009

Time 7h40

Ryan: Robert Sinclair – Bob to his mates – World Hold On – its twenty minutes to seven and National Missing Children’s Day today and er its incredible – they do an outstanding job the folks at Missing Children South Africa – Judy Bothas and her staff – its an unbelievable day for those families that have missing kids that they’ve never seen again. And still in daily hope that they’ll be found. I guess its – its just a day to reflect and have a look at, for those kids that have gone missing and having been brought home and maybe those kids that have been found and reconciled with their family. I guess today is a day to rejoice and be thankful that we’ve got a day like this where we can think about these things. It’s amazing whenever there’s big responsibilities in the city and we start looking around at other people to do it, there is always somebody that steps up onto the plate and goes “You know what? I’m gonna do this! We’ve got crime in this city, this is what I’m gonna do!” You know

we've got animals that need to be fed and looked after in the city. There's poor pets lying – “we will look after it”, there's kids – “We will look after”, there's homeless people – “We'll look after”. It always amazes me that there are people and individuals with big hearts to take on the responsibilities. Some of those responsibilities out of way of what it is that they can really cope with.

Janine: Absolutely Ryan! You know what, at the end of the day – especially with missing children, the Western Cape has the highest number of missing children in the country and I think at the end of the day it also comes back to us looking after one another's children as well. So it's a shared responsibility.

If one starts to look at radio presenting or radio's talk as a performance, it becomes clear that there are performative protocols that require skill (on-air presenting) and creativity in the manipulation of voice, timing, in studio turn-taking with co-hosts and the rest of the repertoire of enactment (O' Sullivan, 1994). The purpose of such performances is to entertain the listener, engage the listener via competitions and various other listener call-in features. This performative nature of commercial radio talk influences the listener's feelings - if the presenter is depressed and talking about depressing current affairs this could affect the listener's mood - this could be called a tragedy in the theatrical sense. If the presenter appears to be or acts upbeat and excited on-air, such as the recorded 94.5KFM presenters (Ryan O'Connor and Richard Hardiman), this also affects the mood of the listeners and the overall sound of the radio station. Bredenkamp says a positive mood and positive talk content will make the entire radio station, including the music sound good and positive for the listener.

### **Listeners and conclusion: 94.5KFM**

Thusfar we have seen how 94.5KFM frames its talk around its predominant music content. At this stage I would like to reflect on the actual results of their on-air product and how it is received by listeners. As of November 2009 94.5KFM had a listenership of approximately 1.2 million listeners per week (RAMS 2009). Given the fact that this is a regional radio station I am inclined to see this as a success, particularly within the context of 5FM – a national broadcaster – that commands an average of 2 million listeners.

When looking at 94.5 KFM's programming and language of presentation or announcing, it becomes clear that they are representing the demographics of their listenership. KFM's demographics are 65% coloured, 30% white and 5% black and Asian (Ian Bredenkamp Personal Interview, April 2008). Bredenkamp adds that: "We know who our audience is and we know that 90% of them can speak Afrikaans – so our talk is 50% English, 50% Afrikaans in the news, sport or reading the traffic. All these voices form a nice blend of Cape Town."

In a pool of 157 respondents only 25 were of coloured descent which therefore meant a limited number of the majority race that listens to 94.5KFM. Close to 50% of the respondents surveyed in this study were unaware of 94.5KFM's existence, which was understandable for those based in Johannesburg, but intriguing when it came to those who are based in Cape Town, yet they did not know 94.5KFM. This also signified the specificity of 94.5KFM in-house research department in terms of audience targeting.

When confronted with the question: “Have you ever listened to 94.5KFM and why did you listen to it?” The following responses surfaced:

Georgia Andrews (female, Cape Town):

Yes [I have listened to 94.5KFM], they also play good music and because it's situated in my city, I also get updated on things going on in Cape town.

Philipa Ndisi Hermann (female, Cape Town):

I used to [listen to 94.5KFM], but I don't think it's African enough.

Karl Anhauser (male, Cape Town):

Only radio station playing music while others had their host and fellow presenters babbling about irrelevant topics.

Mfundo Mphathani (male, Cape Town)

Yes coz of Whackehead in Morning and the Quiz.

Some of the respondents who said they listen to 94.5KFM could not identify the show presenters, some cited the fact that there was a lot of music and that it was a good radio station to listen to when driving or merely switching through radio stations because one will always find music playing. Some respondents felt that 94.5KFM was a radio station targeted at an older radio listeners owing to the classic songs from the past as well as contemporary songs. If my research objectives were audience intensive this type of niche audience 94.5KFM has created for itself would be an interesting area of further investigation.

Perhaps, like MetroFM, 94.5KFM ‘harbours of familiarity’ by providing what their listeners would be most accustomed and comfortable with. Richard Hardiman and Ryan O’ Connor are both Capetonians and thus provide familiar Cape Town voices that can relate on a personal level with the listeners of 94.5 KFM. 94.5KFM also has its own intelligence department, which forms part of the Primedia research section, based in Johannesburg which continuously conducts audience and market related research. 94.5 KFM sources information about listener habits and listening trends from its intelligence department. 94.5 KFM realizes the importance of research and Bredekamp adds that, “We even know what kind of toothpaste our listeners use – Whether it’s Aquafresh or Colgate! Because how can you programme is you don’t know what people want?” (Personal Interview, April 2008)

In a market where music radio stations air similar music from the same South African recording companies it is crucial to highlight the role of talk and programming and music stations. It could be the local presenters on 94.5 KFM that attract listeners, or it could be the things they talk about – the manner in which they talk to listeners. But music on its own cannot be the determining factor of 94.5 KFM’s success as the music is not unique to the station. A case in point being the breakfast show which through the transcripts featured herein carried the largest amount of talk, compared to other radio stations featured in this thesis. Ryan O’ Connor, whenever he spoke on-air, at length would delve into extended narratives that he would relate, vivify, tease, sell to listeners. Richard Hardiman, although he did not present much talk in his shows, possessed a warm, inviting voice that provided companionship for his listeners.

The following chapter concludes this thesis by way of synthesizing the findings expanded upon herein.

University Of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The majority of South Africans rely on broadcasting, usually radio, to meet their information and entertainment related needs (Fourie, 2003), yet the omnipresence of radio in day-to-day activities has largely grown into a natural occurrence. One that often eludes being subject to deeper investigation as consumers and scholars have grown too familiar with the medium which reinforces the adage of ‘familiarity breeds contempt’. Seldom is radio ever viewed as a media text capable of being analysed, particularly within a South African context, where radio predominantly becomes a text for analysis if it is in the form of Talk Radio or Community Radio.

This thesis has sought to initiate a branch of literature that deals directly with a single attribute of commercial music radio in South Africa. My point of departure was based on the fact that so-called music radio stations tend to pride themselves as being music orientated and that music alone determines the success of their radio stations. Yet, what this thesis, together with the literature reviewed seemed to point to the significance of the component of talk on music radio as well as the personalities behind the talk. Through transcription and observation of my chosen three radio stations – MetroFM, 5FM and 94.5KFM – I sought to reveal the functionalist nature of talk on each radio station’s prime time shows.

The chosen methodologies for this thesis were qualitative in nature and sought to

encompass both conversation and discourse analysis to examine the abstracted empiricism framework of “who says what to whom and with what results” (Mills, 1959:55) on chosen morning breakfast shows and afternoon drive time shows on all three radio stations.

Although this was not a comparative study of the three radio stations, I would say that there were varying degrees of talk on each radio station. Content-wise 5FM’s breakfast show presented by Gareth Cliff and co-hosts was by far the most informative, witty, entertaining and attractive show owing to the actual nature of talk on this radio station. The music was to a certain extent popular hits which sounded familiar and were ranked in the top hits categories, yet even though the music selection was quite broad and diverse a number of 5FM listeners interviewed for this study were willing to endure songs they did not necessarily enjoy owing to their anticipation of what the host had to say after each song or perhaps what song the host would select next. 5FM’s afternoon drive time show did not feature as much talk as the breakfast show and DJ Fresh and co-hosts merely linked songs with entertaining, humour-filled information bursts. The high prevalence of advertising per hour on this radio station was noted but deemed to be in the acceptable range according to broadcasting regulations of the country.

MetroFM would rate second in terms of relevance to my study, which looks at talk on music radio. Again, the breakfast show, like 5FM’s proved to carry more talk content via its host Kenny Maistry. What set MetroFM apart from the other radio stations was the nuanced or stylized nature of talk in some of its daytime programming. Kenny Maistry

epitomized the golden voice, deep, male baritone era of radio which features heavily in the stylization of talk on the radio station and matches the mood and tone of their predominantly playlisted music genre – Rhythm and Blues. The afternoon drive time show hosted by Unathi Nkayi and Glen Lewis carried less content but was nonetheless engaging for listeners - in the sense that there was high level of audience participation by way of quizzes, competitions and general conversations with listeners. I found this to be the most engaging form of talk on MetroFM. Listeners felt comfortable in being presenters themselves momentarily. There were moments however that reiterated a concerning lack of content. By this I mean there were instances where one could gauge the unpreparedness of presenters, sense that they had not pre-read live reads or scripts as well as notice that some of the talk in-studio was uncoordinated. MetroFM's main strength was in the fact that they employ strong personalities who are brands in their own right and well-known to listeners.

94.5KFM would be the ideal radio station to fall under the umbrella of music radio. Although its songs were not necessarily contemporary or youthful – there was a high paced feel to their sound as well as talk. The commercial imperative was also evident in the sense that this station exacerbated all forms of advertising formats on radio – from live reads, to embedded brand-name dropping, to pre-recorded advertisements and even certain show segments being sponsored by advertisers. Talk on 94.5KFM featured minimally in their programming, with the exception of the breakfast show, hosted by Ryan O'Connor. The talk on the breakfast show was not witty nor entertaining and it almost felt scripted as it framed certain predetermined show fixtures such as news, sports,

weather and traffic reports. There was an acute level of seriousness in presenter style – such that one could easily identify who the main host was, and co-hosts would speak when asked to speak and not spontaneously contribute to the main presenters talk.

All-in-all, these radio stations reflect an acknowledgement of the importance of talk. They acknowledge and are aware of their listener needs, yet the talk that is currently featured on these radio stations has room to improve. There tends to be too much focus on on-air personalities rather than on-air content.

What is currently scheduled on radio stations is said to reflect the needs of listeners. Yet listeners interviewed for this study did show an interest in the actual nature of talk on commercial music radio. Most respondents were highly critical of the current talk content on prime time shows with others going as far as terming it as “nonsense”, “waffle” or “plain stupid” some were even inclined to say they would rather not hear presenters speak and if presenters were to speak they should speak in more entertaining capacities or be informative.

There are many other functions talk on music radio can serve, however I limit my suggestions on the enhancement of talk on commercial music radio, with the knowledge that there are other radio formats that can serve educational, informative functions – such as talk radio, community radio and public service broadcasters. An investigation into the element of talk on commercial music radio was met with a bit of resistance from radio

station representative interviewees – who were clear that their radio stations were primarily about music.

Music plays an important role in the lives of people. It provides pleasure, emotional solace and inspiration. Music is often cited as a number one hobby amongst people listing their hobbies and this proves that music is the most popular avocation (Wilson, 1985).

Interviews with programming managers further revealed that talk on music radio in South Africa has no major significance except to provide the element of companionship that radio is widely known for. As much as talk is undermined on music radio platforms it is evident that there is power through the utterances of presenters – as advertisers respond and listeners also participate in competitions and various community challenges. The performative nature of talk in commercial radio also attracts and retains listeners as presenters act out various roles amongst one another in studio and the listener witnesses or eavesdrops on these on-air performances. The manner in which they perform and speak to their audience also determines the effectiveness of the presenters' words. It would be of further research interest to explore, in depth, how audiences receive the findings of this research paper and also seek to gauge how they perceive commercial music radio's talk component.

In terms of radio's role in society, one has to look at South Africa's history of Apartheid. Although I mention the history of apartheid and its impact on the broadcasting industry through Tomaselli et al (1989) I tried to avoid the subject of a segregated past as it is well documented by other scholars locally. But this does not mean it should be ignored, as the

past of the country shaped the current audience unevenness. South African radio services were historically used to reproduce notions of separate and distinct populations, with their own separate cultures, living in particular geographical spaces (Barnett, 1998). 94.5 KFM provides music and talk content for an already pre-defined audience that is based in Cape Town, predominantly coloured (65% of listeners) and uses English and Afrikaans as their main languages to address listeners. MetroFM provides music and talk for a predominantly black listenership. 5FM is currently repositioning itself as a diverse youth brand, thereby dissociating itself from its previous predominantly white listenership in the country.

Talk on these radio stations is therefore closely linked to notions of identity, through the language of broadcasting, style of broadcasts to the prevalent genres of music. All three selected radio stations broadcast in English, yet they target different audiences. The music might be similar from time to time yet no interviewees encountered herein professed to prefer all three radio stations. This confirmed that talk on commercial music radio plays a significant role in attracting, repelling or retaining audiences through the manner in which talk is presented and by whom it is presented.

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## **Personal Interviews**

1. Vukile Zondi, programming manager, 5FM, in 5FM boardroom on Monday 18 May, 2009. Johannesburg.
2. Ian Bredenkamp, programming manager, 94.5KFM, in his office on Friday 4 April, 2008. Cape Town.
3. Segale Mogotsi, programming manager, MetroFM, telephonically on Friday 4 September, 2009. Cape Town.
4. Angie Hammond, Head of SABC Market Intelligence department, in her office on Tuesday 19 May, 2009. Johannesburg
5. Franz Kruger, Radio Scholar and Journalism Lecturer at Wits University, at the Wits Coffee Shop on 18 May 2009. Johannesburg.

University Of Cape Town

## APPENDIX 1:

*Survey distributed to audience research participants:*

Thank you for taking the time to view this questionnaire. The next step is to go through the following questions – answering to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong response and this will take you no more than 5 to 10-minutes to complete. The outcomes of this research will be used in a study on the *Performative Nature of Talk in Commercial Music Radio in South Africa* conducted by the University of Cape Town’s Unathi Kondile ([unathi.kondile@uct.ac.za](mailto:unathi.kondile@uct.ac.za) / 082 511 4103).

Enjoy...

1. Name? (optional)

2. What age range are you in?

- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
- 40 and above

3. Gender?

- Male
- Female

4. Which racial group would you classify yourself in?

- Black
- White
- Asian
- Indian
- Other  Which one here: .....

5. What do you do for a living? / Occupation?

6. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? Any hobbies?

7. Are you a TV or Radio person?

TV

Radio

Both

8. Favourite TV Show?

9. Favourite Radio Station?

10. Favourite Radio Presenter? And why him or her?

11. What would you like to see [hear] more of on your favourite radio station?

12. Do you ever flick through radio stations? And why?

13. Have you ever listened to 5FM? Circle your response:

Yes  No

14. Which show did you listen to?

15. Why did you listen to 5FM?

16. Have you ever listened to Metro FM? Circle your response:

Yes  No

17. Which show did you listen to?

18. Why did you listen to MetroFM?

19. Have you ever listened to KFM? (for Cape Town respondents only)

Yes      No

20. Which show did you listen to?

21. Why did you listen to KFM?

22. When was the last time you listened to radio? And what station was it?

23. Would you ever listen to a 'music' radio station for their talk/ presenter's talk? Why and which presenter/radio show? (music radio station = 5FM, KFM, MetroFM, etc)

24. Why do you think presenters talk on 'music' radio stations? What could the role of talk be for them? (music radio station = 5FM, KFM, MetroFM, etc)

25. Why do you listen to radio?

26. Do you think talk featured on commercial music radio stations (5FM, MetroFM & KFM) is essential or of any importance? Explain why 'yes' or 'no'?

## **APPENDIX 2:**

### *Audience research summaries:*

The total number of respondents for this study tallied at 157 people. A breakdown of this total number reveals that 89 responses were received via the physical paper survey, 21 respondents were from Facebook-message sent questionnaires and 48 responses emerged from the 'cold emailing' exercise I experimented with. The sample was not as diverse and was largely limited to Cape Town and Johannesburg respondents with the exception of 14 email respondents from other cities in South Africa and two from the United States of America.

Of this total number of respondents.

20% were aged between 16 and 20

28% were aged between 21 and 25

22 % were aged between 26 and 30

17% were aged between 31 and 35

8% were aged between 36 and 40

Whilst only 5% were aged 40 and above.

In terms of gender 41% were male and 59% female.

50% of the audience sample was black. 28% white. 16% coloured. And 5% Indian. Whilst the rest 1% classified themselves as other.

In terms of occupation 42% were students and 58% were employed. None listed themselves as unemployed.

58% of the people surveyed considered themselves to be both radio and television people, whilst 16% proclaimed to be radio people and 24% classified themselves as television people. In looking at contact with subject radio stations – 86% said they have listened to 5FM. 77% said they had come into with MetroFM and 63% claimed to have listened to KFM.